



University of
Leicester

The Leicester
**HATE
CRIME**
Project

**Victims'
Manifesto**

This Victims' Manifesto is part of a series of publications produced as part of the Leicester Hate Crime Project:

Findings and Conclusions: Full Report

Findings and Conclusions: Executive Summary Report

Victims' Manifesto

Briefing Paper 1: Disablist Hate Crime

Briefing Paper 2: Gendered Hostility

Briefing Paper 3: Homophobic Hate Crime

Briefing Paper 4: Racist Hate Crime

Briefing Paper 5: Religiously Motivated Hate Crime

All of these publications can be accessed at www.le.ac.uk/centreforhatestudies.

Introduction

Over a two-year period from 2012 to 2014 the Leicester Hate Crime Project team conducted groundbreaking research into acts of hate, prejudice and targeted hostility. Funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, this research – Britain’s biggest ever study of hate crime victimisation – engaged with over 4,000 people from a diverse range of backgrounds and recorded the views of 1,421 victims of hate crime. The findings from this work have generated new and significant insights into the nature, forms and impacts of hate offences.

From the outset the project has been victim-led; our main goal was to identify the experiences, needs and expectations of victims, many of whom tend not to be represented within academic research or official policy. On the basis of the project findings and conclusions (see the *Findings and Conclusions* report for a comprehensive commentary), the research team has produced a *Victims’ Manifesto* which embodies the needs and expectations of those whose lives have been directly affected by hate crime. We feel that they are an important, achievable and victim-centred set of recommendations whose implementation can help to deliver more effective services for victims locally and nationally.

If you agree with the principles outlined in this *Victims’ Manifesto* and would like to pledge your support, then visit our website (www.le.ac.uk/centreforhatestudies) to sign up to the *Manifesto*. We are aiming to secure pledges of support from as many organisations from across all sectors as we can. We sincerely hope that this body of work makes a real and sustained difference with respect to helping agencies, partnerships and individuals challenge all forms of hate crime, and by pledging your support you can help us achieve this goal.

Neil Chakraborti

Jon Garland

Stevie-Jade Hardy

September 2014

1. Frontline practitioners should treat victims with empathy, humanity and kindness.

This first recommendation appears self-evident. However, over the course of this project hundreds of victims have shared their frustration and distress at feeling as though the professionals they turn to for support are not listening to them. Crucially, this was a common criticism directed not just at one organisation in particular but towards frontline practitioners across a range of different service providers. This reflects the fact that responding to hate crime is not simply a police or criminal justice issue but one that has relevance to all agencies with responsibilities for maintaining public safety, health and well-being.

As this report has documented, hate crime has a significant emotional, physical and health-related impact on the victim. Whilst this impact is far-reaching and often requires multi-layered responses, often what victims feel they need immediately and above all else is to be listened to and for their experiences to be taken seriously.

2. Organisations should consider early interventions before incidents escalate into violence.

For many of the victims who took part in this research, hate crime formed part of their everyday lived reality. For a quarter of all respondents the individual(s) responsible for their victimisation were known to them, and we heard time and time again from victims who were repeatedly targeted by neighbours, young people from their local area, work colleagues or acquaintances. Often these incidents were being reported to the police or a non-criminal justice organisation, but due to the nature of the incident no action was taken. In a number of instances the harassment subsequently escalated into violent assault.

When research participants were asked what would make for more effective service delivery, many spoke of their desire for organisations to recognise the pervasive and damaging nature of verbal abuse and harassment. If organisations were to take these incidents more seriously, and to intervene at an earlier stage, participants felt that this would prevent future victimisation and would make them feel less vulnerable and more supported.

3. Hate crime awareness campaigns should be publicised in more appropriate community locations.

This report has highlighted victims' lack of familiarity with the term 'hate crime'; their lack of knowledge of what forms and types of crime can be considered 'hate crimes'; and their lack of awareness of how to access support services. We are conscious that in recent years, and particularly at a local level, there has been an emphasis on developing and promoting hate crime awareness campaigns. However, the findings from this study illustrate that such campaigns are failing to resonate with people at a grassroots level, and especially those from smaller and emerging minority communities and from economically disadvantaged environments.

