



Consultation Response
Second Mayoral Strategy on Violence against Women and Girls

August 2013

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imkaan



**Girls
Against
Gangs
Project**

About Us: The MsUnderstood Programme aims to improve local and national responses to young people's experiences of gender inequality. The MsUnderstood Partnership is a three year partnership between the [University of Bedfordshire](#), [Imkaan](#) and the Girls Against Gangs Project, to improve responses to peer-on-peer abuse in young people's relationships and peer groups through:

- Intensive support of local areas to review and improve their strategic and operational response to peer-on-peer abuse
- A national assessment of provision for boys and young men who perpetrate gender-based violence
- Paid internships and volunteer placements for young people to influence policy and service development locally and nationally

[The MsUnderstood Programme](#) is founded and headed by [Carlene Firmin MBE](#), Research Fellow at the University of Bedfordshire

Introduction

This MsUnderstood Partnership (MSU) welcomes the second Mayoral Strategy on Violence against Women and Girls. In particular we note the specific commitments made to address the experiences of girls and young women. Girls and young women under the age of 18 have not always been given specific consideration within violence against women policy development. Even with the inclusion of 'girls' in the title of strategies, their age, as well as gender-specific, experiences have not always been taken into account, particularly in terms of the implications on practice.

It is important that the Mayoral Strategy continues to embed its response to VAWG within a rights framework. For girls and young women, this means aligning the strategy with both the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Girls and young women experience a range of forms of gender-based violence, including:

- Domestic abuse / teenage relationship abuse / intimate partner violence
- Sexual exploitation
- Trafficking
- Gang-associated violence and abuse
- Female Genital Mutilation
- Forced Marriage
- 'Honour'-based violence
- Sexual violence
- Stalking

Both adults, and other young people, will perpetrate these forms of abuse against girls and young women. Service and policy has tended to respond to these forms of gender-based violence either assuming that the victim will be an adult (domestic abuse), or when the victim is child that the perpetrator will be an adult (Child sexual exploitation, child sexual abuse, trafficking). Given the remit of the MsUnderstood Programme, this response will pay particular attention to experiences of peer-on-peer abuse (those perpetrated by other young people), and will consider the implications of this for the proposals made in the Mayoral strategy.

General Comments

The MsUnderstood Partnership (MSU) welcomes the extensive reference made to the specific experiences of girls and young women throughout the draft Mayoral strategy in terms of:

- Preventing all forms of VAWG

- Considering the impact of the definitional change of domestic abuse of 16 and 17 year old young women
- Child sexual exploitation
- Gang-associated violence and abuse, and young women's experiences of physical, sexual and emotional abuse in this context, in addition to their own involvement in offending, and the need for exit provision
- Tackling harmful attitudes
- Working with boys and young men who instigate or perpetrate gender-based violence

At present the commitments made to girls and young women are dispersed throughout the strategy in a way that makes it hard to conceive the overall vision for this group. As girls and young women are given greater consideration in policy and practice it is important to identify some fundamental objectives that would result in an overall improvement to their experiences of services. Given the wide range of references made to the experiences and needs of girls and young women, MSU would make three general recommendations for the strategy:

Recommendation 1: That the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) draw together all of the proposals/actions that are specific to girls and young women to identify fundamental objectives, avoid duplication and maximise impact.

Recommendation 2: That MOPAC work in partnership with the London Safeguarding Children Board on delivering the fundamental, strategic, objectives for girls and young women, to ensure that this aspect of the work is embedded in London's child protection and safeguarding arrangements

Recommendation 3: That MOPAC establish a girls and young women multi-agency sub-group, and ensure the meaningful participation of girls and young women within this, under the Violence Against Women and Girls Panel to monitor these specific objectives over the life of the strategy.

Responses to specific consultation questions

This section answers specific questions posed in the consultation document that are relevant to the work of MSU. Not all questions in the consultation document are answered, but question numbers are used that can be cross-referenced with the consultation document.

Objective One

Q1: What role can MOPAC play to ensure that an integrated approach to VAWG is implemented locally across all London boroughs?

