



Dorset Police Equality Matters

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Dorset Police Equality Matters

1. Project Outline

The Market Research Group were asked to undertake discussion groups on behalf of Dorset Police. The discussion groups focussed on Dorset Police's draft Equality Scheme and Stop/Search Supervision and Monitoring Policy.

The following objectives formed the basis of three focus groups on the Dorset Police draft equality scheme,

- To gather the views of Dorset Residents about the 'Draft Dorset Police Combined Equality Scheme' in order to identify peoples understanding of what this means for them.
- To prioritise the actions within the different sections of the Action Plan to assist with the identification of force priorities to be contained within the Equality Scheme.
- To discuss if there are any equality issues which people feel have been omitted from the Scheme.
- To examine what steps Dorset Police should consider in relation to promoting public awareness and understanding of the Equality Scheme.
- To discuss how best Dorset Police can continue to engage and consult with their communities regarding equality matters.
- To examine what Dorset Police need to do to improve on their commitment to equality.

The following objectives formed the basis of three focus groups on 'Dorset Police Stops and Stop/Search Supervision and Monitoring Policy',

- To gather the views of Dorset Residents about the 'Stops and Stop/Search Supervision and Monitoring Policy'.
- To find out peoples experiences and/or perception of the activity.
- To investigate whether people are aware of what the Police Powers in relation to Stops and Stop/Search are.
- To investigate whether people are aware of why the Police use these powers.
- To identify if people are aware of how Dorset Police monitors this activity.
- To examine what steps Dorset Police should consider in relation to promoting public awareness and understanding of this function.
- To examine what Dorset Police need to do to improve on their commitment to equality.

2. The Market Research Group

The Market Research Group (MRG) is an independent market research agency based within Bournemouth University. We are a full service agency, with our trained staff giving us the ability to conduct desk research, quantitative and qualitative projects.

We specialise in providing market research and intelligence services to public sector organisations, and organisations within the academic, tourism and heritage sectors.

We work in Partnership with our clients and focus on adding value at every stage of the research process together with a cost effective and flexible service. The Market Research Group is able to bring a considered and practical approach to research and offer innovative research solutions to maximum effect.

MRG adheres to the Market Research Society's (MRS) code of conduct and the Data Protection Act 1998, which ensures that both our clients and respondents are treated fairly.

3. Methodology

A qualitative method was chosen as the most suitable approach for undertaking this project. To provide sufficient space to discuss all of the topics six discussion groups were planned. These took the format of three Street Intervention groups and three looking directly at the Dorset Police Equality Scheme. There were 3 key stages to the research project; these were Recruitment, Facilitation and Reporting.

Recruitment

Participants were recruited using a face to face method. MRG's fieldwork researcher approached people in or near the towns where the groups were being held. The groups were recruited to be fully representative by gender, age, disability and ethnic origin. Participants were offered a £20 supermarket voucher as an incentive.

Facilitation

Each discussion group was facilitated by MRG staff, lasted approximately an hour and a half and was held either in the afternoon or evening in different locations around the county.

Reporting

Recordings of the groups were transcribed and analysed to provide the data basis for this report.

The table below shows where and when the group were held and the subject that was discussed.

Location	Topic	Time of day
Blandford	Stop and Search	Afternoon
Bournemouth	Stop and Search	Evening
Dorchester	Equality Scheme	Evening
Poole	Equality Scheme	Afternoon
Weymouth	Equality Scheme	Evening
Wimborne	Stop and Search	Afternoon

Overall 19 people attended the equality scheme and 21 attended the stop and search focus group. The tables below show the demographic breakdown of the groups combined.

Gender	
Male	24
Female	15

Age groups	
18 - 24	3
25 - 35	7
36 - 45	8
46 - 55	7
55 - 64	6
65 - 74	2
75+	2

Ethnic Origin	
White British	13
White Irish	2
White Gypsy/Romany or Irish Traveller	1
White Other	4
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	1
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	1
Other Asian background	1
Black or Black British - African	4
Black or Black British - Caribbean	3
Mixed Ethnic background – White and Asian	2
Mixed Ethnic background – White and Black African	1
Chinese	1
Other background	1

Disability	
Yes disability	5
No disability	30

The Equality Scheme focus groups took place in three different locations; Poole, Weymouth and Dorchester. Opinions varied on how Dorset Police are and should be addressing Equality issues. The scheme covers gender, disability and race equality. The questions in the focus group were asked in a way which incorporated all three strands of the scheme. Participant's opinions and anecdotes tended to focus on race equality.

Generally participants in the Dorchester and Weymouth groups were positive towards what the police were proposing in the equality scheme. Participants in the Poole group were not so supportive with some saying that they thought the scheme went too far and the actions proposed were a waste of tax payer's money. Other participants in the Poole group highlighted that they thought equality was a good thing but felt the Police were doing a good job already and saw some of the actions proposed as unnecessary and felt resources could be spent better elsewhere.

4. What is Equality?

To start the discussion participants were asked "what is equality?" There was a general consensus amongst the three groups that equality is everyone being treated the same. Listed below are the explanations received.

"On the most general level I would just say it's non discrimination" (Dorchester)

"Non discrimination on account of race" (Dorchester)

"Equality is just the same treatment for everybody" (Dorchester)

"Equality is to do with equal access" (Dorchester)

"To treat everybody equally, with an equal amount of fairness and respect" (Weymouth)

"People treated the same irrespective of race, creed, colour, sexual persuasion, religion, disability" (Poole)

"The same, everybody the same" (Poole)

"I think the same, in a job or whatever it is you do, that you are regarded as equal to the person next to you, whatever race, creed or whatever, female, male..." (Dorchester)

"It's about ensuring that people have facilities to access the same quality of services as everybody else so, for instance, you know, it's, if there's a language barrier or physical barrier or something like that, it's about having that ability to have equal access to facilities. It's not just about for physical disabilities to other language, deafness, everything, it's for having that same access." (Poole)

“In my opinion (taking off professional hat), equality means to me equal, equal access, equal treatment, equal opportunity. In terms of contact/interaction with police this means being treated equal in respectful/professional manner with equal outcome as every other member in society.” (Poole)

After the initial question on ‘what is equality?’ was posed for the Poole and Weymouth discussion groups this led to further discussions.

5. Equal Society

In the Poole focus group this question led to a discussion as to whether we live in an equal society with respondents questioning whether we should have schemes which attempt to be equal.

“I think equality is everybody the same, but we’re not treating everybody the same. We can’t be all equal if everybody speaks different languages. If we all spoke the same language we would be a step on the footpath of all being equal.” (Poole)

6. Cost of Equality

A few participants expressed their concern over the cost of equality. The discussion was focusing on public services in general.

