

A Postcode Lottery? Mapping Support Services for Hate Crime Victims in the West Midlands

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In the weeks leading up to and following the June 2016 EU referendum, the United Kingdom witnessed an unprecedented upsurge in reports of hate crime. More than 14,000 hate crimes were recorded by police forces in England and Wales between July and September 2016, with three-quarters of forces reporting record levels of hate crime during that period (BBC News, 2017). This rise was especially unexpected because over the course of the last 20 years law-makers and law-enforcers within the UK have developed one of world's most robust legislative and policy responses to hate crime.

The post-Brexit 'spike' in perpetration illustrates that policy alone is not enough to foster understanding and acceptance within society, or to protect individuals from being violently attacked, harassed or verbally abused on the basis of their identity. When this is considered alongside the ever-growing body of research evidence which suggests that many victims do not report their experiences of hate crime to the police or to any other relevant organisations, do not feel that their support needs are addressed, and do not feel that they have access to justice, the picture becomes even more bleak (Corcoran and Smith, 2016; Hardy and Chakraborti, 2016). This disconnect between policy responses to hate crime and victims' lives was highlighted within the UK government action plan to tackle hate crime (Home Office, 2016: 11):

The UK has one of the strongest legislative frameworks to tackle hate crime in the world. However, legislation can only ever be part of the answer. Unless people have the confidence to come forward, unless the police are equipped to effectively deal with these crimes, unless victims are properly supported and perpetrators brought to justice, and crucially unless we take action to tackle the attitudes and beliefs that drive these crimes, too many people will continue to suffer.

Although experiences of targeted hostility have plagued the lives of victims for many decades, the sheer volume of incidents taking place in weeks leading up to and following the EU referendum spread fear, mistrust and anger within minority ethnic and faith communities throughout the UK. A number of studies have documented the damage that hate crime can cause to the emotional and physical well-being of victims, their families and wider communities (Iganski and Lagou, 2015; Chakraborti, Garland and Hardy, 2014). Now more than ever, public- and third-sector organisations should be taking steps to engage with members of different communities and groups to assess whether they are feeling 'properly supported' and if not, to determine what can be done to rectify this situation.

This report presents the findings from a study commissioned by the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner. The study had four main aims, which were:

- to explore hate crime victims' emotional and physical health support needs;
- to identify hate crime victims' awareness of existing support services;
- to capture hate crime victims' experiences and expectations of support services; and
- to determine whether existing support provision is meeting the needs of hate crime victims.

In order to capture experiences and expectations of support services within the West Midlands, this study used three data collection methods, including an online survey, in-depth semi-structured interviews, and a discussion board on a social media platform. In terms of the sample of participants who took part in this study:

- 360 people aged over 16 who lived in the West Midlands completed a questionnaire;
- 45 people took part in face to face or telephone interviews; and
- 28 people shared their views through Facebook by commenting on a discussion board.

Overall, the research team heard from 411¹ actual and potential hate crime victims and practitioners from across the West Midlands. , making it one of the largest study of hate crime victimisation ever undertaken. This study builds upon a wider body of research – conducted by Prof Neil Chakraborti and Dr Stevie-Jade Hardy – on hate crime victims and support services, involving more than 4,000 actual and potential hate crime victims. The profile of research participants was diverse in terms of age, disability, ethnicity, gender, religion and belief and sexual orientation, and a full demographic breakdown of the sample is provided within the appendix.

This report provides an opportunity to take stock of how members of the public, victims and practitioners within the West Midlands feel about, experience and respond to hate crime, and to determine what further steps need to be taken to ensure that victims have access to justice and do not suffer in silence. If implemented, the recommendations included within this report have the potential to make a difference with respect to helping organisations and individuals respond to hate crime in a more cohesive, victim-centred way.

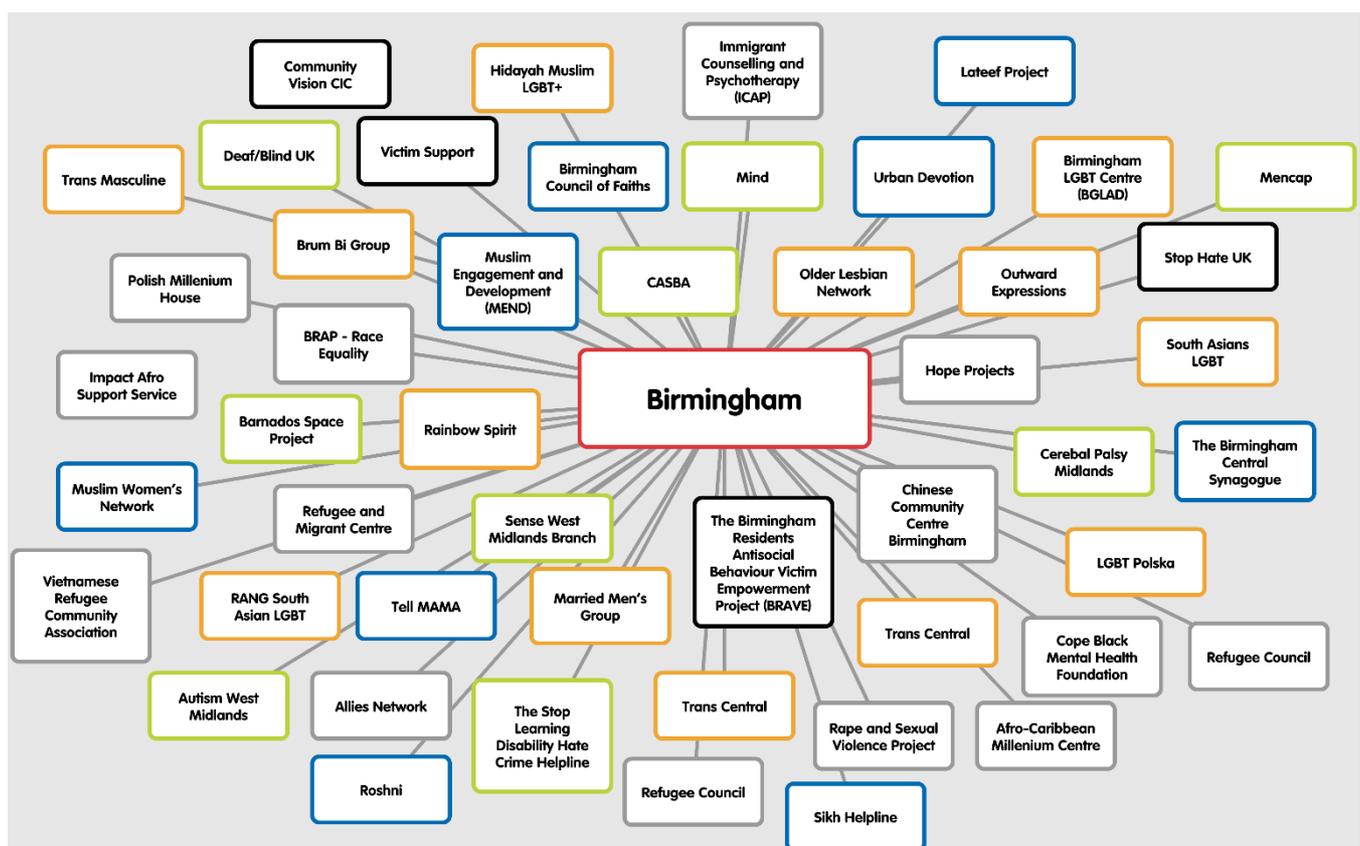
¹ 22 of the 360 survey respondents also took part in an interview.

EXPERIENCES OF HATE CRIME SUPPORT SERVICES

This study was designed to explore actual and potential hate crime victims' experiences and expectations of support services. Of the 373 people who participated in this study through a survey and/or interview, 37% ($n=138$) had experienced at least one hate crime. The nature and impact of these experiences will be discussed in greater depth later on within this report. The findings suggest that just 9% ($n=12$) of those who had been a victim of hate crime had accessed a support service. It is worth noting that 67% ($n=8$) of these participants had received emotional support and 33% ($n=4$) had accessed practical support, either from the police ($n=7$), Victim Support ($n=6$), a General Practitioner ($n=2$) or their local authority ($n=2$)². When participants were asked about whether they were pleased with the support that they had received the survey findings revealed that 57% were satisfied with the response from the police; 50% were satisfied with Victim Support and the local authority; and 100% were satisfied with their General Practitioner.

The finding that just 9% of hate crime victims had accessed support from a relevant organisation is surprising given the wide range of services available throughout the West Midlands. For example, Victim Support offer provisions through local teams, including an "initial risk assessment" from a "victim care officer", a phone call from a "caseworker... within the day", and the delivery of emotional support over the "phone", "face to face", at a "drop-in", or via "email" or "text"³. Additionally, there are numerous voluntary and community support services within the West Midlands that provide specialist support to specific communities and groups, as indicated by Figures 1-7 below.

Figure 1: Support Services in Birmingham⁴



² These figures do not add up to 12 because participants were able to select more than one organisation.

³ This quotations were taken from multiple interviews with members of staff at Victim Support.

⁴ Colour key: Black is support services for all victim groups; Blue is faith-based support; Green is disability-related support; Grey is race-related support; and Yellow is LGB&T-related support.

Figure 2: Support Services in Coventry

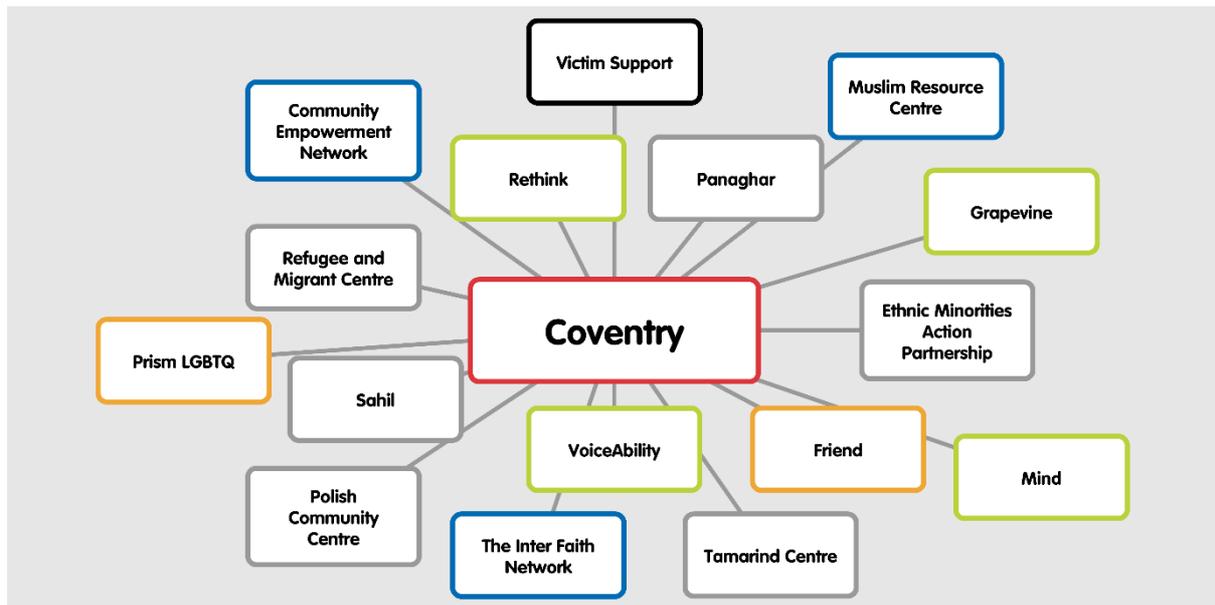


Figure 3: Support Services in Sandwell

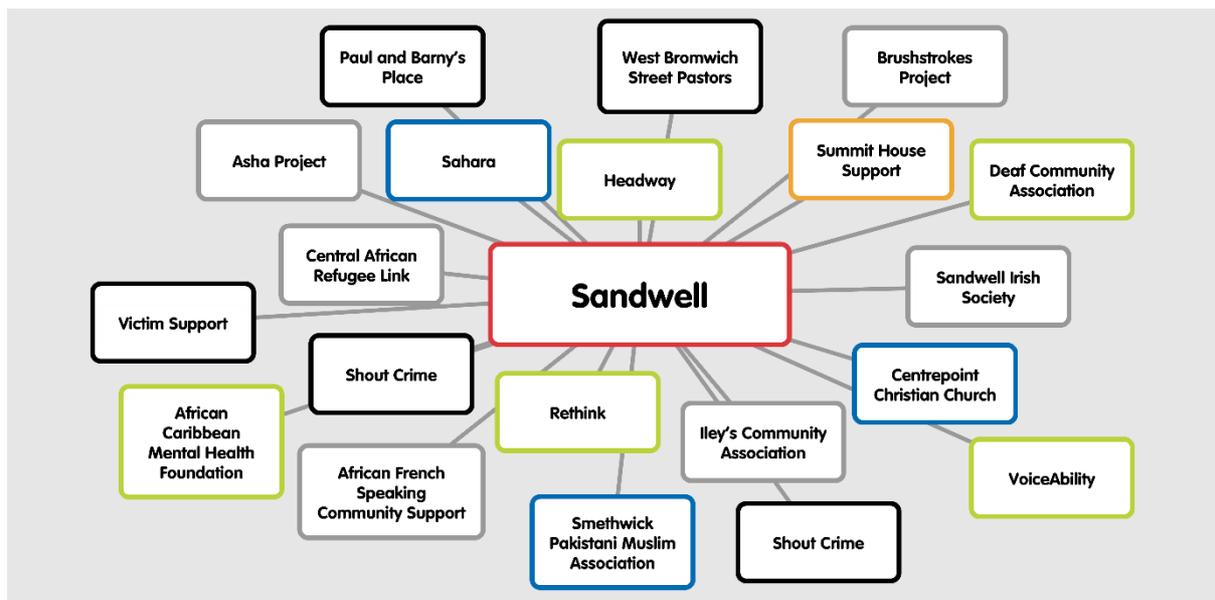


Figure 4: Support Services in Walsall

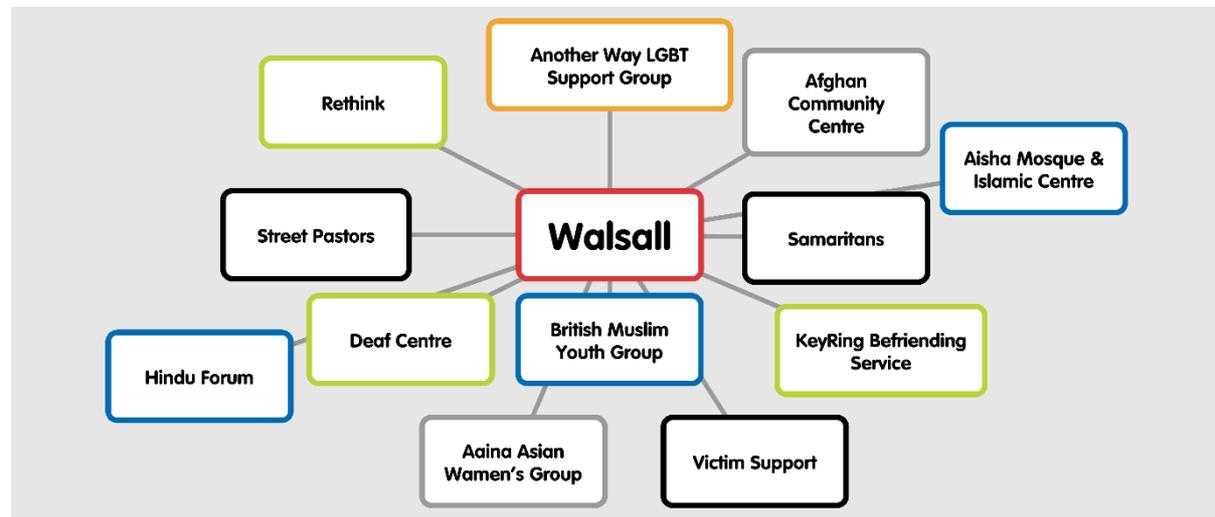


Figure 5: Support Services in Dudley

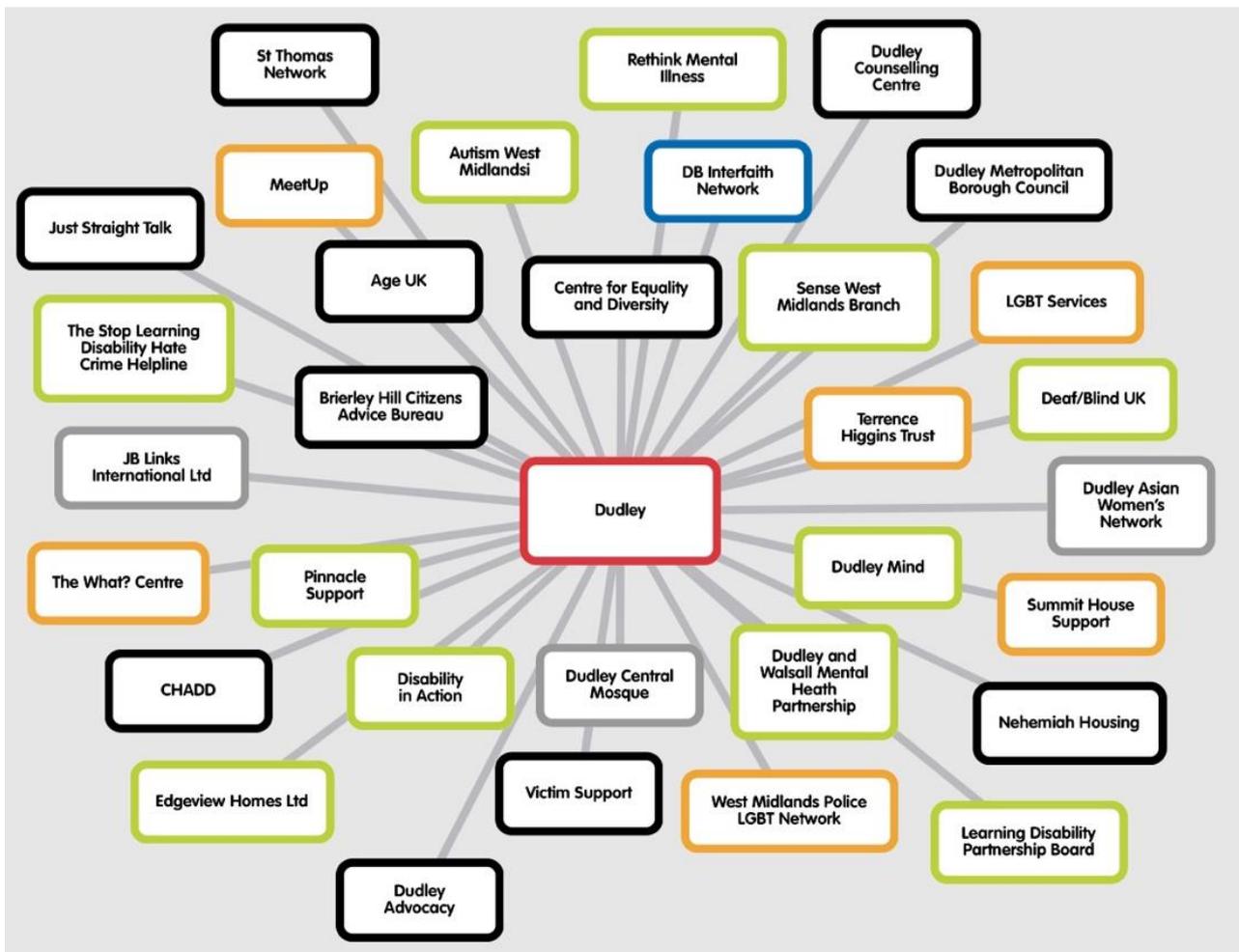


Figure 6: Support Services in Wolverhampton

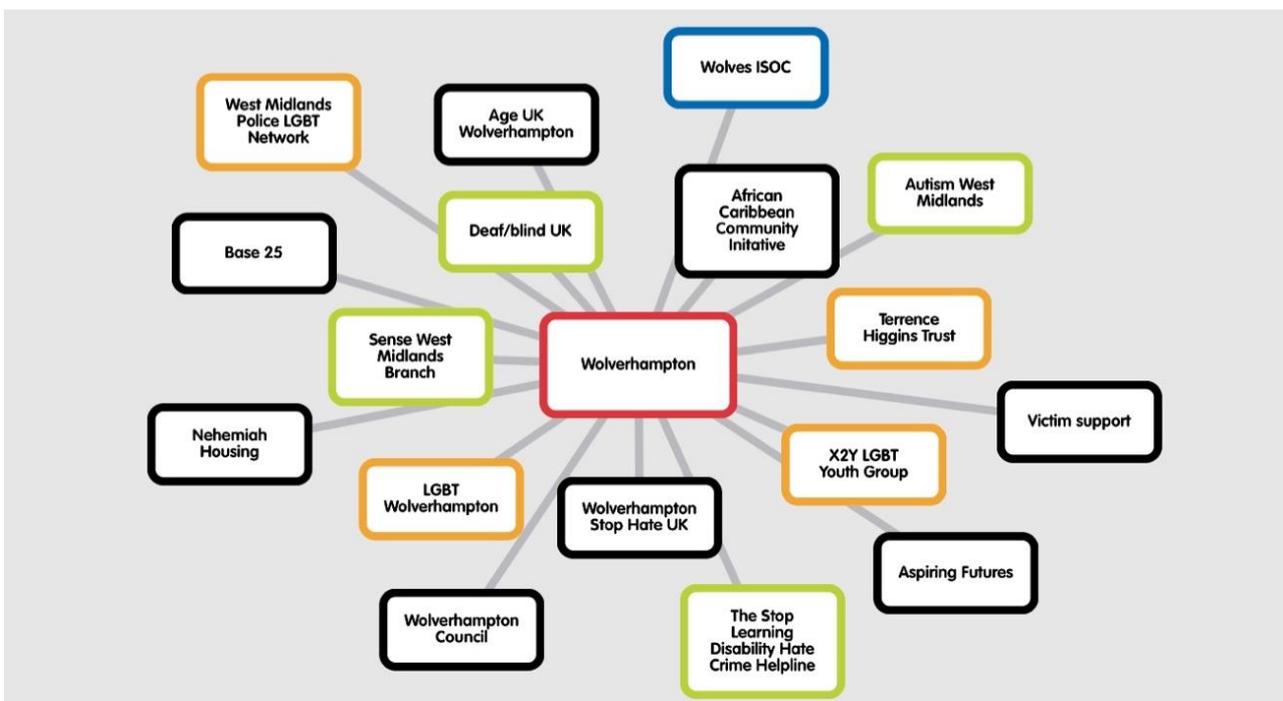


Figure 7: Support Services in Solihull



These figures were created on the basis of the information provided by the Office of the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner and Victim Support West Midlands, and via internet searches. The figures might not contain each and every organisation, charity or voluntary group which offers support to hate crime victims and they might include services that no-longer exist due to the uncertain social and economic environment within which they are operating. Importantly though, this highlights the difficulties that hate crime victims can face when trying to search for and access support services within their local area.

What these figures demonstrate, however, is that to some extent the availability and accessibility of hate crime support services is dependent on where you live within the West Midlands. For example, the map of Birmingham illustrates that hate crime victims have much greater access to support services when compared to the boroughs of Coventry, Sandwell or Walsall. One might argue that the disproportionate levels of support services exists because Birmingham has a significantly larger population than the aforementioned boroughs. However, this explanation ignores the fact that all seven boroughs are home to diverse populations – in terms of ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, disability and gender identity – and that within all of the boroughs racist, religiously-motivated, homophobic, disablist and transphobic hate crimes are being committed. Currently, if someone experiences a homophobic attack, for example, in Coventry, Sandwell or Walsall and felt that they needed specialist support based upon that aspect of their identity, they would have limited access to a tailored lesbian, gay and bisexual support service within their local environment. This can be particularly problematic for those who live within the less urban areas of the West Midlands because their visible ‘difference’, whether this be skin colour, religious dress, gender performance or disability, might be magnified within that context which will not only increase their risk of victimisation but reinforce their sense of isolation.

The suggestion that access to support services within the West Midlands is a ‘postcode lottery’ was brought up within interviews with practitioners who work within different organisations and in different contexts, as demonstrated by the quotations below.

I just find it very dysfunctional across the West Midlands. It's quite difficult to say what's [with reference to support services] in Coventry compared to what's in Walsall.

We support victims of persistent and ongoing antisocial behaviour within the Birmingham area ... I've also got a team member who does a similar sort of job for the Dudley area but we haven't got anything on the ASB front in any other parts of the Midlands area, just in Birmingham and Dudley. I myself live in Walsall, which is right on the extremity of the Midlands. And even that's totally different to some of the other areas in there.

Yeah, it's [the West Midlands] absolutely massive. And from a local authority point of view, Birmingham is the biggest local authority in Europe, and it's about to get bigger with the amalgamation with some of the Black Country and various other bits. And if I'm entirely honest, it's already too big for anybody to manage it properly ... It [support services] depends on the commissioning that you have in each area.

For example, in Wolverhampton you've got isolated pockets of different groups, and targeting your resources to those groups means that you are focusing your resources in particular areas, to the detriment of others sometimes.

I think we're really lucky in Solihull, because we're a smaller borough and partnership working is fantastic. Everyone seems to be working together and feel the same frustrations on services being cut ... We have people that live in Birmingham that come here, but we have to signpost them out. Because we're only funded to help people that live in this area. But you never hear back, and all of the services are different. If you're in Birmingham and you needed support, I'd be quite concerned. Because it's so big, and I'm assuming the money doesn't stretch.

Although the varying levels of support provision within the West Midlands was identified as a barrier to connecting with hate crime victims, a number of other factors emerged as contributing to the low uptake of support services. When participants ($n=138$) were asked about why that had not sought support after experiencing a hate crime four main reasons were identified, as demonstrated by Table 1.

Table 1: Factors affecting uptake of support services

Reasons for not accessing support	Percentage of participants
Dealt with it myself/with help of others	45%
Did not know any support services existed	35%
