

Signa – anonymous recording for all forms of discrimination

Using training, an everyday sexism recording tool and a resource toolkit to increase reporting of discrimination-related concerns and to address them consistently.

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Key details

Does it work?	Untested – new or innovative
Focus	Organisational
Topic	Diversity and inclusion Ethics and values Leadership, development and learning Violence against women and girls
Organisation	Metropolitan Police Service
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Region	London
Partners	Police Education
Stage of practice	The practice is implemented.
Start date	March 2021

Key details

Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	Workforce

Aim

- To educate and raise awareness within the workforce on all forms of discrimination in the workplace.
- To empower the workforce to report and stand up to all forms of discrimination.
- To prevent or intervene in cases of discrimination at an early stage.
- To ensure is used to record unacceptable behaviours.
- To provide culture health data for individual department in the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) which can be used to focus and drive culture change activity.

Intended outcome

- Higher standards and appropriate action taken regarding the reporting of discrimination – including sexist and misogynistic behaviour.
- Provision of a new reporting tool for discrimination to address employees' lack of confidence in standard reporting methods.
- A better understanding of the internal culture surrounding discrimination within the force (measured through staff surveys and listening circles).
- Increased internal confidence that discrimination such as sexual harassment, sexism and misogyny are being addressed.
- Rebuild trust and transparency with the public by demonstrating action being taken to tackle the issues of sexual harassment within the force.
- Increase colleagues awareness of our other existing reporting mechanisms for wrongdoing, and ensure the correct platform is used for the circumstances.

Description

Through listening circles and other communication methods, views were obtained from female employees across the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) around culture. It was found that discrimination particularly, sexism and sexual harassment had been experienced widely among the group.

To address these findings, support was gained from the management board to develop a team of champions. The champions formed the Signa team, created from volunteers working with the forces internal women's network.

Signa project

There are three aspects that make up the Signa project:

1. A tool for recording everyday sexism.
2. Training.
3. A toolkit.

1. Recording everyday sexism tool

This is an anonymised Microsoft form that provides the opportunity to report any concerns relating to sexual harassment. It is available to all employees. Submitted reports are reviewed by supervisors and analysts to decide if they are suitable to publish and share (in line with policy and not subject to a live investigation). If suitable, these anonymised accounts are published on the force intranet, to educate readers and promote associated conversations. Trends in reports are monitored to identify areas requiring further work. For example, action may be required if multiple reports are observed within a particular command. Trends are fed back to the senior leadership teams, so they are aware of the culture within commands and necessary action can be taken.

2. Training

Force-wide training is delivered to all employees, of all ranks and grades. Volunteer officers and staff were identified by the local senior leadership team to be trained in delivering this package. The training addresses all types of discrimination including sexism and sexual harassment, ensuring that the training champions are passionate allies. They have access to resources and tools to plan and deliver training sessions, including lesson plans, videos, support for frequently asked questions and central support.

Training consists of classroom, app-based interactive sessions. Women's stories of victimisation and sexual harassment are shared. The aim is to empower colleagues to intervene in similar circumstances by educating them on appropriate methods of intervention. The app provides data around how many people have accessed the content and signposts users to additional material. The app also allows anonymised answers to a survey in response to the training case study. This then prompts discussion points during the training session.

3. Toolkit

Toolkits are provided on the force SharePoint platform. These include step-by-step guides for force supervisors on how to deal with reports of sexual harassment.

Evaluation

There are four component parts to the evaluation of Signa:

- training evaluation
- evaluation of the training pack
- evaluation of the Signa programme
- performance meeting

Training evaluation

The quality of training is being evaluated using a random survey sent to 500 people. This received a return of 100. This survey was aimed at confirming the learning objectives had been retained and the training delivery had been consistent across a large sample group.

Evaluation of the training pack

The training pack was initially trialled with one group of officers. Minor adjustments were made before the training was rolled out across the force. Feedback was gathered from both the students and those champions delivering the training. This was done using a mix of surveys, interviews, focus groups and observations.

Evaluation of the Signa programme

Feedback was gathered through surveys, interviews and focus groups.

