



07 July 2014

Dear X,

Undercover Meeting Letter

Thank you for attending the first meeting of the Undercover Oversight Group on Tuesday 1st July 2014. We are grateful for your contribution. Since the meeting we have had some positive and helpful feedback. The underlying concept, of inviting challenge and review of our work in respect of Undercover Policing, has been well received.

At our meeting we had a wide ranging discussion and three key themes emerged: Understanding the evidence; being more transparent and open; and inviting independent scrutiny.

Developing an evidence base

Some of the questions debated, that might help us shape both our standards and our approach to the management of undercover policing, included the following:

- We need a better understanding of what is happening across the UK. How many deployments, for what sort of crimes, applying what range of tactics to what result?
- What would the public think about such approaches? How can we test more systematically public perceptions and issues of public acceptability?
- What impact and affect does being an undercover officer have on culture and behaviours of those involved?

There may be further areas of research that others may identify. Ben Bowling and Chris xxx offered to develop some of the above themes into possible research proposals.

The development of greater transparency

We touched upon the way undercover policing is explained and reported in the UK, the secrecy that surrounds it and the lack of understanding by commentators and the wider public. Our approach to broadening understanding and knowledge of the tactic would be shaped by the research described above. It was felt, however, that we could helpfully shed more light on what was going on.

While the current reviews and enquiries were looking at what has gone wrong there needed to be more balance in the public discourse with better explanation of how the tactic contributes to public safety. There was a discussion about the different approaches to media coverage and publicity about undercover policing in other jurisdictions, most notably the US. We asked ourselves what lessons we could learn from elsewhere.

Bob Satchwell and Peter Jukes agreed to consider and propose some ideas and observations on the development of Transparency in this area of policing.

Independent and public focused scrutiny of the way officers are selected and trained

There was general agreement that some degree of independent and impartial scrutiny of selection and training could add value in both shaping the processes and helping reassure people that the right standards were being set at the start of an undercover officer's career. In addition, some discussion suggested we could go further and consider a senior oversight of the conduct of undercover policing that reflects the role of the Independent Reviewer of the use of Counter-Terrorist Legislation.

We agreed to develop proposals to provide a "lay visitor" type scrutiny of undercover selection and training. We would need to consider appropriate vetting and how they can see both the actual training and the core materials.

Dave Tucker and Gordon Ryan were asked to develop some proposals for the next meeting.

As well as the above themes we explored the issues and concerns of individual participants. We touched on the terms of reference on a few occasions, but did not discuss them in depth. I have amended them slightly to reflect the thrust of some of our discussion which included the need to prevent abuse of the tactic. We may wish to spend a bit more time on the terms of reference at the next meeting.

I mentioned, above, the vetting required for access to certain materials and background information. We may wish to discuss how the vetting rules are set, what it means in practice and for the scrutiny we wish to apply to this area of policing.

Finally, I recognise participation in the group was arranged at short notice and involved calling upon the knowledge and networks of colleagues and stakeholders. As you know, we are trying to develop a proof of concept for future challenge and scrutiny groups and we would welcome your observations about how we might secure appropriate membership and participation for future groups that might address other subjects and issues.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rob Beckley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

DCC Rob Beckley
Chief Operating Officer
College of Policing