Did not think the organisation would take it seriously	26%
Too embarrassed to seek support	12%

The most commonly cited reason as to why a support service had not been accessed was that the victim felt that they were able to deal with it themselves or with the help of others, which mirrors the findings from a similar study (Hardy and Chakraborti, 2016). It is important, however, to consider what the implications are for those who have and those who do not have informal support networks at their disposal. Respondents to this question referred to the invaluable support that they had received, and continue to receive, from their family members, friends, carers and colleagues. Given the

important role that these individuals can play in helping victims to overcome the harm caused by their experience(s), it might be worth considering whether they can be 'up-skilled' through the dissemination of material on how to provide effective and sensitive support to hate crime victims.

Survey respondents also referred to a lack of awareness of what services exist as being another key barrier preventing access to support within the West Midlands. As the quotations below demonstrate, both actual and potential hate crime victims are commonly unaware of which organisations they can turn to in order to access emotional and/or practical support:

I'm not aware of support services for hate crime victims in the West Midlands.

Support available is not widely advertised to the public.

There's not enough of them and where are they?

The only support service I'm aware of in the West Midlands is Samaritans.

There needs to be more awareness so people can be informed what to do and where you can go for help.

I know that Citizens Advice is a hate crime reporting centre, but I'm unsure as to who provides support.

This lack of awareness was also apparent within many of the practitioners who were interviewed as part of this study. Many of these participants – who work in different sectors, including criminal justice, health and social care, local government and the voluntary sector – occupy positions within what would be considered 'frontline' services. This means that it is likely that they would come into contact with hate crime victims as part of their everyday role.

I think there are some support services but I don't think they're adequate ... I mean the service is not very easily reachable for this kind of crime.

I don't know, is there a Victim Support group or something? I've heard of Victim Support but I don't know anything about it.

I might be wrong, but I haven't come across a local Victim Support ... Now you've brought it to my attention, I'll be thinking about it now, but they haven't been in the forefront of my mind.

One or two of the old-timers, those people knew, though they weren't quite accurate. But people on the ground, not a clue, they really hadn't got a clue. And that was quite worrying.

As demonstrated in previous studies, awareness of hate crime support services tends to be limited to those in 'privileged' positions, including those 'who work in an environment related to hate crime and/or those who are socially and economically empowered' (see Hardy and Chakraborti, 2016: 19). However, the findings from this study suggest that the level of knowledge even within those who occupy these 'privileged' positions is often inadequate. It is vital that frontline practitioners who engage with those communities and groups who are most vulnerable to victimisation and who are least likely to be aware of support services including "asylum seekers", "people with learning difficulties" and "older people", are equipped with the knowledge to be able to signpost victims to appropriate provision.

When probing the issue further, it became evident that many practitioners felt that enforced spending cuts to services and staffing were responsible for the low awareness and uptake of support services.

With the way the police are operating now, and with all of the cuts to the numbers of officers and everything, [name] can't provide that service now ... I used to deal with [name], who was a police officer specifically for hate crime. But again, with the cuts, that role's gone.

It seems to have got worse since the restructure. I personally don't feel we're doing very much at all for those victims ... You can't do meaningful engagement. And it's a shame because there's real value in community safety. We did try and work with other departments, other agencies and voluntary organisations, and we'd try and get involved with local groups. And that's how you make people living in the community aware of all these services, it's important. Without that, I am worried as to where some of this work is, if anywhere, and what's going to happen as a result of that.

Often, the issue that is preventing them from doing anything is either what they're commissioned to do, or just the straightforward mechanics of not having enough money to be able to actually pay for it And I think that's a real risk actually across the third sector, because as times get harder, then people move themselves into that little bunker and they say, 'I'm sorry, we can't do that'. And that actually means that you're providing a much less person-centred and holistic service.

