



St. Helens Council

St Helens Council

Safer Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Review of Hate Crime

March 2019

1. Background

1.1 During the annual Scrutiny Work Programme Consultation in Spring 2018, the topic of Hate Crime was suggested. This topic falls under the Safer Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel remit and a task and finish group was established, including Councillors, Partners and Council Officers.

1.2 'Hate crime is defined as *'any criminal offence which is perceived, by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by hostility or prejudice towards someone based on a personal characteristic.'* This common definition was agreed in 2007 by the police, Crown Prosecution Service, Prison Service (now the National Offender Management Service) and other agencies that make up the criminal justice system. There are five centrally monitored strands of hate crime:

- race or ethnicity;
- religion or beliefs;
- sexual orientation;
- disability;
- and transgender identity.'

Home Office Report: Hate Crime, England and Wales, 2017/18, Statistical Bulletin 20/18

1.3 As stated in the above report, there were 94,098 hate crime offences in 2017/2018 recorded by the police in England and Wales, this was an increase of 17% compared to 2016/2017. In 2012/2013 42,255 crime offences were recorded resulting in an increase of 123% over the years to 2017/2018.

1.4 The increase in figures is thought to be due to improvements in police recording, raising awareness and different methods of reporting. However,

there has been spikes in hate crime following certain events such as the EU Referendum and the terrorist attacks in 2017.

1.5 The 2017/2018 figure of 94,098 of hate crime offences is broken down into the following five areas:

- 71,251 (76%) race hate crimes;
- 11,638 (12%) sexual orientation hate crimes;
- 8,336 (9%) religious hate crimes;
- 7,226 (8%) disability hate crimes; and
- 1,651 (2%) transgender hate crimes.

1.6 Sometimes a hate crime offence can have more than one motivating factor which is why the above figures equal more than 94,098 and more than 100%.

2. Findings

2.1 The task and finish group comprised the following members:

- Councillors Dave Banks, John Fulham and Jimmy Jackson
- Helen Cushion, Arson Reduction Officer, Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service
- PC Al Russo and Detective Jenny Beck, Merseyside Police
- Simon Cousins, St Helens Council's Equalities Officer
- Layla Davies, St Helens Council's Resettlement Officer
- Colette McInyre, St Helens Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Manager
- Lee Norman, St Helens Council's Housing and Community Safety Service Manager

2.2 There are many different forms of hate crime, including;

- physical assault
- damage to property
- arson
- graffiti
- threats
- verbal abuse
- bullying
- obscene telephone calls
- Intimidation
- Harassment

These are aimed at people with regards to their, race or ethnicity, religion or beliefs, sexual orientation, disability or transgender identity and have devastating effects on people's lives.

2.3 Local Hate Crime Statistics

The following statistics were supplied by Merseyside Police and show the Hate Crime patterns across St.Helens over the past three years.

The data is an analysis of reported Hate Crimes and Hate Incidents for the period of Nov 2015 – Nov 2018. This period includes the merging of Knowsley and St Helens to form the EAST policing area of Merseyside. The merger took place in November 2016 when St Helens along with Knowsley were afforded a dedicated hate crime coordinator.

01/11/2015 – 01/11/2016 (St.Helens)

Category	Total Crime Reports	Total Incidents Reports
Disability	22	02
Race	128	03
Religion	11	02
Homophobic	31	00
Transgender	03	02
Total	188	07

01/11/2016 – 01/11/2017 (St.Helens)

Category	Total Crime Reports	Total Incidents Reports
Disability	26	01
Race	140	06
Religion	09	01
Homophobic	54	03
Transgender	04	00
Total	223	11

01/11/2017 – 01/11/2018 (St.Helens)

Category	Total Crime Reports	**Total Incidents Reports
Disability	41	00
Race	127	02
Religion	12	01
Homophobic	53	01
Transgender	02	00
Total	222*	04

As a comparison, the three tables below show the figures for some neighbouring authorities for the same period as the above table.

01/11/2017 – 01/11/2018 (West - Wirral Area)

Category	Total Crime Reports	**Total Incidents Reports
Disability	48	01
Race	273	05
Religion	11	00
Homophobic	63	00
Transgender	08	01
Total	409*	08

01/11/2017 – 01/11/2018 (North – Sefton Area)

Category	Total Crime Reports	**Total Incidents Reports
Disability	51	03
Race	246	09
Religion	32	00
Homophobic	85	04
Transgender	08	02
Total	391*	20

01/11/2017 – 01/11/2018 (Central – Liverpool Area)

Category	Total Crime Reports	**Total Incidents Reports
Disability	91	02
Race	1158	24
Religion	86	03
Homophobic	242	00
Transgender	22	00
Total	1596*	29

* The individual figures may add up to more than the total as sometimes one crime might be in one or more categories. **An incident report just falls short of being an actual crime.

