west midlands
office of the police
and crime commissioner

Hate Crime

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide the Victims Commission with information about services available to victims of hate crime in the West Midlands. This information together with knowledge from the Victims Commission will underpin recommendations made by the Victims Commission to the Police & Crime Commissioner.

This report is based on:

- Hate Crime Victims' Profile (WMP 2014)
- Hate Crime Collection Plan Gap Analysis (WMP 2014)
- PCC Hate Crime Conference (17/03/15)
- Discussion with Stop Hate UK
- Hate Crime Focus Group at Victim Support (13/05/15)
- Meeting at Summit House (02/05/15)
- Meeting with Rights & Equalities Sandwell (18/03/15)
- Meetings with West Midlands Police
- Hidden in Plain Sight (Equalities & Human Rights Commission)
- Out in the Open: Tackling Disability Related Harassment (Equalities & Human Rights Commission)
- An Overview of Hate Crime in England & Wales (Home Office 2013)

Definition of Hate Crime

Hate crimes are any crimes that are targeted at a person because of hostility or prejudice towards that person's:

- disability
- race or ethnicity
- religion or belief
- sexual orientation
- transgender identity

This can be committed against a person or property.

A victim does not have to be a member of the group at which the hostility is targeted. In fact, anyone could be a victim of a hate crime.

http://www.report-it.org.uk/what_is_hate_crime

National Perspective

According to *An overview of hate crime in England and Wales*, the most commonly reported motivating factor in hate crime incidents was race, followed by religion from 2011 to 2013. The majority of hate crime incidents were assaults and vandalism.

All sources acknowledge that hate crime is under reported, particularly disability motivated hate crime *(Hidden in Plain Sight)*. The reasons given for under reporting include:

- people are not clear as to whom to report to
- they are frightened of the consequences of reporting
- they are frightened that they will be disbelieved by the authorities
- a culture of disbelief exists around the issue

Major cases such as the death of Fiona Pilkington and her daughter Francecca in 2007 have prompted serious case reviews, calls for reform and for organisations to account for their failings in recognising the extent and impact of harassment, along with their failure to intervene appropriately. Despite this, disability motivated hate crime remains under reported.

National organisations that offer support to victims of hate crime include Stop Hate UK, Tell Mama, Community Securities Trust, Age UK, Crimestoppers and Victim Support. Campaigning organisations include Stonewall, Disability Rights UK, Kick It Out and the Sophie Lancaster Foundation which works to raise awareness of hate crime against sub cultures such as Goths, Emos and Metalheads. Stop Hate UK is currently funded by the Ministry of Justice to provide a national disability helpline service.

Local Perspective

West Midlands Police recorded hate crime increased by 12 per cent in 2013-14 compared with the previous year, the majority of which was racial hate crime with transphobic hate crime comprising 1 per cent of recorded hate crime in West Midlands. East Birmingham LPU records the highest number of religious and racist hate crime. Analysis shows that hate crime offences are concentrated in areas where there is a concentration of BME communities in the West Midlands (Victims Hate Crime Profile 2014, WMP). The majority of incidents were violent offences followed by criminal damage.

Discussion with Chris Johnson, Ainsley-Jayne Cobbett and Gary Stack shows that WMP is aware that its understanding of the profile of hate crime is immature which it is obviously keen to rectify so that all its victims receive appropriate support. This is also the conclusion of the Victims Hate Crime and Gap Analysis Hate Crime Profile compiled by West Midlands Police.

While the police have identified headline locations regarding hate crime as above, one of the key issues identified by Chris Johnson is that of locating more precisely where hate crime is perpetrated. While there are obvious hot spots such as the Gay Village and religious institutions where whole groups of people are targeted or building damaged for what they represent, insidious hate crime is being perpetrated against individuals as they go about their daily lives. Knowing where this occurs, as well as increased hate crime reporting would help us understand the extent, nature and complexity of hate crime and its impact on victims. As a result we would be in a better position to commission more appropriate and effective victim service provision in compliance with the cope and recovery model, particularly with face to face support.

Discussion with Gary Stack vindicates assumptions made while undertaking the mapping exercise that the number of agencies whose main aim is to support victims of hate crime is limited. The West Midlands has recently lost Gender Matters which provided support services to the trans community not only within the West Midlands but to the wider West Midlands region. Local agencies identified include CEMAP in Coventry and Rights & Equalities in Sandwell. Wolverhampton has an active LGBT network. The LGBT network in Birmingham does not directly support victims of hate crime, but would refer to Victim Support. Age UK will support people aged 50+ who experience hate crime. Other organisations exist that campaign for a more equal society such as BRAP in Birmingham and CEFED in Dudley but their objective is to promote good practice in equality and diversity rather than support victims of hate crime.