Cuts to specialised services are only making groups more and more vulnerable to attacks.

I see a lot of people now who are being made redundant ... and that team that dealt with these difficult to engage groups became absorbed. In terms of community engagement, yeah, there's still stuff happening but it's not at the same level that it was.

We're finding that because all of the funding is so restricted now, and all of the councils have had to make their cutbacks, what people used to be able to access isn't available anymore. Particularly in the north of the borough where it is more poverty stricken and people need that help, services are closing there more and more.

What he did was he went around to all of the partners and all of the organisations to promote hate crime and make people aware ... We had a contact so if we were concerned, we could ring him and say, 'They don't want to pursue it but what could we do'. We don't have that contact anymore so we're a little bit lost.

Although similar concerns were expressed by actual and potential hate crime victims, these participants tended to focus more heavily on the perceived impact that austerity measures have had upon the police service specifically. For those participants, reductions in the number of police officers and closures to police stations had not only enabled hate crime perpetration to increase but also had detrimentally affected the support provided to victims.

West Midlands Police Service are very stretched at the moment. With the main police station closing in Walsall, all types of crime has not only gone up but it's openly evident on the streets. Where at night roads were quiet, now you see all kinds of vices.

I don't fully trust the police, not because I don't believe in what they do or think they're good people. But they have budget cuts and deadlines, and I feel it would really knock me if I made the effort to make that first step to go and speak to them, and I got somebody at the other end, saying to me, 'Oh, you know, get over it, love'; or, 'That's not a real problem, okay, someone will be in touch'.

My belief is that there are insufficient police to deal with hate crime, which has increased hugely.

Local police stations closed, never see PCSO's let alone PC's, a courts system that fails to punish the offender – need I go on?

Obviously, the police are so stretched with cases and work, they can't always get back to victims straightaway. I think a lot of people do feel left to their own devices and I think that they don't really know where to go and who to turn to.

Dissatisfaction with how the police respond to hate crime and support victims has been identified as a key issue within official sources of data and research findings. The Crime Survey for England and Wales shows that compared to other types of crime victims, hate crime victims are less likely to be satisfied with the police response both in terms of fairness and effectiveness of the service provided (Corcoran, Lader and Smith, 2015). Based on combined 2012/13 to 2014/15 surveys, just 52 per cent of hate crime victims were found to be very or fairly satisfied with the handling of their case, compared to 73 per cent of general crime victims (*ibid*, 2015). The percentage of participants who were satisfied with the police service in this study was 57%, although this figure relates to a very small sample of just 7. Negative perceptions about the quality of the service provided by the police – such as those included in the textbox to the right – will undoubtedly impact upon the likelihood of hate crime victims coming forward to report their experience and/or accessing support services. This also helps to explain why more than a quarter of the participants within this study stated that they did not access a support service because they did not think that they would be taken seriously.

Our police service is totally shit. They don't help at all.

I know now I cannot trust the police to deal effectively and sensitively with any hate crime.

Stereotyping and dehumanising is an unfortunate response from the police.

The police need to be better.

Institutions like the police are failing to support vulnerable people.

The findings from this study suggest that uptake of support services by hate crime victims within the West Midlands is low. This is despite the fact that a wide range of public and third-sector organisations offer services that have the potential to help victims deal with the emotional and physical harms caused by hate crime. The survey revealed that four key barriers were identified by hate crime victims as making them reluctant or unable to utilise existing provisions, including already having access to 'informal' support networks; being unaware that support services existed; feeling concerned about not being taken seriously; and feeling embarrassed about needing support. A significant concern shared by actual and potential hate crime victims and by practitioners was that the lack of awareness of support services has been exacerbated by the cuts imposed upon public sector agencies as part of government austerity measures. Moreover, perceptions about how 'stretched' criminal justice agencies and local authorities are can affect levels of trust and confidence within those services, which in turn will affect the likelihood of people coming forward to ask for help.

EXPERIENCES OF HATE CRIME

Forms and Frequency of Hate Crime

Although capturing experiences of hate crime was not the central focus of this study, it is necessary to discuss these findings in order to illustrate the disparity between rates of victimisation, rates of reporting and rates of engagement with support services. Within the survey respondents were asked about whether they had ever experienced a hate incident or crime, of whom 37% ($n=138$) had. When asked about what form this experience took, 98% of the sample stated that they had been verbally abused on at least one occasion. Worryingly, 54% of these participants indicated that they had been or were being called abusive names on a frequent basis.

Table 2: Forms and frequency of victimisation

Forms of victimisation	Percentage of participants who had experienced this form of victimisation	Percentage of victims who are experiencing this form of victimisation repeatedly
Verbal abuse	98%	54%
Threatened or harassed in person	79%	36%
Threatened or harassed online	48%	46%
Deliberate damage to property	31%	28%
Physically attacked	41%	24%

Table 2 illustrates that a significant proportion of participants within this study have been or are experiencing repeat victimisation, which manifests itself predominantly through verbal abuse and harassment either in person and online. In comparison to previous studies on hate crime victimisation (see Hardy and Chakraborti, 2016; Chakraborti, Garland and Hardy, 2014), the percentage of participants who had been physically attacked in this study was significantly higher at 41%⁵, with a quarter of these participants having been assaulted on more than one occasion.

When participants were asked to consider which aspect of their identity they felt that they had been targeted for the most commonly cited factor was 'my race' (42%), which mirrors the findings of other related studies (*ibid*, 2016; *ibid*, 2014). Religion (20%) and sexual orientation (19%) – which along with race are three of five identity characteristics protected by hate crime policy (College of Policing, 2014) – also featured highly in participant responses to this question. Interestingly, participants also cited that they had been targeted because of a number of 'other' identity and lifestyle characteristics, which are not 'officially' recognised or protected by hate crime policy. For example, 29% felt that they had been targeted on the basis of their dress and appearance. Visual identity markers – which can include religious dress, gender performance and a wide-range of physical traits – contribute to a person's membership of a certain group or 'community' being easier to identify, thereby increasing their risk of victimisation. Additionally, 22% of participants felt that they had been targeted on the basis of their gender; 16% on the basis of their age; 6% on the basis of their mental ill-health; and 5% on the basis of their subcultural status (e.g. goth, emo or punk).

It is worth noting that disability did not feature significantly within the responses to this question, which is likely to be because of the data collection method that was used and the challenges that a survey can present for those with physical and/or learning difficulties. Official data suggests that disablist hate crime is significantly under-reported, with just one in nineteen being reported to the police service in 2015-2016 (Corcoran and Smith, 2016). The Crime Survey for England and Wales

⁵ Within these studies between 32% and 35% of hate crime victims had been physically attacked.

estimates that approximately 70,000 disablist hate crimes took place in 2015-2016, which highlights the sheer volume of disablist hate crime taking place (*ibid*, 2016).

Interviews and survey responses enabled the research team to gain further insight into the nature of participants' experiences of hate crime.

Everywhere I go I expect to be verbally abused because it's happened that often. If I don't get abused it's a bonus.

It's mainly racist like being called 'You black bastard' or, 'You paki bastard', and things like that.

I have had a number of experiences where I just get abuse being yelled directed at me as I'm walking, cycling or out in evenings. This abuse is usually started having had no interaction with the person until that moment.

One very memorable incident was when my wife was pregnant, and she was racially abused and pushed in Argos in town.

They [young people] knock on the windows and on the door... they're shouting or talk swear words ... and she [neighbour] all the time puts rubbish in my garden.

One of them kicked the door, with both feet and it slammed against my hand ... they had spat all over my back. And I didn't even know they'd done it. How disgusting is that? They spit on the windows or they throw eggs at the windows.

Comments that would attack my identity would leave me upset ... I was hit with a rock in the face. Luckily, it was between my brows, I always think back to if I had turned my head a fraction to the left or right I could have lost my sight. The scar is a constant reminder that I have been a victim of hate crime.

These quotations demonstrate the repetitive and 'everyday' nature that hate crime can take. Participants recalled numerous experiences of being "verbally abused", being "spat at", being "pushed", "kicked" and "punched", and having "eggs" thrown at their windows or their flower pots "smashed". Participant responses also provide an insight into the locations in which hate crimes take place, including outside or near the victim's home, on public streets, in shops and supermarkets, schools, places of work and on public transport. The location in which a hate crime takes place can heavily influence how the incident affects the victim and their family. In the more 'familiar' environments such as at work, in school or near the home, it is more likely that the victim will be acquainted with the perpetrator(s) and will, therefore, have to face them again.

Geography was also a key theme to emerge from both the survey findings and Facebook responses. Participants suggested that dependant on where you live within the West Midlands the risk of being a victim of hate crime can increase or decrease.

I live in Birmingham and there are serious no go areas, dominated by those who hate white people. Hate crimes against white people are routine and our law enforcers turn a blind eye like most left wingers who refuse to see our country is in crisis.

[Directed towards a White British woman] Drag your soft-soap Lefty behind to Birmingham and walk through Nechells, Newtown, Aston Triangle or Lozells late at night on your own and see how many pieces you can stay in.

This is a very poor area and ethnic minorities tend to be very, very isolated. Then you get rumours going around and then you get hostility because people are struggling so much and they're saying, 'Oh, they're coming in and taking our jobs and taking our houses'.

In Dudley if you're gay, you don't walk down the street here openly but Stourbridge you can ... And in Sedgley there's certain pubs you don't go in if you're black or you're gay. You don't full stop. It can be really extreme.

I would say that there are pockets of the West Midlands where it is not safe if you are a minority. I don't want to sound as if I'm sort of blasting a particular group because I'm not but it is in the working class areas where it's almost like protectivism. They close ranks in order to hold onto what they've got, whether that's a perceived idea of what their area is or a perceived idea of what benefits they've got from being in this enclosed environment where they feel safe, and they don't want the imposition of an outside group.

Stourbridge, for example, we knew there'd been hate crime incidents around there because I used to live in and work with a disabled group. But for example, Dudley's got, I would say, anecdotally, a higher rate of hate crime incidents, particularly racial, because it's such a mixed bag round here.

