



Berkshire East

Independent Advisory Group (IAG)

Providing independent community advice to Thames Valley Police (TVP)





Leadership messages

A message from the chair Dr Arshad Jarral

- The Berkshire East IAG has completed its first year following Thames Valley Police's new command structure for Slough, Bracknell, and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. The IAG's overall aim is to strengthen trust, transparency, and collaboration between Thames Valley Police and local communities. We focus on helping the police understand community concerns, including issues such as drugs, anti-social behaviour, hate crime, and policing practices.
- I am grateful to all members for their commitment and genuine interest in understanding the shared priorities of Thames Valley Police and our local communities, and for engaging constructively to provide community insight and reassurance on a range of important topics. Your participation and contributions have enabled a healthy and proactive discussion on wide ranging issues including national unrest, international tensions, knife crime, drug-related violence, the use of police powers and TVP new Trust and Confidentiality strategy.





Leadership messages

A message from the chair Dr Arshad Jarral

- I would also like to thank TVP senior leadership for their positive and meaningful engagement with the group and place on record my personal gratitude to Chief Superintendent Steve Raffield, Commander of Berkshire East LCU, who will be retiring from Thames Valley Police at the end of March after a long and distinguished career in policing. I have had the privilege of working closely with Steve over the past year and have greatly valued his support, guidance, and the insight he has shared in supporting the work of the IAG. His contribution has been sincerely appreciated, and he will be greatly missed.





A message from Chief Superintendent Steve Raffield

I'd like to express my appreciation to the Berkshire East IAG for their ongoing dedication and the thoughtful challenge they bring to our work. The IAG is an incredibly important forum, offering perspectives that help us enhance our services, address community issues, and strengthen trust and confidence across Berkshire East. Their contributions have shaped our priorities and decision-making and continue to provide a crucial link in understanding the views and experiences of our communities.





About the Berkshire East Independent Advisory Group

The Berkshire East Independent Advisory Group (BE-IAG) has a membership of 17 individuals who act as a conduit to maintain an effective and continuous engagement between local communities and the Thames Valley Police. They volunteer their time, knowledge and skills to support Thames Valley Police by sharing independent community insight, providing honest feedback and helping the police identify areas where improvements or clearer explanations are needed. Members bring a wide range of backgrounds, experiences, cultures and perspectives and act as a “critical friend,” helping the police understand how decisions, actions and policies may impact communities differently. Furthermore, Members receives regular briefings and updates on TVP’s Policy and operational initiatives which they disseminate to their local communities. Insight from the group informs Thames Valley Police’s Trust & Confidence governance structures, helping senior leaders understand local priorities.



Meetings & membership

- Four meetings during 2025/26
- Average attendance: 9 members
- TVP representation: Average 9 per meeting
- Membership as of 31st March 2026 = 17
- 3 affiliate representatives of local authorities (Slough, RBWM, Bracknell)
- BE-IAG is privileged to have good membership from all three local districts in East Berkshire region - Slough, Bracknell, RBWM, and a well-balanced representation of male and female, different age groups from young to senior citizens and people from variety of ethnic, cultural and professional backgrounds. Recent addition of two young new members has boosted the group's diversity and competence.
- We are also seeking involvement of Jewish and other minority communities currently not represented in the group and local Businesses.





What we focused on



Local Command Unit Development & Policing Model

- Review of the first year of the new Berkshire East Local Command Unit.
- Increased officer numbers following Government funding, with more officers deployed in neighbourhood and retail areas.
- Welcomed the TVP's new Trust and Confidence strategy.
- Discussed facial recognition technology, accuracy concerns, and potential bias
- Reviewed changes to the Police and Crime Commissioner role.



Policing and Community Engagament

- IAG members have deep local connection and use IAG information to support conversations within local communities and Faith groups
- BE-IAG WhatsApp group helps members to identify and discuss local issues in different areas/ communities and share emerging issues and updates on critical developments from TVP with the wider communities.
- Community Safety Partnership Team representatives from three local authorities now attend the IAG to develop a better understanding of community concerns about crime and anti-social behaviors and develop collaborative response.
- Plans for the IAG to hold first public event spring 2026, to showcase its objectives, activities and interactive relationship with TVP





Stop & Search Disproportionality

- Regular review of disproportionality affecting Black and minority communities.
- Commitment from Senior TVP leadership to improved recording, narrative reporting and scrutiny.
- Improved scrutiny of Section 60 Criminal Justice & Public Order Act powers, which allow searches without individual suspicion when there is a risk of serious violence. Any new authorisation is shared with the IAG chair at the earliest opportunity to ensure transparency and public reassurance.





