

Cheshire West & Chester Council

Hate Crime Strategy

2016-2019



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Cheshire West
and Chester

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Foreword

I am pleased and proud to present West Cheshire's Hate Crime Strategy, 2016-2019, on behalf of the partners across the borough who work to protect and support those affected by it.

Tackling Hate Crime matters. Not only can it have a devastating and lasting effect on victims and their families, but it can - and does - divide our communities. It can stop people from living and enjoying their everyday lives and make people fearful to leave their houses or let their children play outside. It hurts and affects us all.

Our country today is more diverse than ever before, and the vast majority of us embrace this rich mix of different races, cultures, beliefs, attitudes and lifestyles. Victims of hate crime now have greater legal protection, with the courts having greater sentencing powers to reflect the seriousness of these offences; but there is still much more to do. Recorded hate crime incidents were 18% higher in 2014/15 than the year before, so it is clear that this is not a problem we have solved.

The purpose of this strategy is to set out our approach and provide a robust framework from which we can tackle the root causes of hate crime, provide appropriate support for victims and ensure effective action against perpetrators. We also hope that it will serve to raise awareness of what hate crime is and give people the confidence to report it - and will result in West Cheshire being an even safer and happier place for everyone.



Cllr Nicole Meardon
Cabinet Member for
Children and Families

Introduction

Hate Crime is a key priority for the Community Safety Partnership in West Cheshire. We recognise that crime which is motivated by hostility or prejudice towards race, faith, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability or any other personal characteristic, whether actual or perceived, is particularly corrosive in relation to individual victims and also to community cohesion.

The murder of Stephen Lawrence in 1993 and the MacPherson Report that followed sparked a change not only in the way that statutory authorities and others deal with racially-motivated crime, but in the recognition of hate crimes more broadly. In 1998, The Crime and Disorder Act came into force, placing a duty on Community Safety Partnerships to develop and publish a strategy for the reduction of crime and disorder in the area - and work in partnership to implement it.

Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) are made up of representatives from the 'responsible authorities' which are: the police, the local authority, fire and rescue authorities, the probation service and health.



More recently, The Equality Act 2010 provides a cross-cutting legislative framework to protect the rights of individuals and advance equality of opportunity for all. It also serves to update, simplify and strengthen the previous legislation and deliver a modern, accessible framework of discrimination law which protects individuals from unfair treatment; promoting a fair and more equal society.

However, the lead for tackling hate crime must come at a local level, with professionals, the voluntary sector and communities working together to address local issues and priorities. Together, we believe that we can challenge attitudes and behaviours, increase reporting, improve access to support and advance the way in which we all respond to hate crimes and incidents.



Definitions

The Government's plan to tackle hate crime, Challenge it, Report it, Stop it, published in 2012, set out a definition for hate crime:

A **hate crime** is any criminal offence which is perceived by the victim, or any other person, to be motivated by hostility or prejudice based on a personal characteristic.

Hate incidents are incidents which fit the definition above but which may not involve a criminal offence, such as criminal damage, theft or assault.

Crimes and incidents can take many forms:

- **Physical attack** to a person or property
- **Threat of attack** including letters, phone calls, physical intimidation and unfounded malicious complaints
- **Abuse or insults**
Verbal, written or gestured

and can be motivated by a variety of prejudices, including:

- Disability
- Race/ethnicity
- Religion or belief
- Gender identity
- Sexual orientation

However, this is not an exhaustive list and does not mean that hate crimes or incidents motivated by hostility or hatred of other personal characteristics, such as gender, age or appearance, can and do not happen.

It is important that we not only continue to monitor hate crime across the strands listed above but also other forms of emerging hostility on a local level. We will continue to identify trends and priority locations to ensure that we are taking action and delivering support and interventions which are appropriate and important to the people of our borough.

