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Dear Mayor Glanville, Cllr Bramble, Cllr Fajana-Thomas, Mark,

Thank you for your letter of 17th March 2022 in relation to the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) response to the Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review (LCSR) into the incident relating to Child Q and the MPS response. I write to set out some actions here that we could usefully discuss and I would welcome a meeting with you to discuss our approach and to hear your thoughts on how we can ensure we are doing all we can to protect children and build trust in our communities.

I want to start by clearly stating that the MPS acknowledges that events in the history of policing London have led to a breakdown in trust and confidence with some communities. It is of the utmost importance that we address this but recognise it is not easy. We have clearly stated our intention to rebuild trust and confidence and want to work with our communities and partners to help us do this and become a truly anti-racist organisation.

As one of the statutory partners within the Hackney Safeguarding Partnership that commissioned the LCSR, we have been fully engaged with it throughout, accepting that it ran in parallel to an ongoing Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) investigation.

We are in full agreement with the review that this incident should never have happened. It is more than regrettable and as you noted we have apologised to the child concerned, her family and the wider community. We fully recognise the significant concerns that have been raised regarding the impact such a search can have on those involved.

We acknowledge that the search by female Met officers under Section 23 of the Misuse of Drugs Act (MDA) did not follow policy. The officers are subject of an investigation by the IOPC of which we await the findings, including with regard to the allegation that the search was racially motivated. Whilst that investigation is underway it would be wrong of me to comment further on that aspect of the report.

What I can say, however, is that the MPS has been deeply affected by the depth of feeling generated by this incident and understand that we need to do something different to address these ongoing concerns.

Our teams will continue to work hard to reduce crime and protect all the communities we serve. I recognise that the events surrounding Child Q have, understandably, generated high emotion and anger and I want to listen and respond to communities to build trust where it has been lost. It is also important to work and train with our partners to bring about this collective change.

In order to respond to your letter I have clustered my response across a number of themes which demonstrate what the Met has been doing since the incident in December 2020, what we have been doing across the organisation to rebuild trust and improve training and our proposals to make Hackney an exemplar for new measures and initiatives.

Leadership

We have taken the response to Child Q extremely seriously, with Chief Officers supporting Marcus Barnett in delivery of both activity locally and more broadly to respond to community concerns. I have personally led the response to ensure clear governance and recognition of the risks associated with this critical incident. Commander Paul Brogden and Commander Alison Heydari have also been closely involved in supporting the Central East Basic Command Unit (CE BCU), which covers Hackney and Tower Hamlets, to engage with communities and build plans to address concerns raised. They will continue to work with and support Marcus in his role as BCU Commander.

Marcus is an extremely capable and dedicated BCU Commander who, as you know, is passionate about his communities and getting our response to Child Q and wider concerns right. In support of him delivering these changes, I will be monitoring centrally and evaluating their success for consideration of a wider roll out across the MPS.

As well as leadership at the local level, the Met Chief Officer team and senior leadership take these issues extremely seriously, reflected through the Met Direction, STRIDE (Strategy for Inclusion, Diversity and Engagement), Rebuilding Trust Programme and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) plans which set clear direction and expectations across the force.

Learning and Training

We accept the recommendations within the safeguarding review and have developed a comprehensive action plan to respond to them. Clearly this plan will iterate as work develops and is by no means the only activity that will take place. I have requested a review of the protocols associated with officers operating in schools alongside our response to the review. Many of the recommendations reach beyond the Met so will take longer to influence and deliver. However, we have not been waiting for reports to be written and had already taken action to ensure officers and staff have a refreshed understanding of the policy for conducting a 'further search' and advice around dealing with schools, ensuring that children are treated as children.

MPS Policy Review

In February 2021, following this incident, the BCU reiterated the MTIP Policy (More Thorough Search where Intimate Parts are exposed) reinforcing the requirements in relation to appropriate adults. It is important to note that MTIP searches are different to strip searches, which only take place in custody. We understand the concerns and we are reviewing the MPS policy for MTIP searches, particularly in relation to Code C of PACE (Police and Criminal Evidence Act), and we will incorporate the recommendations and learning in this review

Furthermore, in light of this incident, we are reviewing the MTIP policy in relation to those under 18. This is firstly to ensure that the policy is appropriate and takes account of the safeguarding review, and also that it recognises the fact that a child in these circumstances may be a vulnerable victim of exploitation by others, which unfortunately occurs where children are exploited by gangs, County Lines and drug dealing.

National Implications

In addition to the review of policy and practice, we are engaged with National Police Chief's Council (NPCC) leads for Stop and Search and Children and Young People, together with the College of Policing to ensure the Met is fully aligned with National protocols (our initial work suggests that we already have additional safeguards in place) and that the recommendations for policing more broadly are considered.

Local Control Measures

In order to ensure that we have a very clear control over this type of search, we are introducing a pilot across Hackney and Tower Hamlets (CE BCU) for MTIP searches. This being that, in addition to the current position requiring a conversation with a supervisor and the presence of an appropriate adult, we will now require an *Inspector authority* prior to the search taking place to ensure appropriate oversight of such an intrusive intervention. We will also require a Merlin report to be submitted for all such searches, recognising that our priority is one of safeguarding the child. We will trial this in CE BCU for consideration of rolling it out more widely across London.

Training

The report raises the issue of adultification. We recognise that this is a subject we need to be more alive to and have committed to ensure that 'adultification' training is delivered to all front line officers in CE BCU. The effective partnership approach to this is essential, and as such, we are grateful to take up the offer of this training being delivered by the City and Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership. It will raise awareness of structural racism, addressing the misuse of the term 'Streetwise' and re-inforce the need to view children as children with a safeguarding mind-set alongside the use of our lawful powers. We will also ask our Learning and Development Community Reference Group to consider how this might be rolled out across the MPS.

