

A New Met for London

# MPS CHILDREN'S STRATEGY



METROPOLITAN  
POLICE

MORE  
TRUST

LESS  
CRIME

HIGH  
STANDARDS









# Contents

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## MPS Children's Strategy

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|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| Commissioner Foreword | 4 |
|-----------------------|---|

---

|              |   |
|--------------|---|
| Our ambition | 6 |
|--------------|---|

---

|  |   |
|--|---|
| The role of the Police<br>in safeguarding children | 7 |
|--|---|

---

|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| Scope and language | 8 |
|--------------------|---|

---

|                        |    |
|------------------------|----|
| A Child First approach | 10 |
|------------------------|----|

---

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Data picture of children<br>involved with the MPS in 2023 | 11 |
|---|----|

---

|            |    |
|------------|----|
| More Trust | 14 |
|------------|----|

---

|                       |    |
|-----------------------|----|
| Strategic Objective 1 | 14 |
|-----------------------|----|

---

|            |    |
|------------|----|
| Less Crime | 19 |
|------------|----|

---

|                       |    |
|-----------------------|----|
| Strategic Objective 2 | 19 |
|-----------------------|----|

---

|                       |    |
|-----------------------|----|
| Strategic Objective 3 | 28 |
|-----------------------|----|

---

|                |    |
|----------------|----|
| High Standards | 32 |
|----------------|----|

---

|                       |    |
|-----------------------|----|
| Strategic Objective 4 | 32 |
|-----------------------|----|

---

|                       |    |
|-----------------------|----|
| Strategic Objective 5 | 37 |
|-----------------------|----|

---

|            |    |
|------------|----|
| Next steps | 39 |
|------------|----|

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# Commissioner Foreword

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Around two million children live in London, or about a fifth of the population. The protection challenges they present for officers are wide-ranging: from a 13 year old being exploited and forced to transport drugs to an 8 year old growing up in a home full of domestic abuse, or a violent 17 year old with a knife. In 2023 there were approximately 61,000 child victims of crime and 51,000 children who were suspected of committing a crime. According to the Office for National Statistics, in England and Wales, domestic abuse is present in around 4% of households with a child under 16, rising to 19% for single parent households. Children can experience crime in a variety of ways and being excellent across this range of very different challenges is a strategic ambition for the Met that this strategy is designed to help.

Childhood creates a unique policing challenge: while any under-18 is a child in law and deserving of protection, any child of 10 years or above is over the age of criminal responsibility. This is the unclear line, set by Parliament, which we ask police officers to patrol; an eight-year period in which children are still children and may be victims and witnesses but also engage in criminal behaviour.

The children's strategy is an attempt to recognise explicitly what the Metropolitan Police has not always got right in the past: that in policing the line between vulnerability and criminality we may sometimes have focused too hard on the criminality we can see, not the vulnerability that lies behind it. It is not a 'free pass' for childhood criminality: where under-18s are engaged in high harm behaviour, officers will use the full

range of their powers to protect the public and the children themselves, and sometimes this requires the use of force. It is, however, a pledge to work better, with our safeguarding partners and with children, to see the 'Child First' and adapt our response to recognise their needs.

All officers will receive new training in childhood vulnerability. Ultimately it is in everyone's interest that we address the risks which may be driving children to engage in criminal behaviour. It will keep children, and society, safer.



**Sir Mark Rowley QPM** |  
Commissioner |  
Metropolitan Police Service



# Our ambition

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**We will keep children in London safe, build their trust and bring to justice those who abuse and exploit them.**

## More Trust

- We will seek to build strong and trusted relationships with London's children to strengthen confidence in policing.

## Less Crime

- We will increase our efforts to prevent and reduce crime committed against children. We will be more precise and proactive in identifying exploiters and abusers of children to mitigate the risks they pose and bring offenders to justice.
- We will ensure children who engage in criminal behaviour have access to appropriate and effective interventions.

## High Standards

- We will ensure our officers have the capacity and capability to safeguard all children.
- We will improve our partnership working, setting out clearly the role of the police in keeping children safe.





# The role of the Police in safeguarding children

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The Police, alongside local authorities, health and education partners have statutory responsibilities to safeguard and promote the welfare of local children, identifying and responding to their individual needs, these are set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 and the Children's Act 1989/2004. These responsibilities form the basis for this strategy.

This Strategy must be read in conjunction with relevant law and guidance governing exercise of police powers in relation to children, including The Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and associated Codes of Practice.

Police encounter children in a variety of unique circumstances, in cases where an individual is suspected of engaging in criminal behaviour or in cases where they are victims or witnesses. This is inherently challenging as the full circumstances of encounters may not be immediately obvious, and may involve simultaneously safeguarding children whilst protecting others from children engaged in offending behaviour. As such police have a unique insight into children's situations and sharing this insight is vital to ensure a coordinated partnership response is informed by the experiences of children who are victims, witnesses, and offenders.

The law also creates criminal liability for children over the age of 10. This creates a unique challenge for policing amongst safeguarding partners to discharge both these duties and also our duties confronting threats and

tackling criminality. It is recognised that some children repeatedly engage in high risk criminal behaviour which may require our officers and staff to exercise the full range of their powers in order to both protect them and the wider public.

Whilst we are committed to working in partnership, we also want to use this strategy to set out where policing can best respond to children. Police expertise is most effective in: identifying and safeguarding victims, investigating crime, pursuing perpetrators and providing emergency responses. These are our primary functions that we deliver working with communities to prevent future crime.

Our safeguarding partners are better equipped and trained to deliver complementary services including working with families, developing support plans, securing access to resources, advocacy, specialist support, diversionary interventions and monitoring. There are also key duties that our partners are required to deliver. For example, local authorities have a role in providing safe accommodation and appropriate adults and the youth justice service provide diversionary services. Safeguarding partners must deliver their individual responsibilities effectively and work closely as a partnership structure in order to effectively safeguard children.



# Scope and language

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**The primary audience for this strategy is MPS officers and staff to inform practice and policy. The strategy will also be of interest and relevance to our safeguarding partners.**

This MPS strategy focuses on the policing of children aged under 18. We have decided to use the term children when talking about under 18s. We recognise that some children aged 12-17 often prefer to be referred to as young people, however it is important that from a policing and safeguarding perspective, that in the eyes of the law, under 18s are rightly deemed to be children and

as such need to be afforded the relevant safeguards. Whilst we understand the views of our young stakeholders, it is most important is that officers see those under 18 as children first and act accordingly.

This is a five year strategy and will be supported by an implementation plan and overseen by a delivery group.









# A Child First approach

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**Child First is an approach that has been developed using evidence of what works to reduce children engaging in criminal behaviour, achieve positive outcomes and create safer communities. Child First recognises that children are different to adults; they have different needs and vulnerabilities. Child First seeks to treat children as individuals and for professionals to understand the wider context of their lives. Child First ensures that work with children acknowledges their status as a child rather than treating them as adults.**

## **What Child First means for policing**

The National Police Chief's Council states that the following principles should be followed when policing children:

- It is crucial that in all encounters with the police those below the age of 18 should be treated as children first.
- The vulnerability of children should be identified and responded to effectively in order to protect them from harm.
- In all situations where children come to the attention of the police a full understanding of their circumstances should be sought. It is unusual for a child to engage in serious criminality without being a victim of circumstance or offending themselves. This may not affect the way we utilise the criminal justice system but should open our eyes to alternative avenues for addressing their behaviour.

- Every interaction is both an intervention and an opportunity. Engagement should be positive and opportunities sought to enhance our relationship with them.
- The voices of children must be heard and their opinions respected.

It is important to note that a Child First approach does not necessarily mean that a criminal justice intervention should not be used and there will be instances that we will need to make use of coercive, intrusive and on occasion use of force powers made available to us in law. Through this strategy it is our aim, in this operational context and in the provision of aftercare, to be more attuned to the vulnerability of children we deal with and take a Child First approach.



