

Equality Policy

The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 (PRSRA) established new arrangements for policing governance in England and Wales, effective from 22nd November 2012.

This document aims to improve understanding of the changing landscape of equalities and policing governance and to help ensure consistency of good practice across equality areas and the policing service.

Over recent years, there have been a number of high profile reviews and inquiries, including;

- The Bradley Report (2009)
- The Independent Police Complaints Commission's report into police custody as a 'place of safety'.
- The Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) Formal Investigation into the Police Service (2003)
- The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry (1999) – Sir William McPherson's report into the murder of Stephen Lawrence.

These have resulted in real change and significant improvements in the quality of service for all communities. Most importantly, these have had a lasting effect on the ways in which the police listen to, consult and police diverse communities.

The primary function of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) is to secure the maintenance of an efficient and effective police force for the communities of their police service area and to hold the Chief Constable to account for the exercise of their functions and those of persons under their direction and control.

PCCs are responsible for the totality of policing in their area, including setting local policing and crime priorities, setting the police budget and precept, and disbursing community safety funding. They have also responsibilities to co-operate with partners to provide an efficient and effective criminal justice system; to co-operate with community safety partners and have regard to their priorities; to obtain views from the community and victims of crime on policing; and exercise duties in relation to safeguarding children and the promotion of child welfare.

By law, in carrying out all these functions, PCCs need to have due regard to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Equality Act 2010;
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and to
- Foster good relations between such groups

As public bodies, the Office of Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) and Chief Constable are subject to the general equality duty. The broad purpose of this duty is to

integrate consideration of equality and good relations into day to day business and for consideration to be given to how public bodies can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good community relations.

The Chief Constable is also subject to the Specific Equality Duties. These include; publishing information to demonstrate compliance with the general equality duty; evidencing how policies and practices have (or would) further the aims of the general equality duty; evidencing that they fully considered equality implications when making decisions; carrying out and evidencing engagement with people who have an interest in furthering the aims of the general equality duty; and preparing and publishing equality objectives.

It will be for the Police and Crime Commissioner to maintain oversight of the police service and it's Chief Constable in meeting the general and specific equality duties. OPCC is represented on all police equality, diversity and human rights boards with the role to independently monitor and scrutinise the work of Merseyside Police ensuring compliance with equalities legislation. This is combined with regular meetings with the police lead on diversity and the Chief Constable. Attendance on the Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Strategic Board will monitor the delivery of the corporate action plan and Equality, Diversity and Human Rights activity across the force, in line with the College of Policing 'Equality Improvement Model'

Monitoring recruitment and retention of minority groups within the work force will form part of this work and to improve on representation, the Commissioner has given her support to a joint PCC/Police initiative, the Merseyside Phoenix Leadership Programme. This is a positive action initiative targeting 18+ year olds who possess one or more of the 'protected characteristics' under the Equality Act 2010. The aims of the programme are as follows;

- To support the short to medium term Positive Action Strategy for recruitment by increasing applications from protected groups to join Merseyside Police, either as a special constable or regular officer.
- To build leadership skills and confidence.
- To assist people to become effective leaders in their communities.
- To build positive links between the police and minority communities.
- To support the Commissioner's vision for increased community engagement with minority groups.

This programme is also supported by the Police Staff Support Networks who the Commissioner has regular meetings with to hear and discuss the wide range of issues faced by staff

Another joint project was in partnership with Muslim community members, police and PCC. The Equality in Policing Conference was held in the Al-Ghazali Community Centre in October 2013 and had representation from across Merseyside who heard

speakers including the Commissioner, Chief Superintendent Moore, Detective Inspector Afful and Constable Walker. Kamal Mashjari chaired this event and as a result, the conference identified a working group to take some of the issues highlighted at the conference forward.

It is important for people throughout public bodies to be aware of the obligations set out in both the Equality Duty and within the Human Rights Act, 1998. To ensure that this happens within the OPCC, training and awareness raising sessions are held for staff and Independent Custody Visitors. In addition, all will be presented with information in respect of both the Equality Act and the Human Rights Act, which outlined the organisation's specific responsibilities in relation to both pieces of legislation.