The Scottish Police Federation (SPF) represents all police officers up to and including Chief Inspector. The SPF also represents police cadets and special constables. Taken together our membership extends to almost 99% of all police officers within the Police Service of Scotland (PSoS).


The PSoS prides itself on policing by consent and the Chief Constable is on record as saying that he wishes the PSoS to be reflective of the diverse nature of our communities. Clearly the SPF welcomes such a commitment as we believe that to enjoy the confidence of all of our communities, the police service must ensure it is properly reflective of them.

The information I gathered does not fit neatly into each area of your inquiry and therefore my evidence is more general in content. I have consulted widely with members of the SPF and indeed those of the Association of Scottish Police Superintendents. I also sought input from the Scottish Police Muslim Association (SPMA), SEMPER Scotland and CEEPA although I received no formal reply from the latter two bodies.

It is important to highlight that the comments I make are largely anecdotal and have been passed to me largely by officers who in themselves have second or third hand knowledge of them.

It is also important to highlight that the main reason cited for a reluctance to reply was that of a fear of repercussions. I have been unable to establish the basis for this fear or indeed whether it has any basis in fact or reality. I note that in general many police officers, regardless of race, colour or creed often share their perception of the risks of raising their heads above the metaphorical parapet, even though there is little actual evidence to substantiate that the fears are rational. It is also worthy of note that this is not a new phenomenon to the PSoS.

The responses can be summarised as follows;

The Police Service of Scotland pays "lip service" to BME issues.

BME officers received better and more extensive support in their former Forces where access to and dialogue with executive officers was easier.
Muslim officers face difficulties in respect of the supply of halal food and prayer facilities at events. This is often considered to be due to a lack of thought and by extension devalues the contribution of Muslim officers.

Positive action where it is undertaken is to be applauded for being admirable in intention but only scratches the surface of what could be delivered. The example of "open days" where under represented groups have the opportunity to meet and interact with personnel in specialist roles was specifically commented upon. That being said an absence of monitoring before and after such events makes measuring the effectiveness difficult.

When the question of recruitment was commented upon the following issues were raised:

Recruitment “drives” within BME communities across Scotland tends to concentrate on youths within the communities. Whilst the SPF represents only those who have already become police officers, some of our current members tell us that barriers to Muslims (in particular) joining the police include:

Young Muslims joining the police need to have the support of their elders. Some perceive a career as a police officer in Scotland to be of lower "status" than other professions.

Muslim women have restraints placed upon them regarding socialising out with their families and residential courses raise obvious challenges.

As Islam requires the eldest son to remain in the home of his parents the application to specialist departments or promotion become a barrier due to the likely need to transfer to other areas of Scotland.

The issue of misconduct was highlighted specifically by only one Muslim officer who advised that whilst he fully supported the laws of Scotland and the Police Regulations that bound him, the fact remained that his community believed in the proverb “Blood is thicker than water” and that, in some cases is extended to “but Imaan is thicker than blood”.

Whilst it is recognised that the PSoS has done much to improve its considerations for BME officers, this improvement has been slow and the service often undermines its good work with examples that could be seen as verging on the ridiculous.

For example the draft PSoS Uniform & Standards of Dress Standard Operating (SOP) contains a requirement for officers to place beards in a net. Muslim officers who grow beards as instructed by Prophet Muhammed have intimated that they would consider whether they could remain within the service if this is enforced.
The SOP also details a ban on tattoos on the face - Hindi women often have the bindi dot tattooed onto their forehead. In addition there is a requirement for any bindi dot (not tattooed) not to be visible when the police bowler hat is worn - the correct wearing of this piece of uniform will always mean that the bindi dot is visible due to the position that it is worn.

One officer was required to undertake his fitness test during Ramadan. The officer failed. Whilst the service subsequently accepted the officer was disadvantaged and permitted a further attempt (that was passed) the potential for criticism is something the service should have been alert to and sought to avoid rather than mitigate.

I am aware that much of the evidence I have submitted is restricted in the main to Muslim officers - this is because these are the officers who have been prepared to speak to me and highlight the concerns of themselves as police officers, as Muslims and as members of the Islam community.

Finally, I would like to highlight that the most recent influx of approaches to the SPF by Muslim officers was during the Commonwealth Games in 2014. This momentous sporting event fell during Ramadan - when Muslims fast from dawn to dusk and prayer holds even more significance. Despite the opportunity to have these small number of officers working in or near the “Village” where feeding and prayer facilities were available they found themselves policing in areas where they could not access appropriate food at the end of each day fast and the ability to pray was limited if available at all.

The SPF looks forward to continuing to work with PSoS in an effort to achieve better employment support and advice, proper positive action measures and better recruitment opportunities for BMA officers and individuals and hopes that the Scottish Parliament will play their part by encouraging more active work in this respect within the Police service.

Jackie Muller
National Equality Secretary
27 June 2015

Appendix 1

General Information

Figures published by Police Service of within their Police Scotland Equality & Diversity Mainstreaming Progress Report April 2015 shows the following data in respect of BME & White Minority officers:
NOTE:
BME figures include those who have identified their ethnic origin as Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Group, Asian Pakistani, Asian Indian, Asian Bangladeshi, Asian Chinese, Asian Other, African, African Other, Caribbean, Black, Caribbean or Black Other, Arab and Other Ethnic Group

White Minority Figures include those who have identified their ethnic origin as White Irish, White Gypsy/Traveller, White Polish and White Other

Workforce Profiles:
The percentage of BME police officers at 31/03/2014 was 1% (the trend since 2010) compared to 4% of the general population. Further, 47% of police officers from a BME background identified their ethnic origin as Asian.

The percentage of BME Special Constables was 1% and 73% of those have identified their ethnic origin as Asian.

The percentage of police officers from a white minority background was 1% at 31/3/14

The percentage of Special Constables from a white minority background was 1% at 31/3/2014 and 50% of those have identified themselves as Polish.

Recruitment:
Between April 2013 and March 2014, 2% of applications received were from applicants who identified their ethnic origin as BME, compared to 4% between April 2012 and February 2013. Less than 1% of newly appointed police officers have their ethnic origin recorded as BME, compared to 2% for the period April 2012 to February 2013. However, 1% of applicants, who were given an offer of employment between April 2013 and March 2014, identified their ethnic origin as BME.

Between April 2013 and March 2014, 3% of applications received were from applicants who identified their ethnic origin as coming from a white minority background. There is no comparable data for the previous reporting period. 1% of applicants who were given an offer of employment between April 2013 and March 2014 identified their ethnic origin as a White Minority background. There is no available data relating to those who were appointed between April 2013 and March 2014.

Promotion:

Between March 2013 and March 2014, 0% of those promoted identified their ethnic origin as BME.