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Institute of
Housing

How to support hate crime victims

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What is hate crime?

'Any criminal offence which is perceived, by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by hostility or prejudice towards someone based on a personal characteristic'

This is the working definition of hate crime, emphasising the perception of the victim and of any third party who might be involved (sometimes referred to as the 'perception test').

Another way to describe hate crime is that it is an attack on a person's social identity, often motivated by prejudice. It is a way of excluding people. And it gives a message that can be threatening and harmful both to the individual and to the communities who are targeted.

Hate crime describes a range of potentially criminal behaviour including verbal abuse, intimidation, threats, harassment, bullying, assault and damage to property. It can occur anywhere: on the streets, in and around the home, online (also known as cyber-hate) and in the workplace.

When a person's social identity is attacked, it is commonly based on one or more of these five personal characteristics:

- disability
- race or ethnicity
- religion or beliefs
- sexual orientation, or
- transgender identity.

Under equality legislation, these are called 'protected characteristics' and are also often referred to as the 'monitored strands'.

Whilst there is no legal definition of 'hostility' the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) uses the everyday understanding of the word which includes ill-will, spite, contempt, prejudice, unfriendliness, antagonism, resentment and dislike.

There is no specific offence in UK law that is called 'hate crime'. However, a range of offences exist where – if it is proven that they are motivated in whole or in part by an individual's hostility

or prejudice towards another based upon a recognised protected characteristic – the court can apply a sentence uplift on perpetrators who are found guilty.

Applying the 'perception test' (see above), all levels of incident should be taken seriously, recorded, and lead to an appropriate response.

Why is hate crime an issue for social housing providers?

There are several reasons for this:

- Social housing households are four times more likely than owner-occupiers to be victims of hate crime.
- Housing providers are often called 'community anchors:' they have significant local influence, knowledge and a legal obligation to respond to hate incidents, and to ensure that tenancy arrangements are observed.
- Housing providers can help hate crime victims by offering practical and emotional support, signposting, dealing with perpetrators, supporting mediation between parties, and being part of multi-agency interventions and partnerships.
- Housing providers are required to comply with the public sector equality duty under the Equality Act 2010. This means they must work to:
 - eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the law
 - advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not, and
 - foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

The How to... series on hate crime

This How to... provides information on how to offer hate crime victims support from a victim's perspective.

CIH has produced three previous How to... guides focusing on different aspects of hate crime:

- [How to...tackle disability-related harassment](#) (2012)
- [How to...tackle racially-motivated hate incidents](#) (2015)
- [How to...tackle hate crime](#) (2016)

These guides offer an overview for housing practitioners to understand and respond to hate crime from a policy, practical and strategic perspective. Bear in mind that they are now four years old or more, so while principles still apply, examples may be out-of-date.

What we know about hate crime

How much hate crime is there?

The Crime Survey for England & Wales (CSEW) estimated in 2018 that there were around 184,000 hate crime incidents. This is higher than hate crime recorded by the police, which in 2018/19 was 103,379 in England and Wales (a ten per cent increase on the year before); 4,914 in Scotland (a nine per cent increase); and 355 in Northern Ireland (a six per cent increase). In England and Wales the number of hate crimes recorded by the police has more than doubled since 2012/13.

Race hate is the most commonly reported hate crime, with most of that reported being for causing public alarm, fear and distress, and 36 per cent relating to violence against the person. The next most commonly reported hate crime concerned sexual orientation. Just under half (47 per cent) of all religious hate crime offences were targeted against Muslims (3,530 offences).

Reporting and under-reporting

People do not report every hate incident. Often the decision to report is based on levels of risk and security which mean that verbal abuse, whilst the most prevalent feature of expressions of hate, is often not reported to the police or any other support service, whereas assault and property damage are. Reasons that people give for not reporting hate incidents include:

- 'The police would not or could not do anything about it'
- 'I did not think it would be taken seriously'
- 'I dealt with it myself or with the help of others'
- 'I did not know who to speak to'
- 'I was afraid of retaliation or making matters worse.'
- 'It takes too long to report'

Impacts of hate crime

Hate crime is recognised as having a more significant impact on its victims, compared with victims of non-hate motivated offences. There are both direct and indirect impacts ranging from physical injury to emotional and/or psychological harm. Research at [Sussex University](#) found that knowing other people who have been a hate crime victim increased individuals' perceptions of threat, which in turn was linked to them experiencing increased feelings of vulnerability, anxiety and anger.

The [Crime Survey for England and Wales](#) found that hate crime victims were:

- More likely to be emotionally affected compared with non-hate crime victims (89 per cent and 77 per cent respectively) and to say they were 'very much' affected by the incident compared to non-hate crime victims (36 per cent and 13 per cent respectively).
- Twice as likely to suffer a loss of confidence or increased feelings of vulnerability after the incident compared with non-hate crime victims (40 per cent and 18 per cent respectively).