A 1: As issues such as child sexual exploitation and gang-associated violence are explicitly integrated into the violence against women agenda, it is critical that MOPAC is able to offer

guidance and direction for areas seeking to take an integrated approach. It is also important to communicate that to integrate does not necessarily mean to merge all responses into one: for example to merge responses to girls and young women with those designed for adult women. MSU recommends two ways in which MOPAC could support local areas to map their issues and pre-existing multi-agency forums, to inform local responses:

Recommendation 4: MOPAC could provide local authorities with a checklist or pointers toward what is required of a VAWG strategy, and in particular how to develop a strategy which considers both the needs of adults and those of children and young people

Recommendation 5: MOPAC could share, publicise, and congratulate exemplars of effective, integrated, strategies.

Q2: How can MOPAC work with partners in London to ensure that harmful attitudes and behaviours are addressed at an early age to prevent VAWG?

A2: There are a range of ways in which MOPAC, in partnership with others, can ensure that harmful attitudes and behaviours are addressed at the earliest possible stage. As most prevention work will take place within universal services, including education and health settings, MSU recommends a combination of reviewing triggers and intervention points from previous cases of peer-in-peer abuse and working with safeguarding, education and health partners to agree a Pan-London approach to prevention. The Head of the MsUnderstood Programme is reviewing case of peer-on-peer abuse as part of her doctoral research, and will be able to use the findings to highlight points of early intervention in terms of harmful attitudes and behaviours. Furthermore, it is imperative that a distinction is made between interventions which seek to change attitudes and those which are targeted at changing behaviour. As a commissioner of services, MOPAC needs to be clear as to whether a change in attitude and/or behaviour is anticipated from programmes that they commission: both matters need to be addressed by may require different approaches. Young people may:

- have harmful attitudes but have not instigated or perpetrated acts of gender-based violence
- be committing acts of violence under coercion and therefore have problematic behaviours and not necessarily problematic attitudes
- have problematic behaviours as well as harmful attitudes which underpin them

Considering the age of the young people being targeted for preventative intervention, and means by which those outside of mainstream education settings can be supported, is also important. Specifically, MSU recommends that:

Recommendation 6: That MOPAC identify the key mentoring services being delivered to young people across London, particularly those that have been commissioned by the Mayor,

and ensure that they provide consistent messages on gender equality in general, and VAWG in particular

Recommendation 7: That MOPAC and City Hall support all Mayoral Academies to take a whole-school approach to gender equality and share lessons from this with other educational establishments across London

Recommendation 8: That MOPAC and the London Safeguarding Children Board develop and agree a practical referral pathway for schools in London to support the safe delivery of prevention work within educational settings. Such a pathway could assist in sign-posting schools to Pan-London services that are available them to use, and detail the MPS response to all forms of gender-based violence that affect young people

Recommendation 9: That MOPAC and the London Safeguarding Children Board take the learning from the case file reviews being undertaken by MSU to identify points of early intervention for those who display harmful attitudes and/or behaviours

Q3: What role can MOPAC play to improve the way London agencies and local areas respond to gang-associated women and girls (both in terms of their victimisation and their offending?)

A3: MSU welcomes MOPAC's continued focus on the experiences of gang-associated women and girls. The recognition of gang association as a risk to girls and young women has led to a proliferation of projects across London, and there is the need to take stock of where progress has been achieved, where there is duplication, and where gaps remain or practice is poor. As part of the process of analysing case files of peer-on-peer abuse, the Head of the MsUnderstood Partnership will be considering whether different approaches are required to proactively identify, assess and support girls and young women in gang-associated cases. MSU will use this work to directly support local areas to improve and develop strategic and operational responses to peer-on-peer abuse, and will share the on-going findings to support the work of MOPAC and other partners. Building on the work undertaken as part of the first Mayoral VAWG strategy, MSU would recommend that MOPAC consider the following actions:

Recommendation 10: That MOPAC use the findings of the MSU local site support to encourage the proactive identification of gang-associated women and girls

Recommendation 11: That when commissioning interventions for gang-associated girls and young women that MOPAC consider the following:

