
KATE GREEN
**DEPUTY MAYOR
OF GREATER
MANCHESTER**

Rt Hon James Cleverly MP
Secretary of State for the Home Department
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Date: 31st January 2024

Dear Home Secretary,

SUBJECT: HMICFRS - An inspection of the effectiveness of the police and law enforcement bodies' response to group-based child sexual exploitation in England and Wales

I write in response to the recent HMICFRS inspection report on the effectiveness of the police and law enforcement bodies' response to group-based child sexual exploitation.

You will be aware of the recent publication on 15th January of the review into Operation Span and the investigation of non-recent child sexual exploitation in Rochdale. This report had been long awaited. The report found compelling evidence of widespread organised sexual exploitation of children within Rochdale from 2004 to 2012, and failures by statutory agencies at the time to respond appropriately. The Mayor and I understand the profound concern this causes communities and the impact of trust and confidence in those agencies. GMP and Rochdale Council have been asked to ensure that every possible action is taken to follow up on leads arising from this report and pursue potential perpetrators. We will now proceed to the fourth and final stage of this process which will seek to understand the confidence levels in the arrangements in place now for protecting children from sexual abuse. This is a piece of work that the Chief Constable and I will continue to be fully sighted on as it develops.

I note the findings of the HMICFRS national inspection across the police service and was concerned to learn of the lack of definition around group-based CSE and the inconsistency of approach taken by different forces. The lack of flags or warning markers for these crimes along with the delays in investigations impacts on the trust of the victims and wider public and on the police's capability to swiftly identify and apprehend suspected perpetrators.

The report makes four recommendations for Chief Constables and one area for improvement. I shall respond to these in turn:

Recommendation 1 - By 31 December 2024, all chief constables should make sure that their forces have problem profiles for child sexual exploitation, each of which should include an assessment of the nature and extent of group-based child sexual exploitation. This should include relevant data from local partner agencies and should be updated frequently, at least annually.

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I can confirm that the GMP Force Intelligence Bureau (FIB) Strategic Team completed the CSE Problem Profile in September 2023, which included analysis of the ten models of CSE. This will be refreshed annually, with the next Profile due in September 2024.

A primary recommendation from the CSE Problem Profile is the implementation of a permanent CSE capacity within the FIB, and the creation of a tracker for CSE flagged offences and intelligence. This recommendation will be taken forward by the Director of Intelligence together with the Force lead for Child Protection.

Recommendation 2 - By 31 December 2024, all chief constables and the relevant business user groups for police record management systems should make sure there are sufficient measures in place to identify group-based child sexual exploitation.

GMP currently collates and maps data, having done so for the last four years, of all multi-victim and multi-offender investigations. This collection plan encompasses the definition of 'Group Based Offending' and is undertaken by the dedicated CSE Major Investigation Team.

I am aware that the data informs a regular oversight report used for the accountability framework, district governance, early threat identification and provides an operational brief to a variety of audiences. Investigations are risk assessed and categorised in accordance with the threat the perpetrators may pose. Those investigations posing the highest threat are the subject of a peer review by experienced Senior Investigative Officers.

I am confident that this process ensures GMP is able to deliver a consistent investigatory approach, with particular attention to victim safeguarding and perpetrator risk management.

Recommendation 3 - By 30 June 2024, all chief constables of forces that are yet to receive the Hydrant Programme's continuing professional development offer should arrange it.

GMP is currently working with Operation Hydrant and the Vulnerability, Knowledge and Practice Programme (VKPP) to ensure the CSE / Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) peer review process is working as optimally as possible. I understand that the Chief Constable has been reassured by the National Police Chief's Council (NPCC) Lead for Child Protection, that GMP has a rigorous peer review process in place.

Recommendation 4 - With immediate effect, all chief constables should take effective steps to eradicate victim-blaming language in their forces.

GMP has invited NAPAC (National Association of Children Abused in Childhood) to undertake a board role on a Multiagency Oversight Group that governs the response to Greater Manchester's largest group based CSE investigations. I am reassured that this ensures that GMP has experts guiding the response in such a way that they can design out any victim blaming behaviours / responses. This has been an invaluable exercise shaping the Greater Manchester wide response to this type of criminal investigation.

GMP is the first force in the country to have developed a Child Protection eBook. This is a digital handbook, available to all officers and staff 24/7 to provide guidance on child protection matters both strategically and operationally. The eBook contains several guidance documents relating to victim blaming language to assist officers in their understanding of issues affecting children and young people who are exploited.

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I am also aware that various training inputs have been developed and delivered to operational staff, which include inputs to help eradicate victim-blaming language, such as Voice of the Child, how to recognise Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's), and 'Out of the shadows', which has made an impact on the 2000+ staff that have attended.

AFI 1 - All chief constables should work with their statutory safeguarding partners to review, promote, and make sure that relevant group-based child sexual exploitation disruption and prevention initiatives are implemented effectively in their forces. This should include consideration of options such as the advice given in the Home Office disruption toolkit and an Operation Makesafe (a national police initiative to raise awareness of child sexual exploitation in the business community) type of approach.

GMP regularly holds multi-agency CSE/CCE weeks of action following the Home Office disruption toolkit and Operation Makesafe best practice guidance.

Most recently, in October 2023, Operation Vigilant (Operation Makesafe equivalent) was a key initiative delivered on several districts, which included days of action supported by statutory safeguarding partners to deliver training and awareness in schools.

In order to ensure the effectiveness of the response to group-based investigations, GMP has invited the Director of Hydrant Programme and CSE Taskforce to undertake a critical oversight role on GMPs operational response. The recent feedback highlights the substantial long-term commitment from GMP and all key partners, and importantly the co-location of a multi-agency workforce.

Yours sincerely



Kate Green
Deputy Mayor of Greater Manchester