

Date: Monday, 28 November 2016

Location: The Chamber, City Hall

Hearing: JUSTICE MATTERS - Tackling Sexual Violence

Start time: 10.30am

Finish time: 12.05pm

Members:

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor of London for Policing and Crime) (Co-Chair)

Rebecca Lawrence (MOPAC Chief Executive Officer)

Graeme Gordon (MOPAC Director of IOM)

Samantha Cunningham (MOPAC Head of Commissioning)

Guests:

Marai Larsi, (Imkaan) (Co-Chair)

Joan Smith (VAWG Board)

Lucy Botting (NHS England)

Helga Swidenbank (National Rehabilitation Company)

Robert Clarke (National Rehabilitation Company)

Martin Hewitt (MPS Assistant Commissioner)

Stuart Cundy (MPS Commander)

Chris (Survivor)

Fax Maxted (Survivors Trust)

Carlene Firmin (University of Bedfordshire)

Akima Thomas (Women & Girls Network)

Sarah McClaren (CPS)

Claire Hubberstey (Safer London)

Martin Pratt (ALDCS)

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor of London for Policing and Crime) (Co-Chair): Okay, well thank you very much for coming this morning and coming to the first of Justice Matters. It is an opportunity for us to look at the Sexual Violence Needs Assessment and also the HMIC Child Protection Report that published last week.

Thank you very much for bearing with us last week as we rearranged the agenda to make sure that we could take into consideration the important report that was published at the end of last week.

I am Sophie Linden and I am Deputy Mayor of London for Policing and Crime, and I think the best thing to do is go around and introduce ourselves and then we'll start with the main body of the meeting.

Marai Larsi (Imkaan) (Co-Chair): So my name is Marai Larsi, I am director of an organisation called Imkaan and Co-Chair of the End Violence Towards Women Coalition and also Co-Chair of the Voluntary Sector Advisory board.

Samantha Cunningham (MOPAC Head of Commissioning): I am Samantha Cunningham; I am Head of Commissioning here at MOPAC.

Rebecca Lawrence (MOPAC Chief Executive): I am Rebecca Lawrence; I am the Chief Executive at MOPAC.

Chris (Survivor): I'm Chris, survivor for today.

Fay Maxted (Survivors Trust): Fay Maxted, CEO of the Survivor's Trust.

Carlene Firmin (University of Bedfordshire): Carlene Firmin, University of Bedfordshire and head of the Misunderstood Partnership.

Lucy Botting (NHS England): Lucy Botting, Head of Safeguarding Adults, Children Radicalisation for NHS England.

Claire Hubberstey (Safer London): Claire Hubberstey, Chief Exec Safer London.

Sarah Maclaren (CPS): Sarah Maclaren, Head of Rape and Serious Sexual Offences, Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) London.

Graeme Gordon (MOPAC Director of IOM): Graeme Gordon, Director of Services and Commissioning for MOPAC.

Martin Pratt (ALDCS): Martin Pratt, Vice Chair of the Association of London Directors of Children Services.

Stuart Cundy (MPS Commander): Stuart Cundy for the Metropolitan Police Service and I am responsible for the sexual offences, exploitation and child abuse command.

Martin Hewitt (MPS Assistant Commissioner for Territorial Policing): That is perfect timing. Hello. I'm Martin Hewitt; I am Assistant Commissioner for Territorial Policing with the Metropolitan Police Service.

Joan Smith (VAWG Board): Joan Smith, I am Co-Chair of the Mayor of London's Violence against Women and Girls Board.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor of London for Policing and Crime) (Co-Chair): Thank you very much, and Helga is just arriving from the London CLC. So this morning in the first half, and we are quite tight for time so I do apologise and Marai will apologise too if try to keep to time.

We are going to be looking to be looking at the Sexual Violence Needs Assessment that was commissioned by MOPAC, and this Needs Assessment is extremely important in terms of looking at the prevalence of sexual violence and also giving us the opportunity to think about well what is our response to the sexual violence and what we now know about it on top of what we knew before.

We will just place on the record that I know that the presentation that you will see I find, and I am sure you have found as well, quite shocking in terms of the prevalence of sexual violence in London and it is important for us to really look at how we can tackle that and where we can look at the gaps around that.

The Mayor has chaired a meeting of the London Crime Reduction Board, which has looked at these findings as well and tasked out specific responsibilities so that we can as agencies together work in partnership to tackle these problems.

I am very, very pleased that Chris is here today to give us her own experience and it is incredibly important that we don't forget that behind the statistics and behind the numbers that we see, the statistics themselves are shocking, are real people and that is why I am so pleased that Chris has been able to join us today and I am handing over to you for about five minutes just to give us your experience of sexual violence, thank you.

Chris (Survivor): Hi everyone. I and my siblings have been victims of emotional abuse, physical abuse; some of us were sexually abused within the home environment and I was groomed and sexually abused by someone outside of the home because of my vulnerability.

We all grew up in a domestic violence household. The trauma we suffered from what we experienced as children and adolescents has stayed with us for our lifetime; I am 47.

We are still trying to get the right help and support today that we need. I reported to the police when I was nine; we told social services what life was like at home but we were ignored; I wrote stories at school about life at home and you could clearly see and smell that we were neglected but I was told I had an over active imagination and all the signs were ignored.

After trying to -- sorry, my sister and I reported to the police again when she was 16 and when I was 18. After trying to speak up after a while you just shut up because all of those feelings of hurt, anger, guilt, shame and stress affects your mental health and your physical health when you are not given a voice and when you are not believed and when you are not able to speak your truth.

We felt unheard and forgotten, but we wanted to share our experiences as a family to help other people so we wrote a book in 2012.

We then shared our experiences with IICSA, the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse just this year, and the matter was referred to Operation Hydrant and then to the local police force this year. We have now an ongoing investigation into our experiences and this is 35 years after the abuse that we suffered as children.

So far our police journey has not been too good to be honest, and I can talk to you at length about that another time but I only have five minutes now.

Now I personally have researched the impact of trauma of child abuse on individuals that have gone through sexual abuse, sexual violence.

I explained the dynamics and the complexities of our family to the police and they have gone against the insight that I offered and made some decisions that have personally caused me great stress and anxiety, so much so when I became very angry after being re-traumatised I actually told the police officer, and I am not proud of this, to go away but I swore at her and I was so angry because of what she did.

We have now spoken about all of those issues and I have now come to trust her, except she retired last Friday, so one of my points is we need continuity of the person that is investigating.

So my key issues are trust. Survivors and victims, complainants, whatever you want to call them, need to be able to trust their case officer. They need continuity of the relationship.

The importance and the understanding of the subject matter; child sexual abuse and child exploitation is at epidemic proportions in England and Wales and that comes across in the reports that you have got sitting in front of you. It not only affects the child that is enduring it but the adult that the child becomes, and in some cases the future generations of that child.

My children have been impacted by my child abuse; my mum was abused, she is in a domestic violence relationship, my dad was abused; it goes on and on and that can happen in many families.

We need a lead who understands and who will change the culture going forward to put victim survivors' health and wellness at the forefront of any criminal investigation.

We need agencies to work together to share information and through best practice help and support not only the victim and the families, but start to change the way society perceives child sexual abuse.

My point three is support through investigation, look to other forces for best practice. I as a survivor have gone into other forces like Surrey and that head puts a lot of emphasis on the complainant's journey so investigative officers as well as support officers in the form of Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVA) deal with the worries and concerns and practicalities of the complainant whilst the police officer is able to get on and deal with the investigative job.

We do not have that in the Metropolitan Police Service. I have not experienced that and my siblings need that support going through this investigative process.

Long term specialist support is number four on my list for non-recent child sexual abuse (CSA) is a must. Many organisations in this room and outside of this room have been fighting for years about the long term impact of CSA and the under funding that it has been given.

Now I do not know how we are going to achieve all of the changes that are needed when cuts are being made everywhere. Caseloads are rising; 40% caseload increase in Surrey force and in the Metropolitan Police force; I've been told that personally. I am married to a Metropolitan Police officer by the way.

IT systems are not robust enough, the right support is not in place, mental health services are not adequate because of the over subscription of the services and the under funding. Every conversation I have with victims and survivors and stakeholders the message is the same and the report bears that out.

Now the whole care pathway for victims and survivors and the way in which we deal with CSA and child sexual exploitation (CSE), which is a subset of CSA, and that again needs looking at; not enough focus is being given to CSA and non-recent CSA as well as current.

It all needs major investment, and wherever I am reading and whoever I am speaking to all I can hear about is cuts, cuts, cuts; we need investment in this area. Thank you.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor of London for Policing and Crime) (Co-Chair): Thank you very much Chris and thank you for putting really absolutely on the agenda many of the issues that we do need to think about, about putting victims and survivors first, the importance of trust, continuity and the importance of a really robust and efficient police response as well as the advocacy services, and these are all issues that we will touch on today.

Today's meeting is in two halves; we will be looking at the Sexual Violence Needs Assessment for the first half and the second half we will be going on to the HMIC Child Protection Report.

No, thank you very much because I think it is, I said at the beginning, so important to remember that it is real people and living their real lives that are impacted by sexual violence.

I am going to hand over to Sam [Cunningham] now who is going to present the findings on Sexual Violence Needs Assessment and some of the next steps in that.