- The level of risk/vulnerability that the programme is seeking to target (for example, young women who are at risk of significant harm and who is being sexually exploited will not necessarily need the same intervention as young women who are on the fringes of gang activity)

- That services are commissioned which address the myriad of experiences faced by gang-associated girls and young women, such as their engagement in offending or experiences of domestic abuse, and do not only focus on the issue of sexual exploitation
- That services take an intelligent approach to identifying young women with whom to work, and can demonstrate a level of knowledge in terms of the nature of their gang-association and the risk that this poses (for example by mapping them against gang members and using this intelligence to assess risk/safety)

Recommendation 12: That MOPAC works with the Youth Justice Board to map provision across London for girls and young women who commit offences, to assess quality and identify gaps, thus informing commissioning

Recommendation 13: That MOPAC hold ‘lesson learning seminars’ for MSU and others to share findings of how cases of gang-associated abuse and violence have been responded to historically, so that promising approaches can be disseminated and repeat errors can be avoided

Recommendation 14: That MOPAC take the lessons from the MSU case review process in terms of gang-exit routes for girls and young women and uses this to identify current responses and gaps to gender-specific gang exit across London (including fostering, residential children’s homes, the secure estate, and refuge provision).

Recommendation 15: That any Pan-London domestic abuse provision commissioned by MOPAC considers the needs of both gang-associated women and girls, and girls and young women more generally

Q5: Objective one sets out MOPAC priorities for the next four years around London taking a global lead to eliminate and prevent VAWG. Do you agree with the priorities outlined in objective one?

A5: To some extent

MSU agrees with all of the priorities identified under objective one. The only amendment proposed is that the broader issue of all forms of peer-on-peer abuse (all forms of gender-based violence experienced between young people) be explicitly identified and drawn out. This could be achieved through the implementation of recommendation (1) made earlier in this document.

Objective Two

Q6: Which of the outlined options for a pan-London domestic abuse service do you most support? Do you have any other suggestions around pan-London domestic violence services that MOPAC could deliver?

A6: Any Pan-London domestic abuse service needs to consider the experiences of 16 and 17 year old young women as they are now included in the domestic abuse definition. As such, if any of the options outlined are considered, (IDVA service, perpetrator programme etc.) they would also need to be age appropriate. It is also not necessarily the case that the options, as presented, are mutually exclusive. It is difficult to provide a definitive answer to this question in the absence of MOPAC taking steps to establish where the greatest need sits and whether some of the options outlined can be integrated.

Recommendation 16: At this stage, therefore, MSU would recommend that the following be considered:

- That MOPAC work with London Councils to confirm where gaps in service provision exist and where need is greatest (including the spread of IDVA's, refuges etc.)
- That MOPAC work with the London Safeguarding Children Board, the Youth Justice Board, and the children and young people sector, in addition to the women's sector, to identify the specific and different needs of children and young people in terms of domestic abuse provision (for example what services are required if the young people involved in the relationship are in school together)
- That MOPAC consider the on-going findings of the MSU case file review to build an understanding of how teenage relationship abuse has been responded to by professionals in London over the past five years

Q7: What more can MOPAC do to raise awareness of VAWG and encourage reporting?

A7: Evidence gathered from Race on the Agenda's Female Voice in Violence research project articulated the fear amongst some young people that professionals can't keep them safe: it was often this level of fear which prevented them from reporting what had happened to them (in addition to other reasons such as not recognising that they were victims of abuse). If professionals can better communicate how they will try to keep young people safe it will encourage reporting (alongside preventative work to enable young people to identify abusive behaviours).

Recommendation 16: It is critical that MOPAC work with the London Safeguarding Children Board, the MPS and other pan-London partners to agree a framework and referral pathway for children and young people who disclose any form of gender-based violence. This pathway should acknowledge the differences that may ensue for different forms of gender-based violence, and when abuse is instigated or perpetrated by other young people instead of adults.

Q8: Objective two sets out MOPC priorities for the next four years around improving access to support. Do you agree with the priorities outlined in objective two?

