



**Preventing violence and protecting
young people**

Police and Crime Committee

LONDON ASSEMBLY

Police and Crime Committee



The London Assembly Police and Crime Committee is responsible for examining the work of the Mayor and his Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC), to make sure that he is delivering on his promises to Londoners. It also investigates other issues relating to policing and crime in the capital, and routinely publishes the findings and recommendations from its investigations.

Contact us

Janette Roker

Senior Policy Adviser

Janette.Roker@london.gov.uk

Anthony Smith

External Communications Officer

Anthony.Smith@london.gov.uk

Lauren Harvey

Senior Committee Officer

Lauren.Harvey@london.gov.uk

Contents

Preventing violence and protecting young people	1
Police and Crime Committee	2
Contact us.....	3
Contents	4
Foreword.....	5
Executive summary	6
Recommendations.....	9
This investigation	11
Chapter one: Violence affecting young people in London.....	12
Violent crime in London	12
Serious youth violence: terminology	12
Chapter two: Early intervention and prevention	16
The root causes of violence.....	16
Parents and family networks	18
Enforcement versus prevention	18
Chapter three: The VRU’s approach	21
The VRU’s approach – rooted in the experience of young people.....	21
The VRU – integrating violence prevention work across London	22
Chapter four: A New Met for London.....	24
The Met’s Children and Young People’s Strategy	24
The Met’s child-first approach	27
Chapter five: Work with schools	30
Safer in school.....	30
The importance of breakfast	32
Safer Schools Officers	32
Chapter six: Knife imagery.....	36
Chapter seven: Stop and search	38
Stop and search powers and use	38
The effects of stop and search on young people.....	39
Chapter eight: Youth practitioners	42
Youth practitioners – building trust and confidence.	42
Rise Up programme.....	42
Committee activity	45
Other formats and languages	46
Connect with us	47

Foreword



Caroline Russell AM
Chair of the Police and Crime Committee

The balance between prevention and enforcement is not right. That's what the Police and Crime Committee heard loud and clear when gathering evidence for this report.

Young Londoners told us, youth practitioners told us, and the Mayor's Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) told us too about the value of addressing the underlying causes of violence and enriching young people's lives. One guest even said they would rather 1,000 extra health visitors than 1,000 extra police officers to prevent future violence.

We heard from the VRU's Young People's Action Group that: 'violence is preventable, not inevitable'. To protect young people and prevent violence, we recommend that the Met has to prioritise safeguarding, finding the right balance between prevention and enforcement.

As part of the work to fix its foundations the Met is working on a Child First Strategy. We are calling on the Met to set out a plan and timetable to train every frontline officer in youth engagement as it embeds this new approach.

Met data shows that young Black Londoners are three times more likely to be stopped and searched, which is why we are recommending that the Mayor should work with the Met to prevent disproportionality in the use of stop and search and hold the Met to account.

No matter where we live or the colour of our skin, from Acton to Walthamstow, we all want the young people in our communities to be safe and to know they have the opportunity to fulfil their ambitions and potential.

We heard that youth practitioners play a vital role in building trust with and supporting children and young people affected by violence, but there are not enough career development opportunities for them. That's why we recommend the VRU strengthens the support it provides to develop and further professionalise the work of youth practitioners in London.

We came together as a Committee to publish this report and show we need investment in community-based, non-policing solutions to violence so that all young people in our city can have a safe and positive life.

We heard a wealth of evidence that we are presenting in this report so that the Mayor, the Met, and the VRU take the right actions based on our recommendations to help London's young people to thrive.

Executive summary

Violence affecting young people can cause significant trauma in individuals and communities, and can impact young people's development, making them more likely to be involved in the justice system in later life.¹ This affects Londoners directly: in London, the total of all violence-against-the-person crimes has risen over the past couple of years, from 237,234 offences in 2021-22 to 252,568 in 2023-24. In addition, during the same period, violence-with-injury offences rose from 73,574 offences to 80,411 and robbery rose from 23,403 offences to 34,158.²

There is substantial work under way in London to address violence affecting young people, with some innovative and leading programmes and projects taking a public health approach, involving the voices and views of young people. This work includes bringing police into constructive contact with young people, and offering training to police and youth workers.

A key change in approach came in 2019, when London's Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) was established. London's VRU brings together "specialists from health, police, local government, probation and community organisations to tackle violent crime and the underlying causes of violent crime".³ The VRU's focus is centred on young people under the age of 25, investing in and providing better access to positive opportunities for young people, families and communities.⁴

In this investigation, the Committee explored the progress made on the Mayor's commitments in his police and crime plan, the work, and impact, of the VRU in preventing violence and the Metropolitan Police Service's (the Met's) approach to protecting children, young people and communities that are most impacted by violence, and what its proposed 'child-first' approach looks like.

The findings of the Committee's investigation are set out in detail in this report, and include the following as a summary:

- The language employed to describe violence affecting young people has the potential to be stigmatising. The Committee notes the statistical basis for the Met to use the term "serious youth violence" for recording and data purposes. However, outside of formal data-gathering situations, the Committee believes it would be more appropriate to use the term "young people affected by violence". This should form part of a wider approach that prioritises empathy and compassion to protect children and young people in London affected by violence.
- The root causes of violence are often located in the experiences children face in the early years of life. Investment in early years intervention is essential in preventing violence and protecting young people.

¹ Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation, [Academic Insights 2021/13: Serious youth violence and its relationship with adverse childhood experiences](#), November 2021

² MOPAC, [Report to the Police and Crime Committee](#), 10 February 2023; and MOPAC, [Report to the Police and Crime Committee](#), 9 February 2024

³ GLA, [What is the Violence Reduction Unit \(VRU\)?](#)

⁴ GLA, [Violence Reduction Unit: About us](#)

- There is a range of work, much of it led or funded by the VRU, taking place to support young people affected by violence in London. However, there is scope for more investment in early-years prevention and intervention.
- The Committee believes that the Met should always aim to strike the right balance between prevention and enforcement activity to protect young people affected by violence. The Met should prioritise safeguarding children and young people by finding the right balance between prevention and enforcement.
- Parents and family networks play an important role in preventing children and young people from engaging in violent crime. The absence of wraparound support from a family network is sometimes evident in London, and many children and young people are not getting that support. Youth workers often step in and fill that gap.
- The VRU is best placed to integrate the work the Mayor is doing across London to prevent and protect children and young people affected by violence – it has funded a number of innovative projects and strengthened partnership working in the capital.
- The Met needs to ensure it draws on the experience of young people as it develops and delivers its Children and Young People’s Strategy and embeds its child-first approach. The Committee heard how it must do more to strengthen its ongoing engagement with young people.
- Trust and confidence of young people in the police is a concern. The Met must actively engage with and learn from communities to increase trust and confidence among children and young people in London.
- Stop and search can cause deep trauma to young people and contributes to some young people’s mistrust and lack of confidence in the Met. While the Met’s use of stop and search has reduced,⁵ it should do more to increase its engagement with young people affected by stop and search, learn from their experiences and ensure the voices of children and young people are represented in its Stop and Search Charter.
- The Committee heard how young people are safer in schools. The Committee supports the VRU’s emphasis on inclusion rather than exclusion.
- The Committee heard a range of views about the value of the Met’s Safer Schools Officers (SSOs). Some believe that police should not be in schools, while others say they can play an important role in promoting positive engagement with the Met and supporting young people in educational settings.
- The Committee heard a range of views about the value of the Met’s Safer Schools Officers (SSOs). Some believe that police should not be in schools, some say the effectiveness of SSOs is yet to be quantified, while others say they can play an important role in promoting positive engagement with the Met and supporting young people in educational settings,

⁵ London Datastore, [MPS Stop and Search Dashboard Data](#)

-
- The Committee has previously expressed concern about the Met’s approach to sharing images of knives on social media. The Met has recognised the impact of online knife imagery on young people and reduced the use of knife imagery online.
 - Youth practitioners play a vital role in building trust and confidence with children and young people, yet they face low pay and few opportunities to develop skills and learning. More investment in youth work is needed.

The Committee makes 13 recommendations, which are set out below.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

The Mayor should work with voluntary and community organisations to increase investment in community-based non-policing solutions to tackle the root causes of violence affecting children and young people. He should provide details of this work to the Committee by 31 August 2024.

Recommendation 2

It is vital for the Met to prioritise safeguarding children and young people, finding the right balance between prevention and enforcement. This should be reflected in the Met's new Children and Young People's Strategy which is due for publication shortly.

Recommendation 3

The voices and experiences of young people must be at the heart of the delivery of the Met's Children and Young People's Strategy. The Met must engage with the VRU's Young People's Action Group (YPAG) to ensure the voices of children and young people in London are heard. The Met should establish its own diverse youth panel representative of London to support delivery of its strategy, drawing upon the expertise and experiences of the VRU's YPAG, amongst others. The YPAG should be consulted on the design of the panel.

Recommendation 4

By the end of December 2024, the Met must set out a plan and timetable to train every frontline officer in youth engagement as it embeds its child-first approach; the Children and Young People's Strategy; and the New Met for London programme. This should include training to develop cultural competence, to avoid "adultification" and criminalisation of children and young people as it continues its journey to fix the foundations of the Met.

Recommendation 5

The Committee welcomes the launch of the Mayor's London's Inclusion Charter, and recommends the Mayor sets out how its impact on keeping children in school will be measured and monitored.

Recommendation 6

The Mayor should explore the provision of a free school breakfast for all school children in London with delivery starting in academic year 2025-26.

Recommendation 7

The VRU should provide a forum for Met officers, schools and youth practitioners to come together to explore how they can strengthen the support they are providing to children and young people impacted by violence.

Recommendation 8

The Met should conduct a thorough review of the role of Safer Schools Officers and how they are supporting children and young people affected by violence. This review should include the voices of teachers, youth practitioners, children, young people and their family networks. The Met should publish the findings of the review by 31 December 2024.

Recommendation 9

The Committee recommends that the Met reviews its knife imagery policy; and reiterates its recommendation that the Met ceases sharing such images, in line with the Motion passed by the London Assembly at its Plenary Meeting on 2 December 2021.^{6 7}

Recommendation 10

The Mayor should work with the Met to prevent disproportionality in the use of stop and search; and continue to use his oversight powers to hold the Met to account for the use of stop and search.

Recommendation 11

The Met should publish the results of its Stop and Search Charter survey as soon as reasonably practicable, including any proposals arising from the outcome of the survey. The Met should confirm the timeline for finalising the Charter.

Recommendation 12

The Met should work with the VRU to identify opportunities to work in partnership with youth workers to prevent violence, support children and young people affected by violence and to improve police understanding of young people.

Recommendation 13

The VRU should strengthen the support it provides to develop and further professionalise the work of youth practitioners in London.

⁶ London Assembly, [Plenary meeting agenda](#), 2 December 2021

⁷ London Assembly Police and Crime Committee, [Violent Crime in London – part 2](#), March 2022, Recommendation 7

This investigation

In September 2023, the London Assembly Police and Crime Committee launched an investigation into preventing violence and protecting young people. The aims of the investigation were as follows:

- Understand the root causes of youth violence in London and the impact of London's VRU's initiatives on protecting young people.
- Examine what the Met is doing to prevent violence in the communities that are most impacted by violence.
- Examine the impact of interactions with the Met on the trust and confidence of young people. This could include the role of Safer Schools Officers and the use of tactics such as stop and search.
- Explore the role that non-policing solutions, including education, youth services, community organisations and charities play in preventing violence and protecting young people in London, how these projects are addressing the causes of serious youth violence, and what learning can be taken from this.

This report is the outcome of two public meetings held with guests from the Met, the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC), the VRU, youth organisations, charities and campaign groups. In addition, the Committee met with representatives from the VRU's YPAG⁸ and youth workers from the Rise Up programme.⁹

The Committee also received six written responses to its call for evidence.¹⁰

The Committee is grateful to all those who gave their time and expertise to this investigation.

⁸ GLA, [Young People's Action Group \(YPAG\)](#)

⁹ GLA, [Rise Up](#)

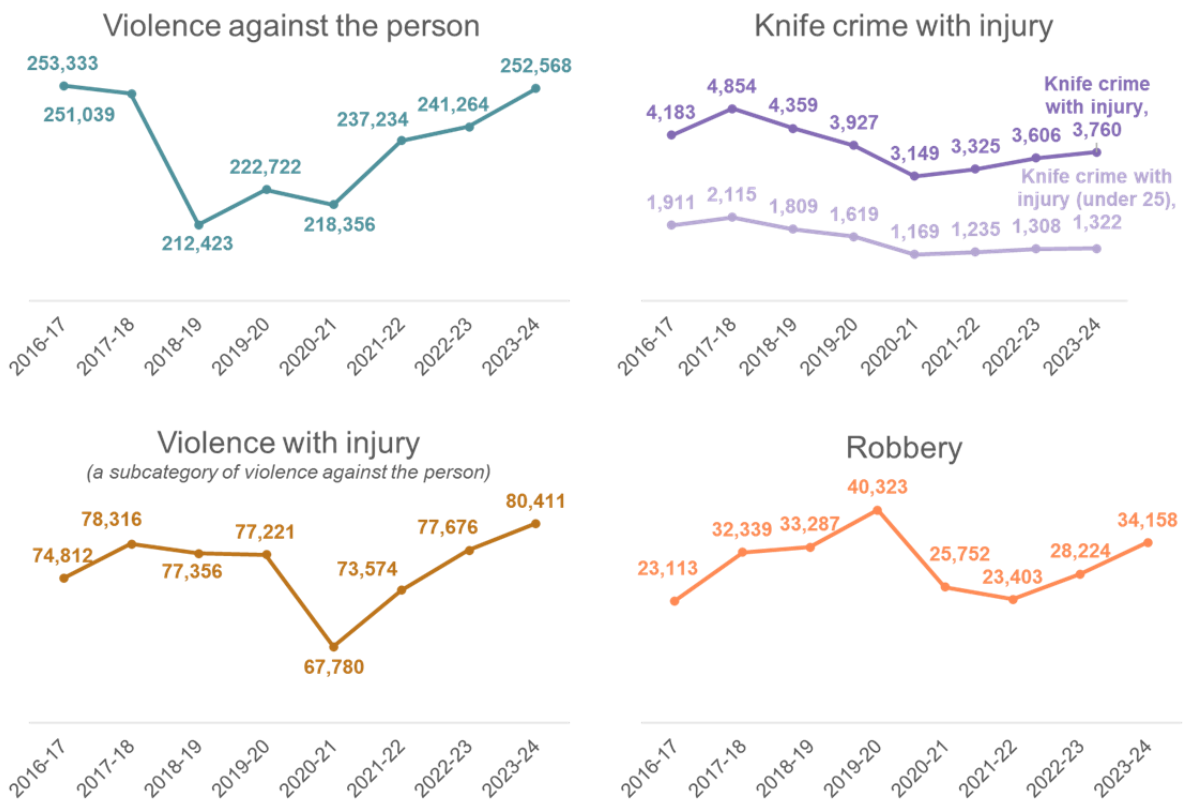
¹⁰ Written responses are published [here](#).

Chapter one: Violence affecting young people in London

Violent crime in London

Levels of violence in London have fluctuated over recent years. Most recent data shows that the total of all violence-against-the-person crimes has risen over the past couple of years, from 237,234 offences in 2021-22 to 252,568 in 2023-24. In addition, during the same period, violence-with-injury offences rose from 73,574 offences to 80,411; and robbery rose from 23,403 offences to 34,158.¹¹

Figure 1: Violence in London – 2016-2024¹²



Serious youth violence: terminology

The Committee heard that the use of language and terminology is very important in this context,¹³ and explored the use of the term “serious youth violence” at its formal meetings. The

¹¹ MOPAC, [Report to the Police and Crime Committee](#), 10 February 2023 and MOPAC, [Report to the Police and Crime Committee](#), 9 February 2024

¹² MOPAC, Reports to Police and Crime Committee, 2017-2024

¹³ Sherry Peck, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 2](#), 20 September 2023, p1

Met defines serious youth violence as “homicide, violence with injury and all robbery offences. Violence with injury can be further divided into subsets of knife crime and gun crime”.¹⁴

The Committee heard that the use of the term “serious youth violence” can be “problematic.”¹⁵ Youth practitioners told the Committee that neither they nor the children and young people they work with use the term.¹⁶ Pauline Daniyan, Chief Executive, London Youth, said the use of the term can “stigmatise young people”.¹⁷

Lib Peck, Director, VRU told us that the VRU doesn’t use the term “serious youth violence” either. Representatives from the VRU’s YPAG told the Committee that the term has a negative inference, is “misleading” and does not provide empathy;¹⁸ and that “violence should not be segmented into young people”.¹⁹ The YPAG advised that in instances when language needs to be directed around a specific field and/or age group, it is more appropriate for the term “young people affected by violence” to be used.

“Violence’, ‘youth’ does not have to be in there and the word ‘serious’ does not have to be in there, just ‘violence’.”²⁰

Representative, VRU YPAG

One representative from the VRU YPAG stated:

“Violence does not occur in a vacuum [and that] young people are brought into it by maybe their peers, or maybe their families, or maybe their friends and the wider community. There is a lot of factors that go into violence, such as poverty, such as they could be underprivileged or maybe they do not have the same opportunities as other people, and therefore that drives them into a lifestyle that they cannot then come out of [...] therefore that term is very misleading.”²¹

She also highlighted that “there is a lot of trauma” involved in violence, adding: “It is not something that young people do for fun.”²²

For the Met, serious youth violence has a specific meaning for data-recording purposes and includes a broad range of crimes. Commander Kevin Southworth, the Met, argued that as a

¹⁴ MPS, [Combating serious violence: update and progress](#), 6 December 2023

¹⁵ Representative from VRU YPAG, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 20 September 2023, p1

¹⁶ For example, Sherry Peck, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 2](#), 20 September 2023, p1

¹⁷ Pauline Daniyan, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 31 October 2023, p2

¹⁸ Representative from VRU YPAG, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 20 September 2023, p1 and p2

¹⁹ Representative from VRU YPAG, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 20 September 2023, p9

²⁰ Representative from VRU YPAG, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 20 September 2023, p9

²¹ Representative from VRU YPAG, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 20 September 2023, pp1-2

²² Representative from VRU YPAG, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 20 September 2023, p1

phrase, serious youth violence is not overused within policing.²³ He said that the Met tends to focus on other “proxy measures,” and added that serious youth violence is “from a policing performance perspective – a victim count. It counts the number of victims as opposed to offenders [...] this can lead to some statistical anomalies because if you have multiple victims [...] then of course it can suddenly amplify your rates.”²⁴

He stressed that this can “lead to some quite misleading figures depending on how many victims there have been in a situation”.²⁵

“As a term, it encompasses a basket of crimes, which range from murder and manslaughter right the way down to some driving offences, death by dangerous driving, causing death by careless driving, things that you might not necessarily think of in that conventional sense of serious youth violence. Therefore, it is a very broad basket of crimes for the most serious violence and serious youth violence. That is what that term means to us from a policing perspective in terms of how we calculate the crime types in a certain area. As a phrase, it is not something that we over-utilise within policing because we tend to focus more on other, more precise proxy measures for crime types.”²⁶

Commander Kevin Southworth, Metropolitan Police

There was general agreement among the participants at the Committee’s meetings that the term “serious youth violence” should only be used as a statistical data-gathering term, and its everyday use has the potential to be “stigmatising and demonising”.²⁷

The VRU’s YPAG highlighted that the best approach to supporting young people affected by violence is by employing empathetic approaches and measures. It stated that the use of the term “serious youth violence” did not provide that empathetic approach to address the issue adequately,²⁸ which has the effect that many young people have now become desensitised to the use of the term “serious youth violence”.²⁹

“Many of our young people have become desensitised to this term ‘serious youth violence’ because it is their everyday norm and their everyday reality. Therefore, we would go with the new narrative of ‘violence affecting young people’ and what that means for the young people.”³⁰

Anthony King, MyEnds (Croydon)

²³ Commander Kevin Southworth, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 31 October 2023, p1 and p4

²⁴ Commander Kevin Southworth, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 31 October 2023, p1 and p4

²⁵ Commander Kevin Southworth, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 31 October 2023, p1 and p4

²⁶ Commander Kevin Southworth, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 31 October 2023, p1

²⁷ Jodie Beck, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 31 October 2023, p2

²⁸ Representative from VRU YPAG, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 20 September 2023, p2

²⁹ Anthony King, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 31 October 2023, p2

³⁰ Anthony King, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 31 October 2023, p2

This report will therefore refer to “violence affecting young people”.

Chapter two: Early intervention and prevention

Violence affecting young people can cause significant trauma in individuals and communities; and can impact young people's development, making them more likely to be involved in the justice system in later life.³¹ As such, early intervention and prevention has been a major focus of those working in the sector.

