

Making London safe for and reducing offending by Young People

Draft

Introduction

This paper outlines the role and responsibilities of the police service and our commitment to children and young people. We will work closely with statutory and voluntary agencies to improve community safety for the 1.7 million young people in the capital helping to make London the safest major city in the world.

Underlying all police dealings with young people is the need to treat everyone fairly and with dignity. Our aim is to reduce youth crime and the fear of crime, while protecting the rights of all children and young people.

Young People (under 18) in London:

- Are responsible for nearly 60% of all street crime in London
- Are victims in 30% of street crimes
- Are the subject of 60% of all Missing Person enquiries
- 18,000 young people out of a total 30,000 Missing Person reports last year

Most adult offenders began committing crimes as young people, the earlier a person starts the more likely they are to become persistent offenders. Tackling Youth Crime must be a priority for the Service, to ensure a safe, just and tolerant society for the future.

The MPS/MPA Policing and Performance Plan 2001/02 identifies Tackling Youth Crime as a priority for the Service.

It is apparent that many young offenders present problems that concern a range of agencies. These factors include: drug or alcohol abuse; low parental supervision, truancy or exclusion from school. Tackling truancy is a Government priority and an MPS objective for those boroughs with high rates of unauthorised school absence.

This document seeks to encourage a holistic service by linking the work of front line operational officers and all those involved in more specialist roles:

- Youth Involvement Officers (includes schools officers)
- Community Beat Officers
- Community Safety Units
- Youth Offending Teams
- Child Protection Teams
- Diversity Directorate
- Drugs Directorate
- Crime Policy, Youth Justice Task Force

There are 270 MPS officers working in Child Protection Teams (CPT) in London. There are a further 65 officers working under SO5 on child protection issues.

There are now over 50 MPS officers working full-time within a Youth Offending Team (YOT) alongside other professionals from Education, Health, Probation and Social Services. All agencies share the common aim to reduce offending by young people. We must develop these links and pool our resources to be most effective in reducing youth offending and victimisation.

There are 150 MPS officers who regularly visit schools to support the education of young people in London. These officers should work closely with the YOT and CPT to ensure their efforts form part of a co-ordinated borough strategy.

The guidelines contained in this document support borough strategies, MPS/MPA Policing and Performance Plan 2001/02, and the strategies of our partners such as the Youth Justice Board. The guidelines outline the range of policing services available to young people in London. By co-ordinating our own efforts and working closely with all partners we will make London a safer place.

- **We must be expert in policing**
- **We must have specialist officers**
- **We must provide quality training and adequate support for these officers**
- **We must continue to support Youth Offending Teams**
- **We must consult and involve young people themselves**
- **We must identify what works and replicate good practice throughout the Service**
- **We must communicate our good work and values both internally and externally, making effective use of new technology**

These Guidelines are divided into three sections:

- 1. Making London Safe for Young People** (preventing victimisation)
- 2. Preventing Offending by Young People** (offending and offenders)
- 3. Developing Good Citizenship** (Good citizens)

None of these categories is mutually exclusive, for example, there is strong evidence that many victims respond to vulnerability by offending against others. It is important to recognise and promote the positive attributes of young people to provide good role models for young people.

1. ***Making London safe for young people***

Borough Youth and School Involvement

Creation of YOTs established joint agency units to tackle Youth Offending but this commitment does not mean we can abrogate our responsibility to support others in the education of young people.

'It takes a whole village to educate a child'.

(African proverb)

In partnership with other statutory and voluntary agencies, our aim is to increase the proportion of young people who progress to adulthood without becoming victims of or involved in crime. Where young people offend, we must ensure they receive effective and appropriate assistance to reduce the risk of further offending.

Borough Commanders should allocate sufficient local resources to Youth Involvement taking account the size of the youth population, offending, truancy, victimisation rates and other indices.

Developing relationships with schools, youth clubs and organisations provides police with the opportunity for positive interaction and effective consultation with young people. There are tremendous benefits from working with young people and not just for or against. Relationships developed through other forms of police school liaison enable specific crime reduction activities to receive the support of the community and become most effective.

