

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS AND DIVERSITY COMMITTEE – 4 MARCH 2010

UPDATE REPORT ON ENGAGEMENT WITH GYPSIES AND TRAVELLERS AND THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE REPORT ENTITLED ‘COMMON GROUND’

REPORT BY THE CHIEF CONSTABLE

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To provide members with an update regarding engagement with Gypsies and Travellers and delivery of the recommendations on the Common Ground report.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Members last received a report at their meeting on 24 July 2009 detailing the Common Ground Report recommendations relating specifically to the Police Service. At that meeting members asked to receive an updated report on progress in six months.
- 1.2 The purpose of the Commission for Racial Equality’s (CRE) inquiry was to explore whether local authorities, through their arrangements for planning, providing and managing sites, were promoting equal opportunities and good race relations, in line with their duty under the Race Relations Act. The Commission also explored the role of the police, in policing sites and managing unauthorised encampments. The findings were based on evidence from 236 local authorities, nine of which were selected for closer study, and from over 400 other organisations and individuals, including Gypsies, Irish Travellers and other members of the public, who responded to their call for evidence.
- 1.3 This report outlines the progress made in delivering those recommendations and gives an overview on current engagement activity.

2. PROGRESS UPDATE ON RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The report contained six recommendations relating specifically to the Police Service. These are detailed below with an update on progress and timescales for achievement (the original report recommendation numbers are shown).

Recommendation 55

Include Gypsies and Irish Travellers in mainstream and neighbourhood policing strategies, to promote race equality and good race relations.

Force Position

Divisions are currently in the process of reviewing their KINS (Key Individual Networks) to establish whether they are representative of their communities. This process will be aided by work being presently undertaken by the Community Engagement Department to develop a community profiling product. This product is intended to map geographic and 'virtual' communities and to assist Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNTs) with targeting their engagement and tactical activity. Gypsies and travellers will feature as key groups to try and map. Once communities are mapped, the next phase of the process will be to enhance understanding of different communities' needs and expectations via effective engagement. To support SNTs in the development of effective engagement activity, the Community Engagement Department is also working to develop engagement toolkits. These are intended to encourage SNTs to utilise a full range of innovative, bespoke engagement methods, tailored to reflect the needs and preferences of different communities. Members of the Gypsy, Traveller and Other Nomadic Peoples' Working Together Group are being approached to inform this process.

Recommendation 56

Target individual Gypsies and Irish Travellers suspected of anti-social behaviour and crime on public, private and unauthorised sites, and not whole communities, and work with people from these groups and local authorities to develop preventative measures.

Force Position

This guidance from the original report will be incorporated as part of the practice advice contained within engagement toolkits.

Recommendation 57

Treat Gypsies and Irish Travellers, both when they are victims and suspects, as members of the local community and in ways that strengthen their trust and confidence in the force.

Force Position

Again, this guidance will be incorporated within the engagement toolkits, which will seek to recommend ways in which staff can engage that result in increased trust and confidence.

In addition, the Gypsy, Traveller and Other Nomadic Peoples' Working Together Group has been consulted on the review of the alternative reporting sites for hate crime and asked for comment on the existing True Vision packs for self reporting. The involvement of members of the Group is enabling the Force to understand their needs and expectations and issues impacting on Gypsy Traveller communities, so that, in partnership, activity can be delivered to support individuals and communities.

Recommendation 58

Provide training for all relevant officers on Gypsies' and Irish Travellers' service needs, so that officers are able to do their jobs more effectively and promote good relations between all groups in the community they serve.

Force Position

In June 2009 the Force hosted two workshops on Gypsy and Traveller Communities. The aim of the workshops was to give delegates an awareness of the cultural and community issues faced within two very different groups and to provide an opportunity for delegates and panels to share experiences and understanding within their areas of work.

At present a review of Force Equality and Diversity training is being undertaken and this recommendation will be considered within that review. Any further training needs identified will be reported to the Strategic Diversity Board.

