



I PAG Report

Consultation and engagement with the communities in Kent during and following a Tier 3 Critical Incident

Report compiled by:

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Group**

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Background

In May 2013 a member of the armed forces was assaulted and killed in South East London. The victim was allegedly assaulted by two males with a number of weapons; the offenders were subsequently incapacitated by police and underwent hospital treatment whilst under armed guard.

The media reported that both suspects were Britons of Nigerian descent and converts to Islam. Community tensions were raised across the UK and within hours, Assistant Chief Constable Gary Beautridge declared this a tier 3 Critical Incident and assumed the role of Gold Commander.

This report will detail the work undertaken between Kent Police and community groups in response to the incident. It summarises the feedback from communities and offers recommendations for future working arrangements between community groups and Kent Police.

Report by Kulbir Pasricha, Community Liaison, Strategic Partnership and Service Delivery

Kent Police Mission, "Provide a first class service protecting and serving the people of Kent"

As Strategic Lead on Community Liaison for Kent Police I manage Community Liaison Officers (CLOs) and deal with policy and procedural issues relevant to community liaison activities which assist to develop, maintain and improve positive relationships between Kent Police and the diverse communities of Kent. This has been achieved through specialised community knowledge and use of local contacts to ensure that Kent Police take a measured and understanding approach to dealing with sensitive issues.

I recognise the importance and value of the work of our volunteers such as the Independent Police Advisory Group (IPAG) and Independent Critical Incident Advisors (ICIAs) where members bring along independent thoughts and views to meetings, which we use to benefit service delivery from a community perspective and engender trust and confidence in our service.

Following the incident in London, I was immediately involved in the Gold Group (working with Bronze engagement) chaired by ACC Beautridge, Head of the Serious Crime Directorate. My involvement consisted of:

- Setting up and running a community impact cell;
- The creation and delivery of a daily monitoring system from 0800 hrs to 2200 hrs with at least one Community Liaison Officer (CLO) working on outside of normal office hours with me;
- The creation of a clear communication strategy to CLOs and Independent Critical Incident Advisors (ICIAs) which included tactical advice and involvement from ICIAs early on, previous Chair of SIAG involvement, communications to SMTs, CLOs, CEOs and other key individuals;
- *Regular contact with the Communities Together Strategic Engagement Team (CTSET) in MPS regarding good practice and lessons learned (this was unique);*

- Delivering key messages to communities i.e. reassurance;
- Meeting with military contacts;
- Liaison with partner agencies such as KFRS;
- Exit strategy with the Community Liaison Co-ordinator (bearing in mind the suspects preliminary hearing is end of September 2013 therefore the monitoring of tensions will continue);
- Working with other key staff in the force such as Neighbourhood Policing, Intelligence departments, Community Safety Units;
- Involvement of Staff Support Associations/Equality Champions as appropriate;
- Working with the Critical Incident Commander and providing feedback to the Critical Incident Review Board.

At the time of this incident, the Independent Advisory Group (IAG) was undergoing a transition into a new structure (Independent Police Advisory Group - IPAG). Chairs/Vice Chairs and members had not been selected therefore a full and effective involvement of members could not be carried out.

However, the previous Chair of the Strategic Independent Advisory Group (SIAG), Mr Barry Coppock, was involved. I was also asked to carry out the role of Independent Critical Incident Advisor (ICIA) and the Community Liaison Team (CLT), including Community Liaison Officers (CLOs), were involved in contact with community groups, partner agencies and other key individuals.

During and after the incident, I ensured that we constantly monitored tensions and reviewed our consultation and engagement with communities utilising the knowledge and expertise of the CLOs working in partnership with other key staff/volunteers/agencies.

I acutely recognise that an exit strategy has to be in place when any incident affects community relations and our approach so far was recognised as good practice by the College of Policing who have made similar comments to the Policing Minister.

“The Police are the Public and the Public are the Police” - Sir Robert Peel.

Report by Gurvinder Sandher, Chair of the County I PAG

The incident that took place in London in May 2013 had an impact well beyond London. Here in Kent I was very pleased with not only the positive response shown by Kent Police but also the resilience of the local communities who came in full force to condemn this atrocity and to stand shoulder to shoulder with one another.