Samantha Cunningham (MOPAC Head of Commissioning): Thank you very much. So as Sophie was saying, the first part of this conversation is around the Sexual Violence Needs

Assessment and MOPAC jointly commissioned this with NHS England at the beginning of this year, two parts really, the first one into sexual violence and the second into child sexual exploitation.

The Needs Assessments were designed to better understand the issues, but most importantly not just to look at prevalence but to look at the quality of the services that are currently commissioned, to understand the extent to which those services effectively respond to victims, and most importantly to understand whether or not the support is right in terms of supporting victims to cope and recover, and I think that is really helpful in terms of the point around long term follow up support.

We know in April 2015 the Dame Elish report was published, which was an independent review into the investigation and prosecution of rape in London. It was critically important for us that we followed that up to understand the survivor experience a little bit more, particularly because some of the recommendations in that report were around what the future of services should be both in terms of where they were located, but also where the investment should be. So the key point for us was to follow that up with this Needs Assessment to pull out a survivor and practitioner review in a little bit more detail.

Also it is important to know that there was a paediatric review that was completed at around the same time as the Elish report from NHS England, which was looking specifically at the pathways of supporting children and young people around sexual assault and sexual violence.

Both of these reports led to significant changes, which I am sure people may comment on that later in the discussions, and recommendations that fed directly into the Needs Assessments.

As The Deputy Mayor made reference to earlier, I think that what the London Sexual Violence Needs Assessment does is set out really clearly some of our challenges and the prevalence really of the issue, but we very quickly wanted to touch on what was included in that assessment.

So there is data on prevalence reporting and service activity in London. More than 150 reports were provided by 50 stakeholder organisations into response to call for evidence.

It is important to state as well that we had a really good mix between voluntary sector and community organisations as well as statutory, and I think that comes out in the report in terms of looking at pathways of care and support.

Interviews and engagement events were held in more than 100 stakeholders and service provider organisations, and most importantly the testimony of more 100 survivors were included within the Needs Assessment.

Based on the findings from this Needs Assessment MOPAC and NHS England believe that the needs of survivors of sexual violence can be best met if our services and our overall approach are victim centric and trauma informed; I think that kind of bears out the previous point.

I am not going to spend too long on this diagram, but it is something that was pulled together to give a visual representation of the challenge in violence in London. What it simply shows is that there are, what it simply shows is probably what we already know, but there are a number of environmental factors within the home and within our communities, but also individual

vulnerabilities that make individuals more predisposed to be either victims of CSA, CSE or of sexual violence and of domestic violence.

What it also tells us is that we know that there is a significant, although not a majority, but a significant number of individuals that suffer from repeat victimisation and go through the cycle that has been described by Chris much more eloquently than me in terms of CSA, CSE and then into adulthood around sexual violence and domestic violence. I also think seeing that within the context of the family as well as the individual is important.

In terms of the key findings from the report the Crime Survey for England and Wales indicates that each year around 24,000 adults in London experienced serious sexual assaults and/or rape. The vast majority of these victims are women standing at 85%, and just to put this into context, this is the equivalent to an average of 10 women in each London borough being subject to serious assault or rape each week.

For men the risks are lower, and the report goes into the detail of this, although I think what we should note is when we look at the CSE Needs Assessment for men and boys it does highlight to us that those under 18 do experience more sexual violence than in adulthood.

One in 5 women, 20%, have experienced sexual assault or rape at some time in their lives since the age of 16; 3.6% of men have experienced sexual assault or rape at some point in their lives since the age of 16.

Just to re-emphasise that point about age, the report goes on to say that younger women and men are more likely to experience sexual assault. In 2013/14, the rate of assaults for younger women aged 16 to 19 was 3 times higher than that for women of an older age.

The report then calls out a number of different key findings about vulnerability and support and we do not have time to go into the detailed statistics here, but I do think it is important for us to accept and respond to those broader vulnerabilities and the high proportion of survivors that area affected by these prior to becoming victims of sexual violence.

So the predominance around issues related to ethnicity, learning difficulties, disabilities, poor mental health, homelessness, immigration status and a history of offending all make individuals more predisposed to becoming victims of sexual violence.

The report also talks about the substantial increase in reporting of sexual violence to the police. It does take into account historic cases, but that is not seen to be the main driving force behind that increase.

Just one statistic, so between 2012 to 2015; in 2012 there were 3,353 cases reported, by 2015 this had increased to 5,416.

At the same period of time it is worth noting though that some of our other services or responses remained static or relatively static. So the reports of individuals through to Havens for broader support and forensic medical examinations remained relatively static during the same time as we were seeing those increases in reports.

We also know that attrition rates at each stage through the Criminal Justice System (CJS) have not improved but in fact got worse at the same time as that increase in reports going up.

Almost a quarter of the cases, 23%, are unsuccessful due to victim issues, and for those cases where domestic violence (DV) is also present the retraction of statements doubles. So when you are talking about that minority that is demonstrated in the Venn diagram the likelihood of a victim staying with a case through the Criminal Justice System becomes even less so.

Furthermore, in terms of the report, the availability and appropriateness of wellbeing services such as mental health services to assist recovery and prevent repeat victimisation are limited. A third of female and male victims have pre-existing mental health issues, which was drawn out of the report, and severe mental health issues increase the likelihood for women by five times and for men ten times in terms of becoming a victim of sexual violence.

The report also highlights that there are a really wide range in London of specialist services delivered by the VCS who are engaging with survivors, but it also recommends that there is overwhelming demand for those services and that the connection between those services and the simplicity of the pathways for survivors is not there, which is the third point in terms of a lack of coordination.

Finally, one of the things that the Needs Assessment really pulls out is that there is no London wide strategy for tackling the causes of sexual violence or for preventing sexual violence, and I think that heavily relates to the conversation that we will have later in the meeting around CSA and CSE.

In terms of identified gaps, there is no evidence of a strategic approach, so thinking about where do we want to be in 5, 10, 15 years is one of the key issues that are drawn out of the report.

Prevention and intervention, so thinking of building resilience in our most at risk communities and groups is something that is identified as a gap.

Chris obviously pulled out in terms of her initial presentation the importance of advocacy and that supporting broader investigations into cases and this is pulled out within the report as well. The report identifies and it remains a guesstimate, but an informed one that there are 41 ISVA supporting adults in London and 16 supporting young people.

There is limited public awareness of potential sources of support for those that have experienced sexual violence. Survivors talked really clearly about being unsure about how to access services.

Then finally, there are a wide range of well regarded specialist services, but the question of funding and long term funding was raised quite clearly.

That is just a summary, I am sorry it is so quick, of the key points that are identified within the report.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor of London for Policing and Crime) (Co-Chair): Thank you very much Sam. I am Co-chairing this part of the meeting this morning and I am going to

hand over to Marai [Larsi] who is going to take forward the next bit, which is about a discussion, picking out some of points around the CPS and advocacy as well.

Marai Larsi (Imkaan) (Co-Chair): Thanks Sophie, and a special thanks to Chris for your courage and also for I think setting the scene for us in terms of this conversation, and thank you Sam for taking us on that journey in terms of the Needs Assessment.

Now Sophie was really keen that members of the public were able to contribute to this morning's discussion and so asked for questions to be submitted to MOPAC prior to the meeting.

We have received two questions, the first question is from a local authority from Greenwich from a local authority colleague, and the question is,

"Where a woman has experienced sexual or domestic violence from an ex-partner what can be done to support them better when they are faced with court hearings about contact orders for the ex-partner's access for the children? Any contact granted is often manipulated by the perpetrator to pursue harassment and further traumatisation of the victim, and the process itself is legally and practically challenging for women to engage with effectively".

And so I wonder Sarah [Mc Claren], Sarah from the CPS, Sarah I am wondering if you can maybe start us off with just a response? Sorry to put you on the spot.

Sarah McClaren (CPS): It is fine. We do not deal with contact orders; they are not part of the criminal proceedings, they are dealt with entirely separately from the CPS so I am not quite sure how much help I can give on that.

I can move on obviously to the second part, which is obviously if allegations arise out of that then obviously they should be reported and we would take them seriously and they could lead to additional charges of witness intimidation for example, which would actually add to the weight of the case. I am sorry, I cannot help you with contact orders, it is a civil matter that.

Marai Larsi (Imkaan) (Co-Chair): No, that is absolutely fine, that is helpful. Can I ask if any colleagues around the table want to...? Stuart [Cundy].

Stuart Cundy (MPS Commander): If I go. So from the police perspective similar to what Sarah says, obviously our role will primarily be for criminal matters, though we do a lot of sharing of information with another... there are other bodies, a lot of voluntary organisations out there that are there to support victims through civil proceedings.

Clearly if offences are identified then they will be referred to us and clearly we can subsequently investigate them.

I think the key thing from our perspective is about that sharing of information. So there are matters which might come to light through civil proceedings which we need to be very cognisant of from a criminal perspective and vice versa, so it is that dialogue which is really important.

Marai Larsi (Imkaan) (Co-Chair): Great, thank you Stuart. Anything from voluntary sector colleagues, any comments on support Claire [Hubberstey]?

Claire Hubberstey (Safer London): I would say, I think this is a really important point, I think the issue about civil orders being used comes across the spectrum in terms of sexual abuse and sexual exploitation.