When our research participants were asked where hate crime awareness campaigns should be publicised, a range of appropriate places were suggested. These included community locations, entertainment venues and other large social spaces which bring people together, as well as supermarkets, bars, restaurants and coffee shops, public transport, leisure centres, places of worship, community and neighbourhood centres, GP surgeries and health centres, and places of work. All of these locations would help to connect those who are at risk of, or who have already experienced hate crime victimisation, with sources of support and help. In addition, participants in this study felt that hate crime awareness campaigns should avoid tokenism, and should be designed in consultation with victims and representatives from diverse communities in order to achieve visibility and impact.

4. Public transport should be made safer for all.

Many participants stated that travelling on public transport heightened their risk of suffering targeted hostility and increased their sense of vulnerability. This was especially the case for certain groups such as those with learning and/or physical disabilities and/or mental ill-health. The impact of being targeted on public transport was considerable, with victims taking significant measures to avoid certain routes that involved buses or trains, or even eschewing public transport altogether.

One of the main suggestions for how public transport could be made safer related directly to the previous recommendation. Participants referred to the need for more visible campaigns that raised public awareness of hate crime, which would include a strong message that all forms of targeted hostility would not be tolerated. It was also suggested by participants that public transport companies could promote clear reporting strategies for their customers, which would include something along the lines of the following statement:

'If you have been called an abusive name, harassed or assaulted during your journey, or if you witness someone being targeted in any of these ways, then please report it and help to make public transport safer for us all'

This message could then be followed by a list of individuals or organisations that people can report to, such as a member of staff, the local council, an online reporting mechanism or the police. Poster campaigns detailing the harms of hate, fully-functioning and clearly visible CCTV cameras, and staff fully trained to recognise and deal with hate incidents were other practical suggestions offered by participants in this study which could make travelling on public transport safer for actual and potential hate crime victims.

5. The public should be encouraged to take appropriate action when witnessing hate crimes.

We heard from many participants whose experiences of targeted hostility took place within a public setting. Seeing bystanders rushing past, turning a blind eye, or simply observing their victimisation without offering to assist directly or indirectly, often contributed to a heightened sense of humiliation and isolation. While the onus for reporting hate crimes often falls upon the individual victim, we heard from many participants who felt that witnesses could do much more to help in those situations.

Crucially, their suggestions did not involve witnesses placing themselves in any danger, or taking direct action such as intervening when someone is being verbally abused or physically attacked. Rather, participants called for witnesses to do more by reporting the incidents they observed to an appropriate organisation or individual, or by checking whether a victim was 'ok' after the altercation. Such suggestions could be factored into hate crime awareness campaigns in order to shift the responsibility for reporting away from just the individual victim, and to remind members of the public that we all have a collective responsibility to do what we can to challenge hate, prejudice and targeted hostility.

6. Third party reporting mechanisms should be located, staffed and publicised appropriately.

Very few of our research participants had reported their experiences to an organisation other than the police. Through the process of engaging with thousands of people from different communities, it became starkly evident how only a very small number of individuals knew that they could report a hate crime online or at places like their local library or community centre.

Once the idea of third party reporting centres and mechanisms was explained to participants they were often positive about having an alternative outlet to police stations where they could report their experiences of

victimisation. Key ways of making third party reporting schemes more accessible and effective would be for practitioners to use more proactive engagement methods to identify which public venues are used by specific communities to liaise and socialise; for practitioners to ensure that the people working in these venues have adequate knowledge of hate crime and reporting procedures; and for practitioners to publicise their availability appropriately and extensively using the methods suggested in Recommendation 3.

7. Organisations should simplify reporting procedures and make them more victim-friendly.

We heard from many participants who felt that the time and emotional stamina required to report a hate crime were often underappreciated by statutory and voluntary organisations. For those with work and childcare commitments or caring responsibilities, taking time off to report hate crimes was simply not an option open to them, particularly as these experiences were such regular events for large numbers of victims. Equally, participants felt that the levels of courage, patience and resilience needed in order to share harrowing experiences with an unfamiliar, and potentially sceptical third party were commonly overlooked by practitioners.

