

Date: 7 June 2013

Location: The Chamber, City Hall

Hearing: MOPAC Challenge Board – Violence against Women and Girls

Start time: 10:00am

Finish time: 11:30am

MOPAC Panel Members:

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime)

Steve O’Connell (MOPAC Non-Executive Adviser)

Jonathan Glanz (MOPAC Non-Executive Adviser)

Jeremy Mayhew (MOPAC Non-Executive Adviser)

Faith Boardman (MOPAC Non-Executive Adviser)

Linda Duncan (Chair, MOPAC/MPS Audit Panel)

Joan Smith (Chair, VAWG)

Helen Bailey (MOPAC Chief Operating Officer)

Metropolitan Police Official:

Martin Hewitt (Deputy Assistant Commissioner)

Guests:

Heather Harvey (Campaigns and Development Manager, Eaves for Women)

Julie Bindel (Research Consultant, Eaves for Women)

Mary Mason (Director of Solace Women’s Aid, North London Rape Crisis Centre)

Ian Rowley (Lead on Westminster’s Sex Worker Task Group)

Adam Taylor, Westminster Council

Carlene Firmin (Principal Policy Advisor (Gang/Group CSE, Victimisation and Abuse Inquiry, The Office of the Children's Commissioner)

Andy Bell (Deputy Chief Executive, The Centre for Mental Health)

Sonia Crozier, Deputy Chief Executive of London Probation Service

Jade Holvey – VAWG Programme Manager, Lambeth

Kristian Aspinall – VAWG, Lambeth

Date: 7 June 2013

Location: The Chamber, City Hall

Hearing: MOPAC Challenge Board – Violence against Women and Girls

Stephen Greenhalgh (Chair): For those of you who do not know who I am, I am Stephen Greenhalgh, the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime and I have a slight cough so I will not speak for too long. We have an action packed agenda today. Delighted that to my right I am joined by Joan Smith, who is chairing our Violence Against Women and Girls Panel, and by Assembly Member Steve O’Connell and our Chief Operating Officer, Helen Bailey. We have two empty chairs but do not worry; they will potentially join later on. We have got lots and lots of people to hear from.

Before we move to today’s agenda I wanted to announce the beginning of a consultation document on a refresh of the Mayor’s Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy. Of course the first strategy was launched in 2010 and I believe it was the first strategy for a global city in the world so London leading the way, as ever. This consultation is important and builds on the successes of the first strategy. A couple of points I could highlight are the quadrupling of rape crisis provision - and I am delighted we are joined by the organisation that runs the North London Rape Crisis Centre - and there have been other significant achievements as well. I will not run through that.

Obviously we cannot be complacent. Even recorded levels of crime; nearly 50,000 recorded offences involving domestic violence, 3,043 rapes and nearly 500 human trafficking offences. We all know that because of chronic under reporting this is just very much the tip of the iceberg.

So delighted that we’re announcing that consultation launch and I would invite absolutely everybody in this room to make representations and comment upon it. We want it to serve London for the next three years, if not for longer.

Well we have got - because I have taken three minutes over that - almost half an hour for each section and we are starting off by trying to set the scene on how we tackle this problem. I am delighted that we have got a number of people today that can help us do that, particularly from the Office of the Children’s Commissioner who has been carrying out a national inquiry into child sexual exploitation. We are also launching a study that has been looking at prostitution in London by Eaves so delighted that we are going to hear about that too. As well as a report on young female offenders by the Centre for Mental Health and Andrew [Bell] is going to be updating us on that. As well as some of the trends and issues that we can learn from in North London from the Rape Crisis Centre. I have not been to North London’s Rape Crisis Centre yet.

I have visited the one in South London and in some ways it is very uplifting to see the passion and commitment but also, frankly, very depressing to see how much of this abuse is familial and people you trust but, nevertheless, great work being done in all four corners of the capital.

Perhaps I could ask Carlene [Firmin] to quickly kick off and outline what work you have been doing and what lessons there are for London. Carlene?

Carlene Firmin: Thank you very much for having me. For London, the child sexual exploitation scene in particular, which is what I am going to focus on, with some reference to gangs, is very complex. London particularly has an issue with peer on peer abuse with everybody, victims and perpetrators, all being under 18, within a school based environment, and neighbourhood based environment. That is tied in with the gang profile in London; makes it particularly complex.

Then you also have the more general issues around sexual exploitation and some linked to intra familial abuse, some targeting of children's home and some use of businesses and other private organisations. Some links to organised crime, particularly in relation to trafficking children outside of London into other neighbouring areas.

The actual issues are quite complex. Some of which are affecting other parts of the country but the peer on peer issue and the gangs issue in particular, some of that is unique to London and requires a unique response.

I think one of the challenges we have in relation to how we respond to this is the structure within the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS). Obviously gangs sit separately to child abuse and sexual violence, which we are very pleased are being merged together, but actually the Trident gangs command, being able to link up with those working in sexual violence, is going to be critical for the sexual violence teams to understand the risks posed to the children who they're notified by because that's a completely separate area of expertise and to understand the risks posed by a victim in a gang context you would need to understand the gang profile. That link up is going to be critical.

There is also the issue, however, of the change of definition of domestic violence (DV) to include 16 and 17 years old. That will also draw in young people. One of the risk indicators for domestic abuse in young people's relationships is having an older boyfriend. But also having an older boyfriend is also a warning sign of sexual exploitation and we do run the risk of children being referred in for domestic abuse who are actually being sexually exploited, and vice versa. So being able to link up gangs, domestic abuse and the sexual violence structures within the MPS is going to be particularly important over the coming 12 months.

There is also an issue with black and minority ethnic victims, particularly in London. They tend to be lost outside of London and obviously the Children's Commissioner is well aware there is an under recognition of black and ethnic minority victimisation in a child's sexual exploitation

context with overriding stereotypes that victims will be white British. Now the service base in London, particularly in sexual exploitation and broader sexual violence services in London, do have strong links with black and minority ethnic (BME) communities and particularly the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) projects in Tower Hamlets and the Barnardo's project in North London see a significant number of Bangladeshi, African Caribbean, African, Polish and a whole range of other ethnic groups of children. It is very important that the MPS learns from their experiences because other forces around the country will not necessarily have that reach into the black and minority ethnic community and so the voluntary sector plays a critical role - and a critical role in also understanding the warning signs.

The Office of the Children's Commissioner published a list of warning signs related to sexual exploitation back in November and we published it with some questions around nuancing. For example, repeated missing is the most consistent warning sign for children who are being sexually exploited and a number of forces rightly use the missing as an indicator for which children to proactively investigate to see whether they are being sexually exploited or not. However, we know that black and minority ethnic children are less likely to be reported missing by their families and then white British children and children in care. We also know children who are growing up in gang associated families are less actively reported missing to the police because those parents are not going to ring the police and bring the police to their home.

Now if we only rely on missing data to proactively find victims we will lose black and minority ethnic victims and that is a particular worry for London because that is a method that is being used outside of London and it will need nuancing in a London context.

One thing we can really work on in London is proactive identification of gang associated women and girls by mapping them against the nominal data we have for gang members. We already are able to map male gang members - a huge number of them - within the MPS. What is really important is to start asking questions about the girlfriends and the sisters of gang members and mapping those women against our nominals a) so you can identify which girls are linked to multiple gangs because they are at particularly high risk of all forms of gender based violence, but also that you can risk assess them properly. If a young woman is linked to a gang that has access to firearms and is likely to use them, for example, she may be more vulnerable to a gang that does not have access to that type of weaponry. That will have an impact for how we assess them because the original gangs' metrics did not flag up females very often because they present with different vulnerabilities.

So just to finalise, I do think there is some lesson learning that we can really do in London. London is one of the few places that has had a conviction for gang associated sexual exploitation. It was a very well run investigation, and following on prosecution, back in 2011. I am very grateful that the MPS has allowed me access to some of its files to do that lesson learning work with them because I do think it is particularly important that we learn a) why the investigation worked that we have had and what we could have done better in some other cases because there are significant concerns amongst girls and young women about risk management,

for example, and whether they will have to be moved out of London, taken into care, what are the risks to family that are left in the area if they are moved. All sorts of very practical risks that they rightly are concerned about and the way in which we can reassure victims is to talk about how things have been managed well in the past. Also to share that with partners because in all of the cases that have gone through - and they are a small number - they have been reliant on children's services, education, housing and other agencies to work with the police and Crown Prosecution Service to have successful convictions. It is really important that while we acknowledge there are structural challenges and challenges around assessment and identification, we need to learn lessons before we take this forward and really encourage girls and young women to come forward and work with the police and other authorities in the future.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Chair): Carlene, thank you very much indeed. We have time for one quick question. Joan [Smith], you have got as many notes as me. Do you want a quick question?

Joan Smith (Chair, VAWG): I am curious about the fact that there have been so many grooming trials around the country and not so much in London so far. I was wondering if there is any reason for that, or any monitoring(?) of it?

Carlene Firmin: As I said there has been a gang associated trial, for example, in London. It received little to no media coverage. There are far more trials that have happened around the country that have received no media coverage because they do not fit the media model of mainly Pakistani British men and white British complainants and victims. We must remember that, even in those cases, just because all the girls who gave evidence were white British it does not mean that all the victims in those cases are white British.

So they have not received public attention. But I do think there has been an issue with how we have identified that particular model. I fail to believe that that does not exist. But I would also urge caution around even calling it a model. Oxford, for example, is actually very different to Rochdale. Oxford was clearly an organised crime group involved in extensive trafficking around the country and was making commercial profit out of sexual exploitation. In Rochdale it was structured around takeaway shops and that kind of thing. So it was quite different in its being but because the perpetrators and victims look the same it gets talked about as if it is the same thing.

