

Response from the Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights: A Review of Our Scottish Strategic Police Priorities

12th February 2016

What are your priorities for your police service?

The Scottish Government is consulting individuals and organisations to offer their views on the future Scottish strategic police priorities with an aim to ensure the police services match the needs of the people and communities of Scotland.

The Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights believes that race equality is central to community cohesion and safety, and, therefore, to police priorities.

Our vision for community cohesion and safety, which has been articulated following ongoing research, policy development, and consultation with minority ethnic communities, grassroots community organisations, and practitioners, describes a Scotland in which there is good race relations across all communities, and in which all minority ethnic individuals feel safe, protected and included, and experience less racism.¹

The areas outlined below reflect what CRER believes are the most important for the future of policing in Scotland, the sort of police services we want to see, and our ambitions for policing in the future. These key aspects have been developed following consultation with communities, desk-based research, and policy development. Further information on this can be made available upon request.

Reduction in racial harassment and racial violence

Research and consultation with minority ethnic groups confirm that racial harassment and racial violence continue to be significant concerns for communities. A review of relevant evidence demonstrates this.

- The Scottish Household Survey 2014 stated that 18% of people – the highest proportion – believed they had experienced harassment because of their ethnic group. The survey also reported that 14% of those from a minority ethnic

¹ This vision emerged as part of our work with the Scottish Government in the development of a Race Equality Framework for Scotland. As part of this work, CRER has conducted thorough desk and consultation-based research and produced an overview of identified and evidenced areas of inequality that must be addressed. Further information on this can be made available upon request.

background had experienced harassment, compared to 5% from a white ethnic background.²

- The 2012-2013 Scottish Crime and Justice Survey found that of those who had experienced some form of harassment in the past year, 8% felt it was due to their ethnic origin or race, which was a greater percentage than religion, sectarianism, disability, sexual orientation, or age.³
- A study on minority ethnic young people in Edinburgh and Glasgow in 2007 observed that many young people simply accepted verbal harassment as part of everyday life, and would not consider reporting it to the police.⁴
- In 2013-2014, there were 4,807 racist incidents recorded by the police in Scotland, with 5,520 crimes recorded. The most common of these were racially aggravated conduct (48%), breach of the peace (28%), and common assault (12%). Where the result was known, 94.7% of incidents resulted in at least one crime being recorded, and 81.3% of perpetrators were referred to the Procurator Fiscal.⁵
- Similarly, of the hate crimes reported to the Procurator Fiscal, racist hate crime is the most common, with 3,875 charges in 2014-2015.⁶
- A 2015 publication by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland reported a general lack of awareness among minority ethnic participants about what the term “hate crime” means, or how to report it.⁷
- Racist hate crime in Scotland has led to loss of life. Between 1993 and 2012, nine people were murdered by perpetrators with a racist motive in Scotland. Analysis of data from the Institute for Race Relations⁸ suggests that Scotland has a higher per-capita rate of racist murder than England. Between 2000 and 2013, the per capita rate of murders with known or suspected racist elements in Scotland was higher than the rest of the UK, with 1.8 murders per million people compared to 1.3.⁹
- People from minority ethnic groups, alongside those from religious minority groups and women, were more likely than others to be worried about physical attack,

² The Scottish Government. Scotland’s People Annual Report: [Results from the 2014 Scottish Household Survey](#).

³ The Scottish Government (2014). [Scottish Crime and Justice Survey 2012-2013: Main findings](#).

⁴ . Frondigoun, H. C., Hughes, B., Russell, L., Russell, R., and Scott, G. Report for Strathclyde and Lothian and Borders Police (2007) [Researching ethnic minority young people in Edinburgh and Greater Glasgow Area](#).

⁵ The Scottish Government, [Racist Incidents Recorded by the Police in Scotland 2013-2014](#)

⁶ The Crown Office Procurator Fiscal in Scotland, [Hate Crime in Scotland 2014-2015](#)

⁷ HMICS (2015). [Joint Research Paper: Policing Ethnic Minority Communities in Scotland](#).

⁸ Institute for Race Relations (2012) [96 Murders Since Stephen Lawrence’s](#).; per-capita calculations based on IRR data on deaths with a known or suspected racial element and data from the 2011 Census.

⁹ Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights. [Ten True Things We Need to Say about Racism in Scotland](#).

sexual assault, or being a victim of an acquisitive crime (e.g. robbery or house break-in).¹⁰

We also know from our community engagement work that racist incidents and hate crime are under-reported in Scotland, with victims choosing not to report due to a lack of trust in the police and criminal justice system, confusion surrounding the process, and feeling desensitised to harassment. Minority ethnic communities want to see simpler reporting methods, clarity and transparency in the process, and improved approaches to keeping victims aware of the progress of their case. There has also been concern raised about online hate speech and hate crime, and methods of reporting and recording these.

Discussion about community safety with minority ethnic groups tells us that individuals feel unsafe in their local communities, and believe they are more likely to experience harassment and violence than those from white ethnic backgrounds. In particular, groups are concerned about:

- Ending social isolation for minority ethnic groups, which often stems from feeling unsafe in their local communities;
- Tackling anti-social behaviour, especially that which has a racist element; and,
- Improving community safety by increasing visible community policing and community liaison officers.