People in Wolverhampton and Walsall will have different experiences of LGBT hate crime in their area, compared to Birmingham where you have a strong community. Lots of people from Walsall would go to the Village in Birmingham, rather than go to a smaller venue where it's more likely that they're going to be targeted in Walsall, because there's that safety in numbers element.

When you've got diverse places like here in the West Midlands, there are those areas which become even more isolated, even more deprived ... Unfortunately, the Polish community, as a new migrant community, is one of those who a) we're invisible, purely because we're white; b) we don't ask for any help, because people don't know that help is out there for them; c) even if they do ask, they're let down by the system or they have to wait.

These responses, which came from both actual and potential hate crime victims and practitioners, suggest that in the same way in which access to support services could be described as a 'postcode lottery' so too could the risk of victimisation.

Perceptions of Hate Crime Policy

Within this study, survey respondents were asked to consider which identity or lifestyle characteristics should be protected by hate crime policy in the West Midlands. The five monitored identity strands featured prominently within the survey findings, with significant proportions of the sample indicating that disability (84%), race (77%), religion (72%), sexual orientation (71%) and transgender status (60%) 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 (71%), age (64%), and gender (63%). 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 College of Policing (2014:7), the professional body for policing in England and Wales, has also given individual forces license to record other forms of hostility and hate where it is deemed appropriate.

Post-Brexit Hate Crime

As part of this study it was necessary to consider notions of community cohesion and belonging in a post-Brexit context. Survey respondents ($n=360$) were asked to consider whether they had become more concerned about hate crime following the EU referendum, with 58% of the total sample stating that they had not noticed a change in how concerned they felt, 21% now more concerned and 14% much more concerned. However, these figures are based on the perceptions of both actual and potential hate crime victims. When just those who had experienced a hate crime were asked the same question the findings were significantly different, with 21% feeling more concerned and 29% feeling much more concerned.

Within both the survey and the interviews participants were asked to provide an explanation for why they had answered this question in such a way. Many participants expressed concern based upon their

observations of prejudiced views becoming more overt, which they perceived politicians and the media to have legitimized.

Brexit changed a lot in bad way. As a Polish national I feel scared about the future of myself and my daughters as it's become so clear that we are no longer welcome in UK. This is our home now that my daughters been born here. After Brexit people feel allowed to show their aggression and that people like me are not welcome.

I believe that the decision relating to exiting the EU has given those who have issues with immigration the green light to be openly racist.

With the Brexit vote the rise in nationalism seems to have emboldened the right wing and has led to an increase of hate speech and hate crimes against minorities.

Working for the local authority and in partnership with the police there has been an increase in hate crime following Brexit which is very worrying.

I feel much less safe and unwelcome in the UK although I've never taken any penny in benefits and pay high taxes.

Brexit, Trump's election, the general climate of the UK is one of uncertainty and fear. This only aggravates the loud minority of bigots even more, because they feel their hateful beliefs are validated by our own government.

Since the Brexit vote I have noticed a marked increase in racist comments towards EU citizens.

[There is] a lot of racist abuse coming in. I wouldn't like to put a percentage on it, but certainly we've noticed it more and more when we speak to victims of the antisocial behaviour.

A significant number of participants suggested that recent global events, including “Brexit” and “Trump”, had not only “validated” and “reinforced” prejudiced views but also had “emboldened” people by making them think that it is acceptable to express such views both in public and on social media platforms. Participants, who stated that they belong to a minority ethnic and/or faith community, spoke of feeling “concerned”, “fearful” and “scared” about their future within the UK. This uncertainty is likely to affect perceptions of safety and belonging which, in turn, might reinforce divisions within and between communities in the West Midlands.

The findings generated as part of this study reveal that the reported ‘spike’ in hate crime, which dominated UK media in the months following the EU referendum, has contributed to an increased awareness of the term hate crime within the general public. Unfortunately this increased familiarity with the term has not resulted in an improved or accurate understanding of hate crime victimisation, policy or legislation. In fact, the very nature of this study evoked considerable hostility from some people within the West Midlands, as exemplified by two participants who told the research team to ‘fuck off with your hate crime, it's fucking boring’ and that they were ‘fed up of these hate and racism surveys’.

The level of hostility and frustration directed towards the topic of this research and the concept of hate crime more generally was unlike anything that the research team had witnessed before. Below is a selection of these views:

To be honest the term "hate crime" was cooked up by the extreme Left as a whip to crack over white British heterosexual Christians, and it's just another way of gagging free speech. If you call someone a twat, a bastard or a wanker it's no big deal, people can brush it off, so why is it different if you call someone a nigger, a pouf or a whore?

If a hate crime is reported to the police and no action is needed to be taken it is still recorded as a hate crime. So it's a crime even when there is NO crime. The thinking of the mad house.

It is a left-wing agenda to silence opinions that they disagree with and to criminalize people who oppose different choices.

Most hate crime is either exaggerated or made up to promote a PC agenda.

A clear liberal attempt at silencing free speech and opinions that they disagree with.

Evidently, there are people who believe that the development of hate crime policy and legislation was driven solely by political correctness and a left-wing agenda, with the aim of restricting freedom of speech. These participants also expressed concern about, what they perceived to be, the preferential treatment and protection being afforded to minority groups through hate crime policy, and the way in which criminal justice responses were discriminatory towards the White British population whose experiences of victimisation were being overlooked or ignored altogether.

I was on the end of abuse because I am white. It would have gone to court but the police are frightened of them.

Hate crime against white people is equally as prevalent as it is against non-white people, it's just not taken seriously. Police ignore reports of hate-motivated violence and rape when the victim is white and the perpetrator isn't because this country's laws don't allow any proper action and so it's a waste of their time.

We need to stop the police from using double standards! Seems the only people who can be racist are White British.

Maybe stop hate crimes against white English people. The police should treat all people the same instead of being afraid of being labelled racist.

Hate crimes shouldn't be a crime as it creates a protected class of people.

Again, this selection of comments provide an insight into the resentment and hostility permeating within groups and communities within the West Midlands, which undoubtedly will affect cohesion at a grassroots level. Responses from other participants demonstrated that many people also have limited knowledge and understanding of just how impactful hate crime can be for the victim, their families and communities, with participants suggesting that those who were affected by hate crime were just being over-sensitive.

Hate crime is just so stupid. If you said good morning to some people it would be a hate crime. We need to get over this stupid law which says that anything you say could be a hate crime.

It's all rubbish.

I'm fed of these 'do gooders'. Once upon a time we learnt to turn the other way and walk on, ignore people that said horrible things to us. If it got too much then you gave it back and then some. Everyone's frightened to stick up for themselves now or frightened to interfere or to help anyone.

Why are people acting like children over a few little expletives? In all of my adult life I've NEVER got upset about a name someone called me, because I'm an adult and it doesn't cause me any physical harm, doesn't threaten my life, doesn't obstruct me in the pursuit of whatever goal I've set for myself in any one day. As for racist/sexist/homophobic verbal slurs, grow the fuck up! What is this? A playground?

This under-appreciation of the significant emotional and physical harms caused by hate crime further demonstrates how much work needs to be done to increase awareness and understanding of this form of victimisation in the general public. Furthermore, the lack of empathy and compassion shown towards the victim is especially worrying given that it is the absence of these emotions that can facilitate the commission of hate crime perpetration.

Impacts of Hate Crime

In the context of hate crime 'the victim is being targeted because of who they are, because of the community that they are perceived to belong to or because of the way that they live their life' (Hardy and Chakraborti, 2016: 10). These characteristics make this form of victimisation inherently personal, which is why it can be so damaging to the well-being of victims. Through both the survey and interviews, participants were asked to explain how their experience(s) of hate crime had affected them. Overwhelmingly participant responses focused on the impact of hate crime upon their emotional well-being.

At the time it made me very nervous and self-conscious.

Fear, anxiety, depression, avoiding going out and censoring self.

As we've seen, some cases can result in self-harm or suicide in severe cases, where, because they don't think it's worth reporting, they don't tell us. It gets worse, to the point that they take their own lives.

It knocks your confidence and lowers your self-esteem.

I have had weekly psychotherapy for the last four years to treat my PTSD.

Developing PTSD, social anxiety, afraid to leave the house, depression, suicidal ideation etc.

My family needs psychological support. My two sons are afraid to go outside.

Being frequently harassed and intimidated affects me in terms of my mental and physical health.

As illustrated by these comments, the impact of hate crime can be long lasting and especially detrimental to an individual's self-esteem and confidence. For some participants, the emotional harms that they had suffered had severely affected their quality of life, including those who were increasingly "mistrustful", "suspicious of others", who had "lost friends", and who "now avoid certain areas" or "shops", are "afraid to go places" and "hardly ever go out on [their] own". The survey findings suggest that 41% of those participants who had experienced at least one hate crime felt that it had significantly affected them and their quality of life. This finding reinforces an earlier point, which is that the low uptake of support services (9%) does not accurately reflect the devastating emotional and physical impacts caused by hate crime victimisation.

Both informal support networks and individual-level resilience were identified as being important factors that can help victims to cope with hate crime. Participants spoke about having the "strength" to deal with being targeted, developing a "thick skin", and having "accepted" that they will encounter hostility as a result of being 'different'. Below is a selection of quotations which are illustrative of this sample of responses:

Generally I have a strong personality and support network, so it hasn't affected me, but I fear for the more vulnerable of society: elderly, women and children.

It's not so much had an impact on me, as I am able to defend myself and know where to seek help and support. I am far more concerned about others who due to various barriers are not equipped to defend themselves.

I consider myself to be a fairly resilient and because of my faith try to consider the circumstances that have influenced the perpetrator to act in the way that they have.

As I get older, I have had the odd occasion of being called a Paki and the person perpetrating abuse has soon regretted it when they have got into a confrontation with me.

These experiences have made me a stronger person. Maybe I've just become accustomed and developed a thick skin.

I'm normalised to it I think.

I've developed a thick skin and now carry the attitude that verbal abuse is just 'harmless words'.