The sexual exploitation services in London have been seeing similar issues, particularly with girls going missing over weekends outside of London, for example, or concerns around private businesses like takeaway shops or taxi firms and the sexual exploitation of children and the targeting of children's homes. One of the challenges the services have had historically is, because of the size of the MPS, if they are giving bits of intelligence and information to the local force, that is not necessarily being structured in the intelligence base in what was either Sapphire or child abuse. You hope that bringing those two things together will alleviate some of that and, anecdotally, services have reported an improvement over the past six months in

contact with the MPS and, given intelligence at a local level, how that leads to intelligence building centrally. That definitely, historically, was an issue.

It is very drip drip. Those cases in Oxford and Rochdale required months, if not years, of investigation, piecing together and building the case working directly with voluntary sector organisations. I do not think we have seen that. But we have, as I say, seen the gang associated case. It just did not get public profile. The victim was not white. The perpetrators were not British Pakistani men so it does not fit that model.

We should be pushing other models into the London press and into the national press when we are seeing them in London to ensure that particularly black and minority ethnic victims acknowledge their victimisation and that they are being sexually exploited. That is a challenge when we only see particular cases in the media.

Joan Smith (Chair, VAWG): Certainly London has that kind of night time economy doesn't it?

Carlene Firmin: Exactly. Yes. I would not doubt that we have similar models using businesses. There may be different ethnic group perpetrators. In all those cases, organised commercial sexual exploitation and the use of private businesses, in other parts of the country where we visited for the inquiry, we found those exact models but the ethnicity of the perpetrators was different because the locality had a different demographic. So in London we may have different ethnic groups using those models to perpetrate sexual exploitation, or the same. I think we will find it is probably an issue.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Chair): We are going to have to move on but, Carlene, that is very, very interesting and it shows the layers of complexity of this issue rather than very straightforward answers to things. Thank you for kicking off the discussion. You referenced the issue around sexual violence and gangs. I am delighted that we have got Andy Bell from the Centre for Mental Health. Perhaps, Andy, you could build on the first comments from Carlene?

Andy Bell: Thank you. Just to say a tiny bit about us. We are an independent mental health charity with the national remit to improve the life chances of people with mental health problems. We got involved in this area because we developed a screenage approach for young people coming into police custody around about 2008/09. In piloting this in a number of places across England we collected anonymised data about the 8,000 young people who came into police custody who were screened for a range of 28 vulnerabilities including poor mental health, histories of family violence -- all sorts. I will not list them; that would be very tedious.

We realised from that there was a very significant issue about the 80 or so of that group who were girls involved in gangs so we had a bit of a closer look at this. From a review of the literature we found there was a very clear link between childhood behavioural problems and involvement in gangs, particularly among girls. There was a range also of family, school and

neighbourhood factors. Particularly the girls tend to be involved in gangs who have lower self-esteem than other girls at risk, whereas in boys it is the other way round; higher self-esteem tends to be associated with gang involvement.

So looking at our data we found that, on average, the girls who were involved in gangs had had nine vulnerabilities each - which is an awful lot. That compares, just as a general idea, with about four for girls who were involved in the Youth Justice System but not involved in gangs, about seven for boys who were involved in gangs. So gang membership is a good marker for a whole range of very poor life chances and experiences.

We found particularly there were very high rates of parents having had their own difficulties, for example, in prison and in mental ill health. We found there was evidence of longstanding victimisation. Girls involved in gangs were three times more likely to have experienced sexual abuse than other girls in the Youth Justice System. There were also histories of running away, of exclusion from school, sexually risky behaviour and very high rates of a range of mental health issues, or markers for mental health issues. So about a third were self-harming, around about a third had sleeping or eating problems and about 40% had early starting behavioural problems, and behavioural problems from a young age are a very strong marker for a whole range of poor life chances later in life.

So what did we learn from that? Well I think first of all we learned that there are lots of opportunities earlier in a girl's life to prevent gang involvement, or at least to reduce the risk very much. For example, providing evidence based parenting programmes targeted towards the families who are most at risk. Looking at London, the role of Health and Wellbeing Boards, for example, in commissioning those evidence based programmes or ensuring they are commissioned across all the boroughs, is terribly important and focused on the families who need them most. Crucially there is a need for all agencies working with children and families to be attuned to the risk factors for later gang involvement and be prepared to respond and respond well and confidently.

Finally, because girls join gangs for different reasons to boys, they need different routes out, and particularly safe routes out of gang involvement that deal with the particular issues they are facing.

That is a quick tour of our work and I hope that is useful.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Chair): That is very helpful. Thank you very much, Andy. I know Jeremy [Mayhew] has a question.

Jeremy Mayhew: Yes. You have underlined the links between women and girls who engage in violence and are victims of violence and mental health and other problems. How easy is it to

identify ahead of time those who are likely to be a problem either in terms of being victims or perpetrators?

Andy Bell: It is quite stark actually. Obviously we cannot tell how people's lives are going to go. Adverse events can happen any time in life. What we do know, however, is that children who have behavioural problems between the ages of, say, three and ten -- and that can come from a whole range of reasons, it is not just bad family (inaudible). But children who do have early starting behavioural problems have a 19 times greater lifetime risk of imprisonment than those who do not. We cannot tell how people's futures are going to go, but we do know that children who are really struggling with behaviour from a young age have extraordinarily poor life chances. Three quarters of parents whose children do have behavioural problems ask someone for help, normally either a class teacher or a general practitioner (GP). The problem is there is not necessarily the awareness of the significance of behavioural problems to a child's life chances, or the very effective programmes that are out there that can support those children to have a better chance.

Jeremy Mayhew: Do you think, within the various public services -- and I do not just mean the Criminal Justice System though I do mean that; social services and health systems. Are there obvious things that we could do to be more joined up?

Andy Bell: Fundamentally we have got to find ways of bringing the various service silos together around these very vulnerable families. That is very easy to say and very hard to do. If it was easy to do we would have done it a long time ago.

Jeremy Mayhew: Exactly.

Andy Bell: So, for example, how do we get schools to work closely with local health and social services? We know that is quite fiendishly difficult. I mentioned Health and Wellbeing Boards. I think they are potentially a crucible for local cooperation to start to build those relationships.

We also need to raise awareness. Teachers and GPs and health visitors and school nurses want to do the right thing, want to help people, but there is not, necessarily, the awareness of how significant these issues are.

Jeremy Mayhew: Or the ability to make the links.

Andy Bell: And the ability to make the links. And, indeed, the availability of programmes that are there and that people have confidence in. So we have to make sure, fundamentally, that those interventions we know work are actually available in every locality and that parents feel, if they ask for help, they get a sensitive and helpful response. The danger, is if you respond badly to a parent who asked for help, it can feel like you are blaming them for their child's behaviour, that their child is ill and that can cause parents to back off. It is really important that those services are engaging and helpful.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Chair): A couple of questions. You mentioned some of the programmes that you believe can really make a difference. One of them was evidence based parenting. Can you just explain what that means? It sounds good but I am not sure what it means in practice.

Andy Bell: Of course. There are two types of programme that it is really important we have available. The first is family nurse partnerships. They are a very intensive form of support but they particularly work well with vulnerable teenage parents, for example, and they provide quite intensive wraparound support during pregnancy and after to help them to build up their confidence as parents and their parenting skills.

Then, secondly, for people who have children of pre-school age all the way through primary school. Short parenting programmes of the likes of Triple P and Incredible Years are known to have very good outcomes, if they are run well. If you try to do a cheap version of it tends not to work. But these are short, 6 to 12 week, training programmes.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Chair): Okay. That is helpful. Just to get that more detail. You mentioned the vulnerability of gang membership girls involved with gangs. How do you identify those girls that have gang affiliations? What are the early signs? In the same way you know you have early signs around repeated missing are there any markers that you would point to?

Andy Bell: Unfortunately we only looked at a point in time when these girls came into contact with the police so I am afraid we do not have the back story that Carlene was able to provide. We know the risk factors at least.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Chair): Perhaps we can move on. We have got to launch this important study looking at the sex industry in London and prostitution. I am delighted that we have Heather [Harvey] and Julie [Bindel] from Eaves to do that. Sorry, we are cracking on with so much. Perhaps you can try to do it in a couple of minutes really. It is virtually impossible.

Heather Harvey: We will speak quickly!

Stephen Greenhalgh (Chair): This is quite a packed agenda really. Not really doing justice to anybody. But please take us through the key findings. That would be great.

Heather Harvey: I was going to start off with a bit of context but I do not really think we have got time for that so all I would say is we were really delighted to be commissioned by the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) to undertake research on the trends and patterns about prostitution and trafficking in London in the context of the Mayor's Strategy on Violence Against Women and Girls. I know you are launching a new one but I hope it will be as good as the old one because we were very pleased with the former one.

Our work at Eaves on all forms of violence against women is situated in the context of women's human rights and particularly the United Nations convention on the elimination of discrimination against women and various documents related to that have highlighted that all forms of trafficking in women and exploitation and prostitution of women is incompatible with the equal enjoyment and rights of women and with respect to their rights and dignity. So that is the context in which we work. Indeed some people have argued the very fact that there is this very fond expression of prostitution as the oldest profession in the world is actually evidence that this falls well within the remit of the United Nations conventions' analysis of harmful traditional cultural practices which are not to be justified. So that is our context for prostitution as violence against women, and your own as well.

