

# MAYOR OF LONDON

## Letter from the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan

**Date:** 19 September 2018

Dear Friend,

I'm writing about a difficult issue I know we all care deeply about – tackling the scourge of violent crime.

Every death as a result of violent crime is an utter tragedy, leaving lives destroyed and families heartbroken. The level of violent crime in our city is clearly unacceptably high and – working together with community groups and others – I'm determined to do everything possible to tackle this problem head on.

As you know, the Commissioner and I have already set up a dedicated Violent Crime Taskforce – funded by City Hall – with officers focusing on the areas worst affected. But the causes of violent crime are extremely complex, involving deep-seated societal problems – from poverty and social alienation to mental ill-health and a lack of opportunities. This means we are never going to be able to arrest our way out of this problem.

Since becoming Mayor, I've sought to work with community groups like yours – as well as with London boroughs, the NHS, youth services and charities – to implement a public health approach to tackling serious violence. But it's clear we need to do more and faster. That's why I've decided to launch a new Violence Reduction Unit (VRU), in partnership with the police, health, local government, community groups, youth services, London Councils and other specialists, to deliver a long-term public health approach to addressing the causes of violence.

We have listened and researched the public health approaches in cities like Glasgow, where they managed to deliver large reductions in violence over the course of a decade, and we've spent time properly learning the lessons from Glasgow and developing plans to scale their approach up to meet the different needs and challenges in our city.

The new multi-disciplinary unit will work to expand on my Knife Crime Strategy and address the links between violence in the home and on the street. The ultimate objective is to divert young people away from criminal activity by supporting the vulnerable at an early stage and giving young Londoners better life opportunities. A key part of this will be working to better understand the risk factors in a person's early life that can lead to serious violence by using data from health, criminal justice and other public services.

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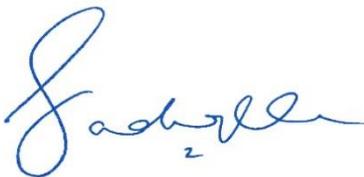
This work will happen at all levels in London, including local police Basic Command Units, the health service and criminal justice agencies. But, without a doubt, one of the key ways we will deliver our approach will be using the local knowledge and expertise of community groups like yours. Community organisations – that really understand their local communities – are critical partners in the success of this new unit, and I look forward to working closely with you over the coming months on the establishment of the VRU.

I have directed an initial £500,000 towards establishing the unit over the coming months so that we have greater capacity to deliver early interventions and prevent the spread of violence. This includes working to improve co-ordination between the Metropolitan Police, local authorities, youth services, health services, criminal justice agencies and City Hall as part of a new enhanced partnership.

I'm confident this new unit will make a positive difference, but it's going to take time. We are not promising that we can deliver results overnight. The causes of violent crime are many years in the making – so not only will the solutions take some time, but they will also require the Government stepping up to properly fund our local councils and public services.

I'm passionate about creating a city where every young Londoner can grow up in safety, with the opportunities to reach their potential. I hope this new unit will help us to work together even more in order to tackle the scourge of violent crime in London.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sadiq Khan', with a small '2' written below the name.

**Sadiq Khan**  
Mayor of London