

## Greater Manchester Police, Fire & Crime Panel

Date: 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2023  
Subject: Police Vetting Procedures  
Report of: DCC Terry Woods

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### PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide the Greater Manchester Police, Fire and Crime Steering Group with an update on vetting procedures at Greater Manchester Police (GMP) both for new applicants and the existing workforce.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Panel is requested to:

1. Note the content of the report and the action taken by GMP's Force Vetting Unit (FVU) to protect the integrity of the force, safeguarding both the public and the workforce from the risk of corruption and / or behaviour that does not accord with police service values.

### CONTACT OFFICERS

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**Equalities Impact, Carbon and Sustainability Assessment:**

N/A

**Risk Management**

N/A

**Legal Considerations**

N/A

**Financial Consequences – Revenue**

N/A

**Financial Consequences – Capital**

N/A

**Number of attachments to the report:**

None

# 1. Introduction and Background

1. On 7<sup>th</sup> February 2022, David Carrick, a now former Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) officer was sentenced to a minimum term of 30 years imprisonment having been convicted of 50 charges of rape and other serious sexual assault and domestic abuse offences. Those offences occurred over a 17-year period whilst Carrick was a serving MPS officer, and such was his un-convicted antecedence whilst holding the Office of Constable that concerns have been raised as to whether opportunities were missed (a) in granting him vetting clearance during initial recruitment and selection and then (b) to withdraw clearance and subject him to the police misconduct regime following trigger incidents during his service with the MPS. Decision making surrounding David Carrick's vetting clearance will be subject of examination by the Angiolini Inquiry.
2. Furthermore, with Part 1 of the Angiolini Inquiry is currently examining whether former MPS officer Wayne Couzens, who in 2021 was convicted of the kidnap, rape and murder of Sarah Everard, should have held vetting clearance both in the Civil Nuclear Constabulary (CNC) and on his transfer to the MPS, there is understandable public apprehension as to the police vetting regime being fit for purpose.
3. Finally, in November 2022, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Service (HMICFRS) released their inspection report on vetting, misconduct and misogyny in the police service. This report was critical of processes for assessing, analysing and managing risks relating to vetting decisions in the forces the HMICFRS inspected, and it made seventeen recommendations and listed two areas for improvement (AFI) specifically in respect of vetting. GMP were not one of the forces inspected in that national thematic inspection and instead, the force's vetting procedures will be inspected during the HMICFR's forthcoming Police Efficiency Effectiveness and Legitimacy (PEEL) inspection of GMP.

## 2. Vetting Regime at GMP

### 3. Governance

#### 3.1. Organisational Structure

1. The Force Vetting Unit (FVU) is a constituent department of GMP's Professional Standards Branch (PSB), led operationally by the Force Vetting Manager (FVM) reporting to the Head of PSB, who in turn reports to the Deputy Chief Constable

(DCC). In addition to the FVM, the FVU comprises, one Senior Vetting Officer, four Vetting Officers (VO's), nineteen Vetting Researchers (VR's) and two Administration Assistants.

2. In 2022, the FVU was subject of both an uplift approved by GMP's Plan on a Page (PoaP) Programme Board and a department-initiated restructure. That restructure led to the creation of three distinct teams, specifically (i) officer and staff initial applications, (ii) contractor clearance and (iii) an aftercare team managing both reviews and renewals of vetting and the maintenance of designated posts requiring a higher level of clearance.
3. The creation of these three distinct teams within the FVU, each with their own Team Leader, provides for greater efficiency and an improved level of competent capability within each individual thematic area of responsibility. Such clarity as to primary responsibilities is the first line of defence in safeguarding against expiration of vetting clearance and / or erroneous granting of clearances that have been the subject of continued criticism of the police service nationally by HMICFRS.
4. Crucially, the creation of an aftercare team prevents a cohort of Vetting Researchers being temptingly drawn into servicing short-term demand stemming from priority recruitment activity across GMP. Instead, with the aftercare team centred on the review of vetting across the existing workforce, this ensures clearances are maintained within the timeframes set nationally by the College of Policing's (CoP's) Authorised Professional Practice (APP) on Vetting and takes account of circumstantial changes, for example (e.g.) but not limited to a change of role, receipt of information relating to criminal conduct and / or disciplinary matters, third party associations, or a differing financial position.
5. Given the focused activity set out at paragraph (para.) four above, alongside the synergy that exists between the FVU working alongside the (i) Anti-Corruption Unit (ACU) and (ii) the Complaints and Misconduct (CMU) collectively as a single entity comprising the PSB, it is anticipated that any critical findings from the Angiolini inquiry as to the sharing of information and decisions taken in granting or maintain vetting clearance for Wayne Couzens and / or David Carrick will not be live issues for GMP within its newly established vetting regime.
6. Recognising the overall tenet of the recommendations within the previously referred to HMICFRS inspection report (2022), particularly as to improved objective decision