We have some statistics around our own research around levels of violence. We are not going to go into that right now apart from to say in our particular research - it would not claim to be representative - we had over 114 women in or exiting prostitution. 84% of them would experience some form of violence and 61% of them had experienced violence at the hands of their buyers.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Chair): Can you say those statistics again, sorry?

Heather Harvey: I can make all this available for you.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Chair): It is just they were very striking.

Heather Harvey: 84% of those in our particular study of 114 women had suffered some form of violence. 61% had suffered violence at the hands of their buyers. 35% at the hands of partners. 24% at the hands of their pimp. 32% of them had entered prostitution before the age of 18. Street and off street.

So that is why we feel it is really important that there is a really clear strategic direction of travel. A pan-London strategic approach. That is one of the things I am going to pass over to Julie in the findings was the fact that there were such diverse approaches. Some people are looking at demand. Some people are arresting women. Some people are looking at the buyers. Some people are tackling the pimps and the controllers. But in most cases, sadly, we continue to see the focus is on the women who are actually selling sex. Whatever side you are on on the prostitution debate, we would all agree that we should not be criminalising women for selling sex. We at Eaves strongly believe that we need to be focusing on the perpetrators and those that are committing violence and exploiting.

I am going to hand over to Julie very quickly to give some of the findings if you can give me just two more minutes.

Julie Bindel: Very briefly - and thank you very much for the invitation and also the support throughout this piece of research - three of the key recommendations - we have several and the

report will be made available on our website this afternoon - are that we need a pan-London exiting service for women and we need a strategic lead under the auspices of MOPAC so that coordination can be as consistent as we would like it to be across the 33 boroughs.

In this study we actually looked at all of the 33 boroughs and we looked more closely at a third of them. This was not, and is not, a prevalent study; it is a snap shot and it is a mapping of the industry. So we are not going to give figures about how many women are trafficked, how many women are in brothels or how many women are on the street. One thing that we did find that we have known for some time is that street prostitution appears to be dwindling - at least that that is visible - but that the off street industry is growing and expanding and new ways are being found to facilitate off street prostitution. We also found evidence that on street and off street is less distinct in terms of its patterns and organisation, as has previously been thought. So the two are merging with women being transient between the two, within flats, on street working from mobile phones, some of whom are defined as escorts, which of course brings with it the idea that this is a high class form of prostitution with no violence associated with it and no coercion associated. We did find that those two types of prostitution are merging.

We also found in some of the London boroughs a small number of the London boroughs, in a particular area there is evidence that women on street are being trafficked and facilitated. In other words not just internal trafficking but some women from Eastern and South Eastern Europe who are being facilitated by criminal gangs. This was backed up by our police colleagues, residents and some of the women themselves.

Very, very briefly the methodology of this study was to hold focus groups, face to face interviews, online surveys, interviews with women and also talking extensively to stakeholders and residents. Which brings me to another key recommendation which is tackling demand and tackling the abuse of coercive elements in this. Across the board, when we talked to residents in the boroughs where there is a visible problem, they want demand to be tackled. There is a shifting tide of opinion, which we are really grateful to see, which is taking away the blame from the women and from anyone who is actually selling sex, those that are exploited, on to the demand and those that actually do cause the problems within the neighbourhoods, within the boroughs and across London.

In fact, a piece of research that Eaves is carrying out on behalf of Lambeth Council evaluating its campaign on demand has shown that this is what the public want. They want to see demand being tackled and they are starting to appreciate that the majority of the women involved in prostitution are victimised, are abused and marginalised. That is not to say that there are not those who choose it. What we are saying is that law and policy obviously is made to reflect the majority of the experiences of those involved.

As I say, we will be launching this on our website as soon as this meeting is finished and we can run back to the office. As we also said, and as Heather said, we really would like to see steps

towards decriminalising those who are selling sex and focus far more on tackling where the real problem is.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Chair): Heather and Julie thank you very much indeed for presenting that so clearly. The messages are very clear. I am struck by the high levels of violence associated with those who are selling sex. To experience that level of violence is extraordinary. 84% from partners but also from customers very high numbers as well. Actually I thought it would be different numbers but those numbers are quite striking. Only a quarter of those from the pimps. These are very striking statistics.

I know that the Mayor and I are very keen to pick up on the first recommendation which is around the move to a pan-London exit service and I think that is very good that you are raising that in the report. The real issue then is the practicality of how that will happen but it is a laudable objective.

Joan [Smith], do you have any questions?

Joan Smith: Yes, I was going to ask about exit strategies. Given the level of violence and coercion that these women are experiencing is there an issue around them being in danger when they try to exit that needs to be addressed?

Heather Harvey: Yes, always. In the same way as we appreciate that when women leave domestic violence situations that is when they are in the most danger and more likely to be the victims of homicide. So it is across the board with any form of violence against women and girls as we know.

There is a little difference in terms of the way that the women are targeted who are leaving prostitution because many of the women are controlled and facilitated by those that they would define as their boyfriends, their partners, who are in fact pimps and pimping and exploiting them.

But what we need to ensure is that we work very closely with our partners in the police service, social services, when the women have particular additional vulnerabilities, which many of them do, and to ensure that services that are being run are being facilitated by those that have direct experience with serious levels of sexual violence and trauma so that the women can disclose what actually is behind their involvement in prostitution.

What we have found is that many of the services that are generic as well as specific to supporting women in prostitution are amazingly run and very well placed to deal with particular issues such as drug and alcohol misuse and various other factors in women's lives but that they are not particularly expert in providing and supporting women through exiting stages. Of course when we talk about exiting we have to be absolutely clear that this has to be offered to women in a staged manner and that it is only the women who are agreeable to, or who in fact

raise this as an issue themselves, to be supported through this. Nobody gets forced to exit prostitution. Women will actually talk about it as soon as there is an opening for them to do so. Many services do not particularly know how to even raise it as an issue. They somehow feel that it is a stigmatisation of their involvement in prostitution to raise the issue.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Chair): OK. So there is some good practice around some of the problems associated with prostitution but not necessarily the wrap around programmes that would help. So that is going to be part of the challenge in making this work on the ground. That is very, very helpful.

Listen, I know we are tight for time so it would be good to hear from Mary on lessons from North London and the rape crisis service that you provide, which I gather is a hub and spoke model.

Mary Mason: That is right, yes. Thank you for the invite and you are very welcome to come and visit us in North London.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Chair): I will.

Mary Mason: Good. We have been running the rape crisis service in North London for the last two years and so I just want to share with you some of our experiences about that and some of our learning from it.

First of all I think that you have all had the breakdown of some of the figures around rape and sexual abuse in London. One of the things that is important when we look at those is to look at what is happening locally because reporting in each local area is so conditional on how confident people feel in the police and the police's response. It is interesting to look at the seven boroughs that we work in to see that in some boroughs there has been a reduction of reporting by up to 30% in the last year and in other boroughs there has been increased reporting by up to 30%. We can actually - I will not bore you with it now - map why that is happening because we know what is happening in the local areas. So providing a confidence warning in reporting and a system whereby women are helped through the system is vitally important because that confidence is very fragile around sexual abuse and rape.

We run a hub and spoke model in seven North London boroughs which means that we have central advocates and we also have advocates who go out into each of the seven boroughs and we have counsellors in each of the seven boroughs as well. We have a reporting in and helpline centrally so the hub holds the service together and the spokes are when women are able to access the service. We provide one to one counselling and a range of group therapies including confidence building and longer term supporter groups. We also provide sexual violence advocacy, as I said, dealing with issues, for example, of housing and immigration support, both of which are crucial in terms of access to after services for women. We provide body therapies

which are especially available to those people where therapy at the current time is not recommend for various reasons.

There is also a fragility everywhere around what is happening around court processes and what evidence third party witnesses are able to give or they would be forced to give. I know there is some clarification going on around that but on the ground it is particularly problematic, particularly around counselling and whether somebody should be able to access counselling immediately about what happens in the court process. A lot of confusion.

So over the last year we have worked with 350 survivors of sexual violence. 70% of women had experienced recent rape and 25% of women had experienced childhood sexual abuse or both recent and historic sexual violence. The majority of our clients are 18 to 24, however, we have clients presenting as young as 11 and also up to 75 years of age. 60% of our service users are from black and minority ethnic groups and 40% are white British. A smaller number of women from BME groups will come to us having experienced childhood sexual abuse. We think that there is a narrative there and a reason for that that we need to explore further. We also have a number of women accessing the service who have been involved with rape but in the context of war and conflict. We think there is a particular need to have a specific type of support for those women rather than the more generic support that is currently available.

This year we have seen a demand for our services increase by 70%. Partly because we established ourselves as a centre within North London but also we think that there is an increasing correlation with Savile and other perpetrators of sexual violence in the press and people coming forward saying that, naming Savile and other perpetrators, as a trigger for them to report the violence that they have experienced.

We are also witnessing an increase in young people presenting to the service. Again, we assume that some of this is because of our networks and confidence in reporting to us but we are also aware of the need for support from non-perpetrating family and friends impacted by the rape of the young women. That is something we are currently not funded to do and we are trying to provide support groups. There is a huge need for that. We think that if we are able to put that support in early then that prevents a spread of victimisation, particularly around young women.

Mental ill health and trauma presentations are extremely commonplace in survivors and a lot of the survivors that we work with have got quite serious mental health and on-going mental health needs. So the long term support groups that we are holding tend to be women who need not just 16 weeks or even six months of support, but actually need long term support to help them to stabilise and go through the ups and downs of quite serious mental health issues.

