



GMCA
Churchgate House,
56 Oxford Street,
Manchester
M1 6EU

1st May 2020

Dear Mr Burnham,

Thank you for your response to our open letter and for guiding us to the research that you state supports the implementation of schools-based police officers entitled: 'Community views on violence affecting young people in Greater Manchester'¹.

After reading your response and the research commissioned by Greater Manchester Police (GMP) and The Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), we note the following concerns:

1) A failure to acknowledge racism

It is extremely disappointing that in a response to our concerns, you took it only as an opportunity to outline the reasons behind your decision-making. All our concerns stem from an evidence base of racist policing in Greater Manchester and beyond. You provided us with no reassurance on this matter, failing to note 'race' and 'racism' in your response, and guiding us to research that fails to reference 'race', 'racism' or 'ethnicity' throughout. This sends a clear message, once again, that you are simply dismissing the long history of institutional racism within the police force. Furthermore, you fail to recognise the State's role and responsibility in perpetuating racialised violence. As a result, the communities in question are reductively framed as the root cause of the problem (as we outline in point 2).

2) Youth violence is not a justification for discriminate policing

Our open letter was an outline of our concerns regarding disproportionate over-policing against racialised and working-class communities. That is a conversation within its own right. Your response to such concerns was that which simply emphasised 'youth violence', this would seem to suggest that you believe disproportionate policing is justified by the existence of youth violence. It also illustrates the racialisation of youth violence, once again. At January's EQUAL event, when researchers and community workers shared concerns about racially disproportionate policing, your first point was to reference 'stabbings in the Arndale'. We must be able to talk about the unjust over-policing of ethnic minority communities, without talking about youth violence. The persistent linking of crime with ethnicity is both dangerous and unhelpful.

3) A failure to deal with root causes

In the context of youth violence, your response outlines concerns that 'young people are growing up in school, home and community environments in which conflict and violence are normalised', yet there is no evidence to suggest more police and police in schools, tackles the root causes of these problems. It is clear that the government's '1.1 billion national increase in direct grants to fund police services' is driving this solution, not evidence-based research, which points to the need for better public services, youth

¹ <https://www.innovationunit.org/projects/violent-crime-in-greater-manchester/>

resources, and jobs. Enhancing the punitive arm of the state has been the vehicle in many contexts for exacerbating the very violence that you describe, through creating a 'school-to-prison' pipeline. This is a worrying path to follow as it fundamentally fails to tackle the structural disadvantages that young people experience. We believe that it would be more effective to focus on, and invest in creating fairer socio-economic conditions, rather than resorting to more policing.

4) No commitment to improving police-community relations

You have acknowledged the poor and 'worsening' relationship between communities and police. Yet your solution is to employ more officers, as opposed to understanding the reasons behind this worsening relationship. If the Mayor's office wants to improve police–community relations, greater emphasis must be put on examining, studying, and listening to the differential experiences of communities, and that should be dealt with separately to this new policy innovation.

In GMP and GMCA's research, young people stated police in schools would "feel like you are in prison", and "be really intimidating". It goes on to note that some primary school children had ambitions to be police officers, but this changed by secondary school. Instead of reflecting on this change (one that our work with young people suggests is a consequence of negative treatment), it is seen as an opportunity to 'help diversify the force and further build relationships with ethnic minority communities'. Not only is this, once again, a failure to listen to communities, but also by relying on ethnic minorities to build relationships suggests that you are unwilling to examine the actions of the current force responsible for a 'worsening relationship'.

5) Inadequate tools to hold disproportionate policing to account

As noted in our letter, there is existing evidence - including Home Office data - that shows policing tactics such as 'Stop and Search' to be racially disproportionate in use. We also believe, based on American evidence, this kind of disproportionately will play out in schools. You responded:

'I want to assure you that these are certainly not the outcomes I or Greater Manchester Police want to see from this and I will be making sure that the existing governance arrangements for Stop and Search in Greater Manchester closely monitors the situation to ensure that your concerns do not become a reality'.

Despite your assurances, these outcomes *are* a reality, now and historically. In 2018/19, in Greater Manchester black people were searched at nearly seven times the rate of white people², an *increase* on the previous year (5.2 in 2017/18). Your existing governance arrangements fail to keep ethnic minority communities safe, therefore the placement of police in schools will be an additional risk to these communities, and one that we are unable to trust will be held accountable.

6) The role of police

You note 'the presence of school-based police officers is simply not about increasing enforcement. We want the officers to be personable, approachable and to become figures of trust for the young people'.

A police officer's job is to enforce the law, if this is not what they are being brought into schools to do, then there are other people better placed for the position needed in school, which you note to be 'figures of trust'. Many young people do not trust police officers. They trust youth workers, teachers, counsellors

² <http://www.stop-watch.org/your-area/area/greater-manchester>

and pastoral staff (many of whom have faced cuts within their sectors): yet the Mayor's office continues to move forward, knowing the need, but ignoring the evidence-based solutions.

Finally, in your response you outline the support you have from education providers across Greater Manchester, suggesting that they are calling for schools-based police officers. The 'Community views on violence affecting young people in Greater Manchester' research proves to be very weak evidence of this. The report does not strongly advance the implementation of schools-based officers, it simply states that a neighbourhood policing strategy 'could involve school-based officers'. There is considerable evidence in the document of police misconduct and disrespect towards young people that makes the concept of expanding police presence irresponsible. On page 37 of the research, desire for more 'links' with police; 'community policing' and authorities working to support one another are sentiments vocalised by teachers. Yet, the only reference to a schools-based police officer is by one teacher. Meanwhile, young people are opposed. To say this report is evidence to support this policy, would therefore appear to be inaccurate.

You have asked us to work with local schools and education providers, to work with you. We continue to work in the best interests of local communities to push forward what will be a success for them. We currently work with teachers and education providers, and we will continue to reach out to them moving forward. We will be contacting those who inputted to the research conducted by GMP and the GMCA to share our concerns, and to enquire as to whether they are aware their input is being utilised to evidence the need for schools-based police officers. In addition, we will be continuing to collect insight from teachers through their unions, many of whom are concerned by these developments (and many of whom were not aware of them, due to consultation having been conducted with headteachers), as well as community organisations and members who have not been included in your consultation.

This letter will be published publicly, alongside your response.

Kind regards,

Kids of Colour
Northern Police Monitoring Project
No Police in Schools Campaign