- Twice as likely to experience fear, difficulty sleeping, anxiety, panic attacks or depression compared with non-hate crime victims.
- More likely to experience repeat victimisation than non-hate crime victims and less likely to be satisfied with the response received from criminal justice agencies.

For more information about hate crime victims go the [Crime Survey for England and Wales](#), and reports on [Hate Crime, England and Wales, 2017/18](#) (pdf) and [Action Against Hate: The UK Government's plan for tackling hate crime](#) (pdf).

Hate-motivated anti-social behaviour (ASB)

Many social housing providers locate hate crime in their ASB policy responses. This may mask the extent of and response to hate-motivated anti-social behaviour. Research of 10,000 victims found that one in ten considered the ASB they experienced to be motivated by hostility or prejudice on the grounds of race, religion, disability, gender or sexuality. The victims believed they were personally targeted, which increased the impacts on them. The study found the most challenging ASB cases were those where the victim was vulnerable and had suffered repeat victimisation. This led to [recommendations](#) (pdf) that, at the point of reporting, a practitioner should:

- Focus on inter-personal communication.
- Identify a caller's vulnerability status, particularly that regarding health and their perception of ASB as personal and targeted.
- Recognise that victims do not have the same 'starting point': some are more vulnerable and at risk than others.
- Through identifying vulnerability and risk should lead the practitioner to consider 'doing more' with the victim, for example, offering greater reassurance, taking more time to communicate, or communicating more frequently.

Different groups have different experiences

In order to limit the impact and harm of hate crimes, housing providers can draw from research evidence to understand the needs and experiences of different protected groups.

A [survey with LGBT*Q](#) tenants found that 33 per cent felt their neighbourhood was not a safe place to live openly as an LGBT*Q person, leading to them being 'hyper vigilant' around their neighbourhood and home. This included 20 per cent of gay men regularly modifying their home in some way if their landlord/repairs person visits, in order to make their sexuality less visible. A large minority (33 per cent) felt their housing provider was not able to deal effectively with harassment and many do not believe they are listened to, taken seriously or treated equally.

Victims of disability hate crime are more likely than all hate crime victims to suffer from stalking, harassment and criminal damage. This is likely to result in heightened fear and anxiety for an already vulnerable group. Recent [research](#) (pdf) of police data found that 50 per cent of disability hate crime occurred in and around the victim's home and 47 per cent of victims knew the alleged perpetrator. This is also known as 'mate crime'.

Mate crime is when vulnerable people are befriended, bullied or manipulated by people they consider to be friends. Here are [some pointers](#) to recognise mate crime:

- Someone with autism appears to have a new friend or a much larger friendship group and a more active social life. They may be visiting the vulnerable person at home for social gatherings and have an undue influence.
- The vulnerable person comments that their new friends will be disappointed if a certain activity doesn't take place. They may express worry that they'll lose their friends. They may appear uneasy about the friendship. They may be spending their own money on others to pay for drinks, concert tickets or buying gifts.

- The person may unexpectedly change their routine, behaviour or appearance. They may have unexplained injuries, look scruffy, dirty or show signs of mental ill health.

Case Study 1: Arawak Walton Housing Association: Proactive Responses

Arawak Walton regularly undertake campaigns to raise awareness of hate crime and ensure we understand what is happening 'on the ground' with our tenants and their communities. As a Black and minority ethnic (BME) housing association the focus is on race hate crime. The association has undertaken door knocking exercises in local BME communities, included mosques. Following major events such as the Manchester terror attack and the EU referendum, the association reaches out to communities and makes telephone contact with organisations to identify what impact such events are having on them and what support can be offered.

Arawak Walton organises events that bring different people together. For example, in the over 55s schemes, an International Cuisine Day results in a large turnout of tenants and others from the local community. They cook and share food from different countries. Arawak Walton are proactive in reaching out to young people and have designed a 'chatterbox' and training session which are delivered in a local primary school, that celebrate similarities and differences, raise awareness of what hate crime is and show how we all can work to stop it.

Supporting victims

Focus on the victim's perspective

Hate crime victims often report not feeling believed or taken seriously; they may fear retaliation or may not want to disclose the problem or their identity to others. This requires a careful and sensitive approach that focuses on the victim's perspective, i.e. focusing on the needs and experiences of the client.

When a housing practitioner receives a complaint it may not be the first incident the victim has

experienced; the victim may have reached a crisis point, be vulnerable and require immediate assistance.

