



Freedom of Information Act Publication Scheme	
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Title	The Management of Witness Agreements Policy Monitoring Report.
Version	Version 1
Summary	<p>This is the 1st document describing the results of the monitoring of the Management of Witness Agreements Policy. The document describes the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• extent of compliance with the policy;• progress towards realising its intended benefits, including the effect of the policy on MPS performance; and• the impact on people both within and outside the MPS, particularly in regard to the approach adopted by the MPS Equalities Scheme in relation to the protected characteristics of diversity (Age; Disability; Pregnancy & maternity; Race; Religion or belief; Sex; Sexual orientation; Gender reassignment; and Marriage & civil partnerships). It is completed in compliance with the Equality Act 2010.
Branch / OCU	Covert Policing Standards Board
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Purpose

Sections 71-74 of the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act 2005 provide the statutory framework for witness agreements. Witness agreements are the preferred method for those seeking to obtain immunity from prosecution, or other sentencing benefit, for crimes they have committed in exchange for providing evidence or intelligence against other offenders.

The purpose of the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) Management of Witness Agreements policy is to ensure a consistent, structured approach across the MPS when dealing with Assisting Offenders who wish to enter into a witness agreement. The policy, supported by the MPS Assisting Offenders Debriefing Manual, sets minimum corporate standards that ensure the integrity of the intelligence or evidence obtained, and that limited MPS finances and resources are only deployed where there is a genuine contribution to be made to law enforcement and MPS objectives.

Monitoring

Adherence to the policy and its supporting manual are enforced through a number of mechanisms:

- Every approach made by, or to, an Assisting Offender must be registered with the MPS Assisting Offender Debrief Unit. This unit will ensure that appropriately trained officers are deployed to scope and, if required, subsequently debrief an Assisting Offender. They have oversight and provide guidance on all aspects of debriefing Assisting Offenders.
- The Assisting Offender Debrief Unit is the single point of contact between the MPS and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS). The CPS will issue no witness agreements unless they have been processed through that Unit.
- A facility exists within the Covert Policing Standards Unit for independent review in the event of system failures; where an investigation into the circumstances can be undertaken.

Registering every approach made between Assisting Offenders and the MPS allows the organisation to maintain accurate statistics. These statistics allow the MPS to monitor many aspects of this activity from, volume and outcomes to the diversity profile of those involved in the process.

Conclusion

Monitoring within the last year indicates that adherence to this new MPS policy and the associated manual is high. There have been no reported breaches of operational security or compromised operations that have required independent review.

The first year of this new policy has now set the benchmark in relation to many of the statistics that will continue to be monitored, but it is too early to draw any conclusions from data gathered so far.

Monitoring has not identified any adverse impact by the MPS Management of Witness Agreements Policy on any group, within or outside the MPS, on the basis of race, sexual orientation, disability, age, religion or belief and pregnancy and maternity. Although not specifically monitored to date it is unlikely that groups within the other protected characteristics of gender reassignment and marriage and civil partnerships would be adversely impacted by this policy. Monitoring continues to identify that very few women are involved in the witness agreement process. Nothing within the Management of Witness Agreements Policy has been identified as being responsible for this disproportionate representation. The cause is believed to relate to the fact that women make up such a small percentage of the prison population within England and Wales that there are fewer of them to approach police or be approached by police to become an Assisting Offender.

Associated Documents

None.