- 2.4 As briefly mentioned in 1.5, the increase in crimes is thought to be due to improvements in police recording, raising awareness and different methods for victims to report the crimes. People possibly feel more comfortable reporting Hate Crimes knowing that dedicated officers will process the report and support victims through the process. Increased reporting of hate crime is seen as a positive sign and not an indication that levels of hate crime are increasing.
- 2.5 The increase in disability hate crime reports has been the result of awareness raising within St Helens which had not been taking place prior to the merger of

Knowsley and St Helens. The Hate Crime Coordinator has been developing relationships with partner agencies in the disability community networks and promoting the reporting of hate incidents. The highlighting of some high profile incidents which have resulted in court cases with excellent results, have also been promoted and this appears to have instilled confidence in victims coming forward to report crimes.

2.6 Local Resources to Tackle Hate Crime

2.7 St. Helens Council has Officers that work across several departments. These officers support victims in reporting Hate Crimes, educate people and liaise with our partners to tackle Hate Crime. In addition there are dedicated Council website pages which list relevant contact numbers, including the Council, Police, Anthony Walker Foundation, Victim Support and Stop Hate UK. This is the alternative method for reporting Hate Crime other than the Police.

2.8 In addition, the Safer St Helens Community Safety Partnership website resource has further information and a link for organisations to sign up to the St Helens No Place for Hate Pledge.

2.9 A Hate Crime Partnership Board exists and is scheduled to meet every three months, members include;

- ✓ St.Helens Council
- ✓ Merseyside Police Service
- ✓ Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service
- ✓ Merseyside Police and Crime Commissioner
- ✓ St.Helens and Knowsley NHS
- ✓ St.Helens College
- ✓ Local Housing Associations
- ✓ Youth Justice Service
- ✓ St.Helens Chamber

2.10 The purpose of the Hate Crime Partnership is to monitor and review hate crime that occurs locally, raise awareness, encourage reporting and support for victims and reduce repeat victimisation.

2.11 The partnership last met in October 2018, however, prior to this, had not met since Autumn 2017. There is a St Helens Hate Crime Action Plan. Members of the task group noted lack of representation from the Primary or Secondary Headteachers groups and the faith sector. It was also noted that victims of hate crime were not represented in the partnership meetings.

2.12 The Councils Safer Communities team completes quarterly reports on Hate Crime statistics which include numbers of crimes, locations, and victim data. This is analysed and used to report for performance indicators. These

performance indicator targets have been intentionally set at a higher figure to clearly encourage the reporting of Hate Crimes, consequentially these targets are not being currently achieved.

- 2.13 Data indicates that the majority of reported Hate Crimes occur in the Town Centre area. The task group members were reassured to learn that, intelligence shows there are no extreme groups operating within the St. Helens area.
- 2.14 Merseyside Police Service has a dedicated Hate Crime Coordinator for St. Helens and Knowsley, Detective Constable Al Russo who works closely with partners and residents across the two boroughs. Considerable work has been undertaken during the last few years to increase awareness and levels of reporting with excellent working relationships being built between partners such as local Councils, Fire Service, NHS, Community Groups and Schools.
- 2.15 Raising Awareness
- 2.16 The Council and its partners work to raise awareness and understanding of hate crime and what support is available through various campaigns. These include:
- St Helens hate crime awareness week in October and fly flag on Town Hall.
 - No Place For Hate reporting.
 - Hate crime poster campaign in schools so children understand what is unacceptable.
 - Holocaust memorial day.
 - Stop Hate UK 0800 no. to contact.
 - Promoting the NHS 'Over The Rainbow' monthly support group for 13-25yrs LGBT.
 - Hosting supporting information on the Safer St Helens webpage.
- 2.17 We heard that the Merseyside Police & Crime Commissioner commissions Stop Hate UK to deliver an awareness raising and reporting pathway for hate crime in Merseyside.
- 2.18 Reporting Pathways
- 2.19 DC Russo and his team have undertaken considerable work around disability hate crime and have established Hate Crime ambassadors in Day Centres.

His research has identified that people feel more comfortable discussing and reporting crimes face to face, this helps to build trust and learn the pathway of the report. The Police also hold monthly information stands in local Hospitals to engage with the public and this also provides a place for people to report Hate Crimes.

- 2.20 Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service manages Hate Crime from the Joint Control Centre in Bootle, Liverpool. Each fire station is a third party reporting centre, where people can feel safe to report Hate Crimes. Fire stations and fire engines in St Helens are also designated 'safe havens' which are a place of relative safety whereby short term refuge can be taken until such time as assistance can be offered or requested. People who are at risk of becoming, or are a victim of Hate Crime can be offered additional measures called 'target hardening' to reduce the threat of fire being used as a weapon against a person.
- 2.21 It was noted that further work is required to increase the number of third party reporting centres. The use of sports centres and community centres was suggested. This would enable victims to report crimes at more locations, and some may feel more comfortable reporting allegations in a more familiar setting, if they did not want to attend a Police Station. A third party reporting week is being planned to take place during national Hate Crime Awareness Week where local partners and businesses will be invited to act as third party reporting centres. The Police would also like to see local Councillors become third party reporting ambassadors so the public have further ways to report Hate Crimes.
- 2.22 The Merseyside Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) has commissioned the services of a number of support services for victims of hate crime. The Anthony Walker Foundation (AWF) is the main hub who will receive all referrals from Merseyside Police for hate crime victims. This will then ensure that the appropriate partner support agency (DAISY UK support services) will provide the necessary support to the victim. The support agencies will offer emotional support, practical assistance and information.
- 2.23 Close work with our local schools is also undertaken, the task group members were pleased to hear that St.Helens schools engage with the police very well. Schools deal with incidents under their own policies and fully engage with the police should the incident be of significant concern. The police are keen to learn about all incidents in Schools to complete local data, however, currently only learn of the incidents reported directly to them.
- 2.24 Since repeal of Section 28 of the 1988 Local Government Act schools can more confidently tackle bullying that is based on sexuality. In 2018 the Department for Education issued draft advice to independent schools, saying