Another thread that is a theme running through our services is not guilty verdicts. There is a question really about why so many of the women we are supporting end up going to court and the perpetrators are being found not guilty. There are issues really about the length of time that the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) has in preparing the cases. Quite a lot of our women

have never met the barrister or the solicitor from the CPS beforehand. The case is often quite ill prepared. So they go into court expecting that there is going to be some justice done - because that is what the victims expect - and then go in and find that quite a lot of the evidence and the material that they have helped to provide is not presented in court. It might be that that is because it should not be presented but, quite a lot of the time, we are being told it is because the preparation has not been done. There is also still a lot of fear about aggressive cross-examination and also an issue about how we end up supporting a woman after a not guilty verdict. We want survivors to come forward. We encourage women to report to the police and we encourage them to go through the court process. But, at the same time, the court process is not robust enough in terms of the experience of the victim through that process.

There are many more things I could tell you about obviously after two years of doing the work of analysing what is going on but what I have tried to do is to pick out the main trends to present to you today.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Chair): That has been very helpful. I am really struck by the variation in reporting levels amongst your boroughs. You said you knew why but did not push. That was one of your first points.

Mary Mason: Some of the issues are to do with media reporting. We have also had issues, in Islington in particular, so people are generally aware of some of those issues. That has affected reporting in that borough. Where there have been campaigns and there has been more work done in the borough on the ground then that has had an impact. We have been working in Enfield in particular around doing work in schools but also in communities in the borough and there has been a better -- it is also about how people perceive reporting of rape of course because we see it as positive that there has been an increase in reporting. So some of those factors play into an increase in reporting.

However, there is still a lot of lack of confidence in what these figures show. Some councillors in some boroughs think that under reporting, low reporting, means that rape does not happen in our boroughs. We hear that at strategic groups in some boroughs. So there is education work that needs to be done around the fact that low reporting actually is bad.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Chair): Absolutely. We are very clear in MOPAC that we want to see an increase in reporting.

Mary Mason: Absolutely. But locally that is not always translated.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Chair): Which is why we have pulled out the crime types which are victim based. That whole issue is well known and we will continue to return and shine a spotlight on some of the variations. Think we need to do that. I think the fragility around the criminal justice system, the CPS and the courts. Certainly when I went to Croydon you could almost feel the pain every time a case did not go according to plan and how unfair it seemed. In

these kinds of environments you cannot have a wieldy low justice can you; you do need to have things well prepared and relatively timely. It sounds like there is much work to be done. I now the team in MOPAC is working very hard on seeing whether we can build a specialist court around sexual violence and get that set up, in the same way we have seen with domestic violence in West London, because that would be a step in the right direction.

Joan, do you want to pick anything up?

Joan Smith (Chair, VAWG): Yes. The 70% increase in demand was incredibly striking. Do you think that reflects a different atmosphere that the reporting of historic child sex abuse cases has actually encouraged people to come forward?

Mary Mason: I think it has been an encouragement for people to come forward but actually, interestingly over the two years, we are now getting more referrals of recent rape. So the percentage balance has shifted towards more recent rape. I think that that is partly to do with establishing the centre because you always obviously see an increase but I think it is also obviously to do with the publicity and people feel more confident in coming forward because of media attention.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Chair): Good stuff. Well thank you all for setting the scene across a whole range of issues around violence against women and girls.

Now we need to see how the MPS, and also how local authorities, respond so perhaps we can get the other people to step forward. Let us start off with my colleagues from the MPS. Maybe the colleagues from Westminster want to come forward and sit in the two chairs at that end. Do you want to sit over there for this bit? This is a new format for me as well so I am a bit bewildered as well.

Deputy Assistant Commissioner, Martin Hewitt, I know you have got a presentation. We have heard some interesting comments and we would be grateful if you could pick them up during the course of your presentations. So over to you, Martin.

Martin Hewitt: OK. Well this is actually a presentation that has been produced here. It starts with the figures but I do want to make a couple of comments in support of many of the things that have been said by people so far.

The first one is for all of us as we go forward with the new strategy and trying to deal with this to really grasp the complexity of this type of crime. We have spoken about a number of different aspects of sexual offending and offending against women and girls and too often where we try to get to is a simple answer that is going to solve all the problems. This is uniquely complex I would suggest. Also, the point was made at the end by Mary there about reporting. It is also emotionally and psychologically a unique type of offending in the way that it impacts on the victim and that then creates a whole range of issues in terms of how the victim is

supported, how the victim interacts with the police, interacts with the court system and all the way through. Part of the challenge for us is how, collectively, we find a process that recognises very clearly that this requires something different than when you walk in and report you have a burglary happen. It is not the same thing.

Particularly when we were talking earlier about support services, one of the real challenges is about the sustainability of those support services because often it is easy to put something in place that deals with someone in the immediate aftermath or at the time but this does not go away and if you are trying to exit someone from prostitution or support a girl that has become involved in gang activity, that is not something that happens in six months or 12 months; that is something that requires sustained effort, sustained coordination over a very long period of time if we are going to deliver that.

There are just a couple of things I want to say about this slide. The first and most important one, and it has been picked up by a number of speakers so far, is this represents probably, at best, 20% of what is actually happening in London in terms of sexual offending. That is my single biggest concern and why one of the real focuses that I have tried to put on this area is around the preventative work that we all, collectively, need to do. Because what we are seeing there is a very small element of the crime that is taking place. Why that particularly worries me. If you took any other type of crime, so if you took gun crime, for example, I would be very confident to sit here and tell you precisely the extent of gun crime in London, where it was happening, the type of activity and then we obviously arrange our policing around that. I cannot do that in sexual offending because I know that I have not got all the reporting. So the efforts that we need to put in place to actually increase the amount of information that we get to allow us then to intelligently police it is really significant.

The sanction detection rate has been commented on a number of times. We do not use a measure of detection rate any more in London. The problem with a rate is that the way you can improve the detection rate is reduce the number of reports of crime that come in in the first place. I absolutely agree with the comments that were made about this is a crime type that we should be increasing. Decreasing is not a success in sexual offending. We have a straight number of sanction detections that we achieve as our targets as we are moving forward. We achieved a 16% increase last year with some of the changes that we did and that we hope to move forward.

This slide really puts you fairly and squarely in the fact that women are the majority victims. In 2012 for us that was at 93%. So whilst we cannot ignore the phenomenon of rape against males - and I think that has probably got even lower reporting levels for all the social reasons and society reasons around that - the vast majority of our victims are women and girls.

Serious sexual offending. Really again the same. As I say, again, same females and also the same disparity but we can only assume that the reporting figures are probably a little bit higher but, nonetheless, it is still not going to be a complete picture of where we are.

Again, this is talking about the figures and the age range there. I definitely see -- and this accords with what Mary said around younger victims presenting more now. That does take you into some of the area around the impact of accessibility to pornography and young boys and young boys' attitudes to women and girls which is some preventative work that we want to drive. That is a particular target area. Youngsters are growing up with a particular image of relationships, an image of sex, an image of women, of girls and women. Then if you add in the point that was made earlier if we take particularly girls in the gang context, the opposite being true in a sense that it is their low self-esteem that is the signal indicator. That then is all fed into that so girls then feeling they need to behave in a way that boys are suggesting is the way they all behave and you then get into this rather negative cycle.

While I remember that point we then have this image of a 15 or 16 year old girl in a gang context with low self-esteem and you try to project forward that child into being the victim and key witness in a prosecution you are into an almost impossible situation to deliver a positive outcome at the end of that. All the factors that make her vulnerable and that is why she is a victim are then re-victimised and exacerbated in the court system that we currently have. The prospect of anybody, if you have been offended in a group sense, putting up with cross-examination from four separate barristers representing four offenders is not a prospect that I would particularly enjoy and I have got a reasonable amount of experience in this. If you take a 15 year old girl with low self-esteem and put her in that witness box that is an almost impossible situation.

Again when I talked about the uniqueness of sexual offending one of the criminal justice characteristics that I think is unique is in no other crime do we place so much of the emphasis on delivering the outcome on the victim. Because you are almost invariably in a consent who said what so much pressure is placed on the victim in a way that in other offending types we will often have different types of evidence that can support. There will often be witnesses. In most rape and serious sexual offences there are not other witnesses. There are not independent forms of evidence. So much pressure is placed on that victim. This was very well articulated in the previous presentations. The pressure and the nervousness that that puts on victims is why we often lose victims before we get to that stage.

Trafficking. Again, I think we have improved. That probably looks more positive than it ought to do because it focuses on a couple of specific operations. We are the only force in the country that has a human trafficking unit specifically. I do think, as I think Carlene inferred, the diverse and fluid nature of London's communities presents particular challenges to us in a way that you do not necessarily get in other communities around the country. But we have the dedicated unit. There is a high incidence particularly from Eastern Europe but from other parts of the world of women and girls trafficked in for sexual exploitation and other forms of exploitation. But I think we are starting to make some progress with the units that we have and all the time we are improving our links with the source countries where these girls and women are coming from. Our trafficking unit sits in the same part of the organisation as our organised

crime team sits so we have got that link made because, in many cases, it is proper organised crime that is used in trafficking of human beings as one of the streams of income that they work from.

Prostitution. I think this is one of the most challenging areas for us to deal with. There is, quite frankly at the top level, a societal ambiguity about prostitution and who is right, who is wrong and how you deal with them, which often ends up with the sex workers themselves being victimised by the system as well as other people. You have clearly got the legal issue in the sense that prostitutes and other sex workers are concerned about their legal status so therefore they are even less inclined to come and report to us.