Local context

In line with the national picture, the number of hate crimes recorded by Cheshire Police have increased over the last couple of years. Recent analysis of reports in the last 24 months show that:

2014/15	2015/16	
73%	70%	were motivated by race
11%	15%	were motivated by disability
7%	7%	were motivated by faith/belief
4%	4%	were motivated by sexual orientation
2%	2%	were motivated by transphobia
3%	2%	were motivated by other prejudices
225	311	Total reports*

From this and other information - along with the views of a variety of partners and affected community groups - **we have identified a number of local issues which inform this strategy:**

- Awareness is extremely low of what hate crime and hate incidents are and how they can be reported. Consequently, it is considerably under-reported, preventing the police and partners from tackling abuse at an early stage
- According to our 2013/14 Adult Social Care Survey, a growing number of people across West Cheshire are experiencing anti-social behaviour, crime or abuse and feel unsafe as a result - but less than a third of the residents who took part in the Council's Our Community Survey felt that the police and public services were dealing with these issues successfully
- The most common form of reports originate from prejudice against race, illustrating that race-related hate crime is an issue across the borough. However, anecdotal evidence would suggest that incidents motivated by prejudice against disability and sexual orientation are far more prevalent than the statistics above would indicate. This implies that further issues exist within those groups in accepting abuse as part of day-to-day life and/or having the awareness or confidence to report incidents when they arise

*2015/16 figure still being finalised - subject to slight change

Vision

Our vision is for a borough where diversity is celebrated, hate crime is actively challenged and all communities feel safe.

Priorities

Our Vision will be delivered through three priorities:

- **Prevent hate crime**
- **Increase reporting**
- **Improve the response**

These priorities seek to address both the causes and the effects of hate crime and align with the core principles of the national Challenge it, Report it, Stop it strategy.

Prevent hate crime

Why?

Increasing diversity across the country has led to a greater understanding and celebration of the different contributions that individuals and communities make to our way of life. Stereotypes and prejudices that existed a generation ago are now widely rejected by the overwhelming majority. However, whilst society has come a long way, intolerance and discrimination still exist, as the statistics on page 4 illustrate.

Everyone should be free to live their lives without fear of abuse or attack on the basis of who they are, what they believe or how they look. By raising people's awareness and understanding, resolving tensions early on and promoting inter-community integration, we can challenge the attitudes that underpin hate crime and prevent any issues that do arise from escalating.

How?

- **Raise awareness and understanding**

It was felt by a number of the groups we spoke to that people's understanding of hate crime, its prevalence, the extent of its impact on communities and what can be done about it is very limited, both locally and nationally.

In response to this, we will

- continue to raise awareness and education through all appropriate channels - including the extensive work already being done by Cheshire Police and the Safeguarding Children in Education (SCiE) teams to raise awareness in Schools
- work to ensure that town centres and public transport networks are safe, including the promotion of 'Safe In Town' areas across West Cheshire
- effectively publicise the ways in which hate crimes and hate incidents can be reported

- **Promote integration between different cultures and activities**

To do this, we will

- continue to promote equality and diversity across the borough through a variety of events, such as Chester Pride, Eid, Diwali, International Day of Disabled People, Chinese New Year and International Women's Day
- link activities across all sectors, cultures and backgrounds so that fewer and fewer take place in isolation

- **Resolve issues and tensions before they manifest themselves in the form of hate crime**

To do this, we will

- Ensure that as much information as possible is communicated to dispel any myths that exist, promote tolerance and illustrate the different contributions that individuals and groups make to our way of life
- Maintain an early awareness of emerging tensions by way of constant dialogue with residents, community groups, voluntary sector organisations and partner agencies

Safe in town areas

What are they?

Places where vulnerable people can go in town centres and neighbourhood areas for support or advice if they feel unsafe. With a Safe in Town card, people can go into shops, cafes and businesses where they see the Safe in Town sticker and know they will be safe. There will be someone there who will call the number on the card for help if it is needed.

Where are they?

Information booklets and application forms for vulnerable people and businesses wanting to join the scheme can be found at www.safeintownwestcheshire.org.uk along with an up-to-date list of participating venues.



Increase reporting

Why?

Research evidence suggests that hate crime and hate incidents may be hugely under-reported, particularly among certain communities. This may be the result of people not realising that what they are experiencing is a hate crime or a hate incident, or believing that it is not serious enough; a cultural or personal inclination to deal with situations internally; a lack of trust in agencies to do anything about it or a fear of being further victimised by going to the police.

Our focus on increasing reporting is driven not only by a desire to protect those affected but by the need to develop a clearer picture of the scale, severity and causes of the problem. Without that picture, we cannot ensure that resources are in the right place to tackle offenders and give victims the protection and support they need.

