

# Race Equality Framework for Scotland Community Ambassadors Programme Findings Summary for Police Scotland May 2016

## The Race Equality Framework for Scotland (2016-2030)

The Scottish Government has developed a Race Equality Framework for Scotland (2016-2030) to tackle racism and promote equality. Substantial work was carried out to gather evidence and engage stakeholders and communities across Scotland.

The evidence gathering process concentrated on four key themes, which ran throughout the development of the framework. These four themes were:

- Community cohesion and safety;
- Participation and representation;
- Education, employment and income; and,
- Health, wellbeing, family and home.

This paper relates specifically to the evidence which pertained directly to community safety, racist hate crime, and relations with the police. Reports on other engagement mechanisms and evidence papers can be downloaded from the [CRER website](#).

Police Scotland should also find the Race Equality Framework for Scotland useful in shaping their approach to race equality, and may want to consider developing a complimentary Race Equality Framework of its own or adopting some of its goals within its own work. This report may highlight issues which could be considered as part of this.

## The Community Ambassadors Programme

The Community Ambassadors Programme (CAP) was developed by CRER in partnership with the Scottish Community Development Centre as an innovative community engagement mechanism to conduct community consultation and to provide a direct link for members of minority ethnic communities to the Race Equality Framework.

Through CAP, minority ethnic grassroots organisations and groups nominated Community Ambassadors who received training and support to deliver structured focus groups with community members. The focus groups used a bespoke workbook to gather information about issues facing Scotland's minority ethnic communities, identifying needs, priorities and solutions regarding race equality in Scotland. The workbook reflected the four themes listed earlier, breaking these down further into sections titled: Work and Money, Education, Making Our Voices Heard, Health and Homes, and Community Safety and Belonging.

The information written in the workbooks by the Community Ambassadors was recorded into an evidence database, alongside other pieces of evidence gathered, and this provided an initial basis to develop the Frameworks' content.

## **Introduction**

This document offers a summary of the views and experiences put forward by minority ethnic communities based through CAP which pertain directly to the work of Police Scotland. The views expressed in this summary are the views of participants, rather than the views of the community organisations who nominated Community Ambassadors, CRER or the Scottish Government.

The intention of this report is to provide evidence from involvement with minority ethnic communities which can be used in policy and practice across Police Scotland. It should be particularly relevant to work undertaken on the renewal of strategic policing priorities and stop and search policy, and to development of the Equality Outcomes for 2017-2020.

### **Notes on interpretation**

There are a number of factors which should be taken into account in interpreting the findings presented within this summary.

- Minority ethnic communities are not homogenous and there are variations in experience and opinion both between and within the groups who took part in the CAP, so views given on the various topics will vary. This should be seen as representing diversity of experience and opinion rather than contradiction or indecision.
- Occasionally views put forward by participants seemed to not reflect the structures, practices or policies in place, suggesting that these areas are not well understood and may require better communication from Police Scotland (and relevant partners) to communities.
- In some cases, the perspectives put forward by participants may not match Police Scotland's internal understanding of their own policy, practice or relationships. In these cases, it is important to reflect on why these perspectives may differ, to seek to establish further evidence and to be open to and appreciative of community perspectives rather than rejecting these, even where they may seem incongruous.

## **Community Ambassadors Programme Findings**

### **Community safety**

Several groups were concerned about community safety. Pubs, streets, cinemas, parks, and remote areas were all seen as areas of concern, as was safety at night. Some groups felt that minority ethnic groups were targeted in particular, especially in cities. It was believed that an equal community is a safe community, and that minority ethnic groups would not feel safe until they felt equal.

It was thought that social isolation contributes to feeling unsafe. The effect of drink and drugs on anti-social behaviour was also mentioned, with people feeling more unsafe in areas where these were common. Groups wanted to see anti-social behaviour and public drunkenness tackled.

*“Some areas have no safety at all and you feel [it is because] you are not from here....”*

Suggested solutions included:

- More visible community policing and police patrols
- Police presence in community safety projects
- More preventative work
- Improved CCTV with cameras in more places
- Cultural awareness training at school and work

The need to tackle clear displays of racism was noted, with one group wanting clearer controls of protests by far right groups to keep them contained and away from high density minority ethnic areas.

It was also suggested that minority ethnic community liaison officers who understand cultural and local issues and can work with communities be employed to address safety, grievances, security and racist incidents.

Some groups noted that they felt particularly unsafe when racist incidents were reported to the police, but did not result in investigations or charges. It was felt that if the police would not take action, threats and violence against minority ethnic groups were unstoppable.

It was also suggested that safety was of particular concern to asylum seekers and refugees, who were especially vulnerable.

