

# LONDON ASSEMBLY



**Unmesh Desai AM**  
**Chair of the Police and Crime Committee**

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**Dame Cressida Dick QPM**  
**Commissioner**  
**Metropolitan Police Service**

(Sent by email)

19 March 2021

Dear Commissioner

## **Sarah Everard case and policing of the subsequent vigil**

I am writing to you on behalf of the London Assembly Police and Crime Committee in the light of the tragic abduction and murder of Sarah Everard to highlight our view that urgent action must be taken on violence against women and girls in London. Women in our city must be able to go about their business without fear of violence.

What happened to Sarah was shocking and has shone a light on how women often face abuse and violence, feel unsupported in confronting it and lack confidence in a positive response from the police if they report it. The Committee wants to see the Met take a robust approach to reports of such behaviour from women to provide assurance that this will not be tolerated on the capital's streets and for the Met to act promptly in response. We will, of course, continue to press the Government to deliver the right legislation to provide the police with the powers to deal effectively with violence and abuse of women.

The Committee also wanted to express its concern about the policing of the vigil to mark Sarah's death. We understand the balancing act the police face when dealing with the challenges of allowing lawful protest whilst also enforcing the COVID-19 regulations and the need to protect the wider public from transmission of the virus when people gather together in close quarters. We also recognise the risks that police officers themselves face when confronted with situations that require intervention and close contact with members of the public, as demonstrated by our call for the Met's frontline officers to be prioritised for vaccination.

As discussed with Sir Steve House, Deputy Commissioner, in our meeting on 17 March we expressed our concern about some of the footage that emerged from the vigil that showed Met officers pulling women out of the crowd as they made arrests. Another key concern is the Met's engagement with the organisers of the vigil and the failure to agree on arrangements for a COVID-19 secure event. An overarching issue as a result is the loss of confidence in the Met by many women who feel they have been let down by the very force that is meant to protect them.

We know that Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, Sir Thomas Winsor, has been asked by the Home Secretary to undertake a review of the Met's actions in relation to the vigil but, as the elected body tasked with scrutinising London's policing, we wish to play our part in this conversation.

Our Committee urges you to take clear, accountable action to rebuild the confidence of women in London that they can feel protected on the streets, and have the confidence to report abuse or violence to the Met in the knowledge that they will get a positive and supportive response.

The Committee welcomes the work of the Met's 'Predatory Offender Units' discussed at its meeting earlier this week. We would like to see the number of officers assigned to these units increase, and would be grateful if you could let us know the number of extra officers you aspire to assign to these units by the end of the 2021/22 financial year.

The Committee would also like to see greater consistency in the way in which the Met uses its powers to tackle domestic abuse and would like to know what targets are in place for Basic Command Units use of Domestic Violence Prevention Orders and Notices and which Basic Command Units are currently meeting their targets and which require improvement.

We look forward to your response on this important issue by 15 April 2021.

Yours sincerely,



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