I was not, sadly, surprised by the figures that were said earlier about the level of violence and victimisation. One of the factors that we would assert you see in the vast, vast majority of our rape victims is there will be a vulnerability factor, permanent or temporary or otherwise. In sex workers they normally stack up three or four of those vulnerability factors which is why they are often selected particularly by predatory offenders because they are very vulnerable in the work that they do. They are invariably not in an area where they are going to have other witnesses or help. They are unlikely to come forward to the police because they are worried about their own status. They are less likely to be believed and so on and so on

If we can get through the new strategy a more coherent way of dealing with prostitution particularly that would be a real step forward for us. We have got an independent consultant working with us, funded to look at how we bring together our processes because our processes are not consistent at the moment and we need to find a single way, working particularly with MOPAC, of how we, collectively, deal with the issue of sex workers. The problem we have is I have got a unit that deals with prostitution in a way that I think we would all want to be done, i.e. seeing the workers as the victims dealing with perpetrators and so on. But then, at a local level, a safer neighbourhood team will come under extreme pressure because locals are complaining about the impact of prostitution in that area and so they take action for good reason but it has a very negative impact on, overall, our dealing with it. We need to get that group together to work up how we deal with this issue particularly.

Gang related. Carlene obviously covered that extensively and there is lots of work that has been done. It is a very big issue for us. I take the point entirely that we have moved on a very long way in the last 12/14 months in terms of our understanding of the gang dynamic. We are not yet as well sighted on the impact of girls and the impact on girls in and around that and that is certainly something that we are moving forward and I can certainly reassure that the links between trident gang crime and the sexual offenders exploitation and child abuse command will be made and will be there and we are focusing activity on identifying -- what much of this comes down to is all of us, collectively, identifying vulnerability. That is the key issue in how we are able to be proactive on this.

Within our command we have created a proactive unit to start targeting offenders, start targeting locations where we think offending is, and basing that around the vulnerability. For too long we have been in a situation where we wait for a report to come and then when, for whatever reason, that victim is not able to come with us through the process, it goes away and we go and look at the next report. That is just not acceptable. If we received information that we thought someone was supplying guns but we could not get the witness to make a statement we would not walk away and say, "Oh well". We would go and do something else and do something more proactive and potentially covert. That is where we are starting to move into at the moment. That is a lot of the learning that has come out of Yewtree and the Savile investigation and all those associated with it because it has highlighted that in those circumstances where you get some form of power meeting some form of vulnerability those are the places where this is happening. We can all spot all the factors.

Perhaps the most depressing part of the presentations earlier was none of it was particularly surprising or particularly difficult to work out. Where we struggle is to get ourselves lined up and actually taking action that is going to move it forward.

That was the last one.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Chair): Martin, just answer your own question then. What do we have to do? Give advice to MOPAC and the Mayor. If you could pick three things that we should do. I am struck by the variability in confidence and reporting. That should not really happen should it? What is the way we deal with that?

Martin Hewitt: For me the three things that I really need us to be able to achieve. The first one is around reporting. Mary hit the nail on the head. Much of this is around confidence. We need, collectively, to be using all of the means of communication and the means of influence that we can to encourage people to report.

The point was made around the media. With all the stuff that came out and the way that it was dealt with around the failed investigations in Southwark back in 2007/08 and all of that media reporting why would a woman in Southwark feel confident to go into the MPS? We have got to, collectively, do what we can to get that message out about reporting. What I am trying to do at a national level is get us to a place where we work out a system where the reporting does not mean you are reporting a crime necessarily and therefore this system starts. I think part of the issue for victims is one of the characteristics of sexual offending is you have had power taken away from yourself, you have been controlled. What a lot of people feel is when they come to us we are going to take power away again and start to demand that they go down this route or that route.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Chair): So confidence to report and using the media. That is an external factor of the MPS. What about SOIT (Sexual Offenses Investigation Trained) officers and there are only a few of those? This may be Territorial Policing's point but ...

Martin Hewitt: No, it is not Territorial. All the SOIT work within our command.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Chair): Is this somehow a non-uniform provision of SOIT in different parts of London?

Martin Hewitt: I think what you are referring to is the case where there was a SOIT that was prosecuted for not doing the job properly.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Chair): That was this year.

Martin Hewitt: The SOIT are laid over London and they work very well with the Havens. We have got three Havens. Getting all of that working and doing everything through all of our means of communicating to encourage people to come forward is one.

We, and I think you, can help around our impact on the criminal justice system and the way the criminal justice system works. We have done a lot of work at national level and I have done a lot of work with the Director of Public Prosecutions (PPP) since Savile around changing some of that. I think there is a recognition that something has got to change fundamentally but we need to constantly be pushing that and demanding that the way the prosecutions are done is effective and is timely because delays in prosecutions, more than any other type of offending, you are more likely to lose your witness.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Chair): So swift assurance.

Martin Hewitt: Swift professional and not re-victimising the victim when it gets to that final stage.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Chair): Do you have any statistics on times taken from start to completion in the different parts of London?

Martin Hewitt: Yes. They will not be in different parts of London. The CPS has one unit that deals with all rape and serious sexual offences in London and we work directly with them. All those investigations would be done within our unit.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Chair): Would you be able to measure it - rather than having your pan-London figure - looking at different courts?

Martin Hewitt (Deputy Assistant Commissioner, MPS): Yes. We can measure it and we do that.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Chair): That is what we need to look at. Just to shine a spotlight on the differences. That is the first step isn't it?

Martin Hewitt (Deputy Assistant Commissioner, MPS): It is.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Chair): So why is it taking twice as long in South London as opposed to North London?

Martin Hewitt (Deputy Assistant Commissioner, MPS): Yes. Because every delay you are more likely to lose your victim in these offences.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Chair): Right.

Martin Hewitt (Deputy Assistant Commissioner, MPS): Then the last one is where the groups that come out of the strategy can really help; getting us properly working in partnership as in leading to action. There are some great bits of partnership working but they are not coherent and they are not uniform across the city. We need to identify how we get that better. We need to make sure everyone is working to the same agenda. We need to identify where there is a lack of facility.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Chair): Martin, we are pressed for time. You have mentioned the P word and I am delighted we have got some colleagues from Westminster - Councillor Ian Rowley, and also Adam Taylor who I believe is an Assistant Crime Commissioner on Westminster City Council - because clearly a critical partner will be the local council. I became aware of your scrutiny report in this area. Of any part of London Westminster will understand these issues intimately and I am very keen that MOPAC hears from you and that we have a chance to hear what you would recommend and take on board some of your insights. Ian?

[From this point in the Challenge Meeting there were problems with the microphone used by Councillor Ian Rowley and Adam Taylor (Westminster Council). The following texts for Councillor Ian Rowley and Adam Taylor convey the essential points in their presentations but do not constitute a verbatim transcription.]

Ian Rowley: I will quickly outline what conclusions we came to. Afterwards we will talk about what we are actually doing as a result of this report in detail and also some of the broader issues around how we tackle violence against women and girls.

This report came out of a review of health inequality sponsored by the Department of Health and what came out as the biggest health inequality for sex workers actually was the risk of violence. If you are living with that type of stress, that type of risk, it leads to all other sorts of health problems; mental health problems, other problems. So we were advised by the police and other partnership officers that this is what we need to look at.

When we started we found it very difficult opaque problem to get grips with. To understand the dynamics of the sex industry within Westminster you have to understand the supply and the demand. We found that you can talk about things on a generic, pan-London basis all sorts of figures, but to have really effective implementation policy you need to understand, with some degree of granularity, as far as you can, the problem you are dealing with and within the particular borough you are working with.

So what you see in Westminster cannot be generalised into what you might see in Kensington and Chelsea or what you might see in Lambeth. There is sex work and there is violence. The major problem we are dealing with is quite complicated and quite difficult.

So what we found in Westminster is that the women who work in the sex industry perhaps working on the streets perhaps working in brothels, massage parlours, walk-ins. The street market is very well understood. It is a limited number of women – 30 to 40 and they tend to be born in this country and they tend to have drug dependency problems. The people in that area are well understood by the police. The police are working with them. They tend to see on street problems for residents. But that is actually only a small part of the overall sex market we are dealing with in Westminster. So when looking at violence against sex workers. There is violence against street sex workers but the hidden isolated violence is people working in the off street environment.

The next point is that people working in the sex industry in London -- it is not just women; it is also men and transgender. It is ethnically quite diverse. So you need to have an understanding of the ethnic mapping in terms of women working in the sex industry. In Westminster its Eastern European, South American and Asian. China and Thailand for example. British and then quite a diverse group of people working in the sex industry that is quite mobile. Previously you had a well-established sex worker community. Those have become more mobile and more transient so it makes it more difficult for the police to work with them and more difficult for excellent groups like the Terence Higgins Trust to actually form relationships with people.

Clearly for the work we do in speaking with partners we have on the task group, the police, NHS Clinics etc, there is a huge amount of under reported violence. Substantial, we can't put a number on it. We hear numbers being thrown around from a particular standpoint. We have to be very careful. We know it is understated by a large margin. There are issues of actually getting reporting of violence up. That is a critical question. It is issues of confidence with the police. That is understandable. The police get a 'bad rap' on this but it is unfair because this is illegal activity in some cases. There may be immigration status issues. The critical thing is to get confidence up and get reported incidents up. That means confidence building and one of our policy recommendations is about putting in some standard protocols and procedures with the borough and standard protocols and procedures when you are working with sex workers to try and get confidence up and reporting incidents up.