## **Policing and criminal justice**

Many groups highlighted concerns around policing, with several calling for an increase in minority ethnic representation in Police Scotland. Groups noted the need for a change in Police Scotland’s organisational culture, recruitment practices, retention rates, promotion practices and accountability to address this. The need for open and accessible recruitment was raised (suggesting that participants are not aware of current recruitment opportunities), as was intervention by the Scottish Government to ensure fair representation. It was thought that the police should work with services to make policing more accessible. Groups noted that minority ethnic groups would feel more comfortable working with the police if representation rates were higher.

It was also suggested that Police Scotland work more with minority ethnic groups to improve connections and cultural awareness. The need for community outreach work was highlighted, as was the need for police to have cultural awareness and anti-racism training. Groups also wanted to see better communication between minority ethnic communities and Police Scotland.

It was also stressed that police should not ignore calls from minority ethnic groups, and that minority ethnic groups must receive better treatment from police. Some participants felt they had been dismissed because of their accent when they called the police. Several groups felt that police did not take minority ethnic groups seriously and did not investigate crimes against them seriously. Groups called for the police

to treat all ethnic groups equally. It was suggested that reports of crime made by minority ethnic individuals should be monitored to identify irregularities or discrimination.

*“Police need to listen to us rather than focusing on where we are from. They need to listen and enforce laws against racism.”*

The need for an external, independent agency to oversee Police Scotland (similar to PIRC) with minority ethnic representation was stressed by several groups. Participants thought that this body should have minority ethnic groups at the same rank as white Scottish members, and would investigate claims of police not responding to racist incidents appropriately. Groups also stated that this independent body would investigate claims of racism within the police, rather than having accusations of racism addressed by police personnel. It was suggested that the Scottish Government review current practices, and bring in changes to reduce racism and bias.

The need for police to provide feedback to victims of crime and their families was noted, as was the need for cases to be properly supervised, as it was felt that procedures were not always followed and that justice was often not achieved for minority ethnic victims.

There were also calls for the end of stop and search, which was felt to be pursued in a way that discriminates. In relation to this and other perceived areas with a risk of discrimination, it was felt that Police Scotland should be more transparent. It was noted that stop and search is “dehumanising.”

*(Stop and search) “...leads to greater stigma and negative feelings which leads to youth feeling as second class citizens. Such approaches lead to lower self-esteem and lack of trust.”*

Some groups also felt that punishments for crimes were harsher for minority ethnic perpetrators than for those who are white Scottish; it was felt that action should be taken to ensure that the consequences of crime are equal.

## **Racist incidents and hate crime**

Many groups raised concerns about racist incidents and hate crime. Participants felt that racist incidents were not dealt with as they should be. The need to take criminal reports seriously was mentioned by several groups; communities want racism to be taken seriously.

Participants believed that police must carry out thorough investigations when dealing with direct racist attacks, and that systems should be in place to ensure police remain unbiased when dealing with racist incidents. One group stated that racism within Police Scotland contributed to racist incidents not being dealt with appropriately.

Communities stressed the need to end street harassment, and noted that this should be taken more seriously by police. Racist violence in cities such as Glasgow and Edinburgh was mentioned, with incidents of stone throwing, egging, car scratching, window smashing and knife crime mentioned.

It was stated that even when incidents were clearly captured by CCTV, they were often dealt with poorly. There was a perception that perpetrators were rarely charged. The need to address this was stressed, with intervention from the Scottish Government suggested.

Participants felt that there needs to be more awareness that racist crimes are illegal and will be punished. Harsher punishments for hate crime were also called for, with information on tough sentences and convictions being publicised as part of a campaign to discourage racism and build community cohesion. Groups believed that racist crimes should receive appropriate sentences, not just community payback orders.

It was noted that racist incidents should be monitored across different agencies and areas, with better collection of statistics on hate crime and racist discrimination. Groups stressed that racist crime is higher than reported and that people do not report due to:

- Lack of trust in the police and faith in the justice system
- Not having enough time
- Not understanding the process
- Being frightened of experiencing more harassment as a result of reporting

It was suggested that there should be easier reporting methods and a dedicated service for reporting and responding to hate crime with dedicated investigation and conclusions. Clear pathways for third party reporting should be promoted to raise awareness, according to respondents. Groups felt that there needs to be clarity and transparency in the process as a whole, and less time should be spent asking victims to repeat their stories. One group stated that they felt powerless to prevent street harassment because they did not understand or trust reporting structures. Participants stated that the Scottish Government should use their powers to more effectively tackle hate crime. One group suggested using restorative justice approaches.

Other groups noted that it was important to monitor and respond to racist incidents that occur in schools, colleges, universities and workplaces.

### **Preventative work**

The need for preventive work was highlighted, with the need for police, racial equality organisations, communities and public service organisations to work together to end racism. Some groups also wanted to see more efforts to tackle radicalisation in communities to help to ensure the safety of all. It was highlighted that relations between police and the community was key to improving community safety for minority ethnic groups.

## **Contact Details**

For more information on the Community Ambassadors Programme, the Race Equality Framework for Scotland 2016-2030, or the wider work of CRER, please contact:

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