

GLA Press Release 13/11/20: Stop and search to be better scrutinised

Mayor's Action Plan focuses on disproportionality of police powers

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- Sadiq to overhaul community scrutiny of police tactics including stop and search, use of force and Taser
- Commissioner says the Met is not free of racism or discrimination, but is listening and wants to work with Black communities to accelerate change.
- City Hall to invest £1.7m on community involvement in police officer training and on recruitment of Black officers in the Met

The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, has today published an Action Plan to improve trust and confidence in the Metropolitan police and to address community concerns about the disproportionality in the use of certain police powers affecting Black Londoners.

The Action Plan has been developed following a series of consultations with more than 400 individuals and groups that either work with or within Black communities. The work was undertaken in response to concerns raised about the disproportionate use of police powers, including stop and search, the use of force and Taser. Communities told the Met and City Hall that they wanted to see increased transparency in police actions, decisions and communications; a police service that better reflects the city it serves; and improved community monitoring and involvement in reviewing the disproportionate use of police powers and complaints.

The Mayor recognises the progress made by the Met since the Macpherson Inquiry more than 20 years ago. It is more transparent and more accountable than at any time in its history and is more representative of London with more than 5,000 Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic officers, up from just over 3,000 a decade ago.

But it is clear more needs to be done. City Hall figures show Black Londoners have less confidence and less trust in the Met than white Londoners and that there remains a persistent disproportionality in the way certain police powers affect Black Londoners. ¹

Figures published today show Black Londoners are almost four times more likely to be stopped and searched on the street than white people in London and six times more likely to be stopped in their vehicles.

The Mayor wants all communities across London to feel they are able to trust their police service and have confidence that the police use their powers to keep them safe. It's crucial that the police are trusted to be able to use their powers to bear down on the scourge of violent crime in our city – which has a devastating effect on families and communities, and which the Mayor and the Met police Commissioner, Cressida Dick, have made it their top priority to tackle.

The launch of the Action Plan comes as the Commissioner, Cressida Dick, today issued a statement in which she recognises and regrets the pain and anguish felt by London's Black communities and says the Met police is not free of racism, bias or discrimination.

She will make it clear that the Met is listening and wants to work with Black communities to accelerate change. The Commissioner will say the police are making progress and have already transformed training and education on diversity and inclusion, and the Met is building on its growing number of BAME officers.

From City Hall, the Mayor commits, as part of the action plan, to invest £1.7 million to develop greater community involvement in police officer training and in the recruitment and progression of Black officers in the Met.

The Action Plan – which the Met Police welcomes and has committed to take forward actions specific to the police service - focuses on:

An overhaul of community monitoring structures to ensure that London's diverse communities are better represented – Black communities will have an even greater role in monitoring a wider range of police powers, including stop and search, the use of Tasers and complaints. There will be greater community involvement in scrutiny of the Met – particularly including the Territorial Support Group and Violent Crime Taskforce. The Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) will produce a quarterly race equality audit of the Met's use of its powers and launch a three-month project with communities to co-design and launch this new scrutiny process.

Stricter oversight and scrutiny of the 'smell of cannabis' used as sole grounds for stop and search – Stop and searches with grounds solely based on the smell of cannabis will be subjected to London-wide scrutiny panels and body worn video footage is being made available to communities for further scrutiny to ensure officers are not relying on the smell of cannabis alone when deciding to stop and search, and use grounds based on multiple objective factors.²

Research into stop and search using Body Worn Video (BWV) footage – Academic research to be undertaken of a sample of body worn video footage to understand better the nature of stop and search interactions and the behaviour factors of officers or individuals that lead to escalation in the use of force.

Public scrutiny - The Mayor and Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime, together with a panel of community members, will scrutinise the work of the Met. Londoners could also submit questions to be answered by the Met Commissioner and senior officers.

Pilot project to review vehicle stops and call for mandatory data collection – The Mayor has asked the Met to launch a new year-long pilot project to review samples of vehicle stops to identify any disproportionality relating to ethnicity. The Mayor has also written to the Prime Minister to request it be made statutory for the police to collect and publish data on ethnicity for all road traffic stops as part of the Home Office Annual Data Requirement. The letters also asks that the Codes of Practice supporting the Police And Criminal Evidence (PACE) Act – under which street searches are carried out – be extended to cover road traffic stops to more clearly define the limits of the powers.

Improvements to training and diversity in the Met include:

Developing community-led training for police officers – The Met has committed to increase community input by default into specific aspects of the training given to new recruits. This will be made possible by City Hall investment of £1m per year.

Challenging aims for Black police officer recruitment - The Met want to see as many as 40 per cent of new recruits from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds from 2022. The Commissioner has also decided the Met will immediately re-introduce the London residency criteria for most new recruits and will be supported by £300,000 of City Hall investment to encourage young Black Londoners to consider a career in policing.