For me it is incredibly patchy, and generally in our experience it comes down to whoever is actually responsible for the case and knowing about certain things that can or cannot be used. There is a lack of ability to look at best practice, learn from really successful examples of specific pieces of legislation being used, and what that often results in, and it is in the report, is in our experience young people who have reported an incident being put back in the same school together and the school cannot take action because the civil orders have been put around it, which means the school have got their hands tied, it is incredibly difficult.

In this example, so children and contact orders being in place, and also a real lack of this monitoring anything that is happening on social media, so victims and survivors being harassed, intimidated on social media, which is not in contravention of the particular orders that have been used.

So I think this is a huge issue and we do need some ability to look at what good practice looks like and then share that around and disseminate it to make sure that in every single case we are getting some dedicated expertise and what actually works.

Marai Larsi (Imkaan) (Co-Chair): Great, thank you Claire, thanks so much. Okay, in the interests of time I am going to move us on to the next question. So the second is from a Stay Safe East colleague, so,

“What is MOPAC’s and the London Criminal Justice System’s strategy for addressing the needs of London’s 750,000 disabled women for ensuring that the Criminal Justice System offers disabled women equal access to justice and to appropriate support?”

So Stuart[Cundy], can I start with you?

Stuart Cundy (MPS Commander): Yeah, by all means. So Sam mentioned the Dame Elish Angiolini review that was undertaken, so since that review which made 46 separate recommendations there has been a multi-agency oversight group, what we call the Multi-Agency Rape Investigation Recruitment Group and a lot of agencies around the room here today sit on that and I now chair that.

Now that has issues like this, and so I do not sit here and say we have got it right in relation to the support that we can give disabled women across London, but by having the right people in that forum there is a lot that we have focused on that we know from the initial response, whether it is through the police or indeed through other agencies is absolutely key. A lot has been done around awareness and training around the myths and behaviours of rape, which certainly from a police perspective we have put heavy investment into our frontline staff.

The benefit of having people around the room means that we can resolve things like this. So for example, whilst not strictly in relation to disabled women, we have done a specific input around autism in all of its guises, which is very poor as we know. So through our dedicated liaison officers who are there for victims of rape, we have professional training days for them which are regularly threaded throughout the year, so they are the ones that are there for a police perspective, they can sit and support victims and survivors through the journey through the Criminal Justice System, which we know is challenging, and that is certainly one of the examples that we have done through that forum.

That forum alone does not sit in isolation, the work that I am sure we will touch on later through Child House(?) Programme and other matters, is to try and make sure that we join all those different arrangements together if that assists.

Marai Larsi (Imkaan) (Co-Chair): Thanks Stuart, thank you. I think it is going to be really critical that response follows the pathway that feels robust in terms of broad... protected characteristics, so disability is one of those so it would be really great to hear maybe from voluntary sector partners, so from Fay [Maxted] and Akima [Thomas] on the kind of, just some thoughts on...

Fay Maxted (Survivors Trust): Yes, just noting that disabled people, disabled women in particular are much more vulnerable to sexual abuse as children as well, and any strategy needs to build together sexual violence and sexual abuse and not focus just on rape. It needs to be across the whole spectrum and bring everyone together I think to build an effective strategy and to build awareness amongst the agencies of what is out there, what groups are involved and what support is available.

Just also to mention Independent Sexual Violence Advisors, I note they are called advocates in here but actually they are advisors as the Home Office Guidance is being issued soon emphasises. They have a really important role to play in making sure someone has access to all of the support services they need including intermediaries if that is what is needed or interpreters.

Marai Larsi (Imkaan) (Co-Chair): Great, thank you Fay. Akima [Thomas], any thoughts?

Akima Thomas (Women & Girls Network): Yeah, I am just thinking about, really about thinking about the multiplicity of issues, thinking about the complexity, and maybe some of our responses are very kind of monochrome. So how do we understand the nuances of an individual, how do we understand the patterns of engagement, what are those barriers to engagement, and thinking about intersectionality because as we think about disability we also need to think about as you were saying Marai those other oppressions as well and patterns of discrimination and how they focus on an individual and impact on somebody's ability to access services and to access justice.

If we think about having clients at the centre, if we think about thinking about our services in terms of working from the most marginalized individuals and thinking about we build a service from that point then actually it means that we do not necessarily have to have something specifically for disabled individuals because everybody would have that equality and that share

of resources, and just thinking about really a trauma focused approach and having that holistic 360 degree kind of thinking and rationalisations and also rolling out best practice.

Marai Larsi (Imkaan) (Co-Chair): There is a theory that if you get it right for the most marginalized you will get it right for everyone --

Akima Thomas (Women & Girls Network): Exactly.

Marai Larsi (Imkaan) (Co-Chair): -- and it is worth thinking about. Thank you for that. I am going to move us on to the next phase of the conversation, which is really an open discussion and so it would be great to have colleagues who whether you have spoken or not before you know, I do not want to silence people, but the other people in the room to maybe just comment on what you have heard so far, any thoughts, any pressing questions, any reflections? It would be really great at this point for us to... I know it is quite, it is 15 minutes so I know it cannot be a really intense discussion but as far as we can cover some of the issues it would be really great. So who wants to start? Martin [Hewitt].

Martin Hewitt (MPS Assistant Commissioner): I would really just like to build on Akima's [Thomas] comment there and just so that... not everyone in the room will know, but for the last four years I have had the national lead for policing around adult sexual offences and Fay [Maxted] has very kindly been sitting on my group for all of that time and we have wrestled with a lot of these issues.

I think the fundamental challenge for all of us comes from the diagram that was put up on the screen and from Chris' description of her personal situation, and it is where so many issues that we tend individually to look at in an isolated way collide and come together in the case of those that are most vulnerable. Through childhood into adulthood it will involve domestic abuse, it may involve sexual abuse, it can involve sexual offending in an adult sense.

The challenge for us is how we collectively respond to that complexity, because I think where the things fall through the gap and where the failings are often is we are responding. I think we have moved on in an enormous way in terms of becoming victim focused, but often it is not sufficient to cope with the complexity of the challenges that that victim faces and all the circumstances around it, and as the first question clearly stated you are drifting from police investigation into Criminal Justice System into civil legislation and the civil courts and all of this come together and then we have got it seems and ever thinner wrap of support network around to deal with the fundamental background issues because that is ultimately the challenge is that of course we need to do the best investigations we can, we need to identify offenders and we need to support victims, but fundamentally in many of these complex cases there are other issues behind it that if we want to really move on we have got to deal with those issues. That I think is our collective challenge as we try and go forward with the strategy.

Marai Larsi (Imkaan) (Co-Chair): Yes, right, thank you Martin. Any thoughts? Sorry, Lucy [Botting]?

Lucy Botting (NHS England): I mean I would agree with that actually. So I think health and health partners have come on an enormous way in the last couple of years but I do not think we are there yet and I do not think we should be complacent about that.

I think from a health perspective we are doing a lot. In most boroughs now we have very good partnerships whether it is Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC), Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASH); some MASHs have developed so that you have both an adult and a child approach and I think that is the way to go because I think you are right, we are falling down the gaps because you have got child safeguarding here and then adult safeguarding here, and actually sometimes never the twain shall meet and there are gaps within that within that whole domestic violence, domestic abuse.

There are some good... I mean NHS England are currently looking at some really good models of practice. So obviously we have got the child houses in development across London in conjunction with MOPAC, but actually we are looking at vulnerability strategy rather than child or adult, and there are some really good models whether it is the American Association for Adults, whether it is the Harm model in the Netherlands where they bring both adult and child safeguarding CSA, CSE, domestic violence together with an immediate rapid response team, and for me that is best practice, really good best practice.

I would say if I am looking at health gaps in particular, so we are doing some work around mental health transformation because we do appreciate Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) mental health is an issue, so there is a lot of work going on in terms of the capacity to deliver mental health services.

GPs and pharmacists actually, how do we really effectively engage GPs in case conferences, how do we engage pharmacies? That is something that our designated professionals are telling us, I do not think we have really cornered that because they have got eyes and they have got ears and they can see and how can they help?

The other big one for me picking up your point was interpreter services because obviously people who come from marginalized backgrounds are not just white British, and actually how do we get the right conversation, how do we get interpretation services where we need to? Again, I think that is a bit of a gap, so I would just like to chuck that in. I do not think that answers the question but it is my sort of discussionary points.

Marai Larsi (Imkaan) (Co-Chair): Thanks for that Lucy, that is really helpful. So Carlene [Firmin] and then I am going to go... Joan [Smith], Carlene and then back to Sophie.

Joan Smith (VAWG Board): I started being Co-Chair of the Mayor's VAWG Panel, which is now the VAWG Board in 2013, so I have been to a huge number of these meetings and heard a lot of stuff.

What keeps striking me is the importance in this of ISVAs, and one of the things we did under the previous administration was launch the pan-London domestic violence service which increased the numbers of Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVA) and that is a big investment of money and training and all of that.

It seems to me that we have never had the same urgency around the idea of training ISVAs, and I know the Home Office definition is about to come out and that there are some difficulties around that, but it seems to me that a women who is, or a young women, whether older or

whatever, who finds herself in a position of being a victim of sexual violence does not know any of these systems that you are plunged into, not only the terrible trauma of what has happened to you and the emotional physical impact, but having to negotiate a system that you do not understand and which will go on for a very long time. Personally I think the amount of time it takes to get sexual violence cases to court is really, really shocking; I think it is a huge trauma for victims.

