

Preventing violence and protecting young people report

Three young people walking in a park

Key information

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The Metropolitan Police (Met) must prioritise the safeguarding of children and young people who have been affected by violence, and find the right balance between prevention and enforcement, as it continues its journey to fix the foundations of the Met.

That is the view of the **London Assembly Police and Crime Committee** that has published its report – ‘*Preventing violence and protecting young people*’ – following the Committee’s two-part investigation into preventing violence affecting young Londoners.

The Committee is calling for additional police training to avoid “adultification” and criminalisation of children and young people, and wants the Met to provide a timetable by December this year to show how it will train every frontline officer in youth engagement.

The Committee also wants the Mayor to work with voluntary and community organisations, to increase investment in community-based non-policing solutions.

Violence affecting young people can cause significant trauma in individuals and communities, and can impact young people’s development, making them more likely to be involved in the justice system in later life.^[1]

The Committee held two formal meetings as part of the investigation, firstly with the Violence Reduction Unit’s (VRU) Young People’s Action Group, followed by a meeting with the Met, the Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC), charities and campaign groups.

The Committee heard general agreement among the participants at its meetings that the root causes of violence are often in factors such as poverty, social inequalities (and an increase in inequality), failure of systems of

support, low educational attainment and lack of opportunities for young people.^[2]

Geethika Jayatilaka, Chief Executive Officer for Redthread, a youth working charity, told the Committee:

“We know there has been a significant decline in early intervention support services in terms of funding over the years [...] very recently there was a Children’s Society report that highlighted a decrease in investment in early intervention services by local authorities of around 40 per cent over the last 12 years. We know that that support network is not as strong as it needs to be. Those are really the areas we need to look at if we are to effectively tackle this.”^[3]

That is why the **Committee** has published its report with **13 recommendations** for the Mayor and the Met, outlining clearly how prevent violence and protect young people.

Key recommendations include:

- The Mayor should work with voluntary and community organisations to increase investment in community-based non-policing solutions to tackle the root causes of violence affecting children and young people, and provide details of this work to the Committee by 31 August 2024.
- It is vital for the Met to prioritise safeguarding children and young people finding the right balance between prevention and enforcement. This should be reflected in the Met’s new children and Young People’s strategy which is due for publication shortly.
- By the end of December 2024, the Met must set out a plan and timetable to train every frontline officer in youth engagement as it embeds its child-first approach, Children and Young People’s Strategy and a New Met for London programme. This should include training to develop cultural competence to avoid “adultification” and criminalisation of children and young people as it continues its journey to fix the foundations of the Met.
- The voices and experiences of young people must be at the heart of the delivery of the Met’s Children and Young People’s Strategy. The Met must engage with the VRU’s Young People’s Action Group to ensure the voices of children and young people in London are heard. The Met should establish its own diverse youth panel representative of London to support delivery of its Strategy, drawing upon the expertise and experiences of the VRU’s Young People’s Action Group amongst others. The Young People’s Action Group should be consulted on the design of the Panel.
- By the end of December 2024, the Met must set out a plan and timetable to train every frontline officer in youth engagement as it embeds its child-first approach, Children and Young People’s Strategy and a New Met for London programme. This should include training to develop cultural competence, to avoid “adultification” and criminalisation of children and young people as it continues its journey to fix the foundations of the Met.
- The Mayor should work with the Met to prevent disproportionality in the use of stop and search and continue to use his oversight powers to hold the Met to account for the use of stop and search.

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