The root causes of violence

The Committee heard general agreement among the participants at its meetings that the root causes of violence are often in factors such as poverty; social inequalities (and an increase in inequality); failure of systems of support; low educational attainment; and lack of opportunities for young people.³² Barrie Laslett, Chief Executive Officer, The Wickers Charity, said that the root causes of violence have not changed since he grew up. He said: "Poverty is a big driver. Nine times out of ten, most kids who get involved in any sort of criminal activity are doing it to make money, the same as when I was a kid."³³

The Committee also heard how, very often, people engaging in violence are themselves being affected by violence.³⁴ For example, Pauline Daniyan highlighted: "If you look at young perpetrators of violent crime, many have been affected by crime at some point."³⁵ Similarly, Sherry Peck, Chief Executive, Safer London said:

"I have never yet come across a perpetrator who is not also a victim. We say that victim-perpetrator divide is absolutely meaningless. If you looked at any of the casefiles of the children we work with and you dug down deep enough, they are victims. They might be perpetrators who need to be held to account right now, but they are also victims and very often historically they come from intergenerational trauma. It is a long-term thing."³⁶

Guests at the Committee's formal meetings highlighted funding for early-intervention support services as a significant factor in the prevention of violence affecting children and young people. This included the need to invest in support networks and early intervention to tackle and prevent violence affecting young people. For example, Anthony King, Chair of MyEnds Croydon, one of eight neighbourhood programmes funded by the VRU, stressed the importance

³¹ Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation, [Academic Insights 2021/13: Serious youth violence and its relationship with adverse childhood experiences](#), November 2021

³² Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 2](#), 20 September 2023

³³ Barrie Laslett, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 2](#), 20 September 2023, p3

³⁴ George Hosking OBE, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 2](#), 20 September 2023, p2

³⁵ Pauline Daniyan, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 31 October 2023, p3

³⁶ Sherry Peck, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 2](#), 20 September 2023, p5

of investing “in an earlier setting”;³⁷ and Geethika Jayatilaka, Chief Executive of Redthread, highlighted “the overstretched nature of preventative services”.³⁸

“We know there has been a significant decline in early intervention support services in terms of funding over the years [...] very recently there was a Children’s Society report that highlighted a decrease in investment in early intervention services by local authorities of around 40 per cent over the last 12 years. We know that that support network is not as strong as it needs to be. Those are really the areas we need to look at if we are to effectively tackle this.”³⁹

Geethika Jayatilaka, Redthread

However, the Committee also heard about an instance in which MOPAC and Met investment had substantially supported one borough: Anthony King highlighted the reduction in youth services in Croydon, and how investment from the VRU and the Met had helped deal with some of the challenges that the borough faces.⁴⁰

“It is key to note that with our borough, with our local authority, we have had the highest number of teenage murders for a number of years. It took for some radical shifts. First of all, it would be wrong of me not to mention the significant impact through investment of MOPAC and the MPS in our borough, in a borough that sadly faced bankruptcy, meaning a reduction in youth services. However, MOPAC stepped up extensively, the MPS stepped up, and the community stepped up to deal with the challenges that we face in our borough. We had 22 months of no teenage murder until sadly the recent passing of Elianne [Andam]. It showed the power of coming together, working together, and building trust and confidence.”⁴¹

Anthony King, MyEnds (Croydon)

The need for, and importance of, early intervention to support children and young people impacted by violence was a factor that was highlighted unanimously amongst the guests at the Committee’s meetings, as well as in the written responses to the Committee’s call for evidence. A representative from the VRU’s YPAG told the Committee that one of the positive results achieved through early intervention is that it shows young people that there are alternative choices available, rather than turning to violent crime.⁴²

The Committee notes and welcomes the range of innovative work taking place to support children and young people affected by violence. However, there is a need for more investment in preventing violence, including early-years intervention, in order to achieve substantial and meaningful improvements in preventing violence and protecting young people affected by violence.

³⁷ Anthony King, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 31 October 2023, p11

³⁸ Geethika Jayatilaka, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 2](#), 20 September 2023, p3

³⁹ Geethika Jayatilaka, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 2](#), 20 September 2023, p3

⁴⁰ Anthony King, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 31 October 2023, p6

⁴¹ Anthony King, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 31 October 2023, p6

⁴² Representative from VRU YPAG, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 20 September 2023, p3

Recommendation 1

The Mayor should work with voluntary and community organisations to increase investment in community-based non-policing solutions to tackle the root causes of violence affecting children and young people. He should provide details of this work to the Committee by 31 August 2024.

Parents and family networks

The Committee explored the importance of parents and family support networks in protecting children and young people affected by violence. Sherry Peck told the Committee that Safer London does a “huge” amount of work with parents as they “are the biggest safeguarding factors for our children”.⁴³

Pauline Daniyan highlighted the important role that parents and families play in a young person’s life.⁴⁴ She suggested that many young people in London are not getting the necessary “wraparound” support that would exist within a tight family unit, due to inequalities and deprivation that exist in some parts of London. In such instances, she noted, the responsibility for filling the vacuum fell to youth workers and community organisations outside of the family unit.⁴⁵

Enforcement versus prevention

The Committee explored the difficult balance between work to prevent and protect young people impacted by violence, and the Met’s enforcement activity when a crime has taken place.

The Committee asked representatives from the VRU’s YPAG whether they believed there was the right balance between work that is being done to tackle the underlying causes of youth violence versus work being done to enforce the law. The representatives were clear that they believed the balance needs to shift to focus on the underlying causes. According to the VRU’s YPAG, there should be a shift towards intervention and the enrichment of young people’s lives, including more focus on address the underlying factors.⁴⁶

“The balance should be shifted a bit so that there is more focus on the underlying factors rather than the enforcement of the law just because [...] with young people, like we said before, they are affected by violence rather than them actually engaging in it because they want to commit violence [...] when we facilitate conversations about violence, we learn that these young people do not want to be involved in violence [...] Our moral is that violence is preventable, not inevitable.”⁴⁷

Representative, VRU YPAG

⁴³ Sherry Peck, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 2](#), 20 September 2023, p5

⁴⁴ Pauline Daniyan, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 31 October 2023

⁴⁵ Pauline Daniyan, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 31 October 2023, p30

⁴⁶ Representative from VRU YPAG, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 20 September 2023, p13

⁴⁷ Representative from VRU YPAG, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 20 September 2023, p13

Similarly, another representative from the VRU's YPAG spoke of the impact that prevention work can have compared to enforcement. They highlighted how enforcement just takes "one young person off the conveyor belt" and then puts "another one back on".⁴⁸

"What we need to do is actually target the conveyor belt itself and then see the young people and tell them, 'You can make the same amount of money and you can be as successful in your life doing legitimate things rather than illegal things.' That information and that message might be clear to all of us in this room today but, if you go into these areas and you are there on the ground, it is not that clear to these young people. They do not know that there are opportunities and that they can thrive in life even though they are from certain areas. It is important to make that clear, rather than just put them in a police cell."⁴⁹

Representative, VRU YPAG

Jade Newton-Gardener, a youth worker from Fully Focused Productions and I aM A Person (IMAP), a youth-led media production organisation, told the Committee that she believed there is an imbalance between enforcing the law and supporting the community through youth work.⁵⁰

Pauline Daniyan endorsed the need for enforcement, but also noted the need to address the underlying causes of youth violence, including building trust among children and young people.

"Nobody is saying that we must not do enforcement, we have to do enforcement to have a functioning society, but we also have to tackle some of the underlying issues as well where we have the younger generation coming up where the levels of trust are so low. It does not bode well for the future. Part of the role that we play, we have to be able to work together with the various agencies and ensure that young people can start to build up that trust so that we can be sure that we are supporting them into a really fulfilling future and career. That is really vitally important."⁵¹

Pauline Daniyan, London Youth

Sherry Peck highlighted that young people do not see police intervention as an act of care. She stated that the focus of intervention should be on safeguarding, rather than criminalising young people.

"The bottom line is that police are not relational [...] Once we layer over that as well the fact that we do have, sadly, historically – you do not need me to tell you – a racist and misogynist police force in London, and until we begin to turn that around it makes it difficult for children and young people to engage. We need to understand the limits of the relationship with the police."⁵²

Sherry Peck, Safer London

⁴⁸ Representative from VRU YPAG, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 20 September 2023, p13

⁴⁹ Representative from VRU YPAG, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 20 September 2023, p14

⁵⁰ Jade Newton-Gardener, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 - Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 2](#), 31 October 2023, p4

⁵¹ Pauline Daniyan, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 31 October 2023, p6

⁵² Sherry Peck, Police and Crime Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 20 September 2023, p16

From the GLA side, Lib Peck also agreed that approaching the issue of violence reduction only from an enforcement perspective would not address the problem. She said that the Mayor was the first to set up a VRU and that this demonstrates a real investment in prevention. Will Balakrishnan, Director of Commissioning and Partnerships at MOPAC, stated that the Mayor's public health approach to reducing violence in London means tackling the underlying causes as well as enforcement.⁵³

While recognising the important role enforcement can play, the Committee agrees that, where appropriate, the Met should focus on safeguarding rather than criminalising children and young people and ensure its work is rooted in a public health approach.

Recommendation 2

It is vital for the Met to prioritise safeguarding children and young people, finding the right balance between prevention and enforcement. This should be reflected in the Met's new Children and Young People's Strategy which is due for publication shortly.

⁵³ Will Balakrishnan, MOPAC, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 31 October 2023, p5

Chapter three: The VRU's approach

The VRU's approach – rooted in the experience of young people

London's VRU brings people across London together to increase understanding of "why violence happens and to take action to prevent it now, and in the long-term". Its approach is focused on prevention and early intervention. It states:

"We believe in the importance of education and being in school, and we're invested in providing both support and positive opportunities for young people, working with communities to give them the tools and resources to deliver change where they live."⁵⁴

In partnership with the YPAG, the VRU has published a refreshed Strategy to 2025.⁵⁵ The strategy highlights how the VRU is working closely with young people, parents, youth practitioners, teachers, health professionals and the police to "champion families, youth work and inclusive education".⁵⁶ It draws on the VRUs learning and evaluation since it was first established. The work of the VRU focusses on prevention and early intervention across five priority areas:

- children and young people – reducing harm
- children and young people – positive opportunities
- families
- education settings
- communities and place.⁵⁷

During its investigation, the Committee was told about the range of work the VRU is leading to ensure the voices of young people are heard across London. At our first meeting on the topic, Lib Peck told the Committee:

"Putting young people at the heart of anything we do has been our philosophy. The YPAG are paid, they are mentored, they are given equipment. They are not just part of a tick-box exercise for us in terms of consultation, they are in there co-producing our strategy with us, talking about what language is effective and what language is alienating, as we have just touched on. Saying what are the relevant activities that young people might get a lot of support and encouragement from, and working out how to make sure that they are mobilising and working with other young people. So they are absolutely integral to that and the strapline of that is, 'Nothing about us without us,' and that is something we hold very, very core to the work of the VRU."⁵⁸

⁵⁴ GLA, [London's Violence Reduction Unit – About us](#)

⁵⁵ GLA, [London's Violence Reduction Unit – About us](#)

⁵⁶ GLA, [London's Violence Reduction Unit – Our strategy](#)

⁵⁷ GLA, [London's Violence Reduction Unit – About us](#)

⁵⁸ Lib Peck, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 20 September 2023, p4

The Committee welcomes the work the VRU told us it is doing to ensure the experience of young people, survivors and victims of violence are brought into the conversations of organisations working with young people, including the Met.⁵⁹

The YPAG told the Committee about the need to understand the experience of young people and put the community first, specifically focussed on where these young people live, where they work and what this cohort believe is needed in that community. Both Lib Peck and the YPAG stressed the importance of place-based and community-led interventions.

