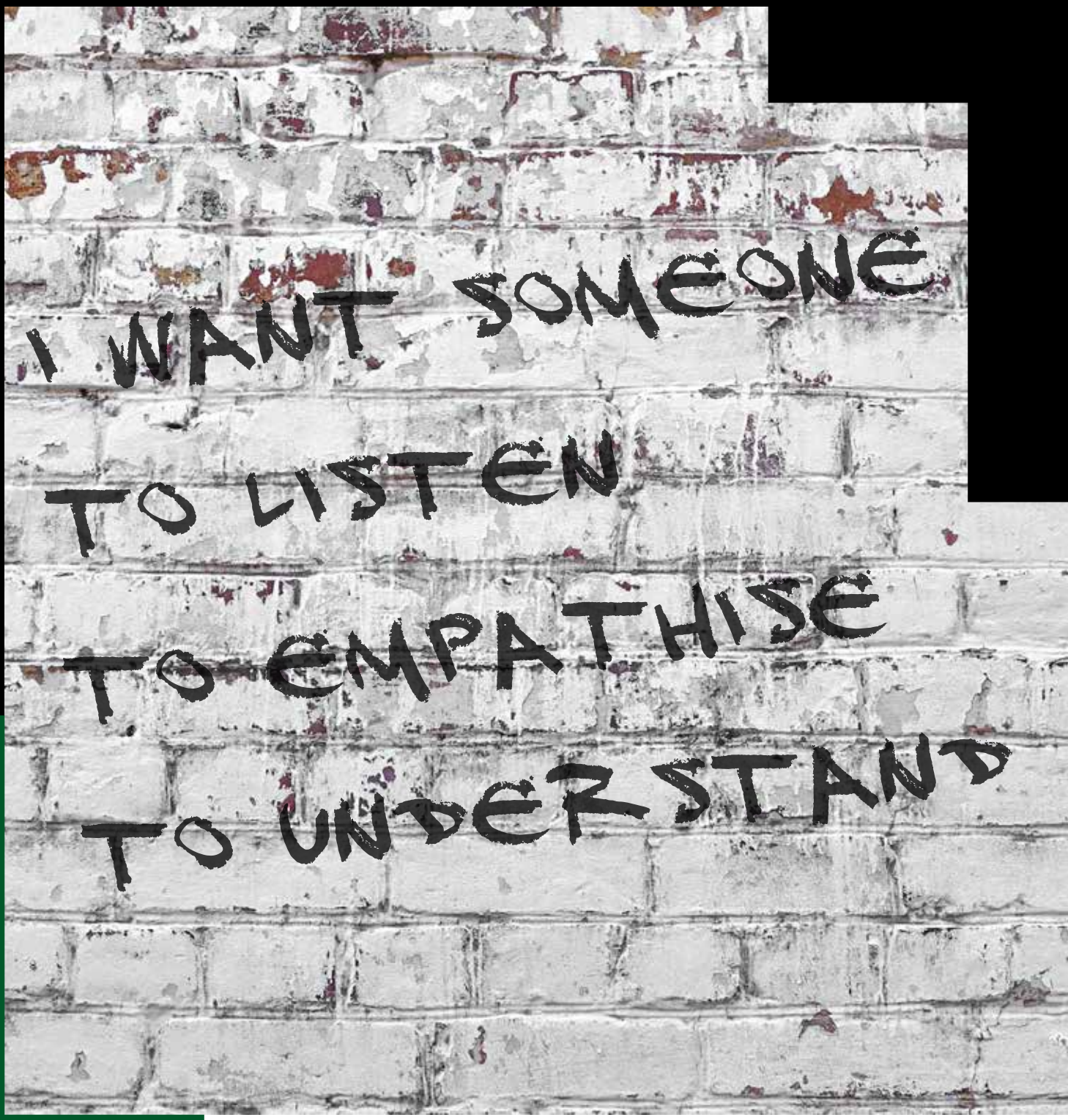
UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

THE CENTRE FOR HATE STUDIES

Healing the Harms:

Identifying How Best to Support Hate Crime Victims



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INTRODUCTION

Every year hundreds of thousands of people in England and Wales suffer prejudice and hostility because of their identity or perceived 'difference'. This can include acts of physical violence, as well as the more 'everyday' forms of harassment and intimidation. Such victimisation is more commonly referred to as 'hate crime', which is defined by the College of Policing (2014: 3) as:

Any crime or incident where the perpetrator's hostility or prejudice against an identifiable group of people is a factor in determining who is victimised.

The concept has come to be associated with five identity strands: namely, disability, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and transgender status. According to official figures, in 2014-15 the Police Service recorded 52,528 hate crimes (Corcoran, Lader and Smith, 2015). It is widely acknowledged that this number is a considerable underestimate of the actual number of hate crimes taking place within England and Wales. The Crime Survey for England and Wales, which provides an alternative measure of hate crime victimisation, estimated that 222,000 incidents took place within the same time-frame (*ibid*, 2015). The issue of under-reporting has been further highlighted through research which illustrates that the majority of hate crime victims do not report their experiences to the police or through available third-party reporting systems (Chakraborti, Garland and Hardy, 2014; Christmann and Wong, 2010).

These studies suggest that there are a number of reasons as to why hate crime victims do not report their experiences to the police or to an alternative organisation. Many victims:

- 'normalise' their experiences of hate crime
- feel concerned about not being taken seriously
- worry about retaliatory violence or making the situation worse
- have a shortage of confidence in the criminal justice system
- lack the time and emotional strength required to talk to a third party about their experiences

Research also highlights that the majority of hate crime victims are not aware of or know how to access support services. This is especially concerning given that a growing body of research evidence shows that acts of hate crime cause significant emotional and physical damage to the well-being of victims, their families and wider communities (Iganski and Lagou, 2015; Chakraborti, Garland and Hardy, 2014). It is because of the significant levels of under-reporting and the relatively low uptake of support services that we lack a comprehensive understanding of how best to support those affected by hate crime.

This report presents the findings of a study designed to identify the support needs of hate crime victims. The research was funded by the Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire, and conducted in partnership with Hertfordshire Constabulary and Hertfordshire County Council. The specific aims of this research were:

- to explore hate crime experiences in Hertfordshire;
- to identify the extent to which actual and potential hate crime victims are aware of local and national support services;
- to assess the actual or perceived barriers that prevent victims accessing support services; and
- to provide an evidence-based template of good practice to inform the wider delivery of new and existing support services.

If implemented, the recommendations included within this report have the capacity to make a sustained difference with respect to helping organisations and individuals support hate crime victims more effectively.

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METHODOLOGY

How did we conduct the research?

Within this project we used a number of different approaches to access and engage with potential research participants in Hertfordshire. First, we utilised a conventional 'top-down' approach which involved our partners within the Office for the Hertfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner and Hertfordshire County Council identifying key organisations and key contacts to approach. These gatekeepers were asked to promote the project through their networks and to facilitate access to their service users. Secondly, we utilised social networking platforms, including Facebook and Twitter, and media outlets to raise awareness of the project and to attract potential participants.

To explore experiences and expectations of hate crime support services, this study used two data collection methods that included:

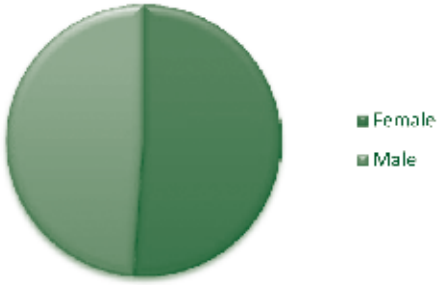
- an online and hard-copy survey; and
- in-depth, semi-structured face to face and telephone interviews.

A total of 1,604 questionnaires were completed by people aged over 16 who lived in Hertfordshire. Of this sample, 36% (n=466) had experienced at least one hate crime. The interviews were used to further explore victims' experiences and expectations of hate crime support services. Depending on the preferences of research participants, interviews were conducted individually or in the presence of family members, friends or carers as appropriate. Overall, 81 participants took part in an interview. In combination with our survey respondents we heard from 1,652 actual and potential hate crime victims[1] from across Hertfordshire.

Who took part in the project?