It also allows time for intimidation by the offender, the alleged offender or members of his family or his friendship group and so on. It seems to me that having that one point of contact who understands the case, who understands the statutory system and who can be there at any time of the day or night is incredibly important. I do not know if other people agree with that but it just seems to me something we really need to deal with urgently.

Marai Larsi (Imkaan) (Co-Chair): Joan, just to respond to that because it really connects to the last point you made Lucy. One of the things that came up in the Needs Assessment is the lack of black Asian minority ethnic (BAME) specific work around sexual violence. So if we are thinking about more ISVAs we also need to think about that specialism because it is not just about providing interpreting services, that can be really great, but BAME women are not always women that need interpreting. Very often women want a culturally specific response, or women want to engage with somebody who they can connect to at community level.

So when we are thinking ISVAs and more ISVAs we also need to think about where those ISVAs are in place.

Akima, I have got you, Carlene first and then back to Sophie and then Fay. Yes, Carlene.

Carlene Firmin (University of Bedfordshire): I just wanted to pick up on a point that was made near the start of the presentation around environmental and individual vulnerabilities because a lot of our discussion tends to drift into individual vulnerabilities because it is what we feel is more manageable, but actually what often connects a number of these cases are environmental vulnerabilities, and there are pockets in London whether they are physical buildings like particular schools or education providers or whether they are public spaces, disused garages, alleyways, disused properties where young people and young adults will be increasingly vulnerable violence and that persists and is not addressed.

If we are taking a strategic approach to this it would make much more sense to have a clear response to those environmental factors, which do require a multi-agency response, but in terms of policing there is a critical role for neighbourhood policing in this area rather than just dealing with the investigative matters that then come at the point of a crisis, because it is almost like a lot of the time I feel like we are now waiting for a problem, we are waiting for an investigation and then the investigation is launched but everyone has had multiple meetings beforehand to discuss how concerned they are about this particular group of children but there is not an intervention put in place bar some awareness raising with those children about how difficult their life is but without actually changing the circumstances that they are in.

So we need to be much more critical of ourselves and creative in this in terms of bringing in housing, public and private businesses, schools, those types of partners that manage and are responsible for the environments in which children are abused beyond their families, because in

terms of families we have a legacy of that work and it definitely requires improvement but we have services in place who are trained and have protocols that they should adhere to. We do not even have a protocol for what you do if there is an ongoing and persisting risk on a particular bus terminus or at a particular transport hub and who are the partners that should be involved and what is the preventative work that should be in place?

For me that is a significant gap and means that we overly lean on investigation as the response to this issue and the thing that is going to tie it all together rather than a collective response, because you are only ever investigating the incidents, and the experience is far more than the incident and that is often the thing that stays with the young person after they have been assaulted and that is a things that does not get addressed with an investigation or a conviction or a custodial sentence. So we really do need to think more creatively about this and about the partnerships that need to be in place to achieve it.

Marai Larsi (Imkaan) (Co-Chair): That is hugely helpful. Sophie, do you want pick up at this point?

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor of London for Policing and Crime) (Co-Chair): Thank you very much. So I just wanted to pick up on some of the issues that have been touched on, and absolutely around complexity of the issues and the Police and Crime Plan we will be looking at vulnerability and harm, and also that is not just about the individuals but about places.

With the CPS in the room, and I afraid we have had apologies from the Court Service so we are going to focus on the CPS a little bit, and to pick up on what Joan [Smith] said around the timeliness, how long it takes to get a case to court and how long it will take for it to be determined.

I mean I think the time from the offence to completion at court for rape is 269 days for Magistrates and 602 days for Crown Court and that does increase the length of time that somebody is traumatised.

What can we do about getting cases to court more quickly and more effectively and more efficiently?

Sarah Maclaren (CPS): We have been doing some considerable amount of work in the CPS around improving the length of time to actually provide the pre-charge advice to the police, which is being monitored actually through the directors taking a personal interest in it, and all CPS areas have been obliged to report now on a very regular basis about our backlogs and advice work.

So there has been a huge drive to actually improve the length of time to turn those cases around.

We have been working very closely as well with the police to provide early investigative advice, which I think is a hugely positive step because it basically involves the lawyer right at the outset being part of the prosecution team working alongside the investigator to steer the investigation and provide advice to save time later with file being batted backwards and forwards with requests for more information.

So I think we are making huge strides to actually get the case into court much, much quicker. Obviously then I cannot possibly speak for the Court Service, and I know that from court to court obviously the time taken to get a case on varies considerably.

For young witnesses we are following the young witness initiative which obviously drives the cases through the court system much, much quicker, and that applies to any witness or victim under the age of 10, so there has been a huge improvement with those cases being pushed forward and obviously linking with the Section 28 pilot in the Child House I think there are a lot of good things that are happening at the moment but we are yet obviously to see the end results of those.

So I do not know if that helps, but I am sorry I cannot talk about the actual delays once it gets into court. Cases are being managed very proactively now through better case management to push them on quicker to trial but I cannot speak for obviously the time delays there.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor of London for Policing and Crime) (Co-Chair): Okay, thanks. I think that is something we will take up outside of this meeting around the courts and unfortunately they could not come here today. Martin [Pratt].

Martin Hewitt (MPS Assistant Commissioner for Territorial Policing): Yes, I just think to add to that, I mean Sarah is very polite; she could have probably attacked us a bit more than she did there. We have worked really hard, but I think as several people have said, this year volume increase in the number of offences that have been reported, which is an entirely positive thing, it is something we have worked really hard to try and get more people to report, has had an impact in terms of the speed with which we can do things.

The courts will talk to you about how much of an increasing percentage of their work is what they would describe as sex cases in one description or another, but I was really disappointed that they did not come today because there are some real issues and I think from a victim point of view there are some really significant issues with that part of the process, and the fact that around the country in my national role you get different approaches in different courts to where the ISVA can and cannot be involved, which I do not understand and I think we have got to really push hard to get that end of the process to be something that is not what is very severely intimidating people who come forward as victims, and I think considerably contributing to the people who withdraw from a prosecution.

The timeliness is a real issue, but also the experience that they perceive may occur and sadly does sometimes is a really big issue.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor of London for Policing and Crime) (Co-Chair): Yes, thank you. And in terms of the ISVAs, I mean we have heard how important the IDVAs were and we have also heard and we know the financial constraints of it and I think there was a conversation and I just wondered if anyone had any views about where you should prioritise support and whether it is within the Criminal Justice System and how you actually get prioritisation around this given the volume of incidents coming through in the increasing reporting? Claire [Hubberstey].

Claire Hubberstey (Safer London): I think the challenge is going to be that everybody is going to say everything that they do is incredibly important and of course it is.

I think where we need to get to in this discussion really is to think about where we want to be, so what are the outcomes we want, and also how can we drive efficiency within that?

For me there is a real challenge relating to the point that Carlene raised in terms of the environmental issue, which is around systemic stuff. So if you look at areas in the country that have managed to achieve successful prosecution particularly around child sexual exploitation there are a number of critical factors that they have had in place that are common amongst all of those areas.

I mean one is the information. So they have had systems that allow them to identify what Carlene [Firmin] said, so the vulnerable locations. So for example, a dedicated missing persons database that auto calculates where young people have been missing, who they have been associated with, addresses and locations that they have been picked up and found in is all done automatically, immediately provides a list of the most vulnerable locations that we should be looking at.

It also allows flags to be put on young people for, for example, sexual exploitation, so you start to see the associations.

In really good examples of this it allows partner information to be put in the system. So agencies that are providing advocacy service or support services, or who are providing return home interviews can go in and actually put information about nicknames, car registration numbers, particular care homes for whom they are dealing with a large number of the victims.

We are lacking any of that sort of stuff in London, which means there is a huge amount of inefficiency, that all the work that everybody is doing with the best of intentions is not getting us to where we need to be, because what we are doing is dealing with every single case as Carlene [Firmin] said, as an individual, and we are not able to make those links to put these cases together.

In terms of the victim survivor journey what that also means is it allows, as we are experiencing, young people's cases to either not get taken up in the first place because they would be considered unreliable witnesses, or else the case is to go to court and then them collapse.

Whereas where we have had in the country successful prosecutions they have used innovative bits of legislation, for example, trafficking, which we are not doing here, we are not looking at how we could use trafficking legislation in these cases, and they have put the cases together. Therefore there is less ability to attack the individual young people or complainant cases because they go as a group, and again it is about that systemic ability to do that I think we are really lacking.

So it is the information, the ability to view that, it is bringing partners in to help build that case and then it is about how the CPS engage in that process, and in all of those other areas the CPS have been in at the very, very, very beginning as opposed to coming in quite late in the day, so they have been able to influence how that has all been put together and I think that is a huge challenge for all of us and is creating massive inefficiencies.

So we can talk about resources, we are all going to champion our own bit.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor of London for Policing and Crime) (Co-Chair): And we are going to move on to young people in the second half of the section and a lot of what you have just said will be picked up there as well.

So before we just round up this bit of the meeting, Akima [Thomas], sorry, you were waiting.

