

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT – COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

INTRODUCTION

1. The purpose of this report is to seek Members' approval to the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) carried out in respect of the Force / Police Authority Community Engagement Strategy.

BACKGROUND

2. Humberside Police Authority, along with many other public authorities, is required to carry out Equality Impact Assessments on all (existing and new) policies and functions. The original duty was created by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and has been extended to cover disability and gender through the introduction of subsequent legislation.
3. An Equality Impact Assessment is a way of systematically and thoroughly assessing, and consulting on, the effects that a proposed policy is likely to have on people, due to factors such as their ethnicity, disability, gender, age, religion and belief, and sexual orientation. It can also be used as a way of estimating the likely equality implications of existing functions or policies on people from different backgrounds.
4. This Equality Impact Assessment was conducted earlier this year as the joint community engagement strategy for the Force and Authority was emerging yet this EIA is not limited to that particular strategy; rather it takes a more holistic approach to methods of consultation / engagement generally and the potential impact on communities.

OPTIONS / RISK

4. The vision of the Police Authority is to ensure policing services are delivered with a commitment to the principles of social tolerance, civility and equality in all its forms. As such there is a business and moral obligation to conducting EIA's as well as statutory reasons.
5. Annex A contains the EIA assessment relating to the joint community engagement strategy – a key function for both the Authority and Force as understanding what concerns and expectations the public have about policing is essential if we are to deliver an outstanding police service that is 'in tune' with public needs. If this element of our business is right it should impact positively on the wider 'confidence and satisfaction' agenda. This is a generic impact assessment and considers the six strands of diversity – ethnicity, disability, gender, age, religion and belief, sexual orientation.

6. The purpose of this particular impact assessment is to ensure that the Force and Authority's processes and practices for engaging the public in policing are fair, equitable and fit for purpose. It also helps the Authority fulfil its new statutory function to promote equality and diversity within the police force maintained for its area and within the authority. Elsewhere on this agenda is information about 'confidence and satisfaction' and 'citizen focus' and the drivers of these are many and varied but it is almost irrefutable that the way we (Force and Authority) engage with local communities, irrespective of their difference will be fundamental in raising this key performance indicator over the coming months and years. Indeed the joint Force / Authority Community Engagement Strategy recognises this point, as its key success measure is *'to see improvements in public satisfaction, confidence and reassurance with the agreed measure of public confidence recognised as the British Crime Survey'*.
7. The recent extensive roll-out of neighbourhood policing and the recruitment of Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) provides an opportunity for the Force to develop greater working partnerships between the police and communities to help create greater trust and confidence and involve the community in problem solving initiatives. The concept of community engagement is a pre-requisite to successful community / neighbourhood policing and the joint community engagement strategy provides the framework for frontline divisional neighbourhood policing teams to develop their own particular priorities and tactics. This will vary dependent on local circumstances and the neighbourhood officers' handbook (praised by HMIC) is a complementary tool for practitioners to assist in the deployment of the most appropriate tactics to engage the public in policing. With confidence seemingly falling across the Humberside Policing area we must ask the question whether this is due to ineffective engagement methods or simply not recognising and capturing those initiatives and tactics that yield positive results. This applies irrespective of whether someone is perceived as different due to ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation etc.
8. The Citizen Focus agenda and the new Policing Pledge can be seen as an extension of community engagement and provides further opportunities to better understand diverse communities and to build police service delivery through the eyes of the public. Indeed the policing pledge highlights the need for 'fair access to policing services'; 'attendance at regular public meetings to agree your priorities'; provision of information on local crime and policing issues' and if seamlessly integrated into the Citizen Focus agenda should see a cultural step change in the delivery of services irrespective of 'difference'. Inculcating equality and diversity within the wider Citizen Focus agenda, (as a sort of 'trojan horse' concept) should provide mutual benefits for both.
9. This EIA did not include any detailed assessment of community engagement at divisional level – merely the overarching joint community engagement strategy. Gaps were revealed in respect of monitoring data being decidedly patchy in relation to several strands of diversity, namely those where there is no statutory requirement (yet) such as religion / belief and sexual orientation although it is acknowledged that these can be extremely sensitive areas. In addition it was difficult to determine what specifically will be done at a force / authority level to connect and engage on a sustained basis with under represented groups. This is

nothing new and the Authority and Force should consider how resources will be deployed to engage with those groups whose voices are not properly heard.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10. There are potential additional financial implications directly associated with the approval of this report. If the recommendations are accepted this could lead to additional investment as both the Authority and Force strive to purposefully engage with those communities currently not (adequately) heard. In addition there could be additional time expended to understand and evaluate which engagement methods deliver the most fruitful results.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

10. As mentioned above at paragraph 2 there are legal imperatives driving the need for public bodies to conduct Equality Impact Assessments. Reports of this nature underline the fact that the Authority takes its general and specific duties seriously.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

11. These are covered in the main body of the report and Annex A.

CHILDREN'S ACT IMPLICATIONS

12. Monitoring of data, both as part of the production of the EIA and subsequently revealed that satisfaction with children and young people is less than the average and young people from an ethnic minority background (based on nationally available data) are more likely to be approached by the police and have a more negative view of the police than their white counterparts. The Children's Act suggests that the Authority should be knowledgeable of the age groups and diversity of children and young people within its area. The decision by Members to approve the recommendations in this report should enhance the Authority's commitment to the Every Child Matters agenda by ensuring the six strands of diversity (including age and ethnicity) are more robustly considered as part of the an inclusive community engagement strategy.

CONCLUSIONS

13. This report and Annex A demonstrates the Police Authority's commitment to meeting its statutory and moral duties to actively consider the extent to which its policies and functions (current or proposed) have any adverse impact on different groups of people. This EIA suggests some gaps that need to be filled in terms of community engagement by the Police Authority and the Force and the recommendations below should aid this process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

14. On the basis of the above Members are asked to approve:
 - (i) The equality impact assessment set out in Annex A

- (ii) That the Authority should receive details of sub-force community engagement activity with diverse groups to better understand 'what works'. This could be a discrete part of the usual Force community engagement report provided at each Communities and Partnerships Committee.
- (iii) That the Communities and Partnerships Committee actively monitors the delivery of the joint Community Engagement Strategy to identify good practice.
- (iv) That the Equality and Diversity agenda should be more closely integrated with the Citizen Focus agenda as they should mutually reinforce each other. This will assist the attainment of improved levels of confidence and satisfaction as well as help deliver a more representative workforce.
- (v) The Communities and Partnerships Committee should monitor, when finalised, the Humberside Police response to the new Equality Standard for the police service (expected April 2009) which will focus on outcomes and delivering best value.
- (vi) A diversity monitoring report capturing several aspects of policing should feature on the agenda of the Communities and Partnership Committee at least every 6 months.
- (vii) That the Police Authority's emerging Community Engagement Strategy addresses the issues highlighted in this EIA on behalf of the Police Authority.

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Background Papers:	None		