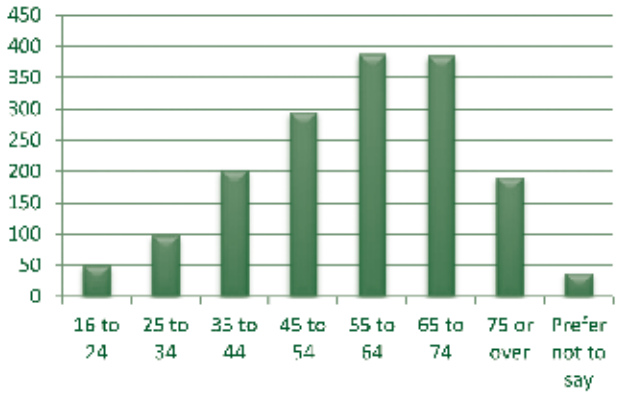
The profile of research participants was relatively diverse in terms of age, disability, ethnicity, gender, religion and belief, and sexual orientation. Within both the survey and the interviews, participants were asked to self-define their individual demographics. Figures 1-4 and Table 1 provide a breakdown of how the participants within this study defined themselves.

Figure 1: Gender of participants



51% (n=790) of those taking part in the project were women, and 49% (750) were men. 14 participants described themselves as transgender.

Figure 2: Age of participants



24% (389) of participants were aged 55-64. The next largest age group was 65-74 which made up 23% (386) of the sample, followed by 18% (296) who were 45-54. 12% (203) of the sample were 35-44, and the same percentage were aged over 75 (192). 6% (98) of the sample were 25-34, and 3% (50) were under 24.

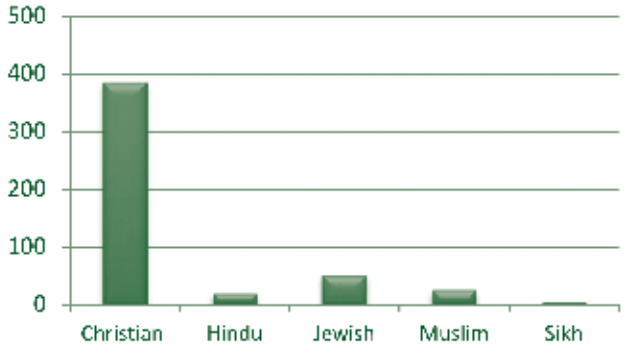
[1] 31 of the 1,604 survey respondents also took part in an interview.

Table 1: Ethnicity of participants

Ethnicity	Breakdown of participants (%)
White/White British (including White English, White European, White Irish and any other White background)	90%
Asian/Asian British (including Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese and any other Asian background)	6%
Mixed Ethnic Heritage (including White and Black African, White and Black Caribbean, White and Asian and any other mixed background)	2%
Black/Black British (including Black African, Black Caribbean and any other Black background)	1%
Gypsy or Traveller (including English/Scottish/Welsh Gypsy, European Roma, Irish Traveller and any other Gypsy/Traveller background)	1%
Total	100%

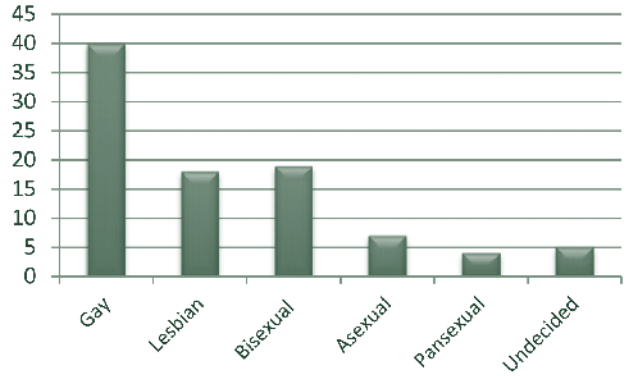
83% (1302) of participants described their ethnicity as White British, followed by 4% (64) who identified with 'Any other White Background'. 2% (36) of the sample described themselves as Asian British and the same percentage (28) identified as Indian. Smaller numbers identified as White Irish, Western European, Pakistani and Black British.

Figure 3: Denomination of participants who specified a faith or religious identity



33% (499) of the total sample can be described as having a particular faith or religious affiliation. Of this cohort, 78% (385) identified as Christian, 10% (51) as Jewish, 5% (25) as Muslim, and 4% (19) as Hindu.

Figure 4: Sexual orientation of non-heterosexual participants



91% (1387) of participants described themselves as heterosexual. 3% (40) identified as being gay, 1% (19) as bisexual and the same percentage as lesbian (18). Smaller proportions identified as asexual (7) and pansexual (4).

Finally, 13% (197) of participants described themselves as having some form of disability, which included learning disabilities, long-term health conditions such as HIV and diabetes; physical disabilities such as visual impairments and issues with mobility; and mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression.

PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF HATE CRIME

Who should be included in hate crime policy?

The concept of hate crime can divide opinion; there has been, and to some extent continues to be, much debate about which identity characteristics or groups should be afforded protection through hate crime policy. As mentioned above, criminal justice agencies in England and Wales are required to monitor five strands of hate crime: namely, hostility directed towards a person's disability, race, religion, sexual orientation and transgender status. Within this study, survey respondents were asked to consider which identity or lifestyle characteristics should be protected by hate crime policy in Hertfordshire. The five monitored identity strands featured prominently within the survey findings, with significant proportions of the sample indicating that disability (90%), race (78%), sexual orientation (71%), religion (70%) and transgender status (62%) should be covered by hate crime policy.

The survey sample also identified a number of other identity characteristics that they felt should be protected by hate crime policy, including mental health (88%), age (76%), homelessness (66%), gender (64%) and asylum seeker status (54%). This finding supports the growing body of research evidence which highlights that there are many other groups within society who experience similar forms of victimisation and who suffer the same level of physical and emotional impact as the more familiar hate crime victim groups, but who are not covered by hate crime policy. The difficulties surrounding decisions about which groups or identity characteristics should be afforded 'special' protection has been recognised through the 2012 Government Action Plan which permits local areas to include other strands in addition to the monitored five when developing hate crime policy (HM Government, 2012: 6). Furthermore, the College of Policing (2014:7), the professional body for policing in England and Wales, has also given individual forces licence to record other forms of hostility and hate where it is deemed appropriate.

Not all of the participants within this study were entirely convinced by the concept of hate crime. Some of the comments from respondents demonstrate that there are some misunderstandings about who is covered by hate crime policy, with the assumption being that only minority groups are offered protection. The following quotations were taken from survey responses.

I believe it is wrong to pick out specific groups for protection.

I do not think any of the offences mentioned should be treated more seriously if they are directed at a minority. They are serious crimes full stop.

I think that only those with the loudest voices are looked after. By that, I mean all foreigners, homosexuals, lesbians, bisexuals, transgenders, transvestites etc. English people encountering difficulty would be ignored.

NONE. I thought justice was meant to be blind. The idea that a crime against one person is less important than that against another is an appalling perversion of British legal tradition.

I would like to feel that this survey is also applicable to those people who are Christian, white and born in this country. Sometimes we feel overlooked.

This perception though is not correct; in fact, everyone within England and Wales is covered by hate crime policy as we all have an ethnicity, a religion or no religion, and a sexual orientation, and we can all be targeted on the basis of our perceived or actual identity characteristics. Another commonly cited opinion within the survey responses was that the concept of hate crime was just a manifestation of political correctness and that those affected by this form of victimisation were too 'sensitive'.

I'm old enough to remember the good old days before this load of PC BS was invented.

People need to become more resilient rather than running to others when life gets tough.

Sticks and stones may break my bones, but calling names doesn't hurt. People should be taught to ignore/avoid and not to be sensitive.

I sometimes think this is an overused issue when common sense should prevail and some minority groups are using this to their advantage or are over sensitive.

In this respect some participants conveyed a lack of understanding of the harmful impacts that hate crimes have upon victims and their families, as well as upon wider communities and social cohesion more broadly.

In what ways do people experience hate crime?

Within the survey, respondents were asked whether they had experienced a hate crime, of whom 36% (*n*= 466) had. When asked to specify which aspect of their identity or lifestyle they had been targeted on the basis of, the most commonly cited characteristic was race (32%) which mirrors Hertfordshire's police recorded figures. This was followed by:

- dress and appearance (25%);
- age (19%);
- religion (16%);
- gender (16%); and
- physical disability (10%).

