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Title:	Violence Harm Assessment (VHA) Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) document
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Summary:	Standard Operating Procedure to provide clear guidance around the VHA which includes definitions, governance, data protection and the sharing of information.
Branch/ OCU:	MO2 - Met Intelligence
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Introduction

1. This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) relates to the Violence Harm Assessment (VHA) and sets out ownership, governance and principles of the VHA.
2. The VHA is used to identify and risk assess individuals involved in violence in London. It is an internal MPS intelligence tool used to tackle the most harmful and violent offenders.

Application of this policy

3. This SOP applies to all police officers and police staff who use or are aware of the VHA. This includes the extended police family and those working voluntarily or under contract to the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) or the Commissioner who must be cognizant of, and are required to comply with, all relevant Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) policy and associated procedures.

Purpose & Necessity of the VHA

4. It measures the harm that violent individuals in London pose, by scoring them for violence and weapons offences and associated intelligence. This provides a single score that allows an assessment of the risk they pose.
5. By using the VHA the MPS will be able to prioritise, focus and direct resources to deal with individuals who pose the greatest risk of violence in London. However, being on VHA does not mandate or guarantee action against an individual.

6. The VHA supports the MPS plan: *A New Met for London*.¹

Use and disclosure

7. The VHA will only be used for official police purposes, set out under VHA Guidance & Processes below, as notified to the Information Commissioner under the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR. A Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) has been produced for the VHA.
8. The VHA is an intelligence only tool which has the most violent individuals in London on it. As such the MPS will not proactively and explicitly inform any member of the public that they feature on the VHA as this could undermine and prejudice the lawful policing purpose of the VHA which is to reduce violence in London. This could happen in a number of ways:
- i. If an individual knows they are or are not on the VHA this may impact on their behaviour and result in more offending.
 - ii. The VHA may be seen by some as a recognition of status and an individual who is not on the VHA may seek to commit acts of violence which would result in them then being placed on it.
 - iii. If a person knows they are on the VHA, and therefore potentially more likely to be prioritised for policing activity, they may accelerate their offending before they are subject to police intervention.
 - iv. An individual may seek to find out if they are on the VHA as a way to confirm if police know about their offending.
 - v. If an individual knows they are on the VHA they may be more vigilant and circumspect about their offending therefore frustrating police activity.
9. A number of these individuals are likely to have police enforcement or operational activity undertaken against them and this would be undermined if an individual knew they were on the VHA.
10. The VHA will be used to help identify those who should be prioritised for further action, and therefore is not relevant unused material. The material that has been inputted into the VHA to generate the prioritisation would be relevant unused material and that would require scheduling. That said, CPS should be informed that the VHA was used to form part of the case and this would be done on the Disclosure Management Document (DMD).

¹ [A New Met for London](#)

11. Information about an individual being on the VHA will not be used as evidence at Court. Under no circumstances should the VHA be disclosed at court in any form, unless explicitly ordered by the court.
12. All Right of Access Requests (RoAR) under the Data Protection Act 2018 in relation to a member of the public asking if they are on the VHA, or Freedom of Information Act (FoIA) requests in relation to the VHA, should be directed to Met Intelligence via the MO2 Nominals and Central Tasking Team
[MO2Mailbox- .NominalsandCentralTasking@met.police.uk](mailto:MO2Mailbox-.NominalsandCentralTasking@met.police.uk).
- 14 Any decision to confirm if an individual is on the VHA will be considered on a case by case basis in line with the statutory exemptions.

Intelligence Requirement, Inclusion Criteria & Review

15. There are clear criteria for selection and retention for all individuals on the VHA. To be in scope of the VHA the offence types under consideration in a rolling three-year period are:

- Homicide
- Attempted Murder
- Lethal Barrelled Gun Crime Discharges
- Knife Injury
- GBH
- Non-weapon enabled GBH
- Kidnap
- Affray/Violent Disorder
- Gun Possession
- Knife Possession
- Robbery Personal Property
- Threats to Kill
- Possession of acid/ammonia
- Rape
- Theft Person

16. To appear on the VHA an individual must fulfil the following criteria:

- Included in at least four separate reports, two of which must be a crime report.
- OR**
- Included in three crime reports where the harm score of those reports is 2500 or greater.

AND

- One of the violent crimes, where the individual is a named suspect in the reports, must have been committed in the last twelve months unless the individual has been in custody.