The Government Healthy Schools initiative seeks to improve the health and well being of pupils, teachers and the community. Schools are required to conduct an audit and set priorities for an action plan. Police officers can support schools to sustain a safe environment for students to learn and achieve.ⁱ

The role of the traditional Schools' Involvement Officer has developed considerably in several areas. Many of these officers now investigate offences occurring in schools; co-ordinate truancy initiatives and undertake crime reduction initiatives in their borough. The Bromley Youth Justice Office model is an example of good practice.ⁱⁱ

We should support schools as organisations to develop and implement whole school policies on discipline, racism, drugs, bullying and school security. We will increase the trust and confidence of all communities by tackling 'Hate Crime' such as racist or homophobic bullying that occurs in schools. Initiatives under Operation Spectrum Athena Sport seek to prevent and detect hate crime in sport, many of these involve schools and youth groups.ⁱⁱⁱ

Youth involvement officers can assist schools with the delivery of their Drugs and Citizenship programmes, ensuring:

- Police efforts are part of the wider school community effort
- Police input is limited to specific areas of expertise
- There are clear aims, objectives and outcomes for police involvement
- Presentations are supported by the sustained contribution of teachers
- Monitor, review, cost and evaluate all school involvement

Research identifies that police / school involvement can have most impact at Year 6 (age 10/11). At this age, pupils are most positive about police involvement and more likely to be influenced by any presentation. Police should support initiatives aimed at easing the transition from Junior to Secondary school (e.g., Youth Action Group contacts).^{iv}

Police officers should be involved in multi-agency 'Junior Citizen' events that provide young children with the skills to cope with the dangers of everyday life. We must develop local initiatives to tackle street crime linked with general safety awareness that educates young people to become 'Street Wise'.

Policing Plan 2001/02

We will improve our performance and achieve our targets by:

Reducing damage to London's communities caused by drug dealing

Piloting the drug education strategy in five London boroughs.

(The evaluation of this work will impact on all police school involvement)

Child Protection Teams

Specialist Operations (SO5)^v now co-ordinate MPS Child Protection Teams (CPT) and are currently developing new corporate guidance. This guidance will emphasise the need for co-operation between all MPS personnel and the need to work in partnership with statutory and voluntary agencies.

The MPS and other agencies will provide training sessions to raise awareness of CPT issues both within and outside the Service. This will improve understanding, helping to improve protection for children and alert paedophiles to the fact that if they commit crimes they will be caught.

In particular, close working relationships should be formalised between CPT and Community Safety Units (CSU), working to agreed protocols. This ensures a holistic service that provides consistent levels of support for victims across the Service. Local strategies should also be developed to address issues such as alcohol abuse and prostitution, protecting children and taking robust action against those who exploit young people.

Internal Partners: Borough police personnel, Community Safety Units, Borough Intelligence Units, Local Vice Unit, School Involvement Officers, Paedophile Unit, National Criminal Intelligence Service, Clubs and Vice Department.

External: Social Services, Education, Health, Youth Offending Teams, NSPCC, Voluntary organisations, Registered Informants.

Policing Plan 2001/02

Objectives:

To increase the Judicial Disposal rate for child sex abuse.
(target - 35%)

To run child sex abuse prevention initiatives in partnership with other agencies.
(target - 60% of boroughs)

Missing Persons (young people account for 60% of all reports)

Investigations into reports of missing young people will be dealt with meticulously and expeditiously in accordance with Service Policy. When found there should be a thorough investigation of the circumstances to identify any underlying cause.

Consideration should be given to interviewing more children on their return, developing local protocols to establish when it may be appropriate for officers from CSU or CPT to undertake these interviews. In all cases when the young person is found, necessary action should be taken to prevent harm and reduce risk of repetition.

2. Preventing Offending by Young People

We need whole solutions to prevent young people being drawn into crime, not simply the mechanics of the Criminal Justice System or punishment options. Enforcement alone cannot stop the increase in youth offending. The MPS will take a leading role in a London-wide initiative to secure additional funding for programmes aimed at diverting young offenders from crime (Youth Justice Task Force, OPSU).