Dress and appearance was found to play a significant role in increasing the risk of victimisation for certain individuals and groups. Dress and appearance includes visual identity markers which can contribute to people being more readily identifiable as belonging to a certain group or possessing a certain characteristic, including having a specific disability, religion or sexual orientation.

Smaller numbers of respondents reported that they had been targeted on the basis of their learning disability, mental ill-health, membership of a subcultural or alternative group, or transgender status. Of the sample who ticked 'Other', various aspects of 'difference' were identified as having contributed to their victimisation, including: a strong or distinctive accent, being perceived as an easy target, being in a mixed ethnic relationship, body shape or weight, level of educational attainment, physical imperfections or social status. It became apparent from the interviews that the majority of participants had been targeted on the basis of multiple aspects of their identity and/or lifestyle, as demonstrated by the following quotations[2].

It's very difficult to actually distinguish whether it's because I'm disabled or whether it's because of my ethnicity.

Male, 59, Sri Lankan, with physical disabilities

It's when people aren't confident about being black or about being a Muslim woman or about being trans. People spot the vulnerable ones and that's who they go for.

Transgender female, 58, White British

I'm not a very feminine girl. Although I'm a straight girl, I have short hair and wear jeans a lot. And people always think that I'm a lesbian. They shout "Oh, you old dyke".

Female, 43, White British

In terms of the nature of hate crime victimisation experienced by this sample, survey data reveal that 96% had been verbally abused, followed by 67% who had been threatened or harassed in person. The findings also highlight the prevalence of these forms of victimisation, with just under half of the sample (45%) being called an abusive name frequently. Smaller, but still significant, proportions of the sample had been physically attacked (35%) on their basis of their perceived identity or 'difference', had experienced their property being deliberately damaged (34%), or had been threatened or harassed online (20%).

Within the interviews we were able to explore the nature of participants' experiences of hate crime in much more detail. It is often the extreme and violent acts of hate crime that attract media and political attention, whereas the more 'ordinary' incidents of hostility tend to be overlooked or underappreciated. This is despite the fact that an increasing body of research evidence demonstrates the cumulative harms of these everyday forms of abuse on the victim (Chakraborti, Garland and Hardy, 2014). The following quotations illustrate some of the 'everyday' experiences of verbal abuse and harassment that interview participants shared with us.

It started because I moved into a house and it needed a lot of work doing, so I got builders in … when the building work started, she got very angry and started just banging on the walls and shouting abuse … She spent the next five years giving me abuse. It was nothing to do with the building work she just didn't want me living there, basically.

Female, 49, White British

[They shout] *Are you a man, are you a woman? What are you? Grow a pair; tranny; gender bender; queer - I'm not going to say the actual word - but you mother F'ing queer.*

Transgender female, 39, White British

[2] Quotations from interviews with actual and potential hate crime victims are presented with the participant's gender, age, ethnicity, and any other relevant characteristic. .

In terms of verbal abuse, loads and loads. Like F'ing old dyke … you got very used to it.

Female, 55, White British, lesbian

Well, on the bus going to school, there were these boys and they were bullying me because I was Jewish. They were saying, "Get off the bus", "You don't belong in this school" and things like that … it makes me feel really upset because, like, I try to hold it in. And it just makes me feel really depressed and I don't like it.

Male, 16, White British, Jewish

It was within the interviews that we also heard about some of the violent attacks that participants had been subjected to. As the quotations illustrate, experiences of physical assault were diverse in nature.

I've been spat on, kicked, punched, thrown up against a wall.

Male, 36, White British, with mild learning difficulties

There were threats of violence. They were on Facebook, I don't know how they found out my old name but they were spreading that around. And they were making jokes about… like, "I can go and get them to all beat him up if you want". And they even started making jokes about rape as well.

Transgender male, 26, White British, bisexual

I was smashed in the face and completely disorientated and blinded, and was unable to make any response. So I staggered out of the woods, fortunately without this guy getting hold of me, got onto a public road. And as I got on the footpath, this guy caught up with me and flung me in front of an oncoming car.

Male, 50, White British, gay

Interview participants also spoke about the prevalence of financial and sexual exploitation. Practitioners, in particular, expressed great concern about the difficulties in tackling this form of hate crime and in effectively supporting victims in the wake of further budget cuts. The victims discussed within the following interview extracts were identified as being 'vulnerable' because of the context in which they lived, which included being housed in an economically deprived location and being socially isolated.

The year before last, he was indecently assaulted in the street, waiting for a bus to go to the drop-in. And he is very visibly a person with needs, so quite easily targeted, befriended.

Female, 47, White British

Most recently a gentleman was targeted because he was just old and vulnerable. This young lady used to target this elderly gentleman and would pretend to befriend him, go in, make a cup of tea, sit there. And then when he fell asleep, she would steal finances from him out of his wallet, or steal pieces of items that she could sell.

Male, 27, White British

What are the impacts of hate crime?

In the context of hate crime the victim is being targeted because of who they are, because of the community they are perceived to belong to or because of the way that they live their life. For these reasons, hate crimes are inherently personal and distressing. Within this study, only 13% of the survey sample reported that they had not been affected by their experience of hate crime. Within the interviews, participants revealed how the experiences of being verbally abused and harassed had left their mark on them. Even years after an incident had taken place participants spoke of still feeling angry, hurt and affected by their experience.

I've been called all sorts of names because I've got disabilities. It makes you feel like a lesser form of human being and makes you feel empty, angry, upset, confused, all of the above. And it just leaves you feeling hollow for so long.

Male, 26, White British, with mild learning difficulties

I was very, very angry. I felt a fool … I just feel sick now … after you've been attacked, you feel so small and so - I can't even tell you how I felt.

Female, 60, White British

It made me not feel safe at home. It made me dread coming home. If I heard her car pulling up, I would immediately tense up. It was horrible … I dreaded every day of my life, I just…you know, I didn't get any sleep.

Female, 49, White British

Often the impact that hate crime has on a victim's mental health is underappreciated. As part of this project, we heard from participants who revealed how significantly their victimisation had impacted upon their mental well-being. As the quotations below highlight, participants reported feeling anxious, fearful and depressed as a result of hate crime.

It [hate crime] *really destroyed my life. I wanted to commit suicide. It was two years of hell.*

Male, 31, White British, gay

Some people can just drop and forget it, and, as some people would say, get over it. The thing is that, depending on how a learning difficulty affects a person, they do not actually drop and forget about it. It doesn't matter how long ago that event actually was.

Male, 36, White British, with mild learning difficulties

It's very hard when they shout at you and call you every name as soon as they see you. The thing is that they don't understand the scars it causes. Every time they throw a punch at me, it's another scar. It takes a while to heal from that.

Transgender female, 39, White British

It's all of those little micro stresses that, in them selves, don't feel like they mean much because you kind of let them go, but actually do have an impact over a period of time on you, about how you feel about yourself. And it does have an i mpact on your mental health.

Male, 50, Black British

As part of the interviews, participants also spoke about how experiencing hate crime had led them to develop coping strategies or defence mechanisms in order to reduce the risk of repeat victimisation. We heard from participants who had made changes to their appearance, their daily or work routines, and who had bought safety devices such as alarms and CCTV equipment. The steps taken by participants to reduce the risk of victimisation demonstrates the substantial impact that hate crime can have on people's lives and highlights the need for support services not only to recognise this but to actively help facilitate the healing process.

Both the nature of hate crime victimisation and the wide-ranging impacts it has upon victims influenced why participants felt that hate crime victims need a different level, and different type, of support.

Hate crime does need special attention because that actually hurts the person mentally probably more so than physically … definitely hate crime can be worse than a burglary, a car being broken into. Hate crime is a personal attack, whether it's physical or verbal.

Male, 46, White British, gay

I think hate crime does require additional support. If you have been attacked because of your identity, because of what you are, it undermines the very essence of who you are.

Male, 39, White British

Yes, because I think it's a particularly painful form of crime. It's an attack on their very being, and that's both extraordinarily painful and humiliating. So yes, I think you do need specialist support because it's so different to any other form of crime.