One thing we did find is there is an issue of getting stable policy structures within the boroughs. Borough commanders move around a lot and other key people move around also. In structures based purely on one to one contacts that doesn't work. It doesn't provide sustainability.

The other problem we face in Westminster is that there is not enough contact with the police dealing with this issue. There is the borough. In the SCD you have the trafficking unit. You have probably got a Sapphire unit. There can be inconsistent objectives from those three groups. That needs to be looked at.

There is the issue of opaqueness. What is going on. When we looked at a mapping exercise we have got over 45 groups claiming to work with sex workers in Westminster. We narrowed it down to a much smaller number that actually effectively is dealing with problems. So it is fragmented. Outreach see things the police would not see. The police would see something and outreach would not see it. The council would see something that the police would not see. The nature of what we are dealing with is opaque and fragmented. What you have got in Westminster is very dynamic so it is changeable. The supply chain changes, the demand changes. And so one of our other proposals is that we need to start a multi-agency group which is chaired by the council pulling along other bodies so we have consistent information, intelligence is shared and we have got good standard policies to deal with problems and understand the dynamics of those problems. We need the MPS at borough level to get consistent policies to get the quality up.

We also concluded that we need an independent sexual violence adviser (ISVA), and that was pretty critical. That is essentially not based in the Council but probably better located in one of the third sector bodies e.g. the Terence Higgins Trust or the Praed Street project in Westminster. That is to reach out to sex workers to build confidence, to get reported incidents up and help the police. Also, if there is a case, the police can refer it to the ISVA. This will then help the police in terms of progressing this case through the criminal justice system. And then there is the clinical side with the Havens. The ISVA is there to do clinical commissioning. This needs to be someone working with the community using the intelligence network to deal with cases and get care referrals.

We need also the funding to continue through groups such as the Terence Higgins Trust, the Praed Street project. That is vital. That is not just a source of income; that is actually a massive intelligence network that they have got built up by large numbers of people over many, many years, with huge amounts of intellectual capital lying in those organisations.

So those are broadly the issues that we came up with. We also noticed that the risk environment has gone up substantially. What you have is an increase in the supply of sex workers and an aggregate demand i.e. the amount of money which can be spent on buying services from sex workers has gone down in the economic situation and therefore you have got a collapse in pricing. Anecdotally, from the work we do, and speaking with sex workers the pricing has gone down by 50%. So you have a collapse in pricing. What you have is an

increased risk environment. Risk of violence. People may be working with clients they are not used to working with and that produces a substantive risk environment where sex workers are potentially subject to violence.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Chair): That is interesting and that, in some ways, explains -- does that accord with what you are seeing in the statistics you see? It is fascinating. OK.

Ian Rowley: You have got an environment which is much more risky to people working in the industry.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Chair): The biggest factor in reducing demand is that we all don't have any money?

Ian Rowley: The demand is still there just the amount of money spent on it is down.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Chair): That's why prices come down.

Ian Rowley: Yes, the prices come down. So you have got an increase in the people working in sex industry but the amount of money available to buy services from sex workers has gone down so supply has gone up. The amount of money available to buy services has gone down, therefore a collapse in pricing.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Chair): There issues around supply and demand and risk are very interesting.

Ian Rowley: I'll leave it to Adam (Taylor) to go into specific details of what we have done.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Chair): That was very insightful and I appreciate having heard ...

Adam Taylor: I'm glad to be prompted not to go into too much detail. One of the things that Councillor Rowley work has done is there are a lot of similarities because, as was said earlier, a number of key things come out of this in different areas that I was going to touch upon and link back to some of the recommendations.

There are four main points that I would like to make I think. The first was around the role of health and public health. Second was this is clearly a priority for the Mayor and for yourself and most, if not all, London boroughs have violence against women and girls as a priority. But it is how that actually translates into policy and practice on the ground because there is some inconsistency and discrepancy sometimes.

I also want to talk a little bit about -- Councillor Rowley has mentioned it already - the issue of resources in terms of the fact that our resources are shrinking. Mary made the point around the North London Rape Crisis Centre but it applies to most of us in specialist services around

violence against women and girls. Demand is very high and massive and increasing all the time. We could have all the resources in the world but it would never be enough. So there is the question that we do need to prioritise where we put those resources.

Lastly, I suppose, coming from the local authority perspective, it would be remiss of me not to sit here and talk about what the statutory role is in some of these services as well. In relation to health clearly domestic violence and violence more generally is an active cause of ill health and poor wellbeing, a huge drain on resources for health and the wider economy and, moreover, without safe and secure communities other public health initiatives to improve, people's exercising and socialising, mobility and so on and so forth are likely to fail because people do not feel safe in their own homes or safe in their own communities and do not engage with some of those wider services.

There is a developing consensus that domestic violence and violence as a whole should be treated as a public health priority. Clearly that is an area of massive flux over the last couple of years and it is not entirely clear how we address that.

I think the point Andy raised before the huge potential for interventions, particularly at a very young age both in terms of the impact that violence in the home has on those young people and their proclivity to then go on and suffer all manner of future ill consequences both in education and their own life of violence.

Despite all that I do not think it is quite clear at the moment what the role of health and health professionals is for this agenda. It is not always clearly defined. There is inconsistency about the way local authority health resources are targeted in this agenda and also commissioning is not always joined up. Mary talked about health being 20% of people approaching the rape crisis centre have suffered recent sexual abuse which, when we started the project, we would have thought would be squarely in the realms of Havens as opposed to rape crisis, but clearly that is not the case. Those two things are not joined up. Health put 50% of the funding into Havens but they do not put it in resources nor are they really involved in how the rape crisis centres are run in North London. That is something we need to look at.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Chair): Why is that?

Adam Taylor: Why do they not put the resources in?

Stephen Greenhalgh (Chair): Why the binary view of support of Havens 50% and no support for support rape crisis?

Adam Taylor: Also I guess it comes down to -- this word fractured has come up an awful lot. The health system is incredibly fractured and it is difficult to know who to engage and how to engage them. So there are opportunities there that maybe we are not exploiting.

The second point I wanted to make was around how the overarching priority of VAWG translates on the ground. For example, within Westminster, there is a dedicated team working with victims of domestic violence. The Community Safety Unit is being cut in half as part of local policing model changes. Whilst, from a delivery perspective in terms of dealing with the number of cases from a policing perspective, that might make sense, I do not know how it is going to work out in reality. I suppose from a partnership perspective it puts at risk a number of areas where that unit is involved in work, for example, around multi agency risk assessment conferences, around dedicated domestic violence courts, and other partnership interventions which we don't fully understand at the moment. The likelihood is they will not be able to engage in those agendas to the extent that they do at the moment. As I say, I do not think we fully understand what the consequences from those things are.

The third point I wanted to make is around shrinking of resources. We do have to recognise that no matter how much resource we put into this it is never likely to be enough to deal with the amount of demand that is out there. The demand that we know about but more significantly the demand that we don't know about. Therefore we do have to look at how we prioritise that work and, in Westminster's case, we have chosen, for the moment at least, to prioritise the work around domestic abuse, over and above some of the sexual violence areas. But we are considering, through tri-borough for example, but also more widely, how we can use things like cluster commissioning to free up some of those resources. Taking for example across the tri-borough area of Hammersmith, Kensington and Westminster, by and large we commission the same services from the same providers but we do it at three different times. Now clearly that is a waste of resources from the local authority's perspective. It is also wasting the resource of the provider who is having to make three different reports in three different sets of meetings and provide three different sets of bids and the management and admin has got to be split between those. We do think we can do better ourselves at making more effective use of those resources. There is an opportunity, through the funding from the Mayor's office, in how we have chosen to bid on the tri-borough basis to do that.

Lastly I think, with the fact that the voluntary sector and the commissioning services potentially will never be able to deal with demand we also have to look at ourselves as a local authority at how we address the problem ourselves. How we take some of our, both statutory and non-statutory responsibility seriously. In relation to VAWG we do need to do more to train up our own staff to identify the issues that everyone has spoken about today and to make sure that, as the first point of contact for all of those victims, that they do the best job they possibly can to engender the confidence of the person they are speaking to and to make sure that they get the right support first time.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Chair): Can I get you to wind up?

Adam Taylor: Yes, this is my last point. However, I have to say the nature of statutory thresholds is quite complex and often you find horrendous examples that we have touched

upon here today. Many of the women and families that we are talking about will not qualify for statutory intervention and that is often a difficult subject that we do have to broach.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Chair): OK. Steve O'Connell, do you have anything?

Steve O'Connell: We are pressed for time so a couple of points. As someone who has experience that reports and recommendations are sometimes more hope over expectation that they get delivered, a year ago you started this work and I must commend you for it. Have many of these recommendations been implemented? You did touch upon resources?

Ian Rowley: Multi agency modelling is now underway. We have appointed a Chairman. We have populated it. We have got DC Hymen from the borough who is going to be working at how they engage with Sapphire. The police got a very constructive letter back a week ago from DC (inaudible) from (several inaudible words), so we are going to be monitoring that. We will be calling these things in through the next six months.

Steve O'Connell: Indeed.

Ian Rowley: There are funding constraints but we are digging around to see what we can do. ISVA but that is highlighted. Adam (Taylor) can give more clarity on that. Training has started already with the scrutiny budget we are doing some training combined with the Terrence Higgins Trust working with safer neighbourhood sergeants and police online. But we do not control the third sector projects such as Praed Street and Terence Higgins Trust. We follow things through properly.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Chair): We expect nothing less, Ian, to be honest. We expect nothing less from you.