Performance meeting

The completion rates of the training package across the MPS are being reviewed.

Further work is ongoing to analyse the data from a number of different sources, including professional standards and the Signa programme.

Overall impact

Tackling discrimination requires a cultural change. As cultural changes take time, Signa as a toolkit addresses this by providing a continuous focus and development in this area.

Despite this, early training and reviews on the recording tool do show a positive effect. Additional insight into the impact of Signa will be available as the evaluation progresses.

In the past 3 years there has been just under 700 entries on Signa. This data has been used to inform MPS upstander training, leadership training and new met for London training which is reaching 33,000 officers and staff.

The success of this has led to Signa now being expanded to include all forms of discrimination and to being hosted on an external, bespoke Crimestoppers platform - this affords better data handling, reassurance around anonymity and a new process for data analysis.

Since February 2025 Signa has been under Culture, Diversity, and Inclusion (CD&I) directorate which intends to provide an improved and deeper analysis of the intelligence to actively drive culture change activity and will be evaluated as we move forward with this new expansion and platform.

Learning

Internal communications support

It's important to ensure that the initiative has the continued support from the internal communications team. When Signa was on the front page of the intranet, clear increases were observed in the number of views on the intranet pages and of reports being made. When Signa was removed from the intranet, engagement levels decreased. This indicates the importance of internal communications around the project.

Enabling conversations

When publishing the anonymised accounts internally, the function to allow comments on the articles was switched on. This enabled direct responses, which were often emotive. This was beneficial as it encouraged conversation between junior and senior ranking officers.

Delivery of training sessions

Training sessions are now delivered face-to-face, following technology issues when using Microsoft Teams. Given the emotive content of the sessions, facilitating sessions online also did not provide support mechanisms for attendees.

Analytical support

Signa initially did not involve the team of analysts within the MPS. This lack of analytical support meant there was no detailed knowledge around who had received training. The programme now has support from force analysts, which has improved understanding about training.

Resourcing

Dedicated resources are required to help review the data and create carefully designed products for local leadership teams. It is important that '0' Signa entries is not seen as a celebration as could indicate a lack of confidence in reporting. It is also important that high levels of reporting isn't used as a performance measure but that Signa data is overlaid with other key 'cultural health' data to guide where the force need to be looking and implementing culture interventions, at local levels.

Data handling

The original Signa platform was hosted on MS Forms which brought with it data handling and confidentiality issues as though the form stated that you shouldn't name anyone, nor should Signa be used to report things that amount to crime or misconduct, some people still did. There also had to be the disclaimer that whilst the data would be treated as anonymous, if you disclosed a criminal offence, your details could be retrieved for further investigation.

By moving to the third party Crimestoppers anonymous platform, we have negated all these issues – people remain 100% anonymous, we will not be able to trace who has submitted intelligence, and

Crimestoppers will pass the data directly to our professional standards Intelligence Bureau – who will be able to redact any names that are mentioned, before they pass to CD&I for analysing themes and trends.

Raising awareness

There is no requirement for training sessions. The Signa form is five very straightforward questions, accessed directly from the front page of the force's intranet. However the force have started an awareness and engagement campaign which has included the production of a 5 minute video – explaining what Signa is, when to use it, when to use other methods of reporting wrongdoing, and how the data will be used.

Analytical support

Signa would benefit from dedicated analysts but at this moment in time the resources are not in place. However the MPS have moved Signa from a small team of volunteers in CD&I where the data will be populated into feedback for local department CD&I Boards. It is important to stress that the data needs to be used holistically and not as a performance indicator itself – for example, low or nil Signa entries could indicate great culture, or it could indicate a terrible culture where no one feels able to report it.

Likewise no reports of a particular theme of discrimination could indicate true inclusiveness, or it could indicate a non-diverse team where there is no representation from different groups of people. Therefore the way the data is presented has to be with diligence and careful representation. MPS CD&I intend to use the Signa data alongside lots of other culture health data to inform local areas where there may be issues, where the data suggests a need for closer analysis and preventative or intervening, positive culture change activity.

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Tags

Violence against women and girls