Female, 61, White British

Are victims reporting their experiences of hate crime?

Research has found that the majority of hate crime victims do not report their experiences to the police or to another relevant organisation. Within this study we decided to probe the issue of reporting by asking actual and potential hate crime victims about how likely it was that they would report different forms of hate crime. Table 2 presents the findings from this survey question.

Table 2: Likelihood of reporting different forms of hate crime

Form of hate crime	% of respondents that were unlikely/highly unlikely to report to the police or to another relevant organisation	% of respondents that were unlikely/ highly unlikely to report to the police or to another relevant organisation
Being verbally abused (e.g. being called a name)	**86%**	**14%**
Being threatened or harassed in person (e.g. at home, on a bus or in the street)	**51%**	**49%**
Being threatened or harassed online (e.g. on social networking sites or via email)	**62%**	**38%**
Experiencing deliberate damage to property (e.g. racist/ homophobic graffiti, smashed windows or wheelchair vandalism)	**17%**	**83%**
Being physically attacked (e.g. being spat at, punched or sexually assaulted)	**13%**	**87%**

As these figures illustrate, the majority of respondents within this study stated that they would be unlikely to report an incident of verbal abuse or online harassment. The survey findings also reveal, however, that the sample would be inclined to report their experience of hate crime if it were to involve deliberate damage to property or physical attack. Within the interviews we were able to further probe the factors which influence a victim's decision to report an incident to the police or to another organisation. It became apparent that the 'tipping point' in deciding to report rested upon the nature of the victimisation. For example, many participants stated that they would report an incident if it involved violence or if it was a repeat incident involving the same perpetrator.

As mentioned previously, 36% of survey respondents reported that they had been subjected to a hate crime on at least one occasion. This sample was asked about whether they had reported their experience(s) to the police or to another relevant organisation. 29% of the sample had reported hate crime to the police which is slightly higher than the national average of one in four (Corcoran, Lader and Smith, 2015). Over the last decade there has been considerable investment and effort devoted to developing third-party reporting mechanisms which provide an alternative reporting route to the police. More broadly, this shift is designed to recognise that tackling hate crime is not just the sole responsibility of criminal justice agencies. For this reason, many non-statutory organisations have taken steps to either become a third-party reporting centre or to identify appropriate locations within community settings that could act as a reporting centre. When survey respondents within this study were asked about their use of third-party reporting mechanisms, we found that very low numbers had used them to report hate crime:

- 28 respondents had reported hate crime to the local authority
- 13 had reported hate crime to a faith leader or group
- 9 had reported hate crime to a disability group
- 7 had reported hate crime to an LGB&T group
- 5 had reported hate crime online (e.g. True Vision, Stop Hate)
- 3 had reported hate crime to a race equality group
- None had reported hate crime to Beacon Victim Care Centre

There were also a small number of respondents (*n*=8) who stated that they had reported their experience to another organisation not listed in the survey. When asked to specify the organisation, respondents stated that they had reported to a housing association, to their manager at work, or to their school, college or university.

What emerged from the survey findings was a clear preference for informal reporting mechanisms which involved sharing experiences with people who were familiar to or trusted by the victim. A significant proportion (25%) of hate crime victims within the study had disclosed their experience of hate crime to a family member or friend. Research evidence suggests that disabled people in particular are likely to share their experiences with a carer, family member or friend (Sin, 2015). Informal conversations with people with learning and/or physical disabilities and/or mental-ill health as part of this project further supported this pattern of reporting.

The survey data revealed that the majority (54%) of hate crime victims in Hertfordshire have not reported their experience of hate crime to an individual or to an organisation. As part of this project we wanted to identify the reasons as to why victims of hate crime were not reporting to the police or through a third-party alternative, and to assess whether the reasons underpinning this decision were in line with research evidence more broadly. When survey respondents were asked why they had not reported their experience of hate crime the majority of participants (40%) stated that they had dealt with the incident themselves or with the help of others. This reason was followed closely by 'Did not think anybody would take me seriously' (39%). Smaller numbers of participants also identified that the reason they had not reported their experience of hate crime was because they feared that it would lead to retaliation or make matters worse (13%); that they were too embarrassed (12%); and that they did not know who to report it to (11%).

Within the interviews participants were able to discuss the issue of under-reporting in greater detail. The three most commonly cited reasons for not reporting hate crime are outlined below and are accompanied by a collection of quotations from both interview participants and survey respondents.

Will it be taken seriously?

I have been racially abused before and I was really scared to report the crime in case the police wouldn't believe me.

Survey participant

I felt that it was a minor incident that no-one would take any notice of.

Survey participant

From experience I feel that the police do not take hate crime seriously, namely disability and crime against women. Due to bad experiences I would hesitate before I contacted the police for help.

Survey participant

I felt that it would not register as important to a busy police force.

Survey participant

What's the point in reporting?

Most crimes are not reported. If it is hard to identify the perpetrator it just feels like you have to get on and ignore it if possible.

Survey participant

I think part and parcel of the reason for not reporting hate crimes, or sometimes any crime for that matter, is the lack of faith in the police. Two good friends of mine, both lesbians, were beaten up and didn't report it to the police. They thought the police won't do anything, they won't know who these guys are, they'll never be able to identify them. What's the point?

Female, 55, White British, lesbian

I think the process can be, like, traumatic as well. You think is it worth going to the police, filling out all these forms, giving up all this time just to re-live it and go over it over and over again, if nothing's actually going to come of it?

Female, 17, White British

Isn't it just something you have to put up with?

If you're being bullied, whatever the reason is, you just see it as that person's being horrible to me. You don't think of what it is. You don't think "Oh, that's a hate crime". You just think, this thing's happening to me and you're so engulfed in feeling miserable.

Female, 49, White British

It starts at school, and we call it bullying. Those are kind of hate incidents. And then it kind of goes right through your life. So for people with learning difficulties, it's normal. And then somewhere down the line, someone actually tells us, no, that's not normal, that shouldn't actually happen.

Male, 36, White British, with mild learning difficulties

If somebody says, look at that fucking queer wearing a dress. Well, yeah, I'm wearing a dress, I'm a man wearing a dress, so what? I can cope with it.

Transgender female, 56, White British

The reasons for not reporting hate crime to the police or to another relevant organisation outlined above are in line with findings that have emerged from previous studies on this topic (see Chakraborti and Hardy, 2015). What has not been sufficiently explored within previous studies is whether newer 'digital' methods of reporting, such as mobile phone apps and websites, could help to increase reporting rates. Within the interviews, participants were asked about their views of these reporting platforms and whether they would feel comfortable and competent enough to use them. The following quotations illustrate the mixed response towards these new 'digital' methods of reporting.

No, but that's more because I'm a technophobe than any other reason.

Female, 55, White British, lesbian

I'm not app'd up … I'm connected to the Internet but I'm more of a personal person. I'd rather talk to somebody.

Male, 58, White British

Oh, yes absolutely I'd feel comfortable using an app. Increasingly the younger members of our community would be most comfortable reporting through apps.

Male, 42, White British

I mean, I'd be fine using an app or website but I'm in IT so I understand how it all works. I don't have a problem but I know people would. My mum is, like, "oh, I don't like doing things on my phone", "oh, you don't know who's looking". You know, so I think some people would have an issue with it, but most people are into IT nowadays. But it's another way of doing it and it's worth pushing.

Female, 49, White British

This section has illustrated that a substantial proportion of hate crime victims within Hertfordshire have not reported their experience of hate crime to the police or through a third-party reporting mechanism. The under-reporting of hate crime has a significant impact on the number of victims accessing mainstream support services. As explained by a staff member from Victim Support, the vast majority of their case load comes from referrals from the police.

I think, being totally precise, I think about 90% of our referrals are from the police. Very few are other agency referrals. And self-referrals are very low. I'd say the vast majority come from the police.

Male, White British, works as Victim Support

If only 29% of hate crime victims within this study have reported their experience of hate crime to the police, given the low levels of agency- and self-referrals, it is safe to assume that the vast majority of hate crime victims are not accessing support from Victim Support. The next section has been designed to explore hate crime victims' experiences of existing support services in order to ascertain whether current provisions are meeting the needs of those affected by hate crime.