“A lot of our work is based on place-based. One of the programmes we might come on to is our My Ends Programme, which is in eight neighbourhoods across London and in neighbourhoods where they are grappling quite often with quite high levels of deprivation and poverty, and where violence has unfortunately been all too common a backdrop to those communities. The fact that we are doing it place-based means that it is much more likely to be advertised, seen, those programmes are referred by those agencies working in that space.

“Therefore, in terms of a range of activities, it would be hard to pinpoint one thing, but I do think pushing that place-based community-led is really important. I do think the range of activities from very early years right the way through to youth workers in custody suites and hospital-based has been important.”⁶⁰

Lib Peck, VRU

The VRU – integrating violence prevention work across London

Guests at the Committee’s formal meetings acknowledged and highlighted how the work of the VRU, and the fact that it has funded a range of innovative positive projects, has enabled partnership working at the local and regional levels across London.

“We would definitely recognise that the VRU has brought together different groups. We are part of some of its charity networks. It has funded a range of different innovative projects over the years, which has been hugely positive. As one of those projects, we can also very much see that sort of commitment to learning and reflection, which is important when you are doing work that is complex and there is not necessarily an easy outcome to be achieved.”⁶¹

Geethika Jayatilaka, Redthread

During our investigation the Committee’s guests agreed the VRU is best placed to integrate the prevention work being done across London, and that it should be given more funding to address the issue of prevention and protect young people affected by violence.⁶² George Hosking OBE told the Committee said:

⁵⁹ Lib Peck, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 20 September 2023, p6

⁶⁰ Lib Peck, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 20 September 2023, p10

⁶¹ Geethika Jayatilaka, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 2](#), 20 September 2023, p13

⁶² George Hosking OBE, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 2](#), 20 September 2023, p14

“I think that the area that we are missing out on most is the investment in prevention. I would like to see more money given to the VRU to put into prevention. I cannot think of a better place in London to put funding in order to drive that across London in a way that produces not just benefits in one or two boroughs but across the whole area.”⁶³

At the Committee’s meeting in September 2023, Lib Peck highlighted that more investment in mental health in schools was needed. She said that are “obvious gaps” in terms of mental health waiting lists and the mental health support young people need. She added that the VRU is funding some “excellent projects”, but its reach is very small given the scale of the challenge.⁶⁴

The Committee welcomes the Mayor’s continued investment in the VRU to provide positive opportunities for young people affected by violence and to tackle the causes of violence, including his £34 million mentoring programme⁶⁵ and £6.5 million additional investment in the VRU across the next two years.⁶⁶

⁶³ George Hosking OBE, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 2](#), 20 September 2023, p14

⁶⁴ Lib Peck, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 20 September 2023, p6

⁶⁵ Mayor of London, [Mayor’s record £34m mentoring programme on track to deliver for 100,000 young Londoners](#), 24 February 2024

⁶⁶ Mayor of London, [Mayor earmarks additional £151m to support the Metropolitan Police and keep Londoners safe](#), 14 February 2024

Chapter four: A New Met for London

The Met published A New Met for London on 18 July 2023. The plan sets out how the Met is “putting communities back at the heart of policing as it delivers more trust, less crime and high standards”.⁶⁷ In A New Met for London, the Commissioner states that the Met will keep serious violence low. It also commits to developing a new strategy “that makes a meaningful difference to how [the Met] police and keep children and young people safe”.⁶⁸

The Met’s Children and Young People’s Strategy

The Met has said that its new Children and Young People’s Strategy “will radically reset [its] approach to protecting and policing London’s children and young people, adopting a ‘child-first’ approach”. In A New Met for London, the Met says it will work with “key partners and experts to develop this strategy and will make sure the voices of children and young people in London are heard and reflected in it”.⁶⁹

Lib Peck told the Committee that the Met should reach out to the YPAG as it develops its strategy, and that the experiences of young people should be at the heart of how the Met shapes this strategy.⁷⁰

“I do find there is something for us to continue to do [...] about bringing the experience of young people or survivors or victims of violence much more into the conversation in many of the big organisations I work with. Where is that when you go and meet with the Department for Education, for example? Where is that experience of young people? Where is that when you are developing a child-first strategy, which the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) is now going to be doing...”⁷¹

Lib Peck, VRU

Geethika Jayatilaka told the Committee that the Met’s strategy needs to start from the point of how to build trust and relationships with children and young people, and that the voices of grassroots/black-led organisations are also important in these conversations. She said:

“It is an important opportunity but in order for that to be met -- we heard from the young panellists this morning about some of the fearfulness and trepidation. We know from the [Baroness] Casey Review that the confidence of Black Londoners in police is less. Therefore, that strategy needs to start from a point of how to build trust, how to build relationships and that needs to underpin all of that work.”⁷²

Geethika Jayatilaka, Redthread

⁶⁷ MPS, [A New Met for London](#), 18 July 2023

⁶⁸ MPS, [A New Met for London](#), 18 July 2023

⁶⁹ The Met, [A New Met for London](#), 18 July 2023

⁷⁰ Lib Peck, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 20 September 2023, p6

⁷¹ Lib Peck, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 20 September 2023, p6

⁷² Geethika Jayatilaka, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 2](#), 20 September 2023, p17

Jodie Beck, Policy and Campaigns Officer at Liberty Human Rights also gave evidence to the Committee on this issue. She highlighted the fact that community engagement with the Met can be difficult and warned that many young people may not want to engage with the Met on the strategy.⁷³

Commander Kevin Southworth confirmed that the Met is making every effort to hear the voice of the child and young person as the strategy is developed.

“We are making every effort we can to make sure we hear the voice of the child in this discussion and young person, just to differentiate between those two. We tend to often forget that just because someone hits their 18th birthday does not mean we stop caring and that is sometimes a hazard when we do talk about “child-first”. We can also forget there are some very troubled and at-risk young people. Sorry, I have used that expression, old habits, Anthony, I am sorry. Very troubled young people can find themselves coming of age and still requiring our help and support. That Strategy is in now draft form, it has been consulted on widely with partners, NGOs and young people and children alike, and ultimately we hope to have it out for consultation in November [2023].”⁷⁴

Commander Kevin Southworth

The Committee welcomes the Met’s commitments so far, and believes that the Met can and should do more to draw on the experience of children and young people as it develops its Children and Young People’s Strategy. It is also disappointed that it has yet to see any public consultation on the Met’s Children and Young People’s Strategy; and believes that this does not instil confidence in how the Met is prioritising its child-first approach.

Recommendation 3

The voices and experiences of young people must be at the heart of the delivery of the Met’s Children and Young People’s Strategy. The Met must engage with the VRU’s Young People’s Action Group (YPAG) to ensure the voices of children and young people in London are heard. The Met should establish its own diverse youth panel representative of London to support delivery of its strategy, drawing upon the expertise and experiences of the VRU’s YPAG, amongst others. The YPAG should be consulted on the design of the panel.

Police engagement with children and young people

Meaningful engagement between the police and young people is key to improving relationships and increasing the confidence of young people in the Met. However, the Committee heard that the Met needs to improve the way it engages with children and young people. For example, Sherry Peck told the Committee that the Met needs to learn to interact with children and young

⁷³ Jodie Beck, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 31 October 2023, p20

⁷⁴ Commander Southworth, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 31 October 2023, p17

people across the organisation, and recognised that while “some can, it is not happening often enough”.⁷⁵

At the Committee’s meeting in September 2023, representatives from the VRU’s YPAG spoke about the importance of the police engaging with young people. Representatives of the VRU’s YPAG told the Committee that young people can often feel that their only experience of interaction with the Met is a negative one. They said:

“A lot of young people do feel that way because, whenever they do experience an altercation with the police, it is always negative. Due to that immediate perception, like we talked about before with the serious youth violence, because of the unconscious bias that young people are heavily involved in crime, young people are the perpetrators, young people are the villains, it makes it harder for them to have that empathy [...] and take into consideration everything that has gone on that might lead that young person to violence and because of that unconscious bias, it is leading them to interact negatively with young people.”⁷⁶

Representatives of the VRU’s YPAG highlighted to the Committee that they believe community engagement is the way to address the “broken relationship”.⁷⁷ They told the Committee that they have shared ideas on how the Met can better engage with young Londoners, including the following:

- The importance of talking about positive experiences: for example, discussing police training and visiting schools, in order to build trust and positive relationships.
- Meeting with young people in places such as youth clubs in high-crime areas, playing football and PlayStation with them, having conversations about relevant issues, such as jobs and careers.
- The importance of talking about early intervention, how to prevent young people from going into violence and instigating a better relationship with officers.⁷⁸

“I do not work for the MPS but if it has the capacity – and I am assuming it probably does because it has community outreach groups – it needs to start going into positions where these young people are, maybe youth clubs in certain areas where crime is quite high across various boroughs in London. There are so many amazing things that the police do to support young people to understand the work that they do.

“I was at an event with my mother – at a festival – and the police’s community group was with a bunch of young kids who were nine or ten years old, playing PlayStation with them, having conversations about their job with them, letting them take pictures in the police car. Stuff like that really allows people from a young age – talking about early intervention and preventing people going into violence and also having a better

⁷⁵ Sherry Peck, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 2](#), 20 September 2023, p16

⁷⁶ Representative from VRU YPAG, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 20 September 2023, p17

⁷⁷ Representative from VRU YPAG, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 20 September 2023, p17

⁷⁸ Representative from VRU YPAG, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 20 September 2023, p17

relationship with the police as well and being confident in articulating themselves when they are in positions around them as well.”⁷⁹

Representative, VRU YPAG

Connor Ellis, Project Zero, told the Committee that the Met should endeavour to engage with young people in plain clothes and that police engaging with young people in uniform can make young people wary.

“Also when it comes to the uniform, them coming without their uniform sometimes would be really good because it shows that they are people just like us. When they come with their uniform I feel that it has already got that agenda, saying, ‘OK, they’re a police officer, they’ve got handcuffs, they’ve got this and they’ve got that, so we’ll be wary of that.’ However, if they come and maybe first of all have a normal conversation with them and after that say, ‘OK, I’m a police officer,’ but when they are in their normal clothes, that would be a good way to engage in the conversation at first, but they will be like, ‘Yes, we’re just normal people just like you.’”⁸⁰

Connor Ellis, Project Zero

Anthony King also gave evidence highlighting the work My Ends has been doing in Croydon that brings communities together every Friday. He suggested that the Met should consider replicating this across London and stressed the importance of Borough Commanders actively engaging with communities, faith groups and families.