I have lived a lifetime with hate crime. I'm lucky in the sense that I can move on from incidents. It's not easy to be able to do this but it's a survival technique learnt over time.

Reporting Hate Crime

Given the considerable emotional damage that hate crime can cause, it might be assumed that victims would be more inclined to report when compared to other victim groups. However, previous research and official data suggests that in the context of hate crime under-reporting is a significant problem (Corcoran and Smith, 2016; Chakraborti, Garland, Hardy, 2014; Christmann and Wong, 2010). According to official figures, in 2015-16 the Police Service recorded 62,528 hate crimes (*ibid*, 2016). However, it is widely acknowledged that this number is an underestimate of the actual number of hate crimes occurring 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*, 2016). Research evidence suggests that it is the 'normalisation' of incidents of hate crime – exemplified by the quotations above – which can result in many victims being unwilling to report their experience (Chakraborti and Hardy, 2015).

When participants were asked about whether they had reported a hate crime to the police, 28% stated that they had. In recognition of the issues surrounding reporting, considerable investment and effort has been devoted to creating third-party reporting mechanisms, which are designed to offer an alternative reporting route to the police. Many public-sector agencies 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. Within the survey participants were also asked about whether they had reported their experience through a third-party reporting centre or mechanism. The numbers of participants who had utilised this option was low (as illustrated by Table 3), and this finding was reinforced by comments expressed within the interviews which illustrated that the majority of actual and potential hate crime victims had never heard of third-party reporting.

Table 3: Use of third-party reporting mechanisms

Third-party reporting mechanisms	Number of participants who had reported through this mechanism
Local council	7
A faith group	6
A lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender group	3
Online (e.g. through True Vision or Stop Hate)	3
A disability group	2
Victim Support	2
A race equality group	1

As part of this study we wanted to identify the reasons as to why hate crime victims were reluctant or unwilling to report to the police or through a third-party reporting mechanism. When participants were asked to explain why they had not reported their experience five key barriers were identified and these are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Reasons for not reporting

Organisations	Percentage of participants
Did not think anybody would take it seriously	39%
Dealt with it myself/with help of others	33%
Did not know who to speak to	23%
Fear of retaliation/make matters worse	17%
It takes too long to report	11%

The survey findings suggest that one of the key barriers facing participants within this study is the perception that they would not be taken seriously, which is in keeping with previous research on this topic (Hardy and Chakraborti, 2016; Chakraborti and Hardy 2015; Christman and Wong, 2010). This perception appears to be influenced by what form of hate crime the victim experiences. Of the total sample of survey respondents, 76% stated that they would be 'unlikely' or 'highly unlikely' to report being verbally abused to the police. Approximately half of this sample also stated that they would be unlikely or highly unlikely to report to the police even if they had been harassed in person or online. The survey findings also reveal, however, that this sample would be more inclined to report their experience of hate crime if it were to involve deliberate damage to property or physical attack. Within the interviews this 'tipping point' was probed further, with the findings revealing that most participants would be more likely to report an incident if it involved physical violence or repeat victimisation involving the same perpetrator.

Quite often there are different parts of the community that just don't feel they'll be taken seriously if they are reporting a hate crime.

I think familiarity with the abuser tends to dull your sense of this needs reporting. I have a suspicion that if the person wasn't somebody I knew or somebody I didn't know very well, I'd be much more likely to report it.

I don't think people take it too seriously most of the time. Physical stuff, yes, but verbal stuff, I don't think they really do. They think very little of it.

That's the norm. You've got the feeling of what's the point of reporting it, nobody will pay attention to it, nobody will do anything about it ... there is a lot of resentment towards the police forces by Poles, there is a lot of mistrust.

The other factors that were found to influence decisions about reporting, included the victim having dealt with the incident themselves or with the help of others (33%); not knowing who to speak to (23%); being fearful of retaliation or making the situation worse (17%); and thinking that it takes too long to report (11%). The survey findings suggest that many participants have a preference for informal reporting mechanisms which, in the context of this study, involved disclosing their experience(s) to people whom they were familiar with and trusted such as a family member (51%) or friend (65%). Again, this finding points to the value of educating all members of the public about hate crime and the importance of reporting because the people who provide informal support could play a key role in encouraging victims to report to the police or to another relevant organisation. In addition, the finding that nearly a quarter of the hate crime victims who took part in this study did not

report their experience because they did not know whom to speak to further highlights the low levels of awareness that were discussed in the first section with reference to support services.

Under-reporting has important implications for the uptake of support services. It is unlikely that hate crime victims and their families will be aware of the services available or how to access them because support organisations rely heavily on signposting from public-sector agencies.

At the moment my answers reflect my perception of how these are dealt with and how seriously it would be taken. I feel that the support network for victims of such crime is currently not out there and also what would be the follow up support, how do I know once something is reported that there would be no repercussions as a result?

The support services that may be required might not be used to their full potential due to lack of reporting. At the end of the day, the question commonly asked is, "What's the point?" Or "What would I get out of it?"

Yes, we all talk about hate crime, and for example, in the West Midlands, we've got third party reporting centres. But a lot of people don't know where they are, what they do, what the needs are. And, of course, when they're set up, you get staff who move on.

The reasons for not reporting hate crime to the police or to another relevant organisation outlined within this section are in line with findings that have emerged from previous studies on this topic (see Chakraborti and Hardy, 2015). With only 28% of hate crime victims reporting their experience of hate crime to the police – and given the low levels of agency- and self-referrals – it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the vast majority of victims within the West Midlands are suffering in silence.

EXPECTATIONS OF SUPPORT SERVICES

This section of the report provides an overview of what actual and potential hate crime victims would expect and need from a support service. Within this study participants were asked to first consider whether they thought that hate crime victims needed a different level and type of support when compared to other victim groups. Many participants agreed with this statement because of the wide-ranging damage that hate crime can cause to victims and their families, as illustrated by the following quotations:

Hate crime should be treated the same as physical assault because it is an assault but the scars are invisible.

Yes, in the same way as you would hope that you'd get specialised support for rape victims, you would expect to have somebody who understands that particular area. You need somebody with particular skills and empathy for that kind of crime.

I believe that, though Victim Support offer good support, we should have specialist hate crime services where staff are trained to respond to just those, and understand the unique issues surrounding hate crimes and incidents.

I would say that it tends to be a little bit more long term, because they [victims] sometimes don't always want that weekly phone call or a visit. Hate crime victims predominantly don't want you going round the house because it draws attention to the fact that they're talking to somebody. So they might want to meet at a drop-in centre or somewhere a little bit more discreet or just have a phone call.

We need to have access to specialist services.

In an ideal world, I'd quite like us to have a hate crime support service. I'd like us to be able to have a small scale unit or group ... If any crime is reported, instead of automatically going to Victim Support, they can go to the service. This service would understand what hate crime is, what the different strands mean, especially for those that are the least reported.

Within the survey all participants were asked to consider what features of a support service would be most important to them. Table 5 highlights what proportion of the survey sample selected each characteristic.

Table 5: Expectations of support services

Characteristics of a support service	Percentage of participants
Being able to access support quickly	79%
Being treated with kindness and compassion	70%
Accessing support from a trained professional	56%
Being able to access practical support (e.g. safety advice, personal safety equipment)	54%
Having a service with flexible opening times	51%
Being able to access emotional support face to face	47%
Being able to access support in a safe place	47%
Being able to access support at home	45%
Being made aware of local support groups	45%
Being able to access emotional support on the phone	31%

As Table 5 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 able to access support from a trained professional. The interviews provided an opportunity to explore participants' expectations of support and support services in greater detail.

In line with the survey findings, being able to access support from a trained professional emerged as a significant theme. When participants were asked about who they would want to provide them with emotional support the response was mixed, with participants referring to mainstream organisations, specialist services, community and voluntary-run groups and charities. For those participants who felt that they had more complex support needs as a result of repeat victimisation, the suggestion was that emotional support should be delivered by a specially-trained counsellor. However, it became evident that regardless of which organisation was providing the support, the important factor – which was also cited by 57% of survey respondents – was that the member of staff responsible for delivering it was trained to ensure that they fully comprehend how impactful hate crime can be.

Specialist hate crime support workers are important, people who have specific skills and knowledge around these crimes.

Professionals dealing with hate crimes must be fair, unbiased, impartial and non-judgmental when carrying out their duties.

So there's quite a lot of complexity, but I think if you've got proper responsible people in safe organisations and others who kind of know how things get done, you can, over a period of time, build up a lot of credibility.

The only way it can be easier, I think, is to have more people in ordinary situations that are clued up either in terms of signposting, which is not the best way but at least it's better than nothing. They can advise, they can even accompany...or they need to advertise more about the things that are in place.

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. For a significant proportion of participants, being able to access support quickly was a priority and this was only possible if it was “easy to access”. In particular, participants focused on the importance of having services that meet the needs of the diverse population that lives within the West Midlands, as demonstrated by the following comments:

Interpretation services are crucial for victims of race hate crimes who have limited English.

For some people who can't use the telephone or use their voice to express themselves, they need to have a dedicated key worker so that they can access the entire process of support that other people can access.

I work with Eastern Europeans and language barriers and lack of follow up are the main issues.

And there's a whole sector of society that will never be able to do it [access support] on their own, because English is a second language, they're probably not going to be able to use a computer that well. A lot of older people or disabled people, they can't understand. Immediately, that option's been taken away, effectively.

Additionally, some participants felt that organisations should be offering support services to hate crime victims outside of the ‘normal’ working hours, making them “available at weekends and out of office hours”. Interestingly, there were participants who felt that they would not be ready to access support directly after an incident had taken place but who would like to have the offer of support at a later date. This would require criminal justice agencies and other relevant organisations to take steps to ensure that victims know that access to a support service does not have a ‘cut-off’ point.

As Table 5 highlighted, approximately half of survey respondents within this study identified that being able to access emotional support was an important characteristic of a support service. Unfortunately, and as demonstrated in previous sections of this report, victims are often unaware of which organisations they can access this support from. One of the main ways in which hate crime victims are made aware of and offered support is through a referral to a relevant organisation or voluntary group. The findings from this study raise questions about how often this practice is taking place and how appropriate the referrals are, given that awareness of support services amongst 'frontline' practitioners was relatively low.