A8: To some extent

MSU welcomes all of the proposals set out in the strategy however, we have identified some gaps:

- Given that the proposals for the Pan-London domestic abuse service are considering the specific needs of children and young people, it would be useful for MOPAC to apply the same approach to other areas of service provision. For example, reference is made to funding Rape Crisis Centres so it would be helpful to know the percentage of Rape Crisis service users who are under-18 and whether the approach to working with them is qualitatively and quantitatively different than their work with adults
- The objective notes that children and young people may be affected by violence in their homes or own relationships, but it is also important to note that young people experience and witness gender-based violence in their peer-groups, schools, and neighbourhoods. All of the work undertaken by MSU seeks to view young people's experiences in a range of social contexts; locating their experiences of violence only in their homes or intimate relationships could render services inadequate.

Objective three: Addressing health, social and economic consequences of violence

Q10: What role can MOPAC play in reforming the way the criminal justice system responds to women offenders in London?

A10: MSU would like to see this question expanded to cover girls and young women as well as adult women. Girls and young women both connected to, and distinct from, street gangs, and those who are sexually exploited, can be engaged in offending behaviour. While the Corston Report reviewed, and made recommendations to improve, the experience of adult women in the criminal justice system, changes were not replicated in the youth justice system. In early 2013 the Youth Justice Board held four events on girls in the justice system and revealed that there were only approximately 50 girls and young women in custody. Following the announcement that all young women's youth offending institutions will be closed (due to a reduction of girls in custody), and the commitment made by the Home Office to consider the implications of the Corston recommendations for the Youth Justice system, MOPAC could play an important role in reforming the way the youth justice system respond to girls and young women in London. In order to do so MSU makes the following recommendations:

Recommendation 18: That MOPAC continue to lobby central Government to review recommendations of the Corston Report in terms of the Youth Justice System

Recommendation 19: That MOPAC work with the Youth Justice Board to identify how many girls from London are currently in custody, and how many are on orders to Youth Offending Teams across London, in order to ascertain the scale of need

Recommendation 20: That any work that MOPAC undertakes on girls and young women in the youth justice system is also linked to the Mayor's gang strategy

Q13: Should refuge provision be commissioned on a pan-London basis and, if so, how would this operate in practice?

A13: Until the work being undertaken by London Councils to collate data and build a picture of need is completed, it is hard to know what type of pan-London provision is required. However, it is important to note that should the need be identified then any operation would need to take into account the specific needs of 16 and 17 year olds who are now included in the policy definition of domestic abuse. *At this stage, therefore, MSU reinforces recommendation 15 made earlier in this consultation response.*

Objective four: Protecting women and girls at risk

Q15: What more can MOPAC do to ensure that MPS delivers a consistent service standard to victims of VAWG across London?

A15: MSU welcomes that the strategy recognises the importance of a consistent approach across London for victims of VAWG. In relation to girls and young women MSU believes that consistency would be improved if, where possible, Pan-London strategies were adopted by the MPS and London Safeguarding Children Board detailing service provision and operational response to gender-based violence as it affected girls and young women. Given the emerging awareness of, and practice to address, issues such as child sexual exploitation and teenage relationship abuse, London boroughs may benefit from pan-London specific safeguarding guidance (which could then be adapted within each local authority), for example clarifying whether multi-agency risk assessment conferencing (MARAC) or child protection conferences are most suitable for young people at risk of significant harm in their own relationships. Therefore, MSU makes the following recommendation:

Recommendation 21: That MOPAC scrutinise and challenge the MPS to develop a joint Pan-London strategy with the London Safeguarding Children Board which outlines the Pan-London strategic and operational response to all forms of gender-based violence experienced by girls and young women, to ensure an age-and -gender-appropriate response that is embedded in child protection

Q16: What more can MOPAC and criminal justice partners do to improve the response to sexual violence in the criminal justice system?