“I am totally pro the MPS, very much so. In our local BCU [Basic Command Unit], Croydon, Sutton and Bromley, our two Borough Commanders that we have had over the last three years have been exceptional. We have seen trust and confidence built in Croydon extensively. We meet every Friday in a room with 60 to 100 people [...] and we have a fantastic conversation. We have direct access and I can speak on behalf of the young people who train them also. We are confident that if we can replicate this model across London, there will be a change across London.”⁸¹

Anthony King, MyEnds (Croydon)

The Committee welcomes the innovative work the Met is doing to engage with children and young people in London. However, the Committee believes that the Met can and should do more to strengthen its engagement with children and young people across London.

The Met’s child-first approach

The Met has said: “[A] child-first approach recognises that children are different to adults, they have different needs and vulnerabilities. A child-first approach seeks to treat children as individuals and for professionals to understand the wider context of their lives.”⁸²

⁷⁹ Representative from VRU YPAG, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 20 September 2023, p16

⁸⁰ Connor Ellis, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 2](#), 20 September 2023, p20

⁸¹ Anthony King, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 31 October 2023, p14

⁸² MPS, [Combatting serious violence: update and progress](#), 6 December 2023

During its investigation, the Committee heard how the Met’s “child-first approach” should be used as a foundation and opportunity to build and strengthen trust between young people and the Met. Pauline Daniyan welcomed the approach:

“The new strategy in terms of child-first is really good starting point because it is about having the child/the young person at the centre, understanding them and understanding some of the challenges and some of the barriers that they face. We have heard in terms of the training that goes into place, particularly where they are policing different communities, so that there is that understanding of the communities and the MPS’s understanding amongst the officers around cultural competency. We can hear that in some areas it is happening. It is a question of then how can you replicate that in different boroughs and in different areas?”⁸³

As part of the Met’s child-first approach, Commander Southworth highlighted the importance of trauma-informed policing and the Met’s understanding of the impact on children and young people as they come through difficult experiences. He also told Members that SSOs can act as a point of contact and reassurance, “front and centre” to the Met’s child-first strategy to avoid “adultification” and “criminalising” of children.⁸⁴

Guests at the Committee’s formal meetings spoke about the importance of the Met being a part of London’s communities, speaking to members of the communities and learning from communities. Guests agreed that undertaking these activities will have a “repeatable” effect on building trust and confidence. Anthony King gave an example of how some of the young people My Ends supports, who have been through the criminal justice system, are working with the Met to train them on how to “police their communities”; as a result, some of these young people are now applying to join the Met.⁸⁵

“We have former children who were looked after who are now training the MPS and being paid to do it. They are building fantastic relationships.”⁸⁶

Anthony King, MyEnds (Croydon)

Pauline Daniyan highlighted the fact that not all communities are the same, and the need for the Met to be trained in how to engage with a range of communities over time, including different community groups and families across London.⁸⁷

“We have heard in terms of the training that goes into place, particularly where they are policing different communities, so that there is that understanding of the communities and the MPS’s understanding amongst the officers around cultural competency. We can hear that in some areas it is happening. It is a question of then how can you replicate that in different boroughs and in different areas?”

⁸³ Pauline Daniyan, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 31 October 2023, p14

⁸⁴ Commander Southworth, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 31 October 2023, p22

⁸⁵ Anthony King, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 31 October 2023, p7

⁸⁶ Anthony King, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 31 October 2023, p7

⁸⁷ Pauline Daniyan, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 31 October 2023, p14

“[...] It is about being in communities and speaking to communities and I will come back to what I said before in terms of trust. We are hearing success stories where the police are able to work effectively within communities and how can that be replicated. It is for the MPS to understand and take the time to come down and sit alongside communities, learn from communities so that we can see more of the good practice where communities are saying, ‘Yes, that is a job or a career that I want to go into. It is a really good example that we have heard.’”⁸⁸

Pauline Daniyan, London Youth

The Committee welcomes the Met’s commitment to a child-first approach as a fundamental aspect of its overall strategy to protect children and young people affected by violence. This is a positive and constructive statement of intent that recognises where things may have gone wrong in the past. The Met must ensure that, central to its child-first approach is the recognition that every child has unique needs, experiences and circumstances. The Met must embrace this approach across all its engagements with young people and ensure that it works collaboratively with agencies and organisations to provide a coordinated and holistic response to the needs of children and young people affected by violence in the capital.

The Met also must deliver on its promise to develop practices which treat children and young people as distinct from adults. Both the Casey Review and the HMICFRS’ report of the Met’s handling of child exploitation warned against the ‘adultification’ of children by the Met, and in their recommendations included a call for the Met to draw distinctions between adults and children.^{89 90}

Recommendation 4

By the end of December 2024, the Met must set out a plan and timetable to train every frontline officer in youth engagement as it embeds its child-first approach; the Children and Young People’s Strategy; and the New Met for London programme. This should include training to develop cultural competence, to avoid “adultification” and criminalisation of children and young people as it continues its journey to fix the foundations of the Met.

⁸⁸ Pauline Daniyan, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 31 October 2023, p14

⁸⁹ Baroness Louise Casey CBE, Casey Review, March 2023 – [Recommendation 7](#), p21

⁹⁰ HMICFRS, The Metropolitan Police Service’s handling of the sexual and criminal exploitation of children, February 2024 – [Recommendation 10](#)

Chapter five: Work with schools

Safer in school

Education is one of the VRU's five key priority areas.⁹¹ Lib Peck has said, "We know that children and young people are safer in school. It's why tackling all forms of school exclusions and driving up attendance is core to the Violence Reduction Unit's prevention work."⁹²

A 2017 report by the Institute for Public Policy Research, *Making the Difference: Breaking the Link Between School Exclusion and Social Exclusion*, stated that children excluded from school in England are often the most vulnerable in society. It found they are "twice as likely to be in the care of the state, four times more likely to have grown up in poverty, seven times more likely to have special educational needs and 10 times more likely to suffer recognised mental health problems".⁹³

The report also highlighted that the majority of UK prisoners were excluded from school at some point. It quoted a Ministry of Justice study of prisoners, which found that 63 per cent of prisoners reported being temporarily excluded when at school and that 42 per cent had been permanently excluded. These prisoners who have been excluded at school were more likely to be repeat offenders than other prisoners.⁹⁴

Similarly, the VRU has reported that a 2019 Ofsted report on knife crime showed that children excluded from school are twice as likely to carry a knife, while data also highlights that almost one in two of the prison population had been excluded from school as children.⁹⁵

Lib Peck told the Committee that the VRU is driving an inclusive education approach that challenges high levels of absenteeism, managed moves and exclusion.⁹⁶ She said:

"We do not say there should be no exclusions at all. We completely recognise the fact that there are circumstances when it is around the safety of other young people. What we are trying to drive is a much more inclusive education approach that challenges high levels of absenteeism, managed moves and exclusions."⁹⁷

⁹¹ GLA, [Our programmes](#)

⁹² GLA, [Mayor launches London's Inclusion Charter – the first city-wide of its type – to help tackle rising suspensions and thousands of children losing out on learning](#), 6 February 2024

⁹³ Institute for Public Policy Research, [Making the Difference: Breaking the link between school exclusion and social exclusion](#), October 2017, p7

⁹⁴ Institute for Public Policy Research, [Making the Difference: Breaking the link between school exclusion and social exclusion](#), October 2017, p22

⁹⁵ GLA, [Mayor launches London's Inclusion Charter – the first city-wide of its type – to help tackle rising suspensions and thousands of children losing out on learning](#), 6 February 2024; and Ofsted, [Safeguarding children and young people in education](#), March 2019

⁹⁶ Lib Peck, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 20 September 2023, p19

⁹⁷ Lib Peck, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 20 September 2023, p19

During its investigation, the Committee heard evidence from participants about the role that schools can play in preventing violence and protecting young people. When asked whether school exclusions are actively a problem, a representative from the VRU's YPAG said:

“Personally, yes, because the second you throw that young person out of those school gates, they are a community at the end of the day, so, even though you remove that young person from your school for any matter, for any reason, then it just falls on to that community because we are not interlinking different sectors, for example the schools linking up with the police or the police linking up with the healthcare system. What tends to happen is that you do not have that intersectional link whereby we are saying, ‘OK this young person is being excluded for this matter. Let us work on putting him down another pathway.’ Or helping them, guiding them, with other communities in our society.”⁹⁸

Similarly, Jodie Beck of Human Rights Charity Liberty told the Committee that exclusion is one of many things that “feeds criminalisation”, particularly of young black people.⁹⁹ In written evidence to the Committee she added that Liberty has called for a moratorium on school exclusions as a vital step towards ensuring schools are places of care, trust, self-expression and learning.¹⁰⁰

Lib Peck also highlighted the importance of supporting young people after school and told the Committee that the VRU supports after-school activities as well as keeping young people in school. She emphasised the importance of the connection between primary and secondary schools, and how supporting the move between both settings is essential to keeping young people in school.¹⁰¹

In February 2024, the Mayor launched ‘London’s Inclusion Charter’, which aims to help tackle rising suspensions and absenteeism. The Charter is a partnership between young people, schools and local authorities. The Mayor has said: “Of course, this approach requires investment and that’s why we’re investing £1.4m in a partnership with UNICEF UK to provide further training and resources to support our hardworking teachers to embed inclusion which we know keeps young people in school, safe and able to thrive”.¹⁰²

Recommendation 5

The Committee welcomes the launch of the Mayor’s London’s Inclusion Charter, and recommends the Mayor sets out how its impact on keeping children in school will be measured and monitored.

⁹⁸ Representative from VRU YPAG, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 20 September 2023, p3

⁹⁹ Jodie Beck, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 31 October 2023, p24 and Liberty, Written submission, November 2023

¹⁰⁰ Jodie Beck, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 31 October 2023, p24

¹⁰¹ Lib Peck, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 20 September 2023, p5

¹⁰² GLA, [Mayor launches London’s Inclusion Charter – the first city-wide of its type – to help tackle rising suspensions and thousands of children losing out on learning](#), 6 February 2024

The importance of breakfast

The Committee heard about the importance of breakfast in protecting young people affected by violence. Anthony King told the Committee that many young people with whom My Ends works, who are affected by violence, were not having anything to eat before school. He spoke about the positive benefits of work being done in Croydon's schools that provide children with breakfast. He said:

“One of the things we realised is that we were having challenges with children and we were looking over 2018, just before the pandemic, and we were noticing that many of our children that were involved in – sorry to use this term, serious youth crime, and looking at it from an early years perspective, carrying knives in school, etc. We realised that many of the children did not have anything to eat before they came into school. Simple things like no breakfast. There are five or six schools in our local area that started to give our children porridge and toast for free; the children did not have to pay for it. We were noticing that it was the children from the disadvantaged backgrounds that were going up for seconds, thirds, wanting more. They were arriving into school earlier.

