

MAYOR OF LONDON

Susan Hall AM

Chairman of the London Assembly Police and
Crime Committee
C/o Lauren.Harvey@london.gov.uk

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Date: 18 August 2022

Dear Susan,

Thank you for sharing a copy of the Police and Crime Committee's report, 'Violence Against Women and Girls' (VAWG). I am sorry for the delay in responding.

As you know, this is a key priority area for me, and I am pleased to note the importance the Committee attaches to this issue.

The Annex to this letter addresses the report's recommendations, and my Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime would be happy to discuss any aspect of this further.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sadiq Khan', with a small number '2' written below the name.

Sadiq Khan

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Annex

Mayor of London's response to the recommendations of the London Assembly's Police and Crime Committee report on Violence Against Women And Girls (VAWG)

Recommendation 1

MOPAC must work with the Met to prioritise action to improve the way VAWG data is gathered, recorded and analysed, including by race and other protected characteristics. MOPAC must also ensure it has robust performance-monitoring arrangements in place to hold the Met to account on this.

The Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime's (MOPAC) Evidence and Insight team is in regular contact with the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) to ensure that the data collected for VAWG incidents is gathered, recorded and analysed effectively. Where possible, we would seek the publication of information across protected characteristics. This data is also used to inform MOPAC's oversight of the MPS.

MOPAC intends to work with partners to improve data collection for VAWG-related incidents from sources other than police recorded data. MOPAC will also explore how to better incorporate the evidence gathered by VAWG sector partners to gain a more robust and holistic understanding of VAWG in London.

Recommendation 2

MOPAC and the Met should carry out a dip sample of domestic abuse incidents to ascertain how many incidents result in multiple arrests, and to determine how widespread the issue of counter-allegations may be.

MOPAC's Evidence and Insight team is conducting a deep dive into domestic abuse, which will be published later this year. This includes reviewing a sample of domestic abuse cases to understand them better. The review will also explore what additional information can be obtained with respect to counter allegations.

Recommendation 3

MOPAC must commission specific research to examine the barriers that prevent victims from reporting VAWG offences, to better understand the scale of under-reporting in London and the action that can be taken to encourage more women and girls to come forward.

MOPAC works extensively with London's VAWG sector service providers and specialists to understand the barriers to reporting faced by victims and survivors. This is done via research and through our regular interactions with the sector. The London Victims' Commissioner's Rape Review is an example of such research.

Improving trust and confidence in the police, particularly for survivors of VAWG, is a key priority for the Mayor. It is the lack of trust that can act as a one of the barriers to reporting. The Mayor's action plan for Transparency, Accountability and Trust in policing aims to address this and ultimately encourage greater reporting, including by women and girls. The Mayor will ensure that MOPAC uses this in conjunction with the recommendations from the thematic report from Her

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Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services on the Police Response to Women and Girls, to improve practice in this area.

London's Victims' Commissioner has held several meetings during 2021 with Black women victims and survivors to understand their experience of the criminal justice system and the barriers they face to reporting. The results of these have informed the development of the Mayor's refreshed VAWG strategy.

MOPAC hosts Operation Soteria Bluestone, an evidence-based programme funded by the Home Office and led by the National Police Chiefs' Council, which aims to support police forces to transform their response to rape. The MPS is one of five forces nationally which have taken part so far, and a research deep dive was conducted by a large team of expert academics between October and December 2021, exploring key areas for improvement, including victim engagement.

We also understand from our VAWG sector experts that some victims and survivors do not wish to report a crime to the police and prefer to focus on their ability to cope and recover from the incident(s).

MOPAC will continue to focus on dismantling any barriers to improve reporting. An examination of Outcomes 15 and 16 where no further action is taken by the MPS due to insufficient evidence or victim withdrawal is due to be carried out later this year.

Recommendation 4

The Met must listen to and learn from the conversation now taking place on VAWG. It must actively seek and respond to feedback from partners and communities on its VAWG action plan, particularly Black and minority ethnic women and organisations, to ensure it implements what London's women and girls want to see from their police.

MOPAC has worked extensively with the MPS to develop its VAWG action plan and has ensured that the voices of survivors, particularly those from minoritised communities, are represented so that tangible changes can be made.

Recommendation 5

The Mayor must set clear and measurable VAWG targets in both his Police and Crime Plan and renewed VAWG strategy; and detail the resources needed to ensure he is able to deliver on his VAWG commitments.

As with the Mayor's Police and Crime Plan (PCP), an outcomes framework has been produced for the Mayor's refreshed VAWG Strategy, which was published on 15 June. This seeks to present a balanced view across the priorities in the strategy and to avoid the pitfalls of a narrow, target-based approach by using a mixture of broad perception-based measures.