The Islington 'Acceptable Behaviour Contracts' initiative aimed at tackling anti-social behaviour by young people, has received national recognition. The initiative proves successful for tackling unruly youngsters and providing a staged progression towards full Anti-Social Behaviour Orders under the Crime and Disorder Act.^{vi}

Policing Plan 2001/02

Objective: To reduce street crime

We will develop links with schools and education authorities to make an impact on issues of bullying, truancy and exclusions.

Police schools' involvement aims to prevent victimisation, prevent offending and develop good citizens. Officers who work in schools should work closely with response team officers, together with colleagues in CSUs, CPTs and Youth Offending Teams. Young people are disproportionately responsible for different types of crime. Nearly young people under 18 commit nearly 60% of street crime and over 50% of vehicle crime in London. Youth involvement

officers should assist Borough Intelligence Units to identify and target Youth Crime hot-spots.

On average, there are 20 – 25 persistent young offenders on a borough. These few individuals can impose a strong influence on their peers. We will use intelligence to target persistent offenders, disrupting and curtailing their activities.

Policing Plan 2001/02

We will improve our performance and achieve targets by:

Returning truants to school (in partnership with local authorities) to help prevent offending.

Boroughs with high rates of unauthorised absence will complete one Truancy Initiative each school term.

Truancy Patrols

Some London boroughs have rates of unauthorised absence that are three times the national average. Lack of academic attainment has strong links to social exclusion, crime, drug dependency, teenage pregnancy and dependency on social services in adult life. Truancy patrols and similar measures prove particularly successful in putting those young people on the fringes of criminality back 'on the rails'.

New powers introduced under the Crime and Disorder Act require co-operation between police and Education Authorities. Police activity aims to reduce truancy rates and raise academic attainment. Working in partnership with schools ensures an appropriate school response when truants are returned.

Policing Plan 2001/02

We will improve our performance and achieve targets by:

- **Implementing Restorative Warnings to help prevent further offending.**

Aiming to reduce the number of first-time offenders who re-offend.

Youth Justice

Changes in Youth Justice introduced under the Crime and Disorder Act first introduced elements of Restorative Justice into the delivery of Warnings and Reprimands. Restorative Justice aims to confront young people with the consequences of their offending.^{vii}

In an effective warning, the young person will appreciate the effects on and feelings of the victim, those of his or her own family or carers and those of the wider community. The young person will also understand the likely consequences if their offending behaviour is repeated.

Youth Justice objectives aim to speed up processing young offenders. Confronting offenders with the consequences of their conduct as swiftly as possible.

Policing Plan 2001/02

We will improve our performance and achieve targets by:

Processing young offenders more quickly.

- *70% of all PYO's charged within 2 days of arrest*
- *70% of PYOs 1st court listing within 7 days of charge*
- *80% of all young offender cases disposed of within 28 days from arrest*
- *80% of all young offender case disposals notified to the PNC within 10 days*

Youth Offending Teams

There are now over 50 police officers working in multi-agency Youth Offending Teams in London. These officers work alongside colleagues from: Education, Social Services, Probation and the Health Service. All agencies involved in Youth Justice have as their primary aim, 'Preventing Youth Offending'. YOT police officers should expect to:

- link the work of YOTs to wider crime reduction initiatives
- promote the work of YOTs to police colleagues
- highlight to young offenders the consequences of crime
- organise reparation work
- oversee curfew or other bail conditions

Policing Plan 2001/02

We will improve our performance and achieve targets by:

Supporting YOTs through the provision of information and intelligence about priority crimes and youths coming to notice.

(By the end of this year, all YOTs should be OTIS enabled. Systems and protocols should be agreed for information exchange. It is essential that YOTs have in their possession all current information on any individual to ensure an appropriate response.)