“This took into account that we had to look at it from the perspective of when we looked at some of the challenges that we had with our nine, ten, 11, 12-year-olds, we were noticing that after school they could only afford chicken and chips and that would be their last meal until first thing in the morning where the schools were able to now give them porridge, to raise their sugar levels, to help them to understand that they can now thrive in a class because they have had something to eat in the morning. Simple things like having breakfast.”¹⁰³

Anthony King, MyEnds (Croydon)

The Mayor has recently extended his free school lunches for all primary school students into 2024-25. However, this does not apply to breakfasts, or to secondary school students.

Recommendation 6

The Mayor should explore the provision of a free school breakfast for all school children in London with delivery starting in academic year 2025-26.

Safer Schools Officers

Safer School Partnerships (SSP) are formal agreements between a school and the police to work together to keep young people safe, reduce crime and the fear of crime in schools and communities. According to the Met's SSP website:

“An SSP is a positive way for the police and all schools to demonstrate their commitment to promoting a safe environment to learn and prevent crime. This will involve a police Safer Schools Officer regularly working at a school or across a number of schools on a full time or part time basis.”¹⁰⁴

SSPs have four main aims:

¹⁰³ Anthony King, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 31 October 2023, pp11-12

¹⁰⁴ Safer Schools Partnerships, [What is a Safer School Partnership?](#)

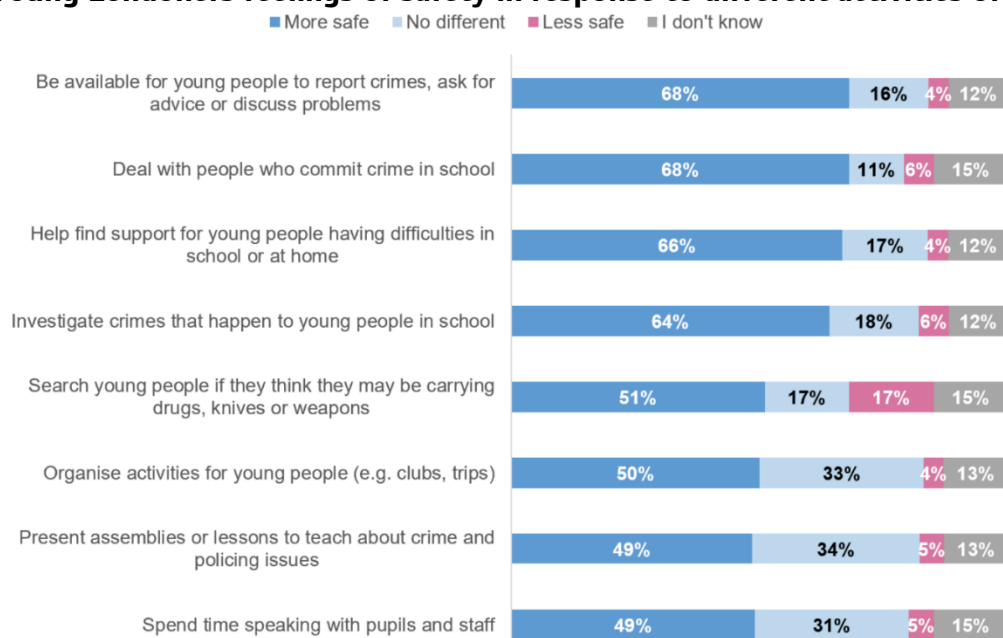
- provide positive engagement to build trust and confidence between the school community (young people, school staff and parents) and the police
- improve safety and enhance safeguarding within the school and wider community
- develop prevention strategies to help young people deal with risk and support victims of crime
- early intervention and diversion promoting positive pathways for young people.¹⁰⁵

SSOs are available to all secondary schools in London. They aim to develop positive interactions with children and prevent and detect crime affecting the school community. The Met has said that SSOs also seek to improve public confidence in local policing and “work closely with partners in education to address safeguarding issues and share information to keep young people safe, including children outside of mainstream education”. They also work alongside other partner agencies to put early interventions in place and divert young people away from crime and entry into the criminal justice system.¹⁰⁶

All secondary schools in London are offered an SSO. However, depending on the level of demand or support requested, some SSOs will serve more than one school. Some schools may also choose not to have an SSO. As of June 2022, the Met had over 370 SSOs.^{107 108}

MOPAC’s We Are London Youth Survey 2021-22, published in April 2023, found that nearly nine in ten young people surveyed believed it was important for the police to work together with schools.¹⁰⁹ It also asked young Londoners their feelings of safety in response to different activities of SSOs. Its findings are summarised in the figure below:

Young Londoners feelings of safety in response to different activities of SSOs¹¹⁰



¹⁰⁵ Safer Schools Partnerships, [What is a Safer School Partnership?](#)

¹⁰⁶ MPS, [Freedom of information request reference no: 01.FOI.21.021420](#)

¹⁰⁷ GLA, [Safer Schools Officers](#)

¹⁰⁸ In the 2022-23 academic year, there were 513 state-funded secondary schools in London. See: LG Inform, [Number of state-funded secondary schools in England](#), updated 12 June 2023

¹⁰⁹ MOPAC, [‘We Are London’ Youth Survey 2021-22](#), April 2023, p21

¹¹⁰ MOPAC, [‘We Are London’ Youth Survey 2021-22](#), April 2023

The Committee heard a range of views about the value of the Met's SSOs. The Met see these officers as playing an important role in promoting positive engagement with the police and supporting young people in educational settings. For example, Commander Southworth highlighted the work the Met has done to prevent criminalisation of children and young people involved in youth-produced sexual imagery in schools, which has received positive feedback from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS). He said that this has "been a really good example" of where the Met has used SSOs to "embrace and mitigate a crime type which, if it were dealt with in another setting, would actually end up with a criminal course". He added: "There is a real utility for using these well-deployed officers to avoid the criminalisation of young children, who might otherwise then come to grief."¹¹¹

Others disagreed, and told us that SSOs should not be in schools. In particular, Jodie Beck told the Committee: "Police should not be in schools. Liberty is unequivocal in holding that position."¹¹² Jodie Beck also expressed concern that working-class and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic students have the greatest exposure to SSOs, with officers being placed in schools where most students are in receipt of free school meals and those schools with a high proportion of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic students.¹¹³

MOPAC's 'We Are London' Youth Survey 2021-22, also noted that:

"In general, certain groups of young people were less likely to say that activities carried out by Safer Schools Officers would make them feel 'more safe' at school – including older age groups, young people from Black Ethnic Backgrounds, and those who had attended a Pupil Referral Unit. Importantly though, gaps tended to be smaller when asked about Safer Schools Officers organising activities for young people; in fact, young Black Londoners were here most likely to say this would make them feel 'more safe' at school (56%, 737 of 1,318, compared with 46%, 1,741 of 3,748, of White respondents). This could highlight the potential for Safer Schools Officers assisting with school trips and clubs to help reach young people from a range of backgrounds."¹¹⁴

In February 2023, Dame Lynne Owens, Deputy Commissioner, told the Committee that the Met needs to be "explicit with schools that we are not there to deal with their disciplinary issues". She added: "If we step into that space, there is a very real risk that we criminalise children whom we would not have encountered on the streets in that way." She also said that she wanted to see SSOs working better with Safer Neighbourhood Teams on violence and bullying behaviour at the school gates or outside the school gates.¹¹⁵

At the same meeting Diana Luchford, Chief Executive Officer at MOPAC, told the Committee that MOPAC surveys suggest a generally high level of support for SSOs among Londoners, but that the quality of the experience and the quality of the individual School Support Officer

¹¹¹ Commander Southworth, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 31 October 2023, p22

¹¹² Jodie Beck, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 31 October 2023, p25

¹¹³ Liberty, Written evidence, November 2023

¹¹⁴ MOPAC, ['We Are London' Youth Survey 2021-22](#), April 2023, p22

¹¹⁵ Police and Crime Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 7 – Question and Answer Session with the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime and the Metropolitan Police Service](#), 22 February 2023, p27

largely drives attitudes.¹¹⁶ Dame Lynne Owens also said: “There are some tangibly good examples of officers doing outstanding things in schools, but we have just got to make sure that quality is consistent.”¹¹⁷

Recommendation 7

The VRU should provide a forum for Met officers, schools and youth practitioners to come together to explore how they can strengthen the support they are providing to children and young people impacted by violence.

Recommendation 8

The Met should conduct a thorough review of the role of Safer Schools Officers and how they are supporting children and young people affected by violence. This review should include the voices of teachers, youth practitioners, children, young people and their family networks. The Met should publish the findings of the review by 31 December 2024.

¹¹⁶ Police and Crime Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 7 – Question and Answer Session with the Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime and the Metropolitan Police Service](#), 22 February 2023, p28

¹¹⁷ Police and Crime Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 7 – Question and Answer Session with the Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime and the Metropolitan Police Service](#), 22 February 2023, pp27-28

Chapter six: Knife imagery

In January 2022, the VRU commissioned research, led by University College London, to look at the impact on young people of using knife imagery in social media posts. This was prompted by concerns raised by the VRU's YPAG that posting images of knives seized by the police on social media could contribute to a sense of fear in communities, particularly among young people.¹¹⁸

The VRU published a report, *The Impact on Young People of Police Using Images of Knives in Social Media Posts*, in January 2023. The report found very little to suggest that viewing social media posts of knives seized by police influences young people's attitudes towards knives and knife-carrying. It recommended further research to capture the views of young people who have been affected by knife carrying or knife-harm. It concluded that young people "did not feel particularly threatened by the images and what they implied and that police social media posts of confiscated knives did not appear to encourage young people to think about the serious and often deadly consequences of using or carrying knives."¹¹⁹ The report also stated:

"With knife crime images being commonplace online and in other media formats, it may well be that some young people have become de-sensitised to the images and have little or no reaction to images of confiscated knives posted on social media."¹²⁰

The YPAG spoke to the Committee about this research and the impact of knife imagery on some young people in London:

"If you are posting a knife being found, let us say, in south London, what people are not thinking about is that people are seeing this and gangs are seeing this, for example, and they are going to see what their opponent in south London is using against them. It gives them a bit more knowledge on what is occurring within that situation."¹²¹

Representative, VRU YPAG

As part of this research, the VRU's YPAG conducted knife imagery peer research. It found that images of confiscated knives can make young people feel scared, fearful, triggered and unsafe. In the final report, the YPAG made the following four recommendations to the Met:

- focus on the root causes of knife crime, for example, poverty
- better communication with communities affected by violence through events
- make large knives harder to buy and less accessible

¹¹⁸ GLA, [The Impact on Young People of Police Using Images of Knives in Social Media Posts](#), January 2023

¹¹⁹ GLA, [The Impact on Young People of Police Using Images of Knives in Social Media Posts](#), January 2023, p17

¹²⁰ GLA, [The Impact on Young People of Police Using Images of Knives in Social Media Posts](#), January 2023, p17

¹²¹ Representative from VRU YPAG, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 20 September 2023, p18

- stop the posting of knife imagery, but where it is deemed necessary the police should censor images.¹²²

The YPAG told the Committee that it had presented its findings to the Met, but had not heard anything back, and is concerned that the Met continues to post images online.¹²³

“What we decided to do with this research is we actually went to New Scotland Yard and we presented our findings. We said, ‘This is what we found. Our young people do not feel safe having this knife imagery posted online and we want a stop to this.’ As we have had about three meetings with them and we have discussed it, it is really positive to see that they are willing to hear our research and what has taken place. We have even spoken about how another part of England already had banned knife images online.

