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Introduction

This case study considers the issues of notifiable associations, data protection offences, disclosure of information, and the impact that these can have on internal and external communities.

Scenario

Intelligence was received that suggested a police officer was passing information to their partner who was not a serving officer. The partner was using the information in disputes with an individual. Intelligence development established that the officer was aware of their partner's criminality – the officer had corresponded with their partner during a prison sentence for a serious assault. The officer failed to declare the criminal association.

Audits showed that the officer had reviewed the incident logs for domestic disputes involving their partner. Telephony checks established a pattern of contact between the officer and their partner that was consistent with the unauthorised disclosure of information from the incident logs.

Vulnerability factors

There were a significant number of these factors, including that the officer's partner had previously been imprisoned for serious assault and had links to organised crime groups. There was also risk to the organisation from operational compromise through disclosure of information. It was decided to arrest the officer and their partner on suspicion of conspiracy to commit misconduct in public office.

Community impact

In addition to the vulnerability factors, the investigating officer identified some significant community impact considerations:

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- the officer was a member of a black and minority ethnic community
- the officer's dress and demeanour were consistent with traditional Islamic practice
- the officer's residence was or had been a registered masjid (mosque).

Disclosure considerations

The vulnerability issues, together with the potential evidential opportunities arising from a search, meant that significant consideration was given to the timing, audience and content of the disclosure.

The investigating officer recognised that it was critical to community cohesion to understand the impact of arresting a traditional Islamic officer. If the officer's residence was a masjid, this fact had to be incorporated in the search and communication plans.

A range of key internal stakeholders was identified and briefed, including the senior leaders from the locations where the:

- officer worked
- officer resided
- officer's partner resided
- ex-partner resided.

Externally, key individuals from the area were identified who could advise on the impact of the arrest, the status of the residence and associated cohesion issues. These people were respected within their communities and had previously demonstrated their integrity. The disclosures were timed to allow sufficient planning while limiting the potential for deliberate or unwitting compromise.

The operation met the strategic considerations and the officer concerned offered their immediate resignation after interview.