Akima Thomas (Women & Girls Network): Yes, it was really in response to thinking about the ISVA and the role of the ISVA, and thinking as well about what about women and victims who have had non-recent experiences who actually do not want to go through the criminal justice process, and thinking about the barriers to engagement, and also thinking about the complexity of their needs and we can think as well about the ISVA role and how that is really changing.

Certainly at Women and Girls Network the role of the ISVA has changed dramatically in terms of statutory services, in terms of limited access, in terms of a threshold to access to mental health therapies means that that role has now been pushed into a more therapeutic response.

Also the length of engagement you know, when do we think about that length of engagement, when does the ISVA role start and when does it conclude, and thinking much more about how do we also have that part of the holistic system so it is not just about the advocacy and the advice system, but also thinking about the complexities of working with therapists as well.

Marai Larsi (Imkaan) (Co-Chair): Just really quickly in terms of the ISVA function, the sexual violence sector has always been the poorer relation of the domestic violence sector; we have never had the sexual violence sector. We have got really poor funding in the DV sector, but we have had even more poorer funding, or even more poor funding, that does not make any sense but I am hoping you get my drift, in terms of sexual violence services and I do think we need to start to think about how we raise the bar in terms of the level of funding that is available to sexual violence work and what that actually looks like because at the moment we are simply not doing enough around sexual violence.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor of London for Policing and Crime) (Co-Chair): Thank you very much, and that is an absolute challenge in terms of the finances investment given the challenges we are facing across the board in relation to some of the vulnerability in London and the increase in vulnerability and reporting of it.

Just before we finish, just some of the keys issues for me are around the complexity and how we support victims and survivors, also around making sure that we are able to support victims and survivors through the court system and the police, CPS and the courts are all playing their role in getting people, victims and survivors through the courts as quickly and as effectively as possible, and we will take that up outside of this meeting and report back Joan to the, I think the Violence Against Women and Girls Board would be the best place to take that back because I think these are key issues.

Not wishing to put you on the spot Chris, I just wondered if you wanted to respond to anything before we moved on that you heard?

Chris (Survivor): Just to remember that survivors are at the heart of all of this, and any decisions that you guys make collectively needs to reflect that at all times.

I know money is short and I know services are over burdened, but we have got to do the best we can for victim survivors because as I sit here today speaking, my sister's in crisis, my brothers are in crisis, their families are in crisis and I am one of many.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor of London for Policing and Crime) (Co-Chair): Yes, and we absolutely understand that that you are one of many and that is why this type of meeting is so important, but it is the actions that come out of it that we will make sure that we feed back to you and feed it back also to the Violence Against Women and Girls Board.

Thank you very much for coming. You are very welcome to stay; we are going to move on the HMIC report on child protection in the second half of the meeting, so thank you.

Chris (Survivor): Thank you.

Marai Larsi (Imkaan) (Co-Chair): Yes, so from me thank you everybody for participating in this section. Sophie is going to completely take over for the second half of the meeting. So thank you for the conversation. Obviously time is limited and it does feel like we cannot get everything covered, but I really see this as a stage in the process rather than the beginning of the end of the...

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor of London for Policing and Crime) (Co-Chair): Absolutely, it is a stage and we have had discussions and we will continue to discuss and develop actions to respond to the Sexual Violence Needs Assessment.

So as I think everybody will know, last week we had the publication of the report from HMIC on child protection and Martin [Pratt] is here to respond to that. Before you do respond Martin, I just wanted to hand over to Sam, Samantha Cunningham, who is going to just give a quick outline of the actual report, but also place it in the context of our own Child Sexual Exploitation Needs Assessment, which also shows the context that this report is in. Sam.

Samantha Cunningham (MOPAC Head of Commissioning): Thank you. So as I said at the beginning of my previous presentation, when we commissioned the Sexual Violence Needs Assessment we also commissioned alongside that a Needs Assessment around child sexual exploitation.

I think as The Deputy Mayor said, it is helpful to raise the key findings of that within the context of the HMIC report as both indicate some kind of questions around partnership work and sharing of information and broader vulnerabilities.

I will be very quick, one of the key things that came out of our Child Sexual Exploitation Needs Assessment was the broader context of risk, which actually we have just talked about, but also the wider vulnerabilities.

So it talks very clearly about the importance of missing, it talks very clearly about the importance of mental health, and it also talks really clearly about the importance of domestic violence.

The latter one for me was really interesting because I think we are both pretty clear around missing and the broader context of CSA and around the issues related to mental health, but I think the issue around domestic violence and young people experiencing domestic violence and what services are responding to that within the family context for me was a really important point that came out of the assessment.

It also highlighted, I am not sure it is quite the same as the points that Carlene [Firmin] was making, but it highlighted really important points around the environment. So thinking about where CSE is happening in London and what the responses are at the moment in London boroughs. The key thing for me was it talked about young people living in one place and experiencing CSE in another place, and I think the context of cross-borough working and also recognising that there are some very good practice happening in some areas of London and some gaps in terms of broader partnership work in others is a challenge about how we are all working together and knitting up the local and the community point, but also it is understanding that our young people are young Londoners and they travel much more freely and frequently and much more joined up than potentially some of our services are in terms of identifying those risks and vulnerabilities.

So the key points that were picked up in that Needs Assessment obviously were around vulnerability cross-borough, environmental factors but also prevalence, and the final point I want to make just before going on to HMIC and the links was just that we should note from London's perspective things are different in terms of CSE. Now whether that is because of how we operate, whether that is because of the way some of our services are already integrated it was not clear, but it should be noted that 55% of all CSE cases according to MPS data are peer on peer. So I think that is important when we think about the environmental factors, when we think about the context of looking and working with groups in terms of justice but also in terms of prevention, but it is about young people, both victims and offenders, and then what that means moving into adulthood.

In terms of those points, there are clear alignment in terms of those issues around broader vulnerabilities and the need for partnership and the need for information sharing and consistency across London with those that were raised through the HMIC report that was released on Friday.

Just before pulling out some of those key highlights from the report, I think it is really important to recognise that the HMIC's data that they find example of officers and staff throughout the Metropolitan Police Service working with extreme commitment, dedication and empathy towards young people. I think we would all know if we looked at what is happening at a borough level and the integration of services that most of our officers, and broader practitioners from statutory and VCS services are extremely dedicated and committed to an increasing problem in London, and I think that does give us the challenge of having a very effective foundation for improving what we do and the practice of what we do.

In terms of the HMIC report it pulled out that the Metropolitan Police Service's response to children who go missing regularly needs to be improved, and this included an increased understanding of the links between CSE and missing.

My point earlier from our Needs Assessment was exactly the same thing was highlighted that there are a number of different vulnerabilities around young people, and it is how we pull together all of those vulnerabilities at the earliest possible point to think about intervening before do end up managing the crisis.

Certainly there is a need for a single chief officer whose responsibility and accountability for all child protection issues, and then that moved on to talking about the training and awareness of child protection issues and how that needs improvement.

For me also through the CSE Needs Assessment it pulled out the importance really clearly of partnership, of partner understanding of policy, of the continued development of policy and practice, and I think it is important for us to think about how we aid and support one another in terms of developing that training and awareness.

Next there is an inconsistency around the scope of MASH and attendance by partners can be variable, and I think Claire [Hubberstey], this actually picks up the point that you were making about sharing information, storing information and being able to view information because it pulled out as well the sort of lack of access for most Metropolitan Police Service across different boroughs around social care systems and how they are able to view that data and information.

Then it moves on finally around Metropolitan Police Service systems need to be fully integrated in order to allow for better data collation and identification of vulnerable young people.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor of London for Policing and Crime) (Co-Chair): Okay, thank you very much Sam. One of the things that was not on the slide is around the HMIC's criticism of the target performance framework that was set under the previous administration.

In terms of MOPAC and The Mayor's response to the HMIC Child Protection Report we will be moving away, scrapping the crime reduction targets that were in the MOPAC Seven and will shortly be producing a Police and Crime Plan that looks at outcomes and priorities that are more sophisticated than that, that look at harm and vulnerability as well as volume crime and how you set that locally.

We are also in terms of responding to the HMIC report working very closely with the Metropolitan Police Service and I will hand over to you in a minute Martin [Hewitt] to set out how you are also responding to ensure that we have a group of experts from around the country. We have talked about good practice and we have talked about looking at where things are working well to ensure that we have that group of experts working with ourselves and the Metropolitan Police Service, bringing somebody, inviting the College of Policing as well as somebody from the National Police Chief's Council to ensure that we have that oversight and that we work together.

Also as part of the oversight of MOPAC we will be ensuring that that is a regular, there are regular formal meetings between myself and the Commissioner and the Mayor and the Commissioner and this will be part of the agenda going forward on that.

The report does as Sam [Cunningham] says, sets out and acknowledges the challenges and complexities around this area, and does also refer to the dedication of the many police officers who working day in and day out, but we cannot get away from the fact that actually many children have been put at risk because of some of the serious criticisms that are in the HMIC report.

Martin [Hewitt], I would be really grateful if you could set out how you are responding to the HMIC report and the improvement plan that I know you have put in place and how that will be taken forward. Then to open that up to partners because there are bits within the HMIC report which is about helping partners work better to support and work with the Metropolitan Police Service such as in the national Multi-Agency Sexual Exploitation (MASE) meetings, so we will open it up after that but I think it is important that we do hear from Martin [Hewitt] as Assistant Commissioner, the Metropolitan Police Service's response.

