

LANCASHIRE CONSTABULARY

A VIEW FROM THE TACTICAL ETHICS COMMITTEE

Report for the Joint Audit and Ethics Committee

Date of meeting: 06/12/2022

Time: 10am to 12pm

Author: PS 6402 Weronika Wallis (*On behalf of the Committee*)



A VIEW FROM THE TACTICAL ETHICS COMMITTEE: EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENTS & THE HOMES4UKRAINE SCHEME

PURPOSE OF THE BRIEFING NOTE

The purpose of this note is to document a response from the Tactical Ethics Committee in respect of two discussions which were had as part of a quarterly Committee meeting. The first section will cover background to both discussions. The second section will provide the Committee's views.

BACKGROUND

Ethical Dilemmas for discussion:

'Equality Impact Assessments – are they treated with sufficient regard?'

A Committee member provided a background of what Equality Impact Assessments are used for and examples of recent issues surrounding the EIA process.

An example was provided whereby changes were being proposed in the organisation and were going to have a significant impact on staff rotas, and therefore on flexible working arrangements etc. It was felt that perhaps not enough consultation had taken place prior to the submission of the EIA and it appeared, to the affected parties, as though the decision "had already been made anyway".

The usual procedure is that staff networks/SPOCs for the area business should be consulted prior to the making of any decisions. It was stated that in this instance the process had not been followed and the EIA was only submitted after the decision had been made. This meant that any issues identified in the course of the EIA submission were not able to be resolved and opportunities to put in place mitigations to protect staff were perceived to be limited.

Equality Impact Assessments are mandatory for the organisation and aim to ensure that any potential impact on staff from protected groups is identified and managed.

'Is the organisation truly impartial if it is supporting the Homes4Ukraine scheme?'

The Constabulary has shared an Intranet post encouraging its staff to participate in the Homes4Ukraine scheme which was created by the Home Office and the purpose of which is to match families residing in the UK with Ukrainian refugees fleeing from the conflict in Ukraine.

A dilemma has been brought to the Committee to discuss whether the Constabulary can maintain its position as being impartial in this situation and also whether it is right that no other schemes for other countries elsewhere in the world had been promoted internally and emphasis had only been made on Ukraine, potentially disregarding any other countries in need.

VIEW OF THE COMMITTEE

Equality Impact Assessments

The Committee agreed that staff across the organisation are likely unaware of the correct process surrounding Equality Impact Assessments and perhaps this is why there is inconsistency and the process is not utilised correctly. It could also be that the individuals involved in change become too focused on the delivery of their projects and lose sight of the requirement for an EIA until later on in the process.

It was also agreed that the current policy writing/change management process appears to be quite complex and perhaps masterclasses for staff in this area would be beneficial.

The Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Team are currently looking to review the EIA form to streamline it and make it easier to complete which will hopefully help with compliance.

The Committee agreed that EIAs are vital to the organisation and we must not lose sight of its core purpose, which is to treat people fairly.

The existing process for approval of proposals involves consultation with HR, Federation and Unison at an early stage, usually as part of scoping or Issues & Opportunities. This means

that there is an element of consultation in existence, although this may be not fully documented or accessible for scrutiny.

As an organisation, we must ensure that any issues identified at the stage of an EIA are not only addressed for that specific piece of work (and brought back before COT if applicable) but that they also form part of organisational learning as they may affect staff in the future.

A suggestion was then made that completion of an EIA should perhaps be a pre-requisite to a proposal entering COT Triage. The Committee felt that this was a reasonable idea.

Actions following on from the discussion:

1. Sophie Temple to continue with reviewing of all incoming EIAs to ensure that compliance is maintained.
2. Ch Supt Osiowy and PS Wallis to speak to DCC Hatchett for any learning to be taken to the Organisational Learning Board. Consider feeding back the last 12-18 months' worth of learning from EIAs.
3. Ch Supt Osiowy and PS Wallis to speak to Ch Supt Mackenzie and Supt Cartwright to discuss whether there is sufficient internal scrutiny on those completing the EIAs.
4. Sophie Temple and Hamza Foy to provide feedback to Ch Supt Mackenzie, Supt Cartwright and Ch Supt Robertshaw re: the TOM review and the EIA implications
5. Sophie Temple to speak to Supt Nikki Evans to explore options around including the requirement for an EIA at an earlier point in the decision-making process. Consider amending the existing COT Triage form to address this.

Homes4Ukraine

The Committee first acknowledged that officers and staff are also members of the public and they have the right to open their home to whoever they want (within reason) and do so outside of work. The Constabulary merely assists with support to help manage the match-making process.

It was then noted that the Constabulary is not "picking and choosing" but merely supporting an initiative which is already in existence and driven by the Home Office. It is not up to the police to create new schemes and rather for the government.

There has been a lot of publicity relating to the events in Ukraine and it is possible that people are unaware of other conflicts worldwide and instead focus on what is publicised the most.

The Committee noted that some negative connotations may exist in the media in relation to refugees from other parts of the world and perhaps it is the more supportive agenda that weighs the public heavily towards the crisis in Ukraine. The media has also shown images of women and children fleeing Ukraine which has also likely contributed to the issue gaining public support.

It is also important to note that the government has already operated three separate resettlement programmes in Syria, however in the case of Homes4Ukraine, it is the first time that the general public have been asked to assist.

Perhaps it would be worth communicating to the wider workforce what other schemes are available and that they could contribute if they wish.

It is also likely that the political and geographical proximity of Ukraine and the potential ramifications of the conflict are driving the public to want to help, in order to show a united Western front and prevent the war from escalating.

The Constabulary has already previously been asked to show a political stance and this was declined. The organisation will only be involved in humanitarian efforts and will not be involved in politics.

The Committee agreed that just because it is not possible to cover all people in need, this does not mean that support should not be offered to anyone. The Committee was agreeable that there are no issues around the Constabulary promoting the Homes4Ukraine scheme and that there were no ethical issues surrounding this.

Feedback from the Committee will be provided to the member of staff who provided this item for the agenda.

NEXT STEPS

A number of actions have been created as a result of the Committee meeting and will be followed up prior to the next meeting.

The next Committee meeting will take place during or around the week commencing 6th of March 2023.