How?

- **Make reporting easy**

To do this, we will

- clearly publicise the ways in which hate crimes and hate incidents can be reported including anonymous online and telephone methods and others detailed on the Council website: www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/yourcouncil/policiesandperformance/equalityanddiversity/reportingahatecrime.aspx
- maintain an effective network of reporting centres and support networks

- **Increase public confidence**

In response to this, we will

- ensure that all partner policies take account of best practice in hate crime
- publicise the work already being done across West Cheshire to secure positive outcomes for victims who have reported incidents to us
- **Ensure that our front-line staff are able to deal appropriately with reports and support victims effectively**

To do this, we will

- raise awareness among staff in respect of what hate crime and hate incidents are and how and where to direct people

- develop and publish a 'Help and Advice guide/Hate Crime Pack' which will detail what services are available and what a victim or witness accessing a service can expect. This will also be distributed to vulnerable and isolated communities identified through our collective intelligence as more at risk of hate crime

Improve the response

Why?

An increase in the number of reported incidents can only be a positive step if each report initiates an effective response.

From the moment the incident is reported, we must ensure that the situation is carefully managed through all stages of the process by professionals who understand the issues and keep victims informed as to what is happening.

A joined-up, more responsive system will hold more offenders to account and ensure that even more people have the confidence to come forward in future.

How?

- **Focus our resources**

In response to this, we will

- continue to analyse and identify where and to whom hate crime takes place
- develop stronger relationships with our communities to ensure that our intelligence accurately reflects the issues they face and that their needs are being met.

- **Ensure that all partners with a responsibility for tackling hate crime maintain an awareness of emerging issues and best practice**

To do this, we will

- share the new hate crime manual to be published by the Home Office
- maintain a constant dialogue between partners to share information and support
- **Promote a strong, multi-agency response**

To do this, we will

- develop the ways in which the statutory and voluntary sectors can work together to support victims and witnesses of hate crime and hold offenders to account
- continually assess our collective performance to ensure that we are working as effectively as possible to protect those in need.

Governance and Accountability

Our Community Safety Partnership (CSP) will oversee this Strategy, its three priorities; and will assess ongoing performance against future Action Plans. The Local Safeguarding Adults Board (LSAB) and Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) will also receive updates should any trends or issues relevant to those groups be identified

Members of the CSP include:

- Cheshire West and Chester Council
- Cheshire Constabulary
- Cheshire Fire and Rescue
- Cheshire Probation Trust
- Cheshire Youth Offending Service

How to report a hate crime

If you are a victim of a hate crime, you can either report it to the police or to the Council

Cheshire Police

Telephone: 999 Emergency
101 Non-emergency

Online: https://secure.met.police.uk/hatecrime_national/index.php?rid=2971

Cheshire West and Chester Council

Telephone: 0300 123 7 033

Online: www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/contact-us/online-services/reportit/reportahatecrime.aspx

In person

At any of our customer service or reporting centres

Customer Service centres

- The Forum, Chester CH1 2HS
- Ellesmere Port Customer Service Centre CH56 0BG
- Frodsham Library WA6 6RX
- Neston Library CH64 6QE
- The Arcade, Northwich CW9 5AS
- Wyvern House, Winsford CW7 1AH

Reporting centres

- Body Positive Cheshire and North Wales, Crewe CW2 7EH
- Chester and District Housing Trust CH4 8DT
- Chester Citizen's Advice Bureau, Chester CH1 4EE
- Deafness Support Network CH1 4JG
- DIAL House Disability Services, Chester CH1 2BH
- Northwich Citizen's Advice Bureau, Northwich CW9 5FP
- The Bren Project, Hoole Road CH2 3NJ
- The Unity Centre, Chester CH1 2BN
- University of Chester, Chester CH1 4BJ
- Winsford Citizen's Advice Bureau, Winsford CW7 2AU

Accessing Cheshire West and Chester Council information and services

Council information is also available in Audio, Braille, Large Print or other formats. If you would like a copy in a different format, in another language or require a BSL interpreter, please email us at **equalities@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk**

Tel: 0300 123 8 123 **Textphone:** 18001 01606 867 670

email: equalities@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

web: www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

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