

UPDATE ON EMBRACING DIVERSITY: A MULTI-AGENCY HATE CRIME STRATEGY FOR THE CITY OF YORK

Embracing Diversity: A multi-agency hate crime strategy for the City of York was approved by the Safer York Partnership (SYP) Board in April 2013. Until August 2014, delivery of the strategy was overseen by a Hate Crime/Prevent Co-ordinator working within the Community Safety Team. However, following a restructure earlier in the year, it was agreed that the delivery of strategy and ownership of the hate crime agenda would sit within the newly established multi-agency Anti-social Behaviour Hub.

The overarching strategic aim of the strategy is to stop hate crime occurring through a programme of hate crime prevention and where it does occur, to respond in a timely way that addresses its impact on victims and the wider community. Within that remit, the following objectives were included in the strategy.

Raise Awareness of hate crimes to aid prevention

When the strategy was launched, extensive work was undertaken with the voluntary sector support services and local media to raise awareness of hate crime. This has been undertaken in conjunction with North Yorkshire Police, North Yorkshire County Council and the seven districts within North Yorkshire to ensure a consistent approach is taken within the sub-region. Work has been undertaken with key agencies to develop multi-agency awareness training and this has now been delivered.

The decision was taken not to develop a multi-agency strategic delivery group as the needs of specific groups in relation to hate crime can be very specific. Instead, work has been undertaken to develop strong links with the relevant voluntary sector support agencies and to work through the overarching anti-social behaviour structure to bring together both statutory and voluntary sector understanding.

Operational links have been established between the anti-bullying steering group and the ASB Hub.

An extensive re-vamp of the Safer York Partnership website is about to be undertaken which will significantly improve the way members of the community can access support and get information on hate crime and how to report it.

Posters and leaflets have been widely disseminated across the city, explaining how to report hate crime. An audit of voluntary groups was developed as part of the consultation process which led to the development of the strategy and contacts with these groups established.

A hate crime pack containing posters, leaflets and reporting forms was agreed with North Yorkshire County Council and North Yorkshire Police and has been widely disseminated.

Make it easier for people to report hate crime

Communities of interest have been consulted to ensure that processes are acceptable and this has been signed off by the EAG. Part of this process included mapping and publishing a simple flowchart that detailed how to report hate crime and how it would be dealt with.

Media work is ongoing with periodic campaigns to raise awareness on hate crime reporting. This will form part of the communication strategy for Safer York Partnership and will be refreshed when the new website goes live. Work has been undertaken with the statutory and voluntary sector to develop hate crime reporting processes as part of the development of the hate crime packs. Awareness and training has been undertaken with a wide range of organisations.

A network of 13 reporting centres has been established. However, it is very rare that reports are received from these centres with the majority of incidents being reported directly to the police or the local authority.

Improve the support available to victims of hate crime

Work has been undertaken with voluntary sector support services to ensure that there is wide understanding of the support that is available to victims. Hate crime has featured as a priority within North Yorkshire Police with regular information provided on the force intranet about how to deal with reports of hate crime. Hate crime is included within the remit of the anti-social behaviour hub and forms part of the risk assessment process where repeat and/or particularly vulnerable victims can be identified, discussed on a daily basis and action plans put into place. The Hub also runs the multi-agency problem solving (MAPS) process which includes the ability to convene a hate crime panel should the need arise.

Links have been established with the relevant support groups to ensure that information on their services can be made available to victims of hate crime through the ASB Hub.

Work has been undertaken as part of the establishment of the ASB Hub to embed hate crime within its victim centred approach.

Improve data capture and develop a more accurate reflection of the extent and breakdown of hate crimes and incidents

Data capture on hate crime is still poor and it is estimated that it is still very much under reported. Whilst support agencies can give anecdotal evidence of incidents occurring, there are very few formal reports received. The level of hate crime in 2013-14 was 98 crimes. This was three more incidents (3% change) than the previous year. The pattern has followed a similar trend to previous years with the majority of incidents being of a racial nature and with small clusters of incidents centred on taxi services and late night refreshment establishments.

Breakdown of hate crime by ward and type has now been included in reports to the Safer York Partnership Board. Whilst it is possible to map this data, the level of incidents and spread across the city (with the exception of late night economy related incidents in the city centre) does add value to the availability of raw data.

As part of the development of the ASB Hub, work has been undertaken with North Yorkshire Police to ensure that repeat/vulnerable victims of hate crime are included in wider work to identify vulnerable victims of ASB. Hate crime has not been the subject of a dedicated thematic forum to date but has featured in workshop discussion on ASB more generally at the annual Crime Summit.

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