Justice Committee

Post-legislative scrutiny of the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012

Written submission from the Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights

The Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights (CRER) is a Scottish strategic anti-racism organisation which works to eliminate racial discrimination and promote racial justice across Scotland.

Our primary concern in relation to the post-legislative scrutiny of the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012 is its implications on racial equality and impact on community safety for BME groups.

Given our particular area of interest, we have chosen to only respond to one question posed by the committee: *In your view, what have been the consequences of the 2012 Act for the police service?*

**Community Policing**

A partnership approach between the police and the third sector can allow police services to learn from communities where failures have occurred and allows individuals to feel heard and understood by the police services.

In some ways, collaboration between Police Scotland and the third sector has weakened since the restructuring from regional forces. CRER is aware from our engagement with communities that while many BME community organisations previously had good relationships with Community Liaison Officers, these relationships have now broken down due to reassignment or changes in the work of the officer following the restructuring.

We would ask that Police Scotland consider reinstating Community Liaison Officers, as building a long-term relationship with a particular community can be effective in increasing confidence in policing and challenging negative perceptions about the police.

**Local Hate Crime Data**

Sharing data on hate crime and hate incidents to inform the development of better services and foster a safer environment for BME groups is beneficial to all involved. We note that there is a particular benefit in improving the sharing of hate crime data on a local level.

Prior to the creation of Police Scotland, some local authorities were able to obtain hate crime data at ward-level, which could be used to identify flashpoints and develop bespoke initiatives and approaches to suit particular communities.

We are aware that Police Scotland has had persistent difficulties in their database systems which prohibit this at present, but we would ask that addressing this
becomes a priority to ensure that this important knowledge can be shared with local groups to improve responses, build resilience, and help in tackling hate crime.

**Conclusion**

CRER would ask that the committee raise these issues with Ministers and Police Scotland, and highlight the importance of local policing and local data to improving community safety for BME groups.

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11 May 2018