A look at the Vulnerabilities portals in Steelhouse Lane shows that victims of hate crime are referred to national agencies such as Tell Mama.

Stop Hate UK, a national charity has been commissioned in Walsall in the past and is now providing a service to Birmingham Council. It offers a 24 hour helpline service but is not providing a pan West Midlands service

True Vision & Third Party Reporting Centres

It is acknowledged by West Midlands Police that these are an under utilized and misunderstood resource. A survey carried out by Solihull Council in 2013 showed that reporting centres in Solihull were infrequently used and some centres did not realise that they were reporting centres. Similarly WMP's own Profiles suggests that Third Party Reporting Centres are under used and that promotion is poor.

Stop Hate UK has expressed concern about the role of Third Party Reporting Centres in supporting victims of hate crime, suggesting that they have limited function in supporting victims of hate crime.

Work needs to be undertaken to improve their profile within the community to increase their effectiveness. The Gap Analysis Profile by WMP refers to key Third Party Reporting Centres that would be interested in taking this further. This may sit with WMP, however, during the Victims Commission meeting on 22 May, Andrew Bolland and Brian Senior expressed willingness to work with the OPCC to explore and understand existing provision and to involve reporting centres in the next stage of service provision/development. A hate crime event, similar to the CSE event was suggested.

Focus Group Victim Support (13/05/15)

As discussed above, no significant numbers of agencies offering face to face support to victims of hate crime as their primary function have been identified in the West Midlands. Support for victims of hate crime has defaulted to agencies which support specific groups within the community; for example, when identifying agencies to be included in the mapping exercise, DIAL in Solihull said that they had a support worker who would advocate on behalf of a disabled person who presented as a victim of hate crime, but it was not their primary function.

Victim Support is commissioned by the OPCC to provide a service to victims of crime and promotes hate crime services as part of their core business. As such, the OPCC held a focus group with service delivery managers from across the West Midlands[1] to seek their views from a service delivery perspective.

---

[1] No representation from Coventry and Solihull.

Bearing in mind that hate crime is often referred to as a hidden crime with victims not always choosing to report to the police, for whatever reason, the following topics for discussion were raised:

- referral pathways

- engagement and its motivators

- face to face support

- perceptions of hate crime

- Victims' expectations

- Third Party Reporting Centres and True Vision

Referral pathways – managers confirmed that the proportion of self-referrals from victims of hate crime, including repeat victims is high[2]. No one attending the Focus Group was aware of any referrals into their service by national organizations such as Tell Mama or Stop Hate UK, nor had anyone referred into those agencies from Victim Support. However, Sandwell Victim Support has a good relationship with Rights & Equalities Sandwell which is one of only two such agencies in the West Midlands; the other being Coventry Ethnic Minority Action Partnership (CEMAP) in Coventry. The Refugee & Migrant Centre in Wolverhampton was also mentioned as another referral agency.

Managers referred to contacts within statutory agencies in their areas throughout the duration of the Focus Group indicating embedded partnership working. The area which proved problematic was the co-relation of hate crime with mental health issues and the lack of specialist mental health support services. Perceptions of people who had experienced a hate crime and who were experiencing mental health issues were discussed from two perspectives:

- Concerns were raised about people who may not be aware that a hate crime had been perpetrated against them because of their mental health issues

- Concerns were also raised about people who presented with concerns about hate crime but whose perceptions about the scale of the hate crime may be exacerbated by mental health issues

It was felt that more specialist mental health support services were needed for these groups with easier and more robust referral pathways. Joint working with a mental health support worker enabled Victim Support to support the victim for their experience of crime.

Engagement – The group felt that the ability to offer translation services to victims during their face to face support sessions was a definite motivator to engage and stay engaged with the service. Victims benefitted from translation services because they could express their emotions freely without being hampered by trying to make themselves understood in a second language. Using translators removed one barrier to facilitating effective support enabling the victim to benefit from emotional support for the crime as well as information. Using a support service as a single point of contact is strengthened by translator facilities.

Managers felt that victims of hate crime respond more readily to support from the third sector as they feel less judged by non statutory agencies. Managers reported that victims often feel that they may be in some way blamed for being a victim by the police – "if you hadn't been there, you wouldn't have been a victim".

---

[2] Based on anecdotal evidence from those attending, not statistical data.

The group commented that they offer support to victims who are frightened that a hate crime might occur. An example given referred to the recent EDL marches in Dudley in which a woman contacted Dudley Victim Support for support before the planned event. She was frightened about what might happen to her and needed support at this point. This highlights the complexities surrounding hate crime and resonates with some of the findings in a report commissioned by Summit House in which gay men said that they changed their behaviour in order to reduce homophobic attacks.[3] This also suggests that local support is important to local people when seeking support for hate crime. Tackling people's perceptions of hate crime at local level may also play a role in community cohesion.

