



Independent Police Ethics Committee

Applicant pack

About the committee

To help build trust and public confidence in policing, Greater Manchester's Independent Ethics Committee advises the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime, and Greater Manchester Police on the complex dilemmas that policing faces in the modern world.

The committee has been given a wide remit, with GMP pledging to give access to the service's systems and people. When established in 2014, it was the first of its type in the country.

The committee decides which issues it wants to consider, as well as having issues referred in by both GMP and the Deputy Mayor. Members of the public can raise issues with the committee - but it does not consider individual complaints about police.

The committee considers both broad thematic issues - such as discrimination, safe drug use, and surveillance - and practical day-to-day issues, such as the use of body-worn cameras by police officers.

Professional ethics is far broader than integrity alone. It incorporates the requirement to give an account of one's judgments, acts and omissions. In simple terms, it is not only about doing the right deed but also about doing it for the right reason.

By having an ethics committee, the Deputy Mayor Kate Green and Chief Constable Stephen Watson are making an explicit and public commitment to transparent, ethical policing in Greater Manchester that is subjected to rigorous independent review and advice.

The committee's work

Since it has been established, the committee has delivered a significant programme of work, on both a planned and responsive basis. Work the committee has conducted includes:

Body-worn video

One of the first major pieces of work carried out was into the ethical considerations of police officers using body-worn videos. Technological advances mean that police can now use affordable cameras which provide high-quality images and audio which can be used for evidential purposes.

The committee considered the ethical dimensions of if, when and how these cameras should be used by police officers and police community support officers. As part of its research, the committee held focus groups with a range of community representatives and police. The committee published a report which summarised its findings and made 14 recommendations for GMP and the PCC's office to consider before deploying the technology widely.

The research helped formulate GMP's policy on the use of the technology, which has now been issued to all frontline police officers.

Whistle-blowing

Committee members reviewed GMP's policy and practices around whistle-blowing, as well as meeting with a range of police officers of varying ranks, and the Professional Standards Branch.

Use of force and weaponry such as Tasers

The committee reviewed a random sample of incidents involving Tasers to ensure GMP's use of the weapon was appropriate and ethically-sound. This was generated from a wider look at how GMP deploys weaponry, and how force is used within policing.

Human tissue retention

Following an audit of human tissue being stored by GMP, the service discovered that there were a number of cases, dating back to 1987, where tissue belonging to deceased victims of crime had been retained by GMP without family members being informed.

GMP requested advice from the committee to ensure the proposed policy the service was taking to informing family members was ethically-sound.

Children and policing

The committee has considered the ethical issues around how the police interact with young people in general, and specifically the treatment of young people in custody. This work has involved focus groups with young people and engagement with custody staff, appropriate adult volunteers, and independent custody visitor volunteers.

Use of data

The committee considered the way in which the police used personal information in both the public and private domain when carrying out activities such as vetting, gathering intelligence and issuing public appeals, and provided advice to GMP on the ethical handling of personal information.

Spit guards

Committee members have recently received reports on the proposed introduction of spit guards within GMP. The Spit Guard is a lightweight mesh garment that is placed over a person's head, to help minimise the risk of blood borne viruses and injuries associated with a suspect biting and spitting. It is not applied until an instance of spitting and biting has occurred, but can help prevent further instances of such behaviour. The guards would only be used where required and would only be applied by trained staff within the custody suites.

Members reviewed samples of the hoods and asked questions as to the use within the custody environment and on young people. Further reports will be brought back to the Committee to review training, implementation and use.

Police employment of people with criminal records

The committee looked at how people are vetted for careers within policing, and what considerations are given to grant employment to those with criminal records. The committee considered whether decisions or processes made by GMP's vetting section were grounded in ethical principles and standards, and how that compliance is measured.

The committee reviewed GMP's processes, other national guidelines, and the approach taken in other professions. They met with GMP's vetting unit and produced a report with several recommendations around transparency, sustainability and equality.

Use of data

The committee considered the way in which the police used personal information in both the public and private domain when carrying out activities such as vetting, gathering intelligence and issuing public appeals, and provided advice to GMP on the ethical handling of personal information.

Engagement with police officers and staff

The committee always aims to ensure it does not have to rely on the word of senior officers from GMP and, where possible, hears from the front-line when considering ethical dilemmas.

The committee has also directly engaged with front-line officers with specific learning sessions around ethics and integrity where officers were able to speak openly and frankly about how they can embed ethics into the day-to-day business of policing.

Role profile

Responsibilities

The committee will aim to be a key contributor to the general trust and confidence strategy of Greater Manchester Police and will contribute to developing trust and confidence in the following ways:

- To increase the legitimacy of GMP across the communities of Greater Manchester.
- To influence ethical changes in force policy.
- To contribute to the debate on the Police policies and practices.
- To act proactively in anticipating and understanding future ethical challenges that the police service will face and to influence GMP's response.
- To promote the use of a 'The National Decision Model, to improve understanding of discretion and ethical decision making across the spectrum of policing.
- To articulate and promote the influence of professional ethics in all aspects of policing.
- To share local issues and best practice which are of a national interest with other Police forces.

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Person specification

Essential Criteria

Knowledge and experience

- Relevant qualification and / or proven experience that enables you to express informed views about complex ethical issues.
- Experience in one or more of the following areas:
 - Specific Policing and Criminal Law
 - Legal Expertise
 - Media
 - Applied ethics
 - Medical/NHS
 - Business/Commerce
 - Accountability to the public
 - Professional or personal connection to Greater Manchester through community service/partnership working/voluntary work
- Knowledge and understanding of ethical principles, and how they apply to the police service.
- Active participation in an area of work or interest in which ethics is a core dimension.
- Members should have excellent communications skills, be willing to attend scheduled meetings and be willing to carry out additional work outside of planned meetings.

Desirable criteria

- Current or previous membership of a group where there is an ethical dimension.
- Experience of community work, projects or advisory groups whether in the private sector or voluntary sector.

About the role

Length of term: Two years

Allowances: Members receive an allowance of £1,000, and an attendance allowance of £211.50 per day or £104.50 per half day, along with reasonable expenses. This allowance is in line with Home Office guidance.

Process

To apply to become a member of Greater Manchester's Independent Police Ethics Committee, please email ethics.committee@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk with a cover letter setting out why you want to be a member of the committee and what skills you can bring to the role. Please also send an up-to-date CV and complete the monitoring form.

We are committed to ensuring that the committee is representative of Greater Manchester's geography and diversity, as well as having a gender balance. We would therefore be particularly keen to hear from people from black and ethnic minority communities, and LGBT communities.

Successful candidates, subject to reference and criminal records checks, will be invited for induction meetings with the chair.

If you would like more information, please email ethics.committee@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk