



Changes to Operational Policing in London

The Metropolitan Police announced the planned roll out of changes in respect of the Basic Command Units (BCUs) on 12 February 2018. The BCUs will see single borough command units being replaced with operational police structures that cover between two and four local authorities. This has been piloted in Barking and Dagenham, Havering and Redbridge as well as in Camden and Islington since 2016. This briefing presents details and a timetable for the proposed reconfiguration and areas for local authorities to consider.

Analysis

The MPS is moving away from their current 32 borough model that is aligned with boundaries of the 32 London Local Authorities, and will fundamentally change the way in which policing is delivered in London. The Met have redesigned the existing 32 borough model to form 12 larger units called Basic Command Units (BCUs).

The BCU model builds on the strategic priorities set out in the Police and Crime Plan and includes a series of changes to local policing based around the following core service areas:

- **Neighbourhoods:** Including a planned minimum of two Dedicated Ward Officers (DWOs) and one PCSO per ward that will be 'ring fenced' from abstraction.
- **Protecting Vulnerable People:** Bringing together both local and previously centrally managed services that have been dealing with child abuse, rape and domestic violence in one place. This should provide a foundation for developing a more joined up, victim-focused service.
- **Response Teams:** It is proposed that teams are brought together to cover a larger footprint, yielding potential efficiencies and reducing 'handovers' of investigations.
- **Local Investigations:** It is proposed that teams of investigators will respond directly to the more serious and complex crimes, offering immediate victim – investigator contact.

Under the BCU model buildings, resources and staff will be shared across the Local Authority borough boundaries. The BCU will be led by a BCU Commander, a chief superintendent. She or he will be the "owner" of strategic relationships in their command. The BCU Commander will be the key contact for council chief execs and leaders.

The BCU Commander will be supported by five superintendents. Four will each lead on one of

the core local policing functions and be the senior point of contact for individual boroughs. The fifth superintendent will lead the BCU HQ. There will be six chief inspectors supporting each of the superintendents in the core functions, including two detective chief inspectors in Safeguarding.

The BCU model will continue to see two Dedicated Ward Officers (DWOs) and one PCSO in every London ward. The MPS has made a commitment to officers spending the maximum amount of time in their wards, focusing on community engagement and local policing and not being abstracted for aid to other areas.

The MPS has also said that BCUs will increase the number of officers dedicated to working with young people in schools and educational establishments and each will have a named officer they will know.

In addition to the operational changes at borough level the MPS will be bringing together the investigation of domestic abuse, child abuse and sexual offences that are currently being delivered separately by borough and specialist officers. The BCU will also have safeguarding teams that will work to prevent harm coming to those with mental health issues or those who go missing, and to reduce the demand from repeat incidents. Safeguarding officers will attend the most serious crimes - alongside response officers – where they will set the investigation and make contact with the victim early on, with the aim of reducing the number of different officers they have to deal with.

Financial imperative

Finance is a major driver for the changes to operational policing announced by the introduction of the BCUs. The MPS has already made savings of £600 million, and now have to make further savings of £325 million by 2021/2. Officer numbers are expected to fall to 30,000 by April, and further by 2021. The MPS argue that the BCUs will give them a more sustainable policing model, and the ability to operate at a larger scale and with fewer officers. The MPS also state that the BCUs will enable them to operate more consistently across London delivering the same core local policing functions – neighbourhoods, response, CID and safeguarding. The BCUs are predicted to deliver £73 million, equating to a reduction of 1,583 police officer posts.

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Safeguarding and BCUs

Each borough has arrangements to receive and triage safeguarding and child protection concerns about of children in its area and to assess risk and vulnerability in order to take decisions regarding statutory intervention at one end of the spectrum or to provide or signpost to universal services accordingly. Within these ‘front door’ arrangements all boroughs also have Multi-agency Safeguarding Hubs or MASH. These are led and overseen in governance terms by children’s social care and include the police (public protection) services, education

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and health services but can also include representatives from a range of other agencies including adult social care, adult mental health, housing, probation and the voluntary sector. The MASH arrangements enable information to be shared quickly and efficiently to assess risk and vulnerability individually and through the multi-agency processes and co-location increases understanding between agencies regarding the different roles, statutory responses and enables safe and appropriate information sharing.

