

Social needs and media considerations

This page is from APP, the official source of professional practice for policing.

First published 23 October 2013 Updated 7 February 2025

Written by College of Policing

3 mins read

Faith communities

The deceased and their family and friends may be from any number of nationalities, cultural groups or faiths, or have no faith. Do not make assumptions about the religious or cultural beliefs or views of people. Where possible and appropriate, ask family and friends in a sensitive manner about their beliefs and cultures as well as those of the deceased.

Consider people's cultural and faith needs and requirements at all times, and provide explanation when the nature of emergencies and major incidents are such that it may not be possible to meet individuals' wishes in the early phases of an incident. As progress is made through the response phases of an incident, it becomes more likely that cultural and faith requirements can be identified and taken into account. Consider these needs, requirements and implications for communication at every stage when dealing with deceased people, their families, and friends.

A range of personnel are available to support the police in ensuring that cultural and faith issues are addressed appropriately during major incidents. Consult police diversity managers and officers, and make use of their networks of key community leaders or faith leaders. Faith groups and faith leaders do not always represent the whole community, so consider the diverse needs of all members of all faiths and cultures as far as practical and possible.

Independent advisory groups

The purpose of an independent advisory group (IAG) is to give the community a voice in police decision-making; they can also provide advice on developing successful partnerships. They will make observations both within the force and to the communities they represent. This includes helping to address problems affecting particular groups or communities.

Effective and well-structured IAGs will enable gathering of a range of community views. For further information see the [independent advisory group's advice and guidance](#).

Communications and social media strategy

Mass media, and in particular social media, is used increasingly by the public to report emergencies, call for help and share information (including misinformation and dis-information). There is an expectation that the police and other agencies will be actively engaged in using the latest technologies to create, manage and respond to information demands. The increased use of smartphones and social media platforms means that first reports of an incident appear increasingly often on social media. It is therefore important to be prepared to deliver two-way, real-time channels of communication where appropriate, and have a well-developed and well-coordinated media strategy ready to implement.

A well-informed public is better able to respond to an emergency, whilst minimising the impact to the affected community. By informing the public (and staff) as best they can, all organisations may build their trust. This includes avoiding alarming the public unnecessarily.

For further information, see [social media in emergency situations](#).

Tags

Civil emergencies