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## **INDEPENDENT ADVISORY GROUPS (IAG): MANAGING THE DIVIDE BETWEEN COMMUNITIES AND POLICE IN KNOWLEDGE SHARING AND UNDERSTANDING**

**Date:** November 24, 2022

*Disclaimer: This briefing note contains the encapsulation of views presented by the speaker and does not exclusively represent the views of the Canadian Association for Security and Intelligence Studies.*

### **KEY EVENTS**

On November 24, 2022, Dr. Rachael Aplin, Senior Lecturer of Policing at York St. John University, presented *Independent Advisory Groups (IAG): Managing the Divide Between Communities and Police in Knowledge Sharing and Understanding*. The presentation was followed by a question-and-answer period with questions from the audience and CASIS-Vancouver executives. The key points discussed were the value and role of IAGs, the principal issues identified and addressed, and the challenges and benefits that the groups present.

### **NATURE OF DISCUSSION**

#### **Presentation**

Dr. Aplin presented on the value of Independent Advisory Groups (IAGs), explored through her research on the policing of Honour Based Abuse, Forced Marriage, and Female Genital Mutilation. She discussed the primary role and function of an IAG, as well as the benefits and challenges that are present when introducing the groups into law enforcement agencies.

#### **Question & Answer Period**

During the question-and-answer period, Dr. Aplin discussed the mutual understanding that IAGs can foster between police and communities, as well as the ways in which the groups can assist in building trust within hostile communities. She also noted the importance of affective emotions in training for

police services as a means of building both resiliency in personnel and a greater understanding of police impact in the community.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **Presentation**

Dr. Aplin began her presentation by outlining Honour Based Abuse (HBA), Forced Marriage (FM), and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), discussing the highly gendered, violent, and sometimes blurred nature of the practices. She noted that although these actions statistically involve female victims, there are instances in which members of other communities are targeted, highlighting the impact of FM on other marginalised groups such as LGBTQIA+ and individuals with disabilities. She discussed misconceptions surrounding the perpetrators of these practices, stating that female family members are far more involved than initially presumed. Dr. Aplin's research showed a significant presence of female perpetrators in cases of FGM, as well as a disproportionate amount matriarchal perpetrators in cases of HBA against pregnant females.

Dr. Aplin then discussed the role of IAGs, stating that the principal function is to provide a safeguard against the disadvantaging of any section of the community through lack of understanding, ignorance, or mistaken belief. She stated that IAGs are not limited to racial and ethnic communities, but can provide nuanced understanding to many groups, including asylum seekers, individuals with disabilities, and diverse gender and sexual identities. She suggested that while police services are primarily prosecution-oriented, IAGs are community focused, which is immensely helpful in providing complete assistance. Though the studies consulted were qualitative and covered specific areas within the UK, they provided deep insight into the positive impact of IAGs on effective community policing.

Furthermore, IAGs are able to identify and address key issues within community policing, such as the existence of race anxiety and cultural tolerance, the need for situational discretion in the approach to policing, and the role of ethnicity in victim services. Dr. Aplin stated that there is sometimes anxiety on behalf of officers that actions will be viewed as intolerant when engaging minority communities, which can lead to under policing and tolerance of dysfunctional and oppressive practices. Additionally, there has been a historical tendency to match victims and professionals by ethnicity as a means of mitigating cultural misunderstanding between police services and community members. Through the formation of IAGs, however, law enforcement is able to engage community

experts and determine the appropriate strategy based on nuanced, sensitive, and culturally informed understanding, and thereby provide the best service to marginalised individuals.

The principal challenges facing IAGs at present are narrow advertising, poor attendance, and difficulty measuring outcomes. Dr. Aplin noted that, in spite of benefits, IAGs can still be perceived as problematic by senior officials and it is necessary to change this narrative within police services. Given that IAGs are advice only, it behoves law enforcement to engage a range of community members in order to avoid cultural misunderstandings and facilitate better responses. Dr. Aplin also pointed to the poor attendance of some IAGs but suggested that value is of greater importance than the quantity. The need for greater study and measurement of IAG outcomes was also discussed, citing the importance of records as a means of understanding the most effective responses in a variety of community specific scenarios.