secondary school children should know about “protected characteristics” under the 2010 Equality Act, which include gender reassignment and sexual orientation. Primary school children should be “aware of the ways in which people can be different and be respectful of those differences”. The advice is expected to be formally issued later this year.

2.25 The Task Group thought that Department for Education has a duty to promote education to raise awareness, although notes that this does not mean pupils or parents and guardians have to agree.

2.26 We heard that partnership working with local Housing Associations is strong and that the Housing Associations are very helpful. It is hoped that working relationships with the faith sector could be strengthened in the near future. Hate crimes reported to the Police via the various referral routes are investigated by the Police. A person who commits hate crime can expect to face criminal proceedings by the Police, and victims should be given the benefit of the doubt when reporting their concerns.

2.27 Training to Public Sector staff and Partners

2.28 Partners such as Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service and the NHS have all delivered bespoke training to their staff with assistance from the Police. Hate Crime is documented in Equalities Policies across partners, helping and guiding staff to understand their roles and responsibilities. Some training is delivered via online portals. It was suggested that this method be rolled out across partners to ensure all employees had the opportunity to educate themselves.

3. Conclusions

3.1 We were pleased to hear about the good work being undertaken by the Council and its Partners in tackling Hate Crime. Hate Crime is inflicted on people by others that feel it is acceptable to say and do terrible, indeed illegal, things. Whether they claim to not understand their crime or plead ignorance the work must continue to ensure that people do understand that it is totally unacceptable and there that there will be consequences for their behaviour.

3.2 It is clear that there is established partnership work being undertaken in the St.Helens area and across Merseyside. Partners are working closely together, sharing data and encouraging people to report Hate Crimes. We would like to see the Hate Crime Partnership Board meet on a more frequent basis to ensure data and good practice can be continuously shared amongst a wider group.

3.3 Whilst the membership reflects the local position, we thought it would be beneficial for representatives from both the Primary and Secondary

Headteachers groups, the faith sectors and hate crime victims be represented.

- 3.4 There are clear reporting methods documented on the Council's website which allows victims a choice should they wish to report a Hate Crime. We would like to see more third party reporting centres in localities and more use made of community centres, sports centres, libraries and other public buildings, as well as a greater awareness of the reporting pathway itself. The Council's performance indicator for Hate Crime is currently not being met, so its hopeful with an increase in third party reporting centres this could be achieved.
- 3.5 The Panel thought that the roll out of Councillor training as third party reporting ambassadors would further enhance current practice. It is acknowledged that Councillors work very closely with local residents on a daily basis, building relationships which could result in victims feeling more comfortable reporting Hate Crimes.
- 3.6 We were pleased to learn that awareness training is delivered amongst partners and that consideration to Hate Crime is set out in Equalities Policies and school's anti-bullying policies. The use of online training portals would reach a wider audience. This would decrease the pressure on the officers delivering the training and employees could undertake the training when convenient.

4. Recommendations

1. That the Hate Crime Partnership Board continue to meet on a quarterly basis to ensure data and good practice be continuously shared amongst a wider group, and that greater effort to broadcast its work be made.
2. That the membership of the Hate Crime Partnership Board be extended to include representatives from the Primary and Secondary Headteachers Groups, the local Faith sectors and victims of Hate Crime.
3. That the work currently being undertaken by Merseyside Police to establish more third party reporting centres in local community centres, sports centres, libraries and other suitable places be supported by the Council.
4. Members be given training by Merseyside Police to assist them in becoming third party reporting ambassadors for Hate Crime within their wards.
5. That an easy to use online, Hate Crime awareness training resource be identified and communicated across partners.

Rec No	Recommendation	Responsible Officer	Agreed Action and Date of Implementation
1	That the Hate Crime Partnership Board continue to meet on a quarterly basis to ensure data and good practice be continuously shared amongst a wider group, and that greater effort to broadcast its work be made.		
2	That the membership of the Hate Crime Partnership Board be extended to include representatives from the Primary and Secondary Headteachers Groups, the local Faith sectors and victims of Hate Crime.		
3	That the work currently being undertaken by Merseyside Police to establish more third party reporting centres in local community centres, sports centres, libraries and other suitable places be supported by the Council.		
4	Members be given training by Merseyside Police to assist them in becoming third party reporting ambassadors for Hate Crime within their wards.		
5	That an easy to use online, Hate Crime awareness training resource be identified and communicated across partners.		