

Haringey Community & Police Consultative Group Feedback on MPS Overt filming Standard Operating Procedure

Haringey Community & Police Consultative Group was asked to consult with the members of its mailing list on the MPS Overt Standard Operating Procedure document. The following is a summary of the comments received divided into different categories.

1. Positive Perceptions

Resentment and concern are natural reactions to such measures, but they also act as good deterrents, i.e. similar to uniformed presence or police cars.

The Committee of the West Green Residents' Association gave some consideration to the Policy Document (Overt Filming SOP Version 5) and its meeting last evening and saw no reasons for concern.

It was agreed that older and vulnerable people welcome 'overt filming' and would love to see greater involvement of the police in tackling anti-social behaviour and crime by whatever means.

A respondent said that he/she feel very insecure living in Tottenham, and welcomes any measures which might improve the security of local residents. The respondent continued by stating he/she have studied the attached documents carefully and believes it is entirely reasonable, if not over-cautious in wishing to avoid giving offence.

It was felt that ...if the police think it is necessary and cost effective then in their opinion they should go ahead.

2. Negative Perceptions

2.1. Overt filming has potential to raise undue concern within the area being filmed - negative connotations about the area and its safety.

2.2. A respondent stated that he/she can recognise the justification for overt filming where there is a disturbance which is likely to cause injury to persons or to property.

His/her concern is that overt filming may be extended to situations where it is not warranted, for example to peaceful demonstrations which have been approved beforehand.

he/she recognise in particular that two safeguards are proposed in the policy statement, namely that: (a) the requirements of the Data Protection Act will be met; and (b) overt filming will nevertheless only be used on the authority of a senior police officer. Whilst not being familiar with the relevant provisions of the DPA, he/she is not confident that the DPA is always and everywhere observed. Further, he/she can imagine situations in which a police officer authorises the use of overt filming in good faith, but where it is subsequently found to have been unwarranted. He/she is concerned over the privacy issues which then arise? Will records

be destroyed in such situations? If so, who will order their deletion and will ensure that they have in fact been deleted?

As a general principle he/she is concerned at the growing pervasiveness of everyday surveillance. The respondent need to know more about the situations in which overt filming will be used before he/she can accept it.

3. The rights of the individual filmed

A respondent asked the question - can people who are filmed demand copies?

4. The filming of children

It is widely published that Photography of children under 'friendly' circumstances requires permission (published or not), does this not apply to Police photography? Can it be justified ethically?

5. Filming the Public

A member of Neighbourhood Watch believes that it is not necessary to put signs up to say that overt filming is in progress. If it is "overt" you don't need a notice as well. We have far too many signs as it is.

He said that the point about sensitivity is well-taken. For example, he had a traffic warden come to his Legal Advice Centre in a great state about members of the public (local councillor in fact) taking photographs of him at his business! He was worried that his picture might appear in campaign leaflets, possibly exposing him to even more harassment and abuse than he gets at the moment. The point is that people, even law enforcement officers, get nervous about being photographed by people they don't trust: it cuts both ways can the police officers bear this in mind.

6. Timescales

Some respondents suggested that it would also be useful to know timescales - how long would a phase of overt filming last, and how frequent.

7. Case Studies

It was suggested that it may be useful if a few case studies could be added to the consultation exercise to demonstrate use and success of this method - it might help people understand the need (including young people).

A number of respondents felt that the community would appreciate feedback or information already available on the evidence that these methods are effective in reducing / preventing crime and what sorts of crime.