17. In the case of rape and theft person offences the individual must be a named suspect for at least one of the other categories.
18. Offences involving domestic abuse are generally discounted as the VHA is designed to focus on street-based violence.
19. Crime report scores reduce by a third after every 12-month period. Intelligence scores are based on the grading of the intelligence. The score applied to intelligence reports follows a standardised weighting methodology linked to the level of confidence in the information. Scores are given to each crime type and then given a separate score based on whether the intelligence is high graded intelligence (e.g. B CHIS) or low graded intelligence (e.g. E Crimestoppers). (<https://www.college.police.uk/app/intelligence-management/intelligence-report>)
20. Intelligence searches are conducted on the same crime types that have occurred in the preceding six months to identify relevant intelligence to be included. This will ensure that only recent and relevant intelligence impacts the aggregated score for the VHA.
21. To further prioritise the individuals, intelligence searches are also conducted on robbery, knife and firearms intelligence for the last six months to identify relevant intelligence to be included. To avoid duplication, intelligence concerning individuals being involved in specific lethal barrel discharges, knife injury or robbery offences are checked against CRIS reports and are only included if they are not named on the relevant CRIS report.
22. VHA individuals are matched with a number of other datasets, these include Emerald Wanted Offender Management System (EWMS), Outstanding Named Suspect data on CRIS, County Line Intelligence Collection Matrix (CLICM), CRIS Violence Victim data (stabbings and lethal barrel discharges), Prison Intelligence Notification System (PINS) and the Integrated Offender Management (IOM) cohort.
23. Data collected on individuals includes personal details, such as name, date of birth, PNCID, borough of residency, ethnicity, gender and whether they are in prison or in the community, as well as links to gangs, whether the individual has been a victim of stabbing or lethal barrel discharge, reported missing, linked to County Lines and wanted by police or have a Judicial Restriction imposed.
24. Met Intelligence will refresh the data on the VHA every quarter. Data will be in Microsoft Excel and will be stored on MPS BOX. The data will identify the individuals who meet the criteria for inclusion on the VHA and will allow them to be prioritised according to threat, harm and risk.

25. The VHA uses a hybrid scoring method using the Cambridge Harm Index (CHI) and the Office for National Statistics (ONS), both of which are based on sentencing levels. The use of the hybrid scoring ensures that all of the offending types and aggravating factors are incorporated onto the VHA. This is based on the feature codes of the crime report.

On the Cambridge Harm index for example a robbery offence is scored the same whether it is a robbery with a firearm or knife or whether the robbery is non weapon related and involves school children over small amounts of money. Due to this we used CHI score for non-weapon robbery and ONS for weapon enabled robbery.

26. CRIS scores reduce by a third after every 12-month period. Intelligence scores are based on CRIMINT evaluation codes.

27. The VHA also contains additional information from the following MPS indices CRIMINT (including intelligence relating to gang association), CRIS, MERLIN, and EWMS, including details of CBOs and other judicial restrictions based on PNC, PINS and EWMS data.

28. Should an individual appear on the VHA and, for whatever reason (eg local knowledge or professional judgement), it is believed by a local Basic Command Unit (BCU) that they should no longer remain on it, their details and the rationale for removal should be sent to Met Intelligence via the MO2 Nominals and Central Team Mailbox for review and removal.

VHA Guidance & Processes

29. The VHA contains a range of information on violent, high harm individuals in London. This information can be filtered to the area where they reside to assist in local disruption, safeguarding, sensitive high-level research and threat to life incidents.

30. A range of policing options which could be considered in managing the risk posed by individuals on the VHA is available on the College of Policing website at the following link. [Disrupting serious and organised criminals – menu of tactics | College of Policing](#)

31. In addition, if required, further filtering can be carried out on the crime types scored to allow police resources to be prioritised depending on national or local priorities.

32. The BCU Detective Superintendent – Head of CID will have oversight of the individuals on the VHA at a local level. They will have responsibility as to how the VHA is used to manage the risks posed by the individuals on it, as well as a tool to prioritise resources.
33. BCUs will be able to request assistance from specialist units through the local tasking process to support frontline policing to tackle and disrupt VHA individuals if required. Use of such operational purposes will be governed by the relevant policies and procedures related to the specific policing action decided appropriate for an individual.
34. In addition, Met Intelligence, Specialist Crime and other police units such as Roads and Transport Policing Command (RTPC) and Territorial Support Group (TSG) are able to use the VHA to identify individuals who are involved in specific offences.