Martin Hewitt (MPS Assistant Commissioner): So I suppose the first really important point to make, I mean there are some very, very difficult messages in this report and we were given indication that that was going to be the case while the inspectors were still in the organisation and we sat down, as you always do, immediately they finished their field work and have a hot debrief, and we then at that point started the work to start to try and get ourselves to address the really key issues. So this is not work that we started on Friday, this is work that we started back in May or June when we first got that debrief.

Contextually, and there are clearly things we have to do better, but the really important contextual point I think is, that comes through very loudly and clearly, is effectively protecting children can only be a multi-agency exercise, and we have a very important role to play but we have got to make sure that there as few gaps as possible between all the agencies and the organisations, and even in the previous discussion we touched upon a load of the issues that I think are still relevant for this issue.

Just to hit the point around leadership. As I am sure everyone will now be aware, I have now taken that role at the management board level within the organisation to take us forward in terms of where we are around child protection.

I think the point that the HMI made was factually accurate; that there was not someone at the top. I do not think that means there was not leadership in the organisation in various places around this, but it is now my role to bring all of that together.

We set up a team immediately that the debrief happened to go and look at all the cases that the HMI had looked at, and we have now looked again at all of those cases, and that team, or a version of that team will remain as a continuous improvement team in all aspects around how we deal with child protection.

If I am honest, I think the most critical elements for me was the fact that when we had looked at those cases we had come to very different conclusions about their adequacy, and that concerns me and so we have put an enormous amount of work into understanding why that is and dealing with that through that team.

There is a whole range of training activity that is already in train; in fact much of it started in October. Training activity in and around the custody environment where there were particular issues about children remaining in custody. I think that is a very particular partnership example.

So it is important... the HMI talked about 40 cases, they asked to look at cases where we had charged a child so therefore there would be a potential that they would be remanded in custody. Too many of those children stayed in a police cell, but there are real issues about the availability of accommodation for us to put those children into that is obviously not a police environment. I have been a custody sergeant and I am a father and I would never say custody is a good place for a child to spend any more time than they ought to spend.

What I would say, I think where we let ourselves down was our custody sergeants who were used to getting a response that was, "There is no available space", were just keeping and looking after those children in that environment.

So there is a lot of training gone on with our custody suites and I think we need to work really closely with partners around that.

Training around child sexual exploitation. It is really important to just be very clear that this inspection was into child protection, not exclusively child sexual offending. So we deal with about 15,000 child abuse offences or investigations every year, of which under 3,000 will be a sexually orientated offence. So it is important to that broad view but we need to get that understanding out there

I think the point that was made in the opening around really all of us collectively understanding the nature and the vulnerabilities around particularly CSE, and I mean Carlene [Firmin] is the expert around the peer on peer offending, but that is a real issue for us in London in a way that it perhaps is not a real issue in other places, but it is getting underneath that, getting every officer to be aware.

Again I think picking up on some discussions in the last section, ultimately where we need to get to is not only all of our staff seeing themselves as having an active safeguarding role, but all those other people that come into contact with young people, be that in education, in health, in social services, seeing themselves as having a very active role, and we need to work I think together there.

We set up a scrutiny team, a scrutiny panel of experts, both experts in child protection, people who work in partner organisations, academics, people who work in voluntary sector groups who are there and sitting alongside our Gold Group that we have set up to deliver that and some really, really very knowledgeable people, both knowledgeable in the area and knowledgeable in London, which I think will be a real help for us and will work with the group that The Deputy Mayor is establishing.

I guess the last comment that I would want to make is our plans that were already in place about how we would seek to reorganise the way we deliver operational policing. The model for that going forward is to bring much closer a large number of our officers who currently work in specialist departments and dealing with both child offences but also adult sexual offences, and bringing them together with those officers that operate at a local level in what we call our community safety units who are dealing with lower level sexual offending or dealing with

domestic abuse or dealing with hate crime and issues like that at a local level, bringing those together into one team that I think better gives us the opportunity to see the whole picture and identify the different potential aspects of vulnerability that any particular individual or family group or location might be suffering from.

Then I think that gives us one point then to interact with all the other organisations and agencies and through the MASHs and the various other groups that we operate with and to try and tighten that.

Lastly, very lastly I would say is the IT issue or information sharing issue is for me fundamental in all of this. It has been identified to us that we have had failings internally within our organisation which we can deal with, but I think then collectively is our information flow timely and effective between all the different agencies and groups that will have knowledge that can allow us to better protect children, and I think that is something we need to focus on collectively.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor of London for Policing and Crime) (Co-Chair): Thank you very much. Before I do open it out to other partners I was wondering if you could, there were other bits in the report that --

Martin Hewitt (MPS Assistant Commissioner): Yes, there are lots.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor of London for Policing and Crime) (Co-Chair): -- well I mean it is a comprehensive report and a very critical report, one of the things was around missing children and the fact that they are being miss-categorised and not taken seriously enough and some of the issues around follow up interviews, but also around sex offenders and the management of or understanding where they are and there was quite a lot of criticism in the report and I was wondering if you could let us know how that is going to be improved.

You said yourself that the self-assessment was one of the most worrying things, and I understand that you are putting in place training, but how do we have confidence going forward that you are able to put that level of understanding of how child protection cases should be dealt with to those that have misunderstood their own assessment because it really was quite critical in terms of self-assessment?

Martin Hewitt (MPS Assistant Commissioner): So we have put in place this continuous improvement group that will if you like undertake an audit function around investigations that are undertaken, but the layer before that that is the one that I think we need to really address is that all of those investigations would have been supervised and would have been signed off at various levels, and we need to make sure that that process is working effectively and then use this other group as the kind of oversight and the audit group to check that and make sure that we are true on that.

The issue around missing children, we deal with about 25,000 missing children every year. I don't think it would ever be that people do not care. I think we are asking both the initial person who takes the call around that and then subsequently people in the chain of command to make a judgement around the risk associated with those children, and clearly in some of those cases that risk has not been adequately identified.

I think we are putting in place training generically. We are actually going to start the first I think bespoke course to take people through all the issues around dealing with missing youngsters or missing people, but particularly missing youngsters, which is on the verge of being rolled out.

I do think that we do have to again think about more broadly getting also to some of the issues that are causing the children going missing in the first place as well, because many of the examples that we used were examples of children where they were on multiple occasions going missing, many of the examples in the report that were used are the case studies where children who are in care and are on multiple occasions going missing.

So I think we all need to work to that, but we have got to get our risk assessment processes as good as they absolutely can be to allow us to effectively take that forward, but we have got a training package and we will carry on working through that.

As far as the registered sex offenders, it is really important to note, and clearly the inspectorate found some officers who did not know all the registered sex offenders that were on their area, but I do think it is important to note that on every single borough we have a dedicated team of staff, the Jigsaw Team, whose sole purpose and responsibility is managing those registered sex offenders that live on that borough, and that is what they do.

I think there are real opportunities around neighbourhood teams as we have already said in a number of aspects of this because they get to know locations, they get to know groups, they get to know people, in playing a role there. We equally again are working through the Gold Group how we get that level of awareness raised more generically, but I think we need to focus on those who can add the most value and then work our way through from there, but we are definitely picking that up, but it is important to note that we do have those teams on each borough that are doing this as their full time job, because I think you could have interpreted the report that there was no-one paying any attention to sex offenders on a particular borough, which is not the case

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor of London for Policing and Crime) (Co-Chair): Just in relation to the speed in which you think you can move through some of the recommendations and some of the programmes that you are putting in place, the HMIC are going to be doing quarterly reports for the Home Office, training takes time, how will you know quickly whether you are making progress on this?

Martin Hewitt (MPS Assistant Commissioner): So they will be back I think for the first time probably in January and I have already been having discussions with the HMI in relation to that. The Gold Group has an extensive plan that lays out everything that we want to do, and as I have said, some of the training that I have just spoken about has already taken place in October.

We have professional development days for the vast majority of staff that happen quarterly, and we have already used the October ones within the custody arena, within some other arenas to roll some of this out, but there is a very extensive and clearly timetabled plan that the gold group and then ultimately me within the organisation will hold to account, you will hold to

account through our processes and then obviously the HMI will come back at quarterly intervals to basically check that we are doing what we say we are delivering.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor of London for Policing and Crime) (Co-Chair): Okay, thank you. Clearly there are issues for the Metropolitan Police Service to put right from the report, but as we are here with the partnership and in terms of what partners presence and more effective information and partnership working it would be good to just open it up to those in the room to be able to look at what you think needs to happen in response to the report, but also how can we make sure that the partnership working is more effective whilst the police actually address the issues of the report into their own organisation that we also think about how the partnerships can work better as well.

Marai Larsi (Imkaan) (Co-Chair): Sorry, just me taking advantage of my proximity to you. So Martin [Hewitt], it is really great to hear you say, because when I looked at the report I thought it is a broader child protection report, and I was really alarmed that I only saw one female genitalia mutilation (FGM) case mentioned and I saw nothing on forced marriage, which then had me wonder what HMIC was looking for or what was happening with those cases. So just could you give me a bit of a comment, or concern as -- and I lead an organisation that works specifically around BAME women and of concern is that FGM and forced marriage are not always taken seriously as child protection concerns and narratives around culture et cetera very often stop police officers and other agencies from acting appropriately.