A16: In terms of young people, there is a range of ways in which MOPAC and others can improve the response of the youth justice system to sexual violence. Work underway by

ACPO and the Crown Prosecution Service to review guidance for prosecuting and investigating cases of child sexual exploitation will create a good baseline for further work to develop. Cases of peer-on-peer exploitation and gang-associated sexual violence have gone through London's criminal justice system and it is important that MOPAC and others learn lessons from how these have been managed. MSU is currently reviewing a number of cases and will happily deliver lessons-learned seminars for stakeholders. Furthermore, the University of Bedfordshire is commencing a study on young people's experiences of the criminal justice system as victims of child sexual exploitation. In addition, while the crown prosecution service has specialist rape prosecutors and the MPS has a newly formed sexual offences, exploitation and child abuse team, MSU believes that they both may also benefit from additional training on the contexts of peer-on-peer exploitation and street gangs. We therefore recommend that:

Recommendation 22: MOPAC considers hosting lessons-learned seminars for criminal justice colleagues in London once the MSU police case review is completed

Recommendation 23: MOPAC liaises with the crown prosecution service and the MPS to establish whether their sexual offences specialists could benefit from additional training on gang-associated sexual violence and/or peer-on-peer exploitation. Training such as that developed by AVA and Women and Girl's Network for the Home Office may be particularly beneficial.

Q17: How Can MOPAC ensure that London agencies improve access to protection and support for girls and young women who experience VAWG?

A17: The draft strategy states that 'MOPAC must ensure that London agencies are implementing the new definition of domestic violence and abuse and improve young women's access to appropriate protection and support, *regardless of their age*' (page 32). MSU would argue that while young people of all ages requires support, services should be developed for girls and young women with complete *regard of their age*, and that MOPAC has a role in ensuring that support is age-appropriate for young people. The strategic and operational response to girls and young women is at a very early stage of development and therefore requires coordination and oversight to avoid duplication or the proliferation of poor practice. MOPAC can contribute to this coordination by:

- Collecting data on the number and profile of girls and young women under-18 who are accessing MOPAC commissioned or funded VAWG services (the draft strategy offers a mix of data for young women under-25 and under-13 and could benefit from some consistency)
- Mapping how London's local authorities are responding to girls and young women, including collecting data on the number of IDVA, ISVA and MARAC based responses that have been provided to girls and young women who are under-18, and

ascertaining whether any specific consideration has been given to ensure that responses are age-appropriate

- Work with the London Safeguarding Children Board and other partners to ensure that the pan-London response to the issue is one that is embedded in London's child protection procedures and is not seen as distinct
- Utilising the findings that will be generated from MSU and other studies on support to local areas, in order to build and disseminate a body of knowledge about local challenges and solutions

In order to achieve the above MSU reiterates recommendations 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 11, 13, 15, 16, 17, and 21 of this consultation response

Q19: What role can MOPAC play to ensure that gang-associated young women and girls have access to specialist provision to enable them to exit/escape gang violence?

A19: The gap in exit provision for girls and young women who are gang-associated has been well documented over recent years, and is reaffirmed in the draft strategy. In order to move forward with this agenda it is important to set it in context of broader service provision for gang-associated girls and young women, and for girls and young women more generally. In order for girls to exit gang-association, London requires a robust response to assist all girls and young women to exit gender-based violence. Furthermore, if low, medium, and high risk interventions for gang-associated young women were mapped and clearly identified they too would contribute to building safety plans and where required exit strategies. Given that girls and young women under-18 are still children, the role of current provision for children including residential children's homes, fostering, and secure estate need to be considered, in addition to supported and semi-supported housing for young people who are 16+. Exit strategies will also need to link with any plans to extend domestic abuse provision to 16-17 year olds. In addition, beyond the immediate support offered to facilitate a move, young women may require on-going support to address the impact that this experience has had on their lives. As part of the case file review process, the Head of the MsUnderstood Partnership is identifying ways in which girls and young women have exited gang violence over the past five years and this information should enhance any approach that is developed under the new VAWG strategy. In addition the forthcoming reports from the University of Bedfordshire and the Office of the Children's Commissioner will provide further evidence on effective operating models for young women who sexually exploited in a street-gang context. **Therefore at this stage the MSU reiterates the recommendations 10-15 outlined earlier in this response to enable the development of gender-proofed suite of exit strategies for gang-associated girls and young women.**

Q22: Objective four sets out MOPAC priorities for the next four years around protecting women and girls at risk. Do you agree with the priorities outlined in objective four?