The London VAWG Board will provide strategic leadership for VAWG in London and will be responsible for overseeing the delivery of the VAWG Strategy. We are exploring how the VAWG Board can hold statutory partners to account for their actions in supporting the VAWG Strategy and facilitate a partnership response to collectively tackling the barriers to the eradication of VAWG.

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Recommendation 6

MOPAC must demonstrate, by September 2022, that it has robust performance monitoring in place to hold the Met to account on its work to increase trust and confidence.

‘Increasing trust and confidence’ is one of four priorities in both the PCP and refreshed VAWG strategy, underpinned by a number of outcomes. MOPAC will use a mixture of quantitative and qualitative measures to present a picture of crime, safety and confidence in policing in London and to monitor delivery. Where possible and appropriate, this will include data on protected characteristics.

Recommendation 7

MOPAC must put in place, by September 2022, a forum to ensure regular engagement with organisations working with VAWG victims in order to hold the Mayor to account on his VAWG commitments

MOPAC already has well-established formal and informal mechanisms to ensure regular engagement with organisations working with VAWG victims, developed over several years. MOPAC’s regular and meaningful engagement with the sector is a strength and enables it to work collaboratively to tackle the complex and very serious issues that are addressed under the VAWG banner. These mechanisms include a MOPAC-funded Expert Reference Group that provides the formal Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector perspective on tackling VAWG.

The Expert Reference Group is a subsidiary of the VAWG Board, and its representatives sit on the board to ensure the views of the VCSE sector are represented in that forum.

London’s Victims’ Commissioner also engages regularly with VAWG sector providers across the capital and has direct channels to influence the delivery of the Mayor’s response in tackling VAWG. Additionally, the victim and survivor voice and views of the sector are heard through both the Victims’ Commissioner’s Victim Reference Group and ongoing, regular meetings between the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime and VAWG Sector representatives.

Recommendation 8

The Mayor must commit funding to ensure that specialist support services are available and accessible for every woman and girl in London that needs them; and end the postcode-lottery access to specialist services.

To date, the Mayor has overseen a record investment of over £100m in funding for specialist VAWG services, including securing additional funding from various government departments and committing an additional £17.7m from City Hall to support the delivery of the refreshed VAWG Strategy.

Alongside this, the Mayor will continue to lobby to ensure the appropriate level of sustainable multi-year funding comes to the capital. Current levels are simply not enough.

Despite this, the epidemic of VAWG will continue until we challenge the misogynist and sexist attitudes that allow it to exist in the first place. City Hall cannot overcome this alone. The refreshed VAWG strategy reflects a truly London-wide approach that seeks to pool collective resources to bring about support for those who have been affected by violence and abuse.

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As part of the delivery of the refreshed VAWG Strategy, MOPAC will build on its work with Local Authorities and other commissioning partners to most efficiently utilise the limited resources available to tackle this incredibly complex issue.

Recommendation 9

The Mayor must demonstrate how he is working with the Government, and using his commissioning powers, to ensure long-term funding to provide specialist services with the certainty they need to provide support to victims.

The Mayor has set a precedent to provide multi-year funding to specialist support services for victims and survivors when this has been possible, for example, through his VAWG Fund, including the VAWG Grassroots Fund.

The Mayor was pleased to see that from this financial year, the Ministry of Justice has committed to a three-year funding settlement, which MOPAC will ensure is passed on to our service providers.

Recommendation 10

The Mayor must work with the specialist VAWG sector and use his commissioning powers to ensure smaller 'by and for' services are able to access funding, and are supported through the procurement process.

MOPAC's commissioning is driven by an understanding of the diverse needs of survivors in London and the needs of marginalised communities such as those from minoritised groups, migrant survivors, and those with other protected characteristics, and by an understanding of the intersections between them.

MOPAC has a strong track record of ensuring that organisations supporting those who are most marginalised in society can access funding. The Victims Small Grants Fund (which has run from 2015-16 through to 2021-22) and the Mayor's VAWG Grassroots Fund (launched in 2020-21) have actively sought to support such organisations, including by simplifying application processes and providing organisational and capacity building support to providers.

The VAWG Grassroots fund was co-designed with representatives of the sector and was split with a minimum of 60% of funding prioritised for grassroots, 'by and for' BME specialist organisations and up to a maximum of 40% for specialist grassroots community organisations that provide services for marginalised and minoritised groups such as disabled women, LGBTQ+ women, women with no recourse to public funds (NRPF) and women involved in prostitution.