I don't think [referral to support] should be an opt-in kind of thing, I think it should be automatic. I think we shouldn't put the responsibility on them [victim] to make a fuss about the hate crime. They're okay when you're dealing with the assault, with the theft, because it's something tangible. Whereas the hate crime part of it isn't. So when you say, 'Would you like to speak to somebody about that part of the incident?', they don't because they think it's not relevant, it's not worth it.

People are so traumatised by the things that have gone on, they need somebody to literally physically hold their hand to go down to Victim Support.

I think every hate crime should come through [to Victim Support] and I think it should come through for us to make a contact with them five to seven days after the incident date, so that it gives them time to get their head around what's happened and to be more open to the offer of support.

Both the survey and interview data demonstrate that there is no 'one-size fits all' approach to providing support for hate crime victims.

It would probably depend on the severity of the crime or how affected you were, how frightened you were by it. But there again, I wouldn't go to the police unless I felt really threatened. So I'd be happy for them to pass my details on, I would probably ask for the number as well, in case I wanted to contact them myself. So either of those I would say.

It's got to be a holistic support involving partners, but it could be different for different people. And you've got to expect that.

Support for hate crime victims needs to be available in a variety of formats and delivered through a variety of organisations. However, it is important for those who are in a position to offer support to recognise that the most commonly cited support need was to be treated with empathy and to have their experience taken seriously. This support need should be straight-forward to deliver and does not incur a cost. 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.

People need to know that they matter and their complaints will be listened to.

The most important issue is being supported from a non-judgemental, honest, empowering perspective.

Feeling like you are being listened to and taken seriously.

I think that a major factor in helping is to treat the victim with respect, kindness and compassion; to ensure the realization that hate crime is a rare occurrence and that the victim is in no way responsible.

I think the perception is that nobody will take you seriously unless it becomes physical.

One of the key ways in which policy-makers and practitioners can support hate crime victims is by enabling them to have access to justice. Research evidence suggests that victims are keen to see police forces, local authorities and other relevant partner organisations making much greater use of ‘smarter’ and not ‘harsher’ punishments for perpetrators (Chakraborti, Garland and Hardy, 2014). Conventional criminal justice responses to hate crime can be confusing and protracted, and have the potential to reinforce the degrading treatment that victims have already suffered at the hands of the perpetrator. Similarly, a growing evidence base questions the effectiveness of these punitive responses in relation to their capacity to prevent people from committing hate crime or rehabilitating those who have offended (Walters and Brown, 2016; Hall, 2013).

This study provided the research team with an opportunity to assess actual and potential hate crime victims’ preferences on which approaches should be prioritised in order to tackle hate crime perpetration and to rehabilitate the offenders.

Table 6: Approaches to tackling hate crime

Criminal justice and other interventions	Percentage of participants
Educating young people about diversity in schools	82%
More hate crime cases going to court	65%
Community ‘payback’ orders (e.g. the perpetrator volunteering in a community setting)	55%
Diversity awareness courses for the perpetrator	46%
Longer prison sentences for hate crime cases	44%
Face to face supervised mediation between the victim and offender	32%

Table 6 illustrates that the vast majority of participants within this study would like to see greater priority being given to designing and developing initiatives that educate young people about diversity and hate crime.

I think that education and awareness needs to start younger ... So much needs to be done in schools that isn't being done. But the whole integration and acceptance of others surely needs to come from young, so that it's natural.

I don't think anybody ever is born racist or sexist, or disablist or hostile, or anything. Everything is taught. How to be bad is taught. Therefore, surely to God we can teach people how to be good. I just think with a national curriculum that forces them to learn about English grammar and Henry VIII, it's missing the real stuff that will keep us safe and secure and optimistic and efficient in life, is kind of being left behind.

I feel that we need to take a bit more time out of the school curriculum - because you can't depend on families to educate people - you've got to put it in somewhere. And I think if education is the only way that we've got control of people for long enough to teach them these values, we're going to have to free up a bit more time in the education system to go back and teach kids real, real basics again.

I think it's more about having interaction with different faiths and undertaking different awareness and educational programmes, especially in schools. Of course, there is RE subject, but there has to be a special focus on respecting different faiths, so that a child going to school, from the first day, they have a positive message in their mind.

People don't know enough about other people's lives, cultures etc and they need educating.

Equally, a significant proportion of participants stated that they would like to see more hate crime cases going to court (65%). Concerns over how daunting and distressing the criminal justice process can be does not appear to affect a participants' willingness to pursue a conviction. In fact, when the survey sample is restricted to just those who have experienced a hate crime, the percentage of participants who would like to see more hate crime cases going to court increases to 71%.

Dealing swiftly with people who deliberately offend in this way is the best way to make victims feel better.

Harsher sentencing for those convicted.

I support any kind of harsher sentences for any hate crime committed as it potentially can spiral into all kinds of issues.

Data from the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) indicates that hate crime prosecutions are moving in this upward direction, with a record number of 15,442 having been successfully prosecuted in 2015/16 (CPS, 2016). However, it is widely acknowledged that difficulties surrounding interpretations of hostility and motive, and the stringent evidential proof required for prosecutions, results in hate crime cases being difficult to prosecute (Walters, Brown and Wiedlitzka, 2016). With the police referring just one in five hate crime cases to the CPS in 2015-2016 (Corcoran and Smith, 2016), it is important to consider how hate crime victims' expectations can be managed to ensure that if an incident does result in no further action it does not compound the harms that have already caused.

Approximately half of the participants within this study cited that diversity awareness courses and/or community 'payback' orders should form part of a suite of responses used with hate crime perpetrators. Currently, there is little understanding of what works in the context of rehabilitating hate offenders or knowledge of what these interventions would look like in practical terms (Walters, Brown and Wiedlitzka, 2016). That said, however, it is clear that current policy and legislative responses do not prevent hate crimes from happening and do not appear to meaningfully change a perpetrator's views or behaviours (*ibid*, 2016). Therefore, developing, implementing and evaluating one or both of these interventions – which have been identified by hate crime victims as being priority issues – will not only increase knowledge within this area but also has the potential to reduce the likelihood of perpetrators re-offending in the future.

Nearly a third (32%) of actual and potential hate crime victim's would like to see more opportunities for face to face supervised mediation between the victim and the offender. Restorative practices aim to facilitate an inclusive and meaningful dialogue between those who have been involved in or affected by a crime in order to heal the harm caused or to prevent it from happening again (Walters, 2014). Although restorative practices have become relatively mainstreamed within the criminal justice system, its use for hate crime cases continues to face resistance (Walters and Brown, 2016). The limited use of restorative justice for hate crime has meant that there is a paucity of data on its effectiveness for rehabilitating offenders, but research does indicate that it can empower victims by providing a platform for their voices to be heard (Walters, 2014; Walters and Hoyle, 2012).

I think the perpetrators should be involved in some kind of mediation with the victim, to let the perp know the effect that their hate has had on that victim. ... And I think it will make the perpetrator more aware of the impact that they have on people's lives. I think it should be either part of their sentencing or it should be where we could have some mediation between the victim ... even if it's not face to face mediation because I know face to face mediation can be quite daunting, but even just to write down the impact would be good.

As noted within this quotation, the key concern that participants expressed with regard to restorative justice was in relation to coming face to face with the perpetrator. However, face to face interaction

between the victim and the perpetrator is just one approach that falls within the range of available restorative practices. When participants were asked for their opinions on a restorative approach that involved the perpetrator and a 'champion' – someone who would belong to the same community or possess the same identity trait as the victim – the response was overwhelmingly positive. It was perceived that this form of restorative practice would re-address the power imbalance which can exist between the victim and the perpetrator whilst still providing an opportunity to convey the harm caused by the incident.

As found within the context of support services, this section has demonstrated that victims' preferences, needs and expectations differ greatly when it comes to responses to hate crime. The findings suggest that while many participants value the conventional criminal justice approach to dealing with hate crime, there is also a strong appetite for the implementation of educational and restorative interventions. This has implication for the framing of hate crime policy and delivery of services, as outlined within the following section.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The aim of this study was to assess actual and potential hate crime victims' experiences and expectations of support services in the West Midlands. Whilst this report has suggested that the uptake of support services is low, it has also highlighted that hate crime victimisation is prevalent, that prejudiced views and community tensions are commonplace, and that awareness of existing support provision is poor. The report has also outlined what actual and potential hate crime victims need and expect from support services, as well as how they would like hate crime to be tackled by criminal justice agencies and other relevant organisations.

The recommendations outlined below have been produced as a result of the evidence collected through this study, and therefore they embody the needs and expectations of actual and potential hate crime victims and practitioners. Some of these recommendations will be more applicable to policy-makers, while others for frontline practitioners. If implemented, these recommendations have the potential to improve existing support structures and organisational responses to hate crime, thereby enabling practitioners to support hate crime victims in a more meaningful and victim-centred way. This study and its findings have relevance beyond the West Midlands, and for this reason the recommendations should act as best practice guidance for enabling agencies regionally and nationally to overcome the barriers that victims face in accessing justice and support.

- **Seek to promote and evaluate hate crime-specific support services throughout the West Midlands**

This report demonstrated that there is no 'one-size fits all' approach to delivering support to hate crime victims. Participants and practitioners spoke about the invaluable support provided by a wide range of third-sector organisation or a voluntary-run groups within the West Midlands. 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 on the basis of a range of different individual and situational factors, including situational factors and individuals traits, including the type of hate crime experienced by the victim or how often they have been targeted; the availability, or otherwise, of existing support networks for the victim; their social and economic position within society; and the presence of physical or mental health issues.

If there are services available, these need to be publicised more widely as I was not aware that there were any support systems.

In order to ensure that support needs are being met it is essential that appropriate support provision is available within each borough, that actual and potential victims are made aware that these services exist and that the support offered is regularly monitored to assess its effectiveness. This will help to build support provision that is able to respond to the diverse and ever-changing needs of hate crime victims and their families.

