



**METROPOLITAN
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TERRITORIAL POLICING

Cindy Butts
Deputy Chair
Metropolitan Police Authority
10 Dean Farrar Street
London
SW1H 0NY

EK - Camden Borough
Holborn Police Station
10 Lambs Conduit Street
London
WC1N 3NR

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Our ref:

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Dear Cindy

MPA Domestic Violence Board

Thank you for your letter dated 29 April 2008 seeking further information following Camden BOCU's attendance at the MPA Domestic Violence Board on 4 March 2008. I am grateful for the acknowledgement of the good work taking place within Camden and am pleased for the opportunity to provide further clarity regarding the issues you have raised.

Please see below for my chronological response to the issues raised in your letter.

- **Victimless prosecutions**

A number of domestic violence cases have been successfully prosecuted in situations where the complainant does not support a prosecution. An exact breakdown of these cases, which are often referred to as 'victimless' prosecutions, is not available as the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) monitors overall case attrition and attrition in domestic crime cases but does not measure 'victimless' cases separately. However, they represent a small proportion of overall domestic violence cases. The Community Safety Unit (CSU) estimates that around 10 such cases have been supported by police and CPS in the last year in Camden.

However, it is important to distinguish between cases that are not supported by the victim from the outset and those where the victim withdraws his or her support after a suspect has been charged. In cases where the victim indicates at an early stage that she or he will not attend court, police give careful attention to their reasons and, where

appropriate, seek support through the use of special measures. Where corroborating evidence is available, such as records of 999 calls or photographs of injuries, and risk factors are present, police will refer a 'victimless' case to the CPS for a charge to be considered.

Overall, the experience of my officers is that intensive and sustained police involvement is necessary to bring such cases to a successful conclusion. One recent example highlighting this involved a defendant with a personality disorder who had repeatedly assaulted his mother. Police identified this as a high-risk case and worked with the victim and with mental health professionals to reduce the risk of further violence. The mother was due to be subject to a witness summons, requiring a high level of support to her and cooperation between police and CPS. The defendant pleaded guilty before the case reached trial and he received a conditional discharge.

Where witness summons is not possible, prosecutors may apply for statements to be admitted as hearsay evidence, under the provisions of the Criminal Justice Act 2003, although prosecutors report that the experience of using these provisions presents a number of difficulties. For example, later statements such as 'withdrawal' statements may contain inconsistencies that cannot be explored through cross examination as the witness is not present. The courts must also consider their responsibilities for ensuring a fair trial and are cautious in admitting victim hearsay. The topic of hearsay evidence was included at a training day for Camden CSU investigators in April and the aim of this was to improve case file quality and highlight the importance of detailed victim impact statements.

- **Strategic support from the CDRP on domestic violence**

There is a high level of support from the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) regarding domestic violence in Camden. This includes support and involvement at a senior and strategic level. The Domestic Violence Strategy and Services Manager takes the lead both strategically and operationally, and the Assistant Director of Community Safety at the Local Authority (LA) actively supports the work on domestic violence. The Chief Executive is also involved and the department is well resourced. The CDRP acknowledges that there continue to be gaps at a strategic level, particularly in the areas of Housing and Health. We will work to redress this through the partnership.

Strong CDRP support enables the DV action plan to remain a high priority and this is monitored through the DV Forum. A strategist is employed by the LA specifically

to work on domestic violence reduction. The partnership also oversees and funds the MARAC system and the IDVA programme. The IDVA programme has recently expanded, with extra staff employed and new specialist support available, for example for victims with addiction problems. Police, CPS and local authority are also working together to plan the introduction of a special domestic violence court. This is subject to further planning and funding availability.

- **Integration of the Health Service into the CDRP strategic response to domestic violence**

The strategic response to domestic violence is led by the CDRP and the health service participates in this partnership. There is limited strategic buy in from the health service at a senior level, however representatives from the local primary care and mental health trusts are active participants in the Camden MARAC. We welcome further opportunities for cooperation with the health service at a strategic level and we are working with the Local Authority through the partnership to improve the level of involvement of the two local hospital trusts in the CDRP.

- **Health Service support at a local level for the aims of the CDRP on domestic violence**

There is a strong operational partnership between police and the health service focusing on high risk offenders, under Operation Jigsaw. CSU officers have provided training on the response to domestic violence to accident and emergency staff. The Safer Neighbourhoods approach provides police with a point of contact at Sergeant level for each of the local hospitals. In addition, SNTs that have a hospital within their ward work closely with health service staff. There is an opportunity for the partnership to work with the SNTs to improve the involvement of health service staff in achieving our goals on domestic violence.

- **Training for PCSOs and SNTs to support local victims of domestic violence**

Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) may be the first point of contact for victims of domestic violence and this particularly affects the new 'Station' PCSOs who have taken up posts in the station offices at Holborn and Kentish Town police stations. CSU officers have provided training on the first response to domestic violence for these new SPCSOs and there is a schedule of further training for new staff when they are posted to the BOCU.

Local Safer Neighbourhoods Teams are routinely made aware of the most high-risk domestic violence cases. The officer in the case will contact the SNT and discuss steps to reduce the risk of further violence. MARAC actions will also include an agreed programme of visits to domestic violence victims by SNT officers where appropriate. SNTs are aware of local support for victims of domestic violence and specialist advice is always available from the CSU. SNTs are also supported through the single point of contact scheme where SNTs are allocated a Crime Wing Detective Sergeant to provide advice regarding crime matters.

While PCSOs will not be deployed to domestic incidents, they may witness them and they need the skills and knowledge to respond correctly. The Borough protocol for the deployment of PCSOs makes clear that any PCSO who witnesses a domestic violence crime or incident must request a uniform unit to be despatched.

- **Reasons for the reduction in reported offences in Camden**

There are a number of possible explanations for the reduction in domestic violence offences in Camden during 2007-08 and these include the impact of the MARAC system. The MARAC became fully effective during 2007-08 and the concerted effort to manage and reduce the risk to high-risk victims has resulted in a reduction in offences. The Camden MARAC has reviewed 130 cases to date; only 7 repeat victims are currently under review by the multi agency partnership. The positive action approach has also been consistently applied in Camden and this has the effect of reducing repeat offences and increasing the proportion of suspects who are arrested. Independent research into the reduction in offences last year has not been completed due to resourcing difficulties, however this is a long term undertaking that will be further considered by the CDRP. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that in this performance year there has been an increase of 10% in reported domestic violence crimes, compared to last year. Our sanction detection rate for domestic violence crime for the PYTD is almost 54%, against a target of 47%.

- **Succession planning**

Domestic violence is a high priority for Camden and the Community Safety Unit is staffed by an experienced Detective Inspector and experienced Sergeants. The unit is well resourced, although one constable post is currently vacant, albeit

internal postings are reviewed across the BOCU Crime Wing every six months. In April 2008 Camden's Crime Wing was restructured to create a Public Protection Group (PPG) that includes CSU, Sapphire and Serious Violence units. This has provided greater resilience and flexibility to respond to urgent investigations and ensures a sustained commitment to domestic violence investigations. The PPG also has a dedicated intelligence capability that supports analytical work around domestic violence offenders. In common with all London boroughs, we are currently subject to a high level of scrutiny and the investigation of violent crime, including domestic violence, is a priority.

- **The effectiveness of the Hate Crime car and visits to LGBT venues**

The Hate Crime car has been deployed under Operation Athena, most recently as part of an MPS-wide Athena Day on 21 May, and this remains an effective approach to domestic violence and other hate crime. The most recent Athena operation was carried out by 20 officers from Camden CSU, who were supported by officers from across the BOCU. It resulted in 17 arrests, of which 15 were for domestic violence cases and 2 were for homophobic crime. Charges were achieved in 10 cases, including assaults, harassment and firearms offences. Officers were also able to carry out victim visits together with the Camden IDVAs. An Operation Athena deployment is planned to take place in Camden every two months during 2008-09 and the CDRP has agreed additional funding for this. This work is in addition to the MPS corporate requirements.

LGBT venues in Camden have been identified and allocated to one of the borough's 27 LGBT Liaison Officers (LOs). The LOs include uniform and detective officers and police staff, and there is a strong contribution from our Special Constables. The 12 venues are visited twice a month and self reporting forms are left to encourage reporting of crime, including domestic violence. Same sex domestic violence cases are allocated to an LO if specifically requested by the victim. A freephone number is publicised to victims via leaflets and business cards. Frequent outreach work is completed on Hampstead Heath with support services to encourage crime reporting.

- **The effectiveness of Integrated Prosecution Teams**

The Integrated Prosecution Team (IPT) for Camden will be introduced from November 2008 and is scheduled to be fully implemented by January 2009. IPTs

are a means of reducing duplication in case processing and improving case quality. We will be able to benefit from the experience of boroughs including Hackney, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest that have piloted the IPT system, and this includes the experience of preparing and presenting domestic violence cases for court. Witness care units will continue to provide support to the victims of crime.

I hope that you find this information useful and I look forward to future work in partnership with the MPA.

Yours sincerely,

Detective Superintendent Jeremy Burton
Camden BOCU

pp Ch Supt Dominic Clout
Borough Commander

cc Tony Brooks
London Borough of Camden