

LONDON ASSEMBLY

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Unmesh Desai AM

Chair of the Police and Crime Committee

Cressida Dick DBE QPM

Commissioner

(Sent by email)

12 December 2020

Domestic Abuse and Christmas

Dear Commissioner,

Thank you for taking the time to appear before the London Assembly Police and Crime Committee on 11 November 2020. Our Committee is keen to pick up on some of the points you made during the meeting on domestic abuse incidents throughout COVID-19 and the rise in cases across the capital.

Our Committee welcomes the work that you, the Mayor and the Government have done in this area so far this year. Support for victims of domestic abuse is in high demand as people are spending more time in their homes than ever before. Reported domestic abuse incidents are at an all-time high this year and our Committee wants to ensure that more work is done to protect victims from suffering as we enter the Christmas period.

Christmas time is special for many people in London, but others worry about spending so much time at home, particularly if they live with an abusive partner or family member. Christmas this year is going to be different to any other year in recent memory, which is why we want to ensure that the Met has a plan in place to respond to a possible increase in domestic abuse incidents over the coming weeks.

Domestic abuse incidents in December have risen by over a third over the past 10 years. In December 2010, 1,554 domestic abuse incidents with injury were recorded in London compared to 2,031 in December 2019. While domestic abuse cases have been rising year on year since 2010, there is also a worrying trend that cases are annually higher in December when compared to November and January. This is likely linked to families being at home more in December compared to other months of the year, and we feel that this could be exacerbated by having to spend more time at home during COVID-19, higher alcohol consumption over the festive period, whilst Christmas also brings a lot of extra stress on families, including financial worries which may have been intensified by the pandemic. Our Committee wants to ensure that the Met is working on a plan to protect victims of domestic abuse as lockdown measures are eased, and especially as some COVID-19 restrictions will be in place over the Christmas period.

If you could outline what you are planning to do to support and help victims of domestic abuse and how you plan to respond to the possible rise in incidents over the Christmas period, including the specific points below, our Committee would very much appreciate it.

- We understand that the Met is on track to deliver Predatory Offender Units (POUs) on every Basic Command Unit that will provide proactive policing against domestic abuse offenders and the Dauntless+ system. How many of the POUs are currently operational, and what is the timescale for roll-out, and how will they be tracking the most prolific offenders through December and the New Year period?
- Our Committee has heard that social media campaigns can be highly effective in targeting victims who do not report domestic abuse. Consequently, these campaigns can have a positive impact on increasing reports of domestic abuse. To what extent does the Met use social media to encourage victims of domestic abuse to come forward and report and has it considered providing additional resources to use social media to promote support for victims over Christmas?
- The recent announcement by the Mayor that he is investing £3.7 million to support domestic abuse victims and survivors, including £700,000 for new training for police officers to improve the response given to survivors of domestic abuse, as part of a package, is welcomed. How is this funding supporting the service the Met provides to protect victims of domestic abuse and help bring perpetrators to justice over Christmas?

We would be grateful to receive a response to the issues raised in this letter by 21 December 2020.

Yours sincerely,



Unmesh Desai AM
Chair of the Police and Crime Committee

Cc: Sophie Linden, Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime