

Overview & Scrutiny

Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission

Hackney Council
Room 118
Town Hall
Mare St E8 1EA

Reply to: tracey.anderson@hackney.gov.uk

23rd April 2021

Dear Commander Catherine Roper, Commander Jane Connors and Borough Commander Marcus Barnett

Thank you for attending the Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission (LiH) meeting on 9th November 2020 and for your engagement with the scrutiny commission throughout the year.

Our engagement with our local MPS BCU commenced following concerns about community tensions between the police and local residents in relation to the use of force and stop and search activity by the police. When we commenced discussions with the local BCU our scrutiny commission raised the following:

1. Impact of stop and search on community relations with the police service.
2. The increasing use of handcuffs and use of handcuffs on young people aged 10-14
3. The training police officers receive in relation to carrying out a stop and search
4. The threshold for a police officer's record of complaint to trigger an investigation of any trend or reoccurring inappropriate behaviour
5. The use of TSG officers in the borough and the impact of their work on community relations locally
6. Explanation about the intelligence used to inform a stop and search
7. How links are made between different crime types
8. An explanation about why stop and account is not used first instead of stop and search
9. An explanation about police officer accountability and the complaints system in the MPS
10. An overview about the stop and search monitoring data and how the insight is used by the MPS.

Following our discussions the key themes that emerged for follow up were:

1. **MPS complaint system** - The system is not trusted and seldom used by the community groups most impacted by stop and search activity.
2. **Accountability of police officers for behaviour and appropriate use of police tools.** The wider public perception is that the MPS does not have robust systems in place for police officers to be held to account.

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3. **No set monitoring targets for stop and search and outcome success rates.** Having on average a 20-25% success rate from the volume of stops and searches conducted is not a good demonstration of success or a good use of resources.
4. **Reducing the disproportionality among ethnic minority groups being stopped and searched.** There were no reports of current work to address this or reassurance given on how the MPS plan to address this wider than the BCU review work.
5. **Representation of Hackney's diverse community in MPS / MOPAC community engagement and scrutiny structures.** We learned the MPS are working to improve dialogue and engagement with the public but this is not widely known by the local community.

MPS Complaint system

At the November meeting we heard from the IOPC that out of 33,000 complaints against the MPS only 4% were from the black communities and 1% from young people. The IOPC pointed out the groups impacted the most were least likely to make a complaint. Our local Account Group was very clear that getting young people to engage with the complaint structures and mechanisms in place was a big barrier.

In our various discussions with the community and stakeholders some parts of the community did not see the MPS as an accountable public body and had reservations about the police investigating themselves. We understand that for the public to have confidence in using the MPS complaints system and seeing it as an effective tool to address problems within the MPS, the public need to have faith in the system.

The complaints system was recently changed to include a right of review by MOPAC or the IOPC. The scrutiny commission Chair looked at the MPS website to review how easy it was to navigate the web page to log a complaint. In the Chair's view it was not very easy to detect from the MPS homepage where to go to make a complaint. As stated during the discussions it is important for the community to know how they can make a complaint but it is also key to have clear navigation that makes it easy for a member of the public to make a complaint. It was also noted that the MPS website did not provide detailed information about the right to review in relation to a complaint. The Commission is of the view it is important to promote the changes to the complaints system so that people are aware there is a secondary part to the process which is independent from the MPS. This would help the police service to be seen as an organisation that welcomes feedback and uses this information to make improvements to the service they provide local communities.

Our request

1. ***We would like to see the local BCU and MET HQ improve its communication with local communities about the complaints procedure and processes and outline the local action plan for this work.***

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- 2. We would like an update on the local BCU and MET HQ's work with SNTs to make the process of complaints more accessible and for young people to feel empowered to make a complaint.*
- 3. We would like to see the MPS homepage on the website make it easier to detect how to make a complaint. This would help to make this information more accessible.*
- 4. We would like the local BCU and MET HQ to consider adding more information to the complaints page on their website about the secondary part of the complaints process to give residents reassurance there is an independent review in the process.*

Accountability of officers

Although we acknowledge that wider societal impacts have had an effect on reducing the public's trust and confidence in the MPS. We also note that trust and confidence issues between the Police and Hackney's communities predate these wider society impacts.

We picked up on local community concern that the police have no accountable structures to the public or want to be accountable to the local community they serve. You told us you have systems in place to hold police officers to account but that this information is not publically available. To local people the perception is police officers are unaccountable for inappropriate behaviour or actions. Despite there being different patterns of behaviour exhibited by different police unit teams. The public view police officers as one organisation/unit. We detected some deflection about inappropriate behaviour and excessive use of force coming mainly from the TSG or other police officers who are external to the borough; in comparison to the actions of local police officers who regularly work in the borough. It strikes us that transparency around the monitoring of police officer performance should be improved to build trust and confidence particularly within Hackney. Although we have no formal role in the MPS accountability structures we hope our feedback will be used to inform your strategies and the operational policies of the MPS.

People want their voices to be heard and to see the organisation is listening to the concerns they raise. At our meeting the MET HQ Officers outlined the MPS Commissioner's commitment to: 1) reduce violence and 2) improve trust and confidence. Although we welcome these commitments, our local community has told us they need to see more evidence of change by the MPS so they can see the results of better behaviour and conduct from police officers. We would like to see the MET HQ take further action and full responsibility for the conduct of other police unit officers to help maintain the local community's trust and confidence in their local police officers from the BCU.

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Our request

- 1. We would like the local BCU and MET HQ to consider publishing data that demonstrates how the MPS monitors a police officer's behaviour and conduct when carrying out authorised police activity.***
- 2. We would like the local BCU and MET HQ to consider how they can publish police officer accountability data to make it more accessible and transparent to the public.***
- 3. We would like the local BCU and MET HQ to highlight the progress and changes the organisation has made since the publication of the reports from the Macpherson and Lammy Review. We are seeking reassurance the MPS is listening to the concerns raised and can demonstrate it has responded to the recommendations made.***

No set targets for the successful outcome rates for stop and search

Public sector organisations are expected to provide the best mix of quality, effectiveness and demonstrate best use of resources. Over the last decade the pressure on public finances has been unprecedented.

With stop and search being a key tool in crime prevention the Commission is aghast that there is no set target to monitor the effectiveness of this tool. Stop and Search is a police tool that is seen as key to help reduce crime in London. Locally, successful arrest outcome rates from conducting stop and search activity hovers around the 20-24% mark. If the effectiveness of this tool was measured on this success rate, this tool would be assessed as ineffective and not a good use of resources.

We welcome the local MPS review of stop and search and the use of handcuffing. We also welcome the plans to record the ethnicity of car drivers stopped. We see these two pieces of work as supportive in obtaining more local evidence if profiling is taking place for black and ethnic minority drivers.

At our meeting MET HQ officers encouraged local MPS scrutiny groups to establish the data sets that would support them in their role of local scrutiny of the MPS. We would like to see the MPS establish a community scrutiny group that is representative of Hackney's diverse community so that the suite of data developed helps them to perform robust scrutiny of MPS activity.

Our request

- 1. Any model of success has a way of demonstrating good performance. We would like the local BCU and MET HQ to consider introducing set targets for their stop and search police activity to drive improved performance. We hope this will help the local BCU and MET to be able to demonstrate that stop and search is a successful police activity and tool in crime prevention/reduction.***

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- 2. We would like to ask the local BCU and Safer Neighbourhood Board to work with Hackney Council when they are identifying the suite of local MPS data they need to effectively monitor all local MPS activity in Hackney, particularly stop and search.*
- 3. We would like an update from the local BCU on the local Stop and Search review and an update on the recording of ethnicity data in relation to car stops in Hackney.*

Reducing disproportionality

The stop and search monitoring statistics clearly shows disproportionality in relation to the use of this tool on different ethnic minority groups. In addition there has been a report of increased use of handcuffing. Whilst we understand handcuffing is a necessary tool, there is concern about the impact high use is having on cohorts within the community (particularly black men and young people). The report produced by our local Account Group highlighted the trauma effects this has had on young people in our borough. In our view we feel the MPS does not fully appreciate the impact this is having on trust and confidence.

We were dissatisfied with the MPS replies about the criteria that informs a stop and search activity and the use of that criteria by police officers. Our discussions revealed police officers have a large amount of discretion (judgement) when deploying this police tool. The perception is this autonomy sits alongside weak accountability structures which do not inspire confidence that inappropriate police behaviour, bias, unconscious bias or the conduct of a police officer will be addressed. During the pandemic a person's identity is being concealed by a mask. It is our view that this will make it even more difficult to stop and search the right people based on description. Therefore using this tool will warrant the need for the criteria used to be even more robust with lesser amounts of discretion.

There have been many discussions about this issue over the years and particularly since the 2011 unrest. We welcome Hackney MPS BCU conducting a review on stop and search activity and the steps being taken to set up a local MPS scrutiny group. However, despite the sources of intelligence information being made clearer at the meeting (point 4.12.21 in 9th November LiH minutes) there was no explanation that gave a rationale for the disproportionality of stop and search activity other than there being bias or unconscious bias. We believe not having a set criteria for police officers to follow and allowing individual judgement is enabling police officers to exhibit bias or unconscious bias when using the stop and search police tool.

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We are concerned when an institution places the onus of bias and unconscious bias on the individual and feel strongly that responsibility should be held by the senior leaders within the organisation (that of police behaviour) and that all institutions should monitor racism and unconscious bias to drive forward a change in culture. Hackney Council has implemented a programme of work to drive forward culture change within the organisation. Particularly in relation to reducing inequalities and bias and unconscious bias. The Commission is of the view that there are working practices, knowledge and information Hackney Council can share with the local BUC about developing inclusive leadership across the organisation. We recognise the police need to maintain law and order and to do this effectively requires some degree of autonomy. But as pointed out in our meeting this autonomy works well with respect from the community served and respect comes from a community when they feel the measures taken are fair and proportionate and more importantly equal across all community groups.

Our request

- 1. We would like a commitment from the local BCU and MET HQ to ensure the local MPS scrutiny groups set up are representative of Hackney's diverse community, capturing a broad range (ethnicity, gender, etc) of both adult and young people's voices and experiences within Hackney.***
- 2. In relation to culture change We would like a commitment from the local BCU and MET HQ to work with Hackney Council to learn about implementing inclusive leadership across the organisation.***
- 3. Communicating and engaging with local residents is key to building trust and confidence. We would like to know what the local BCU and MET HQ plan to do differently in relation to communicating and engaging with residents to address the local concerns raised about the use of force and disproportionality from stop and search activity.***

Representation of Hackney's diverse community in the MPS and MOPAC community engagement structures

We heard about the roll out of additional scrutiny to address local concerns about the use of force and the MPS mentioned they are doing a lot of community engagement work. We also noted the MET's work to bring about change in its dialogue and engagement with the public. Our discussions identified a large volume of work is being conducted by the MPS in relation to community engagement. But this is not being communicated effectively to the local community and the local community is not aware of this work.

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The MET HQ officers talked about having more empathy in their engagement with the community and the involvement of young people in the training of new recruits for stop and search. The involvement of young people in the training of police officers for stop and search has been implemented at our local BCU through the local MPS stop and search monitoring groups. This was put in place a few years prior to give a better understanding to both young people and police officers about the effects of stop and search on both parties. But there still remains tension between the community and the police in relation to the use of stop and search activity.

The MPS talked about having a representative monitoring group. We note there is limited public knowledge and understanding within the community about the work and role of the Safer Neighbourhood Board (SNB). However, we do acknowledge that MOPAC confirmed they do not provide support to SNBs to do community development and engagement work. We are aware that the membership of the SNB includes Hackney residents. However, we are not confident the current SNB membership is fully representative of Hackney's diverse community. We also learned that MOPAC relies heavily on the SNB to feed through the concerns of the community. That being said, we are querying if the current SNB membership captures the full breadth of voices and experiences from Hackney's diverse community. Our discussions have highlighted the need for better local MPS community engagement and scrutiny structures to enable all sections of the community to engage. We would like to see the local MPS community engagement and scrutiny groups have a better representation of Hackney's diverse community to better reflect the diversity of voices and experiences within the community.

The Hackney Account Group provided valuable insight ([Account Group Report](#)) bringing the voice of young people to the MPS stop and search scrutiny and community engagement structures. We recognise the Hackney Account Group's relationship with the local MPS has been challenging and that they are no longer funded by the local BCU. Notwithstanding the challenges with the working relationship we believe there is a role for their work in the MPS community scrutiny structures. In our dialogue with the MPS and despite assurances that the community would be consulted, it was still unclear how the MPS would engage with young people. The Commission is seeking assurance about the future of local MPS engagement with young people. We would encourage MET HQ and Central East BCU to work with MOPAC and Hackney Council to help find a way for constructive engagement so that the concerns raised by Hackney's young people in the Account Group Report can be addressed.

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Our request

- 1. We would like to know what the local BCU and MET HQ will do differently in relation to better community engagement. We would like to see information about the local BCU's communication plan for community engagement?**
- 2. We would like to see a better representation on the SNB and other MPS / MOPAC community scrutiny groups of the various communities in Hackney. We are asking for the local BCU and MET HQ to review the current local SNB membership and to work with Hackney Council to carry out engagement with local residents (adults and young people) to identify a more diverse range of local residents to join the MPS scrutiny structures.**
- 3. We would like to know if the Hackney Account Group will continue to be involved in MPS / MOPAC community engagement structures and their role?**

Thank you for agreeing to return to the next LiH meeting on 22nd June 2021. To help manage the meeting we are asking for a written response to the requests outlined in this letter. The Commission is proposing to discuss the written responses from attendees at the LiH meeting on 9th November 2020 at the next LiH meeting on 22nd June 2021.

Yours faithfully



Cllr Sharon Patrick

Chair of the Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission at London Borough of Hackney

CC Natasha Plummer, Head of Engagement (MOPAC)
Sal Naseem, Regional Director London (IOPC)
Cllr Susan Fajana-Thomas, Cabinet Member for Community Safety (London Borough of Hackney)
Detective Superintendent Mike Hamer – CE BCU Lead for Violence & Criminal Investigation (Metropolitan Police Service)