Given the range of group identities covered by the hate crime monitored strands, practitioners will need to be flexible and open to the needs of individual clients as they present themselves. The victim may have suffered repeat victimisation. To reduce the damaging effects of secondary victimisation housing practitioners should consider the following:

- Offer a non-judgemental approach, a safe space, and listen and validate experiences.
- Identify with the client issues of confidentiality, anonymity, and vulnerability.
- Provide emotional support.
- Meet the victim at a location of their choosing within a set period of time to obtain more information.
- Identify the nuances and impacts of the incidents. Has the victim suffered an intersectional hate incident/crime? For example, are they both Muslim and disabled? Are they a black lesbian?
- Provide relevant information, including a copy of the hate crime policy, list of other support and advice services, diary sheets to record further incidents.
- Agree actions that provide support and which respond to the complaint, including who will take them and when.
- Agree how often the complainant will be contacted and kept informed, and by whom.
- Work with partner agencies to provide assistance, including referral to a community-based or specialist support service.
- Identify what support can be offered if the case goes to court.
- When appropriate, discuss closing the case, offer after-care and confirm in writing.
- Send a customer satisfaction form after the case has been closed.
- Review cases and outcomes on at least an annual basis.

Case Study 2: Working with specialist hate support services

Housing providers have a key role to play with specialist hate support services who can offer a range of services both to victims and housing practitioners. Stand Against Racism and Inequality (SARI, Bristol) and Galop (London) work with a variety of agencies and support services to advocate on behalf of hate crime victims. Housing providers work with SARI which leads on the local hate crime case review panel. Through SARI, housing practitioners are able to access expertise, training, advice and be part of multi-agency responses to resolve complaints.

Galop (London) work directly with housing providers to support LGBT tenants who have reported hate crime. Galop support social housing tenants, and this may include:

- helping the victim to secure alternative housing when they feel unsafe to return home
- offer safety planning advice
- attending court
- providing emotional support throughout the court case, and
- offering after care which includes supporting the victim with his housing providers to get attackers sanctioned and/or evicted.

Restorative Justice (RJ) as a local tool

The evidence suggests that most hate crime is verbal abuse, threats and intimidation and that hate crime victims are likely to suffer repeat victimisation. To better support victims, restorative justice (RJ) may offer a local solution. As explained by [Why me?](#), RJ empowers victims of crime to communicate with the offender, often with the aim of a face-to-face meeting. Using RJ in complaints of hate crime could:

- empower victims by giving them a platform to explain the pain caused by hate
- help them to regain power by being able to tell their story

- lessen the victims' feelings of self-blame and fear of further incidents through hearing the potential assurances from offenders
- encourage empathy and understanding in people who commit hate crime, which can make those affected feel satisfied that they have helped to combat ignorance.

The community trigger

The 'community trigger', also known as the ASB Case Review, is the name applied to the Response to Complaints section of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Disorder Act 2014. It enables victims to require agencies to carry out a review of their response to the anti-social behaviour they reported, where they feel they did not get a satisfactory answer.

Housing providers should be informing their tenants about the community trigger but in practice, [ASB Help](#) found that many of the larger providers had no information on the mechanism of the trigger. [Trials have shown](#) that the community trigger gives victims and communities an additional tool to demand that agencies deal with persistent anti-social behaviour, which is often targeted at the most vulnerable people in communities.

A community trigger can be activated by approaching the local authority if the following threshold has been met:

- if an individual has complained to a local authority, police and/or a social landlord three times about separate incidents in the last six months, or
- if five individuals in the local community have complained on a similar basis in the last six months.

Through the community trigger, victims of anti-social behaviour can demand action, starting with a review of their case, and leading to agencies working together to take a more joined up, problem-solving approach.

Key messages

[Supporting Victims of Hate Crime](#) and [Hate Crime Victim Support in Europe](#) (pdf) are both practical guides. They suggest that effective support for hate crime victims involves:

- believing people and offering help
- reducing the immediate impact of the reported incident
- aiming to resolve the complaint through agreed interventions and actions that empower the client
- reflecting and developing professional practice.

The evidence currently points to increasing hate crime across the five monitored strands. Research indicates that hate crime causes harms for the victim and the communities who are its target. The level of vulnerability a person feels will vary case by case. [A review of support projects](#) shows that often the quality of service a victim gets is more important to them than the final outcome. Criminal sanctions are limited in scope and scale; for example, since 2016/17 less than four per cent of all reported disability hate crimes have resulted in a prosecution.

These conclusions point to housing providers having up-to-date policies, procedures, trained staff, effective local partnerships and the capacity to signpost to local and national support services that clients may access. Most importantly, successfully supporting victims of hate crime requires being able to offer a flexible, nuanced, empathic, and informed service which empowers and goes some way to reassure victims that their experiences are valid and that action will be taken.

Selected links to resources

Click on the links below for more resources on hate crime.

[Supporting victims of hate crime: A practitioner guide](#)

[Hate crime victim support in Europe: A practical guide](#) (pdf)

[True Vision](#)

[Crown Prosecution Service](#)

[Galop](#)

[Anti-Muslim, Islamophobia](#)

[Mencap](#)

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