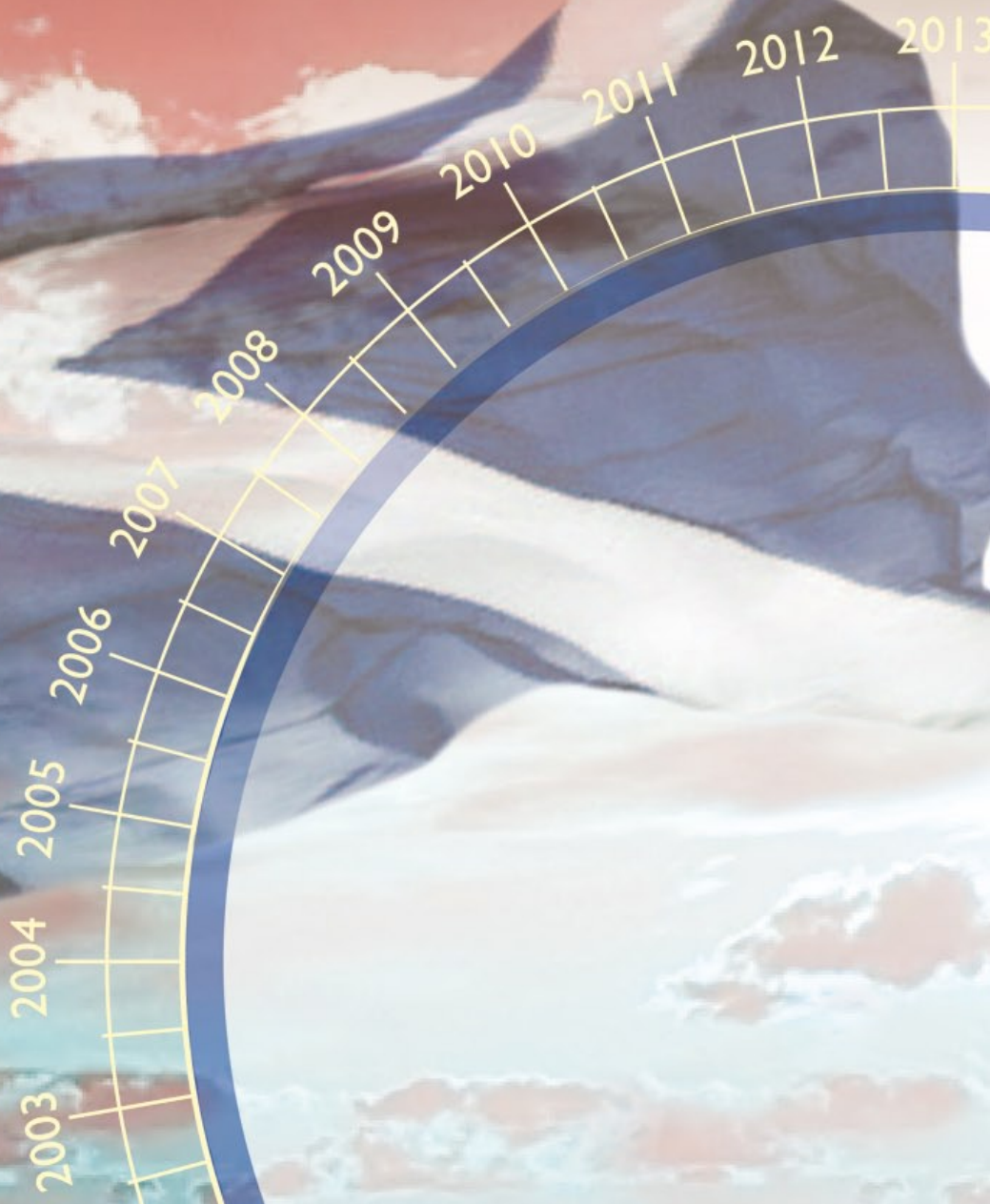




ASSOCIATION OF CHIEF POLICE OFFICERS IN SCOTLAND

# ACPOS RELIGION AND FAITH REFERENCE GROUP ACTION PLAN 2006—2009



NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED

## ACPOS RELIGION AND FAITH REFERENCE GROUP ACTION PLAN 2006—2009



The Scottish Police Service faces a number of challenges in the modern world in which we now live and must be in a position to meet and tackle the issues which arise as a result. These stem from events in the UK and around the world, the migration of different nationalities to Scotland and the changing demographics of our communities.