We would welcome the opportunity to conduct further joint training with our partners to improve learning and shared understanding. We want our training to be agile and responsive and will seek to work with communities to inform the best approach.

Peer review

We also plan to conduct peer reviews across the BCU, utilising learning from elsewhere in the force and, where relevant, policing across England and Wales. The Community Safety Partnership will have an important role to play in this work.

Engagement

Already in train

Alongside policy review and training, we recognise the critical role communities play in policing and it is essential that we build trust in those areas where it is lost. Together with our 'traditional' engagement methods, there has also been a significant amount of activity within Central East BCU since Child Q, including;

- *Trading places*; stop and search role play scenarios where young people and police get to change places.
- A virtual application called '*A different view*' that gives a young person a realistic experience of an officer's response and duty for stop and search. Just like trading places they get to act in our role.
- Development of a fully functioning and *active IAG (Independent Advisory Group) and SNB (Safer Neighbourhood Board)*; led at Senior Leadership Team level and with clear evidence of dialogue around the impact of recent events and tensions.
- Set up of a *BCU Continuous Improvement Team* which reviewed 796 Stop and Searches in November 20, identifying and implementing areas for improvement such as increased supervision and use of Body Worn Video (BWV). A second review took place in November 2021 which found volumes had decreased but outcomes increased.
- *Cultural awareness training*; provided to all new recruits and Safer Neighbourhood officers with an intention to roll out to all officers in CE BCU. Training is delivered in partnership with community groups and faith leaders.
- Setting up *Police Encounter Panels (PEP's)* to review and scrutinise incidents of community concern as soon as we can after the incident.
- *Innovation Hubs* have been utilised throughout the BCU to give community members a voice in problem solving challenges. One such example brought 30 young people together to discuss the challenge of serious youth violence and listen to their recommendations.
- Development of a comprehensive *Youth Engagement Plan*.
- *Inclusive Leadership training* has been delivered by colleagues at Hackney Council. This is alongside the Inclusive Leadership training that has already been rolled out across the MPS.

In support of local activity, the MPS has a comprehensive plan of activity across the Deputy Commissioner's Delivery Group, the Mayor's Action Plan and activity coordinated through our Crime Prevention, Inclusion and Engagement (CPIE) Department. This sees training rolling out across the Met to address concerns raised in our communities.

These and other activities are all part of our work to ensure the MPS is a truly anti-racist organisation.

Finally, we want to try new initiatives in CE BCU in parallel with the vast amount of work already underway across the MPS. These include;

- The creation of a *child centric stop and search review panel* involving the community and professional partners. The panel will scrutinise search activity, review the BWV, critically evaluate whether there has been a 'safeguarding first' approach and to highlight and raise any identified adultification.
- Where drugs are not located from a S.23 MDA stop and search conducted on a child, the Hackney police MASH team will run a pilot scheme whereby a *letter is sent to the parents* of the child informing them of the police interaction. This is to ensure that we are transparent with the parents in keeping them informed of events involving their child and to maximise the potential 'critical or 'teachable' moments which can make a difference to long term outcomes by reducing missed opportunities to implement safeguarding measures. (This builds on an approach we piloted in Haringey in relation to wider stop and search and a focus on safeguarding children involved.)
- Where there is a MTIP carried out on a child outside of a custody environment, a very detailed Merlin report will be created which will be flagged by the police MASH into Social Services to trigger a *trauma informed response* from the partnership through multi-agency strategy discussion, and if appropriate escalation via the City and Hackney Children Safeguarding Partnership for further scrutiny and challenge.

Transparency

Comprehensive data around the MPS use of stop and search, including MTIPs such as this, is already available to the public via the Met's public stop and search dashboard:

<https://www.met.police.uk/sd/stats-and-data/met/stop-and-search-dashboard/>

The dashboard data is broken down by borough, stop reasons, search types, outcomes, demographics, ethnicity and proportionality. Significantly and transparently, the dashboard includes data on MTIP searches, broken down by borough, gender, age, ethnicity and outcome rates.

In 2021, the MPS carried out around 4,300 MTIP stop and searches, out of a total of over 228,000 stop and searches. MTIPs were under 2% of all stop and searches.

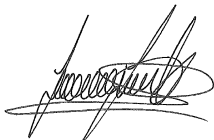
We continue to scrutinise our data closely to understand any disproportionality, ensure that our policing effort is focussed where harm is most prevalent and learn from what it tells us. We involve community groups in this activity across the MPS to ensure we seek views from beyond the police.

Finally, we are under no illusion that the Child Q incident, together with other high profile incidents, have had a significant impact on the trust and confidence Londoners have in the MPS. Officers and staff throughout the Met are working hard to rebuild that trust. We know we must do so and we are committed to doing all we can.

You will be aware that the Commissioner asked Baroness Louise Casey to lead an independent and far-reaching review into our culture and standards of professional and personal behaviour. I know that this incident is already being factored into Baroness Casey's Review and we support that entirely.

I hope that this letter demonstrates the importance with which we take this work, the energy and commitment to building trust in our communities and the desire to get it right. We cannot, of course, do this alone. Our valued partnerships across the MPS are essential to ensuring the response to children is effective and I hope that we can continue to explore shared opportunities to work.

Yours sincerely,



Laurence Taylor

Deputy Assistant Commissioner, Frontline Policing