VICTIMS' EXPERIENCES AND EXPECTATIONS OF SUPPORT SERVICES

Awareness and use of hate crime support services

This project aimed to explore actual and potential hate crime victims' experiences and expectations of support services. The sample of survey respondents who had experienced a hate crime were asked whether they had accessed any type of support or support service. Just 8.6% (*n*=37) of respondents stated that they had received support as a result of their victimisation. When respondents were asked about where they had accessed this support the top five responses were as follows:

- 17 respondents had accessed support from the police
- 14 respondents had accessed support from a family member or carer
- 12 respondents had accessed support from Victim Support
- 5 respondents had accessed support from faith group or leader
- 4 respondents had accessed support from the local authority
- No respondents had accessed support from Beacon Victim Care Centre

Although the size of the survey sample that had accessed some form of support was relatively small, it is still worth noting that the most common form of support received was emotional support (83%), followed by practical support (44%). Within the interviews we were able to probe the nature of support received by victims in greater depth. As the quotations below illustrate, participants had accessed various types of support from a variety of different organisations.

Where I have asked for or looked for support, it has been a combination of emotional and practical, i.e. practical solutions that would then eliminate or make it difficult for the abuse or the victimisation to continue … I have called the local authority and HertsHelp.

Male, 59, Sri Lankan, with physical disabilities

I'd get the bus to college every day and would be abused verbally. I went to the police and they sorted it all out, they did quite well … I got support from Herts Young Homeless, they had more understanding of mental health and stuff to support me.

Male, 24, White British, asexual

I have been contacted by a support service but I can't remember their name. They did phone me up and they sent me some free window alarms that I've stuck on my window. It was good to know that there's somebody there who can offer some options on dealing with the incident.

Male, 63, White British

I got the support I hoped for. Our local hate crime officer was fantastic. She understood that, due to my speech problems, I preferred email contact. I'm sure this was less convenient for her but she never complained. She was thorough and empathic … she took it very seriously, was very thorough, and had excellent communication skills.

Female, 45, White British

As demonstrated by the quotations, participants had accessed support from a range of public- and third-sector organisations in Hertfordshire. Some of the smaller voluntary and community services identified by the sample included Butterflies, Cortex, Jackie's Drop-in, Viewpoint and Well-Being Drop-ins. Participants who had accessed these community-based services reported that they offered invaluable, tailored support.

As part of this study, practitioners from different organisations were interviewed to explore the important, and sometimes unrecognised, role that they play in tackling hate crime and supporting victims. Below is a series of quotations, taken from interviews with practitioners, which outline the types of support they offer to hate crime victims.

So [we deliver] *emotional, advocacy and practical support. So practical could be getting their home secured, sending them out some personal alarms if they feel at risk when they're out … And then obviously the emotional support, the emphasis is very much on face to face contact … It's either at home or in a café. In Hertfordshire both sides of the county run what we call surgeries.*

Female, White British, works at Victim Support

It completely depends on what the victim specifically wants. We can just be that person at the end of the phone whenever they want to call or text. Or we can go out to meet them at their home. Signposting is offered as well to any victim support agencies out there. We also have a tenancy support team that can support any of our tenants for any issues, be it rent arrears, be it issues with their home, be it the fact that they've been a victim of antisocial behaviour and/or hate crime.

Male, White British, works at a Housing Association

We really have a robust approach to any form of hate crime. If somebody rings up who's reporting a hate crime, we have a 24-hour turnaround on that crime. Our managers have to audit those cases to make sure that we have done everything we need to do … What we need to do with each of the victims, is make sure that they know they're believed and understood. And so it's making sure that they know you're listening to them and you're taking them seriously, and that you are going to help them really. other reason.

Female, White British, works at a Housing Association

I encouraged her to report it to the police as it was a hate crime. She was very reluctant to do it but after some pushing, basically, I managed to get her to report it. I then heard from her about two days later and she was quite upset with me for encouraging her to report it, because the police had been non-stop badgering her because they wanted to come out and see her and take a statement from her, which she didn't want to do. So that whole incident of her reporting, it may well have put her off from ever reporting hate crime again to the police.

Male, 27, White British

This study aimed to assess whether current support provisions are meeting the needs of hate crime victims. Within the survey, respondents were asked whether they were pleased with the support that they had received from the organisation they accessed. The survey findings revealed that respondents had a mixed response, with 55% of those accessing support from the police being dissatisfied; 78% being satisfied with the support received from Victim Support; and 70% being dissatisfied with the support received from the local authority. It is worth noting again though that the sample size of hate crime victims who had accessed support from these organisations was limited (37).

We also asked interview participants about their views of the support that they had received, and the quotations that follow are taken from responses to this question.

As these quotations illustrate, not receiving an appropriate response from an organisation can significantly affect the likelihood of that person accessing that service again. Similarly, it is important that hate crime victims do not feel bombarded by different agencies as this can be confusing and overwhelming. As we shall discuss later within this section, not every individual who experiences a hate crime will want or need further support.

One of the key sources of support identified by participants within this project was Hertfordshire Constabulary's specially-trained hate crime police officers. Three of the five hate crime officers were interviewed to find out more about their roles, and the following quotations are their descriptions of what their job entails.

I feel like for me, picking up a phone and calling a stranger is one of the most anxious things I could possibly do. And picking up and them being, like, oh, you know, I'm not really sure. Like, don't worry about it, just don't because it ain't worth it. And it just made you feel like, you know what, next time I might not bother.

Female, 17, White British

What happens is the victim gets bombarded with everybody; harm reduction or a hate crime officer, then Victim Support. In the end, they're, like, hold on, I didn't want it to go this mad. But that's just how it starts. It doesn't sustain itself, it doesn't have the legs, it doesn't keep going … Gradually it all goes and runs out of steam.

Female, 55, White British, lesbian

We have a role profile which means that the most important part of what we do is to review what gets reported and then, within a set amount of time, make contact with that individual … We look towards following up and providing support and confidence by verbal contact with the individual, which is invaluable.

Female, White British

Our role's pretty varied, it changes daily. It depends what jobs are coming in. Obviously, we can take statements; we can carry out video interviews; we can interview witnesses; we can organise arrests, we can even deal with arrests if that's what it necessitates; co-ordinate hate crimes; provide statistics, reports to the public.

Female, White British

I come in every day and I review the last 24 hours, for example, all the hate crime incidents and crimes. I help develop each of those crimes and support the officers, i.e., statements, arrests, progression up to court … I work with the council and sister agencies, as I call them, and just look to resolve the issue or identify the issue. It also means supporting the offender as well as the victim.

Male, Asian British, Muslim

The service provided by hate crime police officers appeared to be highly valued by those victims and practitioners who had come into contact with them. Additionally, when participants, who had not previously heard of hate crime police officers, were asked about what they thought of the role the response was also overwhelmingly positive.

As this section has highlighted, very few of the hate crime victims we engaged with as part of this project had accessed a support service. To date, no study has sought to explore the reasons as to why such a small number of hate crime victims utilise existing support provisions. As part of this project survey respondents were asked about why they had not felt the need to access support from an organisation, and the most commonly cited reason was that they 'had dealt with it themselves or with the help of others' (46%). As with reporting patterns, this may indicate that a significant proportion of hate crime victims have a preference for accessing support from an informal or familiar source, including a family member, friend or carer.

Survey respondents also identified a number of other reasons as to why they had not sought out some form of support, which included not knowing that support services existed (20%). A lack of awareness of what support provisions are available was a theme that regularly arose within interviews with hate crime victims and practitioners. The following quotations have been taken from the survey sample.

Currently there is confusion about where exactly one should go to for support.

Didn't even know any support mechanism exists.

Where support can be accessed needs to be well communicated, at present people don't know where to go to get support.

It became apparent that those who had knowledge of what support services existed, and how to access them, tended to either work within an environment that related to hate crime and/or to be socially and economically empowered.

I think I tend to be more proactive because of my increased awareness of public services. I have prior knowledge.

Male, 59, Sri Lankan, with physical disabilities

I've heard of Victim Support but that's because I volunteer with Samaritans.

Female, 49, White British

We know, because we're lucky enough and privileged enough to be in the know, that the police is part of a wider network of organisations, both statutory and voluntary. But I'm not sure that comes across quite clearly to service users or to people who use services.