The Service is committed to addressing issues of religious hatred and intolerance and this priority forms a key element of the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland (ACPOS) Diversity Strategy, which was launched in 2004 by the Diversity Business Area.

The ACPOS Religion and Faith Reference Group was established as part of the strategy to provide dedicated leadership and focused organisational commitment to take this forward.

Under the ACPOS Diversity Strategy, and following considerable consultation, the Religion & Faith Reference Group has now published its Priorities and Action Plan, demonstrating the commitment of the Scottish Police Service to address religious hatred and intolerance. This Action Plan will complement and support the extensive work already ongoing in respect of sectarianism in Scotland.

The work of the group is to help develop, influence and implement national strategies and policies, in relation to staffing issues and delivery of a truly effective, high quality service to our communities. Trust and engagement with faith communities nationally as well as the collaboration of the Scottish Executive, Crown Office and other stakeholders are all vital to achieving the aims of the Group. Publication of this commitment and later results will serve to ensure confidence and provide reassurance to faith communities.

Religion may be only one factor in an interconnected cultural and ethnic identity. It is often difficult to distinguish between religious hatred or racism as a motivation for violent, abusive or discriminatory behaviour. Faith and cultural beliefs may in some instances also lead to discrimination against some groups in society. However, we do know that religiously motivated crimes can have as great an impact on individuals as those directed against their race.

There is a need to ensure that such incidents are being captured and monitored consistently and effectively to influence national, as well as local strategies and policy and ensure the necessary support is being provided to victims.

Given the breadth of religious, faith and belief groups, it is important to try and define those groups whom the Action Plan exists to support. This is determined by the main legislation used by the police in Scotland to report offences which are aggravated by religious prejudice—Section 74 of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act, 2003.

This legislation covers offences aggravated by religious prejudice towards any of the world's religious groups or of groups who are perceived to have some form of religious affiliation. The legislation also covers incidents and crimes motivated by the victim having no religion.

Events both nationally and internationally have impacted on religious groups in Scotland, increasing fears and concerns which can result in people feeling more isolated from mainstream society and more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. This can particularly be the case for those who are visibly identifiable with their faith.

It is important that the Scottish Police Service is in a strong position to meet and address such challenges. This can only be achieved by working together with our communities, as well as religious and faith organisations and other partner agencies in Scotland.

This Action Plan will assist this process. It will be regularly reviewed within the quarterly meetings of the Group to ensure that the aim and objectives continue to reflect the key issues affecting individuals and communities.

It acknowledges and reflects the ACPOS Policing Priorities for Scotland 2006-2009 and its underlying themes, as well as the ACPOS Diversity Strategy, which aims to provide a quality service that is fair, accessible and meets the needs of all individuals. It also recognises and aims to influence the recommendations contained within the Law at Work Independent Review into Policing and Race Relations in Scotland and, where appropriate, address the issues raised.

The Action Plan will remain responsive to changing circumstances and developments as they emerge.

### Colin Mather

Deputy Chief Constable  
Chair

ACPOS Religion & Faith Reference Group

### Progress To Date

- Consultation with Scottish Executive, Crown Office and Scottish Inter Faith Council to examine and understand roles, shared expertise, common goals and responsibilities.
- Established ACPOS Religion and Faith Reference Group with representation from all Scottish Forces, British Transport Police, Scottish Police College, Scottish Inter Faith Council, Scottish Executive & Crown Office.
- Questionnaire sent to all Scottish forces—initial picture of community concerns/incidents.
- Engagement with faith community representatives, supplemented by questionnaire to identify priorities and perceived gaps in service.
- Internet based research and contact with authors of relevant reports.
- Scoping report prepared documenting main issues for faith communities.