making, the FVU is making a further structural adjustment by converting four VR posts into the three VO posts.

7. The VO is the principal decision maker in whether to grant vetting clearance and whilst such staff will naturally maintain the skills of a VR, they additionally possess higher level capabilities in application of objective decision making. This variation in organisation structure, which is being delivered within the PSB's existing budget, will provide for improved efficiency, enabling the FVU to better flex dynamically to dynamic, and reduce the pressure on the existing VO establishment thus creating a more conducive working environment to aid the highest quality decision making.

### **3.2. Appeal and Quality Assurance Governance**

1. It is expected that some individuals will be dissatisfied with the decision not to grant vetting clearance and as a matter of organisational justice and procedural fairness against the requirements of the APP on Vetting, GMP operates a Vetting Appeal Panel (VAP) comprising (i) the FVM, (ii) Senior Vetting Officer, (iii) Head of ACU and (iv) the force Operational Security (OpSy) Manager.
2. The VAP will only consider appeals on four grounds, specifically (i) new information that was not available to the original VO, (ii) the decision was disproportionate, (iii) the decision was perverse or unreasonable and (iv) no explanation was given for the decision was given. The decision of the VAP is final and to ensure the panel's legitimacy and integrity, it acts autonomously and free from the possibility of either undue influence from any internal or external stakeholder, or numerical recruitment and selection targets.
3. Responding to the HMICFRS inspection report, a dip sampling regime has just been introduced whereby on a rotational basis, each week a member of the PSB Senior Leadership Team (SLT) quality assures the vetting decisions of those applications and vetting renewals where clearance has either been (i) rejected, or (ii) granted in circumstances where adverse information was documented during the process.
4. Extending on para. Three above, additionally the Head of PSB and the Head of the CMU [at the rank of Detective Superintendent] review all vetting refusals where the applicant is from a Black, Asian or minority ethnic (BAME) background.

## 4. Force Vetting Regime

### 4.1. Procedure

1. A comprehensive, systematic, and effective vetting regime is essential for assessing an individual's integrity and suitability to work in policing. Vetting identifies areas of vulnerability that could damage public confidence in GMP or the wider police service and to ensure consistent application of the national standards relating to vetting across the police service of England and Wales, the FVU works to the statutory Vetting Code of Practice (2017) and the associated APP for Vetting (2021). Under section 39A of the Police Act 1996, chief officers must have regard to the statutory Vetting Code of Practice.
2. The following twelve (summarised) principles as listed in the Vetting Code of Practice underpin all decision making within the FVU.

1.	Vetting practitioners will comply with the requirements of the Vetting Code of Practice and the Code of Ethics, with each case treated on its own merits.
2.	Everyone working in a police environment will be vetted to the requisite level including: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) Those with unrestricted or unsupervised access to police information, assets of estates.</li><li>b) Have access to force or national police systems, directly or remotely.</li><li>c) Act as a representative of the police service.</li><li>d) Have the power to make or significantly influence strategic decisions in the police service, including members of partner agencies.</li></ol>
3.	The level of vetting required for a person, for both force vetting and national security vetting will be proportionate to the role they carry out.
4.	Police vetting should comply with the standards laid out in APP for Vetting.
5.	All vetting information must be stored in a suitable secure manner, with the information being treated confidentiality and accessed by only those with a business need.