Under 18s on the VHA

35. The VHA can be filtered to identify those individuals on the VHA who are children (under 18 years old). The MPS Safeguarding Children Policy and the London Child Exploitation Operating Protocol 2021 require that where a child comes to police notice and a safeguarding concern is identified, a pre-assessment checklist (PAC) should be completed, which in turn is shared with partners for a safeguarding response. It is likely that any child that features on the VHA based on the crime types involved will have a presence on Merlin with multiple checklists completed.
36. A child featuring on the VHA may indicate that they are at an increased risk of harm based on the crime types involved. Any activity conducted around that child must seek to mitigate the risk to the child in addition to any enforcement activity.
37. Children on the VHA will likely feature in other bespoke meetings locally and with other children who have been identified as being vulnerable. Whatever forum the child is discussed in, the safeguarding response needs to be comprehensive, recorded and involve a multi-agency response.
38. Wherever information in relation to a child is shared with agencies outside of the MPS it is the intelligence and information on the child which should be shared and not the fact that they are on the VHA.
39. It will be for the Head of CID on each BCU to decide if any further or enhanced safeguarding activity should take place in relation to children who

feature within the BCU related subset. Below are a number of options which should be considered, especially if a child is going to be considered for enforcement activity. The list is not exhaustive, nor are the options mutually exclusive.

- Review of current safeguarding activity/plan to ensure all records are joined up and give a holistic overview of safeguarding risks.
- Review if individual is known in another forums (such as Multi Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) or other meeting supporting vulnerable children.
- Consider a strategy meeting and assigning a named lead identified to coordinate a comprehensive safeguarding plan (if one is not already in place).
- Record the outcome and subsequent plan from the strategy meeting.
- Multi Agency family engagement.
- Ensure 3rd party referrals are completed.
- Full research package completed to establish any concerns around exploitation.
- Ensure relevant proactive/safeguarding officers attend the MACE meeting to establish common themes that may assist in prevention, intervention and diversion.

Access & Training

40. The Met Intelligence - MO2 Nominals and Central Tasking team will manage the administration, auditing and access of the VHA.
41. Access to the VHA can be authorised by a Superintendent/Band B for officers or staff members that require access for a policing purpose. Those requiring access will predominantly be intelligence teams, BCU officers and staff, which could include CID and Schools Teams, and other specialist units who have a key role around violent individuals.
42. All VHA users must have completed the information and security package titled 'Managing Information', prior to applying for access to the VHA.
43. New users are also required to read the VHA SOP, sign the User Undertaking Form, agreeing to abide by the protocols and have it authorised by a Superintendent or police staff equivalent (Band B).
44. In supporting an officer/member of staff's access to the VHA, the following points should be considered by the applicant's authorising officer/member of staff.
 - The rationale for access.
 - The role of the applicant – (eg. are they based within a team / unit which deals with violence related crime).

- The frequency that the applicant will require access to the VHA (eg. if it is a one-off occasion and therefore could Met Intelligence be asked to interrogate the VHA on the applicant's behalf?).
45. The completed form should be sent electronically to the MO2 Nominals and Central Tasking team. This form will be recorded and will be made available to the DPS in the event of any investigation into potential misuse of the system.
46. Where the requirement for access to the VHA no longer exists, it is both the User and Supervisor's responsibility to ensure that VHA permissions are removed and they should contact, by email, the MO2 Nominals and Central Tasking Team MO2Mailbox-.NominalsandCentralTasking@met.police.uk. If a user fails to comply and subsequently uses their VHA access without authority, they will be committing a disciplinary offence.
47. Access to the VHA will be withdrawn if:
- A user changes roles that no longer requires access to the VHA or is no longer covered by the existing permission.
 - If a user is identified by MO5 as not accessing the VHA within a 6-month period. If a user attempts to access the VHA after the 6-month period, they must re-apply for access.
48. MO2 Nominal and Tasking team have responsibility for the removal of access to the VHA.

System Security, Storage & Retention

49. The VHA is stored on MPS BOX. BOX provides strict security and auditing capabilities. Access is only authorised for officers and staff that require access to the VHA based on their current role.
50. The most recent VHA will be stored on BOX and will be overwritten every quarter when the VHA is refreshed.
51. Older VHA datasets will be archived and kept in storage on the shared drive for three years. There will be no access to the archived datasets other than for selected staff within Met Intelligence. Data is kept for three years for operational or academic research purposes, as well as equality impact assessment purposes.
52. Access to the VHA via BOX will be as 'read only' permission. Under no circumstances should personal, individual records (part or full) of the VHA be

made on a separate document or an informal, local record of any part of the VHA be created. The VHA should not be downloaded, printed or copied.

