

## **Unmesh Desai AM**

**London Assembly Member for City and East  
Chair of the Police and Crime Committee**



**Lib Peck**

Director, Violence Reduction Unit  
(Via email)

**City Hall  
More London Estate  
London  
SE1 2AA**

7 April 2020

Dear Lib,

### **Violence Reduction Unit**

As a Committee, we have been looking at the rise in violent crime in London for several years, and we are concerned that within that time violence has become more frequent. In December 2018, we wrote to the Mayor about the development of the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU).<sup>1</sup> We set out several principles for the development of the Unit, including that it should focus on all types of violence and that delivery is locally led. We also made recommendations for the activity of the Unit, including that it should focus on school exclusions and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs); and enable the use of mediation services at a local level to prevent the escalation of violence.

On 12 February 2020, we met with you to discuss the performance and progress of the VRU. The aim of the meeting was to examine and assess whether the Mayor is making sufficient progress on his objectives and commitments to tackle violent crime; how the shape and direction of the VRU has evolved and developed; whether the VRU has the necessary plans, strategies and processes in place to effectively combat violent crime in London; and the VRU's programme of spend.<sup>2</sup>

#### **The VRUs progress and performance**

The importance of measuring the success of the VRU's approach and investment was discussed at our meeting. You told us that all of the programmes that the VRU invests in have "some evaluation around them" and that key performance indicators (KPIs) are in place. You also identified that one of the key challenges for the VRU is to make sure that it is on top of what is working.<sup>3</sup>

**Recommendation 1: We request that the VRU informs this Committee of the mechanisms that the VRU has in place to evaluate the progress, performance and effectiveness of the**

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from the Police and Crime Committee to the Mayor, [13 December 2018](#)

<sup>2</sup> Meeting of the Police and Crime Committee, [12 February 2020](#)

<sup>3</sup> Meeting of the Police and Crime Committee, [12 February 2020](#)

**Unit and that it provides further detail about the KPIs that have been developed. We also ask that the VRU provides clear, accessible and up-to-date information on its KPIs on its website.**

We understand that London's VRU is a test site "to develop a slightly more sophisticated evaluation" as it moves forward. You also told us that the Unit has been working with public health colleagues, including the National Health Service, to see if there is a better and more sophisticated way to measure both impact and impression and feelings of safety and that, that would be your "suite of evaluation measures."<sup>4</sup>

**Recommendation 2: We ask that you keep us updated on this piece of work as it evolves and inform us of its findings.**

### **Work with schools**

The work the VRU is doing with Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) was discussed at our meeting, and we heard that PRUs are on the VRUs "radar". You confirmed that the VRU needs to look for some change around the pupils it has helped who are in PRUs within a year, and that there is a need to "set up and evaluate some of the schemes that are already running."<sup>5</sup>

Whilst we welcome the work the VRU is doing with the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted), we are concerned by those schools that Ofsted recognises are underperforming and failing in their efforts to prevent violence. We recommend that:

**Recommendation 3: The VRU provides further information to demonstrate how it is working with organisations to support children before they reach crisis point and face exclusion by May 2020.**

**Recommendation 4: The VRU reports back to this Committee on the progress it has made to tackle problematic PRUs and schools by December 2020.**

**Recommendation 5: The VRU should convene an action group to work towards improving the performance of schools and PRUs in London in preventing and tackling violence.**

**Recommendation 6: The Mayor should work with the Minister for Education and borough leaders to jointly write a letter to all schools outlining their responsibilities to prevent violence, mandating them to make a change and cooperate with violence reduction initiatives.**

**Recommendation 7: The VRU develops a piece of work to identify schools that are underperforming in their efforts to prevent violence.**

### **Improving local delivery**

At our recent meeting, you stressed that the VRU is not duplicating work carried out by MOPAC and London boroughs. We heard how the VRU has been working with boroughs to develop their violence reduction plans. We understand, that while the VRU supports all of London's boroughs, it is directly targeting 16 of these.<sup>6</sup>

**Recommendation 8: We ask that you provide this Committee, by May 2020, with further detail about the work the VRU is doing, and the action it is taking, to support MOPAC,**

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<sup>4</sup> Meeting of the Police and Crime Committee, [12 February 2020](#)

<sup>5</sup> Meeting of the Police and Crime Committee, [12 February 2020](#)

<sup>6</sup> Meeting of the Police and Crime Committee, [12 February 2020](#)

**London boroughs, local partnerships, schools and the voluntary and community sector to prevent and tackle violence.**

We are keen to understand more about the how the VRU is engaging with Londoners to raise awareness of its remit and progress. You highlighted the importance of the Mayor speaking about the work of the VRU and the VRUs website, its monthly newsletter and the numerous community visits and groups you attend. However, you mentioned that the website needs updating.<sup>7</sup>

**Recommendation 9: We urge the VRU to update its website as a priority, and continue to do so on a regular basis, to ensure transparency and that Londoners have access to the most up-to-date information.**

### **The future of the VRU**

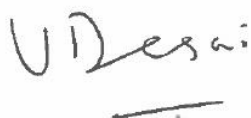
We have previously expressed concern about the openness and transparency of the VRU. We have also questioned whether being based within MOPAC (although operating independently) is most appropriate for the VRU. In December 2018, we stated that “if the VRU is placed within MOPAC, we will be looking closely to see whether it can demonstrate its independence from policing; whether it is meeting its principles around openness and transparency; and whether Londoners have trust in it to deliver. If we are not persuaded that the principles are being met within a year of the VRU being in operation, we will review whether MOPAC is the most appropriate place for it to be based.”<sup>8</sup>

At our meeting in February 2020, we heard that this is something that has been considered and that a review is due to conclude soon.<sup>9</sup>

**Recommendation 10: We ask that the VRU reports back to this Committee on the focus of the review, its findings and conclusions, once these have been shared with the VRU, and provides further information on what the future of the VRU looks like.**

We would be very grateful to receive your response to this letter by 30 April 2020. Please copy your response to Tanya Lightfoot-Taylor, Policy Adviser, [Tanya.Lightfoot-Taylor@london.gov.uk](mailto:Tanya.Lightfoot-Taylor@london.gov.uk).

Yours sincerely,



**Unmesh Desai AM**  
**Chair of the Police and Crime Committee**

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<sup>7</sup> Meeting of the Police and Crime Committee, [12 February 2020](#)

<sup>8</sup> Letter from the Police and Crime Committee to the Mayor, [13 December 2018](#)

<sup>9</sup> Meeting of the Police and Crime Committee, [12 February 2020](#)