I was given an early briefing by Kent Police about what was unfolding in London and quickly briefed local community partners about what had just happened. The response of Kent Police to this incident and their commitment to engage the diverse communities did not surprise me. All the years of hard work in engaging with the community and building up relationships was borne out by the calm considered response of local community groups and individuals.

Over the course of May 22nd and 23rd I was in regular contact with both Kent Police and our community partners. I am aware of the extensive outreach work that was

undertaken, for example with the Dartford and Gravesend Muslim Association. I also independently conducted an interview with ITV Meridian where I underlined the confidence the community had with not only Kent Police but also our local community partners.

Having looked at the feedback provided by members of the IPAG from around the County it is clear that local communities overall were pleased by the proactive response of Kent Police. Nonetheless where IPAG members felt better communication was required, this is something that I along with members of the County IPAG will look at in further detail. However, I think it is important to understand that this incident took place at a time when we were in a period of transition from the old IAG setup in to the new IPAG model.

The communication strategy included a press statement which was released at 2200 hrs on the day of the incident, which included reassurance and key messages.

Kent Police press statement:

Kent Police is providing a visible presence in communities across Kent to ensure that people across the county are safe, following the incident in Woolwich, South East London today, 22nd May 2013.

The Metropolitan Police Service is investigating the incident and working to establish the circumstances of the attack in which a man died at 2.20pm.

Whilst there is no intelligence to suggest any direct threat to anyone living in the county, Kent Police has additional resources across the region to provide a presence in potentially vulnerable communities.

Assistant Chief Constable Gary Beautridge said: 'We are working with local communities and partners whilst the Metropolitan Police investigate the full circumstances around this incident. We are providing high visibility policing in areas across Kent and would appeal for people to stay calm and work with us to ensure the safety of everyone in our county.'

Statement from Mr Barry Coppock:

Barry Coppock, chairman of the Strategic Independent Advisory Group, said: "I am liaising and attending meetings with Kent Police on a regular basis and I, in turn, have actively engaged with many representatives and leaders in the community to ensure that people know what is happening, why police are present around the county and how officers are working with us to ensure our safety.

"The feedback from people has been really positive; they are pleased with the police approach and their commitment to keep us all safe."

Use of ICIA's in Op Latitude

ICIAs are members of the community who have knowledge around a community of place or community of interest; they are security vetted and receive relevant awareness training for their role. They offer independent, critical advice, for example during the on-going management of a critical incident and can help the police by:

- developing sensitive and effective policing
- challenging assumptions and mind sets
- demonstrating openness and accountability
- providing independent advice from a community perspective
- building trust and confidence with families, individuals and communities

Their role is strategic, advising those dealing with an incident or the impact of the incident and its policing on communities. They are NOT investigators, mediators, advocates or intermediaries.

The advice given by an ICIA is independent of the Police and therefore the ICIA carries no responsibility or liability for outcomes of decisions based upon any advice given. Responsibility for delivering against that advice rests wholly with the police.

1) The facts about the incident and key messages from Kent Police with a request for feedback (at least 50% were emailing/ringing views and feedback) were circulated by the Community Liaison Team to the ICIAs within 24 hours of the incident taking place.

2) Timely feedback from ICIAs. For example we became aware of a text message with inflammatory content sent to an ICIA who immediately contacted Kulbir Pasricha. Contact was made with the Metropolitan Police and it was established that the incidents referred to within the text message **had not taken** place, namely assaults against Muslim women and boys.

All ICIAs, CLOs, SIAG, JIU, NCTT (National Community Tension Team) and other key individuals were immediately informed of the following:

"Kent Police is aware of rumours of an assault in Edgware Road, London and rumours of an assault involving three Asian boys. The Metropolitan Police has confirmed that these are untrue. Kent Police continues to patrol and provide reassurance in the county."

It is important to note that two days previously, the same message was being circulated in Wales and on Facebook – Asian Shout, therefore the timely update provided to the NCTT ensured other forces could provide timely reassurance and minimise community tensions.

