

Cumbria Police Authority

Communities, Equality and Diversity Committee

14 April 2010

Agenda Item No.

Report by the Acting Chief Executive

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF POLICE AUTHORITY POLICIES

BACKGROUND

Under the race, disability and gender equality duties, the Authority must assess its policies and procedures to see how relevant they are to:

- eliminating unlawful discrimination
- promoting equality of opportunity
- promote good community relations between people from different groups.

In its Equality Scheme, the Authority has committed to assessing the impact of its policies. The aim of the impact assessment process is to ensure that our policies/procedures/ guidance do not unjustifiably discriminate against groups or individuals; increase the quality of service to all our communities and comply with existing legislation. An impact assessment is a review and consultation exercise to establish whether or not a policy/procedure/guidance, or a particular part of it, has or may have an adverse impact on a particular group. If an adverse impact is identified, the relevant policy/procedure/guidance will be amended, where appropriate. This Committee has the role of overseeing this process and any action taken as a result.

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on recent assessments of policies.

RECOMMENDATION that Members note the report.

DETAIL

In line with the Single Equality Scheme, a policy review diary is being developed to allow Authority officers to ensure that policies are reviewed in line with agreed timelines and that impact assessments are conducted or updated. This is based on the diary developed by the Constabulary but after investigation, it was felt to be more appropriate to manage the Authority's own policies separately. Authority oversight of the impact assessment of joint policies between the Constabulary and Authority can continue to be maintained by Members checking that these have been conducted before approving a policy.

Since the last meeting, the Authority has approved its Single Equality Scheme. The Committee received a report on the impact assessment of the draft policy at its last meeting and since then, the policy underwent minor amendments based on feedback from consultees. Those that have replied so

far have welcomed the Scheme and considered it to be comprehensive. The Scheme is a living document and comments on it will be considered regularly. Staff consultation on the Grievance Policy has now closed and an impact assessment will be conducted before it comes into force.

A number of joint policies have been agreed by the Authority. These have been impact assessed and comments have been received from the Community Advisors' Group. These have mainly focussed on the clarity of wording and the overall impression given by the documents, rather than any adverse impacts being identified. The main amendment to the Policing Plan 2010-13 following this exercise was to increase the emphasis on the role of neighbourhood policing officers in listening to the public and explaining why the Constabulary is striving to meet the equality standard, as well as changes to language to make it plainer. In the Joint Consultation Strategy, the list of stakeholders has been updated to include groups which the Constabulary and, where appropriate, the Authority aspire to engage with but were not captured in the document.

The Local Policing Summary is not a policy but the fact that it will be received by every council-tax paying household in the county means that understanding how it will be received by different groups is very important. The Community Advisors' Group has been consulted and appropriate amendments were made to the wording of the summary before its submission to the Police Authority for approval. These centred on the presentation of young people (as Members of the group were keen that the summary did not perpetuate stereotypes of young people as offenders) and making some of the statements more understandable. Once the design for the document has been finalised, comments will be invited from Cumbria Equality Resource Centre.

Training

1 member of the Authority and 1 officer completed training on equality impact assessment in February 2010. At present, 12 Members of the Authority have completed training, including 5 Members of this Committee. The Authority is making good progress towards its commitment to all Members of this Committee being trained by June 2010 and all Members of the Authority by January 2011. Further training is planned for 13th April and can be arranged at a future date.

Relevant Community Feedback

Details contained within the report.

Stuart Edwards
Acting Chief Executive

6 April 2010

Background documents: Cumbria Police Authority Disability, Gender and Race Equality Schemes; Draft Single Equality Scheme

Race and Diversity, Disability, Gender and Human Rights Act

Implications: Equality impact assessment provides a way of assessing the

impact of policies on different groups so that adverse effects can be mitigated, where appropriate.

Human Rights Implications: Equality impact assessment provides a useful way of assessing whether people's human rights are being upheld in terms of fair and equal treatment.

Strategic Risk Implications: If the Authority does not assess the impact of its policies on different groups, it may inadvertently discriminate against a particular group and will not fulfill its statutory duties.

Contact:

Nicola Brooker, telephone 01768 217737 or e-mail
nicola.brooker@cumbria.police.uk