What we heard from the Community





Key Themes

- Positive feedback about reductions in murder, drug and knife crime and S 60 use.
- Ongoing concerns about young people involved in knife crime and drug use and its impact on families and wider society.
- Police Officers are engaged with local councillors, community and faith leaders at various levels
- Increased police officer visibility through expanded neighbourhood teams and improved focus on retail crime.
- Updates on TVP/Slough Borough Council joint Clear-Hold-Build project and continued focus on drugs and knife crime in the Langley area.
- No major concerns raised from the Traveller community in Eton/Windsor.
- Concerns about misleading national debate and social media on grooming gangs and the importance of relying on local data for better-informed decision making.



Fear of extremism and hate crime

- National and international events have caused increased reports of hate crime and tension; particularly relating to anti-migrant/asylum seeker sentiment.
- Anxiety across communities that overseas tensions could spill over locally.
- Communities are concerned about safety, particularly women wearing Islamic attire, worshippers, older people, and isolated residents who are feeling vulnerable and devalued.
- Fear of crime, protests and threat to community cohesion driven by national and social media narratives and recent surge in flag displays across the UK.
- Importance of removing inflammatory symbols such as flag through working closely with Slough and RBWM Councils
- Assurance from police on preparedness, community reassurance measures and steps to counter misinformation and challenge hate narrative.



Use of policing powers involving vulnerable individuals

- Fear and distrust relating to stop & search powers and potential bias
- Concerns about interpreting autistic or neurodiverse behaviours as suspicious.
- TVP committed to improving training and raising awareness
- Recognition of the need to protect vulnerable people, including women, older adults, and cultural groups.



Feedback to Trust & Confidence Board & Responses

- Consideration of funding streams to support setting up of an independent hate crime reporting line
- Importance of careful and sensitive handling of incidents and communications to avoid community tensions.
- Continued focus on the causes of knife crime and appropriate use of Section 60 powers.
- Members welcomed a briefing on retrospective and live facial recognition. Although assurances were provided regarding safeguards and appropriate use, concerns were raised about privacy and misuse.



Key Messages for the Community

- Significant reduction in the use of s60 in Slough (60% decrease).
- New government funding has provided additional neighborhood officers, with 1 Sergeant and 9 Officers deployed in Slough.
- TVP is closely monitoring national and international events to provide reassurance
- Community encouraged to challenge misinformation and rely on verified sources.
- Everyone urged to report incidents to the police.





Reflections on how the panel is working

What worked well:

As a new group, our first priority was to bring members together and establish shared objectives and themes. The group is fortunate to have a diverse membership representing different communities, experiences, and professional backgrounds, which has enabled constructive and inclusive discussion and meaningful contributions. We noted strong commitment from senior leadership through to operational officers, who regularly attended meetings and provided briefings on important local and national developments.

What we will improve:

Looking ahead, the IAG will focus on improving hate incident reporting, increasing transparency around policing data, strengthening engagement with community and faith groups, supporting effective neighbourhood policing, promoting community cohesion, and ensuring members continue to share community perspectives to inform policing practice and build trust.



Areas of Future Focus

IAG Cycle	Proposed Areas of Focus
April 2026	Police Race Action Plan (PRAP) consultation; TVP Trust & Confidence Strategy delivery plans
June 2026	Anti Social Behaviour Action Plan; Neighbourhood priority setting and progress
Sept 2026	Neighbourhood Engagement Plan; update on Trust & Confidence sentiment survey
Nov 2026	ASB Action plan; T&C Strategy delivery updates



How to get involved

For any enquiries relating to our Independent Advisory Group please contact:
scrutiny@thamesvalley.police.uk.

We are committed to supporting members' learning and development through training and informal learning sessions and seek your valuable input to help shape and improve what and how services are delivered to our communities.

Next meetings planned:

- 17th June 2026
- 9th September 2026
- 11th November 2026
- 6th January 2027