So could you maybe just say a little about that in terms of, because although that is not in there I want to make sure that there is improvement around that as well is kind of what I am saying?

Martin Hewitt (MPS Assistant Commissioner): Yes, well I mean as I am sure you will be aware they are both areas that we focus very strongly on within the Metropolitan Police Service and also take a national lead around both of those areas. They are incredibly complex ones to work into.

Around FGM I think we have done a lot of work both with affected communities; we have undertaken investigations within the limitations around that. You will probably be aware some of the work we have done even at the airport to raise awareness with people who are both leaving and coming back into the country from locations where that is a prevalent practice.

We absolutely see that as a child protection issue, this is an extreme child protection issue I would argue, but comes with all the challenges of the country(?), but I can absolutely say that is something that we will continue to work very hard at impacting on and working with all the other groups and agencies that we need to work on because that is clearly not one that we alone can deal with.

Similarly with the honour based violence and the forced marriages, again both areas where the Metropolitan Police Service have had very public issues around particular cases and some very difficult cases, and again, an area where we direct quite a bit of expertise and we try and work very, at a central level with having the right ability to investigate and deal with these issues. Again, this very often comes down to that local level again, and having that understanding of communities in a location because this is very specifically community based kind of issue. Then

also having the ability for us to link with all of those groups that are supporting victims in particular locations, so it has got to be done at those two levels.

As I say, in our plans for how we would organise ourselves going forward, both of those issues, plus child protection, plus sexual offending, plus domestic abuse would all be within the one arena around if you like vulnerability that we will be looking at, which I think gives us a much better chance of being able to identify crossovers and for things not to fall. Because it is that ever present dilemma in an organisation as big as ours where there are real advantages of calling something specialist because you get a group, a smaller group, you get all of that, but at the same time then what you can get is the rest of the organisation go, "Therefore that is nothing to do with me", and we need to, we are always constantly trying to manage that tension because this is to do with everyone and everyone might be the person, anyone might be the person who gets that bit of information or spots that issue.

Again, particularly with FGM, schools, medical practitioners are all people that are in a position to spot those issues for us. We have worked with airlines, we have worked with all sorts of other people, we have got to keep everyone generating and then us take the appropriate action as the police when we can, but it is definitely still on the agenda very strongly.

Marai Larsi (Imkaan) (Co-Chair): Great, thank you.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor of London for Policing and Crime) (Co-Chair): Okay. Lucy [Botting], from NHS England, because there were particular issues on partnership working and the MASH and MASEs and how NHS England can work with the police.

Lucy Botting (NHS England): Absolutely. I just wanted to say just a couple of other things. So I think somebody mentioned information, so we absolutely understand that information sharing is still an issue, so it is still, it is better, it is improving, but it is still an issue and a lot of that is to do with the IT systems.

We have started work nationally with child protection information systems that actually join social and health together, so they start to flag cross-borough children who are presenting in A&E and in walk in centres, which is a start, but absolutely appreciate a long way to go.

I would say on the partnership engagement with the MASHs, the MARACs, the MASE, that actually again, it has improved. So we know that a lot of our health partners with designated professions are round the table, but I still think we are missing a trick.

So I think I alluded to the pharmacists, that we have not engaged, or the MASHs and MARACs have not engaged pharmacies.

The other one that I again on a higher strategic level is GPs. So how do we engage primary care in case conferences, and for me it is a plea really to local authorities to think about innovative ways to best practice, so what works, because GP colleagues are often in surgeries when case conferences happen and cannot get away from busy surgeries to actually attend case conferences although critical.

So what about webinars, so social you know, the IT solutions to doing that and there are some really good practices in telecons and webinars where actually the GP will phone in and be part of that critical discussion around the child as well as being able to do the surgery.

So as I said, it is improving, but actually it is about looking at partner resolution to those case conferences. So I think that is where I am coming from.

I should say that I am also the national lead on human trafficking and we should not forget the trafficked children. We have an awful problem when we look at the top ten countries, it is not just about the international trafficked children, we have got a big problem with national trafficked children in the likes of CSE.

There are some really good practices that are happening around trafficked individuals. So West Midlands, there are some good practices in Hounslow and Croydon; we should learn from that because actually that works in terms of your missing children. Why do children go missing? Well children often go missing because actually they are taken and put into looked after environments with no specialist support, and mentally they are still thinking, "Well actually the perpetrator is my best friend. The people here are not friends with me, I don't trust them", and they run off again and run away.

So it is when we are looking at supporting our children who have been exploited, trafficked et cetera, it is about that specialist response and specialist trust advocate for those children. So there is some really good work and I think we need to learn from it.

Just quickly, school nursing; really important factor in child protection, children who go missing, children who are starting to go off in terms of mental health wellbeing, because possibly of things going on at home.

So again, looking forward how do we work with the local authorities, work with the police and school nursing to identify some of those issues at the trigger point.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor of London for Policing and Crime) (Co-Chair): Okay, thank you. I think Martin [Pratt], it would be useful to hear from you in terms of the local authority point of view, but I would be really grateful if you could focus on actually some of the issues with the HMIC Child Protection Report about getting what we have at the moment right and ensuring that that works properly and then looking at some of the how do we improve issues, because actually I think we have had highlighted to us that some of the basics are not working and how the partnership working can help that improve.

Martin Pratt (ALDCS): First of all I completely endorse Martin's [Hewitt] comments about this being a multi-agency, a multi-disciplinary issue. One part of the system cannot operate in isolation and we know that in London we have some examples of outstanding good practice, and we also have very poor practice and there is a high level of variability, so we have to think about that challenge together.

In particular, I think where we are identifying information sharing as an issue, I know that in some multi-agency safeguarding hubs, police and other partners are present every day, all day, that the information sharing is well analysed, and in fact if I could use my own authority as an

example, at Camden we have an analyst sitting in the MASH partly funded by MOPAC who not only is able to see all of the various systems but then proactively pursues individual cases looking an open source social media, and that level of individual analysis means that we are able to talk to colleagues in other boroughs and address some of the cross-borough issues that were being spoken of earlier as well.

When it comes to custody, which is an area of great concern to Directors of Children Services as well as to the police, there is a real issue about having sufficient availability of the right sort of, that right sort of resource, and it feels to me that there are some things we should consider commissioning at a regional level, at a London wide level, at a sub regional level as well as just thinking of this as a local issue.

Though quite often it is the suitability of the accommodation as well. I can think of one individual case; the last time I was asked to authorise secure accommodation on welfare grounds for a young man who had been in custody and the closest available bed was in Exeter and he was required back at Highbury Youth Court at 10.00 the following morning and this was 7.00 at night. So just the practicality of doing that was very difficult.

Now there are other sub-secure if you like approaches which I think we need to explore including levels of supervision, so there is some real work for us to do there.

I also think on the multi-agency, the oversight, each borough has a Local Safeguarding Children Board; there is a London Safeguarding Children Board. I think that the report is a real challenge, to help us think about how we organise and oversee those crucial relationship and assure ourselves of the effectiveness of practice and that we are sharing the best practice not only that is happening nationally but that is actually happening in the city and making sure that that becomes consistent.

There is a danger with creating consistency in that sometimes you stifle innovation and you reduce the effectiveness of the most effective, so we will have to watch that very closely, but the Association of London Directors is fully committed to working with the Metropolitan Police Service and The Mayor's Office and all other partners to make sure that the issues in this very important report are addressed.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor of London for Policing and Crime) (Co-Chair): Thank you. Carlene [Firmin], did you...?

Carlene Firmin (University of Bedfordshire): Yes, I just had a couple of points to make really. I mean I was actually quite relieved when I saw the HMIC report as challenging a read as it was because these have been issues that we have been flagging up various VAWG Board and Gangs Panel meetings for the past eight years, if not longer, in their various different guises, and often in a fire fighting way that there is a case that needs dealing with now and then someone runs out to deal with it as if it is not symptomatic of a wider need to have a pan London child protection strategy that has clarity around what the partnership is expecting of different agencies and where that all fits together.

A classic example of that has been the persistent gap between responses to gang related violence, CSE, missing children and domestic abuse, which is something that we have flagged for years.

So the fact that it was put together by HMIC is actually very helpful and hopefully will be a line in the sand around this debate and help us to just move forward on it.

I think from a policing perspective we have got a consistent challenge because we like to see children as either victims or perpetrators when they come into the Criminal Justice System, and then the victims receive a CP response of varying kinds and the perpetrators do not. That has been one of the big reasons why we have had this gap between gangs and CSE because there is not a consistent child protection response to children who are gang associated in London, and there is an ongoing need to address that at multi-agency level.

I think for services that are aligned around the clear divide between victims and perpetrators there is an additional challenge, and the fact that we have got over half of our identified CSE cases as peer on peer is the crux of that because they all require a child protection response for every child involved in those cases, and national learning will not help us here because there is no national expertise on peer on peer. We can travel where we want in the country, we will not find a police force that has a clear response to this because it is their minority of cases and some do not even recognise it as an issue.

So London should actually be leading on this, and it is highly concerning that we have had years in discussion and we have not seen a way forward.