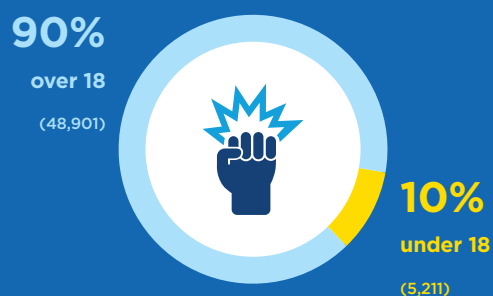
# Data picture of children involved with the MPS in 2023



Homicide victims



People Proceeded Against (PPA) for Homicide



People Proceeded against for violence against the person



People Proceeded Against (PPA) for Victims of Violence Against the Person



People Proceeded Against (PPA) for knife crime offences



People stopped and searched



Missing people (Feb 23-Jan 24)



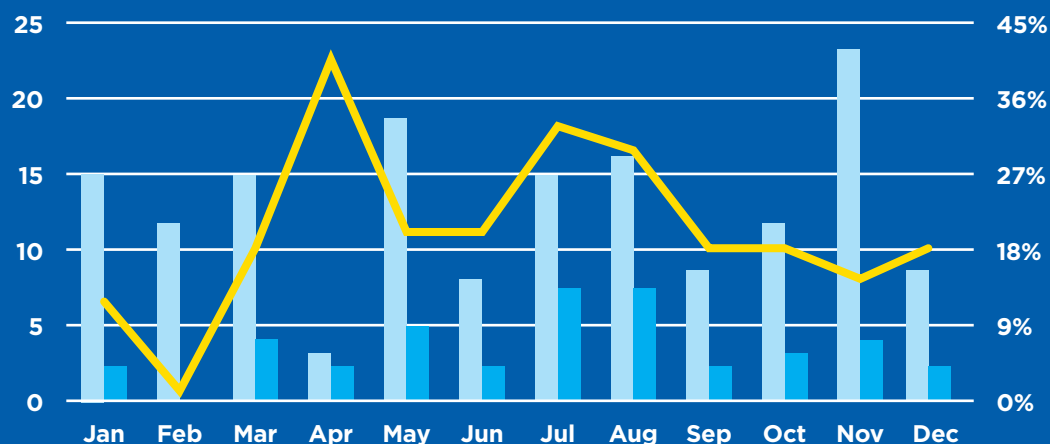
Missing incidents (Feb 23-Jan 24)

## Data Picture of children involved with the MPS in 2023

People Proceeded Against (PPA) for Homicide, by Age Group, from 01/01/2023 to 31/12/2023



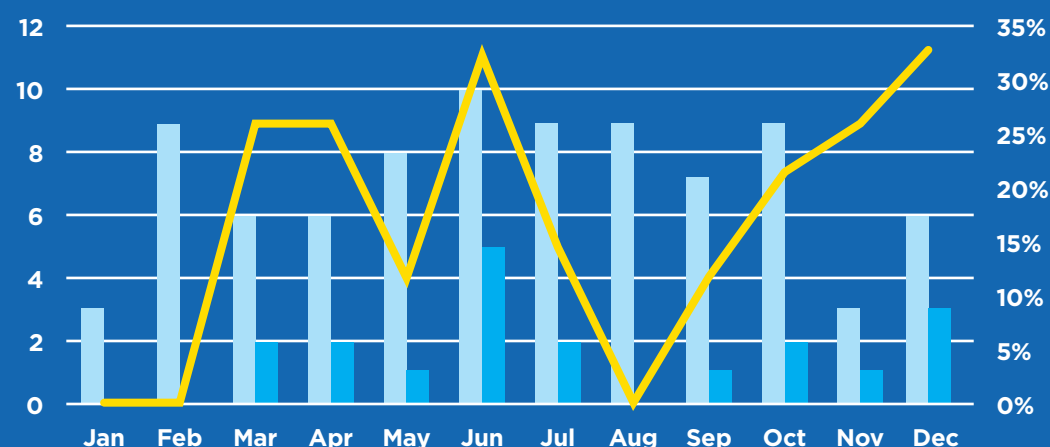
Over 18  
Under 18  
% of Under 18



Homicide Victims, by Age Group, from 01/01/2023 to 31/12/2023



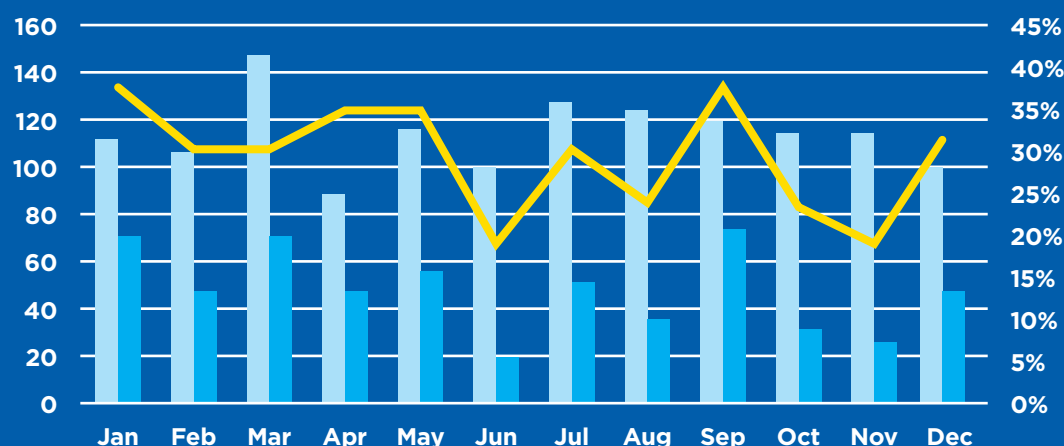
Over 18  
Under 18  
% of Under 18



People Proceeded Against (PPA) for Knife Offences, by Age Group, from 01/01/2023 to 31/12/2023



