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Your ref: 280807HA006

3 October 2007

Dear Cindy

Thank you for your letter reference the borough's attendance at the MPA Domestic Violence Board on the 12th June 2007.

In response to the three points raised I can advise you of the following,

Four Additional Posts

The four additional posts within the Community Safety Unit (CSU) were filled by the end of May 2007 and were sustained during June 2007. However a number of Detective Constables on the Borough were successful in applying for posts and the Borough is now 10 Detective Constables under strength. This has impacted across the borough and includes our CSU.

We had hoped to rectify this position through the corporate T/DC selection process, which took place in early summer. We anticipated our shortfall and flagged this up in advance to the Corporate Workforce Planning Unit. Unfortunately due to Service priorities a decision was taken centrally not to post any T/DC's to the Borough. This also included posting from our borough three officers who had been selected as T/DC's. You may remember that during our appearance at the board we were praised for our development of officers as TDC's within the CSU. Another corporate TDC process is currently underway and providing the Borough is posted TDC's I will ensure that filling the now vacant four CSU posts will be the priority for the Borough.

Referrals to Advance

It has been agreed that all victims will be referred to Advance on a daily basis unless there is good reason not to. This will only be in exceptional cases and rare. Having given this undertaking Advance now have concerns about their resilience to cope with the increased number of referrals and are addressing this internally. In summary there is now no issue with police referring all cases and the system is in place to do so.

Community Engagement

As the board are aware there are a number of multi-agency panels on the Borough at various levels addressing domestic violence. It is recognised that there will be significant advantages in engaging black and minority ethnic communities, the polish community and young people at the appropriate levels with these groups and the police in particular. Examples of our engagement are,

Standing Together has developed safe and respectful ways of consulting survivors. This is fed back to us through our monthly operations meetings and informs our training processes for staff. It is also pointed out that our training of our SNT officers including PCSO's in DV awareness was subject of recognition at the Board. These officers are our front line link to distinct communities.

This year Standing Together has put together a consultation with local lesbian, bisexual gay and transgender survivors of domestic abuse about what the barriers are to their using the criminal justice system, their experience of it and of the availability of support and information. This consultation was carried out in partnership with pan London specialist support groups and local witness/victim support groups. In consultation with our partners we intend to use the learning from this process and replicate it with black and minority ethnic communities.

The CSU makes full use of the MPS Cultural and Communities Resource Unit to assist our survivors. Both Hammersmith and Fulham have victim and Achieving Best Evidence (ABE) suites. All officers on the Vulnerable Persons Unit are ABE trained on arrival at the unit.

The borough has a Racial Incident Panel, which is attended by police, local authority and other support agencies. Linked to that group, the borough now has third party reporting sites for black and minority ethnic communities. The CSU DI has had direct involvement in the development of the reporting forms and personally receives notification of all such incidents in order to ensure an excellent standard of investigation.

There is also a Domestic Violence Prevention Project in Schools to run initially over two years from November 2006. This project was set up by the borough DV Coordinator and is funded by Children's Services. The Schools project has its own coordinator and has already started running DV awareness sessions for school staff and activities for children focusing on respectful relationships and domestic violence prevention.

Yours sincerely

Ali Dizaei

Borough Commander, Hammersmith & Fulham Borough