Male, 51, Black British

A growing body of research evidence illustrates that it is those hate crime victims who are marginalised within society – either because of their social or economic disadvantage, their 'outgroup' status or their membership of a new or emerging community – who are least likely to report their experience of hate crime and to access support services. It is because these groups are considered 'hard to reach' that researchers, practitioners and policy-makers often fail to meaningfully engage or consult with them. It is this lack of interaction that contributes to people within these communities being unaware of existing support provision.

The lack of awareness of support services became especially noticeable when asking participants about Hertfordshire's Victim Care Centre, Beacon. The survey findings illustrate that not one respondent had reported to or received support from Beacon. Within the interviews with actual and potential hate crime victims, participants were asked about whether they had heard of Beacon and every time the response was "No". The lack of knowledge about what Beacon does was further demonstrated within the interviews with practitioners from different organisations. The following comments from practitioner interviews have been anonymised.

That's interesting because I've never heard of it. I've heard the name Beacon but only in a really loose sense. I find it really surprising that they've been going over half a year and it's not out there.

Male, White British

I knew that the Police and Crime Commissioner was setting something up around victim support. I can't tell you what Beacon do. I'd no idea about it until you said this afternoon about what services they provide.

Male, White British

What I will say is, it seems that they're saying that they can deliver a lot, but I've not had the best feedback because I believe that that's because people have not used it that well. Now whether that's access or not really understanding what they're doing, I don't honestly know.

Female, Asian British

I think since the launch, for me, it's fallen on a flat face really. And I think there needs to be a great big publication exercise on it.

Female, White British

It is evident that much more work needs to be done in order to raise awareness of Beacon, not only to actual and potential victims of hate crime but also to local public and third-sector organisations.

A substantial proportion (42%) of hate crime victims did not feel that they required any support as a result of their victimisation. As mentioned earlier within this section, it is vital that we recognise that not every person who experiences a hate crime will feel it necessary to access support. This is not to say that these individuals are not shocked, upset or angered by what has happened to them but rather, that they feel able to overcome it without accessing external support mechanisms.

I am very resilient and I have to say, it may be about me as a person rather than me, you know, as a gay person. It's more about me being somebody who really does deal with things quite well. I mean, as well, I'm hardened to a lot of things, through my life, through my job, etc.

Female, 55, White British, lesbian

Some people don't want support, some people want it to go away, they're in denial. All those emotions come into it, maybe if I close my eyes it will go away, sort of thing and I don't want to keep re-living it.

Male, 35, Asian British, Muslim

A lot of the time a victim doesn't feel like a victim. And naming somebody as a victim is in itself quite disempowering. I haven't felt like a victim, although the police would have defined me as a victim … When they say, do you want to be referred to Victim Support? It's like an obligation or it's like a process. My instant response is, no.

Transgender female, 59, White European

Expectations of hate crime support services

This part of the report aims to outline what actual and potential hate crime victims would expect and need from a support service. All respondents within the survey sample were asked to consider what features of a support service would be most important to them. Table 3 highlights what proportion of the survey sample selected each characteristic.

Table 3: Expectations of support services

Characteristics of a support service	% of survey respondents
Being able to access support quickly	**81%**
Being treated with kindness and compassion	**72%**
Being able to access practical support (e.g. safety advice, personal safety equipment)	**58%**
Accessing support from a trained professional	**57%**
Having a service with flexible opening times	**46%**
Being able to access support at home	**45%**
Being able to access emotional support face to face	**44%**
Being able to access support in a safe place	**44%**
Being able to access emotional support on the phone	**31%**

As the Table demonstrates, survey respondents indicated that the most important features of a support service were being able to access support quickly, being treated with kindness and compassion, and being at able to access practical support. The interviews provided an opportunity to explore participants' expectations of support and support services in greater detail. From analysing the interview data it became possible to produce four key themes which both actual and potential hate crime victims identified as being important aspects of an effective support service.

i. Being able to access support quickly, easily and outside of a fixed time period

In line with the findings from the survey, the majority of interview participants indicated that one of the most important features of a support service is accessibility. In particular, it was felt that organisations should offer services to hate crime victims outside of the 'normal' working hours. For a significant proportion of interview participants, being able to access support quickly was a priority and this was only possible if it was easy to access. Interestingly, some participants stated that they would not be ready to access support directly after an incident had taken place. It was this cohort of participants who felt that they should be able to receive support at a later date. The following comments highlight these themes.

I would need a very quick support response.

Survey participant

Friday night, Saturday and Sunday, that's when people need it. And I know it's dreadfully expensive but that's when people need help, particularly people - people like me - people who are living on their own and they're stuck inside these four walls.

Transgender female, 56, White British

24 hours later is not necessarily the right time for some people. Give that person some information that it's there, so that if they have a crisis, you know, if you wake up in the middle of the night and you suddenly realise what's happened to you, you can contact them.

Female, 51, White British

A telephone service which can be accessed out of hours because I think a lot of people have their crisis moments maybe at night time when they're on their own. It doesn't fit in with the nine to five. And so that could be on the phone or that could be by Internet as well, like a chat. Because some people find it easier to type because it's distancing themselves, rather than picking up the phone

Transgender male, 26, White British

ii. Being able to access emotional and practical support

Similar to the survey findings, there was a strong feeling from interview participants that support services should offer practical support to hate crime victims. When probed further about what types of practical support should be available, participants referred to the police specifically and to their ability to 'get the job done'. Few participants made reference to expecting to receive or needing safety devices, such as personal safety alarms or CCTV.

Emotional support wouldn't have done it for me. I needed practical support. You know, I needed the police to have powers to go in there, get her out and put her somewhere else.

Female, 49, White British

It's all very well having a support service to talk to and tell them about what's happened, but I think what people are more anxious for is actually solutions to what's happened to them and actually a way forward.

Male, 18, White British

I'd like to see the offender brought to justice, and I think everyone in my family would say, actually that's the main priority of the police. There are other agencies that should be providing emotional support.

Male, 45, White British

Although emotional support did not feature as highly on the survey sample's 'wish-list' compared to other forms of support, within the interviews many participants spoke about the important role that emotional support plays in healing the harms of hate crime.

Well, I would like face to face emotional support, you know, because, I mean, a good old cry does you good.

Female, 64, White British

What we [Samaritans] *do is just listen. We kind of go down into the well with them and we sit with them, and we're with them with their problem. We don't know what it's like but we give them empathy, get them to talk … the power of listening and open questions is phenomenal. So with Beacon, I mean, they need to do this.*

Female, 45, White British

This was particularly true for those whose mental health had been adversely affected by hate crime. However, it is important to recognise that in most cases a victim's mental ill-health has not been caused by a single incident of hate crime. Rather, many victims have been made to feel 'different', and have experienced multiple forms of discrimination and hostility, throughout their lives. It is these individuals who need specialist emotional support in order for the victim to be able to unpack and deal with the layers of hurt. For many hate crime victims, the role that Victim Support can play in providing emotional support would meet their support needs. However, some of the hate crime victims we heard from within this study have complex and multi-layered support needs, and as such require a more substantial and advanced support package. This level of support was felt to be currently lacking.

When you get to that point where you've had Victim Support for a while, and then you feel that person actually needs more professional help, there's a massive gap. Now what do you do? Do you support them during that gap? Where do you send them to?

Female, 55, White British

I think a major thing which would really help people is having a place where they could get a type of counselling … So they're likely to be a counsellor and offer a counselling support, but a soft approach rather than a formal approach.

Transgender male, 26, White British

iii. Being able to access support from a practitioner, a volunteer and a peer

When interview participants were asked about who they would want to deliver emotional support, the response was mixed. As previously mentioned, when hate crime victims have significant and complex support needs it was felt that trained practitioners should deliver the necessary emotional support. However, it became evident that regardless of who was providing the support, the important factor – cited by 57% of the survey respondents – was that they were trained to fully understand hate crime and the ways in which it can affect someone.

Another significant finding to emerge from the interviews was that many participants would like to be able to access support from someone who had also experienced hate crime. Within interviews, participants referred to being interested in 'mentoring', 'buddy schemes' and 'peer support'.