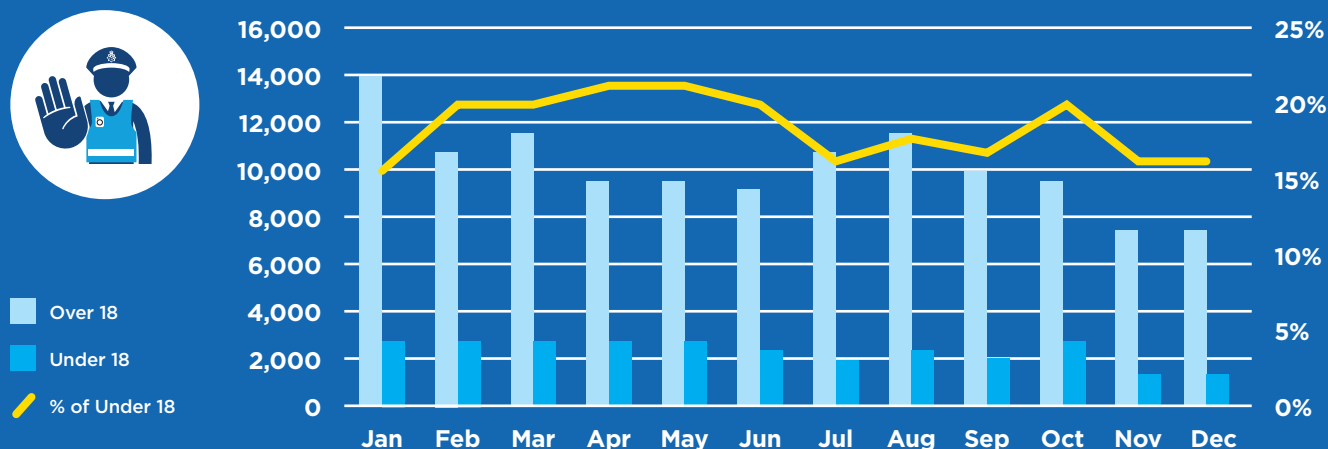
Over 18  
Under 18  
% of Under 18



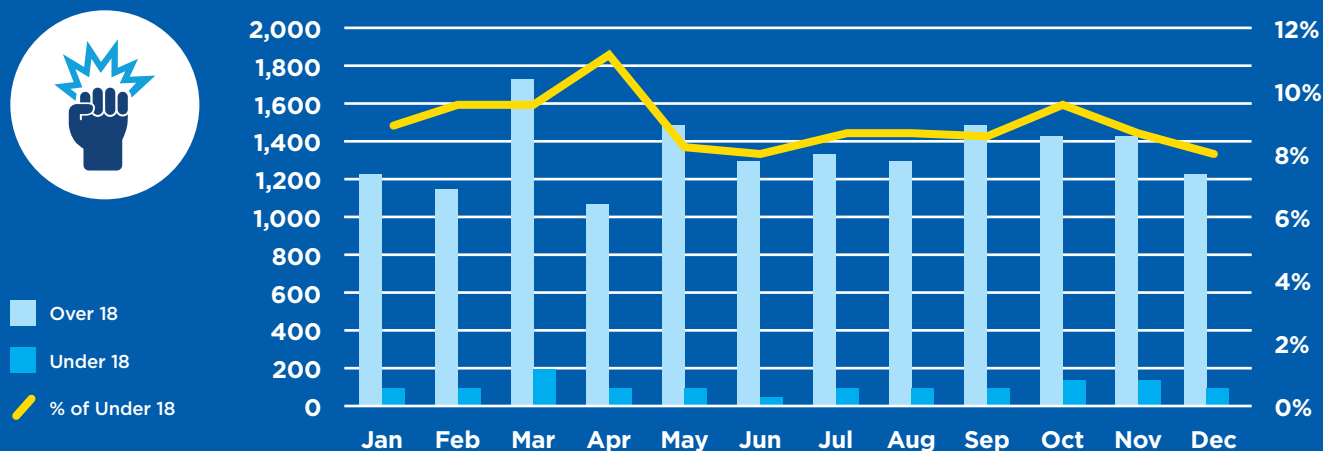


## Data Picture of children involved with the MPS in 2023

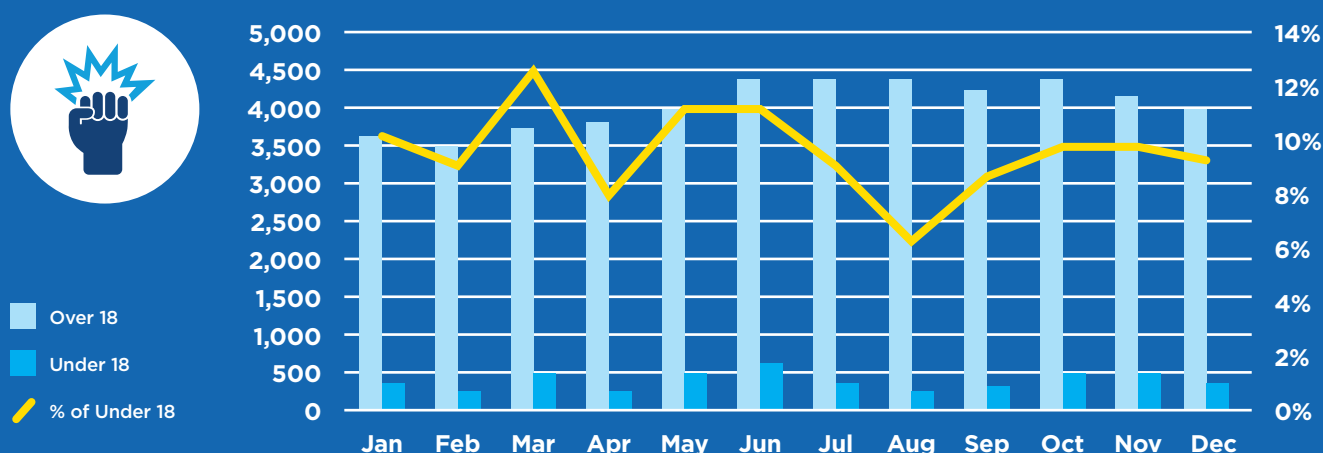
The number of people stopped and searched, by Age Group, from 01/01/2023 to 31/12/2023



The number of People Proceeded Against for Violence Against the Person, by Age Group, from 01/01/2023 to 31/12/2023



The number of Victims of Violence Against the Person, by Age Group, from 01/01/2023 to 31/12/2023



# More Trust

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## **STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1: We will seek to build strong and trusted relationships with London's children to strengthen confidence in policing.**

In the New Met for London we set out our ambition to embed the values of policing by consent. Consent to police in London is not a given and in order to tackle and prevent crime we need to rebuild trust. Having trusted relationships with children is a key element of Child First.

By fostering trust with children we aim to better identify risk and protect them and wider communities, from future harm. By building a stronger relationship with London's children we will gain greater understanding of the crimes affecting them and be able to design better prevention strategies. We want to establish relationships with children that will last into adulthood, building increased confidence in the next generation.

Building better relationships with children in London will deter more offenders and bring more perpetrators to justice. High profile cases of child exploitation across the UK have shown us that the voice of children must be heard if we are to effectively tackle exploiters and not inappropriately blame or criminalise children.

Our priority aims for building trust with children in London are to:

- Tackle discrimination
- Improve our relationship with children
- Strengthen links between wider neighbourhood teams and education settings
- Deliver precise and proportionate stop and search
- Promote routes into policing careers and volunteering





## **Build trust – Tackle discrimination**

In developing this strategy we asked children how we could build their trust and improve their confidence, their biggest priority was assurance that the police are anti-racist. The MPS has worked in collaboration with London communities to develop a London Race Action Plan (LRAP) that aims to create an anti-racist police service, improve service delivery to black people and trust. Key enablers to achieve this will include improving cultural competence at all levels, improving our data and transparency and involving black people and black children in all that we do. LRAP will focus on black people including black children due to the disproportionate outcomes seen and lowest trust levels. The hope is to seek benefits more widely across all ethnic minority communities in London.

Adultification bias skews the perception of the capacity and capability of children, leading to others (including professionals) viewing them as more grown up or adult. This particularly affects black children, who might be viewed primarily as a threat rather than as a child who needs support<sup>1</sup>. This can lead to missed opportunities to intervene with support and instead cause harm. It can also damage children's confidence in the police. This is reflected in MOPAC's recent public attitudes survey that shows that only 12% of young black Londoners agree the police treat everyone fairly.

We commit to better understanding how adultification bias occurs and to identifying practical ways of reducing it amongst our officers.

### **1. ACTION**

**Working with experts in adultification the MPS will commission learning on adultification bias and how it impacts responses to children for all officers and staff who may come into contact with children as part of their role.**

As we committed in the New Met for London Plan we will not tolerate discrimination of any kind (e.g misogyny, homophobia and racism) against Londoners, our people, or anybody else we work with. Any officer or member of staff who is found to have discriminated will be dealt with robustly.

## **Build trust – Improve our relationships with children**

We appreciate that every encounter with police forms children's perceptions of the police and the legitimacy of policing is established with children in London. By understanding children's experiences and identifying any potential vulnerabilities we can build a better intelligence picture and develop our understanding of how to tackle crime affecting them. To do this officers need to be professionally curious, taking time to ask children, be they victims, witnesses or drawn into criminal activity, about their experiences and record not just their verbal responses but also their non-verbal cues. This allows officers to gather the best evidence to, develop an intelligence picture and to create a record that aids future decision-making.

<sup>1</sup> Davis 2022; Davis and Marsh, 2020; Georgetown Law Centre on Poverty and Inequality, 2019

## 2. ACTION

**We will work with experts to improve our existing training provision focused on working with children. We will prioritise improving officers' communication, observation and listening skills and their understanding of neurodiversity and how mental ill health can manifest in children.**

As our methods of communication change through use of technology and social media we will evolve engagement methods in line with the needs of the children we serve. We already use specific communications to target school age children to warn them of the risk of street robbery, targeting specific social media platforms in hotspots and at peak times and using independent partners to help convey messages. We want to develop this further and increase our media engagement with children to improve their trust through being more relatable and relevant to young people, building intelligence to better understand how we can tackle crime affecting them

## 3. ACTION

**We will develop tailored messages aimed at secondary aged children, using relevant platforms and channels to help us deliver messages about crime prevention and build their trust**

We are committed to building positive working relationships with children across London, so we can better understand their concerns and priorities and work with them to prevent crime. We will work to engage a diverse range of communities and organisations that represent children e.g. the Children's Commissioner, to capture and reflect on a cross section of children's experiences and also update on progress on the strategy.

## 4. ACTION

**We will ensure we work with children from a diverse range of communities in the delivery of this strategy, either through creating a bespoke group or working with existing forums. In addition we will ensure that a wide range of children's voices are captured in each Basic Command Unit (BCU) as part of their standard community engagement and fed back to the delivery group.**

### **Build trust – Strengthen links between neighbourhood teams and education settings**

We recognise that schools are inherently safe places for children and have a key role in preventing crime and keeping children safe. We are committed to improving strategic links with schools, with an emphasis on ensuring that young people are safe outside of the school environment. Threading the Children Strategy across Neighbourhood Policing, we aim to build trust by increasing the breadth of officers and PCSOs to which young people become familiar.

We have invested in an additional Neighbourhood Superintendent for every borough who will work with communities to agree their local Safer Schools Partnership plan. Alongside this, a wider range of officers will be trained in working with children, which will become a core function rather than a specialist capability.