53. In the exceptional circumstance that a user requires a print or electronic copy that contains data from the VHA, such as if a court ordered a copy of the VHA, authority to print/copy must be obtained from the Met Intelligence VHA superintendent lead via the MO2 Nominals and Central Tasking mailbox. Should this be authorised, any printed version of the VHA (or part of it) must be handled as 'Official - Sensitive' material. The copy itself should not be copied, and its movement must to be tracked and fully recorded. If an electronic copy is made, it must not be stored on personal storage (devices or files). In line with MPS [Records Management Policy](#), any copy made should be destroyed at the first possible opportunity and a record made of this fact.

Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) & Equality Impact Assessment

54. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (the Act) the MPS have a Public Sector Equality Duty which is in place to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

55. In order to do this the act sets out three specific aims which must be achieved. These are:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.
- Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

56. In order to meet these aims and duties the MPS have in place an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) to assess the equality impact against those on and affected by the VHA. This assessment aims to identify disadvantages suffered by any individual and/or group safeguarded by a protected characteristic, and by those who are not. It is a living document which will allow the MPS to, where necessary, revise current VHA arrangements, ensuring that equality considerations are an explicit part of the thinking and decision-making at every stage of the VHA.

57. The PSED and EIA are intended to be a continuous process and will ensure the VHA SOP and associated documents, processes and guidance are kept under regular review.

58. If any user of the VHA notices trends that suggest there is disproportionate effect or impact on people who share a protected characteristic, they should notify the Met Intelligence - MO2 Nominals and Central Tasking team as soon as practicable.

Governance & Audit

59. The MPS Director of Intelligence/DAC - Intelligence is responsible for the governance and oversight of the VHA data. The strategic governance of operational use of the VHA is Commander FLP - Violent Crime Lead.

60. All VHA users must have good reason and be able to justify its usage solely for a policing purpose.

61. VHA users will be subject to audit. It remains of paramount importance that when using the VHA every action must have appropriate justification.

62. The Met Intelligence - MO2 Nominals and Central Tasking team in conjunction with MO5 Covert Governance will conduct audits on all VHA users.

63. Audits will monitor any attempts to download or print the VHA, which will have been recorded in the system logs of BOX (background data).

64. Failure to comply with this policy will result in the immediate removal of the VHA permissions and consideration for performance or disciplinary measures to be undertaken.

Roles & Responsibilities

65. **VHA Owner – (MPS Director of Intelligence/DAC - Intelligence)** – responsible for the governance and oversight of the VHA data.

66. **Commander FLP – Violent Crime Lead** – responsible for the strategic governance of the operational use of the VHA.

67. **Met Intelligence - MO2 VHA Coordinator (Superintendent)** – Provides support to VHA Owner, Coordinates the VHA within the MPS, responsible for:

- VHA SOP
- VHA DPIA

- Sign off of VHA FOIA requests
- VHA EIA
- VHA FAQ's
- Gathers and collates quarterly feedback from BCU Neighbourhood Policing Team (NPT) Superintendent for inclusion into the VHA Equality Impact Assessment (EIA).

68. **BCU Detective Superintendent – Head of CID** – ensures this policy is effectively and fairly operated within a BCU, within the terms of GDPR. Responsible for:

- Lead the operational delivery for enforcement and intervention activity against individuals on the VHA.
- Collating BCU VHA enforcement activity, intervention and results.
- Provide feedback to the CID Delivery Board regarding their VHA activities.

69. **BCU NPT Superintendent**

- Collating and gathering feedback, concerns and comments from BCU partners and community groups about the VHA, to ensure the ongoing PSED requirements are met as well as for inclusion on the EIA. Any feedback should be shared with Met Intelligence via the MSTeams VHA channel.

70. **The Lead analyst of Nominals and Central Tasking Team (MO2 - Band C)**

- Provides analytics and support for BCUs in relation to the VHA.
- Responsible for centrally scoring and managing the VHA.
- Central Met Intel will run daily search strings on CRIMINT for individuals on the VHA, who score 2500 or more, to identify any relevant intelligence that can be acted upon for enforcement or intervention.
- Central Met Intel to conduct weekly checks against EWMS and PINS to identify subject movement in and out of custody.