When considering national priorities for policing, reducing harassment, violence, and crime for all of Scotland should be a priority, but additional consideration needs to be given to groups more likely to experience these, including minority ethnic communities. Working alongside minority ethnic groups to identify ways to challenge and tackle this is key to reducing racial harassment and racial violence for all.

Better relationships between Police Scotland and minority ethnic communities

There is significant concern among minority ethnic groups about the relationship between groups and the police. Groups feel disconnected from the police, and feel as though the police do not respond well to the needs and concerns of minority ethnic communities.

In consultation with communities, CRER found examples of instances in which individuals reported racist incidents which the police did not treat seriously, in which racist crimes were not investigated properly, and in which individuals experienced racism from police officers themselves. The recent death of Sheku Bayoh while in police custody, as well as the evidence surrounding the history of violence and racism of one of the principal police officers involved with the case¹¹ and the difficulties and delays in the investigations

¹⁰ Equality and Human Rights Commission (2016). [Is Scotland Fairer?](#)

¹¹ BBC Scotland, [Sheku Bayoh custody death](#)

following, has contributed further to a widespread distrust of the police among minority ethnic communities.

Owing to instances such as these, minority ethnic communities recognise a culture of institutional racism¹² within Police Scotland, despite efforts to address this. Groups have called for an external, independent review of institutional racism within Police Scotland, with minority ethnic community involvement. However, this perception stands in stark contrast to a statement made by the head of resource management for Police Scotland during a parliamentary inquiry who said, “We do not believe there is any significant institutional racism within Police Scotland – in fact, I would be astounded if there was any at all...”¹³ This, in fact, shows a lack of disregard for what institutional racism is.

CRER believes that Police Scotland must address these concerns and that practical knowledge on racism, race equality, and cultural awareness is needed within Police Scotland. Ensuring Police Scotland is well-equipped to address and tackle racism, both externally and internally, should be a significant future priority.

A more representative Police Scotland

It is also very important to minority ethnic communities that the police are representative of the communities they serve. However, this is not the presently the case. The percentage of minority ethnic police officers was at 1% in 2014, and has remained static since 2010. The percentage of BME minority ethnic police staff was also 1% in 2014, and has been so since 2010. The percentage of BME special constables decreased from 2% in 2009-2010 to 1% in 2014.¹⁴ Furthermore, only 1% of police officers, police staff, and special constables were from a white minority background in 2014, including White Irish, White Gypsy/Traveller, White Police, and White Other.¹⁵ Minority ethnic groups are also underrepresented in applications, appointments, and promotions.¹⁶

Police Scotland cannot be representative of the communities it serves if this remains the case. Recruitment, retention, and promotion practices must be reconsidered with input from minority ethnic communities to ensure a future police force is representative and aware of issues facing minority ethnic groups in Scotland. Groups CRER has engaged with felt that a more diverse police force would have a positive impact on community relations and race equality.

¹² According to [The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry](#), institutional racism is, “The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people.”

¹³ The Scottish Parliament (3 September 2015) [Official Report: Equal Opportunities Committee](#)

¹⁴ Police Scotland. [Equality and Diversity Mainstreaming Progress Report. \(2015\)](#).

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

More transparent data collection

Concerns have been raised about the ways in which data is recorded and reported by the police. For example, in the reporting of racist incidents, data within the publication is presented with “victim” and “complainer” within the same category, which clouds the data and does not make clear which ethnic groups are most often the victims of racist incidents, as the ethnicity recorded could either be that of the actual victim or that of someone who complained about the incident but was not the victim. This confusion led to media stories claiming that white British people had become the most common ethnic group to be targeted in racist incidents.¹⁷As such, this approach needs to be evaluated and reconsidered.

Additionally, the Advisory Group on Stop and Search¹⁸ which reported to Scottish Government in August 2015 included guidance on how ethnicity monitoring should be conducted in its Draft Code of Practice on Stop and Search. To ensure the system is effective, its implementation and impact needs to be monitored and evaluated on an ongoing basis.

Transparency in reporting, particularly in regards to the monitoring and reporting of ethnicity, allows the police to be held accountable by ensuring that minority groups are not being disproportionately targeted and that statistics on crime are robust and detailed. Revisiting these practices should be an aspect of this consultation exercise.

The future of strategic police priorities

In short, Police Scotland must consider its relationship with minority ethnic communities when developing new strategic policing priorities. There is significant concern within communities about harassment and violence, institutional racism within the police, and equal ethnic representation with Police Scotland. These must factor into the development of new national priorities for policing, and efforts to address them must be made in collaboration with minority ethnic communities to ensure Police Scotland is truly fair and equal towards the communities it serves.

Contact

For further information, please contact:
Rebecca Marek, Policy and Parliamentary Officer
rebecca@crer.org.uk.

¹⁷ BBC Scotland. [Rise in ‘white British’ racism incidents in Scotland.](#)

¹⁸ The Scottish Government (2015). [The Report of the Advisory Group on Stop and Search.](#)