



Proposal for An Information Exchange Protocol for the Sharing of Racist Incidents Data

MECAC Meeting – Thursday 16 June 2005

It is proposed that the MECAC forum should agree to a protocol to share racist incidents data in Derby City. There are many benefits of data sharing which this paper will consider. Through the sharing of data, using an agreed protocol, we gather a holistic view of racist incidents in Derby. Currently there is no co-ordinated method of achieving either outcome.

Introduction

The protocol will have two objectives, to allow all depersonalised racist incident data to be collected and to allow personal information to be shared. Personal data can only be exchanged in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 if it is to prevent/detect crime or to apprehend/prosecute offenders. Each disclosure of personal data should be merited on a case by case basis. Personal data regarding victims, informants or witnesses should only be disclosed with the consent of the individual.

For the majority of occasions personal data will only be shared during case conferences between agencies on specific cases. All requests made for personal information should be in writing to reflect the principles of transparency.

Benefits

There are additional benefits to information sharing. Depersonalised information can be used to map hotspots. For those who are unfamiliar with the term this is where areas are identified as being at risk of offences reoccurring. With this information agencies can pool resources and attention given to target areas. Initiatives such as increased CCTV's, increased police patrols, focussed areas for community wardens, improved street lighting can be put into place to prevent and detect crime. Once identified these initiatives can be used to create a safer communities and pre-empt racial tensions.

It is proposed that each agency that attends the MECAC forum appoints a designated officer who holds information on racist incidents data, who would share the information prior to meetings. The information would be collated and presented at the forum.

Race Equality Duty

Under the Race Relations Act 2000 (Amendment) public authorities are under a general duty to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and to promote good relations between people of different racial groups. A method of achieving the general duty is to monitor racist incidents to see if the agency is promoting good relations between different racial groups.

An operational information exchange protocol, which is an invaluable asset when it comes to issues of crime reduction and community consultation. To have a forum where this information can be disclosed would be a great benefit to the City. We must also recognise that in this era of The Freedom of Information Act 2000 this information is expected to be disclosed on request.

Criteria

The data needed for an effective depersonalised racist incidents database largely depends on the agency that holds the information and any information, which could make the individual identifiable. It is suggested that we should all collate a minimum amount of data to present to the forum as follows:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Number of incidents	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ethnicity of Victim
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Type of incident	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Age of Victim
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Location eg Area, Street Name	

Pitfalls

With all agreements across agencies there are risks that the protocol may not deliver results. Potential obstacles include partners reluctant to commit to the protocol, responsibility for implementation unclear, low partner interest, suspicions between partners and weak leadership. All these obstacles can be overcome. It is proposed that the REC take a lead in encouraging partners to compile data.

Next Step

In order to begin the process each agency should nominate an individual to co-ordinate the transfer of information. We also need to discuss what information we should share. The above are only suggestions, which can be adapted. It would be necessary to discuss with each agency what information it currently holds and to see if it needs to be adapted to meet the requirements of the protocol. Once we are agreed upon a format then a draft will be produced. Once the draft has been amended and agreed the signatories would then produce the agreed information prior to the MECAC forum to be collated and presented at the meeting.

There is a lot of work that needs to be put into creating trust and having an operational protocol but the benefits outweigh the initial difficulties that we may have. Not only can we identify problems quicker for the communities sake but also resolved harassment more effectively for the victims.