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Hate Crime Focus Group – Engagement Report



WILTSHIRE AND SWINDON USER'S NETWORK

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Hate Crime Focus Group – Engagement Report

Introduction

This report looks at the views and understanding of people (service users) around hate crime who attended a focus group on 14th February 2017. The event was also used to inform those who attended about the difference between a hate crime and a hate incident and how to report them. The focus group was organised in response to the need for further information around Disability Hate Crime to help inform the Wiltshire's Hate Crime Multi Agency Group (of which WSUN is a member).

Engagement Method

The event took the form of presentations by Louise Rendle (CEO WSUN) and Tamara Campe (Detective Sergeant for Diversity and Inclusion) together with round table discussions led by WSUN's outreach workers.

Attendance

17 service users attended (8 males and 9 females). Those who attended included people with a learning disability, autistic spectrum condition, long term conditions, physical disability, visual and hearing impairments and mental health experiences (and hard to reach communities). Their ages ranged from 31 to over 85 years. Also in attendance: Angus Macpherson, Police and Crime Commissioner for Wiltshire and Swindon and Sergeant Annie Pursey, Diversity and Inclusion Sergeant.

Participants often expressed their opinions in very clear terms, and these statements appear throughout this report in **bold blue text**.

Key areas of focus based on questions asked:

1. What do you know about hate crime?
2. How would you report a hate Crime?
3. Looking at True Vison (on-line reporting website)
4. Why might you not report it?
5. What would make it easier to report?

What people said

1. What do you know about hate crime?

Some people reported that they had little or no understanding of hate crime.

I need more information, to understand what this is

I have a vague idea , but I'm not really sure

Whilst others spoke about things that they thought may be a hate crime. These suggestions included;

People calling you names or laughing at you because of weight issues or disabilities

Bullying people because they are weak or different

Attacking people because they are from another section of the community

To do with stealing

To do with taking people's children

Acts of criminal damage, such as cutting mooring ropes (on a canal boat)

Anything that discriminates against or is offensive

If something is racially motivated

People also spoke about how you may not always be aware that you have been a victim of a hate crime and it might be others who care for you, who might be able to spot it more easily. One person said that ***I cope with it by myself*** and another table felt people needed to understand that it was ***okay to speak up and report things*** and that it was ***important to be aware but not scared***.

One table spoke about the impact hate crime has on people; the costs may be both financial (criminal damage) and emotional. It can lead to fear and mental health issues.

Some people also thought the idea of what is a hate crime and what isn't was difficult to understand: What one person may think is a joke, others may perceive (think) that it is a hurtful comment or action. Equally it was recognised that someone may use inappropriate language or insults as a defensive response because they are angry but not really intend to insult someone's race or disability.

Tamara then explained that for something to be recorded as a **hate crime**, a crime such as being hit, or having something stolen, needs to be committed and it has to be motivated (or perceived to be motivated) by a person's

- Disability
- Race

- Religion/faith
- Sexual orientation
- Transgender

This can be committed against a person or property.

A **hate incident** relates to actions such as name calling because someone has a disability or a person refusing to serve someone because of their race, but where a crime is not committed.

2. How would you report a hate crime?

Many people reported that they would go to the police, either by using 999 or 101, although there was confusion about which one should be used and when. One person talked about how the 999 number was free from mobiles and telephone boxes, even if you had no credit on your phone, however 101 would not work. Other people thought you might use a police station, although people were worried that the police often share different spaces now with other organisations and that it might not be very confidential. One person thought you might approach a police person *on the beat*.

An area of concern was also a mistrust of the police and what they may/may not do.

A further concern related to what might happen if someone reported a hate crime.

I don't feel safe reporting it in case they pick on me

If people knew I had seen the crime they may pick on me instead

Some service users thought it might be possible to report it on line but were not aware of how they could do this.

Wouldn't know which site to go on

Others thought they would go to someone they trusted like a family member or a carer, so that they could either help them decide if they should report it, or so that someone could help them with the process.

One table talked about the Safe Places initiative and felt they could ask a shop keeper to help them if the symbol was displayed.