In taking this approach we will work to:

- Minimise the risk of Serious Violence and crime to children by intervening with those already involved in criminal activity.



- Provide reassurance to children, parents and the wider community through greater visibility and accessibility by developing partnership activities, such as safer routes to and from schools.

We will continue to work with key partners to create safe spaces outside of schools and to ensure that children on the cusp of criminality are provided the right interventions through a youth referral system.

Concerns have been raised that the use of Safer Schools Officers risked disproportionately affecting children with special education needs, children with disabilities and children from ethnic minority backgrounds. In light of this we have committed to collect and analyse data about the equality implications of police officers working closely with educational establishments.

## 5. ACTION

**We will integrate trained Schools Officers into Neighbourhood Ward teams to achieve a wider community focussed crime prevention approach to support the safety of children both inside and outside of school.**

### **Build Trust – Deliver precise and fair stop and search**

Knife crime is of concern to the public and in particular the impact it has on children's safety. In 2023 583 children were proceeded against for knife offences in London, 30% of all people proceeded against.

Stop and search is an important tool in keeping children and the wider public safe from weapon enabled crime. As a law enforcement agency there will inevitably be incidents where intrusive and or forceful powers need to be

deployed against children, such as stop and search or on occasion more thorough searches where intimate parts are exposed where children present a risk to themselves or others.

Many of the concerns about stop and search, raised by the children we consulted with, were based not around the tactic being used but rather around how it is deployed. The New Met for London Plan commits to introducing a new Stop and Search Charter. We are working on the development of the Charter working directly with communities to help define the principles of how stop and search should be conducted.

We are also working to ensure that safeguarding is considered in every stop and search encounter with a child. We are currently piloting a new initiative that is considering the information we obtain during a stop and search and, where there are wider safeguarding concerns, how these young people can benefit from timely support and interventions. We are also developing a new toolkit that will identify early those who are children who are most searched to ensure we are recognising safeguarding concerns and making appropriate referrals.

We already do significant work to monitor stop and search and we are reinforcing this by introducing a new process to systematically review selected body worn camera footage across London and use it to identify and address discriminatory practices.

## 6. ACTION

**We will conduct a Pan London safeguarding pilot on stop and search and introduce a new process to review stop and search which will help identify and address discriminatory practices.**

## Build Trust – Promote routes into policing careers and volunteering

### Volunteer Police Cadets

As our primary youth engagement and diversion programme, Cadets support operational policing, crime prevention and community safety. The Cadet cadre is richly diverse: in January 2024 49% of cadets were from black and minority ethnic backgrounds and 48% were female. Cadets actively support children from vulnerable backgrounds to create a safe space for young Londoners to engage with the police and gain a wider understanding of policing in London.

### 7. ACTION

We are committed to maintaining a Cadet unit in each Basic Command Unit (BCU). We will deliver an engaging programme that will allow young people to gain valuable skills, contribute to their community and build their confidence

## How will we measure success?

### STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1

To renew our relationships with all London's children, building positive and trusted relationships and improved confidence in policing

We aim to increase the percentage of children aged 11-16 surveyed by MOPAC who:

- Have a good opinion of the police
- Feel they can trust the Met
- Believe the police treat everyone fairly.





# Less Crime

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**STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2: We will increase our efforts to prevent and reduce crime committed against children. We will be more precise and proactive in identifying exploiters and abusers of children to mitigate the risks they pose and bring offenders to justice.**

This strategy aims to reduce crime through putting in place crime prevention strategies, identifying those at risk of serious harm, being more precise in pursuing perpetrators and providing better support for victims. We also want to ensure that we are identifying children who are engaging in criminal activity and that they are dealt with in a proportionate and effective way.

As children are significantly affected by the following crime types they are priority areas for the strategy.

## **Less Crime – Prevent serious violence**

The 2023 Youth Endowment Fund's survey into youth, violence and vulnerability found that 25% of 13 to 17-year-olds in London had been a victim of violence. This is the highest rate in the country. The survey also found there is a significant overlap in children who are perpetrators of violence and victims. 48% of teenage children who said they had committed violence were also victims of violence.

## **Knife Crime**

Anecdotally much knife crime is linked to high-harm gangs, illegal drugs markets and violence involving children. We know children who fear attack misguidedly seek to arm themselves for their own protection. Our work to tackle knife crime is currently focused on:

- Education and Engagement, e.g. sharing stories of those impacted by knife crime;
- Working with local retailers, trade organisations and relevant online sellers;
- Targeted activity in violence hotspots;
- Weapon sweeps in high knife crime areas.

As part of their community crime fighting plans, each of our 12 Basic Command Units have their own localised plans to tackle knife crime in their neighbourhoods. These focus on preparation, prevention, protection and pursuing perpetrators.

In addition to our business as usual activities we carry out a biannual national week of intensified activity around knife crime offences, which focuses on education and increasing awareness of the

impact of knife crime. We also run Operation Nightingale in which 75 of the most violent hotspots are subject to enhanced activity to reduce serious violence. This is supported with dedicated problem solving activity, to understand and address the underlying causes of serious violence in hotspots.

We have an officer, embedded in London's Violence Reduction Unit (VRU), which is part of the Mayor's office and works along-side MOPAC. The VRU invest in activities that provide guidance and positive opportunities for young people, their families and communities aimed at early intervention and prevention of crime. Collaboration with community and youth work organisations, particularly in prevention efforts is very important and we will be working with the newly commissioned MOPAC Violence and Exploitation Service which aims to provide interventions to 500-600 children and young people each year.

### **Gangs**

We designate certain urban street gangs as High-Harm Gangs (HHGs), based on their links to homicide, firearms discharges and county lines drug supply. Using intelligence we map out gang associates to identify those at risk, which includes children who may be vulnerable to exploitation. This helps inform operational and partnership activity with the intention of protecting victims and preventing exploitation. We work with our partners and external agencies to ensure that all available diversionary and disruption opportunities are promoted and utilised by our teams who are working with those vulnerable to harm.

### **Violence Harm Assessment**

We have introduced a Violence Harm Assessment which is a prioritisation tool designed to identify adults and children who are at risk of being a victim or perpetrator of violence across a range of offending – including robbery, sexual offence, knife crime and firearms. This tool will help us better identify those at risk and provide suitable interventions. We will look across the organisation to ensure the individual receives a proportionate response in each set of circumstances.

## **8. ACTION**

**We will work with partners and use data to better identify those at risk of serious violence to ensure they are supported and referred to the right agencies.**

Through the Serious Violence Duty we are committed to working with partners to share information, intelligence and knowledge on victims and those at risk to inform multi agency planning.

### **Less Crime – Improve identification of exploitation**

The recent HMICFRS inspection into the MPS response to child exploitation identified areas of concern in our practice. We have commenced a package of concerted action to address the priority issues raised in the report. As set out in the New Met for London Plan we have made public protection a Met wide priority, committing to transform how we protect the public from harm and address longstanding concerns about keeping children safe. Actions in this plan included putting an extra 565 people into specialist teams, of which 72 are being deployed to build capacity within our exploitation teams. We have also created 64 additional



posts to local safeguarding teams to support increased information sharing and decision making.

We have made structural changes to increase consistency and build expertise within our exploitation teams. We have appointed a full time Lead Responsible Officer and Tactical Policy Advisor who are responsible for overseeing our response to child exploitation and they have introduced new process to better record children's vulnerability, cases where victim and offenders overlap. They are providing a strategic overview to the harm profile and identifying trends and hotspots with a view to putting in place preventative activities and problem solving tactics, such as those set out in the Home Office Disruption Toolkit.

We have trained 6,000 frontline officers on identifying exploitation, victim blaming language and perpetrator focused investigations and another 400 officers who are responsible for investigating missing children, on the application of the national guidance regarding risk grading of missing children. Training has also been introduced for front line leaders, mid line leaders, inspectors, sergeants new recruits, custody, call handlers and schools officers. These changes are achieving results, since the HMICFRS inspection we have almost doubled the number of missing children being identified as high risk and there has been a 50% increase in the volume of the child exploitation concerns being identified by officers and then investigated by the child exploitation teams.

We recognise there is more we need to do in order to deliver an exemplary service and have developed a specific action plan to improve our response to exploitation. This includes developing new toolkits

for our expanded teams, including supervision guidance and details on perpetrator focussed tactical options and evidence led prosecutions.