- **Develop awareness-raising campaigns which promote support services more effectively**

This report has highlighted that there is much misunderstanding and confusion when it comes to hate crime. This study found that most participants lacked awareness of what services were available within the West Midlands, with 35% of hate crime victims stating that they had not accessed support because they did not know any existed. Similarly, the views expressed by those participants who felt uncomfortable with the notion of hate crime policy, illustrated that many people do not accurately understand how hate crime policy is implemented or how impactful hate crime can be for the victim, their families and wider communities. In order to address these issues, public sector agencies, community groups and voluntary organisations need to develop more effective awareness-raising campaigns.

They don't even advertise it. Why is it not on buses? The whole hate crime advertising only ever seems to be done in-house. Its organisations sending posters around to other organisations. Until you've got stuff plastered on big noticeboards, plastered on the sides of buses, nobody is ever going to understand what hate crime is.

In recent years public agencies have devoted a significant amount of time and effort to developing awareness-raising campaigns at a local and national level. However the findings from this study suggest that these initiatives are failing to reach people at a grassroots level, particularly those who belong to socially and economically disadvantaged communities. Awareness-raising campaigns need to involve representatives from a diverse range of communities in order to ensure that key messages resonate with specific groups, including those who are wary about the existence of hate crime policy. The key messages should be tailored to address the main barriers identified within this report, including improving awareness of what forms hate incidents and crimes take; how hate crime can affect victims and their families; what responses victims and witnesses can expect from the police and other relevant organisations; and why it is important to report. Community representatives will also be able to help in identifying appropriate community-based locations to disseminate and publicise awareness-raising material.

- **Ensure that all frontline practitioners are equipped with the knowledge and skills required to deliver victim-centred support**

This report has demonstrated not only that some 'frontline' practitioners have insufficient levels of knowledge of support services within the West Midlands, but also that actual and potential hate crimes victims would expect to access support from a trained member of staff and be treated empathetically by them. Unfortunately research findings suggest that too many victims are not being dealt with in a manner that is victim-centred, sensitive and compassionate (Hardy and Chakraborti, 2017).

As an employee of West Midlands Police and as a first contact for many victims I believe the training provided to myself and my colleagues is sub-standard or perhaps not existent in the area of recording hate crime/incidents. The training for officers might be better, however as for the people who answer the phone to members of the public and offer advice and record some crimes, this has to be improved. Having recorded some hate crimes myself I think sometimes the victim isn't always happy to admit that there is an element of hate in the crime. But once you ask the right questions the victims seem relieved that they weren't just paranoid!! My common sense and life has led me to ask the right questions, but a little more training wouldn't go amiss.

Receiving a dispassionate or dismissive response is likely to diminish a victim's confidence in public sector agencies as well as the chances of them coming forward to report in the future or access a support service. The most effective way to improve practitioners' understanding of hate crime and its impacts is through providing meaningful, evidence-based training. Moreover, organisations should be encouraged 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.

- **Treat victims with compassion and take all incidents seriously**

When participants were asked to consider what they would need from a hate crime support service being treated with kindness and compassion was one of the most commonly cited expectations. Frontline practitioners within the public- and third-sector are increasingly constrained by limited resources and time, and the level of resilience demonstrated by the practitioners who took part in this study and who are working within adverse conditions, was humbling. This might explain why hate crime victims commonly observed that they are met with a rushed or dismissive response.

My view is that you don't forget when somebody real takes a real interest in real time. Anything less is drifting towards transactional.

As highlighted within this report, incidents which may appear 'trivial' to an outsider can form part of a much broader picture of hostility and harassment that is being experienced by a victim. Therefore, it is vital that when frontline practitioners come into contact with a hate crime victim or witness, they find the time to listen, they take the incident seriously and they respond to the victim with kindness.

- **Communicate investigative processes and case updates in a more accessible way**

This study has highlighted that many hate crime victims lack awareness of what hate crimes are and where they can access support. This lack of knowledge also extends to the procedures and practices that are involved when the police or another relevant organisation are investigating a hate crime. It is widely recognised that hate crime cases can be particularly challenging and complex to deal with, which can result in investigations being drawn out and many cases concluding in no further action.

I called the police ... then there was a lull for a while, so I thought, well, it's been three weeks, I'll give them a call again... we don't know whether it's being prosecuted as a hate crime and we don't know how to make sure it is ...I didn't expect them to come back at all unless we chased it up.

These processes and the investigation outcomes can be particularly difficult for victims to understand, especially if they have not been kept up to date with case developments. Although the outcome cannot be changed, the way in which a victim feels about it and the service that they have received is often based upon their interactions with frontline officers or practitioners. Therefore, practitioners should be encouraged to consider what steps they could take to ensure that the investigation process is explained in an accessible way and that case updates are communicated in a more meaningful way.

- **Facilitate a more meaningful and victim-centred referral process**

Nearly half of the participants within this study stated that if they were to experience a hate crime they would like to be able to access emotional support either face to face or via the telephone. This might not be a provision that can or should be delivered by public-sector agencies but rather by a specialist hate crime or identity-based organisation. However, this study has found that very low numbers of actual and potential hate crime victims are aware of the support services available within the West Midlands. Therefore, frontline practitioners within public-sector agencies play a pivotal role in facilitating access to these services.

We're trying to create an approach which means that nobody has to repeat everything all the time. We do a lot of joint work or home visits jointly, just so people don't feel like they've been abandoned and that they trust who they're talking to ... If somebody doesn't want us to make that contact for them or they're capable of doing it themselves, then we'll give them the information, or we will make that contact for them. And we follow referrals up as well. We make sure that processes have been followed and that they've been contacted.

It is not only essential that these professionals have awareness of what support services are available within their local area, but also that they play a more prominent role in encouraging victims and witnesses to utilise those services. This could be achieved in a number of ways, including providing the potential service user with a specific name and the contact details of a practitioner within that organisation; asking the organisation offering the support to contact the victim directly; or arranging and attending the first meeting with the victim. Each of these practices would contribute to the victim feeling like their incident is being taken seriously, and would increase the likelihood of the victim making use of a support service.

- **Ensure that frontline practitioners have the time and resource to take part in community engagement**

One of the service areas hardest hit by government austerity measures has been community engagement, and many frontline practitioners working within police forces, local authorities and other relevant partner organisations have less time and fewer resources to meaningfully engage with local communities and diverse groups.

More needs to be done to pro-actively ask if people have suffered hate – too much emphasis is on the victim to take action or report.

Community engagement is beneficial both to members of the public and to public sector agencies because it helps to improve practitioners' knowledge of different communities and understanding of local tensions; it provides opportunities for community members to have their views and experiences heard; and it leads to the development of policy and practice that is grounded in real-life experiences. Engagement between public sector agencies and those communities who are vulnerable to hate crime is key to increasing awareness of hate crime and of the support services that exist, as well as increasing familiarity, confidence and trust in the organisations that deliver this support. Given the numerous benefits that come from community engagement it is imperative that practitioners working within the police, local authorities, and health and social care organisations be afforded the time and resource required to facilitate effective dialogue with members of different and diverse communities.

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APPENDIX

Tables 1-5 provide a breakdown of how the actual and potential hate crime who took part in either the survey and/or an interview defined themselves. Those participants who identified as a practitioner and those who shared their views through Facebook were not asked to provide their demographic characteristics.

Table 1: Gender of participants

Gender	Percentage of participants
Male	64%
Female	36%

64% (n=239) of those taking part in the study were women, and 36% (134) were men. 7 participants described themselves as transgender.

Table 2: Age of participants

Age	Percentage of participants
16-17 years old	3%
18-24 years old	13%
25-34 years old	17%
35-44 years old	24%
45-54 years old	25%
55-64 years old	10%
65-74 years old	7%
75 years or older	1%
Prefer not to say	0.2%

25% (92) of participants were aged 45-54. The next largest age group was 35-44 which made up 24% (90) of the sample, followed by 17% (65) who were 25-34. 13% (48) of the sample were 18-24, 10% (36) were 55-64 (36), 7% (25) were 65-74, and 3% (11) were 16-17 years old.

Table 3: Ethnicity of participants

Ethnicity	Percentage of participants
White/White British (including White English, White European, White Irish and any other White background)	79% (295)
Asian/Asian British (including Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese and any other Asian background)	10% (36)
Black/Black British (including Black African, Black Caribbean and any other Black background)	2% (9)

64% (240) of participants described their ethnicity as White British, followed by 9% (33) who identified with 'White European'. 4% (15) of the sample described themselves as 'Indian' and 3% (13) identified as 'Asian British'. Smaller numbers identified as 'White Irish' (7), 'Black British' (8), 'Pakistani' (6), 'Middle Eastern' (7) and 'Other' (11).

Mixed Ethnic Heritage (including White and Black African, White and Black Caribbean, White and Asian and any other mixed background)	2% (8)
Gypsy or Traveller (including English/Scottish/Welsh Gypsy, European Roma, Irish Traveller and any other Gypsy/Traveller background)	0.2% (1)

Table 4: Denomination of participants who specified a faith or religious identity

Faith or religious identity	Percentage of participants
Buddhist	2%
Christian	61%
Hindu	3%
Jewish	2%
Muslim	20%
Sikh	2%
Other	7%

33% (122) of the total sample can be described as having a particular faith or religious affiliation. Of this cohort, 61% (75) identified as Christian and 20% (25) as Muslim. Smaller percentages of participants identified as Hindu (4), Jewish (3), Sikh (3) or 'Other' (9).

Table 5: Sexual orientation of participants

Sexual orientation	Percentage of participants
Asexual	1%
Bisexual	3%
Gay	3%
Heterosexual	79%
Lesbian	3%
Pansexual	1%
Undecided	1%
Other	1%
Prefer not to say	4%

79% (294) of participants described themselves as heterosexual. 3% (13) identified as being bisexual or lesbian, and a similar percentage as gay (11). Smaller proportions identified as asexual (2), pansexual (4) and undecided (4).

Finally, 11% (40) of participants described themselves as having some form of disability.