“The only problem at the moment is that our last meeting was about two or three months ago, and we have not really had anything back in the sense of where we are going with this information because we are still seeing knife images posted online and so there is a little bit of a delay in that sense. But, again, we will move forward and we will see what happens in that case.”¹²⁴

Representative, VRU YPAG

The Committee has previously expressed concern about the Met’s approach to sharing images of knives on social media. In its report on violent crime published in March 2022, the Committee noted that despite the Met’s good intentions, “the sharing of knife images online risks encouraging young Londoners to equip themselves with larger and more lethal knives”.¹²⁵

Recommendation 9

The Committee recommends that the Met reviews its knife imagery policy and reiterates its recommendation that the Met ceases sharing such images in line with the Motion passed by the London Assembly at its Plenary Meeting on 2 December 2021.^{126,127}

¹²² GLA, [The Impact on Young People of Police Using Images of Knives in Social Media Posts](#), January 2023, p26

¹²³ Representative from VRU YPAG, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 20 September 2023, p18

¹²⁴ Representative from VRU YPAG, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 20 September 2023, p18

¹²⁵ London Assembly Police and Crime Committee, [Violent Crime in London – part 2](#), March 2022, p15,

¹²⁶ London Assembly, [Plenary meeting agenda](#), 2 December 2021

¹²⁷ London Assembly Police and Crime Committee, [Violent Crime in London – part 2](#), March 2022, Recommendation 7

Chapter seven: Stop and search

The Met's use of stop and search powers on young people has been the subject of significant controversy in London in the past, and has potential to profoundly affect the relationship between young people affected by violence and the police. During its investigation the Committee explored how the Met interacts with children and young people using stop and search, the impact this is having on the trust and confidence of young Londoners and the Met's work to protect young people affected by violence.

Stop and search powers and use

HMICFRS defines stop and search powers as follows:

“Statutory powers that a police officer may use to stop and search someone to prevent and detect crime. They can be used to avoid unnecessary arrest in circumstances where a quick search might confirm or eliminate an officer's suspicions. Use of these powers is lawful if an officer has reasonable grounds for suspicion that a person is in possession of a stolen or prohibited item, or controlled drugs, or is a person is in an area where serious violence is anticipated.”¹²⁸

The Met states:

“Stop and search is never used lightly and police officers will only exercise their legal right to stop members of the public and search them when they genuinely suspect that doing so will further their investigations into criminal activity – whether that means looking for weapons, drugs or stolen property.”¹²⁹

Home Office data shows that in the year ending March 2022 the Met made 40 per cent of all stop and searches in England and Wales. In London, the Met made 23.8 stop and searches for every 1,000 people, compared with 6.1 for every 1,000 people in the rest of England and Wales¹³⁰.

According to the Met's Stop and Search Dashboard, in the 12 months to February 2024, the Met recorded 145,511 stops. This was 39,468 (21.3 per cent) fewer than the previous 12 months¹³¹

Demographic data on stop and search from the Met's Stop and Search Dashboard shows that young people aged 18 to 24 are within the age range most frequently stopped by the police, followed by young people aged 14 to 17, as shown in the figure below.

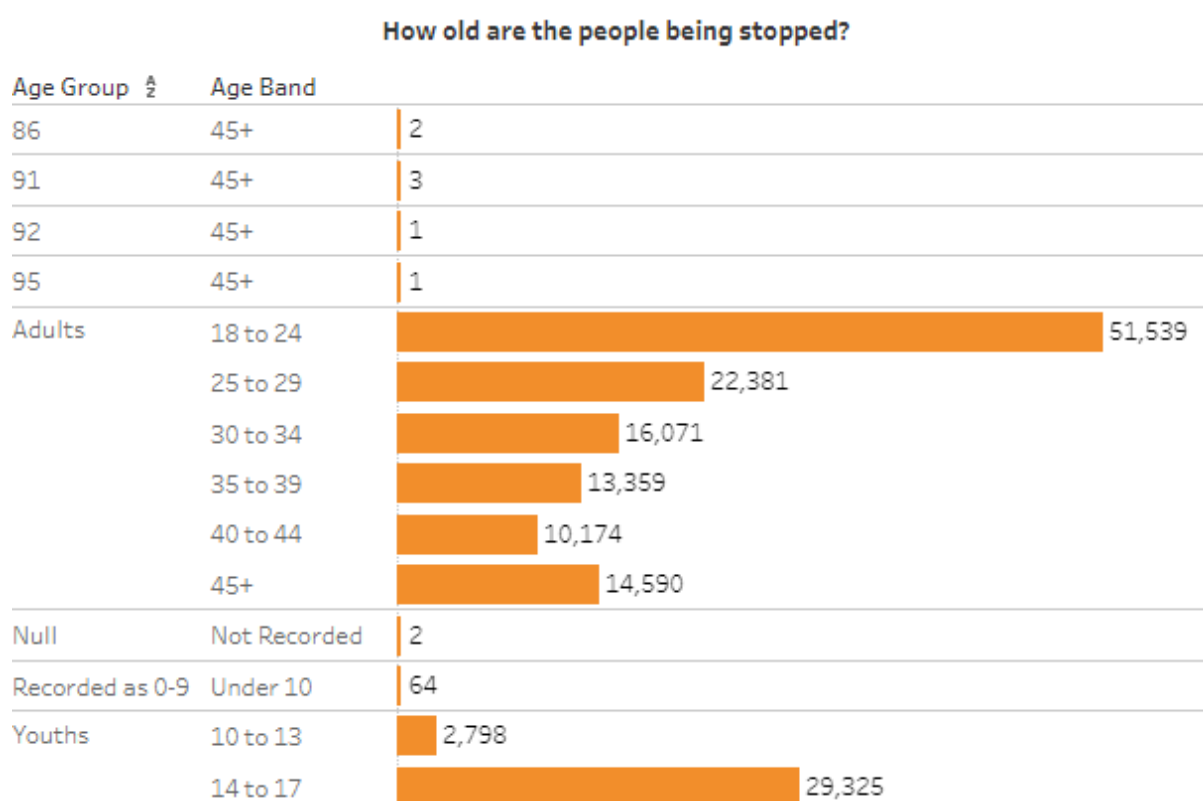
¹²⁸ HMICFRS, [Glossary Stop and search powers](#)

¹²⁹ MPS, [Why we use stop and search](#)

¹³⁰ Home Office, [Stop and search: Ethnicity facts and figures](#)

¹³¹ MPS, [Stop and Search Dashboard](#)

Volume of people stopped by the Met across all boroughs by age between 31 August 2022 and 31 August 2023¹³²



The effects of stop and search on young people

We heard a diversity of views about the effects of the use of stop and search on young people in London. Jodie Beck told the Committee that stop and search is “deeply harmful for young people”; and that it can cause “deep trauma” and leads to mistrust and lack of confidence in the police.¹³³ The Casey Review asserted that “stop and search is currently deployed by the Met at the cost of legitimacy, trust, and therefore consent.”¹³⁴

The VRU’s YPAG told the Committee that stop and search is often the first interaction that young people have with the Met. They explained that this is sometimes seen as a negative experience and many young people have ill feelings about this, which shape their wider view of the Met.

“My first interactions with the police have been stop-and-searches when I have had nothing on me. I have been stopped and searched for jogging. I have been stopped and searched for looking across the road. I have been stopped and searched for wearing a COVID mask. I have been stopped and searched for wearing a jacket. It looked like it was going to rain and I was wearing a jacket and I got stopped. All these times, I have just

¹³² MPS, [Stop and Search Dashboard](#)

¹³³ Jodie Beck, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 31 October 2023, p29

¹³⁴ Baroness Casey of Blackstock DBE CB, [Baroness Casey Review – Final Report](#), March 2023, p17

been minding my own business, trying to go home, trying to get somewhere, trying to go to do to some work to enhance my life and have a better future.

“I am not the type of person who holds grudges or has a bitter heart and so, when that happens, I do not have any ill feelings about it, but there are a lot of young people who do.”¹³⁵

Representative, VRU YPAG

However, Anthony King highlighted that often, young people who have lost a sibling to knife violence are the biggest advocates of stop and search.

“Working with families that have lost their siblings, and I can name numerous families that have lost their siblings to stop and search and the impact that it has had on the families. I have sat down with four families that have lost a sibling or a child to knife crime. They are the biggest advocates of stop and search, coupled with the siblings of those.”¹³⁶

Anthony King, MyEnds (Croydon)

Anthony King also told the Committee that he believes that there has been “adultification” of stop and search. He suggested getting children and young people together with senior Met officers to hear and learn from first-hand experiences. He further stated that My Ends have paid young people impacted by stop and search to train Met officers on how to stop and search appropriately. He said that this has resulted in a reduction in stop and search, and a positive dialogue. It has become more about a conversation rather than enforcement.¹³⁷ The Committee would support efforts to work with schools and youth organisations to educate young people about the conditions under which stop and search powers are available, and what their rights are when being stopped and searched.

New stop and search initiatives

The Met has announced it is trialling a new approach to stop and search, called “precision stop and search”, in parts of London that have been identified as the worst affected by knife crime.¹³⁸ It has been reported that officers carrying out “precision stop and search” have been given procedural justice training, which teaches them to use respectful language when carrying out a search and to explain why they are doing the search.¹³⁹

Commander Kevin Southworth also told the Committee that the Met is developing a new Stop and Search Charter. He highlighted that it is being co-produced with communities and will represent the voices of children and young people. He said that the charter aims to make sure that the Met only does a “surgically necessary” amount of stop and search. Commander Southworth also informed the Committee that the use of stop and search has reduced by 19 per cent and Section 60 stop and search down by 41 per cent, by using intelligence-led activity to

¹³⁵ Representative from VRU YPAG, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 20 September 2023, p16

¹³⁶ Anthony King, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 31 October 2023, p31

¹³⁷ Anthony King, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 31 October 2023, p29

¹³⁸ BBC, [Met Police: Communities traumatised by stop and search](#), 13 October 2023

¹³⁹ BBC, [Met Police: Communities traumatised by stop and search](#), 13 October 2023

guide stop and search.¹⁴⁰ The Committee believes that the Met's Stop and Search Charter has the potential to improve trust and confidence through open engagement and by seeking consent for the use of stop and search from the communities most affected by it.