We are also clear that in order to fully combat child exploitation then other safeguarding agencies need to play a role and we need to work in partnership. We are working with partners to revise and implement the London Child Exploitation Operating Protocol which sets out the roles of each agency in safeguarding and protecting the welfare of children from exploitation.

We are also working with local Multi Agency Child Exploitation groups engaging in multi-agency planning to address child exploitation. It is vital that we work together to share data, analysis and devise strategies to support victims and tackle perpetrators who pose a risk to children.

## **9. ACTION**

**We will uplift capacity across the child exploitation teams with an additional 72 officers across London**

## **10. ACTION**

**We will introduce a new operating model to build a more cohesive and joined up response between the Youth Justice Service, intra - familial and extra familial harms, missing persons units and gang teams.**

## **11. ACTION**

**We will work with partners to revise and implement the London Child Exploitation Operating Protocol**

We are also committed to improving our response to children who are missing. As part of this work we are in the process of introducing Local Missing Hubs to overhaul our

response to investigating missing persons, including children at risk of exploitation. The aim of this model will be to put in place a group of experts who will be able to quickly risk assess and investigate missing incidents. As part of this we will make the best use of technology to support investigations into missing children.

We understand that patterns of exploitation can continue into early adulthood and that young people aged 18-24 may also be victims of this harmful crime. We will work in partnership to secure services for victims of criminal exploitation aged up to 24 and we will ensure our officers are equipped to use all available legislation where required to avoid a cliff edge of support when an individual turns 18.

## **12. ACTION**

**We will introduce a Local Missing Hub model to consolidate our expertise on risk assessment and missing children.**

There are challenges in the handling of missing cases that come from providers of children looked after in care, in response to this we have signed up to the Philomena Protocol as a tactic to drive accountability across care provision when children go missing through the use of Joint Responsibility Arrangements. The Protocol sets out the responsibilities of each agency when working with children who are care experienced who are missing. We have already committed to evaluating the effectiveness of the Protocol in partnership with MOPAC.

## **Less Crime – Pursue Perpetrators**

### **County Lines**

Operation Orochi, funded by the Home Office, tackles county lines drug supply by targeting individuals who directly control drug lines, and who may exploit children to run drugs. The team use data led investigations which enables them to charge modern slavery and drug supply offences without victim engagement. We recognise that sometimes it is not possible for children to support prosecution perhaps through fear, and evidence led prosecutions means we are still able to prosecute the full extent of this criminality and send a strong message to dissuade criminal gangs from exploiting children to sell their drugs. Teenagers identified as drug carriers, who are exploited to do so, have not been prosecuted and are instead recognised as victims of Modern Slavery, with safeguarding interventions put in place.

When a child who is affected by county lines is identified by our officers they are referred on to specialist services that support young people aged up to 25 to help them exit exploitative activity, this includes services provided by the Violence and Exploitation Service, Safer London, Abianda, Safecall, St Giles Trust and Catch 22. Since 1 April 2022, Op Orochi, working closely with these agencies, has proactively rescued and safeguarded 102 children exploited on county lines and charged 70 individuals with Modern Slavery. There may be instances where children involved in County Lines criminality actively influence other children into engaging in drug supply and other offences. In such instances, officers and staff will utilise their lawful powers to safeguard all involved and pursue justice; underscoring the complex challenges our officers often face.



Since November 2019, (when Operation Orochi began), to the end of July 2024, our teams have closed 3,663 drug lines, arrested 6,034 county lines line holders and associates, and had 7,630 charges authorised for a range of offences including drug supply, modern slavery and weapon possession.

Operation Yamata uses the same method to tackle drug lines which are entirely London based. The Yamata teams work with local Public Protection teams on their BCUs, to ensure victims of criminal exploitation linked to London lines are identified and supported.

### 13. ACTION

**We will roll out the methodology used in Operation Orochi aiming to increase evidence-led prosecutions, that do not need child victims to provide evidence, in all child criminal exploitation cases.**

#### **Tackling drug misuse**

The MPS have Project ADDER (Addiction | Diversion | Disruption | Enforcement | Recovery) operating at the intersection of drugs supply, drugs treatment services, health and criminal justice across every BCU. This partnership works to support and steer young people away from the harms of substance misuse, collaborating with partners to create a generational shift in demand for drugs by looking at risky behaviour and red flags in young people which may instigate substance misuse behaviours such as adverse childhood experiences and drugs use within the family network.

Specifically, Project ADDER is working on how to:

- improve referral and diversion pathways into drugs treatment

for children and young people both in and outside of the criminal justice setting.

- identify those in need of drugs intervention e.g in education settings, through outreach and identifying risky behaviour
- embed system wide outcomes to negate the devastating impact of drugs on London's communities
- Support borough based and central MPS resources to tackle drug supply and the associated crime/exploitation including that of young people

#### **Offenders Online**

The MPS proactively targets offenders who use the internet to groom and abuse children online by using a variety of covert and overt methods. The MPS are part of the Regional Organised Crime Unit (ROCU) and receive funding to specifically target the threat posed to children by offenders with a sexual interest in them; both online and through contact offending. The MPS both generates and receives intelligence relating to these offenders and works closely with regional, national and international partners to disrupt their activity and bring them to justice in a co-ordinated way; they routinely disrupt suspects attempting to meet children for the purpose of child abuse.

Child abuse which is facilitated or assisted by technology is subject to the same rapid change and proliferation as our ever changing technological and online landscape. The picture is made more complex by the advent of End to end Encryption (E2EE); a secure communication system where messages can only be seen by the sender and receiver. Encryption has many positive uses, but some social media companies such as Meta are proposing to implement

or already have implemented E2EE in private messaging spaces. E2EE overrides current controls in place that help to keep children safe and potentially poses a huge risk to children online. It is incumbent on us to find new ways to identify and disrupt offenders in this space. We are working closely with the National Crime Agency to ensure we can continue to identify and target high harm predatory offenders online.

#### 14. ACTION

**We will work with the NCA and other law enforcement agencies both nationally and internationally to continue to tackle offenders online and identify victims**

Child Grooming and sexual coercion extortion ('Sextortion') of children is a growing threat online. We have seen an increase in reports relating to children that have been groomed and coerced into creating child sexual abuse material and then extorted. This is another underreported threat where there is inconsistency in approach to recording, reporting and investigating. We work regionally, nationally and internationally to tackle sextortion, to ensure that perpetrators are identified who are targeting multiple victims across different forces and areas. We have amended our toolkits to offer tactical advice for officers on recognising and responding to this threat and we are contributing to NCA led work to tackle the threat of Sextortion nationally, including sharing our analysis and toolkit.

We anticipate Artificial Intelligence (AI) generated child sex abuse material will become a greater issue. This presents unique challenges in terms of our Victim Identification work as well

as digital forensic retrieval. We have access to equipment which allows us to increase the speed by which we can triage images, identify potential victims/suspects and initiate police activity. We are also using software which allows better interrogation of large sets of data, this capability enables us to review and risk assess 641,000 messages in 35 minutes. We are using innovative AI technology to grade cases, saving officer time and taking a robust and consistent approach to grading. We work closely with national partners to share effective practice and ensure we are abreast of the latest policy developments.

Child on child offending is the most common form of reported CSA and is particularly high for indecent images of children offences. The circulation of self-generated indecent images is a significant contributing factor to this<sup>2</sup>. We have included a section on Youth Produced Sexual Imagery below outlining our response to this issue.

#### **Registered Sex Offenders (RSOs)**

Pursuing and targeting the most dangerous and prolific perpetrators is an essential role in reducing crime committed against children. Our specialist teams manage some of the highest risk offenders living in London through home visits, risk assessment and risk management plans. We use civil orders on the high risk offenders to place additional prohibitions on their behaviour. We also have digital capabilities which allows us to monitor a sex offender's activity and identify offences and breaches of orders. We use these tactics to help us disrupt predatory behaviour and online child sexual exploitation.

<sup>2</sup> [vawg-stra-public-official.pdf \(npcc.police.uk\)](#) p.17



## **Less Crime – Better identification of online abuse**

Children now have access to technology for their entire lives, with Ofcom reporting 17% of children aged three to four have their own smartphone, which jumps to 97% by age 12-15<sup>3</sup>.

The Online Safety Act is intended to make the UK the safest place to be online. It sets out a legal duty for social media companies to put in place systems and processes to tackle child sexual abuse content on their services irrespective of the technologies they use, including services using E2EE. The Act will give Ofcom the power, where necessary and proportionate, to require that a company use accredited technology, or make best efforts to develop technology, to tackle child sexual abuse on any part of its service including public and private channels. If they fail to do so Ofcom will be able to impose fines of up to £18 million or 10% of the company's global annual turnover – depending on which is higher.