Following the new 2021 statutory duty on the Greater London Authority (GLA) to provide support to domestic abuse victims in safe accommodation, the GLA, working with MOPAC, established a commissioning framework for organisations involved in the delivery of specialist support to victims of domestic abuse in safe accommodation. This framework includes a 'lot' specifically for smaller, specialist 'by and for' organisations to ensure that, in any process to award contracts for services to providers on the framework, funding can be ring-fenced for providers on this lot.

In total, £11.4m has been awarded so far to providers on the framework, including £3.6m to smaller 'by and for' organisations. This approach has provided new opportunities for these 'by and for' organisations to bid for contracts that would otherwise have been unavailable to them and have led to new services being delivered by 'by and for' organisations across London.

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Recommendation 11

The Mayor's forthcoming VAWG strategy must strengthen MOPAC's commitment to provide wraparound support for victims of VAWG with no recourse to public funds. This should include both immigration and intensive resettlement support.

The Mayor has invested approximately £2m to date in a unique programme of support for women with insecure immigration status and no recourse to public funds NRPF. This programme has been funded since 2019 and provides advocacy and wraparound support for women seeking safety. The service has been extended until September 2022 while we consider what is needed in the longer term following the publication of the refreshed VAWG Strategy.

We have been very active in seeking legislative change to ensure that those with insecure immigration status are able to get the support they need to reach safety and achieve justice.

In addition to this ongoing campaign and working in close partnership with our expert VAWG sector providers, we have provided a strong platform for the victim and survivor voice to evidence how the policies in place for those with insecure immigration status create additional barriers for those seeking to flee violence and abuse. Since we hosted the launch of the 'Step Up Migrant Women' coalition in 2019, these voices have been heard in parliament and through a variety of media channels as part of a collective campaign to raise awareness and rally support at every legislative opportunity. This has included exposure through select committee reports and calls for evidence during the passage of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

We will continue to support the recommendations from the Super-Complaint brought by Liberty and Southall Black Sisters and lobby the government to make the changes required to protect all victims and survivors of abuse, irrespective of their immigration status.

The refreshed VAWG Strategy advocates that persons with NRPF must be supported to get equal access to justice and services. Furthermore, as per the recommendations from the London Victims' Commissioner's survivor consultation (2021), MOPAC will work with partners to seek to improve the information available to persons arriving in the country to disempower any potential threats from perpetrators who may use insecure immigration status and a lack of information on personal rights to perpetuate abuse.

Recommendation 12

The Mayor's refreshed VAWG strategy must include an emphasis on services for children affected by sexual violence and domestic abuse.

The refreshed VAWG Strategy reflects the impact of various aspects of VAWG, including sexual violence and domestic abuse, on children. The Domestic Abuse Act (2021) now officially recognises children as survivors of domestic abuse.

Recommendation 13

The Mayor must work with specialist VAWG partners to determine what more is needed to increase and improve the provision of programmes for VAWG perpetrators in the capital. This work must take account of cultural and age-related need, and identify the funding required to deliver a stable long-term programme of support to perpetrators and their victims.

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We have prioritised tackling perpetrators of VAWG, directly funding programmes that target perpetrators and address perpetrator behaviour, such as Drive (a programme that works with high risk, high harm perpetrators of domestic abuse alongside providing support for the victim/survivor and their families) and London's Stalking Threat Assessment Centre (S-TAC). We have made considerable progress in leveraging nearly £6m in funding from the Home Office since October 2020 to implement, test and expand new domestic abuse perpetrator programmes with specialist partners across London, and we will continue to do so with £2.5m already confirmed for this financial year (2022-23), with further funding award announcements to follow. These programmes will be evaluated to identify success and add to the evidence base nationally of what works.

We have continually lobbied for a nationwide change that would enable a better and more coordinated response to managing VAWG perpetrators. This includes the development of a register for serial perpetrators and a national strategy. We are pleased to see that the government has recently made a commitment to explore this, and we look forward to developing London's response.

Recommendation 14

The Mayor must use his influence, and work with partners, to lobby for investment in education resources and training for schools to provide programmes that promote healthy relationships, and support children and young people affected by VAWG, including early intervention.

The Violence Reduction Unit continues to deliver a range of programmes to meet this recommendation, including:

- The inclusive schools programme, which ensures schools both support an inclusive approach to education and work to ensure children learn about healthy relationships.
- Two separate teacher training strands of delivery on healthy relationships and inclusion.
- An online harms programme delivering skills and awareness to children and professionals around online safety.
- An early intervention VAWG mentoring programme for girls and young women.
- Delivery of support to children who witness or experience domestic abuse within the home.
- Ongoing work in the child to parent violence space.

MOPAC continues to provide specialist support for children and young people who have experienced VAWG through a range of services such as funding youth Independent Domestic Violence Advocates at Major Trauma Centres and Young Peoples Independent Sexual Violence Advocates in London's four Rape Crisis Centres.