The Committee notes and welcomes the launch of the Met's online Stop and Search Charter Survey, on 19 February 2024, to seek the views of Londoners on the developing Charter.¹⁴¹

The Committee recognises that stop and search, when used appropriately and intelligently, will play a necessary role in addressing knife violence and can have powerful results. However, when used incorrectly, the Met risks undermining its efforts to restore trust in policing if it does not follow through with its aims to be more minimal and precise in its application of stop and search while eliminating the evident racial disparities of the practice.

Anthony King highlighted to the Committee the impactful work that was done in Croydon which further demonstrates that stop and search can have positive results, when carried out carefully.

*"What we did is the same young people that were impacted through the stop and searches we now train, and we pay them through MyEnds to train the police officers on how to stop and search appropriately. The results were stop and search reduced in Croydon and young people now found that they can have a conversation and dialogue with the MPS. It became more about conversation versus enforcement."*¹⁴²

Anthony King, MyEnds (Croydon)

Recommendation 10

The Mayor should work with the Met to prevent disproportionality in the use of stop and search and continue to use his oversight powers to hold the Met to account for the use of stop and search.

Recommendation 11

The Met should publish the results of its Stop and Search Charter survey as soon as reasonably practicable, including any proposals arising from the outcome of the survey. The Met should confirm the timeline for finalising the Charter.

¹⁴⁰ Commander Southworth, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 31 October 2023, p31-32

¹⁴¹ MPS, [Stop and Search charter survey](#), 19 February 2023

¹⁴² Anthony King, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 31 October 2023, p29

Chapter eight: Youth practitioners

Youth practitioners – building trust and confidence.

The Committee explored how youth practitioners can play a vital role in building trust with children and young people and supporting those affected by violence. Pauline Daniyan explained that youth workers are someone a young person can trust, both outside of the formal education system and the family. She added:

“Many young people, particularly where they are dealing with a lot of structural inequalities and poverty and so forth, are very often looking to see who can they trust. This is where the youth sector plays a really vital role.”¹⁴³

The Committee also heard that there is a role youth workers can play within an educational setting alongside trained teachers and the police.¹⁴⁴

At its meeting in September 2023, Geethika Jayatilaka spoke about the work Redthread is doing to “support young people to live healthier, safer, happier lives” and how its team of youth workers based in hospitals and health settings are engaging with young people to “build relationships to support them with what is needed when they are in there, but also to help them to stay safe, to plan with them around that and to ensure that there are support services that they can access when they leave”.¹⁴⁵ The Committee reiterates its support for Redthread’s hospital-based youth work, engaging young people who have been impacted by violence at that “reachable moment” when they are likely to be most receptive to help.

Rise Up programme

As part of its investigation, the Committee met with frontline youth workers from the Rise Up programme, who are working with young people often at risk of experiencing violence. Rise Up was established in 2020. It is funded by the VRU, and delivered in partnership with London Youth, Leap Confronting Conflict, Clore Social Leadership and Power the Fight. It works with youth practitioners to “build their skills, confidence and experience to better support vulnerable young people in London”.¹⁴⁶

The VRU states that Rise Up is key to helping frontline youth work by “deepening youth practitioners’ practice, especially in relation to addressing conflict and violence” and enabling youth practitioners to feel “better equipped to reduce conflict amongst young people”.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴³ Pauline Daniyan, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 31 October 2023, p6

¹⁴⁴ Pauline Daniyan, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 1](#), 31 October 2023, p25

¹⁴⁵ Geethika Jayatilaka, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – Panel 2](#), 20 September 2023, p9

¹⁴⁶ GLA, [Rise Up](#)

¹⁴⁷ GLA, [Rise Up](#)

Youth Practitioners from Rise Up told the Committee about the benefits of the Rise Up programme.

“The Rise Up programme has opened up – I am going to speak for myself – my understanding more deeply, to look more in depth at young people, for example, for adverse childhood experiences, looking a lot deeper into them, how to look at my practice to make it more trauma-informed, to look more deeply at how young people are presenting.”¹⁴⁸

Josephine White, Little Acorn Services

Joseph Lynch, Babel Theatre, told the Committee that the Rise Up programme “is a very rare opportunity to have this kind of level and scale of professional development.”¹⁴⁹ He reported that youth workers have few opportunities to develop their skills, including, for example, in conflict resolution, understanding the lives of young people and knowing the boundaries of being a practitioner.

“I believe that youth workers pay a passion tax. They are heavily invested in the lives of young people because a lot of youth workers come from similar backgrounds to the people they end up working with. However, because of that, they are critically invested in keeping young people alive and keeping people safe, but they face low pay and face very little chance for professional development other than maybe becoming a manager of a youth centre and then face also no skills development.”¹⁵⁰

Joseph Lynch, Babel Theatre

Joseph Lynch added that the Rise Up programme enables youth workers to be a “cohort” in that they have become a collection of youth organisations banding together with a common cause and a common practice.¹⁵¹

The Committee also heard about the importance of youth workers working with the Met to increase “police understanding of young people”. For example, Josephine White, Little Acorn Services said that she believes it is a good idea for youth practitioners to work with the police. She said that the Met “need to come into our services and listen to the young people because then they will get a better understanding of where they are coming from and what they are trying to let them know, “If you speak to me in a certain way, I am going to react in a certain way”.¹⁵²

The Committee welcomes the VRU’s continued support for the development and professionalism of youth practitioners in London.

¹⁴⁸ Josephine White, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – panel 2](#), 31 October 2023, p7

¹⁴⁹ Joseph Lynch, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – panel 2](#), 31 October 2023, p8

¹⁵⁰ Joseph Lynch, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – panel 2](#), 31 October 2023, p8

¹⁵¹ Joseph Lynch, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – panel 2](#), 31 October 2023, pp8-9

¹⁵² Josephine White, Police and Crime Committee meeting, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Preventing Violence and Protecting Young People – panel 2](#), 31 October 2023, p8

Recommendation 12

The Met should work with the VRU to identify opportunities to work in partnership with youth workers to prevent violence, support children and young people affected by violence and to improve police understanding of young people.

Recommendation 13

The VRU should strengthen the support it provides to develop and further professionalise the work of youth practitioners in London.

Committee activity

Formal Committee meeting, 20 September 2023 – guests:

Panel 1

- Lib Peck, Director, London VRU
- Representatives from London's VRU YPAG

Panel 2

- Sherry Peck, Chief Executive, Safer London
- Barrie Laslett, Chief Executive Officer, The Wickers Charity
- Geethika Jayatilaka, Chief Executive, Redthread
- George Hosking OBE, Chief Executive and Scotland Director, WAVE Trust
- Connor Ellis, Opportunities Coordinator, Project Zero
- Stephen Barnabis, Director, Project Zero

Formal Committee meeting, 31 October 2023 – guests:

Panel 1

- Commander Kevin Southworth, Head of Profession, Safeguarding, Metropolitan Police Service
- Will Balakrishnan, Director of Commissioning and Partnerships, MOPAC
- Jodie Beck, Policy and Campaigns Officer, Liberty Human Rights
- Pauline Daniyan, Chief Executive Officer, London Youth
- Anthony King, Chairman, MyEnds (Croydon)

Panel 2 – Rise Up youth practitioners

- Joseph Lynch, Babel Theatre
- Josephine White, Little Acorn Services
- Zey Binboga, Displaced
- Jade Newton-Gardener, Fully Focused Productions/IMAP
- Tania Aubeelack, Unitas Youth Zone
- Louise McNestrie, Rise Up Programme Manager, London Youth

Respondents to written call for evidence:

- Barnado's
- Carney's Community
- Liberty Human Rights
- The Open University
- Redthread
- London Borough of Sutton Children's Services and Jigsaw4U

Other formats and languages

If you, or someone you know needs this report in large print or braille, or a copy of the summary and main findings in another language, then please call us on: 020 7983 4100 or email assembly.translations@london.gov.uk

Chinese

如您需要这份文件的简介的翻译本，
请电话联系或按上面所提供的邮寄地址或
Email 与我们联系。

Vietnamese

Nếu ông (bà) muốn nội dung văn bản này được dịch sang tiếng Việt, xin vui lòng liên hệ với chúng tôi bằng điện thoại, thư hoặc thư điện tử theo địa chỉ ở trên.

Greek

Εάν επιθυμείτε περίληψη αυτού του κειμένου στην γλώσσα σας, παρακαλώ καλέστε τον αριθμό ή επικοινωνήστε μαζί μας στην ανωτέρω ταχυδρομική ή την ηλεκτρονική διεύθυνση.

Turkish

Bu belgenin kendi dilinize çevrilmiş bir özetini okumak isterseniz, lütfen yukarıdaki telefon numarasını arayın, veya posta ya da e-posta adresi aracılığıyla bizimle temasa geçin.

Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਸ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਦਾ ਸੰਖੇਪ ਆਪਣੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਲੈਣਾ ਚਾਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਇਸ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ ਜਾਂ ਉਪਰ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਡਾਕ ਜਾਂ ਈਮੇਲ ਪਤੇ 'ਤੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ।

Hindi

यदि आपको इस दस्तावेज़ का सारांश अपनी भाषा में चाहिए तो उपर दिये हुए नंबर पर फोन करें या उपर दिये गये डाक पते या ई मेल पते पर हम से संपर्क करें।

Bengali

আপনি যদি এই দলিলের একটা সারাংশ নিজের ভাষায় পেতে চান, তাহলে দয়া করে ফো করবেন অথবা উল্লেখিত ডাক ঠিকানায় বা ই-মেইল ঠিকানায় আমাদের সাথে যোগাযোগ করবেন।

Urdu

اگر آپ کو اس دستاویز کا خلاصہ اپنی زبان میں درکار ہو تو، براہ کرم نمبر پر فون کریں یا منکورہ بالا ڈاک کے پتے یا ای میل پتے پر ہم سے رابطہ کریں۔

Arabic

الحصول على ملخص لهذا المستند بلغتك،
فارجاء الاتصال برقم الهاتف أو الاتصال على
العنوان البريدي العادي أو عنوان البريدي
الالكتروني أعلاه.

Gujarati

જો તમારે આ દસ્તાવેજનો સાર તમારી ભાષામાં જોઈતો હોય તો ઉપર આપેલ નંબર પર ફોન કરો અથવા ઉપર આપેલ ટપાલ અથવા ઇ-મેઇલ સરનામા પર અમારો સંપર્ક કરો.

Connect with us

The London Assembly

City Hall
Kamal Chunchie Way
London E16 1ZE

Website: <https://www.london.gov.uk/who-we-are/what-london-assembly-does>

Phone: 020 7983 4000

Follow us on social media

