

Camden:

**No Place
for Hate**

**An executive
summary report
on hate crime
in Camden**



Foreword



Camden is one of the most vibrant and diverse boroughs in London, where people take great pride in living. Our communities are largely cohesive, but we understand that hate crime remains a major issue across our borough.

We commissioned this research as part of our commitment to tackle inequality as set out in the Camden Plan.¹

We identified a need to develop a broader understanding of hate crime locally so that we can work with our partners to increase hate crime reporting, work better together to support victims, and develop best practice that can also be implemented by other boroughs.

The number of hate crimes reported in the borough has fallen by 35% over the past four years,² but our research found that some victims

of hate crime do not report incidents because they think their experience is too trivial or that authorities will not or cannot do anything about it. National research estimates that around 60% of hate crimes go unreported to the police.³

We know that not every incident amounts to a crime, but incidents can still cause significant distress, fear and could lead to an actual crime. This is particularly true in situations where there is repeat victimisation.

We will now be using findings to work with our communities and partners to make sure every resident in Camden feels safe and confident in reporting hate crime.

**Cllr Jonathan Simpson,
Cabinet Member for Community Safety**

¹ The Camden Plan. 2012.

camden.gov.uk/camdenplan

² Reported hate crime incidents recorded on the MPS Crime Recording Information System (CRIS) between 2010/11 and 2013/14.

³ Home Office, Ministry of Justice and Office for National Statistics, An Overview of Hate Crime in England and Wales. 2013.

gov.uk/government/statistics/an-overview-of-hate-crime-in-england-and-wales

Introduction

This project assessed communities' awareness and experiences of hate crime, and what they see as barriers to reporting incidents. We used a series of research questions and approached residents in various ways to maximise participation:

- A survey launched online during Hate Crime Awareness Week in October 2014. This was promoted to local organisations that work with communities who may be targeted in relation to hate crime.
- A community engagement project was carried out in January 2015 targeting a selection of community centres in the borough, where residents were asked to participate in guided conversations about this issue.
- An easy read version of the survey questions was made available to organisations that advocate for Camden residents who have learning disabilities.

In total 136 people participated in the project, full details of which can be found at camden.gov.uk/communitysafety



Map 1: Location of organisations targeted for the community engagement project

Key

- HCA** Holborn Community Association
- KCBNA** King's Cross Brunswick Neighbourhood Association
- QCCA** Queen's Crescent Community Centre
- STCC** Somers Town Community Centre
- WHWC** West Hampstead Women's Centre

Findings

Definitions

The definition of hate crime agreed by the Police Service, Crown Prosecution Service, Prison Service and other criminal justice system agencies is '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'.⁴

The five centrally monitored strands of personal characteristics are race, religion or faith, sexual orientation, disability and gender identity, although crimes based on prejudice to age or appearance can also be hate crimes.

A gap was identified in our research in relation to knowledge of what hate crime is.

Over half of online survey participants identified that hate crime is based on certain personal characteristics.

However, around three quarters of those interviewed in the community did not

understand the term 'hate crime'. These were often older people or those approached at community centres where interpreters are used to engage with participants. Some community participants exclusively associated the term with racism or confused it with other types of distressing behaviour.

There is a risk that confusion about the meaning of hate crime and misunderstandings about the significance of specific personal characteristics removes the option of victims considering whether they will make a report before further factors are even considered.

Locations

The majority of participants cited specific locations where they felt vulnerable or safe in relation to experiencing hate crime. Participants often felt less likely to experience hate crime in the area where they live, within public or community spaces and in areas with high cultural diversity.

Camden Town was most frequently identified as the area where participants felt most likely to experience hate crime, but also the area where many people felt most safe. Where people felt more vulnerable they associated this area with crime, pubs and intoxicated people. Where people felt safer they associated this area with cultural diversity and guardianship.

⁴ Home Office, Ministry of Justice and Office for National Statistics, An Overview of Hate Crime in England and Wales. 2013.
gov.uk/government/statistics/an-overview-of-hate-crime-in-england-and-wales

The majority of participants who felt more likely to experience hate crime on public transport or at night also identified themselves as LGBT. In some cases this was linked to concerns which were related to locations associated with alcohol consumption.

Experiences

During the research we took experience of hate crime to mean someone who had experienced hate crime directly or knew someone who had.

The majority of survey participants (83%) had direct or indirect experience of hate crime. This was particularly true of those who identified themselves as having certain personal characteristics. All participants who identified themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) had experienced hate crime, as well as the majority who considered themselves to have a disability, the majority who said they were Muslim or Jewish, and many who identified themselves as belonging to a minority ethnic group.

In situations where someone else was experiencing a hate crime, the majority of participants would report it to another person or organisation, and many would help the victim. However, some participants suggested that they would not take any action due to a lack of confidence in the police or to protect their personal safety.

Prevention of further incidents was the most frequent reason participants gave to why they would report a hate crime. This was followed by responses that showed consideration of social responsibility. These are important to note for the potential they demonstrate for building resilient communities that want to work together to challenge instances of hate crime in their neighbourhoods.

A context-dependent response emerged with a smaller number of participants, who responded that they would make a report in situations where they had felt frightened or if there was physical abuse. This indicates a possible tolerance to perceived lower-level incidents and demonstrates an opportunity to encourage reporting of all incidents to reinforce the unacceptable nature of hate crime.

Reporting

Barriers to reporting included fear of threats or retaliation, concern that no action would be taken and a perception that victims might not be taken seriously. Reasons for not reporting to specific agencies included not trusting agencies to act independently and a perception that staff are not trained to support victims. There was also concern that non-statutory organisations have less power to take action against perpetrators and protect victims.