Steve O'Connell: Okay. My second question. I hope we have time to hear about the Lambeth model which is highly commended. I have read the recommendation. What seems to be a gap in your very, very good recommendations about exit strategy because we have heard a lot earlier about how important it is to have a managed exit strategy for sex workers to get out of that very difficult time. Within your recommendations are you working on that in Westminster?

Ian Rowley: That did not go as far. We had a time and a funding limit and we had to stop.

Steve O'Connell: Right, so you did not prioritise exit?

Stephen Greenhalgh (Chair): I would say, given what you have just described, that there is this huge demand but there is less cash, the risk levels have gone up tremendously. We hope you look at and consider working upon whether we can find sensible ways to provide that staged exit where we can as well.

Ian Rowley: Yes, we need to think about that.

Steve O'Connell: The next iteration.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Chair): That is a sign that we are moving on to the next topic.

Steve O'Connell: Thank you very much.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Chair): Thank you very much, Ian. Thank you, Steve. Let us move on to the next section and I reassure you that we are going to rattle through the lessons for London. We are not going to restrict you to three minutes. We are going to overrun so we will have a proper -- we have got lessons here from both London Probation and also from Lambeth. We are trying now to tie this together really so I think it would be quite nice to hear from Lambeth, following on from Westminster, to get a local view, because clearly both boroughs have the issue. Possibly finish off with Sonia then if that is okay.

Sonia Crozier: That is fine.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Chair): I know we have got Kristian (Aspinall) and Jade (Holvey), I believe, from Lambeth. Over to you.

Kristian Aspinall: I am going to give a quick overview of the strategic approach and policy towards violence against women and girls and, in particular, the Lambeth model when it comes to prostitution, and then my colleague, Jade, will give some detail on the actual work that we are delivering and the outcomes we have achieved.

So in terms of Lambeth in 2011 we developed and launched our first Violence Against Women and Girls strategy which was based on service user involvement and victim and survivor input so that brought together all the work around partnership and gender based violence.

One of the key aspects of that was ring-fencing and committing the funding at the start of the strategy so for the entire lifespan of the strategy Safer Lambeth has guaranteed the funding for all the services we committed that there will be no reduction in any violence against women and girls work for the entire three year lifespan of the strategy. In terms of prostitution we adopted the UN definition which classes prostitution as a form of violence against women in line with Mayors' strategy in 2010. In particular, from our prostitution policy statement, we absolutely as a partnership reject the notion that prostitution is a form of work or is a civil right. In terms of Safer Lambeth prostitution is viewed as a form of commercial sexual exploitation and we treat it as such. In particular in Lambeth with our quite substantial street based sex market violence, abuse, homelessness, poverty and substance misuse are at the root causes of street based prostitution in Lambeth.

Just to quickly highlight, in terms of substance misuse, as an example of the levels that we are talking about, last year we did a six week focus piece of work around the Olympics, supporting street based prostitution. Over 93% of the women who are known to services we encountered during that time period had a regular substance misuse issue so in terms of the Lambeth approach substance misuse was a significant concern for us.

What that did was lead to the development of the Lambeth model which was a shift away from our previous approach, which was based around enforcement and anti-social behavioural orders against prostitutes, which, ultimately, was not working. At best we were displacing the model whilst targeting the victims, women working in prostitution, and also not tackling the supply side at all. So we adopted an approach with four main areas and my colleague, Jade, is going to go into details on those. In short summary, our approach is around firstly tackling the supply side of sex. Targeting the buyers. Supporting women to exit prostitution, and their children and lifestyles. The third is preventative which is preventing women and girls from starting being involved in prostitution in the first place. Fourth was community involvement just by working with our communities to get their backing. Jade?

Jade Holvey: It has been very interesting to hear other colleagues' recommendations around how to approach prostitution and we are very honoured to be here today to talk to you about some of the work we are actually doing so we have actually picked up those recommendations and we are delivering against them in Lambeth. It is possible.

So as Kristian said we take a four pronged approach around tackling demand. Some of the work we are doing around tackling demand is that we have a standard operating protocol with the Lambeth police service which is around an implementation of a kerb crawler operation protocol. So we are tackling the demand side. We do this via different methods. We have 'test purchase' operations with Lambeth police and we also issue warning letters to those who we suspect are soliciting for the purpose of buying sex. Since December 2011, when we started our targeted operation, we have stopped 211 men in Lambeth. That is predominantly around the Brixton and Brixton Hill area. What we are seeing is that a significant proportion of those males are from the Lambeth and, in fact, the Brixton area but we are also seeing men travel across other boroughs, specifically our neighbouring boroughs, to buy sex in Lambeth and that will lead on to one of our recommendations and challenges.

We have also developed a media campaign so that we are clear with not only residents but with women who are involved in prostitution and with men who are buying sex around our approach, framing our approach into the violence against women and girls framework and being very clear on what our actions will be if you come into Lambeth to buy sex. We can share that campaign with you. Hounslow have recently adopted the campaign and they will be rolling it out across their borough also.

We have spoken a lot about supporting women to exit and that is key to our approach but to enable us to do that we commissioned specialist support services to support women to exit. We

commissioned an organisation called Trust who run an outreach service for us, a court diversion scheme, one to one work and group work. We also fund St Mungo's to run something called the Chrysalis Project which is an accommodation based support service for women who have been involved in prostitution to support them to exit. We know that accommodation is often a crucial problem so that is why we choose to commission a three step move on support service.

What we also have in Lambeth is something called the Gaia Centre, which we are very proud of. It is one of the first violence against women and girls centres in London, if not in the country, and they deal with all issues of gender based violence ranging from sexual violence prostitution, trafficking --

Stephen Greenhalgh (Chair): Sorry. Just making notes. It is the first in the country and then ...

Jade Holvey: It is one of the first violence against women and girls centres in the country.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Chair): And what is it called?

Jade Holvey: The Gaia Centre.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Chair): Sorry.

Jade Holvey: We are seeing a huge amount of referrals into the Gaia Centre. In the last 12 month we have seen over 1,500 referrals for gender based violence. Bringing together gender based violence under one roof, so to speak, we are seeing the crossover of women's experiences so in the past we dealt with women in a quite fragmented way so we would say, "If you're experiencing sexual violence you'll go to this service, domestic violence you'll go to this service". We were very clear that we wanted to improve our response to women so we brought it all under one roof. What we are seeing is around 40% of women who are accessing the Gaia Centre are experiencing various forms of gender based violence so they are experiencing a multitude of what we have been speaking about today.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Chair): Okay. So this has enabled you to see that by mapping that and cross referencing.

Jade Holvey: Yes. We spoke about the need for a multi-agency approach. We have developed that in Lambeth. We have something called the Lambeth Prostitution Group, which I chair, which is based on a map principle so it is bringing together key partners to identify and work through the areas of the mobility that women are experiencing and to look at improved exiting with a focus on safety.

We have also heard a lot about prevention and early intervention. Again we are doing work around that and we have developed a free violence against women and girls training programme

for Lambeth. We are on board with what other colleagues are saying around the need to respond so our training focuses on identification, assessment and an appropriate and good response. We need to get it right. So far we have trained over 350 professionals across Lambeth so we are seeing a real take up of that training programme.

We are also doing work in schools around raising awareness of gender based violence, tackling and challenging inappropriate behaviours and this week we have launched a teen abuse campaign working with the Home Office to encourage younger women who are experiencing domestic violence to access the support.

We have an early intervention scheme within the Gaia Centre so we have two workers who work with 13 to 16 years picking up on some of the concerns that Carlene raised around gang affiliation, youth offending, exploitation. Those workers really do do a lot of targeted outreach where young women are accessing services to pull them in to our specialist support and support them around those exploitation concerns.

Finally it is important for us to keep our community informed and community engagement is also key to what we are doing. That is supported through our media campaign. We also have written to residents in affected areas reassuring them that we are actually tackling this as an issue in Lambeth and being clear around what our approach is.

We have also put articles in the local press. We have done press releases. We have briefed our councillors. Any way in which we can talk to people around the work that we are doing we will take those opportunities.

Some of the challenges that we have to think about are how we will address issues such as prostitution through the local policing model and the need for a pan-London approach. In Lambeth we do not work in a bubble and what other boroughs do can have an impact on what we do. So we know that men from other boroughs will access Lambeth to buy sex and we also know that women from other boroughs will come to Lambeth to sell sex.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Chair): So your media campaign which has been picked up by Hounslow, what happens if you buy sex in Lambeth?

Jade Holvey: If you are caught soliciting for sex or buying sex then we will issue you a warning letter or we will do a test purchase and we will arrest you. So there are various methods that we will use - and we are using them.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Chair): So warning through to arrest.

Jade Holvey: Yes. We also have a care escalation process so if you come to notice on more than one occasion for attempting to buy sex we will take various steps. We will look at an

unacceptable behaviour contract or we will look at anti-social behaviour orders. So far we have only had one repeat.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Chair): Your focus, essentially, is on the people that are buying. The focus I understood from Westminster was to -- because prostitution is not illegal whereas a brothel is illegal. So your focus in Westminster has been on enforcement and closure of brothels as I understand from your report.

Ian Rowley: Brothels are illegal. In Westminster there aren't that many brothels. First of all you have got to know whether brothels exist. The police just spend all their time trying to close them and they reopen them again. That is the enforcement problem for the police. Therefore the police have to prioritise which brothels they close.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Chair): So that kind of enforcement does not really work.