A22: To some extent

MSU agrees with all of the priorities identified under objective four. The only amendment proposed is the same as that made for objective one: that the broader issue of all forms of peer-on-peer abuse (all forms of gender-based violence experienced between young people) be explicitly identified and drawn out. This could be achieved through the implementation of recommendation (1) made earlier in this document.

Objective five: Getting tougher with perpetrators

Q23: What can MOPAC and partners do to improve the way the criminal justice system responds to VAWG?

A23: In addition to our answer to Q16, MSU would like to highlight the need to improve the way in which MOPAC and partners thinking about the response to non-convicted suspects of VAWG. In the case files being reviewed by the Head of MsUnderstood partnership, in the vast majority of cases where there is group-based offending not all those suspected or charged are convicted. Over the next six months MSU will be considering the implications of this for schools, youth clubs and other services who may continue to work with young people who have not been convicted, but who are suspected of perpetrating or instigating gender-based violence. We would welcome being able to share these findings with MOPAC and other stakeholders to begin to build solutions in the coming year.

Q24: How can MOPAC improve our understanding of what works in addressing VAWG offending behaviour including domestic violence and abuse perpetrated by young men and boys?

A24: Firstly, it is important that MOPAC maintains specificity when considering boys and young men, as opposed to adult men. When children are implicated in instigating or perpetrating gender-based violence it is important to acknowledge the safeguarding issues and vulnerabilities of the young person who is causing the harm in addition to those who have been harmed: the strategic role of both the London Safeguarding Children Board and the Youth Justice Board is important for setting this tone. MOPAC can utilise extensive research into adolescence, teenage relationship abuse, and young people and offending to improve understanding. In addition to learning from programmes designed to tackle VAWG offending behaviour, MOPAC could also consider looking at sexually harmful behaviour programmes that have been designed to work with children and young people: therefore drawing upon both the VAWG and Children and Young People sector to develop age and gender appropriate responses. As part of a three year programme of work, MSU will be conducting a national assessment of provision for boys and young men who perpetrate gender-based violence, including looking at work underway in London. MSU is willing to

share the emerging findings of this work on an ongoing basis with MOPAC to inform the commissioning of services and further research in the future.

Q26: How can MOPAC work with London partners to ensure that harmful attitudes and behaviours and negative notions of masculinity are addressed by all agencies and professionals who encounter that across sectors?

A26: As was noted in the answer to question (2) MSU urges caution in conflating harmful attitudes and harmful behaviours. MOPAC plays a central role in ensuring that when they commission services they need to specify whether they are expected to address behaviours as well as attitudes, or whether the service is primarily one to challenge attitudes. Likewise, MOPAC should ensure that the commissioning process includes ways in which provider's knowledge of gender inequality and notions of masculinity can be assessed. MSU therefore recommends that:

Recommendation 24: MOPAC develop an assessment for all service providers that they commission, to ensure minimum levels of knowledge regarding gender inequality, to the same extent that they would only commission a provider who held an explicit anti-racist ethos and working practice.

Review of recommendations

The MsUnderstood Partnership looks forward to informing and working with MOPAC over the coming years as they implement the new Mayoral strategy on violence against women and girls. As the strategy is finalised we reiterate the following recommendations to ensure that it addresses the age and gender specific experiences of young women and young men:

Recommendation 1: That the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) draw together all of the proposals/actions that are specific to girls and young women to identify fundamental objectives, avoid duplication and maximise impact.

Recommendation 2: That MOPAC work in partnership with the London Safeguarding Children Board on delivering the fundamental, strategic, objectives for girls and young women, to ensure that this aspect of the work is embedded in London's child protection and safeguarding arrangements

Recommendation 3: That MOPAC establish a girls and young women sub-group, and include girls and young women as members of this group, under the Violence Against Women and Girls Panel to monitor these specific objectives over the life of the strategy.

