

**DEVON & CORNWALL CONSTABULARY POLICY & PROCEDURE D92
STAFF SUPPORT GROUPS**

VERSION DATED: 18/07/2005

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1. POLICY AUDIT IDENTIFICATION

- 1.1 This policy has been drafted in accordance with the principle of Human Rights legislation, Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the document is classified as 'OPEN' and therefore will be available for public disclosure.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

- 2.1 Devon & Cornwall Constabulary recognises that its workforce needs to reflect the communities we serve in order to increase trust and confidence in the police and ensure the Force offers an appropriate service to all communities in Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. The recruitment and retention of staff from minority groups is therefore essential. Staff from minority groups may have different needs to other staff and it is part of the Force's recruitment and retention strategy to ensure these are met. Self-organised staff support groups play an important part in ensuring this happens. It is also recognised that there are organisational as well as personal benefits to be gained from such groups.

3. INTRODUCTION

- 3.1 This policy sets out the procedure that must be followed by groups wishing to apply for formal recognition as a staff support group and the criteria such groups must meet. It also provides a definition of a staff support group.
- 3.2 The requirement for diversity support groups is accepted good practice in HR management and is endorsed by ACPO and the Home Office in the document 'Dismantling Barriers', available via the Force Library.

4. DEFINITION

4.1 For the purpose of this policy a staff support group is defined as a group set up by staff from minority groups for staff from minority groups to:

- * offer personal support to staff experiencing discrimination;
- * promote equal opportunities for all staff;
- * assist the Force in complying with Equal Opportunities legislation; advise and assist the Force in working towards good practice on diversity and promote better relations between the police service and minority groups within Devon and Cornwall.

5. ELIGIBILITY

5.1 In order to qualify for formal Force support, groups should be able to meet all the following criteria:

- * Evidence additional support needs resulting from discrimination experienced nationally or within the Force
- * Evidence that existing consultation mechanisms do not have access to the specialist knowledge required to meet the needs of staff from minority groups
- * Demonstrate that they promote better relations between the police service and minority groups within Devon and Cornwall and assist the Force in representative consultation
- * Offer direct and indirect support to staff
- * Promote equal opportunities for all staff
- * Assist the Force in complying with Equal Opportunities legislation
- * Advise and assist the Force in working towards good practice on diversity

6. PROCEDURE

6.1 Any group of colleagues that feels it meets the eligibility criteria above is able to apply for Force support.

6.2 A report covering all the eligibility criteria must be submitted to the Head of Human Resources (HR) who will assess the evidence for the group being considered a staff support group. The Head of HR will consult with the Force Diversity Manager before making a decision.

6.3 As the budget holder for staff support groups HR Department will make all decisions on whether to support a staff support group or not. They will base their decision on both the recommendation of the Force Diversity Manager and whether there are, for example, alternative funding options.

6.4 HR Department will notify the group of the success or failure of their application for staff support group status. These notifications will also, in the case of a successful application, lay out what support will be available.

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6.5 Where an application is not supported, appeal is via the Fairness @ Work Procedure.

7. SUPPORT OPTIONS

7.1 Support will be allocated to each group on the basis of identified need by 'HR' department. Different staff groups will have different needs and therefore each group will have a support package tailored to their needs. For this reason some groups will have a higher level of support than others. For example, a group for disabled staff will need minutes, agendas and other information produced in alternative formats for staff with visual impairments.

7.2 The maximum level of support for any group to consider is:

- * Annual equipment and administration budget
- * One mobile phone per group (or land line with remote voice mail facility)
- * Email address
- * Information on the Force intranet
- * In addition to the annual budget, funding for up to two places per group per year to attend the national conference of the national body the group is affiliated to if applicable. This includes travel and accommodation costs.
- * Members to be able to attend meetings in duty time (depending on operational imperatives) up to a maximum of six meetings in the year*
- * Provision of venue for agreed meetings
- * The type and availability of transport for those meetings where it is agreed staff can attend in duty time e.g. pool car or claim travel expenses.
- * Facility time to be available for one administrator per group up to a maximum of two days per month. Where the administration of the group is shared by more than one member, each member will have a proportion of the total facility time.

- The meetings members attend in duty time must directly tackle issues of discrimination. Social meetings should be attended in the member of staff's own time. (See PPS D303 available in Real Search (RS) on Religion & Belief: Staff Needs, for agreement re prayer time) [D303.doc](#)

8. MANAGEMENT AND FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS

8.1 HR Department will hold the budget for corporate support for 'staff support groups'. This is for all costs except those detailed below:

8.2 Abstraction and travel costs for staff attending 'staff support groups' will be met by members' own BCU and Departmental budgets. This spreads the costs across the Force and is a clear indication by managers that they value all staff.

8.3 Where there are additional costs related to a member of staff's role as Chair or Co-ordinator of a staff support group such as administration (e.g. photocopying and postage) and phone bill costs these will be met by the employing BCU or Department.

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- 8.4 If a member of any support group chooses to take up an Executive role on the national body they are affiliated to, they must make a business case within their own BCU or Department for the time needed to carry out their Executive responsibilities. For Police staff reference should be made to special leave (see the Police Staff Handbook). Where a BCU or Department does not agree to duty time for this purpose appeal is through the Fairness @ Work Procedure.
- 8.5 Staff support group co-ordinators will meet regularly with the Force Diversity Manager and ensure the FDM is fully aware of any issues being raised by group members that may need raising with management. Individual members confidentiality will not be breached.

9. FORCE COMMITTEES AND WORKING GROUPS

- 9.1 Where group members are invited by the Force to attend meetings such as the Diversity Board or a working group this will always qualify for duty time and is not counted as facility time. However this must be negotiated with the relevant BCU or department and is dependent on operational imperatives.

10. RECORD KEEPING

- 10.1 As self-organised groups, staff support groups are not obliged to make minutes of their meetings public under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.
- 10.2 Staff support group co-ordinators are responsible for ensuring all records (including minutes) are kept confidential in a secure place.
- 10.3 Staff support group co-ordinators must ensure they are compliant with the Data Protection Act 1998 with regard to any personal information kept on members.

11. REVIEW

- 11.1 The annual review of this guideline is the responsibility of Commander Human Resources Department.