



Ethics Think Tank

Public Summary 2025–2026

**Helping Thames Valley Police Make
Fair Decisions**





What is the Think Tank?

The Ethics Think Tank is a group of independent experts who help Thames Valley Police (TVP) think about difficult questions.

The group includes people from different backgrounds, including academics, community representatives and specialists in ethics, law and policing.

The group does not make decisions on behalf of the police. Instead, it helps police leaders think through difficult issues and understand how decisions may affect the people and communities they serve.



Why is the Think Tank important?

Police officers and staff sometimes need to make decisions where there is no simple answer.

For example:

- How should new technology be used?
- How can police keep people safe whilst protecting privacy?
- How should different community views be considered?
- How can police make sure decisions are fair?

The Think Tank helps make sure that different voices, experiences and viewpoints are considered when difficult decisions are being made. This helps make sure decisions are carefully thought through and take account of the people and communities affected by them.



Who takes part?

The Think Tank is chaired by Professor Mark Sheehan from the University of Oxford.

The group includes people with experience in:

- Ethics
- Law
- Universities and research
- Disability and accessibility
- Community safety
- Leadership and coaching
- Domestic abuse support
- Risk management

People with different experiences help the group look at issues from many angles.



Why independent views matter

Good decisions are made when people listen to different points of view.

The Ethics Think Tank includes people from outside the police who can ask questions, challenge ideas and share their experiences.

This helps make sure that difficult issues are looked at from different angles and that the voices of communities are part of the conversation.



What did the Think Tank discuss this year?

The group discussed how facial recognition technology can be used fairly and responsibly.

Members talked about:

- Privacy
- Public understanding
- Trust
- Safety
- How information should be shared with the public

The group felt that clear information and open communication are important when using this technology. Members also discussed the importance of helping people understand how and why the technology is used.



Looking after the Environment

The Think Tank discussed how policing decisions can affect the environment.

Members considered how police organisations can balance environmental responsibilities with the need to keep people safe and respond to crime.



Inclusion and Pride Events

The group discussed the use of rainbow lanyards by police, the involvement of Police at Pride events and the questions raised by a court ruling.

Members considered:

- Inclusion
- Respect
- Personal choice
- Support for different communities

The discussion recognised that people may have different views while still wanting everyone to feel safe and respected. Members also supported the development of a summary report to capture the ethical considerations, community impacts and practical suggestions arising from the discussion.



Information overload

Police officers receive large amounts of information every day.

The Think Tank discussed whether too much information can affect:

- Decision-making
- Concentration
- Wellbeing
- Public safety

Members felt more research is needed to better understand the issue.



Recording Ethnicity Information

The Think Tank discussed why police ask people about their ethnicity.

Members considered:

- Why this information is collected
- How it can be collected respectfully
- How it can be used fairly
- How it can help identify whether different communities experience policing in different ways

The group felt it is important to explain clearly why this information is being requested.



Understanding Fairness

The Think Tank reviewed a piece of work designed to help TVP better understand differences in policing outcomes between different groups of people.

Members supported the work and encouraged it to continue developing.



What difference did these decisions make?

The discussions helped shape future work in several areas.

For example:

- Helping improve public information about facial recognition technology.
- Supporting work on the fair use of ethnicity information.
- Helping develop new ways of understanding fairness in policing.
- Identifying topics that need further research and discussion.
- Encouraging police leaders to think about environmental issues alongside other responsibilities.



What happens next?

The Think Tank will continue to look at difficult questions affecting policing and local communities.

Future topics may include:

- Incidents recorded by police that are not crimes but may be perceived as motivated by hostility or prejudice.
- Ethnicity recording
- Facial recognition technology
- Other new issues as they emerge



What happens next?

Members would like to revisit some topics over several meetings to allow deeper exploration of complex issues and to consider how thinking develops over time.

Where appropriate, the Think Tank may also contribute to written reviews, ethical commentary and recommendations to support organisational learning and decision-making.



Find out more

To learn more about the Ethics Think Tank, contact:

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