Recommendation 4: MOPAC could provide local authorities with a checklist or pointers toward what is required of a VAWG strategy, and in particular how to develop a strategy which considers both the needs of adults and those of children and young people

Recommendation 5: MOPAC could share, publicise, and congratulate exemplars of effective, integrated, strategies.

Recommendation 6: That MOPAC identify the key mentoring services being delivered to young people across London, particularly those that have been commissioned by the Mayor, and ensure that they provide consistent messages on gender equality in general, and VAWG in particular

Recommendation 7: That MOPAC and City Hall support all Mayoral Academies take a whole-school approach to gender equality and share lessons from this with other educational establishments across London

Recommendation 8: That MOPAC and the London Safeguarding Children Board develop and agree a practical referral pathway for schools in London to support the safe delivery of prevention work within educational settings. Such a pathway could assist in sign-posting schools to Pan-London services that available them to use, and detail the MPS response to all forms of gender-based violence that affect young people

Recommendation 9: That MOPAC and the London Safeguarding Children Board take the learning from the case file reviews being undertaken by MSU to identify points of early intervention for those who display harmful attitudes and behaviours

Recommendation 10: That MOPAC use the findings of the MSU local site support to encourage the proactive identification of gang-associated women and girls

Recommendation 11: That when commissioning interventions for gang-associated girls and young women that MOPAC consider the following:

- The level of risk/vulnerability that the programme is seeking to target (for example, young women who are at risk of significant and who is being sexually exploited will not necessarily need the same intervention as young women who are on the fringes of gang activity)
- That services are commissioned which address the myriad of experiences faced by gang-associated girls and young women, such as their engagement in offending or experiences of domestic abuse, and do not only focus on the issue of sexual exploitation
- That services take an intelligent approach to identifying young women to work with, and can demonstrate a level of knowledge in terms of the nature of their gang-association and the risk that this poses (for example by mapping them against gang members and using this intelligence to assess risk/safety)

Recommendation 12: That MOPAC works with the Youth Justice Board to map provision across London for girls and young women who commit offences, to assess quality and identify gap, thus informing commissioning

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Recommendation 15: That any Pan-London domestic abuse provision commissioned by MOPAC considers the needs of both gang-associated women and girls, and girls and young women more generally

Recommendation 16: At this stage, therefore, MSU would recommend that the following be considered:

- That MOPAC work with London Councils to confirm where gaps in service provision exist and where need is greatest (including the spread of IDVA’s, refuges etc.)
- That MOPAC work with the London Safeguarding Children Board, the Youth Justice Board, and the children and young people sector, in addition to the women’s sector, to identify the specific and different needs of children and young people in terms of domestic abuse provision (for example what services are required if the young people involved in the relationship are in school together)
- That MOPAC consider the on-going findings of the MSU case file review to build an understanding of how teenage relationship abuse has been responded to by professionals in London over the past five years

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Recommendation 21: That MOPAC scrutinise and challenge the MPS to develop a joint Pan-London strategy with the London Safeguarding Children Board which outlines the Pan-London strategic and operational response to all forms of gender-based violence experienced by girls and young women, to ensure an age-and -gender-appropriate response that is embedded in child protection

Recommendation 22: MOPAC considers hosting lessons-learned seminars for criminal justice colleagues in London once the MSU police case review is completed

Recommendation 23: MOPAC liaises with the crown prosecution service and the MPS to establish whether their sexual offences specialists could benefit from additional training on gang-associated sexual violence and/or peer-on-peer exploitation. Training such as that developed by AVA and Women and Girl's Network for the Home Office may be particularly beneficial.

Recommendation 24: MOPAC develop an assessment for all service providers, that they commission, to ensure minimum levels of knowledge regarding gender inequality, to the same extent that they would only commission a provider who held an explicit anti-racist ethos and working practice.

Should you want to discuss anything within this submission in greater detail please contact Carlene Firmin, Head of MsUnderstood Partnership on carlene@msunderstood.org.uk