ESSEX INDEPENDENT ADVISORY GROUP

Protocols and Practical Guide
Introduction

This guide and set of protocols are intended to provide practical advice and guidance on the operation of the Essex Independent Advisory Group (IAG).

They will clarify roles and expectations and will provide a basis for development of the IAG and its aims for the future.

Essex Police Service recognises the enormous value of the involvement of Essex individuals, groups, organisations and communities in policing. Their input into the activities of the Police enables policing at both a strategic and tactical level to be more effective, focusing on community engagement and therefore responding to community needs. Independent advice is especially valuable in relation to critical incidents and major investigations.

To address these needs, and ensure above all that the community plays a major role in shaping and monitoring their policing, Essex Police must engage with an independent group of people – The Independent Advisory Group (IAG).

What can IAG members bring to policing in Essex?

- As advisors, they are independent of the police; they are not police officers.
- They bring expertise and knowledge which is of great value to the police.
- They bring experience based on being a member of the public who has been the recipient of policing services.
- They are often selected for their knowledge of a particular community.
- They help promote community cohesion.

What is their role?

- They are there to advise the police and be ‘critical’ where appropriate. The responsibility for delivering against that advice rests wholly with the police.
- Their role is strategic, advising those dealing with an incident of the impact of the incident and its policing on communities. They are not investigators, mediators, advocates or intermediaries.

What might members of the IAG do?

- Give advice on the impacts on communities and individuals of policies (including policy development).
- Assist with critical incidents.
- Advise the police on how to communicate effectively with their communities.
- Maintaining transparency of decision-making, keeping processes open promoting honesty and fairness.
Critical incidents defined as any incident where the effectiveness of the Police response is likely to have a significant impact upon the confidence of the victim, their family and/or the community.

- Identify avenues of enquiries and comment for example as to how they effect communities and cultures
- Provide the police with the community perspective on how the incident, investigation, policy development are likely to be perceived by communities
- Provide the community view of how particular police activities are likely to be perceived by communities, for example, Stop & Search.
- Participation in police training, particularly raising awareness of issues for minority groups.
- Give a personal perspective;
  - as a person who is connected to a particular community.
  - as a person who is part of that community may feel about what the police are proposing to do.

In addition, the IAG members will also:

- Advise the police on cultural and other issues, specifically relevant to the community involved.
- Give guidance on communication with the victim, family, witness or other communities.

**IAG Members should generally NOT**

- Give advice about how to investigate.
- Undertake enquiries on behalf of the investigating officer or Senior Investigating Officer.
- Speak to the victim, witness or visit the scene.
- Act as an intermediary to aid communication (this is usually the role of the family liaison officer, who may receive advice from the IAG Member).
- Appeal for witnesses to come forward.
- Encourage individual witnesses to give evidence or a statement.
- Seek active involvement in a pro-active phases of an enquiry such as arrests, searches or interview except to advise on the potential impact of such actions.
- Speak on behalf of the police to the media, investigators or others who may be scrutinising the development of case, on matters of investigation or policy development (without involvement of Essex Police media staff).

**What is ‘Independent Advice’?**

This is advice given by the IAG members because the advice provided is independent of the police and carries no responsibility or liability for outcomes.

IAG members are not answerable to the police. The police are neither responsible for advisors' actions nor obliged to follow any of the advice they give. Accordingly, IAG Members are truly independent.
IAG Involvement

In all cases the decision to involve the IAG rests with the police. In major or critical incidents this decision will be made by the Senior Investigating Officer; for minor incidents the decision may be made by the investigating officer, or a policy maker.

The first consideration governing the use of the IAG must include a clear understanding of:

- the added value gained
- the assessed risks
- the form the involvement is to take

It is essential that all forms of IAG involvement are clearly understood from the outset, and are appropriately documented. Therefore, for a murder enquiry this would be within the policy file held by the Senior Investigating Officer, for a consultation exercise it would be within the terms of reference document, and for design of policy and strategy it would be within the briefing documents.

