

London Policing Ethics Panel Minutes of Meeting

Monday, 14 August 2023

Membership

Dr Suzanne Shale (Chair)
Dr Jyoti Belur
Professor Jennifer Brown
Abdul Hye Miah
Professor Bryan Edwards

Research Adviser

Professor Ben Bradford, Institute of Global City Policing (apologies)

Observers

Chief Inspector Ben Smith, MPS
James Bottomley, MOPAC
Alf Harris, MOPAC

Minutes of Meeting

1. The minutes of the July meeting were approved.

Chair's Update

2. The Chair had recently met with the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime and updated the Panel on the issues they discussed:
 - The Deputy Mayor thanked the Panel for the commentary it provided on implementing the Police Foundation's Principles for Accountable Policing. MOPAC has found it a very useful resource to assist with the establishment of the London Policing Board. It was agreed that this commentary would be published on the Panel's website.
 - The Met's 'VAWG 100' programme and the advice that the Panel has provided to the MPS on the pilot, a version of which the Panel will be publishing on its website (paragraph 3 below refers).
 - The Met's roll-out of Right Care Right Person. The Chair advised the Deputy Mayor that due to her work as a Non-Executive Director of the Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust, any work that the Panel might do on this topic would be led by the Panel's Deputy Chair, Professor Jennifer Brown.
 - The Panel's project on Police Officers in schools. The Deputy Mayor advised that she was also interested in the wider issue of how all Police Officers interacted and dealt with children.
 - The Deputy Mayor advised that MOPAC was undertaking a review of how the MPS had implemented the recommendations in the Panel's 2019 report on the use of Live Facial Recognition.
 - The development of the Panel's future work plan.

- The Deputy Mayor commended the Panel on quality of its work and the number of issues that it has reported on.
3. The Chair advised that, due to the operational nature of some of its content, she had been discussing with the MPS the publication of the Panel's advice on the Met's VAWG 100 pilot programme. The Chair is working on an abbreviated version of the report that is suitable for publication and it is expected that this will be ready in the autumn, along with the MPS's response.
 4. The Chair brought to the Panel's attention the Home Office's call for applications for members for its Biometrics and Forensics Ethics Group.

MPS Digital and IT Update

5. The Chair updated the Panel on discussions she had recently had with the MPS's Chief Information Officer and outlined the wide range of technological innovations in policing that were at various stages of consideration in the MPS.
6. The Panel noted that a lot of important ethical questions might arise from the technology that is being developed for use in policing. It was important that the MPS received ethical advice, but the Panel might not have the capacity nor the right knowledge and expertise for this. It agreed that it would consider how it might address this.
7. The Panel discussed the proposal they have suggested to the MPS – that they hold a roundtable discussion to get an understanding of what is on the horizon for data-driven policing and to outline the ethical issues that they should include in their considerations.

Policing in Schools

8. The Panel noted the key objections that some people and organisations have regarding having Police Officers embedded in schools. Objections given included:
 - Unfairness and the risk of stigmatisation.
 - Schools where police were present were more likely to have crimes recorded.
 - Lack of evidence that it builds trust.
 - Confusion regarding where boundaries were for police in schools.
 - Means of punitive punishment for "problem" pupils.
 - Over-policing and criminalisation of young people in schools that have a Safer Schools Officer.
 - Unfairness to pupils depending on how schools are selected to have a Safer Schools Officer.
 - Lack of an evidence-base that it is effective on what it seeks to achieve and the underlying assumption that it will reduce bullying, ASB and exclusion.
9. Alf Harris gave an update on MOPAC's priorities for the Safer Schools Officer role, in particular relating to disproportionality. There is a need for transparency and communication of the role, and for understanding what young people and the community would like the role to be. MOPAC would also like to see more community engagement with the training and recruitment of Safer Schools Officers.

10. The Panel recognised that MOPAC was generally supportive of Safer Schools Officers, and that the Panel's contribution should be to focus on the specifically ethical principles in play. It agreed to do further work to define the ethical issues ahead of its September meeting.
11. The Panel agreed it could be of value to engage with the people and organisations who had strong views on Safer Schools Officers and the Panel would develop a plan for getting this input.

Right Care Right Person

12. The Panel discussed the Met's implementation of the Right Care Right Person approach that it is rolling out later in the year. They agreed that they would keep under review whether there would be benefit in providing ethical advice to MOPAC or the MPS on any aspects of it.

The Panel's next meeting will be on 11 September 2023