Concerns were also raised by numerous victims, and particularly those from new and emerging communities and those for whom English was not a first language, that the reporting process was far too complicated. Many of them referred to cultural and linguistic barriers which prevented them from reporting, and to needing more support and clearer lines of communication from police officers and practitioners through what can be a challenging and daunting process.

8. Organisations should engage more extensively with different groups and communities.

One of the ways to bridge the gap between practitioners and those directly affected by hate crime is through more meaningful engagement. This report has outlined many of the barriers facing victims in terms of reporting their experiences to a relevant organisation and accessing support. All too often participants remarked that if police officers and other support services made more of an effort to engage with them then they would develop a more informed understanding of the issues victims faced, while victims themselves would feel that their experiences were being taken seriously.

Rather than taking the more 'obvious routes' to accessing communities – via gatekeepers and self-appointed 'leaders', for example – we found that employing a 'softer', more subtle approach to engaging with a wide range of diverse communities was a more effective way of connecting with people. The research team spoke to people working in and spending time in scores of leisure sites and community meeting points across different parts of the city. Through this process of engagement with diverse groups and communities, we heard many individuals express annoyance at what they felt was the tokenistic approach taken by some organisations to community liaison, which often took the form of narrow lines of communication with self-styled community leaders. Such an approach can fail to represent the variety of experiences and concerns of people within and beyond these communities. For this reason many of our research participants called for the police and other relevant organisations to see community engagement as an integral part of their role, and to adopt a more comprehensive mode of engagement similar to the one utilised within this project.

9. Voluntary and tailored community services should be supported and properly resourced.

One of the main aims of this project was to identify ways of improving the quality of support provided to victims. This became ever more challenging as the project went on as more of the services which provide support for some of the most vulnerable and marginalised members of society were falling victim to government austerity measures. This was particularly evident in the context of tailored support services for people with learning and/or physical disabilities and people with mental ill-health.

When participants were asked which services they turned to when they wanted to share their experiences of targeted victimisation and to receive support, they often mentioned small, voluntary and community-based groups rather than some of the more mainstream organisations. We heard from many participants who said that their voluntarily-run mental ill-health support group, locally-run women's group, homeless shelter, and asylum seeker or refugee group (to name just some examples) were where they felt safe, supported and able to talk about their experiences. Unsurprisingly then, when asked what would improve the quality of support available for victims of hate crime, a common response was to call for more council and government support for those kinds of voluntary and community-based groups. Freeing up resources to support these groups is pivotal to their continued existence and can give them a platform to extend the level of support provided to service users dependent on their presence.

10. Non-punitive responses to hate offending should be pursued to challenge underlying prejudices.

There is often an assumption that members of the public – and particularly victims of crime – demand punitive responses to offending behaviour. Within the context of this study however, participants showed an overwhelming preference for the use of educational interventions and restorative approaches to justice, as opposed to extended prison sentences or harsher regimes. Moreover, this preference was shared by victims of different types of violent and non-violent hate crime and from different communities, ages and backgrounds.

Many participants spoke of wanting the offender to understand the impact that their behaviour had had on them, their family and in some cases their wider community, and believed that this could be achieved through the use of facilitated mediation. More broadly, participants called for schools, youth workers and community groups to use educational programmes as a platform to inform young people about positive aspects of diversity, to connect divided and segregated communities, and to raise awareness of the harms of hate. Overall, participants felt that the use of smarter punishment – and not harsher punishment – offered a more effective route to challenging underlying prejudices, and therefore to preventing future offending.

If you agree with the principles outlined in this *Victims' Manifesto* and would like to pledge your support, then visit our website (www.le.ac.uk/centreforhatestudies) to find out more information. Your support could help to make a real difference to the lives of victims of hate crime.

In addition to this *Victims' Manifesto*, the research team has produced a comprehensive *Findings and Conclusions* report, an *Executive Summary* of key findings and a series of themed briefing papers covering specific strands of hate crime. Copies of these reports are available at www.le.ac.uk/centreforhatestudies.



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