Sometimes that personal thing of somebody who's not trained but who's having the same experience as you, you may actually find that more helpful in a way, getting coping strategies off each other.

Female, 60, White British

Having a mentor … a peer support thing. When I had the thing, I remember saying to the police, you know, is there anyone in the area that you know that are going through this? And I said, it would really help me if I could have someone.

Female, 49, White British

You see, mentoring is really effective and when it works, I think it works really well. You just need to get something there in place e so that people that are committing to mentoring know what they're signing up for and why.

Transgender male, 26, White British

iv. Being able to access different forms of support from different organisations

Both the survey and interview data demonstrate that there is no 'one-size fits all' approach to providing support for hate crime victims. Support needs to be offered in a variety of formats and through a variety of organisations. The quotations below have been selected to demonstrate the range of opinions expressed by both interview participants and survey respondents when asked about what support they think hate crime victims should receive, and who should deliver it.

Hotlines for victims to speak confidentially even if you are not reporting.

Support for victims of hate crime should be available from varied sources; agencies, charities, religious organisations and legal organisations.

Online advice should be available.

It could be a resource centre where people are empowered even before they have experienced victimisation.

You need to appeal to different generations and different people. You can't have one uniform service that fits everyone. There isn't a one solution fits all. You've got to have lots of different solutions for lots of different problems.

You can't say I think drop-in centres need to be prioritised, I think phone calls need to be prioritised, because you've got people that want different ways. I think everyone in this room's going to want a different way to be supported, and that's the problem.

Every hate crime should be dealt with through a multi-agency approach.

There was widespread recognition from interview participants that the public and voluntary sectors were constrained in their ability to provide tailored support services to hate crime victims because of continued Government budget cuts. This was expressed most acutely from the practitioners who openly conveyed their concern and frustration about being unable to deliver the level of service that victims need.

Police forces are underfunded, they have not got enough staff and the staff that they do have are so seriously overworked and they are stressed themselves.

Survey participant

You've got to be properly resourced so that when people do come for support … you see, you only get one chance. You come once and you don't get satisfaction, you won't come again.

Male, 59, Sri Lankan, with physical disabilities

Police powers are stretched now, the old PCSOs don't have the sort of capacity to sort of be the face on the road all the time, they can't be everywhere at once, because resources are stretched, aren't they?

Male, 44, Asian British

We're finding that at the moment we can't get no funding at all. Our council has just had all their funding cut two weeks before Christmas. That's not helped at all … It's quite frustrating, without funding we can't move forward.

Male, 31, White British, gay

However, it is important for those who are in a position to offer support to recognise that the most commonly cited support needs were for victims to be treated with empathy and to be believed. Neither of these expectations cost money. The vast majority of research participants, regardless of their background or the type of hate crime they had experienced, stated that an effective support service is one that takes the time to listen to the victim. The following responses were provided by survey participants when asked what was the most important factor in providing effective and meaningful support to hate crime victims.

Being believed.

To know that what I report is taken seriously and acted on.

People do need different things but what I do think is, they need to know that you're taking them seriously and you believe what they say.

To be treated with compassion and respect.

A cold and firm police officer doesn't help when you've been a victim of a hate crime. Sympathetic action by the police is essential.

This section has demonstrated that the term 'support' means different things to different people. Support can, and should, be provided by different organisations and by people who have an awareness of hate crime and its impacts. It should be delivered in a way that is tailored to meet the needs of the individual. These needs will vary greatly depending on a range of different situational factors and individuals traits, including the type of hate crime experienced by the victim or how often they have been targeted; the presence, or otherwise, of existing support networks for the victim; their social and economic position within society; and the presence of health issues including mental ill-health and/or physical disabilities and/or learning difficulties. The following section provides best practice guidance on how organisations and frontline practitioners can meet the support needs of hate crime victims.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The aim of this study was to assess actual and potential hate crime victims' experiences and expectations of support services in Hertfordshire. This report has outlined the perceived effectiveness of hate crime policy; the range of hate crimes experienced by people who live in Hertfordshire; the considerable emotional and physical impacts that hate crime has on a victim's well-being; the significant levels of under-reporting to the police and the poor usage of third-party reporting mechanisms; the low numbers of hate crime victims who have accessed support services; and the support needs and expectations of actual and potential hate crime victims.

This study and its findings have relevance beyond Hertfordshire, and for this reason we have used what we have learned from this study to produce best practice guidance for agencies and partnerships regionally and nationally. The recommendations outlined below are based on the needs and expectations of actual and potential hate crime victims with whom we engaged as part of this project. If implemented, these recommendations have the potential to improve existing support structures and organisational responses which will enable practitioners to support hate crime victims more effectively.

1. Ensure that diversity and hate-related training is delivered to all frontline practitioners

There was a perception amongst many actual and potential hate crime victims that frontline practitioners lacked the necessary knowledge and understanding of diversity and hate crime to be able to provide appropriate levels of support to victims. This affected victims' confidence and willingness to report to the police and to access support services. When both interview and survey participants were asked to recommend ways in which existing support provisions could be improved, a significant proportion identified the need for improved practitioner training.

I know it's a big ask but for all officers, not just hate crime specialists, to have a good understanding of how different groups experience low level discrimination day in and day out.

It would be helpful if the person offering support had knowledge of the particular hate crime, i.e a Muslim/Jewish/Transgender person.

Good training for all police, to ensure that they deal with any member of the public, who reports an incident, with understanding.

Police need more training around supporting people with disabilities and identifying when they are victims of hate crime. Until police understand disability and apply the social rather than medical model this will continue to go unrecognised and disabled people will continue to face abuse.

I would go back to training - training's really important in terms of getting people to think differently about how they engage with people with mental health issues and/or other groups of people.

Organisations should commit to providing evidence-based diversity and hate crime training for all frontline members of staff. This training should be developed and delivered with involvement from members of diverse communities and hate crime victims. It is also important that these organisations take meaningful steps to publicise the training that staff receive to the general public in order to increase levels of confidence amongst those who have experienced, or who are at risk of experiencing hate crime.

2. Encourage frontline practitioners to treat victims with compassion and to take all incidents seriously

For many this recommendation will seem self-evident. Over the course of this study, when participants were asked to describe the key attributes of an effective support service, many referred to being treated with empathy and kindness as a crucial first step. However, a significant proportion of participants reported that their basic support needs were not being met because they were not being listened to or believed. As this report has documented, hate crime can have a devastating impact on the emotional and physical well-being of victims. Whilst some of those affected by hate crime might require a comprehensive support package and a multi-layered response, many victims feel that what they need immediately, and above all else, is to receive a prompt response, to be treated with compassion, and for their experiences to be taken seriously.

I just want someone to listen to me and not judge, to empathise with me, to understand.

Male, 25, White British

You need someone that's just going to sit and listen to you. I think that's the most important thing because I think you need to talk about it to get it out of your system. You need to be offered empathy and care and reassurance.

Female, 60, White British

It should be taken more seriously. It's not like when someone is attacked and you can see the damage. Hate crimes victims suffer inside and that affects their mental health.

Survey participant

3. Produce awareness-raising campaigns for support services that are engaging and publicised more widely

This report has highlighted that hate crime victims are often unaware of support services and of how to access them. This was particularly evident when it came to knowledge of the Beacon Victim Care Centre. It is critical that more engaging and effective awareness-raising campaigns are developed in order to enhance both the general public's and practitioners' awareness and understanding of existing support provisions within Hertfordshire. As part of this study, participants were asked to propose their ideas for how organisations could better promote the services that they offer to hate crime victims. A selection of these suggestions can be seen below.

I think that it should be advertised on television because not everybody's got on computers. I mean, I haven't got one, for instance. A TV advert and posters and flyers through people's letterboxes.

Female, 64, White British

I think you need to use every advertising outlet that you can get. I mean, there's BOB FM that's Local to Herts. There's TV, there's social media. I think Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Instagram, anything like that .

Male, 29, White British

They need to do a big publicity campaign really. There are lots of local TV stations, Hitchin TV, Stevenage TV. Use BOB FM, which is the main radio station. And the other ones are Vibe and BBC Home Counties.

Male, 50, White British, gay

I think social media, that's a key way of getting a message across to lots of people. I mean, everyone's on it all the time.