One critical thing I think that has happened in the Metropolitan Police Service over the past few years is the loss of sufficient analytical support. There were some brilliant analysts doing work around peer on peer abuse within Trident and other departments two to three years ago that have now been spread thin and there is not the type of analytical support that Martin [Hewitt] talks about in Camden is a one off occurrence. I mean that analyst is super, but if you look at analytical support across London it is nowhere near of that standard, and actual partnerships between social care and policing to have analysts that understand the social care dynamics of criminal justice is a need that really does need to be addressed.

Finally, I would flag that since the start of this year we have had a London Safeguarding Adolescent Steering Group in operation that MOPAC is represented on and the Metropolitan Police Service is represented on and the London AD network and others.

I would invite Martin [Hewitt] and Stuart [Cundy] to consider whom the Metropolitan Police Service representative should be at that meeting given this now discussion at the moment. There is a gangs representative and there is a CSE representative and sometimes there is a missing representative; it would be helpful if there was someone who had oversight of child protection.

I think that group had recognised that the London Child Protection Procedures, which we should all be operating to are insufficient in terms of safeguarding adolescents, and some of the issues that emerged in the HMIC report around missing, gangs, CSE, domestic abuse are particular to children who are vulnerable in extra familial context where the police end up leading the response, but you cannot police your way out of a child protection issue and we

need a multi-agency response to public space risk and not just the policing or community safety response to that issue.

So the group is aiming to work together to provide an additional supplementary chapter on safeguarding adolescents, and I would encourage that to be seen as part of this discussion so that we do not duplicate efforts in this venture, and that it is engaging practitioners and young people about how they want to be kept safe so we have a consistent way of working on this particular dynamic because I agree with Lucy [Botting], we do need a consistent response to safeguarding full stop.

In terms of teenagers there are particular issues that we just have not bottomed out that are quite clear to us in the HMIC report, so the training and the response that goes into this has to be around how we understand teenagers and that we do not see them as a problem, which too often we have in London, and the way that we have managed risk to children is to manage children and teenagers rather than manage the risk that they face.

I think we all need to see this as a point at which we change that language, change that dynamic; do not refer to them as streetwise, manipulative, promiscuous, and we all challenge ourselves to develop a strategic ownership of this that is held by all partners.

I think MOPAC does play a key role in this because we have been having these conversations for eight years and there has not been a strategic response to child protection over that time.

So I hope that the Police and Crime Plan and other documents that fall out of the new administration will support a working in this direction.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor of London for Policing and Crime) (Co-Chair): Carlene, I think that is very well put and very strongly put. Martin [Hewitt], I just wondered whether you wanted to respond to some of the issues that have been put to you today especially around this, having a response to teenagers and response to peer on peer abuse and how the police can get better at that and whether the training that you are putting in place does put into place some of the issues that Carlene has just raised?

Another issue, I mean I must admit I do now get frustrated, and I do not mean this as a criticism of people that have said this today, I do now get very frustrated to still hear sharing of best practice and information sharing being an issue, because these have been issues again as Carlene has said, for years and years and years and I just think we need to work through where there are issues, and there needs to be leadership from either the police or the local authority or both to get to the bottom of why this is still an issue in some areas and it is not an issue in others, because yes, there will be down the line investment in IT services, but we cannot wait for that IT to be there whilst children and young people are at risk, and we just need to work through this and work through that quickly.

Martin [Hewitt], the other issue that I think we have not picked up on that was in the report is around investigation and around some of the reports that were coming in and some of the issues that were highlighted in the HMIC report about the length of time that there has been... the length of time it took for the police to respond where there have been issues around missing people or online abuse, or suspected online abuse, and how that is going to be put right as well.

Martin Hewitt (MPS Assistant Commissioner): Okay, there is a lot there.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor of London for Policing and Crime) (Co-Chair): Sorry, there is a lot there.

Martin Hewitt (MPS Assistant Commissioner): I mean all of those investigative points, I mean there were clearly failings in a number of those investigations that were looked at.

We have looked and we have after Dame Elish's report there were a lot more officers put into the arena around dealing with sexual offence, some of which does touch younger people, but we have clearly got to look at our distribution of resources because some of that comes down to the volume of work that people are dealing with, and in all of these areas there have been dramatic increase, and not little increases, dramatic year on year increases in the number of reports coming through or the number of missing persons (MISPER) and so on.

So we have got to work through all of that, understand how we can be... you need to be efficient as well and work out the more risky and the less risky so that we are putting our effort where it needs to be.

I mean I have been in a lot of the discussions that Carlene [Firmin] refers to over the years having come from a gangs background, and we have not collectively got ourselves lined up to deal with that issue, and particularly around I think the teenage one is a really important one because child protection is a broad band and there are different issues for different age groups, but I think that teenage one is where you get a collision of a lot of the issues that we have been talking about and not just in this session but in the previous one. So I do not know who sits on that group that you talked about so we will look at that.

I think some of what Carlene [Firmin] was saying there is a phrase that I have kind of stolen having had a conversation with the Children's Commissioner around all of this and it is that point about seeing the child in everything, because we tend to see them as an offender or a victim or someone that is causing us trouble, and actually all of them, and the point, I think the key point for me about where you have got peer on peer sexual abuse going on, both sides of that equation are children that need helping, because one group are victims in the ordinary sense and the other group should not be doing what they are doing and there is probably something going on with them.

So I think there is a lot to try and bring together. I think the way we are going to restructure will help us. We have got to work out how that links across into the gang work, which has been a perennial challenge, but I think where we want to try and line up our priorities helps us to go in that way and we will have a look at what the group is and how better we can get involved in that.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor of London for Policing and Crime) (Co-Chair): Stuart [Cundy] did you want to --

Stuart Cundy (MPS Commander): Do you mind if I add something to that? So it is something that Chris said the first part of today that struck me when you mentioned about best

practice, and I think we are always learning from best practice no matter where it comes from, and having recently left Surrey Police and come here you do learn across police forces a lot.

Some of the things which the HMIC picked up is about... some of our staff have got a huge amount of passion there. There are some things that the Metropolitan Police Service does that other forces do not do, so particularly around how we target online paedophile activity.

We have some strengths too but it does not mean to say there are not got weakness about which you have just touched on, and it is as Martin [Hewitt] says, some of that realigning of resources.

In terms of the quality of investigation, which is a primary responsibility for myself, the HMIC, not just for the Metropolitan Police Service but for other forces as well, identified that if a case is presented to an investigator where it is not overly complex and you can see there is a child at evident risk, more often than not on those cases we do the right thing by the child and it is swift.

It is the more chaotic challenging scenarios where officers, and for me a lot of it is about mindset and behavioural from a police perspective, are not thinking beyond what is presented before them, and that goes to the very heart of a lot of what the HMIC found across a broad range of investigations.

So I have to bottle what goes on very well with some of our real specialists, particularly around CSE for example, and translate that into what is going on across all of the boroughs across London and coalescing those resources together as Martin [Hewitt] has described for the pathfinders I think will be quite key to us to help improve the investigative quality on a whole and not just in those specialist investigations.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor of London for Policing and Crime) (Co-Chair): I think the restructure, or the proposed restructure of the pathfinders will help with that, but as we have also said it is the people that are within those structures taking it seriously, trusting those that are coming forward with reports that need to be investigated and making all the links and working with partners in the right way, and seeing the child, I think that is an important issue and an important phrase to remember in this.

So thank you very much. Sorry, Claire [Hubberstey], did you want to...?

Claire Hubberstey (Safer London): Could I just make this point? I completely echo, I was going to make the point that Carlene [Firmin] made in many ways in terms of this conversation, I was reflecting back to the previous MOPAC Challenge that we had on this very topic where much of the key findings from the HMIC report were made, some of the stuff that we have talked about in terms of local authority responses, the patchy inconsistent nature, all of those things were had and here we are yet again having very much the same discussion with a lot of the same people around the table.

I think from a service provider perspective it is incredibly difficult. We have talked about the cuts, we have talked about the caseloads, we have talked about being really over burdened. It is very, very difficult when you are providing services and that is your primary focus to engage and

to try to make a change on some of the strategic levels, and that we have to have some leadership around some of that stuff if we are going to change it and move it forward, because we have all talked about it and we have all raised it as an issue.

As Carlene [Firmin] said, it has been going on for the last eight years but we have not seen anything different, we are having the same conversation as we did at the last one of these, and we have not seen any significant improvements at all.

Yes, we talked about Camden then as well, something we have not seen replicated at all in other areas, and it is very, very difficult when your resources are so stretched to be going to all these different MASHs and MASEs, even to go to them all never mind when they are so inconsistent in terms of how they are structured, how you present the information and best advocate.

So it has to be a top down approach as well around that to best enable the VCS to respond in the way that we need to that would be my final plea.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor of London for Policing and Crime) (Co-Chair): That is a very fair challenge back in terms of leadership and I think that is one that we are certainly going to pick up and take forward in terms of the oversight as well in this piece of work, and we will be discussing this with London councils and London boroughs about that to try to make some progress in this because I do get very frustrated as well in terms of talking about information sharing, good practice and learning lessons when some of these lessons have been well learnt in other parts of the country, especially around missing children they have been learnt for quite a few years and we should be embedding them and moving forward.

So that is the end of the session today. We will come back to this and we will also be having further oversight in terms of child protection measures and the HMIC report, and we will think of the best way of feeding back to this group around the actions that will come from this. So thank you very much for coming and thank you for your comments and suggestions, thank you.