Resources to aid reporting were raised as something which would help people to report, with specific suggestions including increased neutral or unbiased agencies, accessible online facilities and access to interpreters. Another theme that emerged was the need for increased information and awareness about hate crime, including within community centres. In addition, the need for increased support for victims was identified, including training for frontline staff, and protection of victims from retribution.

Recommendations

Advocacy

Many participants who had experience of hate crime identified a lack of adequate support as an issue. Dealing with the police and other agencies can be confusing and overwhelming, particularly when the victim is already dealing with the trauma of the hate crime experience. Victims need support to understand the roles of the different agencies and options available to them. The findings indicate that the reporting stage is crucial to establish a relationship of trust and understanding between the victim and reporting agency. The person taking the report needs to be able to manage the victim's expectations and ensure that those reasonable expectations are then met.

Increased availability and awareness of hate crime advocacy services is needed to help victims navigate the reporting process and address underreporting. This includes support to victims of low-level, persistent incidents that may not constitute crimes, but which have a profound impact, as well as support to victims involved in high-risk cases that would benefit from identification to a multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC).

The Camden Community Safety Partnership is piloting a third party (independent, non-police) reporting scheme for victims who do not want to report incidents directly to the police. Victims can report to Camden Council Community Safety Service, or to one of our partner organisations. This scheme was launched in February 2014 and has provided an opportunity to improve partnership approaches between the council, community organisations and housing providers, underpinned by support from the police. This pilot could be further developed to increase opportunities for third party reporting.

Careful consideration needs to be given to the terminology used as the term 'third party reporting' may not be understood by many victims or their potential supporters. Whatever terms are used, those who administer the system and support the victims must be empowered to monitor and report on incident and crime data and hold all relevant agencies involved to account to achieve the best possible outcome for victims.

Action

Our research found that some victims of hate crime frequently do not report incidents because they think their experience is too trivial or that authorities will not or cannot do anything about it. This perception is likely to lead to underreporting.

One of the most commonly identified reasons for reporting was social responsibility. This suggests communications aimed at increasing reporting would benefit from an approach that emphasises reporting as ‘the right thing to do’.

Reporting must also be seen to serve a purpose for the victim and the community, whether that is through taking a case to court, accessing support, or helping to protect others by providing intelligence to the police and other agencies. Agencies need to be keenly aware that the overriding reason that victims report is that they want the abuse to stop. There is a general understanding that victims would prefer any penalties imposed to be proportionate and to be relevant to the offence committed and that victims would like perpetrators to recognise the impact of their actions.

Many participants who had experienced hate crime emphasised the importance of education in their responses. This indicates support for restorative approaches, which are already in development as part of the Camden Plan, to be used more widely and consistently. Hate crime often impacts far beyond the individual to their wider family and community, and restorative approaches can reflect this by including options for group mediation and community conversations.

Protection

The issue of the perceived vulnerability of a victim who reports and retribution against them or their family was identified as a significant barrier to reporting in our research. This issue of vulnerability needs to be explored with a victim as a part of the reporting process, especially with those victims using a third party agency who are hesitant about reporting. The role of supporting organisations can also be maximised to provide more informal support and reassurance to victims of low-level, persistent incidents, for example, a weekly phone call or visit from a neighbourhood police officer.

A risk assessment process can be used to identify how safe victims may be, both through asking specific questions and the professional judgement of the questioner. We now use a risk assessment approach for victims reporting possible hate incidents, as well as other issues, and the Metropolitan Police Service is looking at adopting a similar approach. There is an opportunity to provide support to community and faith organisations who may receive third party reports in assessing risk to victims. Appropriate support must be provided in relation to complex or high-risk cases, including where victims wish to remain anonymous.

We introduced a Community MARAC in partnership with the Metropolitan Police Service to support high-risk victims of antisocial behaviour and hate crime in March 2013. This group is attended by mainstream and specialist agencies that can address complex problems and manage risk to the victim and their community by confidentially sharing intelligence with the police and other agencies. Increasing awareness of how to refer to this group among organisations across the borough could assist in supporting high-risk cases while ensuring that the approach is tailored to meet the needs of each victim and their family.

Conclusion

Our research shows that understanding and experience of hate crime in Camden is varied. We have identified perceived vulnerabilities of potential and actual victims and the barriers to reporting to agencies. We will take forward recommendations to enhance advocacy to encourage victims to report hate crime, whether that is to the police or a third party. We will work in partnership with the Metropolitan Police Service and other criminal justice partners to demonstrate to victims and communities that action has been taken following hate crime reports. We will also build confidence in reporting and ensure victims feel protected by signposting victims to services available for support.

It is important not just to address the fear and distress that hate crime causes the individual, but also to recognise that hate crime incidents can poison communities and undermine our work to develop community cohesion.

This is why we are committed to working with our communities to develop appropriate and tailored solutions to tackling hate crime in Camden.

Getting Help

If you would like to speak to someone about hate crime you can call the police to make a report on 101 or 999, or speak to one of the following organisations who can make an anonymous report on your behalf:

Camden Community Safety Service

camden.gov.uk/communitysafety
020 7974 4444

Camden LGBT Forum

camdenlgbtforum.org.uk
020 7388 5720

Camden People First

camdenpeoplefirst.org.uk
020 7388 2007

Camden Safety Net

camden.gov.uk/know
020 7974 2526

Community Security Trust

thecst.org.uk
020 8457 9999

Hopscotch Asian Women's Centre

hopscotchawc.org.uk
020 7388 8198

TELL MAMA

tellmamauk.org
0800 456 1226

The Monitoring Group

tmg-uk.org
0800 374 618

Queen's Crescent Community Association

qcca.org.uk
020 7267 6635