6.	Decision making in respect of vetting clearance should be independent of recruitment and other human resources processes. There should be an effective working relationship between FVUs and professional standards departments.
7.	Vetting clearance may be transferrable between posts and forces upon the completion of a vetting health check.
8.	Chief Constables are responsible for ensuring effective vetting arrangements are in place in their own organisation.
9.	Decisions about vetting status should follow the national decision making (NDM) model and must be accurately recorded.
10.	Where a person is subject to a vetting rejection, they should have a right of appeal to a person independent of the original decision maker.
11.	All police personnel should be subject to periodic re-vetting in accordance with APP for Vetting
12.	There is a rebuttable presumption that a person will not be suitable for appointment as a police officer or special constable if they have a previous conviction or caution for a criminal offence, especially if it relates to dishonest or corrupt practices, or violence.

3. The minimum level of vetting for all police officers, special constables and staff (including PCSO's) is described as Recruitment Vetting (RV) and lasts for a period of ten years. Those with RV clearance are allowed access to materials graded with a Government Security Clearance (GSC) of official-sensitive and occasionally secret.
4. The higher level of vetting clearance for those in designated posts is termed Management Vetting (MV) and lasts for a period of seven years, during which time clearance must be reviewed twice, most commonly at the three and five year mark. Those with MV clearance are allowed access to material graded at GSC secret and occasionally top secret.

5. GMP applies a Non-Police Personal Vetting (NPPV) regime against those working in force who are (i) contractors, (ii) volunteers, (iii) agency workers, and (iii) are employed by partner agencies. There are four NPPV levels as shown in the table below.

<b>Level</b>	<b>GSC material</b>	<b>Occasional access to</b>	<b>Site access</b>	<b>System Access</b>
<b>NPPV1</b>	None	None	Unsupervised	None
<b>NPPV 2 Abbreviated</b>	Official-sensitive	None	Access card no access to force system	None
<b>NPPV 2 Full</b>	Official-sensitive	Secret	Access card & access to force systems	Yes
<b>NPPV 3</b>	Secret	Top secret	Access card & access to force systems	Yes

6. GMP HR is responsible for ensuring that authentication occurs in order to confirm the applicant's identity, nationality, employment eligibility and residency qualification. This is always completed before the vetting process is started. The nationality check assists GMP in discharging its statutory obligations under the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006.
7. As per principal twelve within the Vetting Code of Practice, there is a rebuttable presumption that a person will not be suitable for appointment as a police officer or special constable if they have a previous conviction, caution or impending case for a criminal offence, especially if it relates to a dishonest or corrupt practice, or violence. Presently from the statutory code perspective, factors that may weigh against this presumption being applied in individual cases include the nature and severity of the offence, the person's age at the time they committed the offence and the length of time since the offence was committed. Each case must be considered on its own merits including both the individual's role in the offence and the nature of the conviction or caution. The same presumption applies to police staff roles with designated powers or roles where there is a likelihood of being in the evidential change.

8. Applications for a position as a police officer, a special constable, or as a member of police staff where that member of staff may be in the evidential chain are rejected in all cases where:
  - (a) Offences were committed as an adult or juvenile which resulted in a prison sentence (including custodial, suspended or deferred sentence and sentences served at a young offender's institution or community home); or
  - (b) The applicant is a registered sex offender or is subject to a registration requirement in respect of any other conviction.
9. Extending on principal twelve within the Vetting Code of Practice, GMP will reject applicants who have a conviction, caution or impending case where the offence (i) involved the targeting of a vulnerable person, (ii) was motivated by hate or discrimination, or (iii) related to domestic abuse.
10. Where the applicant has previously come to adverse police attention, e.g., been arrested or subject of a criminal investigation, but the matter has not resulted in a criminal conviction or caution, a case-by-case assessment will be made that takes into consideration the following factors.
  - (a) Number of allegations.
  - (b) Severity of allegations.
  - (c) Credibility of the allegations including whether irrefutable evidence exists to show them to be false or malicious.
  - (d) Reason for the matters not being progressed.
  - (e) Age of the subject at the material time.
  - (f) Amount of time that has passed since the matters being considered.
11. Membership of a proscribed organisation or other group or association that has aims and objectives that are contrary to the Code of Ethics and Standards of Professional Behaviour as set down within schedule 2 of the Police (Conduct) Regulations 2020, will result in vetting clearance being refused.
12. In assessing information and intelligence revealed during the vetting process the FVU applies the following two-stage test:
  - (a) Are there reasonable grounds for suspecting that the applicant, a family member or other relevant associate
    - i. is or has been involved in criminal activity?