“We can’t sustain it financially. It costs an absolute fortune to write multilingual papers. It’s far cheaper to say ‘you come to this country, you learn the language, it’s English and you read it’. It’s not British, the language is English because we are English and you read it in English. It’s written once.” (Poole)

“It costs money and as tax payers, we are paying for those translators whether the police use them or whoever uses them, why should we?” (Poole)

7. Can equality be achieved?

In Weymouth the question “what is equality?” led to a discussion on whether Dorset Police can achieve equality.

“Personally I find that it’s hard to find the right balance with equality and I’m sort of happy to find a small amount of equality in society or say in Dorset. I don’t know if you can get equality properly. You can aim for it but I don’t know if you can actually achieve it fully.” (Weymouth)

This led to a discussion on the barriers in relation to Dorset Police obtaining equality. The argument generally was that you could do all sorts of things as an establishment but you are still going to have individuals working for the authority who have certain prejudices. This argument also came up in the stop and search discussion groups.

“I think because you are dealing with individuals. It would be nice if the police was an individual but you’ve got various characters and make-ups in that framework and you are always going to get somebody that is a slightly bad apple that takes a look at somebody and stereotypes them just on their look and then treats them accordingly. I think that’s the problem” (Weymouth)

One participant thought that Dorset Police had a better attitude towards equality than they had found when living in London.

“And on that I’d also say that I find in my experience I can’t help but think about the London life I had and comparing it to the Dorset life now and I find that the majority of police do seem to have a good attitude towards equality, the majority. I’m fortunate not to have found that minority so far since I’ve been here six years. They are doing a good job down here so far. I do believe they should teach the Met how to act personally.” (Weymouth)

8. Is it important for Dorset Police to have an equality scheme?

When asked if it is important for the Police to have an equality scheme participants from the Weymouth thought it was important for the police to try to address equality issues but they didn't think this could be fully achieved. In the Poole group opinions varied with half of the group saying that they supported equality but felt the police were doing a good job at the moment and didn't see that there needed to be extra resources in that area. The other participants were totally against having a scheme and couldn't see how it was the role of the police to address equality. Instead, they wanted more focus on fighting crime and being visible in the community. In Dorchester participants saw the need for the scheme and were generally supportive of what the police set out to achieve.

From this initial discussion we can see that equality is an emotive subject with some people saying that the police should try to improve equality and others stating that it shouldn't be a priority for the police.

Equality is a priority for all public services in the UK but as we can see some people don't feel it should be. Dorset Police could spend time promoting why equality is important for policing services in Dorset, explaining to people how it will improve the services that they provide. However some people feel so strongly that it shouldn't be a priority that the police will need to accept that if they seem to be placing a lot of emphasis on equality some people will not agree with their actions however hard they try to promote the benefits of the scheme.

9. How can the scheme be improved?

Participants were asked to look at a summary document on the Equality Scheme which outlined what Dorset Police were doing and were intending to do to address equality. They were asked if they thought it covered the main issues which needed addressing with regards to disability, gender and race equality; if anything was missing from the scheme and if anything could have been improved.

In Dorchester and Weymouth participants were impressed with what the police were proposing. In Poole there was a mixed view with some participants wondering why the police were proposing to do some of the actions.

10. Main issues surrounding race, disability and gender equality

In the Poole group one participant said that the main issue for race, disability and gender equality for the police is communication with the public as members of the community, victims and offenders.

"I feel the main issues relate to contact with the public as both victims and offenders, and probably most importantly the public as members of the community. The key issues has to be accessibility to the police. The areas that are increasingly becoming a challenge are communication - whether that is actual verbal communication or written communication; community access both in the "on the beat" role and community offices/stations. The other issues is about passive/unconscious discrimination of gender, race or disability this is less so about overt discrimination (i.e. the prejudice approach) but more about the awareness of different groups needs and approaches." (Poole)

11. Is anything missing from the scheme?

Participants were told that the equality scheme outlined proposals to improve gender, disability and race equality they were asked if they thought anything was missing from the scheme. In Weymouth group members thought that class equality was missing. The police were seen to treat people from a less privileged background with less respect than those from a privileged background.

"I think there's another equality where you've got the more affluent people can be treated with far more respect than probably the poorer people. I think there is a gap there and that is stereotyping poorer people and wealthy people." (Weymouth)

It was thought that this was also associated with where you live,

"And then of course the police tend to stereotype people living in a particular area. They tar them all with the same brush whereas maybe they're not like that. I think that's probably quite a big problem in Dorset." (Weymouth)

"That's right yeah. If you're stopping a man in a Rolls Royce, I bet you any money that the police officer is going to be a little bit more respectful than to somebody who's in clapped out Ford Cortina." (Weymouth)

"Probably the people who the police are more likely to come into contact with are the people who are less likely to be the ones who can express themselves and defend themselves and speak up for themselves and who know what their own rights are. That's probably always the case that the people who shout the loudest and stand up for their rights are quite often the 'correct' and 'proper' citizens and the ones who are on the shadier side of society quite often are on the shady side of society because they were not given the same opportunities as other people and they were never able to develop the language and the skills they need to hold their own and to deal with an authority figure like the police. Quite often they will then maybe react with aggression. Then you get into the spiral of you act that way then you are treated a certain way and because you get used to being treated a certain way you will go, it self perpetuates and it's not just the police it's society." (Weymouth)

The issue of wealth inequality also came up in the Poole discussion group

"One could say that if you are a poor White English person from West Howe estate I can bet you 10 bucks that you are more likely to get busted for speeding and drunken behaviour than if you are a very high status individual from perhaps a very well established English family with lots of finances behind you with a name behind you. So ensuring equality is just as important for White English people" (Poole)

When asked how the Police could address the issue of class inequality one respondent suggested the Police should have advocates who can support people who find it difficult to communicate with the Police.

“I wonder if there is any provision for people who may have English as a first language but still do not have great communication skills, like an advocate type person to help get the message across for people who are perhaps intimidated by authority or shy or not very good at expressing themselves. Which can be, not a disability as such but can be disabling in a situation” (Weymouth)

The Weymouth group were quite impressed with the Equality Scheme overall. “On paper it does look good actually.”

“There’s a Muslim thing, and a domestic violence thing, there could well be some women somewhere who don’t know how to get help and don’t speak English. I think it’s excellent that they try to reach everybody and try to support everybody.” (Weymouth)

In Dorchester participants were surprised at how much Dorset Police were doing to address equality.

“I’m quite surprised how much is actually done from reading all this, all these different groups. I don’t know whether the police actually inform the public that all this goes on. I think one of the things the police should perhaps do is let the public know what there is. Until I read this tonight, I don’t know about you but I had no idea half of this existed.” (Dorchester)

This led to a discussion as to whether the Police were trying to do too much

“I’m almost tempted to say there is too much going on.”