IAG Advice

IAG advice can be requested via the Equality of Service Manager by any police officer. The request can be made by way of an informal telephone call, in a written request with a written response, at an informal or formal meeting. Whatever the means of requesting involvement, the police will ensure that IAG Members are briefed thoroughly and give feedback at the end of any co-operation.

The IAG has access to the highest levels of management within Essex Police including Chief Officers.

The IAG has access to any parties dealing with any aspect of policing / diversity issues.

*Police staff must remember that constructive criticism should be embraced with a willingness to learn and improve, openness and honesty are key in building trust and confidence with communities.*

Confidentiality

By the very nature of the work confidentiality issues will arise. IAG members are required to sign a Code of Conduct which includes a confidentiality clause. It is a pre-requisite that it is observed in order to maintain trust and confidence within the group.

The work of the IAG is conducted on the assumption of total confidentiality unless agreed collectively by the group, respecting personal confidentiality.
The IAG Budget

The IAG has a small budget and the following sets out the principles and processes relating to finance arrangements.

Of particular importance here are issues of openness and transparency whereby :-

- It is recognised that the IAG is resourced from public funds.
- Such money must be managed with complete openness and transparency.
- The conduct of administration of IAG finances must be capable of independent audit.

The nature of such payments represent compensation for financial disadvantage incurred and as such the budget is held by Essex Police on behalf of the Group.

- The budget holder is the Equality of Service Manager.
- Such payments are authorised by the Equality of Service Manager to established members of the IAG.
- every IAG member is entitled to claim funds in furtherance of the recognised purposes of the group – whether a claim is in fact made is a matter for individuals to decide (typical examples of payment are for travelling / parking / refreshments).

Emotional Support

IAG members may become involved in traumatic incidents through their work with the police. By keeping advisors roles limited to that of giving advice, we can ensure that the possibility of post traumatic stress disorder or other psychological effects is limited. However, officers in charge of investigations and operations where independent advisors have been involved should be aware that advisors might suffer ill effects and will ensure that support is provided to any IAG Members experiencing such symptoms. Referrals to Essex Police Welfare Department and inclusion in TRiM (Trauma Risk Management) debriefs should be considered where appropriate.

Conclusion

Consultation and independent advice make a major contribution to the improvement of policing both for the police and the communities whom they serve. Relationships between the police and IAG Members should be built on trust and respect which ensures constructive co-operation between both parties. It is also vital that both the police and the IAG feel a sense of ownership towards the advisory process. It is inevitable that the different perspectives brought by IAG Members and the police will at times result in tension. Therefore it is essential that firm foundations, based on recognition of the values and roles of the police and the IAG, be in place to enable the relationship to sustain.

Objectivity and a balanced understanding of each other’s roles and responsibilities will enable both sets of participants to express views and raise issues in a safe environment, to the benefit of all communities and the Police Service.
Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why have an IAG?
   - Engages communities – helps build trust and confidence.
   - Improves community cohesion.
   - Assists to develop policy and strategy that is non-discriminatory.
   - Supports critical incidents and investigations.
   - Assists and advises the police to fulfil requirements of Stephen Lawrence Inquiry, Crime and Disorder Act.

2. How does trust build between police and advisors?
   - This is an evolving process but experience of both police and IAG Members suggests that confidence and trust in each other will grow.
   - Officers/ IAG Members must be as open and honest as possible.
   - Advisory groups must have protocols covering confidentiality and conflicts of interest.

3. What roles should advisors take on? – examples –
   - Advise on the use of certain police powers, policy and strategy.
   - Advise on critical and other major incidents.
   - Advise on pre-planned policing of events.
   - Assist in police training.

4. What should they not do?
   - They should not be put in a position where they may become witnesses.

5. How do IAG Members maintain independence?
   - By not becoming involved in incidents beyond giving advice.
   - By ensuring that the advisory process is open and transparent, allowing public scrutiny.
   - By ensuring that they are free to bring matters of concern to them forward for consideration.
   - By ensuring that neither police nor the advisory group have complete control of the process.
   - By ensuring that the way the role of independent advisors is portrayed in the media is sensitive to the needs of the advisors and disclosed with their permission.

For more information about the Essex Independent Advisory Group, please contact the Equality of Service Manager, Essex Police Tel 01245 452552