- ii. has financial vulnerabilities (applicant only)?
- iii. is, or has been, subject to any adverse information?

(b) If so, is it appropriate, in all the circumstances, to decline vetting clearance?

13. For those employed by the force and subject of disciplinary proceedings where an allegation is proven but a sanction short of dismissal is given, the individual's vetting clearance is automatically reviewed by the FVU. The possibilities arising from review are in respect of continuing vetting clearance are (i) granted, (ii) granted with conditions, (iii) downgraded, or (iv) declined. Insofar as the last option is concerned, currently there is no defined statutory gateway available to dismiss a police officer or special constable who cannot achieve even the lowest level of RV. That is a matter on which the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) have engaged the Home Office on, as part of His Majesty's Government rapid review into the process of police dismissals.

## 5. Vetting Demand and Performance

### 5.1 Applications and Renewals

1. Given the additional demand stemming from both the Police Uplift Programme (PUP) and Force Contact Centre (FCC), the number of applications processed by the FVU has increased by 26% in 2022 [from 3000 to 3783 applications] when compared to the previous year. Of those applications last year, 1509 were in support of the PUP and 512 attributable to the FCC. The table below shows the demand against force vetting levels.

Level	Year 2021	Year 2022	Variance	Percentage
RV	1761	2548	+ 787	+ 44.6%
MV	123	237	+ 114	+ 92.6%
NPPV	1116	998	- 118	- 11.8%
<b>Total</b>	3000	3783	+ 783	+ 26.1%

2. The 92% increase in MV clearances is attributable to the FVU's continued review of designated posts across the force, assigning such clearance levels to a greater number of posts within the Public Protection and Serious Crime Directorate (PPSCD) as a means of applying additional assurance to the integrity, reliability and potential for

financial vulnerability of individuals with access to sensitive police premises, information, intelligence, financial and operational assets.

3. Working towards a specific recommendation within the HMICFRS inspection report, the FVM is presently developing a structured plan that will deliver a review of all posts throughout GMP that will require MV (and where necessary additional complementary or higher levels of clearance) where the risk of potential compromise of assets is high, or the risk of serious damage to the force is substantial. It is anticipated that this review with associated processing of all identified posts requiring an upgrade to their level of vetting clearance will be completed by 31<sup>st</sup> October 2023.
4. To future proof the activity set out at para. three above, the FVM has begun liaison with GMP Human Resources (HR) to develop a system whereby all designated posts are marked accordingly within the force's establishment roll. Such flagging will ensure the FVU is notified when a conditional offer is made to an applicant, and this will provide a sustainable solution for ensuring that individuals entering designated posts will always hold the requisite higher level of vetting clearance from the very outset.
5. The above activity also responds to the HMICFRS's criticism within its national report that none of the forces they inspected had linked their HR and vetting case management systems (CMS's). Developing a flagging system within GMP's establishment roll will act as an interim position until the commercial supplier of the Core-Vet CMS used by nearly all forces, including GMP, develop an application programme interface (API), which is needed before this software can integrate with any separate HR database.

## **5.2 Refusals**

1. Naturally, with an effective regime, not all applications will result in vetting clearance and refusals will necessarily follow where individuals are assessed as a security risk. The tables below, show the show the number of vetting applications for police officers and the Special Constabulary processed by the FVU for the calendar year 2003.
2. In respect of police officers, 8% of candidates [113 individuals] were refused vetting clearance at the point their applications were initially processed. Of those individuals, 57% appealed [64 individuals] and of those, 88% were unsuccessful in securing vetting clearance [56 individuals]. In total, taking the appeal procedure into consideration, 7% of police officer applicants [106 individuals] were refused vetting clearance.

Police Officers								
Gender	Total	Percentage	Successful 1st Application	Appealed	Appeal Unsuccessful	Appeal Successful	Total Successful	Percentage
Male	843	59%	768	48	44	4	772	92%
Female	592	41%	554	16	12	3	557	94%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1435</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1322</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1329</b>	<b>93%</b>
Ethnicity	Total	Percentage	Successful	Appealed	Appeal Unsuccessful	Appeal Successful	Total Successful	Percentage
White	1202	84%	1130	36	30	5	1135	94%
BAME	222	15%	182	28	26	2	184	83%
Not disclosed	11	1%	10	0	0	0	10	91%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1435</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1323</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1330</b>	<b>93%</b>

3. In respect of Special Constabulary applicants, the proportion of vetting refusals was far greater when compared to police officers. 25% of candidates [18 individuals] were refused vetting clearance at the point their applications were initially processed. Of those individuals, 50% appealed [9 individuals] and of those, 78% were unsuccessful in securing vetting clearance [7 individuals]. In total, taking the appeal procedure into consideration, 22% of police officer applicants [16 individuals] were refused vetting clearance.

Special Constabulary								
Gender	Total	Percentage	Successful 1st Application	Appealed	Appeal Unsuccessful	Appeal Successful	Total Successful	Percentage
Male	49	66%	35	8	7	1	36	73%
Female	25	34%	21	1	0	1	22	88%
<b>Total</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>78%</b>
Ethnicity	Total	Percentage	Successful	Appealed	Appeal Unsuccessful	Appeal Successful	Total Successful	Percentage
White	60	81%	45	7	5	2	47	78%
BAME	14	19%	11	2	2	0	11	79%
Not disclosed	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>78%</b>

### 5.3 Workforce Police National Database (PND) check

1. On 18<sup>th</sup> January 2023, the Home Office announced that all police forces must check their workforce against national databases to identify if anyone had ‘slipped through the net.’ That essentially meant that forces need to provide assurance, by checking their workforce against national databases, to satisfy themselves that where police

officers, staff and volunteers have (a) been convicted of a criminal offence and / or (b) have been otherwise indexed to adverse information e.g., as a suspect, both (i) an appropriate vetting security clearance decision has been made and (ii) proper criminal and / or disciplinary investigations have been undertaken.

2. In response to the announcement by the Home Office, a decision was taken by the NPCC that all police officers, staff and volunteers in England and Wales will be checked against the PND to identify any intelligence or allegations that need further investigation. The PND includes information from custody records, crime records, intelligence records, domestic and child abuse records and known criminal entity records (e.g., Organised Crime Groups (OCGs), County Lines investigations and Modern Slavery investigations).
3. On 14<sup>th</sup> February 2023, GMP supplied its entire applicable workforce data, which consisted of more than thirteen thousand records, to the PND service provider. That data has in turn now been washed through all PND records and GMP has since received its return, which by in large, given the experience of a foreign force pilot project, will contain false positives. Those return PND records will now be subject of analysis by a dedicated sensitive intelligence team, uplifted into the PSB, for the very purpose of undertaking this project work.
4. Given that set out in para. three above, the checking of the police workforce data against PND is not an instantaneous transaction, nor is the analysis of the information provided and it will take GMP, as with every other force, several months to determine whether they have any persons serving with them who present as a concern and who must be subject of further enquiry and where appropriate, intervention e.g., (i) criminal investigation, (ii) disciplinary investigation, (iii) a vetting clearance review, or (iv) local management information.
5. The national deadline for completion of this project is 29<sup>th</sup> September 2023 and thereafter, together with all other forces throughout England and Wales, GMP will publish the results in line with an associated NPCC publication strategy.

## **6. Conclusion Summary**

1. From a force HMICFRS self-assessment governance perspective, of the nine recommendations applicable to forces (as opposed to national policing bodies), GMP is presently reporting that four recommendations have been met and the remaining

five will be met (or will likely be met), before the deadline set by the inspectorate.

There are no recommendations where GMP has assessed that they will not be met in time for the HMICFRS deadline. Of the two AFIs, one has already been achieved, whilst the other will not be met by the deadline because a commercial software provider solution needs to provide a resolution and that is an issue common to nearly every force and is such is a matter on which the NPCC Vetting portfolio on behalf of policing nationally is progressing.