Regarding the benefits of IAGs, Dr. Aplin suggested that the groups provide an essential perspective at a low cost, empowering police to employ the most effective strategy in a variety of nuanced situations. She stated that IAGs do not exist to reinforce the status quo, but rather provide critical appraisal to police and other professionals based on a wealth of knowledge and practical solutions. The diversity of the IAG injects a cultural competence into policing, acting as the doorway into the community and providing a voice to individuals that might not ordinarily engage with police. Dr. Aplin concluded that IAGs are under-utilised at present but represent a highly effective operational resource for police services.

### **Question & Answer Period**

During the question-and-answer period, Dr. Aplin noted the potential for IAGs in mitigating the role of mis- and dis-information in marginalised communities, as well as building trust between communities and police services. Though under-explored at the moment, she suggested that the use of community conduits could provide essential access to various communities.

Dr. Aplin discussed the benefits of IAGs when engaging hostile communities presenting a defence of harmful cultural practices based on religion. She pointed to the justification of HBA on religious grounds, noting that an informed understanding shows that the practice is not based on religion but rather a maintenance of the status quo power dynamic. By engaging an IAG, police would be able to determine the best way to navigate these situations, particularly when the victim may be unaware of the dysfunctionality of the practice.

Regarding the presence of diversity in police services, Dr. Aplin suggested that the aim of policy should be the retention of female police officers. She emphasised the need for strong role models for diverse communities in leadership roles, highlighting a lack of female representation in recent years. Dr. Aplin also noted that many procedures to ensure a compassionate workplace already exist, and that it is an adherence to these procedures that is required at this juncture.

Lastly, Dr. Aplin discussed the importance of affective emotions in training police personnel, as well as the benefit of instruction through case studies. In her experience, the most beneficial instruction to police personnel has been affective. By engaging emotions and providing an open discussion regarding the historical impacts of police culture, there is increased understanding of accountability and impact within marginalised communities. She suggested that this aids in fostering resiliency among police personnel, restating the need for strong and diverse role models in leadership roles. In the discussion around the various routes into policing in the UK (such as DHEP, PCDA, and the 3-year pre-join degree in professional policing), Dr Aplin muted the benefits of providing a fourth route, which was to allow mature officers to join the service without a degree. This would complement the current suite on offer, because the current mandate to possess a degree is exclusionary and contributes to the gap in recruiting personnel that are diverse and reflective of the public they serve.

## KEY POINTS OF DISCUSSION

### Presentation

- IAGs are a safeguard against the disadvantaging of any section of the community through lack of understanding, ignorance, or mistaken belief. They are not limited to racial and ethnic communities but can provide nuanced understanding to many groups.
- IAGs have provided essential insight into police responses to highly gendered and misunderstood practices within diasporic communities, such as HBA, FM, and FGM. For example, the presence of female perpetrators was much larger than originally presumed by police services.
- IAGs are able to identify and address key issues within community policing, such as the existence of race anxiety and cultural tolerance, the need for situational discretion in the approach to policing, and the role of ethnicity in victim services.
- The principal challenges facing IAGs at present are narrow advertising, poor attendance, and difficulty measuring outcomes. In spite of their benefits,

IAGs can still be perceived as problematic by senior officials and it is necessary to change this narrative within police services.

- IAGs provide an essential perspective at a low cost, empowering police to employ the most effective strategy in a variety of nuanced situations. They do not exist to reinforce the status quo, but rather provide critical appraisal to police and other professionals.

### Question & Answer Period

- There is significant potential for IAGs in mitigating the role of mis- and dis-information in marginalised communities, as well as building trust between communities and police services. Though under-explored at the moment, Dr. Aplin suggested that the use of community conduits could provide essential access to various communities.
- IAGs are beneficial when engaging hostile communities presenting a defence of harmful cultural practices based on religion. By engaging an IAG, police are able to determine the best way to navigate these situations, particularly when the victim may be unaware of the dysfunctionality of the practice.
- Engaging affective emotions is crucial in training police personnel. By engaging emotions and providing an open discussion regarding the historical impacts of police culture, there is increased understanding of accountability and impact within marginalised communities.



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