

Response to published Mayor's Office of Police and Crime, Police and Crime Plan 2022-2025

'Building a safer London'

We made a statement when the Police and Crime Plan first came out welcoming the commitment in the plan to work more with DDPOs and Disabled people. This is a more detailed response after going through the published plan to highlight keys issues we feel are important to address:

- Tackling low levels of community confidence
- Understanding our community
- Intersectional working practices
- Accessible engagement / services
- Recognition of repeat victims of hate crime
- Victim Care Hub to include specialist services

Do more to tackle low levels of community confidence

With lack of confidence in policing so low amongst Disabled Londoners we felt that is not enough that it was implicit that engagement, accountability, and transparency aims are threaded through the plan. Disabled Londoners need it explicitly stated with clear, accessible communication and engagement. We need opportunities to hold MOPAC to account when this is not happening.

It was disappointing despite our previous reports and presentations to MOPAC that Ableist / Disablist attitudes and discrimination was omitted from the London Mayor's list of unacceptable attitudes and behaviours that they

expect the Metropolitan Police Service to drive out. We would welcome more engagement with MOPAC via the newly established Greater London Authority (GLA) Deaf & Disabled People Organizations' Disability Stakeholder group with agreed actions on how to improve situations that are discussed relating to our community. At the last meeting, it was suggested that the GLA set up a Disability Chief Officer or Commissioner. We know that outcomes across all work areas will improve if there is a disability lens included.

Marginalised communities are most at risk of being discriminated against or treated unfairly, so we also wanted it explicitly stated that all areas of the London Mayor's work have an intersectional lens, including Disabled Londoners. Disabled people are part of every group of people.

Improving the lives of Disabled Londoners improves everyone's lives. We all need responsive, accessible, accountable, and effective services. Embedding this into planning and delivery ensures that Disabled Londoners are included at the start and goes beyond the limitations of the Equality Act. We feel that there has been a missed opportunity to initiate an organisational and commissioning transformation into more intersectional based change that would benefit all. It would be reassuring to know who is representing Disabled Londoners on the London Recovery Board; all areas of work detailed by the board impact on Disabled Londoners' lives.

Do more to understand our community

In our response, we highlighted our report, "Abandoned, Forgotten, Ignored"¹ on how the pandemic exposed long-standing inequalities in society disproportionately affecting Disabled Londoners. We are pleased that MOPAC acknowledged and included this in their final plan.

¹ <https://www.inclusionlondon.org.uk/disability-in-london/coronavirus-updates-and-information/campaigns-news-during-coronavirus-crisis/abandoned-forgotten-and-ignored-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-disabled-people/>

Making sure the right language is used when engaging with Disabled Londoners is vital to build rapport and trust. The use of ‘people with disabilities’ is not social model language. While it is important to respect self-identification from individuals; when working with DDPOs, making sure social model language is used indicates respect and understanding of our culture and political movement.

The MOPAC Police and Crime Plan mentions numerous other plans and groups that have been set up to look into the areas of focus outlined in the Police and Crime Plan. As small organisations, we need support to be able to engage with work streams and contribute our knowledge and expertise. Having a Disability Chief Officer would ensure that the right people are involved.

Missed opportunity for intersectional work

With each area of work comes an opportunity to include Disabled Londoners, who are women, children, from black and minority ethnic communities, LGBTQ+ communities, and different cultures and religions.

We welcome approaching the prevention of violence with a public health approach and suggest that there is work to be done around understanding Disablism / Ableism and how this manifests in individuals, services and society that leads to violence against Disabled people. We understand that there is a Behavioural Insights Team, and we would be interested to their insights into why disabled people are targeted for hate crime, for example.

One issue we raised that the Behavioural Insights Team could investigate would be why Disabled people are targeted and harassed due to receiving Disability Benefits. There are fundamental systemic issues that need addressing to uncover how the root causes of hate crime against disabled people can be remedied; being seen as ‘vulnerable’, ‘less than’, ‘burden on society’ and an ‘easy target’.

Failures following police contact with Disabled people in distress led to harm or deaths which could have been avoided. Some of these are detailed in the IOPC (Independent Office of Police Conduct) “Learning the Lessons” bulletins and others in IOPC investigations. Some made local or national news. These instances may have contributed to the reduced trust Disabled people have in the police.

Due to the anonymous nature of many of the Learning the Lessons bulletins, exact locations are not always known, however the failures in interacting with Disabled suspects or victims are not a localized problem within the UK.

4Front Youth Empowerment², INQUEST³, and Stop Watch⁴, report over-policing and escalation occurs disproportionately in interactions between the police and people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities. Autism Injustice⁵ and our own ‘Poor Policing’ report⁶ highlight how Disabled people often experience poorer or hostile interactions with the police. There is a wealth of international research on police violence and over-policing of Disabled people from BAME communities, especially Black communities⁷ The problems and failures detailed below will almost certainly disproportionately impact Disabled people from BAME communities.

People from BAME communities are less likely to be diagnosed or identified as Disabled compared to their white peers. Neurodivergent conditions are underdiagnosed⁸, yet neurodivergent people are significantly over-

² <https://www.4frontproject.org/> <https://www.lbc.co.uk/news/three-quarters-of-all-children-strip-searched-by-met-come-from-ethnically-divers/>

³ <https://www.inquest.org.uk/>

⁴ <https://www.stop-watch.org/what-we-do/research/>

⁵ <https://autisminjustice.org/>

⁶ <https://www.inclusionlondon.org.uk/news/poor-police-response-report-disabled-victims-of-hate-crime/>

⁷ <https://time.com/5857438/police-violence-black-disabled/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/jun/09/sandra-bland-eric-garner-freddie-gray-the-toll-of-police-violence-on-disabled-americans> <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/understanding-policing-black-disabled-bodies/>

⁸ <https://elevateyoungminds.uk/blog/black-neurodiversity-the-intersectionality-and-representation-of-neurodivergence-in-the-community-6fe5p>

represented in the criminal justice system⁹. This would suggest that there is a disproportionately high number of Disabled people from BAME communities involved in the criminal justice system who have not been identified as Disabled. Systemic inequalities lead to a bias when relying on self-disclosure and identification assessment tools. There needs to be more focus on Londoners with intersectional identities and how to overcome the barriers for services and support.

In a 2014 bulletin was a case detailing how, when trying to determine whether an autistic boy in their custody had an item he could harm himself with, officers made the decision that because the boy was autistic, he “wouldn’t be able to communicate with them”. They then restrained him and forcibly strip-searched him. In a 2019 bulletin was a case detailing how an autistic man was also forcibly strip-searched in search of drugs as his “erratic behaviours” (including sensory processing difficulties, repetitive behaviours, and social differences) were assumed to be the result of drug use, despite the man’s previous disclosure of being autistic. In a 2020 bulletin, was a case of a boy with mental distress being forcibly strip-searched following expression of suicidal ideations and behaviours. In none of these cases were appropriate adults present for the strip searches.

In the most recent ‘Learning the Lessons’ bulleting, issue 40, are no less than 5 separate incidents of police staff initiating, pursuing, or maintaining inappropriate contact or relationships with Disabled women they met during the course of their duties.

Disabled people killed by the police such as Jason Lennon, Richard Cottier, and Kevin Clarke, also raised concerns about police capacity to de-escalate and engage with Disabled people experiencing mental distress and trauma. Black Disabled men, particularly those experiencing mental distress and trauma, are disproportionately harmed and killed in police contacts which resulted in IOPC investigations.

⁹ <https://www.thejusticegap.com/support-for-neurodivergent-people-patchy-and-inconsistent-say-justice-watchdogs/> <https://www.thebraincharity.org.uk/neurodiversity-in-the-criminal-justice-system-helping-prisoners-with-neurological-conditions-get-extra-support/>

We feel that specialist Disability Equality Training based on the Social Model of Disability and the Cultural Model of Deafness rolled out across all levels of staff would greatly improve understanding of intersectionality issues and opportunities to improve services for everyone.

We can only build strong communities if we have the resources to be able to do so. We are encouraged that there is a growing recognition that organisations run by people with lived experience are best placed to provide holistic community strength and resilience. There is a network of over 70 DDPOs in London that can help but need financial and training support.

Do more to engage with our community

As well as working with Independent Advisory Groups (IAGs), MOPAC need to make use of the community expertise and knowledge of marginalized groups, including victims who do not want to report to authorities. The CATCH Partnership, Hate Crime strategic and stakeholder groups will all have valid evidence from victims who may not engage with surveys and requests for feedback.

We would welcome an expansion of the Mayor's action plan for transparency, accountability, and trust in policing to include intersectional identities and other disproportionately affected groups.

We welcome the focus of supporting the strengthening local partnerships to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour as disabled Londoners have been increasingly more isolated during the pandemic and need responsive, caring services to feel safer in their communities.

Hate Crime against Disabled people often starts as anti-social behaviour and need rapid responses and community solutions to anti-social behaviour and harassment based on their identity.

The high number of Disabled people targeted for ‘cuckooing’ involves complex situations involving anti-social behaviour and housing that can lead to serious consequences, including the Disabled victim being criminalized themselves or losing their home.

A common theme in numerous Safeguarding Adult Reviews is how early intervention could have saved a Disabled person’s life. While these failures to intervene are often leveled at social care, sometimes mistakes made by the Metropolitan Police also contributed to harm or death. Cuckooing and hate relationships have increased in frequency with austerity, and the warning signs are often missed or mistaken. When they are recognised, they are deemed to fall below the threshold for accessing services and people are left to fend for themselves. The following case study illustrates these issues;

In the Safeguarding Adults Review of George, in Lambeth, the Metropolitan Police had multiple occasions of contact with George and his family, including:

- the arrest of George’s brother, Andrew, for assault on their other brother, Michael
- Andrew’s release from prison on license
- attending the unexpected death of Michael at the family home
- issues of domestic abuse within the family
- a second arrest of Andrew at the family home following threats of violence against George
- repeated claims of financial and coercive control.

However, like many of the services which interacted with the family, failings in follow-ups, reports, and inter-agency working meant that the ongoing patterns of abuse were not flagged. Eventually, Andrew committed arson on the family home with George — who was severely agoraphobic and terrified to leave the house — inside. George’s life was saved by the intervention of a neighbour.

Similarly, opportunities to safeguard Michael — the subject of an SAR in the borough of Richmond — were missed by the police. Michael died at his home in January 2020 after a period of criminal exploitation as part of a County Lines drug network. Michael was known to the Metropolitan Police for a long time prior to his death, but it was only after his body was discovered that they investigated and concluded that he had been the victim of cuckooing and exploitation.

Research by MacDonald et al. (2022)¹⁰ has highlighted how Disabled people victimized by organised criminal groups often come to police attention as perpetrators and not as victims. Homes where cuckooing has occurred are identified as “drug dens” and the Disabled person — especially when they also have substance dependency or mental distress or trauma which are subject to additional biases — is deemed to be as involved in the criminal activity as everyone else present and charged.

We welcome the aims to increase visible neighbourhood policing, using data to identify hotspots for disabled people and harassment, cuckooing and would encourage Community Safety Partnerships to include Disabled community representatives.

Do more to support repeat victims of hate crime

We are disappointed that repeat victims of hate crime are not included in the matrix on supporting repeat victims. Disabled people are often targeted for ‘low level’ harassment and abuse that can span years, which can quickly escalate into crime. Not having the valuable data of repeat incidents can lead to missed opportunities to support a Disabled victim.

¹⁰ [Macdonald, Stephen J., Donovan, Catherine, Clayton, John & Husband, Marc \(2022\). Becoming cuckooed: conceptualising the relationship between disability, home takeovers and criminal exploitation. *Disability & Society*](#)

Victim Care Hub to include specialist services

We welcome the development of a Victim Care Hub, that includes specialist support for marginalised groups. As with any service, including those for children, they need to be fully accessible. This means having specialist trained staff to be able to engage with Disabled people. This would include how to engage with care homes / residential / school environments.

As many Disabled people, particularly those with learning difficulties are targeted online for fraud, we would welcome input into how support would be offered to those marginalised groups of online fraud.

While the Police and Crime Plan cannot address all systemic Ableism and its impact on Disabled Londoners, it can provide a golden thread focusing on intersectional disability issues across all work streams, including housing, health, transport, employment, and education as well as policing and crime.

Inclusion London

Supporting London's Deaf and Disabled People's Organisations

The London DDPO Hate Crime Partnership

The London DDPO Hate Crime Partnership is funded for 5 years from 2018 by the National Lottery Community Fund and Three Guineas Trust (and Trust for London between 2018 to 2020). It is the only Pan-London partnership between Deaf & Disabled People's Organisations (DDPO) working to combat hate crime against Disabled people in London. This is the only partnership of its kind in the UK. Currently, there is no UK wide partnership of DDPOs combating hate crime against Disabled people.

We represent DDPOs at over 20 key meetings a year, to influence policy and decision makers. We work closely with the wider MOPAC HC Partnership (currently Community Alliance to Combat Hate or CATCH) via Stay Safe East, led by Galop, who provide support across all hate crime strands and whose membership includes DDPOs from this partnership.

DDPOs involved in this partnership offer different levels of Hate Crime (HC) support including HC Advocacy, Peer Advocacy and Support, Awareness raising and Third-Party Reporting Centres. As a DDPO, you do not need to be funded specifically for hate crime services to join.

As the lead organisation of this partnership, Inclusion London provides capacity building to strengthen the network of support, hate crime data and insights and strategic policy and campaigning work so that no Disabled person needs to suffer alone if they experience Hate Crime.

Since March 2021, this partnership has a Hate Crime Data & Insight Officer at Inclusion London leading on the Hate Crime DDPO Data Collation Project, which works with key DDPO members of this partnership, based across London to provide qualitative and quantitative data on the work of DDPOs, specifically looking at the reasons for the disparity between official reports to the Metropolitan Police and the work provided to victims of hate crime by DDPOs.

Our HC Data & Insight Officer works for the partnership to collect data and insights across multiple sources, to uncover hidden hate crime; in the media, safeguarding adults and anti-social behaviour reports.

This partnership currently includes 25 DDPOs together with three key DDPOs (Inclusion London, Merton Centre for Independent Living and Stay Safe East) and Advocate Specialist Kate Mercer. We are working together to provide bespoke training, specialist support for HC advocates, secondments to develop HC support within DDPOs, and HC resources including a Hate Crime Advocate Toolkit and Disability Hate Crime Monitoring and Evaluation Handbook. We are working with six DDPOs to design a training module and films resource for DDPOs to use in their local areas. We have strong connections with National Hate Crime Awareness Week and support DDPOs during October to raise awareness of Hate Crime locally.

Get involved

There are opportunities to be involved, working collaboratively with Inclusion London, via regular partnership meetings and one-to-one support.

By joining the partnership, we will keep you up-to-date with future developments.

Further information

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