

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS AND DIVERSITY COMMITTEE – 4 MARCH 2010

**UPDATE REPORT ON THE EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION (EHCR)
FORMAL INQUIRY INTO DISABILITY RELATED HARASSMENT**

REPORT BY THE CHIEF CONSTABLE

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To provide members with an update in respect of the Equality and Human Rights Commission's Formal Inquiry into Disability related harassment.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In December 2009 the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) announced its intention to conduct a Formal Inquiry into disability related harassment in England, Scotland and Wales and how public authorities are protecting disabled people's human rights to live free from violence and abuse.
- 1.2 The draft terms of reference were expected to be published "early 2010" after which the Inquiry would commence. To date, the Terms of Reference are yet to be received.
- 1.3 It is anticipated that the Inquiry will gather and examine evidence from disabled people and others who have been affected by disability related harassment and from public authorities on what steps they are taking to tackle the issue.
- 1.4 At the end of the Inquiry, public authorities found not to be doing enough to tackle the problem and to protect the human rights of disabled people could face legal action to force them to comply with their legal obligations.
- 1.5 The EHRC has contacted public authorities reminding them of the requirement to review and update their Disability Equality Schemes by 4 December 2009.

2. MAIN FINDINGS OF THE LATEST DORSET POLICE EQUALITY SCHEME UPDATE

- 2.1 In relation to the requirement for public authorities to review and update their Disability Equality Scheme by 4 December 2009, the Force had already done this, having published a revised Combined Equality Scheme on 31 May 2009 following internal and external engagement and consultation.
- 2.2 Consultation was undertaken with the Disability Support Network members and all Independent Advisory Groups (IAGs). More specific advice was sought through the Central IAG.

- 2.3 The Force website has been updated with the new Scheme and the new three year action plan.
- 2.4 The disability section of the plan now contains 33 actions specifically relating to disability equality matters.
- 2.5 Between April and December 2009 Dorset Police recorded a total of 13 disability related hate incidents.
- 2.6 Dorset Police is a member of the two divisionally based Prejudice Free Groups, which comprise of statutory partners and third sector organisations. The aim of the partnerships is to provide a co-ordinated approach to build the confidence of communities to report hate incidents and crimes.
- 2.7 Work is currently underway to review the reporting procedures and raise awareness across the Force area. This includes a revision of the current self reporting forms and third party reporting forms, a review of appropriate alternative reporting centres and an awareness raising publicity campaign. It is anticipated that a launch of the new systems will take place in spring 2010.
- 2.8 The Force is due to commence a skills audit of its current IAG members in order to ensure that the groups provide as wide a representation of Dorset's diverse communities as practical. The audit will enable the Force to identify gaps in current membership, which will enable the Force to undertake positive action in the annual recruitment campaign commencing in September 2010.
- 2.9 During 2009 the Force has been improving accessibility for the deaf community. A number of pages on the Force website are now available in British Sign Language:
- How to contact the Force
 - The Policing Pledge
 - Hate Crimes and Incidents
 - Safer Neighbourhood Teams and what they do
 - Independent Advisory Groups
 - Employment
 - How to make a complaint
- 2.10 The Force website also enables individuals who have visual impairments to change the background colours for ease of reading. Access keys have been provided to enable people of different abilities and disabilities to easily navigate the around the site.
- 2.11 The Force is currently considering closer working with Disability Wessex to enable more engagement with disabled people across the county and give the force access to wider independent advice.

3. FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

- 3.1 The Force continues to develop its arrangements in relation to equality through the implementation of the Equality Standard which is the subject of a separate report to the Committee. The Force will continue to monitor the development of this inquiry and consider its implications within the wider equality agenda.
- 3.2 A further report will be brought to Members in due course.

4. RECOMMENDATION

4.1 Members are asked to note the content of this report

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