Tamara then explained how you could report a hate crime/incident:

Anyone can report a hate crime or incident, not just the person directly affected:

999 or 112 in an emergency

101

To a Police Officer or at a Police Station

Report online via True Vision [Click here for the True Vision Website link](#)

Crimestoppers 0800 555111

3. Looking at True Vison (on-line reporting website)

The groups were asked to look at the form, which could be used to report a hate crime, through the national on-line website, True Vision.

Issues around the accessibility of the site were an area of concern.

2 groups reported that the language used was **quite complicated**, another person said that '**Why do you perceive this?**' **could be better worded –plain English please!** Service users felt there needed to be an easy read version, that was easy to find on the front page of the website as **some of the words may be difficult to understand.**

One person with a visual impairment pointed out that her screen reader (a computer program used to read the words out loud) does not recognise drop down boxes. The site also needs better punctuation, otherwise the screen reader will read the article as one long sentence.

Other issues related to the length of the form and the number of questions that you needed to answer. Some people felt that this may off-putting and may lead to people giving up.

Another concern was that you couldn't just ask for someone to phone you back if, you were struggling to fill in the form. One person said ***I would prefer someone to go through the form with me.*** Another person would prefer ***to meet someone face to face.***

Font size being too small and text colour were also mentioned. As was the amount of information you see as soon as you going onto the site, making it very difficult to find your way around it.

The fact that it doesn't really explain anywhere the process of what will happen to someone who reports a hate crime was another anxiety for some people. Service users were worried that if they gave the name of someone who they felt had committed a hate crime, the police might approach that person before they had spoken to them. Also what is the process if someone is charged?

A number of people reported that they did not use the internet or that they had no access to a computer and so therefore they would not be able to use this method as a way of reporting.

4. Why might you not report it?

The groups were asked to think about why people may not report a hate crime.

By far the biggest concern from the group was that there may be repercussions (additional problems). People were fearful that things may escalate (get worse), especially if that person was known to them (a member of your family).

I worry about giving my name

I would be worried about what will happen

People said they would be anxious if someone had threatened them as part of the hate crime. For example, if someone had said they would hurt them if they told anyone.

Another concern was they were fearful or unsure about the process; would they have to face the person again?

Contacting the police was also something that made people feel concerned too.

I feel nervous and anxious; I would worry about it because it is a new thing!

Being embarrassed or worrying that they would not be able to articulate or be understood was a worry too.

Other issues included

- People not understanding what a hate crime is, or how to report it (4 people)
- Mistrust of the police (3 people)
- No point, as action will not be taken (2 people)

5. What would make it easier to report?

People agreed that it was often the lack of knowledge about what hate crime is, how to report it and what happens after, is one of the main issues. They therefore felt that more publicity around the whole issue is needed.

Suggestions for where to place information (Leaflets, posters, messages) included;

- Libraries including mobile libraries
- GP surgeries
- Tourist information

- Relevant charities and organisations such as Stroke Association, Age UK, other local groups
- Supported Living / Sheltered Housing

Anti-bullying and hate crime campaigns in newspapers, on the local radio and TV were thought to be useful by some members of the group.

Many people are still unaware of the 101 number and what this should be used for, so the group thought this should also be widely advertised.

Feedback

We asked the participants of the focus group to feedback after the meeting. Of the 15 people who completed the form, all of them said that they knew more about hate crime than before.

I know much more now

I enjoyed finding out about it

We also asked 'what is the most useful thing you have learned from the event?'

What is a hate crime...ways of contacting the police and the action the police are taking

Police are now listening, I learned about Safe Places and the True Vision website

More Crimes are hate crimes than I realised

The police are taking this sort of crime seriously

Recommendations

Recommendation 1	Future engagement and how information about hate crime is spread needs to be local and varied across Wiltshire. This will ensure a wide range of people including those who are most vulnerable, have an opportunity to learn about hate crime and how they can report it.
Recommendation 2	Education of the public must include the difference between hate crime and a hate incident and the importance of reporting both, even if no action is taken. This will ensure the police and other organisations can look at possible trends as well as the overall picture in Wiltshire.
Recommendation 3	The ways in which people can report a hate crime are varied. They must include easy to read forms and information, accessible on-line reporting (suitable for screen readers) and the opportunity for face to face contact or telephone contact.
Recommendation 4	On-going training for key people, for example Hate Crime Advisors, around the difficulties faced by different groups

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