“Is this not taking up too many police to actually implement this?”

“It’s like they are trying too hard I think, trying too hard to impress people”

“Is it workable? Are they spending too much resource on that and not on the other areas they should do. “

12. Interpreters and translations for people who can't speak English

The discussion arose in the Poole focus group about Dorset Police providing translations either oral or written for residents who don't speak English. As shown by the follow quotes this was an emotive part of the discussion.

Some participants believed that if people live in Britain then they should speak English and therefore did not believe that the police should offer translation services. This conversation arose from the proposed action of publishing a guide to driving and the law which is made available in different languages.

"In England I think we go too far overboard on this multi race, multi language, multi cultural thing." (Poole)

"When in Rome, do as the Roman's do. If you want to live in England you learn English...and obey their customs and their laws. I would not expect to get preferential treatment because of my nationality." (Poole)

"You will never be equal unless you can communicate with the locals will you? You cannot because you go into your own little group and there is no need to learn the language then." (Poole)

One participant saw the need for the Police to offer support in different languages and he was supported by other members of the group.

"But then I would argue perhaps, certainly in my experience, that when somebody, regardless of how intelligent, how well versed they are in a second, third or fourth language, if you are in a point of extreme distress or under extreme stress. Which quite often is the point of contact where they are with the Police – your ability to cognitively process a second language is significantly impaired. Therefore, whilst predominant in society, you know, I'm not here to agree or disagree about English as the main language. But, in times of distress you need to be able to communicate with somebody and in a point of mental distress from whatever form of trauma you find that people will struggle to process and that's human nature. It doesn't matter how intelligent you are, how unintelligent you are, you are going to struggle to process. So in the very nature of police work you are going to get people in points of trauma so how do you overcome that. Because you can't say to that person, I'm sorry you are not allowed to be stressed, you are not allowed to have natural cognitive impairment due to trauma, you can't communicate so therefore we can't so therefore we can't offer you a service and support. Because, however good we are at speaking various languages, when you are in a point of distress you are not able to stop and think and self interpret, self translate." (Poole)

As a result of these comments from the Poole discussion group the facilitator asked those in the Weymouth group if people thought it was important that the Police provide interpreters for people who don't speak English as a first language. The response was yes.

"I think it's a necessity for them to do their job properly. Nowadays it's more of a multi racial culture we have here in the UK and I think it would be naïve of them to think that they could do the job without some sort of interpreter." (Weymouth)

We can see that there are mixed views when it comes to the police providing services in different languages. Overall the majority of participants were supportive of the police if required offering information in other languages. The example was provided in the Dorchester discussion group about a car crash which occurred last year in Dorset which involved foreign

drivers and because of this the group were supportive and could see the need for the Police publishing a guide to driving and the law and offering it in various languages.

Participants were surprised at how much Dorset Police were proposing to do and there was a certain amount of consensus amongst the three groups that they were trying to do too much.

The one area which was mentioned that was missing from the scheme was the issue of class/wealth equality. It was mentioned that the police should look at how officers deal with members of the public from certain areas and backgrounds.

13. Promoting public awareness about the Equality Scheme

Participants were surprised at how much Dorset police were doing in regards to equality which suggests that if the police want people to be aware of the scheme then they need to work on careful promotion of it by highlighting the areas which are relevant to the public.

We know from elsewhere in the discussion that participants want the police to be more visible in their communities and they thought this help with the promotion of the scheme. Others recognised the need for communicating the scheme and offered suggestions as to where to publicise it. One participant from the Poole group thought that it was necessary for the Police to promote public awareness practically and in literature.

“In my opinion there are two main answers to this, one is a practical action point another is a communication one. Firstly the practical approach, I guess the main measurement we all will make as members of the public will be the police action, and in this area it is about going back to community policing. This would give us the direct interaction with officers and the force at a community level, its about police attending community groups talking with the equality target groups. Also talking an interacting with the public not just when there is "a job to be done" but also as community presence. The second approach about communication is about having Equality information available in the various mediums in public/community group/police stations in easy to read form. A simplistic way which would represent the equality approach would be a promotional scheme using media or even an American approach tag line that included equality approach.” (Poole)

14. Ideas for publicising the equality scheme

Participants thought that the full document should be condensed and written in plain English, publicised on the web with copies in each community centre, police station and public library. When the idea of leaflets was suggested people said that they certainly wouldn't pick one up and read it. Other suggestions included posters at bus stops or a short TV advertisement.

"They used to run a good ad campaign in London with a black guy running and a white guy running. It was like, which ones the criminal and everybody thinks oh, 'it's the black guy' and of course neither of them is because they are both running after. It was very clever because it was a way of saying, you reading this poster are as prejudiced as anyone else. But of course if you are the black guy who's been targeted 20 times in the street due just for being black then you are not going to care much what a poster on the wall says. So it impresses me but then they've never stopped me in the street so I don't really know how effective it is doing campaigns." (Weymouth)

Participants suggested using existing community publications and other mechanisms to promote what the Police are doing.

"In our village we have Frampton Village News which is a little newsletter. I'm sure the editor would welcome something to fill up the newsletter to say what the police – how they can relate directly. If they can't get there, they could get through the parish newsletters" (Dorchester)

One participant in the Weymouth group said that they could use the mobile office to promote the work that the police are doing. In order to do this though he said it would need better promotion as people didn't generally know what time the service was available.

15. Should the scheme be publicised

Participants from the Poole group questioned whether the Police need to promote awareness about equality.

“I think you know if you are asking about how they should promote the public awareness of their equality scheme, is just by how they police. You know, one would argue, do you really need to – we are aware of the government legislation that is out there. Should we not just say that the measurement is in performance like you would measure any other sort of thing. They are bound by various equality standards, governance etc. It’s more about performance, one would assume being a government body that they should be meeting government guidelines anyway. Do they really need to be pushing this further forward?” (Poole)

It was suggested in the Poole group that generally people aren’t that interested.

“If people are really that interested publish the document on the net.” (Poole)

“But most people aren’t going to be bothered” (Poole)

When asked specifically about promoting the equality scheme ideas were based on using existing mechanisms such as the website and existing networks.

From the other questions throughout the discussion we can see that the police need to concentrate on making the equality scheme relevant to Dorset residents. Focussing on how it affects them and how the scheme fits into the overall objectives set up by Dorset Police.

16. How could Dorset Police promote themselves as an employer?

Participants mentioned that one of the best ways for the police to promote equality is to see it in the force itself.