Ian Rowley: I listen to what you say in Lambeth. It seems like mainly a street prostitution problem fuelled by drugs, right? But in Westminster it is a small minority. In Westminster it is a relatively small problem and the council is very effective, the police are very effective in dealing with it. For us in Westminster it is the rest that is huge. If you are going to talk about suppressing demand I agree we need to be looking at suppressing demand but perhaps if we were to eliminate the demand for prostitution in Westminster I do not think it is actually feasible or realistic a target. So what you have to look at is the different world as it is and what is the reality in Westminster. We can probably chisel away at the more unacceptable aspects of the demand and that is where you are going to get the biggest social impacts. Yes, we need to look at that. But to presume we have got a global demand in Westminster it is not just Westminster residents who supply the sex market. It is not. It is actually people coming from all over the world to Westminster. That is the issue we are dealing with. You have got a supply which is not a street based prostitution of local residents; it is a global supply. How do we deal with that? I want pragmatic solutions that will have some impact and improve things.

Jade Holvey: I do think that we are quite pragmatic as well and we are looking at what we are seeing in Lambeth.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Chair): I do not want to hear a row between two boroughs. That is not the purpose of MOPAC Challenge! I think the point is that you cannot generalise about the problem.

Jade Holvey: No, you have to look at local issues.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Chair): The split between on street and off street is going to be different across boroughs. How you tackle this. There may be some common themes but there may be some practical differences based on problems as they present themselves. I think we are flexible enough to understand that. I get the issues that have been raised and I am very

interested actually in your exit service and the providers you use and I would like to encourage my colleagues, if they have not already, to pick up on some of the things that you are already working on. We need to now move on, if that is okay, just because we are so pressed for time, but thank you very much indeed for that.

Now the last person we need to hear from is Sonia(Crozier), Deputy Chief Executive of London Probation Service. Sonia, sorry about that.

Sonia Crozier: I will be as quick as I can. Just to do context very quickly the London Probation Service supervises about 30,000 offenders in the community across the 32 London boroughs. Of those 30,000 90% are men and 10% of women. Of the 10% women that we supervise unsurprisingly, yes, they have committed crime but you will often find female offenders have experienced high levels of violence either in a domestic situation or out on the streets because of the lifestyle they are engaged in. We are absolutely committed to developing our women only provision across London. We have got some fabulous examples of working in partnership, for example, Women at the Well and Minerva, to actually attend to the complexity of need that women often present either when they come out from prison or they are on community orders.

In terms of our contribution to safeguarding it is estimated - sorry I do not have the source data for this - approximately 200,000 children a year are impacted by the consequence of parental imprisonment. Absolutely does not surprise me, the observation that was made earlier about one of the vulnerability principles being a parent who has experienced custody. Obviously that is also reflected in some of the targeting around troubled families as well.

Where we see probation having a key role in terms of child sexual exploitation firstly through the identification of children who potentially could be at risk we have currently reviewed all our policies and we have revamped all our training now around child protection to raise awareness amongst our officer group and we have got a launch event, which is a multi-agency event, on 21 June to actually explore in more detail the probation contribution to this very important subject. I think we are one of the first probation trusts in the country that --

Stephen Greenhalgh (Chair): Is this a London launch?

Sonia Crozier: London launch, yes. 21 June. I think MOPAC have been invited to that. In terms of the identification of potential children at risk the vehicle to do that is certainly through our engagement with MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hubs), going forward and early evaluations of MASH are already beginning to signal some benefit in terms of bringing the probation case load and the mapping across in terms of potential children at risk.

The other area where we have got a contribution to make is obviously our engagement around serious group offending or gang issues. Again, our newly created centralised unit strengthening the information exchange with the police and Trident in terms of mapping across the probation

case load and then identifying those who are either directly involved in gangs or associated with. It connects to the point Martin made earlier. It is about changing to bridge these intelligence pools together. That is the challenge for us in future. If you have got intelligence around gangs you have got intelligence coming out of MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hubs), out of ION(?). How you connect those pools of information round different cohorts and offenders I think is the big challenge and where the benefits will be going forward.

Obviously it is not just about the identification. It is what happens after someone has been convicted where we also have a contribution to make both in reducing the occurrence of re-victimisation so programmes that we deliver around sex offender treatment programmes and domestic violence. Let us not forget as well we have a duty, with our victim liaison officers, to offer advice and support to the victims of serious sexual violence crime post-sentence once the individual has been convicted. Similarly, in terms of the prohibitions that we can put on licences and community orders, can also protect victims going forward.

That sums up the probation contribution.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Chair): Thank you very much. Any questions from colleagues? A question from Jeremy.

Jeremy Mayhew: With women who have been convicted what is the process of engaging with them? As we have heard earlier, more often than not, they have other problems as well. What is the standard practice, so to speak, post-conviction, or post-sentence, of engaging with such women?

Sonia Crozier: The standard practice is obviously to identify what are the factors that brought them to the court's attention in the first place and then to set out a supervision plan which identifies those steps that you can put in place to stop that happening again.

Jeremy Mayhew: They would always be offered that?

Sonia Crozier: They would if they are on statutory licence or community order. What we are committed to is to signpost women into women only services because that works best. But I have to say that the provision of that varies considerably across London. The Minerva Project is absolutely brilliant. All our women offenders in that part of London go to that project. But you step into other boroughs, particularly the outer London boroughs, and your provision for women only services diminishes. That is the challenge going forward.

Jeremy Mayhew: There are obviously examples of people who then get convicted etc. etc. but that is a very good gateway to try to get people on a new course.

Sonia Crozier: Absolutely. You want to get them away from the criminal justice system and engaged in community provision. Where it exists that is exactly what we do. Where it does not then the challenge for us, with our other partner agencies, is to grow that provision for female offenders.

Jeremy Mayhew: Do you have a way of measuring success?

Sonia Crozier: We measure success through reduced reoffending, through compliance with the order.

Jeremy Mayhew: And you do that?

Sonia Crozier: And we do that - and service user feedback as well. So you ask your service user, "Did you get something out of probation?" and if the answer is, "Yes" then that is the good thing.

Jeremy Mayhew: I wonder whether there is something here, not for now, about identifying what works and what does not. And what is conducive to what is working.

Sonia Crozier: What works is providing people with those things that get stability back in their life. Whether that is drug or alcohol treatment, somewhere to live and a better sense of regard for themselves.

Joan Smith: Do you have a role in women who have committed prostitution? Do you work with them to exit prostitution?

Sonia Crozier: Yes. The partnership that we have with Women at the Well is a good example because they are very specialist in that area. So if the crimes do centre around prostitution then, yes, we want to access women's services that exit them away from that.

Jade Holvey: Can I just say something?

Stephen Greenhalgh (Chair): Yes, sure. Of course.

Jade Holvey: In relation to women's offender we got some money through the London Crime Prevention Fund from MOPAC - so thank you for that - to look at women's offending and we will be looking at what has happened in Minerva and working with the probation service in developing a more holistic and coordinated approach to female offenders in Lambeth and we would be happy to share that with you once we have got into the development stages.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Chair): That would be very, very helpful.

We were due to have a further six or seven experts but we would have been here until 4.00pm so we did not hear from the London Safeguarding Children but there is an awful lot of fascinating evidence that has been presented today and I want to thank everybody for raising this.

If I am struck by anything it is just how broad and, to use Ian's phrase, opaque, complex and fragmented this problem is, to start with. There are some messages. Virtually everyone in their presentation talked about the complexity. Certainly, although it is a catch all phrase, violence against women and girls, there are so many forms of violence against women and girls that we have touched on as well. You cannot start to group these things in a very simplistic way so each area from grooming of women that you cannot generalise to how you deal with prostitution borough by borough and you cannot generalise.

I am struck that there is an aspiration to tackle this in a sensible way. I am struck by a couple of things really, to summarise. It must increase confidence not only in the Metropolitan Police Service but the wider criminal justice system so that is the first thing that we need to think about and start to find markers, or confidence, to see that we can see an improvement over time. You cannot see those massive disparities in different parts of London. That has to be the first point.

We need to make sure that the confidence in policing extends to the Crown Prosecution Service and the courts themselves and the work that MOPAC are doing to ensure that we have a court system that is swifter for Londoners, but also more specialised and more sensitive to some of the issues. That is very, very important as well.

Both boroughs talked about protocols. I think this is something where the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime needs to think how we can supply best practice on protocols to deal with some of these issues. Where there are good robust protocols and beacons of good practice we need to be an agency that can disseminate that more widely across London.

Ian, you mentioned the role as not part of the state but very independent. These ISVA/IDVAs (Independent Sexual/Domestic Violence Advisors).

Ian Rowley: Yes.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Chair): That I know is very patchy provision across London. I know certainly when I was in South London ISVA/IDVAs are incredibly important and mapping and understanding their role and ensuring that there is enough provision there is important.

Lastly, health. You mentioned health issues. We can play a part in MOPAC in ensuring that they are not an absent partner and drawing them in to these issues via the Health and Wellbeing Boards locally – make sure we have them to engage across the piece. That is generally the call around multi-agency working so the MASH principles, the early read outs seem very positive

about that so we need to do what we can to break down the service siloes and get public services and the voluntary sector to continue to work together to ensure that we eradicate violence against women and girls.

Thank you all very much indeed for coming along and I hope you will provide your feedback formally as part of our consultation on the refresh of the Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy. Thank you very much indeed.