### **15. ACTION**

**We will work with OFCOM providing feedback on the proposed codes of practice for the Online Safety Act and support the NCA's role as designated body for receiving and taking action on reports of harmful online content from technology industry partners.**

We recognise the impact of online harms from Grooming to Child Sexual Abuse Material is severe. The impact does not only take place online but can also affect a victim/survivor's life offline. We are working to create a victim support package that is accessible, age appropriate,

reflects current protocols and is relevant to the child/family's needs. It is being developed in partnership with professionals at the Marie Collins Foundation which includes their lived experience group so we can distil and deliver what victims and their families need as a result of being subject to these offences.

### **16. ACTION**

**We are working in partnership with the Marie Collins Foundation to create a dedicated victim support package that meets the needs of a child on discovering that an indecent/intimate image of them has been shared.**

### **17. ACTION**

**We are working with technology industry partners to lever technological solutions to more quickly and effectively identify the highest harm cases online.**

### **18. ACTION**

**We are reviewing our structure to ensure we bring together the collective specialist expertise of our online abuse teams.**

## **Less Crime – Prevent children being radicalised**

2023 saw the highest number of terrorism arrests of young people recorded since records began. Of the 219 arrests for terrorism related offences last year 42 of these were children aged 17 and under. That represents 19 per cent of all such arrests up from 11% in 2021, with the majority of adverse activity taking place in the online space. Most children arrested for terrorism offences are charged with possession

<sup>3</sup> OFCOM, Media Use and Attitudes Report 2022

or dissemination of terrorism media. As many of the young people involved have complex needs, it is important that we look at the most appropriate method for managing the risk that these individuals pose, and this may be through intervention rather than prosecution. It is crucially important that we work with a range of partners to identify those who are vulnerable or susceptible to being drawn into terrorism, so that they can be offered the support of Prevent – the national Safeguarding Programme for those at risk of radicalisation.

The role of the public is increasingly important as the challenge of detecting and disrupting potential terrorists has moved from the real world to online. The importance of friends and family cannot be underestimated as they are the ones most likely to see the deterioration in their loved one. The ACT Early | Prevent radicalisation website and support line have been introduced to provide families with the information and support to understand what help is available. Empowering communities to defeat terrorism involves raising awareness of the signs to look out for, methods of reporting/referral and engendering the public confidence to act on this awareness to facilitate intervention at the earliest opportunity whether this be a radicalised individual, a suspicious package or hostile state activity. Our advice is that people should act early in order to save the life of their child along with the lives of others.

Counter Terrorism Policing continue to collaborate with a number of stakeholders including Education, Local Authorities, Children's Services, schools, DfE, charities and mental health services on this

agenda. CT Policing acknowledges that partners are more equipped, more knowledgeable and more experienced at managing the needs and vulnerabilities of children. Our partners have more powers to protect children and more experience at managing the many vulnerabilities that can lead a child to being drawn into terrorism and terrorist offending. Their experience and knowledge of supporting children and their vulnerabilities means that their experience is key in guiding how we act in the best interests of the child. We must be bold in sharing information at an earlier stage, where possible, to facilitate partners in their support of our shared ambition in prioritising the best interests of the child and recognising their rights and needs.

## 19. ACTION

**Working with National Leads we are taking a multi-faceted approach to preventing children becoming radicalised by using a range of possible actions, including swifter support for young people (even when they are suspects) and managing young people (where appropriate) with Prevent interventions, alongside an investigation.**

### **Less Crime – Support victims of domestic abuse**

The Office for National Statistics estimates that 25.8% of children live in a household where an adult has experienced domestic abuse<sup>4</sup>. The Domestic Abuse Act has made clear that children are victims in their own right when domestic abuse takes place in their household and there is considerable evidence that

<sup>4</sup> violence-against-women-and-girls---strategic-threat-risk-assessment-2023.pdf (npcc.police.uk)



the harms they experience persist into adulthood. Our approach to tackling domestic abuse is outlined in our Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) action plan and our ultimate aim is to prevent and reduce domestic abuse, however we recognise the need to ensure that child victims are identified and are getting the specialist support they need. To deliver this requires effective partnership with schools and social care. To this end, we are running Operation Encompass; the statutory scheme that shares information about domestic abuse incidents with schools to ensure children who have witnessed DA are given support at school.

#### 20. ACTION

**We will review the delivery of Operation Encompass to improve outcomes.**

#### 21. ACTION

**We will establish a new Public Protection Referrals Desk to enhance our current provision, this team will identify children who are experiencing domestic abuse at home or in their family and consider whether their cases would benefit from a multi-agency discussion.**

#### **Less Crime – Tackling violence against girls**

Tackling VAWG is a key priority for the Met. Our VAWG action plan sets out how we will build trust and confidence, pursue perpetrators and improve the safety of girls in public spaces. The full plan can be found here:

**VAWG action plan: Our 10 commitments | Metropolitan Police**



## **STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3: We will ensure children who engage in criminal behaviour have access to appropriate and effective interventions**

Children engaged in criminal activity can range from low level offending to causing serious harm. Therefore, it is right that we tailor our response to children depending on the gravity of their offending. Homicide statistics from 2023 show that 20% of those proceeded against are under 18 years old. Police have a duty to safeguard the public from harm and therefore, in some instances children's offending behaviour needs to be met with robust enforcement action.

Early identification of risks and provision of support for children improves outcomes and has the potential to prevent future crime. If we have positive interactions with children on the cusp of criminality, focused on not just responding to the immediate event but addressing the root causes of the behaviour, we can prevent problems before they escalate. Early identification of risks and provision of support for children improves outcomes and has the potential to prevent future crime.

### **Less Crime – Use effective interventions for children engaged in criminal behaviour**

There are a range of interventions police can deploy when responding to children engaged in criminal behaviour. To support consistency in officer decision making the NPCC has developed the Child Gravity Matrix. This is a triage tool to help officers decide the most appropriate outcome for children who offend. It reflects the breadth of options available including statutory (caution, conditional caution or prosecution) and non-statutory (community resolution, deferred prosecution, deferred caution, voluntary diversionary activity) case disposal outcomes.

#### **22. ACTION**

**In conjunction with our partners, the MPS has already adopted the new Child Gravity Matrix; we will ensure officers take into account any aggravating or mitigating factors as well as victims' views (where they are obtainable)**

There is evidence that diverting children who have engaged in low-level or first-time criminality from formal criminal justice processes can protect them from future involvement



in crime. It can also lessen the severity of crimes they might later commit and reduce patterns of repeat offending<sup>5</sup>. Out of court resolutions (OOCRs) and deferred prosecutions are recordable police outcomes and can include requirements for the individual to engage in interventions and diversionary activity addressing their behaviour. OOCRs when delivered well also provide opportunities to improve victim satisfaction by giving the victim a voice and delivering swift and tailored resolution.

In a deferred prosecution, the police pause a prosecution if the individual agrees to a contract of rehabilitative and/or restorative conditions to tackle root causes of offending and make amends. For children, a deferred prosecution always includes diversionary action. The intervention work is carried out by the local youth justice service. If this is successfully completed, it results in 'no further action' i.e. no formal criminal conviction – which we know affects employment and other life chances. An initial London pilot of this approach for lower-level offending has yielded strong results, particularly in the 18-21 cohort. In the pilot, young adults who were offered deferred prosecution saw a considerable reduction in reoffending (further charges) compared to those cautioned or charged as normal over a 12 month follow-up period (2018-2023). The Lammy Review also references deferred prosecutions as a means of tackling disproportionality, stating that roll out of deferred prosecutions would address a key source of disproportionate outcomes from ethnic minority groups in the CJS, whilst delivering benefits to victims, the taxpayer and wider society<sup>6</sup>.

## 23. ACTION

**The MPS working with YJ partners will introduce a deferred prosecution scheme for offending by children, where appropriate.**

We are supportive of a Home Office review of the Home Office Counting Rules (HOCR), with a view that deferred prosecutions and other diversionary activities can be appropriately recorded and there is a consistent approach across the country.

### **Child Integrated Offender Management Team**

We have piloted a new child integrated offender management (CiOM) team to fill the gap between units that manage adults and those which manage high harm offenders, tackling children most at risk of offending whilst acknowledging that they are still children and remain at risk of exploitation and harm from others. The CiOM team works to ensure those children who are involved in offending behaviour are held to account, allowing them to understand the impact and ramifications of their actions, whilst at the same time, supporting them in order to reduce the offending and avoid this continuing into adulthood.