“That surely has to be some way to promote equality is to see it from the force itself.”
(Weymouth)

“What about encouraging people that are already here from ethnic groups to join the PSO’s” (Dorchester)

When asked how they might encourage people to join the police the response was to visit existing groups.

“By contacting the various groups that are in the Dorset areas, seminars, meetings, that sort of thing to encourage them to take pride in their community.” (Dorchester)

In the Poole discussion group there was a conversation about positive discrimination.

“They’ve got a problem with that because, I’m going back years ago now but the Met police went out to actively recruit coloured people as police officers and that was absolutely slated in the press.” (Poole)

It was explained that the Police didn’t want to positively discriminate but wanted to provide information and equal access to anyone who wanted to apply for the force.

One participant suggested recruiting through careers advisors through schools,

“There used to be a time when you got the 5th form or the upper sixth of the school, you had career advisors and career advisors would come in and they would say right ‘what are your interests? What do you plan to do in the future? You would say ‘I want to be a Biochemist’ and they would say ‘OK but you need to get this A level, that A level, the other A level. You need to achieve certain things and you can go ahead and do it. There was never any question about ‘hang on a minute, it’s predominantly a male occupied job, am I going to fit in’. Nobody cared, the same thing could apply now, just have a couple of careers officer placed in different school.” (Poole)

“Well just go to the job centre or whatever it is they call it nowadays. I want to join so and so, how do I go about it.” (Poole)

“I mean, the fact that you are a female or a male really shouldn’t come into it. If you want to join the police join the police.” (Poole)

In general there were a few ideas about promoting the police as an employer; visiting existing groups and schools. Dorset Police could carry out some further consultation with new recruits asking how they found the recruitment process.

17. Engaging and consulting with communities.

In all six focus groups whether the discussion was on the equality scheme or stop and search the issue of police communicating face to face with members of the public arose. More specific suggestions on how the police can engage and consult with communities included, visiting schools, information stands at public events, employing independent agencies to carry out consultations and dialogue and act as a medium between the police and the communities.

“I would say one thing for Dorset Police to do with a more long term view would be to target schools, start with the children. Children when they are young enough they couldn’t care less what colour people are, that’s something we learn.”

“I’m not aware of them promoting themselves around carnival time which seems like a good opportunity to me because you’ve got different people arriving around that time. You’ve got your locals and you’ve got your holiday makers and that. I would like to see more of them letting people know what they are achieving and that around that time. Again I expect that’s a busy time for them so it must be hard for them to do that. Coming back to the Notting Hill carnival, I do notice that if you’ve got a group of people around that’s the perfect time to catch them. The college get there, you see them doing their promotion around that time so maybe they should use that opportunity. It would be a good opportunity to promote what they are doing.” (Weymouth)

“The police should get independent people to do things and report back. If they set up something and ask people to come, they won’t turn up unless they have a bottle of wine. Maybe existing groups, lots of communities meet for lots of strange reasons if you read the local advertisers there are knitting groups and baking groups and whatever. Maybe, if they are very clever it could be done in the way whereby someone representing the police but not being the police because that gets people’s backs up.” (Weymouth)

When asked who these independent people might be the response was:

“I’m trying to think...people like you – not dusty raincoat, public servants, not authority figures. Some kind of completely independent person who for some reason people would want to listen to.” (Weymouth)

“The main way for Dorset Police to continue is to engage with the full range of community groups via community policing and meetings. Using customer satisfaction surveys and market research. Keeping the public updated on progress of the force applying the ongoing responses to legislation.” (Poole)

“Most of the time when I see police they are either driving past or they’ve been called out because something bad had happened. It would be nice every now and then to see them in the community at any event, promoting their equality schemes and that. Because they are doing pretty well compared with the old bill that I’ve met, say the Met. I think they should be proud of what they’ve achieved and what they are trying to achieve and they should be trying to get out there and show everybody what they are doing and they should be using every opportunity they get really.” (Weymouth)

18. The 'bobby on the beat'

In each of the focus groups all participants agreed that it's about the police being visible and talking to the communities they serve. The need for more "bobbies on the beat" was mentioned in all focus groups.

"You are going back to the basics of having a bobby on the beat to mix with people. If you saw a bobby around and he chatted to you or if he chatted to different ethnic groups of people then obviously he's going to know the people on his patch much better. Rather than riding around in the cars and that, you don't get that." (Weymouth)

"He knows all the local youths that hang around that might be a problem. He knows the local history. With the best will in the world the way they police at the moment in cars, it might be quite efficient to get police officers from one place to another quickly but it loses total contact with the public." (Weymouth)

The Weymouth group did recognise that more visible policing would require more funds from central government would be needed.

"They are just trying to fine tune what they've got at the moment as best they can. With the best will in the world they are not going to be able to put more bobbies on the beat."

The Weymouth and Dorchester group mentioned if the police want to promote equality one of the best ways would be to experience it when seeing and speaking to the police.

"You can read all the stuff telling you what they might be doing but it's going to be personal experience which will promote people's trust and confidence in the police and the way that has been mentioned several times tonight is by seeing police." (Dorchester)

19. Dorset Police are better at engaging compared to other places in the UK.

In the Weymouth group it was noted that the police do try to engage with the public,

"I think Dorset police do seem to make an effort to see what the people think sort of thing. They will have meetings, like public meetings and things like that for people to have their own say so I think that's quite good. We never found that in the Midlands. Down here they will try." (Weymouth)

20. Improve commitment to equality.

As shown throughout the discussion the majority of participants felt that for the police to improve their commitment to equality they need to be more visible on the streets and improve their ability to communicate with members of the public.

“I think a lot of the prejudices people have against the police are that the police spend all their time filling in papers and so on and hardly any time on the street and I think the more they get out on the street and become visible the better. It is certainly my impression in the last year or two that maybe they are making more of an effort but I think that’s what they should be concentrating on. Being visible and approaching people and talking to people. Like the old bobby really. “

Further specific comments were made in relation to communication of Dorset Police’s commitment to equality.

“What is the cooperation with the multi cultural networks, like established groups that are already established with the police is that something they support.” (Dorchester)

One participant from the Poole discussion group said that in order for the police to improve their commitment to equality they need to be responsive to the changing communities that it serves and guidelines from central government.

“I think the commitment to equality must be seen by the community and the most basic way that this is measured will be the interaction they have with the police. The commitment must be responsive to the changing needs to the community. To this extent is about responding to community/public issues as they arise. As central government rolls out various Laws & Policies on equality the police should be reviewing there service and both change there approaches to meet these as well as publicising how they are meeting the challenges.”

21. Prioritising actions

At the end of each focus group participants were asked to prioritise the actions which Dorset Police still had to undertake. This aroused some further comments about specific elements of the scheme.