Police involvement in and commitment to the MASH is vital to an effective multi-agency front door. In addition, the recent innovation which has seen Child Abuse Investigation Team [CAIT] officers co-located in a Children’s Social Care Assessment team has had some real benefits in terms of the timeliness and the quality of both risk assessment as well as appropriate engagement with Strategy Meetings – a key initial meeting which starts to share individual risk assessments and to plan the intervention for child/children at risk of significant harm. There is an appetite from Children’s Social Care Leaders in other parts of the capital for the wider use of CAIT co-location.

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Whichever model of police command units is in operation and indeed in periods of transition, key elements of effective police engagement in safeguarding include the following:

- Ensuring a sufficiency of specialist child abuse investigation officers.
- Ensuring single agency and multi-agency risk assessments are undertaken in the statutory time frames.
- Enabling joint visits and investigations and multi-agency Strategy Meetings are held within statutory timescales.
- Ensuring that the move to vulnerability hubs does not reduce the chances of a child being seen by an officer who is a specialist in child abuse investigations – rather than a specialist in adult rape investigation for example.
- Ensuring that officers responding to safeguarding incidents that fall outside of the remit of the vulnerability hubs – which includes large numbers of lower level domestic abuse reports which are likely to significantly impact on the well-being of children – are sufficiently well-trained and supported to identify and address risks to children and young people.
- That the police are locally represented, and at the right level, at the range of child safeguarding meetings they are required to attend.

Time-table and details of staggered rollout

The MPS has made a commitment for a two-month period of local engagement and four-months of preparation work prior to BCUs going live. The blueprinting will take place during this period, after which there will be at least one month to allow for a go-live period.

| | Pilot from late 2016 | June 2018 | September 2018 | November 2018 |
|----------------------|--|---|--|---|
| Cluster | East: Barking & Dagenham, Havering, Redbridge | West: Hounslow, Ealing, Hillingdon | North East: Waltham Forest, Newham | North: Enfield, Haringey |
| BCU commander | Jason Gwillim | Paul Martin | Richard Tucker | Helen Millichap |
| Cluster | Central North: Camden, Islington | South West: Richmond, Kingston, Wandsworth, Merton | South East: Lewisham, Bexley, Greenwich | Central East: Hackney, Tower Hamlets |
| BCU Commander | Iain Raphael | Sally Benetar | Simon Dobinson | Sue Williams |
| Cluster | | | South: Lambeth, Southwark | West: Hammersmith, Westminster, Kensington |
| BCU commander | | | Simon Messinger | Rob Jones |
| Cluster | | | North West: Harrow, Brent, Barnet | South Area: Sutton, Croydon, Bromley |
| BCU commander | | | Simon Rose | Jeff Boothe |

Commentary

It is clear that the changes have been made in the context of significant resource reductions to the MPS. While the pathfinders have tested a number of aspects of these changes there will no doubt be further issues that will arise in each sector as the roll out takes place.

The MPS has given assurances that BCU commanders will be willing to listen to the issues which emerge across different localities and look to develop the model collaboratively.

Local authority and police partners in each cluster may wish to consider putting the following in place:

- Regular meetings across clusters with leaders, commander and senior leadership teams both in the LA and police.
- Monitoring of police engagement with partner boards including statutory arrangements.
- Local authorities and police partners to identify and agree which key structures (for example Integrated Gangs Units) need to be maintained in localities and potentially expanded.

London Councils will continue to engage with the Metropolitan Police and the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime to help ensure borough interests are represented through this process of change.



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Links:

[Met Announces Changes to Local Policing \(Press Release\)](#)

[One Met Model 2020 Basic Command Unit Pathfinder Review \(pdf\)](#)

This member briefing has been circulated to:

Portfolio holders and those members who requested policy briefings in the following categories: **Crime and Public Protection**