In the longer term, as community profiling work develops, it is anticipated that any further training needs identified can be incorporated into engagement toolkits or included in the training review outlined above.

Recommendation 59

Review formal and informal procedures for policing unauthorised encampments, to identify and eliminate potentially discriminatory practices and ensure that the procedures promote race equality and good race relations.

Force Position

Since the publication of the report, the Unlawful Encampments Policy has been equality impact assessed and reviewed in line with standard Dorset Police processes. In addition, the policy has been subject to further scrutiny and consideration from the Gypsy, Traveller and Other Nomadic Peoples' Working Together Group. As a result, a single-sheet guide to the police policy relating to unlawful encampments was designed and approved by the Group, the purpose being to provide a simple and more readily understandable overview for Gypsies and Travellers. The policy is due for review again in June of this year as part of the regular review process, which includes the completion of an equality impact assessment is standard practice.

Recommendation 60

Review the way policy is put into practice, to make sure organisations and individuals take a consistent approach, resources are used effectively and strategically, all procedures are formalised, and training needs are identified.

Gypsy Traveller Liaison Officers exist on both territorial divisions as subject matter specialists. These roles are intended to ensure that consistency, corporacy and professionalism are applied when staff interact with Gypsy Traveller groups. The monitoring of the occasions on which related policy is put into practice in relation to the considerations outlined above is an ongoing process. Due to the relatively low level of applicable occurrences locally, periodic review remains as an action for liaison officers, pending a suitable number of examples from which to seek to identify trends, themes or issues.

Individuals from Gypsy and Traveller communities continue to form a part of the delivery for Diversity Module 2, in which officers and staff are given the opportunity to understand the impact of policing and culture on diverse groups. Currently the possibility of student officers having placements with Gypsy and Traveller communities is being explored.

3. UPDATE ON ENGAGEMENT WITH GYPSIES AND TRAVELLERS

- 3.1 In 2008 Dorset Police in partnership with the Dorset Race Equality Council, established a group to work with the Force to understand the needs, fears and expectations of Gypsies, Travellers and other nomadic people.
- 3.2 The forum provides an opportunity for a two way flow of information between the Force and the members of the Gypsy and Traveller communities.
- 3.3 The meetings and actions flowing from them are intended to provide an opportunity to:
- Promote mutual understanding, communication and consultation between the two parties.
 - Support the police in ensuring that members of Gypsy and Traveller communities are listened to, understood, informed, protected and safe.
 - Encourage liaison between the police and 'hard to reach' members of society, specifically Gypsy and Traveller communities and young people.
 - To promote understanding of cultural differences and practices within these communities to give Dorset Police a greater chance to practice integrity, professionalism, fairness and respect when working with these communities.
 - To seek assistance and advice from members of the group regarding the impact of national or local events affecting these communities.
 - To provide assistance and independent advice, where requested, in relation to specific incidents, policy and/or procedure.
- 3.4 The group meets on a quarterly basis and provides an opportunity to discuss issues freely and members are permitted to air their views in an open environment so that the advice drawn from it is as representative as is possible.
- 3.5 As a result of issues raised by members of the group, it was agreed that the December 2009 meeting should focus purely on site issues. The Gypsy and Traveller Strategy Officer from Dorset County Council agreed to attend, discuss concerns and work with members to address issues where possible.
- 3.6 Members of the group were given the opportunity to raise issues of concern with the Strategy Officer prior to the meeting. Key points were identified and members provided advice as to how the issues could be addressed. There were taken back by the Strategy Officer to Dorset County Council for their consideration.
- 3.7 Following this dedicated meeting, in view of the number and complexity of the site-related issues, members of the group are now trialling a separate sub-group with a specific focus on site issues. The first meeting of this group took place on 17 February 2010.
- 3.8 In order to keep the Committee updated, it is proposed that a further report on progress be provided to members in a year's time.

4. RECOMMENDATION

4.1 Members are asked to note the content of this report

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