Participants were given four tables of the actions for race, gender, disability and the combined actions which covered all three diversity strands.

22. Race Actions

Dorset Police had six of the race actions from the equality scheme still to undertake. Participants were asked to rank these actions from one to six with one being the greatest priority.

The table below shows the average of the combined rankings provided by participant. Action 25 'to undertake a comprehensive review and full impact assessment, on the force's stop/account and stop/search activity' was thought to be the number 1 priority. Action 31 'Develop and implement a Jewish Consultative Panel to assist the force at times of heightened tension caused by local or national events' was thought to be the least priority.

Action	Average ranking
25 To undertake a comprehensive review and full impact assessment, on the force's stop/account and stop/search activity	1.8
26 Develop and publish a guide to driving and the law. To be available in different languages	2.8
28 Develop a plan for engagement with Muslim women	3.5
27 Undertake an annual review on the guide to driving and the law and the suitability of the languages offered	3.7
29 Undertake an annual review of the mechanism established for the engagement with Muslim women	4.2
31 Develop and implement a Jewish Consultative Panel to assist the force at times of heightened tension caused by local or national events	4.7

23. Gender Actions

There were ten specific actions relating to gender which Dorset Police still needed to undertake. Again participants were asked to rank the actions out of ten with one being the greatest priority. We can see from the table below that action 44 'Review force policy and procedures in relation to domestic violence' was seen as the greatest priority and action 50 'Development of a new policy to take into account the changes implemented within the Gender Recognition Act 2004 to support transsexual staff' was seen as the least priority.

Action	Average ranking
44 Review force policy and procedures in relation to domestic violence.	3.5
52 Undertake an Equal Pay Audit to identify and address any inequalities.	3.6
46 Additional training to be provided to custody staff to assist in recognising particular issues that may affect female detainees in custody.	3.9
51 Positive Action initiatives to be extended to attract and recruit men and women.	4.0
49 Review recruitment processes to address areas where female officer representation is low and through consultation identify positive action initiatives.	4.4
43 Multi agency project for the creation of and Family Justice Centre.	5.0
48 As part of the Safer Detention and Handling of Persons in Custody Project, force Policies and practices to be reviewed to address gender based issues.	5.3
53 Develop force Work Life Balance Policy and ensure that gender equality issues are addressed.	5.5
45 In relation to sexual victimisation and prostitution, undertake a review of intelligence processes in conjunction with the MOPI (management of police information project.)	5.6
50 Development of a new policy to take into account the changes implemented within the Gender Recognition Act 2004 to support transsexual staff.	7.4

24. Disability Actions

There were nine specific disability actions that Dorset Police needed to undertake. Once again participants were asked to rank the actions out of nine with one being the greatest priority. Action 33 'Ensure accessibility for members of the public and staff by the installation of automated doors across the force area, as identified in the Access Audit' was seen to be the greatest priority. Action 36 'To review the accessibility requirements of the Training Block at Force Headquarters to ensure that it is accessible. Consideration to be given to automated doors on the main entrance, installation of a stair lift on the back stairs, improved lighting of the corridors within the building and installation of a central hand rail on the main front stairs' was seen as the least priority.

Actions	Average ranking
33. Ensure accessibility for members of the public and staff by the installation of automated doors across the force area, as identified in the Access Audit.	2.6
41 Arrange an Open Day specifically for people with disabilities to attract individuals to apply to work within the Police Enquiry Centre.	3.3
34 Review accessibility to first and second floors of the Main Building at Force Headquarters to ensure that people with disabilities have access to all areas.	3.7
35 Review the provision of accessible toilets to all floors of the main A10 Building in Force Headquarters.	4.0
39 Review force website to ensure that it is accessible and compliant with the DDA and the World Wide Web Consortium guidelines and AAA.	4.7
37 Consider use of mystery shoppers to undertake disability access checks and publishing the programme of any upgrades through the local media and on the force website.	4.7
40 To evaluate, develop and support the work of the Deaf Liaison Officers.	5.4
38 Replacement of the main staff entrance doors into the Bournemouth and Poole Command Centre, to improve access for staff and members of the public during its temporary use as a public reception area. It is anticipated that work will commence late Summer 2008.	5.6
36 To review the accessibility requirements of the Training Block at Force Headquarters to ensure that it is accessible. Consideration to be given to automated doors on the main entrance, installation of a stair lift on the back stairs, improved lighting of the corridors within the building and installation of a central hand rail on the main front stairs.	6.6

25. Combined race, disability and gender actions

When participants were asked to rank the combined equality scheme actions most struggled with prioritising them as they said they weren't sure of the implications of some of what was proposed. The phrasing of some of the actions was too strategic with internal focus that it was hard for members of the public to understand.

For participants who did manage to complete the last section they were asked to pick their top three priorities from the list. From the table on the next page we can see that the top priorities were,

- Development of a Central Referral Unit to deal with all vulnerable adults and child abuse referrals.
- Develop and publish a Welcome to Dorset booklet giving key information for those individuals new to the area. To be available in different languages and formats.

The Action which was marked as the least priority was,

- Undertake a review of the Strategic Board Structures

There were a few comments about that specific action as participants were not sure about the implication of undertaking a review of the strategic board structure.

As the overall method for this research was qualitative the results of the action ranking exercise should only be used as an indication of the priorities as it is based on a few peoples' opinions.

Action	Average ranking
Development of a Central Referral Unit to deal with all vulnerable adults and child abuse referrals.	6
Develop and publish a Welcome to Dorset booklet giving key information for those individuals new to the area. To be available in different languages and formats.	6
Review and Research issues of confidence in Dorset Police from diverse communities.	5
Undertake an annual review the Welcome to Dorset booklet and the languages and formats it is published in.	5
To promote and encourage people from local communities, including minority groups, to join local Independent Advisory Groups across the force area.	4
Develop a Neighbourhood Contact List including contacts from diverse groups for use by Safer Neighbourhood Teams and the force.	4
Review the Communication, Consultation and Engagement Policy.	3
To complete the building of a new Custody Building and Office Accommodation, Bournemouth, which will address specific issues affecting detainees who may have a disability, have a religious or cultural requirement, or are female.	3
Undertake annual review on information provision and the publicising of services in different languages and formats via the web and all other opportunities.	3
To review and develop Independent Advisory Groups to ensure that they continue to meet the force and communities needs.	3
Develop the force Strategic Assessment process and its appreciation of migration and the implications for diversity.	2
To develop PPAF (Police Performance Assessment Framework) to incorporate equality and diversity measures as a separate area or as part of the Raising Confidence Priority area.	2
Review the Crime Recording System (CRS) in the context of race, disability and gender equality issues to ensure that CRS database is fit for purpose and provides relevant data for users with a particular focus on the flagging of those crimes where vulnerability is a factor.	2
Continue with the review and development of the existing third party reporting procedures for Hate Crime within the multi-agency strategic group (Pan Dorset RHIG).	2
Identification of proposals and implementation of a refresher training programme for diversity to ensure that all staff are kept up to date with legislative requirements.	2
Undertake an annual review of the Neighbourhood Contact List to ensure it is kept up to date.	2
Ensure that a system of Quality Assurance/Performance Management exists to monitor data being recorded onto the CRS.	1
Evaluate and report on the trial of new flexi-rules for consideration of Force wide adoption.	1
Promote all Equality Schemes internally and externally.	1
Undertake a review of the Strategic Board Structures	0