3. Developing Good Citizenship.

It is important to recognise that most young people do not commit crime and of those arrested for an offence, the majority will not re-offend. Recognising the achievements of young people in awards ceremonies such as the Young

Achiever Awards in Lambeth and Southwark promotes good citizenship.^{viii}
^{ix}The Philip Lawrence Awards, supported by the Home Office and the National Youth Agency, recognises outstanding achievements by young people.^x

The outstanding, innovative work of the Southwark Partnership Team for the Young Person Reward Scheme, demonstrates the partnership and funding opportunities available to reward good behaviour and promote active citizenship.^{xi}

Appropriate training for officers working with young people is crucial and needs to be tailored to circumstances.^{xii}

Consultation

Citizenship education recognises that young people should be involved in issues that affect their lives. Lack of involvement can lead to disillusionment and exclusion, being involved increases motivation towards high achievement in life. We must recognise the positive attributes of young people and work with the young to benefit the community.

Every borough should develop an effective method of consulting with and involving young people in policing issues that affect them. The Diversity Directorate's Advisory Group Guide provides information and good practice in this area.^{xiii}

Lambeth 'Youth Interface' sessions prove an excellent opportunity to develop better understanding between operational police officers and young people in the Borough. Police Education Partnership (PEP) involves young people aged 15-16 in police recruit training at Peel Centre.^{xiv}

Volunteer Police Cadets

Boroughs should consider establishing a Volunteer Police Cadet corps.^{xv} At present, there are 16 groups in the MPS. These groups foster police / community links and the existing groups reflect the ethnic profile of their borough.

The aims of the VPC:

- Teach good citizenship, encourage active communities
- Enhance relationships between young people and the police
- Create a group of young people to assist the MPS in non-confrontational tasks (e.g., policing the London Marathon) and be involved in community work
- Stimulate and maintain the interest of suitable young people who may be considering a career in the police.

Recruiting

At strategic and operational level police should maintain effective regular contact with schools. All boroughs are required to undertake a minimum of four Recruiting Initiatives each year. Many of these initiatives involve young people, for example police involvement in school careers days. Officers involved in these initiatives should be trained Network Volunteers, supporting the work of the Positive Action Team.^{xvi}

Summer Schemes

During Summer 2000, 27 boroughs received funding from HSBC to assist in the running of Summer Diversion schemes. These schemes provided development and recreation activities for young people. Only four of the 27 boroughs operated police-led schemes. There is no corporate funding available this year.

Police can support and enable communities to run effective and targeted Summer Diversion schemes for young people. Police officers working in partnership with local authority Community Safety units, Youth Services or residents/tenants organisations have positive community benefits and can impact upon youth crime in the community. Barking and Dagenham police are an example of good practice in Summer Diversion schemes.

Youth Action Groups

YAG (supported by Home Office funding and Crime Concern) and other peer-led education or crime prevention projects recognise the positive attributes of young people. They can reduce incidents of vandalism and prove successful in tackling racist, homophobic and other bullying in schools. Police should assist schools and youth groups to develop these initiatives.

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ⁱ Healthy Schools 'National Healthy Schools Standard, DFEE website

ⁱⁱ Bromley Youth Justice Unit,

ⁱⁱⁱ Athena Sport, DCC4(3) Room 934 New Scotland Yard

^{iv} Youth Action Plus, Enquiry Line 01793 863516

^v SO5

^{vi} Islington (NI)

^{vii} Youth Justice Task Force, Room 1015 New Scotland Yard

^{viii} Lambeth Borough Schools Unit, Cavendish Road Police Station

^{ix} Southwark Partnership Office

^x Philip Lawrence Awards, National Youth Agency 0116 285 3700 (& website)

^{xi} Southwark Partnership Office

^{xii} P11(4), Peel Centre, provides School Involvement Course places at Tottenham and Croydon colleges.

^{xiii} DCC4(4), room 910 New Scotland Yard

^{xiv} P9 Recruit Training, Peel Centre

^{xv} Volunteer Police Cadets, co-ordinator Inspector Anthony Moore, room 1008 New Scotland Yard

^{xvi} Positive Action Team,