Male, 16, Asian British

On the basis of these suggestions it would seem that the use of a variety of methods to promote what a hate crime is, and where victims can access support, is key to raising awareness amongst different sections of different communities. Although many of these strategies are already being used by a range of local and national organisations, the very fact that most participants had not seen them before demonstrates that existing awareness-raising campaigns are failing to connect with actual and potential hate crime victims at a grassroots level.

Importantly, it was felt that these awareness-raising mechanisms should be tailored, and where necessary adapted, to connect more meaningfully with different sectors of society. Key to achieving this is for organisations to design awareness-raising campaigns in consultation with both hate crime victims and representatives from a diverse range of communities and groups. This will help not only to produce key messages and content that will resonate with a specific group, but also to enable practitioners to identify more appropriate, community-based locations to publicise the material.

4. Continue to employ specially-trained hate crime police officers

TThis project has identified that a number of factors undermine hate crime victims' confidence in the police and criminal justice system more broadly. As outlined in previous sections, victims often feel that their experience will not be taken seriously by the police; that the police are not sufficiently trained in hate crime to fully understand its impacts; and that the criminal justice process is confusing, intimidating and emotionally draining. It is unlikely that an individual who holds these beliefs will feel that they are being, or will be, appropriately supported.

The role of a hate crime police officer offers hate crime victims something different; it provides victims with the opportunity to be supported by someone who has a specialist understanding of hate crime and of different communities, who will act as an advocate, and who will deliver a personalised, meaningful service. Having a single point of contact throughout the investigative process helps victims feel less intimidated by the criminal justice system and more supported during this difficult time. This report has highlighted not only how the role of a hate crime police officer has been well received by both actual and potential hate crime victims, but also how this role is valued by practitioners who work within the voluntary and community sector.

100% they're a valuable resource. I couldn't have done all this without them. [Name of police officer] is *just brilliant, absolutely brilliant.*

Male, 31, White British, gay

Yes, absolutely it's an important role. And [name's] brilliant. She's a friendly face. She's out there. She's not just at the end of a phone, she goes to stuff and mixes with people. She's absolutely totally supportive.

Transgender male, 58, White British

5. Identify opportunities to resource voluntary and community support services

One of the main aims of this project was to explore the current usage of existing hate crime support services. Often victim support services are conceived of in very narrow ways, with the assumption being that the only option for those in need of support is Victim Support. However, when participants were asked which services they turned to when they wanted to receive support, they often mentioned small, community-based groups rather than the more familiar and mainstream organisations. As part of this project, we heard from participants who said that their mental health well-being groups, their disability day services, and their locally-run transgender social group (to name just some examples), were where they felt supported and able to share their experiences of hate crime.

Before I was spending, say, two, three days a week doing nothing, sat on my tod, going through depression from being bullied. But since starting here, I'm learning to deal with it more because of talking to these guys … We all just come here and socialise and just get on really. It's such a great place for disabled people to go to.

Male, 26, White British, with mild learning difficulties

I think a place like this could do with being, if anything, bigger and loads of support. It's fantastic, it really is. Just to come here and meet all the others, it just gets you through.

Male, 44, White European, has mental-ill health

It's a nice drop-in. They make me feel comfortable, make me feel secure. They make me feel happy. They make me feel like I can actually trust them and believe what they think of me.

Male, 28, White British, with mild learning difficulties

Given the important role that voluntary and community services play in providing support to hate crime victims and to some of the most vulnerable and marginalised members of society, it is unsurprising that both victims and practitioners expressed great frustration at services being stripped-back due to ongoing austerity measures. Unsurprisingly then, when asked what would improve the quality of support available for victims of hate crime, a common response was to recommend for more council and government support for these kinds of voluntary and community-based groups. Mainstream organisations should not only consider ways to free up resource to support the continued existence of these groups, but should also take steps to learn about what makes these groups so effective at supporting people from different backgrounds.

6. Provide a specially-trained counsellor service to those most in need

This project has demonstrated that hate crime victims come from different backgrounds, have different hate crime experiences, and have different support needs. It is therefore impossible for one organisation to deliver a 'one size fits all' support service. Hertfordshire already has an array of public- and third-sector organisations who take an active role in tackling hate crime and who are also available to support those affected by it. However, what is currently missing is an 'enhanced' service for victims whose mental health has been significantly affected as a result of hate crime. It is these individuals who are in need of long-term counselling support from a trained professional. At present, these victims can only access this level of support through their GP and this process was widely criticised by research participants for being lengthy and ineffective.

In my case the bullying, harassment and verbal abuse has led to serious depression, and it became almost impossible to leave my home where I felt safe. I couldn't even get counselling despite an eight month fight.

Female, 35, White British, with physical disabilities

There needs to be counsellors who can offer support appropriate to the individual. Everyone takes things differently, copes differently, deals with things differently. Counsellors have more freedom to properly understand and help those victims who suffer.

Female, 44, White British

A more fruitful option might be to employ a trained counsellor who would be located within Beacon Victim Care Centre. This individual would be expected to have specialist knowledge of hate crime, as well as other especially damaging crimes such as domestic violence and sexual assault, and would deliver an enhanced support package to those victims who are most in need. This approach could form the basis of a pilot project which could be evaluated to generate empirically-driven evidence on the effectiveness of this support mechanism.

7. Communicate investigative processes and case updates more effectively

One of the most frequently cited support needs expressed both by actual and potential hate crime victims was for hate crime cases to be taken seriously. There are two main issues which tend to undermine victims' perceptions of how seriously the police, and other relevant agencies, are taking incidents of hate crime. First, many victims are often unaware of the procedures and practices that must be followed when investigating a hate crime. Such incidents can be complex and therefore investigations can be time-consuming and difficult. Secondly, victims are rarely kept up to date with case developments. Both of these factors can contribute to hate crime victims feeling that their case is not being dealt with efficiently or effectively.

They took my statement and I never heard anything else … To get that response from them was awful.

Female, 60, White British

I have experienced verbal abuse … the police filed it as a nonracial incident. I never got an explanation why they did this. It made me lose confidence in reporting another incident.

Survey participant

Being able to recover from any type of 'hate crime' depends not only on being able to report it and speak about it, but also on being kept up-to-date with any events that follow. Such information will help the victim's recovery.

Survey participant

To a large extent these problems could be overcome through better communication. Frontline practitioners might want to consider how they can better explain the processes involved in investigating hate crimes and how they can utilise different methods of communication to ensure that the victim is kept informed. Both of these strategies will help to manage expectations and to convey how seriously these incidents are taken.

8. Utilise more creative and accessible ways of providing support

As part of this study we sought to engage with people who lived in different locations throughout Hertfordshire. It soon became apparent that those victims who lived in more rural locations felt isolated due to being unable to access support services in different areas of the county.

Support services are a postcode lottery. So for example, Jackie's Drop-in, if you live here and you haven't got any transport, you can't get to Letchworth because the infrastructure is really, really difficult. So getting from one part of the county to another in Hertfordshire is really hard. You might have a fantastic support service for a group in Watford but would never be able to get access from anybody in Hitchin, let's say.

Female, 55, White British, lesbian

As a county, Hertfordshire is home to village-style, rural locations, as well as highly-populated urban areas. In both practical and financial terms it is unfeasible to provide a physical support centre or a support service within every borough that would meet the needs of different hate crime victims. It is therefore necessary for support services to consider more creative approaches to connect with victims based in more remote areas of the county. One such approach could be through the development of an online system which enables gh the development of an online system which enables support to be accessible through a website and a mobile phone app. This could form part of the portfolio of support offered by Beacon, but moderated by volunteers at Victim Support to ensure that victims are being advised and supported by people who are trained.

The online platform could also include a 'catalogue' of the support services available in Hertfordshire, which could also be updated regularly by Victim Support. This study has demonstrated that whilst Hertfordshire has a range of support services available to hate crime victims, many are unaware that these mainstream support services or voluntary and community-run social groups exist. This lack of awareness also extends to frontline practitioners, who during this project highlighted the confusion they often encounter when trying to identify a service to signpost someone to. It would therefore be beneficial to produce a 'catalogue' of these services that could be accessed by actual and potential hate crime victims, as well frontline practitioners.

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