26. Equality Scheme conclusion

Apart from three participants most people were supportive of Dorset Police's commitment to equality. There was an observation that the police were almost trying to do too much. Overall participants found the equality scheme hard to grasp and understand how it was relevant to them. One recommendation would be for Dorset Police to turn the document into a plain English summary which explains to people how the scheme is relevant to them. As some participants thought that equality shouldn't be a priority for the police, it would be worthwhile explaining how the equality scheme fits into Dorset police's overall priorities. The main conclusion to come out of the discussion groups is that people felt in order to improve equality more police need to be visible walking through the towns and villages and engaging with the communities that they serve.

Stop and Search

The Stop and Search focus groups took place in three locations; Blandford, Wimborne and Bournemouth. The aim of the discussion was to see how aware participants were of the stop and search and monitoring policy. Throughout this section of the report the term 'stop and search' is used to cover all three types of street intervention.

Very few participants overall had personal experience of Stop and Search. For the majority their perceptions were based on other people's experiences and media reports. Participants who had personal experience of being stopped and searched had varied experience of how they were treated by the Police. A lot of their experiences occurred outside Dorset in places such as London and Birmingham. It was clear that the way people had been dealt with in the past and elsewhere in the country has an affect on how they still view the police.

27. What is meant by street intervention?

Only one participant recognised the term street intervention as stop/stop and search.

"I thought it was stop and search but it probably goes deeper than that does it."
(Wimborne)

No one from any of the other groups recognised the term street intervention but all were aware of the term Stop and Search.

"It's fully reported in the press and on television. So personally, I'm aware of it via the media. I would say that I see that type of intervention as important and necessary part of police function but there must be constraints." (Blandford)

28. Perceptions of Stop and Search

Participants were asked about their perception of Stop and Search. This could have been from personal experience or the experiences of people they know or have heard about. Participants who had actually been stopped and search had varied opinions about how they were treated.

29. Respect

One participant from the Bournemouth group explained how after being stopped by a policeman her son had felt really angry about the way he had been treated.

“My son asked him why he was stopping him. Apparently he looked like somebody that they had a description of. My son felt intimidated by the officer, he felt scared. He’s 20, he doesn’t look it, he looks a bit younger but he’s a twenty year old young black man and you know – he felt angry afterwards. He came home and told me about it, but there was nothing I could really do about that, it wasn’t a nice experience for him – his attitude towards the police is quite a negative one as it is and that happening to him doesn’t help situations like that at all.” (Bournemouth)

When asked if the police had been respectful to him,

“No, he actually said one of them was really cocky. My son has been brought up to have manners and respect and so forth and fortunately it didn’t get any worse. It could have done because my son could have got angry and started retaliating verbally, it could have got out of hand but he didn’t. It just goes to show – he wasn’t doing anything, he was on his way home to me, minding his own business. I feel that that’s being really judgemental because of the area we live in.” (Bournemouth)

Another participant added,

“I can relate to what you said about why young lads end up being negative about the police. Because that’s what happens, the police don’t treat them with respect when they do stop them and they get their backs up and a lot of people are quite anti-police. In the end it’s for the same reason, it’s them and the police.” (Bournemouth)

When one of the participants was asked whether they had been treated with respect when they had been stopped in the past they said,

“Sometimes, sometimes with disrespect – sometimes you are being picked on, singled out, stereotyping and stuff.” (Bournemouth)

One participant in the Blandford group explained that people don’t mind actually being stopped as long as they are respected.

“It’s good to stop and search but they’ve got to speak to people properly” (Blandford)

In the Wimborne group one participant had been stopped but said that the police were respectful and explained why they were stopping him.

“They were quite polite; there were two police officers who stopped me. They explained why they did it. I mean obviously at that time in the morning people cycling about in town, it could be anything. It was fair enough, I agreed with what they were doing. I had to explain to my boss that I was late because of that.” (Wimborne)

One participant from the Blandford group commented that he found being stopped and searched embarrassing.

“Sometimes it’s embarrassing in front of other people afterwards you feel so upset as well. Sometimes they get you in front of your friends or family and if the police are asking questions for nothing.” (Blandford)

There was some recognition that the Police have a tough job being respectful yet acting tough.

“At the same time, the police do have a rather fine line to walk haven’t they. They’ve got to be polite yet at the same time they’ve got to be firm to retain the respect of the public and it’s a very narrow sort of line. It is very easy to fall either way.” (Blandford)

30. Trust in the Police

In the Blandford group one participant said that in order for stop and search to work effectively the police need to be trusted.

“I mean, if the police behave in a way which encourages mistrust of them and the way they implement their duties then you have a major breakdown in the policing system and this all stems out of the need for a reason for stopping and searching because you can cause alienation from the public with the wrong implementation of those powers.” (Blandford)

This led to a discussion as to whether people trust the police

“I trust in the police but definitely we people of colour, there is always discrimination somehow, we people of colour there is always discrimination, almost every time.” (Blandford)

31. Different in Dorset

It was recognised that the situation in Dorset was different compared to other places in the UK.

“When it comes to Dorset because we people of colour are few it’s not as bad. If you go to places like London, Birmingham, Leeds, Liverpool, people of colour are targeted.” (Blandford)

32. Intrusive or Reassuring?

In Wimborne this question arose as to whether stop and search was intrusive or reassuring.

“If you are an innocent party it seems a bit off doesn’t it to go to that extent.”

“Or reassuring, that they take the trouble to check it out.”

33. Stop and Search – Police Powers

Participants were asked if they knew what the police powers were in regards to stop and search. People weren't aware of specific powers but a few participants knew that they had to have a reason for stopping and searching someone.

Participants were then told the specific powers in relation to stop and search

- The police have the legal right to stop members of the public and search them for various reasons.
- The grounds the police officer must have should be based on facts, information or intelligence or could be because of the way you are behaving. (exemption Terrorist threat or when a series crime has or may take place)
- The officer must be polite and respectful at all times. All stops and searches must be carried out with courtesy, consideration and respect.
- Must be used fairly, responsibly and without discrimination.
- The search will take place on the street
- If the officer asks you to remove more than your coat and gloves or anything worn for religious reasons they must take you somewhere out of public view.
- If English is not the person's first language and they do not understand why they have been stopped, the officer must take reasonable steps to inform them of their rights.

34. Are the rules followed?

In the Bournemouth and Blandford groups participants who had experienced stop and search were not convinced by the stop and search powers. It was generally felt that they could easily be abused.

“They stop you right and they just search you they don’t explain to you why. I’ve been stopped myself before and searched.” (Blandford)

“I’m sorry but I’ve got to laugh because if that was the case a lot of these other things wouldn’t happen. The grounds the police officer must have should be based on facts, information or intelligence. Well come on, they just do it at random. It’s never based on anything apart from the fact that they see you and don’t like you, they think you shouldn’t be there. Where do fact, information or intelligence come into that?” (Bournemouth)

Another respondent added

“I mean saying that – facts, information and intelligence. That is a big wide scope for the police to do what they want to do. If the police said, I’ve got information that someone saw you because they aren’t perfect, they do tell lies. Someone saw you trying to burgle that house down the road or trying to take a car. If the police stopped you and tell you that, whether it’s true or not, if you resist you get arrested, it’s as simple as that. That’s how they work – not all of them, I can’t tar all of them with the same brush but if they want to use that, they can use it with a wide scope because it’s there to be used for that.” (Bournemouth)

“It’s quite vague isn’t it” (Bournemouth)

Participants in the Blandford group felt that the powers were acceptable with regards to carrying out the procedure but felt that they weren’t followed in some cases.

“They’ve got to follow it properly though because some of them don’t.” (Blandford)

35. A need for Stop and Search

Most participants did feel there was a need for the police to have stop and search.

“With stuff that’s going on nowadays with people carrying guns, people getting stabbed up and stuff like that, yeah I think they should have the power to stop and search people, yeah, I certainly do because there is a lot of stuff going on which they do need the police to help and they do a good job, but some of them abuse it. There will always be a bad egg in the basket, it’s one of those things isn’t it?” (Bournemouth)

“It is an essential part of policing” (Blandford)

“The thing is, if they don’t use the powers how are they going to know whether you are innocent or guilty.” (Blandford)

“I suppose it is preventative as well, something could happen in the next few hours, if somebody is holding a weapon.” (Blandford)

One participant in the Blandford group found it strange that the police had to have a reason for stopping you

“That line of saying they must have a reason as to why they stop somebody I find it rather, I don’t know. I don’t accept it, I’d rather if they think they have to stop you, if it’s not that they necessarily know something about you but for security reasons because if people are innocent they shouldn’t worry about being stopped and searched.”

The participant went on to say that she was from a country where crime is a regular occurrence and therefore she supports stop and search.

“I come from a country where crime is like flowers and to me stop and search is a good thing to prevent anything from happening. It’s bad of course when you think you are innocent but when you are innocent then there is nothing wrong with them asking you or searching you. Because of the crime that is happening around for security reasons I support this stop and search to anybody.”

36. Why do the police use these powers?

When asked why they thought the Police used these powers a variety of reasons were provided,

“To enforce the law” (Blandford)

“I suppose it is preventative as well, something could happen in the next few hours, if somebody is holding a weapon.”

“Safer neighbourhoods”

“The positive side has got to be crime prevention, hasn't it? It's really what you are aiming at if they are suspects, someone is carrying a weapon or drugs. If they move quickly they can prevent a serious incident and injury.”

Generally participants were supportive of the police powers in relation to stop and search but felt they could easily be abused. When asked for ideas as to how these powers could be regulated no suggestions were generated and it was felt that the existing monitoring of Stop and Search should be better explained to the general public.

37. Monitoring stop and search

Participants were told that the police recorded ethnic origin after they had performed a stop/stop search. It was explained that the information was collected to monitor the policy and to check that officers aren't just stopping certain people from certain backgrounds. Participants in the Bournemouth group didn't feel any better about stop and search once they knew the police recorded this information. It was noted how difficult it was to explain the reasoning behind gathering ethnic group to participants and that it was not commonly seen as a mechanism for preventing prejudice within the Police service.

38. Recording of Ethnic Origin

“To be honest with you I think it’s rubbish. It’s proper rubbish, to put down where this person is from to make sure they are being treated rightly. It’s rubbish, there’s no need for that, at the end of the day people should be treated properly regardless of their colour or where they are from. The police do abuse their power and control, they know their job and power better than the likes of me at the end of the day. I don’t really know a lot about the police and how they work. They know about it a lot better than myself so they’ve got that yeah, and they use that to control people and abuse it. A lot of them do, the majority of them do, it’s as simple as that.” (Bournemouth)

At first some people in the Blandford couldn’t understand why the police had to collect this information,

“Could it not be said that the police officer who wants to use the power of stop and search and has just cause to do so. The person he is searching their ethnic background, religious belief whatever, is totally irrelevant. Why therefore do they need to ask that questions”

When the monitoring procedure was explained further then participants in that the group could understand why they collected the information.

39. Prejudice and Racism in the Police force

There was a general feeling prejudice in the police force still exists even though the police have to monitor this information. It was recognised in the stop and search focus groups and the equality scheme that prejudice is human nature.

“The way I see it racism is a thing what has always been in the police force, whether I like it or not or anyone likes it or not. It’s always been in the police force. I know there are not meant to be but there are still some who are. Everyone has got some form of prejudice in life, this is the way I see it.” (Bournemouth)

This was also commented upon in the Blandford group

“Yes, there are racists in the police, I know there is. A hell of a lot of it right, was kept quiet. I’ve seen the police go out and provoke people, if you are headstrong you’ll be alright but if you’re not headstrong right you get sucked into it. They provoke you to start.”

“There are some, I suppose you get it in all walks of life, some kind of bully tactics and I don’t think it will ever get stamped out to be honest.”
(Bournemouth)

There was mixed opinion as to whether the police should ask for ethnic origin in the Wimborne group.

“You shouldn’t have to should you. I don’t think you should have to say last year there was 40% of white people stopped where there was 60% of others stopped.”

“But you do want to be able to see if people are just stopping people due to their ethnic origin. You do need that information in order to find out.”

Generally when participants were first told that the police collect the ethnic identity of the person who is being stopped and search they couldn’t understand why it was necessary for the police to collect this information. It was thought that if they were not discriminative in the first place then there would be no need to collect this information.

