

## Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM

17<sup>th</sup> March 2022

Sophie Linden  
Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime  
[SENT BY EMAIL]

Dear Sophie,

### **URGENT: Questions and Concerns from Report into 2020 Strip Search**

I was deeply shocked that a recent safeguarding report found that at the end of 2020 a 15-year-old Black school girl was strip searched by Metropolitan Police officers at her school without another adult present and in the knowledge that she was menstruating.

This is yet another significant failing by the Met and I am glad that the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) is looking into this specific case, as not only does it raise significant safeguarding concerns, but also potential issues of racial discrimination.

Although the IOPC are looking into this specific case, there are wider concerns raised by this case that I wish to highlight to you, and ones which require urgent action.

I would be grateful if you could provide answers to the following questions:

- Given Det Supt Dan Rutland, of the Met's Central East Command, said: "We recognise that the findings of the safeguarding review reflect this incident should never have happened", what immediate actions are you taking in relation to the concerns raised by this case?
- Will you commit to working with the Met to undertake an audit of all strip searches undertaken in the last five years and refer any that present concerns in terms of safeguarding and conduct to the IOPC?
- If consistent themes of poor practice or misconduct are found in relation to the way in which strip searches have been conducted, will you commit to asking Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) to look into these?
- In this specific case the report by City and Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership (CHSCP) said it was highly likely that "adultification bias" had been a factor, where adults perceive Black children as being older than they are because they see them as more "streetwise". How are you working with the Met to tackle "adultification bias"?

- When the new BCU model was introduced in 2018, it was claimed there would be improvements to safeguarding, “bringing together all those involved in safeguarding services.” Will you commit to reviewing safeguarding improvements at BCU-level, and given the details of this specific case what urgent guidance on strip searches is being issued to BCUs?

I am sure you can appreciate the concern many Londoners have had reading the details of this harrowing case, as well as the clear and well-reported impact the events that took place have had on the young girl and her family, and it is important that action that can be taken is taken as soon as possible to improve practices more widely.

I look forward to a response at your very earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Caroline Pidgeon', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM**

Liberal Democrat London Assembly Member