

**The Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime and Metropolitan Police Service:  
Public Access and Engagement Strategy**

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**October 2017**

The Criminal Justice Alliance (CJA) is a coalition of 130 organisations – including charities, voluntary sector service providers and research institutions – working across the criminal justice pathway. Our members now employ more than 14,000 people between them. The Alliance works to establish a fairer and more effective criminal justice system.

The CJA welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation. This response focuses on questions most pertinent to the CJA's work.

**Q9. How can we ensure that hard to reach communities are identified and their voices actively sought on London-wide and Borough-level policing issues?**

The CJA welcomes and supports the engagement mechanisms currently in place such as Independent Advisory Boards and Stop and Search Community Monitoring Groups. They can play a vital role in improving police/community relations, particularly during critical events. However, as the draft strategy recognises, these mechanisms need to be open to change and improvement, particularly for those communities which are hardest to reach.

Arguably, one of the hardest to reach 'communities' is children and young people. Given the high level of resource expended on policing children and young people, particularly in the use of tactics such as stop and search, more could be done positively to engage with this group, listen to their experiences of crime and consequentially improve the Metropolitan Police's fairness, accountability and decision-making. For black, Asian and minority (BAME) children and young people in particular, trust in the police is critically low – robust recent polling commissioned from YouGov by the Criminal Justice Alliance showed that 37 per cent of BAME people in London aged 16-30 have either not much or very little trust in the police, and over three quarters think that the police unfairly target their communities with stop and search.

One example of a new model of youth engagement is the Youth Commission, established by Leaders Unlocked, now coordinating seven regional commissions that recruit and train proactive young people to engage with their peers and present to local PCCs, police forces and other agencies on issues relating to policing and crime. A recent example of the Youth Commission's work saw the Nottinghamshire Youth Commission creating a film about stop and search. Their PCC Paddy Tipping noted: 'This film is unique in that it is the only one out there looking at these complex issues from both the young people's *and* the police perspective.'

These types of projects, which draw on experiences and perspectives across the divide between young people and the police, help to create a more positive dialogue for both. With over 1,000 youth organisations across London, there exists a huge untapped resource of experience and expertise for the police to draw from in re-establishing positive and authentic relationships with this hard to reach group.

We welcomed the commitment in the Mayor's Police and Crime Plan for 2017-2021 to ensure that the voices of young Londoners are heard. Any plans to improve public access and engagement should take heed of this.

**Q10. How can MOPAC better enable local communities to be more aware of, and involved, in the work of the local Independent Advisory Groups, Safer Neighbourhood Boards, Independent Custody Visiting and Community Monitoring Groups?**

IAGs, SNBs and other monitoring groups can play an important part in improving police accountability and transparency through community scrutiny. We welcome any improvements to awareness of, and involvement in, such work.

On the draft strategy's promotion of better digital access to services, we believe such engagement mechanisms could also benefit from an updated '21<sup>st</sup> century' makeover that ensures a more comprehensive online presence, with greater transparency and improved community access to their work. It is shocking that some decades after many were set up, some of these groups have no easily accessible web presence. (Conversely there are examples of conspicuous good practice in this area, such as the Haringey Independent Stop and Search Monitoring Group.)

We do believe it should also be the responsibility of those groups themselves to take a proactive role in encouraging greater involvement from the communities they represent.

**Q12. What type of information should be shared by the police to help communities feel informed about policing and crime in their area?**

The Metropolitan Police already publishes a large amount of data about crime trends such as use of stop and search and Tasers. The recent addition of use of force statistics is a welcome move in the direction of increased transparency.

However, while the data is increasingly comprehensive in scope, some of its presentation could be made much more accessible to Londoners, not least with the use of more plain English and much clearer localised data. For example, the infographics on use of stop and search for each police force on the police.uk website are a far more digestible way of communicating this information.

**Q16. How can we empower local citizens to influence Borough and Ward-level policing? How can this be achieved digitally or through other virtual means, so it is not just through physical attendance at Community Contact Sessions?**

The CJA welcomes a move towards much better digital engagement with local citizens. Robust and meaningful public engagement comes from consulting with a diverse and representative cohort of local citizens, and improved digital access to this type of consultation could ensure that the Metropolitan Police are better engaging hard to reach communities and individuals who are either unprepared or unable to attend contact sessions in person.

Online polls, surveys and forums can provide a thoughtful and inclusive means of empowering local citizens on policing issues, as long as the terms of these engagements are made clear and the impact of public involvement demonstrated.

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*This consultation response does not reflect the individual policy position of any member organisation of the CJA*

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