40. Promotion and public awareness of this function

The three groups were asked about how the police should promote the stop and search function. All three came up with different ideas; Bournemouth said the best way of promoting the stop and search function is by example, Wimborne group proposed that the police should hold public meetings and the Blandford group suggested either producing a flyer or include information in the Safer Neighbourhood Scheme booklet.

“First of all by example, but you’re saying even before that. I think you can promote, you can advertise, you can do a lot of things but its got to be shown by example really. They’ve just got to do it. Everything like that will take time, their reputation has been built up over years. It’s not going to happen over night. The only way the public’s view will change is also by the way they conduct themselves. It’s a two way thing, it works both ways but it’s not going to happen over night and no public brochure or anything is going to do it because this is something that’s been long standing. The only way it’s going to change is by doing it.” (Bournemouth)

In Wimborne it was suggested that the Police should hold a public meeting once a month to promote what the police are doing and also use it as a way of promoting awareness of policies such as stop and search.

“They sent booklets didn’t they to every house, about the Safer Neighbourhood scheme, it was like a fat booklet. They did do a massive marketing thing to show that there are these special constables and stuff. I think it should be something that maybe should have its own purpose on its own and I think that is going direct to people’s doors, not necessarily in person but perhaps with a flyer to make people aware. I’ve got two small children and sometimes I feel intimidated going into town so I do strongly believe that if those powers are there that not just people who are stopped and searched but everybody, the diverse community that there is in Blandford should know about it. It’s actually quite a large catchment.” (Blandford)

41. Commitment to equality

Even though some participants were negative throughout the discussion about the use of stop and search it is necessary to remember that the majority of these experiences occurred outside of Dorset. Participants in both the Blandford and Bournemouth discussion groups did note that the police were getting better in their approach to equality.

“I think they try to do a better job, they are trying to do a good job. Like I said I keep referring back to it because I do work with some of them and everybody is individual in their own right you know, they are trying to get parts of the community together and get some kind of level ground so to speak where everyone can get together and understand what people’s needs are and get something positive going you know. “ (Bournemouth)

42. Training in communication

Participants in the Bournemouth group said that racism exists in the police force. When asked how they thought the police could address this they suggested that the police needed to be better trained in communicating with people and adapting their style depending on who they are talking to.

“They could be trained in how better to deal and approach other people and with different sexes and age groups as well. How do you approach somebody who’s in their forties and fifties – you don’t have to put that much effort in. How you approach a younger person, they have to stop and think and be a lot more aware of what they are saying and how they are approaching them because it’s a younger person and because the reaction that young person will give is going to be different to an older person and they should be trained to deal with that. Maybe older people, more mature people in the police force you know. People from more minorities that could actually talk to somebody on their level.” (Bournemouth)

“Well then their training should be upgraded as well then. They should have more people skills or go to counselling classes or whatever, they should improve their training.”

“As a way of improving it, if they were to enter into places like drug rehab centres, youth offender’s centres, homeless centres - by going into the community and targeting to the people they most have to confront – if they were to interact with those people and get a better understanding of them, that may also help. There’s no point in them going out and being all nice to everyone that’s go their fine jobs and their house and they’re not committing crimes anyway, what’s the point in that. For them to interact with people that they may come to deal with more often - they’re the ones they need to interact with.” (Bournemouth)

43. The 'bobby on the beat'

In Wimborne participants thought that in order for the police to improve their commitment to equality they need to be more visible and the idea of the "bobby on the beat" was suggested again.

"It comes back to what I said in the first place, if you've got a copper on his feet he gets talked to a lot more by the local people. He becomes a friend of the local people and on top of that on a programme on TV a while ago, they reckon a lot of crimes have been prevented by a copper on the beat because he knows what's going on." (Wimborne)

"You need the community bobby to go around mixing with the community and I'm sure that would reduce the amount of problems straight off. But they don't, they drive around in a blessed car and that's the only time you see them. It's not until they get into the habit of talking to the community that any improvement will be made in my book." (Wimborne)

It was discussed that in some places a policeman on foot wouldn't be the best solution but it was thought that it could work in Dorset.

"I think there are a lot of places in England where a policeman walking about on his own is not a sensible thing but Dorset is not one of them. I don't think their problems are quite that big. I think they could get a grip on it in a place like Dorset. Most of us are nearly retired. If they were talking about somewhere really rough like Derby or Leicester where the police do turn up and are mobbed." (Wimborne)

Another suggestion was for the local policeman to visit schools and make themselves known,

"It depends on how you do it as well. If the local policeman starts right at the beginning going to local junior schools and makes it known that he's there to protect them they get to know him and grow up with him. They'll have respect for a person like that." (Wimborne)

44. Stop and Search conclusion

It was difficult for people with no direct experience of Stop and Search to comment specifically on Stop and Search however everyone was able to give their views on the more general discussion. Those people who had been stopped and search generally had a quite negative view of their experience.

In order for stop and search to work effectively the police need to be trusted and the rules that ensure the fairness of stop and search need to be effectively explained. However, it was noted how difficult it was to explain the reasoning behind gathering ethnic group to participants and that it was not commonly seen as a mechanism for preventing prejudice within the Police service.

The rules that ensure the fairness of stop and search were generally thought acceptable but participants felt that they weren't followed in some cases.

It was noted that most negative stop and search experiences had occurred outside of the Dorset area and across all groups it was generally felt that Dorset Police behaved and acted with more equality than any other Police Service that respondents has been in contact with.

45. Overall conclusions and recommendations

Within Dorset there is a widely held consensus of support for Dorset Police. In fact residents who had lived in other locations in general had a higher regard for Dorset Police than those who had been long term residence. This support however, did not necessarily extend as far as an understanding of the importance of the equality scheme to the appropriate functioning of the police service. Residents' primary concerns related to the visibility of policing within Dorset.

Overall participants were generally supportive in what Dorset Police were proposing and actively doing in terms of equality, however most people thought that visibility of the police was more important than specifically concentrating on equality. It was thought that if the police were more visible within communities this would contribute to improving equality. In order for the police to improve its commitment to equality in Dorset they needed to be visible on the street and actively communicating with members of the communities.

We have seen on one hand that some people feel that the equality scheme almost proposes to accomplish too much but when looking at the specific policy of stop and search some people feel that there are prejudices in the police force that need to be addressed.

Key recommendations

1. Higher levels of visibility of the police in towns and villages.
2. Better communication of the need for equality policies and strategies and the methods of their implementation.
3. Consideration of outside organisations to promote and explain, in plain English, equality policies and strategies.
4. Better provision of data to the wider community about the diversity within that community and therefore the need for well considered equality policies and strategies.
5. Further review of the negative perceptions of Dorset Police held by longer term residents.
6. Further review of the positive perception (especially by those from the BME community) of Dorset Police in relation to other Police Services.