As part of the new operating model design we will ensure we have an approach that delivers the right policing response for each child concerned. This will ensure the correct support mechanisms for each child regardless of which department or strand takes responsibility for them, in conjunction with our partners. In some cases that will mean the proportionate response is for officers from our neighbourhood teams to own

<sup>5</sup> Wilson D B, Brennan I, and Olaghere A (2018); Petrosino et al (2019).

<sup>6</sup> [The Lammy Review \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

responsibility for the required activity. In others it may mean our child protection teams assume oversight of the response. There will however be circumstances where the severity or volume of the offending behaviour that the child has engaged in, requires an enforcement based approach with a judicial outcome sought. Key to this will be the oversight mechanisms built in to ensure every child is subject to the most suitable response and support based on the circumstances. We have incorporated learning from the CIOM pilot and as a result several BCUs have now gone live with CIOM's, with the ambition being that they will be in place across all BCUs

#### 24. ACTION

**To support the work, provide greater clarity and understanding for all involved, practice guidance will be developed and introduced for all CIOM's.**

#### **Youth Produced Sexual Imagery**

We receive a significant volume of reports of self-generated sexually explicit material from children and it is likely there is considerable underreporting. Assessing these reports to establish whether there are any aggravating factors and trying to prevent redistribution of these images is a challenge for law enforcement and key partners. We are working with National Police leads to prevent the criminalisation of children that produce and share these images of themselves and safeguard them against future risk, trauma and repeat victimisation.

#### 25. ACTION

**We will continue to roll out continuous professional development to Neighbourhoods officers to upskill them in how best to respond to youth produced sexual imagery, including a toolkit specifically designed to assist officers when dealing with these incidents**

#### **Less Crime – Reducing criminalisation of children who are looked after**

Care leavers and children who are looked after continue to be disproportionately represented in prison. Studies suggest that at least one quarter of the adult prison population has experienced care as a child<sup>7</sup>. We will actively support the London Protocol on reducing criminalisation of children who are looked after and those leaving care. The Protocol sets out the roles and responsibilities of professionals involved in the care of children, looked after, and care leavers in London, to reduce the disproportionate likelihood of them entering the criminal justice system. As part of delivery of the protocol we have developed a training video in collaboration with MOPAC to increase awareness. This video is being made mandatory for all frontline and control centre officers. We will also work with partners to ensure the CPS 10 point checklist is completed for those children who offend in children's homes, in order that informed decisions can be made about what action should be taken

<sup>7</sup> Williams, K. et al (2012) Prisoners' childhood and family backgrounds Results from the Surveying Prisoner Crime Reduction (SPCR) longitudinal cohort study of prisoners. London: Ministry of Justice

## 26. ACTION

We are committed to fulfilling the police roles and responsibilities within the Protocol for London – Reducing Criminalisation of looked after children and care leavers. This includes exploring how to better record children looked after, as either victims or suspects on crime reports and exploring the development of a template for officers to assist in their decision making.

## How will we measure success?

### STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3

We will ensure children who engage in criminal behaviour have access to appropriate and effective interventions

- Increase in percentage of out of court resolutions and deferred prosecutions in children's case disposal data.





# High Standards

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## **STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4: We will ensure our officers have the capacity and capability to safeguard all children**

Recent HMICFRS reports, Child Safeguarding Practice Review findings, Baroness Casey's report and other National reports have shone a light on the need for improvements in our safeguarding response. We take these extremely seriously and are working at pace to improve our practice. As set out in our New Met for London Plan, we have made public protection a Met wide priority committing to transform how we protect the public from harm and address longstanding concerns about keeping children safe.

### **High Standards – Delivering our statutory safeguarding duty**

We want our officers to be confident in their statutory safeguarding role and deliver the responsibilities set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children.

We have upgraded our computer systems to make it easier for officers to improve access for officers making safeguarding decisions. The new system will allow us to flag safeguarding concerns more consistently.

We are aware of the need to improve our risk assessment processes and are therefore rolling out specific training on how to assess and grade

safeguarding risks. We are also improving supervision to ensure those who audit and inspect officers' work are skilled in understanding safeguarding risks and issues. We are also committed to reviewing policies, guidance and toolkits relating to children to ensure officer's responsibilities to safeguard children and protect their welfare are clear.

### **27. ACTION**

**We will deliver learning identified in the HMICFRS report on our response to Child Exploitation and other findings relating to our safeguarding practice in other National Reviews and Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews.**

### **High Standards – Deliver Child First and trauma informed practice**

Due to the unique role and powers afforded to police, officers will often find themselves in the challenging position of having to balance the use of intrusive tactics with the need to safeguard children. Dynamic situations require officers to make fast paced decisions to protect the child concerned and the wider community. We recognise that there

will be circumstances where first and foremost risks to public safety will need to be managed. This strategy is clear that delivering a Child First approach does not prevent MPS officers exercising their lawful powers but encourages them to understand the wider context.

Introducing a Child First approach across the MPS will require specific training, supervision and leadership.

#### **28. ACTION**

**We will embed a Child First approach into new learning packages as appropriate, and ensure that revisions to existing learning consider Child First approaches where applicable. This will include training for officers on managing and de-escalating situations in a Child First way.**

Whilst we set out our strategic approach to children in this strategy, this is not a procedural document for officers; we will be reviewing all our policies and processes to ensure they reflect a Child First approach.

#### **29. ACTION**

**We will review and revise all our policies to ensure they distinguish between how we deal with children versus adults and outline how to take a Child First approach in that context.**

We know the significant impact adverse childhood experiences (ACES) can have on children and want to ensure that our front line officers understand this and know how to effectively respond and engage, to reduce or avoid re-traumatisation. Whilst we must be pragmatic and recognise that not all officers can be subject matter experts in this field we will take steps to ensure all officers who regularly engage with children feel equipped to do so in a trauma informed way. Many of the children we work with have experienced

trauma and it is important our officers recognise the wide ranging impact of this and how both the experience of crime and the professional response to crime can cause trauma.

#### **30. ACTION**

**We will train officers to understand the impact of trauma on children, this will include refreshing our existing training and resources on trauma and ACEs. We will continually evaluate the training to ensure that it is delivering an effective outcome.**

### **High Standards – Support to child victims and witnesses**

In the Less Crime section we have set out actions we are taking to support victims of specific crime types. The Victims Code of Practice affords victims who are under 18 (at the time of the offence) enhanced rights. Enhanced rights can include referral to a specialist support service, being contacted sooner after key decisions and having access to special measures (at the discretion of the court). Common special measures include having a screen/curtain around the witness box or giving evidence by live video-link, either from a separate room within the court or a dedicated live-link site outside the court building. Other special measures include: giving evidence in private with no press or public allowed in the court room; removal of wigs and gowns worn by the judge, and the defence and prosecution advocates in the Crown Court; the use of communication aids, having the help of an intermediary to understand questions; or providing evidence/being cross-examined through pre-recorded video, meaning the witness does not need to give evidence at the trial. We are also working to produce an information leaflet for children as victims of crime.

We are raising awareness across the MPS of the impacts of victim blaming language and the implications it can have on the given response. We are also revising all of our policies to ensure we include a distinction between how these policies should be applied differently to children instead of adults.

### 31. ACTION

**We are committed to ensuring that officers deliver the rights set out in the Victims Code for under 18s, through training, awareness raising and enabled by data systems.**

#### **High Standards – Detain children in custody appropriately**

We recognise that entering police custody can be a traumatic experience, exposing children to a predominantly adult environment. Increasingly, forces are reporting an awareness of the impact police custody is likely to have on a child and many areas are putting measures in place to avoid bringing children into custody wherever possible. The use of Voluntary Attendance has increased and some forces are also considering other diversionary measures as an alternative to unnecessary arrests, including working with schools to avoid children being unnecessarily criminalised for incidents that have taken place in an educational setting. There will however always be circumstances where the seriousness of the offence, the frequency of the offending or the wider circumstances mean that arrest is the proportionate and required response.

When custody is required to ensure public safety we aim to triage child cases, prioritising contact with children's services to share information and ensure they are fully sighted on any risk we are aware of. This will help us plan for release and ensure risks posed to the child are identified. We need our partners' support in sharing information and providing the right support and/ or diversionary services to the child on release. When custody is necessary, steps have been taken to reduce the trauma for children by placing them in detention rooms and not cells wherever possible. All suites now have permanent youth workers for engagement at the earliest opportunity and the introduction of distraction items and kits.