- Consultation with ACPO and shared information with other ACPOS Business Areas.
- Gained understanding of parallel issues that exist between Inter-Christian and wider religious intolerance.
- Presentations delivered at key strategic and faith community events, highlighting the priorities and work of the Group and inviting feedback.
- Action Plan produced and agreed detailing main priorities for faith communities and the Scottish Police Service. Clear reporting lines, ownership, accountability, monitoring arrangements and leadership.

### Our Vision

To make Scotland a country free from hatred, prejudice and discrimination founded on religion, faith or belief.

### Our Aim

To identify, prevent and work with other agencies towards the elimination of crime founded on religion, faith or belief and to build upon and promote good relations between religious and faith communities and celebrate and reinforce the strength that lies in the diversity of Scotland.

The following strategic goals will be achieved through a strong partnership between the Scottish Police Service and key partners, working closely with communities, religious and faith groups and other relevant stakeholders.

### Strategic Goals

1. Provide a corporate and strategic response on priority issues affecting communities.
2. Maintain awareness of priority issues for faith communities requiring a national response or influence.
3. Build, promote and maintain good relations at a senior level nationally between the Scottish Police Service and religious and faith groups and communities.
4. Work in partnership with the Scottish Executive and other stakeholders towards prevention of or early action against religious hatred or intolerance.
5. Ensure that policing strategies protect religious and faith groups in Scotland from abuse and victimisation and give consideration of distinct faith needs.
6. Consistent recording and monitoring of crimes and incidents across Scottish forces.
7. Consistent interventions to respond to crimes and incidents across Scottish forces.

### Strategic Goal 1—Unified & Strategic Response (Leadership)

- Establish dedicated Reference Group under ACPOS Diversity Business Area.
- Agree Action Plan priorities and task owners.
- Ensure cohesion and links with other ACPOS Business Areas and Diversity portfolios.

### Strategic Goal 2—Maintaining Awareness

- Establish awareness through contact with faith groups nationally.
- Scope the issues from force and faith community's experience.
- Maintain current overview of the issues nationally.

### Strategic Goal 3—Strengthening Engagement Nationally

- Improve contact with groups with whom engagement is less developed.
- Formalise links and communication with key groups and stakeholders.
- Promote and market the work of the Reference Group.
- Ensure that faith communities influence the work of the Group.
- Examine the role of Lay Advisors and make recommendations.

### Strategic Goal 4—Partnership Working

- Continued high level commitment to outcomes from stakeholders & partners.
- Develop partnership strategies to address concerns of faith communities nationally.
- Ensure appropriate communication and engagement with the media.
- Establish best methods of communicating rights and responsibilities clearly.
- Influence community and schools based education.
- Influence methods of support to victims.
- Examine influencing offender management programmes.

### Strategic Goal 5—Effective Policing Strategies

- Consider existing legislation.
- Encourage reporting of incidents and reporting options.
- Ensure inclusion of issues in Impact Assessment & Policy Review processes.
- Link business within allied plans.

### Strategic Goal 6—Consistent Recording and Monitoring

- Influence staff training, development and guidance.
- Consistent standards of crime and incident reporting.
- Establish baseline information from which improvements can be measured.

### Strategic Goal 7—Consistent Response to Victims and Message to Offenders

- Examine existing Service response procedures to victims.
- Examine existing Service procedures for offenders.
- Identify gaps, anomalies and share and publicise best practice.

This document will be available electronically from April, 2007 onwards on  
[www.scottish.police.uk/main/acpos](http://www.scottish.police.uk/main/acpos)

Printed copies can also be made available, including copies in alternative languages,  
large print, Braille or audio by contacting the following:—

ACPOS Diversity Secretariat  
Northern Constabulary  
Police Headquarters  
Old Perth Road  
Inverness  
IV2 3SY

Tel 01463 720241  
E-mail: [executive@northern.pnn.police.uk](mailto:executive@northern.pnn.police.uk)



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ACPOS  
173 Pitt Street  
Glasgow  
G2 4JS