71. **Met Intelligence (MO2) - Local Intelligence Teams (LITs)**

- Will identify intelligence relating to individuals on the VHA which will be flagged to relevant BCU unit or local Grip and Pace meetings if particular threat, risk and harm is identified.
- Local Intelligence Teams (LITs) will also identify intelligence relating to individuals on the VHA which will be flagged up locally to BCU proactive Teams.

Partner Agencies & Sharing

72. VHA users must adhere to MPS Policy and Guidance. The MPS has a policy on the kind of information that can and can't be shared, and when. There are also processes to follow to ensure compliance with the law and policy, this

includes the recording of decisions in relation to the sharing of information. VHA users should be aware of the METSEC-Code (The MPS Security Manual) and Information Sharing (IS) – MPS statement of intention policy.

73. The VHA is an internal intelligence tool and will not be shared with partners. Intelligence on individuals, on the VHA, can be shared on a case-by-case basis for a policing purpose or if there is associated risk or harm through other legislation (*Crime and Disorder Act 1998*) or under local Data Sharing Agreements (DSA). The attached link will provide access to the MPS Share Policy which will provide guidance in relation to case-by-case sharing – (<http://mpsweb.intranet.mps/support/information-management/share-met-information-policy/>)

74. Where the sharing of information with partners takes place, it is the underlying intelligence and information on an individual which should be shared, not the fact that they are on the VHA.

75. Where regular meetings with partners take place intelligence/information underpinning the VHA can be shared on a case-by-case basis. This could be to assist with a joint police/partner response to manage that individual or to offer help, support or guidance to exit criminality if that person is at risk (for example, through Community Safety Partnerships or third party organisations). If information/intelligence is shared and there is no statutory basis to share personal data, a Data Sharing Agreement (DSA) if not already in place, will need to be considered.

76. If advice or guidance is required in relation to a DSA then assistance should be sought from the MPS ISSU.

77. A Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) and Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) are in place to ensure community engagement and impact is considered and documented as well as to protect the data which is being processed within the VHA.

78. VHA users **must not** disseminate the list of individuals contained within the VHA outside of the MPS. Any questions in relation to this direction should be directed to either the Met Intelligence VHA lead or the MO2 Nominals and Central Tasking team.

Reporting & Oversight

79. CID delivery board

To make sure that there is governance and accountability of the use of the VHA by operational policing, and that it is being utilised to manage offending and reduce

identified risks, the VHA will be an agenda item on the CID delivery board chaired by Commander FLP – Violence Lead.

80. MPS VHA Webpage

Information in relation to the VHA and a set of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) will be available via the VHA public facing website (<https://www.met.police.uk/police-forces/metropolitan-police/areas/about-us/about-the-met/violence-harm-assessment>).

Version	Date	Additions/Modifications	Prepared/Revised by
Version 1.0		VHA SOP	Jon Mott
Version 1.1	01/06/2021	VHA /SOP	
Version 2.0	17/05/2022	1 st draft - VHA Policy/SOP update	DSu Bill Wright
Version 2.1	08/06/2022	2 nd draft – VHA Policy/SOP update	DSu Bill Wright
Version 2.2	05/09/2023	3 rd draft - VHA Policy/SOP update with comments from LH, AC, SS	DSu Bill Wright
Version 2.3	05/09/2023	4 nd draft - VHA Policy/SOP update to reflect VHA DPIA review and changes	DSu Bill Wright
Version 2.4	24/12/2023	5 nd draft - VHA Policy/SOP update to reflect review by LC and Legal service review and changes	DSu Bill Wright
Version 2.5	17/01/2024	6 th draft - VHA Policy/SOP – For final sign off	DSu Bill Wright

Appendix 1

VIOLENCE HARM ASSESSMENT ACCESS

USER UNDERTAKING FORM

I understand the provisions and implications of this SOP.

I understand that by signing this user undertaking form I am agreeing to abide by the content of the SOP and failure to do so may result in immediate removal of my account and possible misconduct investigations.

Reason For Access	
Full Name (applicant)	
Warrant / Pay Number	
Post	
Date	

Supervisor Authorising (Superintendent or Equivalent)	
Warrant / Pay Number	
Date of Authorisation	

Once these documents have been electronically signed by the applicant, please email the document to your Superintendent or equivalent (Band B) who will then complete the authorisation part of this form and email it to both the 'MO2 Mailbox – Nominals and Central Tasking' mail group MO2Mailbox-.NominalsandCentralTasking@met.police.uk