Community engagement and tension

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Police officers and staff should identify potentially 'susceptible' communities and proactively make efforts to build relationships with those communities and relevant partners. These relationships will provide a structure and network, which can be used when tensions rise, an investigation occurs or a critical incident is identified.

Effective community engagement can help to mitigate community tension caused by hate crimes or non-crime hate incidents. Conversely, failing to engage will undermine community confidence in law enforcement and make positive policing outcomes more difficult to achieve.

Ministry of Justice guidance defines a community as a group of people who interact and share certain characteristics, experiences or backgrounds, and/or are located in proximity to each other.

A community can be large or small, concentrated in a specific geographical location or widespread throughout a larger geographical community. For further information, see **APP on engagement**.

Strong relationships will also inform strategic analysis of community risks and issues, partnership development and day-to-day community policing activity.

Independent advisory groups

The purpose of an independent advisory group (IAG) is to give the community a voice in police decision-making; they can also provide advice on developing successful partnerships. They will make observations both within the force and to the communities they represent. This includes helping to address problems affecting particular groups or communities.

Effective and well-structured IAGs will enable gathering of a range of community views. See also Intelligence, Community voices

See also:

- **APP on Communication**
- **Independent Advisory Groups: Advice and Guidance on the Role Function and Governance of IAGs**

Police and crime commissioners

PCCs will canvass the views of the public about policing in their area. They undertake consultation and engagement events with community groups to understand community views and concerns. Chief officers should work closely with their local PCC to ensure that these views are reflected in their Police and Crime Plan and the police service response to hate crime and non-crime hate incidents.

Community tension

Community tension which may give rise to hate crimes or non-crime hate incidents should be identified at the earliest opportunity – see **Engagement and communication APP** and **Intelligence management APP**.

Significant events or incidents, either within and outside the local force area, may affect or **indicate increased community tension**. This information should be used to inform community engagement activity, and force strategic threat, risk and harm assessments.

General indicators may include:

- incidents of disorder and a noticeable increase in critical incidents
- significant anniversaries
- public events (for example, meetings, demonstrations, carnivals, concerts, fairs)
- elections (for example, extreme candidates standing) and other significant political events
- deaths in police custody
- other police-generated events (for example, crime initiatives, raids)
- religious festivals
- extremist activity
- anti-social behaviour
- critical incidents

- unusual or serious assaults on police personnel
- use of offensive weapons against police
- hostility or resistance to normal police activity (for example, stops, patrol, arrests)

Incidents of inter-group disputes which may affect or indicate community tensions, such as:

- racially motivated incidents (for example, assaults, criminal damage)
- disputes between or within gangs with different ethnic membership
- disputes between LGBT+ communities and those who seek to condemn their sexual orientation, (for example, on religious grounds)
- disputes between or within religious groups
- disputes between different gangs, schools, colleges

Other factors which may indicate or cause changes in community tension include:

- hate crime (for example, racial and homophobic attacks)
- vigilante patrols
- police raids on sensitive premises (for example, cultural or religious buildings)
- threats to community safety (for example, potentially problematic additions to the sex offenders register)
- inter-community threats (for example, between religious sects)
- repeated incidents of serious antisocial behaviour
- strong media interest in community issues (for example, asylum seeker issues)
- global conflict, particularly where UK populations have heritage in affected regions
- political unrest or terrorist activity overseas, particularly where it affects UK-based populations or where it receives extensive media coverage

For further information, see the **True Vision website**.

Community impact statements

A **Community Impact Statement (CIS)** can describe the impact that offending has had on a community, provide context and give the community a voice.

A CIS should be prepared in hate crime cases where there is a recognisable **'community of identity'** that shares the personal characteristic of the victim.

A CIS can also relate to the targeting of a building or institutions, for example, a place of worship or a day centre used by people with learning disabilities, frequented by a community.

Tags

Hate crime