Face to Face support – this was seen as particularly enhancing support to victims whose first language was not English. Supporting a victim face to face through a translator enabled the supporter to pick up on the victim's body language and respond appropriately. It was felt that body language is a key part of communication and can be lost through telephone support alone and while this may be true for any victim of crime, there will be a higher prevalence of people whose first language is not English as this factor is often a motivator for hate crime.

Perceptions of hate crime – staff spoke about the general public's perception of hate crime. One case was cited in which an Asian woman had experienced verbal hate crime abuse which she had reported to the police and which the police had acted on. Her work colleagues were initially sympathetic but became less sympathetic on hearing that the police were following up the abuse and taking action against the perpetrator. It was reported that sympathy from her work colleagues waned at this point.

Staff said that verbal abuse is not seen as significant by the general public. One staff member commented that the "public understanding of the impact of verbal abuse isn't there". They felt that verbal hate crime abuse was significantly under reported. Another staff member commented that "hate crime starts with the young but they do not recognise it as such". This resonates with discussion with Rights & Equalities Sandwell. Rights & Equalities Sandwell had undertaken work with young people about racial hate crime. It was observed that young Muslim males do not recognise comments made to them as verbal hate crime.

Staff felt that hate crime affects tight knit communities who talk to each other and may conclude that their experiences are not being taken seriously. Having reached this conclusion they choose not to report. Conversely, another observation made was that victims of hate crime may not necessarily wish to report or receive support within their own community and may prefer to seek support from an independent source.

Participants highlighted the link between hate crime and ASB and commented on initial referrals which do not refer to the hate crime. Managers felt that it was only when they began working with a victim and trust had been established that the victim began to disclose information that led to the bigger picture of a hate crime.

The group spoke about victims of disability motivated hate crime who were afraid to leave their homes because they were regularly called "benefit cheats" by members of the public.

Expectations – Managers commented that while they supported victims of criminal damage they recognised that this formed part of a hate crime. It may not have been referred as such by the police or thought of as a hate crime by the victim but recognising it enabled the victim to receive the appropriate support, if that was what the victim wanted. Whether the victim or Victim Support went back to the police to ask them to address the crime as a hate crime depended on the wishes of the victim.

---

[3] Experiences of behaviour change and hate crime within the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) community in Dudley (Dr S Iafrati and Dr C Williams) University of Wolverhampton

Victims' expectations of being supported for their experience of hate crime and the impact of resolving the hate crime on their life do not always converge. An example was cited in which the solution for one blind man who experienced hate crime in his neighbourhood was to move the victim out of his home. The man did not know where anything was in his new home – a substantial impact on his life.

Another factor which affected expectations was that of communication. Managers said that they often spent time with the victim to explain why actions had or had not been followed through by the police. Victims often gave the impression that they thought the police were racist because something that victims thought was going to happen, did not happen; whereas if the police had explained why they could not follow the action through, these perceptions may have been avoided.

Third Party Reporting Centres and True Vision

Everyone attending knew about Third Party Reporting Centre and True Vision but commented that the public, victims and particularly those who had witnessed a hate crime probably did not know about them. They suggested that the profile of True Vision should be raised by the police so that anyone witnessing a hate crime could report it – managers stressed that everyone should be made aware of True Vision. Awareness campaigns should not be restricted to potential victims as witnesses to hate crime may not necessarily be potential victims. It was felt that restricting promotion to certain groups may miss out a large proportion of people who do not report hate crime through ignorance of reporting mechanisms.

Conclusion

There are few services for victims of hate crime in the West Midlands from which victims can receive face to face support. Insights gained from the Focus Group indicate that victims benefit from face to face support from a third sector agency. Being able to offer support in a victim's first language is key to effective support and associated good outcomes, otherwise the hate element of a crime may never be recognised. Eastern European languages were highlighted as languages in which people particularly need support, a finding which resonates with support for victims of human trafficking.

Telephone support from Stop Hate UK is not consistent throughout the West Midlands

Options:

- Leave things as they are

- Immediate solution would be to fund Stop Hate UK to provide a pan West Midlands service.

- Consider funding hate crime caseworkers with/without language skills to complement above service.

- Facilitate meetings in which Victim Support, Stop Hate UK and West Midlands Police work together to build reporting centres into effective support provision for victims of hate crime to include telephone and face to face support. (Intermediate - long term solution)

- This should enable agencies to streamline their own roles and expectations, decide what they need from each other and agree how to put findings together to create an effective service for victims.

- Include Paulette Hamilton to advocate for mental health services