Delivery of the Action Plan starts immediately and City Hall will involve communities in regular meetings to review the progress made towards the Action Plan's objectives, the first of which will be in February 2021.

The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, said: "In London, we pride ourselves on being a beacon of diversity and a city that is both fair and inclusive, but the Black Lives Matter protests in the summer, which followed the tragic killing of George Floyd, highlighted how much more we have to do to improve trust and confidence among the Black community in our public institutions.

"Through the development of this Action Plan, we've listened and responded to the continued frustrations of Black Londoners, who are concerned about the disproportionate use of some police powers. It's simply not right that Black Londoners have less trust and confidence in our police service and it's something I am determined to resolve.

"The Stephen Lawrence report was a landmark moment in the history of race relations in our country. It had a transformative effect on policing and it's clear the Met is a very different police service to the one it was 20 years ago. There is no question that our police officers work extremely hard to keep us safe and the Met has made improvements to become a police service more reflective of the city it serves. But more must be done – and will be done through this Action Plan – properly to recognise and address the impact that some police tactics used disproportionately on Black people is having.

"This starts with involving communities and ensuring they have proper oversight and scrutiny of stop and search, the use of Tasers and the use of force, as well as in the training of new police officers so they can better understand the trauma that the disproportionate use of police powers can have on Black Londoners.

"We need all communities in London to have trust in the use of police powers as the Met goes about the vital work of tackling crime. As a result, the whole city will be a safer place for all Londoners."

Lord Simon Woolley, director and founder of Operation Black Vote, said: "The Action Plan is an important and much welcomed step towards improving trust and confidence in policing in London.

"Black communities need to see a police service that truly represents society and is actively anti-racist. I have been a longstanding supporter of improving diversity in the police, but also ensuring that our law enforcement officers police with consent. Therefore, I welcome the Mayor's investment in all of these key areas.

"It's clear that there is a long way to go to improve trust and confidence in the Met, and I want to believe that Black communities have been listened to and been involved in new measures that we all hope will bring about much needed change. I remain optimistic and hopeful."

Pastor Lorraine Jones, founder of Dwaynatics, said: "I have been working on the frontline to tackle knife crime in London and I am concerned by the scale of the violence in this city. I have also had first-hand experience of stop and search and know the trauma this causes when done badly and aware of the negative impact this has on our community trusting and working with the police. It's so important that the Met has a culture of treating Black Londoners with respect and kindness so they feel safe and protected. I am pleased this is finally being recognised with this important work.

"I am very pleased with the Mayor's Action Plan. It is clear he has listened to the concerns of the community and highlighted really important areas that the police need to work closely with London's Black community on. We have something on paper that we can use to hold the police to account and it shows a timely and real shift in the Met's approach, which we have all really needed to see.

"It gives me more confidence and a peace for my children and grandchildren to know these changes are going to be made. What the community really needs to see is action and I look forward to seeing the police follow this new framework to strive to be a police service that protects all of us.'

Janet Hills, Chair of the Met's Black Police Association said: "We welcome the Mayor's Action Plan which was sent out for London wide consultation, allowing for open and candid discussions with the Black communities.

"It is encouraging to see that the Met have agreed to make significant changes as a result, particularly around the recruitment of Black police officers and those that define themselves as Black, to ensure greater representation of police officers and staff at all ranks.

"Black Londoners should view the police service as an employer of choice, and have confidence in them to deliver a fair and equitable service. We will continue to do everything we can to improve the working environment of Black police officers and staff within the MPS. The Action Plan is a start to building the trust that is needed to ensure that we have a police service that is diverse and inclusive to all."

Sayce Holmes-Lewis, CEO of Mentivity, said: "Firstly, I'd like to thank the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, the Deputy Mayor of Policing, Sophie Linden, and the large number of Londoners that have showcased their commitment and contributed to this Action Plan to improve the transparency, accountability and trust in policing within London.

"I truly believe that this Action Plan is the basis and the foundation for real, progressive change, especially in relation to how Black people are to be policed within the capital. However, I am under no illusions that we still have much to do and the real work commences now. Actions speak louder than words. We must move forward constructively as a cohesive, collective and committed community to make these recommendations and changes a reality so that the Metropolitan Police Service improves its service to all Londoners, but especially the Black, African and Caribbean communities that have been over-policed and under-protected for so long.

"We have an opportunity to make a true difference and enact a legacy of sustained change. Let's keep the momentum going."

Ben Lindsay, CEO and founder of Power The Fight, said: "While the acknowledgement that historic and systemic racism has created a breakdown in trust between the police and black Londoners is welcome - there is still much to be done.

"This detailed action plan is a good start in supporting the voices of Black Londoners and Black police officers to be heard, holding the police to account for their actions, encouraging the police to adapt their methods and providing solutions for greater community cohesion in relation to policing in London."

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