We will ensure charged children are released on bail whenever possible. If bail is not possible, we will endeavour transfer of the child to local authority accommodation unless exceptional circumstances apply.

Through our Engage programme, in ten BCUs we have a dedicated and trained youth worker to provide intervention in police custody at teachable, reachable moments and beyond, including:

- Screening of all children for risk factors relating to Serious Violence and Child Criminal Exploitation
- Direct and independent work with young people (separate to the criminal investigation) using child-centred, trusted relationship and evidence-based approaches.
- Where possible, conduct a whole family intervention, signposting and facilitating the introduction of parents to targeted interventions within the local area.
- Signposting and facilitating the introduction of children to local targeted interventions



We are working to extend the programme to all our BCUs. We have also developed a video book for children and their appropriate adults that explains the custody process and are piloting a new approach sharing information between detention teams, British Transport Police and Children's Services. This pilot commits that within one hour of being checked into custody details of the arrested child are shared with Children's Services who will reciprocate with a call back within one hour and provide the custody sergeant with any information which may help manage the child's welfare or safeguarding needs.

### 32. ACTION

**We are committed to continuing the Engage Programme until April 2025 and are evaluating how best to deploy the programme across London**

We are carrying out work in Wood Green Custody suite in order to make it our first Child First suite. This will include lighting and painting changes in both the cells and booking in areas with additional distraction items and suitable furniture included.

#### **Presumption of legal advice and Specialist solicitors**

In June 2022 we launched the presumption of legal advice for children in custody and were the first police force to do so. Now more children have access to legal advice, we are keen to ensure that there is a consistent standard of advice. In the context of youth justice, there can be real value in children making admissions, taking responsibility or demonstrating genuine remorse as this allows them to access a number of different pathways. Without admission and if there is significant evidence to support that the child committed the offence, then it is highly likely the

child will face a charge and attend court. Very often, when such cases are heard in court, they are referred back to local Youth Offending Teams for alternative disposal such as Triage. This ties up valuable court time, increases costs and more importantly adversely impacts upon the child, victim and any witnesses.

### 33. ACTION

**We are working with the Youth Justice Board (YJB) Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) and Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and senior individuals within the Law Society to introduce additional training for all solicitors and legal advisors, to better equip them to provide advice to children whilst in custody. This will ensure that children are able to make informed decisions when answering questions made as part of the investigation. The ambition is to pilot this scheme in November this year, to test proof of concept and viability, before wider rollout.**

This will reduce unnecessary detention, increase diversion from court, help identify vulnerable children, introduce swifter justice and reduce disproportionality, whilst at the same time reducing unnecessary court times and costs.

#### **Custody Strip Searches and More Thorough Searches where Intimate Parts are exposed (MTIP)**

Police officers will often find themselves in the difficult position of being concerned that a child is in possession of concealed items which may harm themselves or others. Officers, however, have a responsibility to ensure the safety of both that child and others, so will on occasion need to utilise the powers afforded to them. How that search is conducted and the safeguarding activity that follows is

crucial to ensure the child is protected from harm while the officer is carrying out operational duties. It is our policy that two officers of the same sex as the person being searched need to be present during an MTIP.

Ensuring the safeguarding of every child who is subject to a search is an absolute priority. We have made changes to the policy for more thorough searches of children to take account of the safeguarding review for Child Q and identify potential exploitation risks that children subject to this type of search may be facing. We have developed a new policy where front line Inspectors take ownership of the whole Child MTIP process. Under this new system, if an officer suspects they have reasonable grounds for an MTIP search of a child, they present the information to a local BCU Inspector. If the Inspector agrees with the grounds, they take ownership of the whole process, including communicating the information to the child and appropriate adult, administration of the search and safeguarding concerns. This new process has significantly raised the threshold for authorisation and oversight. Every child MTIP is also quality assured by a central team with feedback on the process followed by the searching officer, authorising officer and the local leadership team.

### **High Standards – Audit**

In order to ensure that the measures we are taking to improve officer capability are working we are putting in place a range of checks and balances to scrutinise our response to children. These include the development of a peer – learning programme, a new scrutiny panel and

a pilot of a new restorative approach to complaints, where children, involved in incidents, sit with officers to take them through their experiences of police intervention.

### **34. ACTION**

**Our dedicated inspection team will carry out case audits to ensure learning from the training is being put into practice and where there are learning needs we will provide on the job training or awareness raising.**

With London communities and our people, we have reset our values and guiding principles to help deliver cultural reform across the Met. We are reasserting how we want officers and staff to behave and the culture we want to build. These values and principles will be embedded in our HR processes that develop all those working in the MPS

## **How will we measure success?**

### **STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4**

**We will ensure our officers have the capacity and capability to safeguard all children**

- Improved HMICFRS inspection findings on our ability to safeguard children
- Percentage of cases audited that use the child's voice and recognise the individual child's needs.
- Reduction in the amount of time children spend in custody

## **STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 5: We will improve our partnership working setting out clearly the role of the police in keeping children safe**

### **High Standards – improving Local Safeguarding Children Partnership working**

One of the key responsibilities of the police is to be a ‘safeguarding partner’ as defined by the Children Act 2004. Working Together to Safeguard Children also makes clear that strong multi-agency working is vital to identifying and responding to the needs of children and families. We work with safeguarding partners in order to co-ordinate safeguarding services; act as a strategic leadership group in supporting and engaging others; and implement local and national learning including from serious child safeguarding incidents. We have collaborated with our partners to develop this strategy, asking them to challenge us and hold us to account, share effective practice and information and improve our processes.

The MPS can only be successful in delivering this strategy if the wider partnership landscape is able to support and contribute in the areas in which policing is not well placed

to do so. Ensuring there are sufficient high quality commissioned services to meet the needs of the children across London will be key both for children as victims and those requiring diversion. Ensuring that the right support is provided by those best placed to do so is essential.

In order to better understand where there are gaps in our safeguarding response to children we will commission a research project to map the end to end journey of children who have contact with the police and other safeguarding partners, to better understand their experiences and where our multi agency response could be enhanced.

#### **35. ACTION**

**We are committed to improving our partnership with Local Safeguarding Children Partnerships and enhancing our role in them, including:**

- **Reviewing our funding contributions**
- **Providing multi agency safeguarding learning opportunities to our leaders.**



There are also a set of challenges that we are looking to work with our partners to address, these include:

- Provide alternatives to justice in order to deliver strategy as intended, including investment in tested early intervention and diversion schemes;
- Work to improve offer provided to missing children to prevent missing episodes;
- Provision of sufficient secure accommodation and secure mental health placements;
- Quicker placement of children put in police protection;
- Quicker provision of appropriate adults;
- Improving working across Local Authority boundaries;
- Actively involving us in commissioning decisions;
- Improving data sharing protocols;
- Participating in quality assurance and audit processes.

### **36. ACTION**

**We will commission a research project to map the end to end journey of children who have contact with the police to share with safeguarding partners and help us identify gaps in provision**

## **High Standards – Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub Review**

Our recent review of the Multi agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), has re-set our approach to information sharing and the identification of risk in relation to children and vulnerable adults.

Following this review we are committed to rolling out a new London wide multi agency threshold process, this was developed with multi agency partners and subject to extensive consultation including sign off by the London Safeguarding Children Partnership Executive. We will increase staffing levels within public protection teams to ensure there are enough resources to partake in strategy discussions when the threshold is met. We are in the process of rolling out a new training package, including a resource guide and toolkit to embed the new MASH model of working and the multi-agency London threshold policy. We are also putting in place a new feedback system to ensure the quality of the reports is appropriate and effective.

## **How will we measure success?**

### **STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 5**

**We will improve our partnership working setting out clearly the role of the police in keeping children safe**

- Increase the percentage of Superintendents and Chief Inspectors who have received multi agency safeguarding training
- Increase the quality of MASH referrals (assessed via audit)

# Next steps

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## Accountability and Impact

Alongside this strategy document we have developed an internal delivery plan and governance structure to oversee the implementation of the strategy. We will be closely monitoring impact through data products and are committed to updating partners with progress on delivery at regular intervals, this includes through MOPAC accountability structures and to the London Policing Board.

## Implementation

There is a delivery plan being developed alongside this strategy that will be shared with partners. We also commit to sharing annual progress updates.



