

# Forces encouraged to disclose ethnicity and nationality in specific cases

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New interim guidance on what information can be released about a suspect or defendant's ethnicity and nationality

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Police forces are being encouraged to consider disclosing the ethnicity and nationality of suspects when they are charged in high-profile or sensitive cases as part of new interim guidance developed by the College of Policing and the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC).

The change aims to support consistency, fairness and transparency in policing communications, while also addressing the risks posed by misinformation and disinformation.

This interim guidance will form part of a refreshed media relations authorised professional practice (APP) due to be published in late autumn, at which time the Law Commission review of the Contempt of Court Act is expected to be published.

## When disclosure may be appropriate

The national guidance advises that forces should confirm the nationality and/or ethnicity of the suspect or defendant (where known or recorded) in high profile, or sensitive investigations or operations where there is:

- a policing purpose in doing so
- a related risk or impact on public safety such as rising community tension
- misinformation or disinformation leading to community tension
- a significant level of media or social media interest

## Building on existing practice

This interim guidance builds on current practice, where forces are encouraged to publicise charging decisions in serious cases. It has been developed in consultation with the Crown Prosecution

Service and the Home Office and comes into immediate effect.

The College's [\*\*media relations APP\*\*](#) gives guidance on policing's role in communication at different stages of the justice process. This includes when and how to share information about suspects and defendants with the public.

## Immigration status

The guidance confirms that it is not the role of the police to verify a suspect's immigration status. This responsibility lies with the Home Office, which will decide whether it is appropriate to confirm immigration status in each case.

*The public remains concerned about mis and disinformation so this interim guidance provides clarity that police can disclose the ethnicity and nationality of suspects when they are charged in high profile and sensitive investigations.*

*I want to reassure the public that officers will continue to police without fear or favour. The interim guidance will bring consistency so information can be released for all ethnicities and nationalities when it meets the right criteria.*

*Later this year the College of Policing will update its current authorised professional practice for media relations so that the public, journalists and police forces are clearer on how we all navigate today's challenging information landscape."*

**Chief Constable Sir Andy Marsh, CEO of the College of Policing**

*We saw during last summer's disorder, as well as in several recent high-profile cases, what the major, real-world consequences can be from what information police release into the public domain.?*

*We have to make sure our processes are fit for purpose in an age of social media speculation and where information can travel incredibly quickly across a wide range of channels.*

*Disinformation and incorrect narratives can take hold in a vacuum. It is good police work for us to fill this vacuum with the facts about issues of wider public interest.?*

*Our aim with this guidance is to provide greater consistency with how we report this information.?*

*Being as fair, consistent and transparent as we can will improve confidence in policing as the definitive source of this information – making all our communities safer in the process.”?*

**Deputy Chief Constable Sam de Reya, the NPCC lead for communications and media**

[Go to interim guidance](#)

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