Key messages circulated to communities/groups through multiple sources:

- 1) Remain calm and report any incidents/concerns to Kent Police reiterating the contact details of 999 and 101;
- 2) Reassure that they will see increased visibility of police in potentially vulnerable areas;
- 3) The Kent Police Community Liaison Officers and other key people have been speaking and reassuring contacts across the Communities of Kent and they can be contacted via 101;

- 4) A reminder that Kent Police is taking a zero tolerance approach to any reports of Hate Crime or what may be retaliation incidents in the wake of the events in London;
- 5) People are urged to report any suspicious activity to Kent Police on 999.
- 6) Kent Police is appealing for people to work with us to ensure the safety of everyone in Kent. To keep up to date with Kent Police you can follow us on Twitter: @kent_police or visit our website: www.kent.police.uk

POST INCIDENT FEEDBACK

Feedback from IPAGs

The new IPAG structure was implemented on 1st July 2013 and at the first meeting, the members were asked about their views/feedback around this incident and how Kent Police consulted and engaged with the communities across Kent.

The IPAG members who were already ICIAAs and/or community contacts for CLOs were aware of some of the information and subsequent reassurance that was provided to the residents of Kent.

The members commented on their willingness to be involved and the importance of their roles to shape service delivery, key to engendering trust and confidence within the communities of Kent. They reiterated that consultation and engagement with IPAGs is vital so the force can understand the diverse nature of the communities.

A breakdown of the feedback provided in the July Divisional IPAG meetings is available on request from the Community Liaison Team.

Feedback received via PCC office

Mr Mohammed Uddin, General Secretary of the Tunbridge Wells Islamic and Cultural Association, posted the following comment on 4th August 2013:

"On behalf of the Tunbridge Wells Islamic and Cultural Association, I would like to thank Kent Police for their support and understanding during the difficult times the Muslim community has gone through since the Woolwich Incident.

The police officers have been fantastic, we had continuous contact and special visits to our evening classes to reassure the parents, teachers and children who take part in the after-school religious education. We had meeting with the officers to discuss the safety concerns. The police officer also organised the fire service visit and emergency radio control. A big thank you."

Recommendations

The Community Liaison Team provided updates to the College of Policing regarding the relevant strategies and subsequently the Home Office has indicated Kent Police has good practices around Community Engagement and Consultation.

However, taking account everything that took place, the following recommendations have been made around future involvement of IPAGs when managing a Tier 3 Critical Incident:

- 1) In the event of a tier 3 critical incident, or other such relevant incident taking place, fast track actions include immediate contact being made with the County IPAG Chair who will then provide consultation and engagement, as appropriate, with Divisional IPAG Chairs/Vice Chairs;
- 2) Appropriate involvement of County IPAG Chair at Gold Group;
- 3) Appropriate ICIA's identified through IPAGs and through pool of ICIA's to be involved at Gold Group;
- 4) Regular feedback to IPAGs around relevant issues (National and Local) following the Critical Incident;
- 5) Involvement of IPAGs in the exit strategy to ensure Kent Police maintain the trust and confidence of the communities;
- 6) Review of lessons learned and good practice involving IPAGs post incident by the Force and the County IPAG;
- 7) A statement from County IPAG Chair to be included in Kent Police press releases, including social media, during and after any significant incident.

A press release regarding the new IPAG structure has been released end of August 2013 to all media so they are aware of the new model.

In conclusion

Albeit the IPAGs were entering a new structure when the incident occurred, there was still an effective Gold Structure in place that took into account the importance of community consultation and engagement through neighbourhood teams, Community Liaison Officers, partnerships and other key individuals/groups.

This report has highlighted the work undertaken between Kent Police Community Liaison Team and community groups/volunteers including the ICIA's and summarises the feedback from the IPAGs.

There are also recommendations for future working arrangements between the County IPAG and Kent Police in response to future Tier 3 Critical Incidents/other significant incidents.

This report is therefore seeking approval from DCC Alan Pughsley for the recommendations above.