



London Campaign against Police and State Violence

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Lambeth Council Chief Exec (Derrick Anderson)

London DMPC

MOPAC

Greater London Authority Police & Crime Committee

Borough Commander for Lambeth (Chief Supt. Richard Wood)

London Crime Reduction Board Gangs Panel

Lambeth Councillor involved in Shield who deals with crime reduction + is director of this programme (Councillor Jane Edbrooke)

By post and e-mail

Monday 13th July 2015

Re: Pilot of Operation Shield in Lambeth

We write on behalf of London Campaign against Police and State Violence (LCAPSV) to register our concern at 'Operation Shield'; the Group Violence Intervention Pilot, which is currently underway in the borough of Lambeth.

About LCAPSV

London Campaign against Police and State Violence is a group of voluntary campaigners working to make the Metropolitan Police accountable to local communities for abuses of power; and bring an end to its culture of brutality and racial profiling including the racist use of Stop & Search. LCAPSV has supported numerous people who have been beaten, abused, subjected to harassment and unlawful imprisonment at the hands of the Metropolitan Police.

Our Concerns

We have several significant concerns regarding the safety, legality and viability of this pilot and the adverse implications for individuals and families that will be affected once it is extended into other boroughs. We have listed our concerns below, with direct reference made to the 'Shield Pilot Partnership Agreement and Operational Model', which we have received a modified version of via a Freedom of Information request:

1. Entire families are at risk of being collectively punished for crimes with which they have little, to no association.

1.1 Individuals targeted by the scheme may be registered at a family address that they do not currently reside at, or have little contact with, but their families may then be threatened with eviction if that property is rented through the local authority, or with the support of Housing Benefit, or through a housing association.

1.2 Individuals who are linked with a crime after being identified as a 'gang member' may be punished for crimes that they have no involvement in, or knowledge of, which will consequently impact on their families too.

Punishing criminal activity with homelessness will subsequently lead to increased rates of homelessness, with rising social problems and criminal activity typically associated with homelessness.

2. The criteria for identifying a 'gang' or 'gang member' is dubious. The process of updating a database of supposed gang members is also unclear, as are the grounds for collating this data, which will potentially incur unjust racial profiling in the process.
3. There is a risk of stigmatisation and unfair trial and legal process when defendants are portrayed as 'gang members', particularly when the process for identifying 'gang members' has already been brought under scrutiny.
4. The Shield Operational Model recognises that the circumstances that the Group Violence Intervention (GVI) Model arose from in the US and the situation here in the UK¹ are different. The original model was developed following analysis of the dynamics of youth violence in Boston over a long-term period and then based its response on this analysis. Operation Shield appears to have none of the research component and operates on the basis of a series of predetermined assumptions about youth violence and how this can be impacted. Its attempt to implement a scheme without any of the relevant context seems wholly inadequate.
5. In launching the project, the London mayor stated:

*It is time we gave these gang members a clear ultimatum – the police know who you are and if anyone in the gang steps out of line then every member will face consequences.*²

The uncompromising rhetoric of exceptional punishment in the mayor's announcement is cause for extreme concern; it suggests that due process

¹ Shield Partnership Agreement and Operational Model, p 6.

²

<https://www.london.gov.uk/media/mayor-press-releases/2015/01/one-rule-for-all-may-or-launches-tough-new-gang-intervention>

would not be adhered to in apprehending individuals under the scheme. The implication of group punishment replicates the principles of joint enterprise; the Justice Committee's report published last year was critical of joint enterprise and recognised that:

*The subjective and objective information which has been accumulated through JENGBA's campaigning, the work of the TBIJ, and the research by the Cambridge Institute of Criminology all call into question, in their different ways, the compatibility of joint enterprise with a wider conception of justice.*³

JENGBA has published its own list of concerns at the group punishment component of Operation Shield.⁴

6. One of the key components of the strategy is 'Help for those who ask - providing individuals the opportunity to exit from their criminal lifestyle and provide a route out'.⁵ The Shield Operational Model states that 'partners must agree what type of support can be provided to ensure that a realistic offer is made to the individuals seeking help'.⁶ However it remains unclear in any public documentation released to date what this 'help' would realistically constitute, what other statutory agencies will be involved in providing this help and how comprehensive it will be.

There is no information on whether the pathways for support will be standardised within boroughs or individually tailored for each 'call-in'.

It appears that the 'punishment' element of the scheme has been much more prominent in its portrayal in the press, which is demonstrated in the mayor's aforementioned comments. In an Implementation Guide for the GVI Scheme, it is made clear that 'providing help to street group members is a critical part of GVI'.⁷ With the implications of the scheme focusing so heavily on punishment, there is little indication that Operation Shield is not simply an attempt to rebrand and continue a punishment-led model of preventing gang crime that has already proved ineffective.

7. The Equalities Impact Assessment carried out with regard to Operation Shield⁸ is insubstantial and vastly inadequate in respect of the complicated racial, class, and gendered assumptions around this project and how it is being carried out.

The focus is on the assumed benefits that the programme will have to BME

³<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmselect/cmjust/310/31006.htm#a11> p 38.

⁴ <http://www.irr.org.uk/news/archaic-operation-shield/>

⁵ <http://moderngov.lambeth.gov.uk/documents/s72045/SLP%20Report%20Shield.pdf>

⁶ Shield Partnership Agreement and Operational Model, p 42.

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http://nnscommunities.org/old-site-files/Group_Violence_Intervention_-_An_Implementation_Guide.pdf p 67.

⁸ <http://moderngov.lambeth.gov.uk/documents/s72045/SLP%20Report%20Shield.pdf> p 7.

communities, without in any way addressing the direct and indirect ways that the programme will specifically target BME communities and further serve to criminalise them. It is unclear how the safeguarding and equality considerations and assessments have been made, including the standards used to measure an equality impact assessment. We consider such issues essential and clear mapping of this process is part of a local authority's legal obligation towards residents.

Recommendations

We hope for full clarification from you on the above points along with the following:

1. Information on when the Pilot evaluation carried out by the MOPAC Evidence and Insight team is due to be published, with evidence of its findings.
2. Information on when the review of this pilot is due to be considered by a public accounts select committee in Lambeth.
3. Further clarification of the monitoring outcomes of the 'Call Ins' which were due to have begun in Lambeth in late March/early April 2015.⁹
4. Information on whether it would be possible for representatives from organisations supporting members of the local community who will be affected by this pilot to sit in on the bi-monthly Shield Programme Board for the sake of transparency and for fairer representation of residents' concerns.
5. A thorough and non-biased equality and impacts assessment, if this has not been carried out already.

We await your response to our concerns and would also appreciate an opportunity to meet with you and discuss these issues further.

Yours sincerely,

London Campaign Against Police & State Violence

⁹[http://www.minutes.haringey.gov.uk/Published/C00000444/M00006932/AI00041647/\\$CSReport5315OpShieldandgangsstrategy.docx.pdf](http://www.minutes.haringey.gov.uk/Published/C00000444/M00006932/AI00041647/$CSReport5315OpShieldandgangsstrategy.docx.pdf) p 2.