

Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee

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Safer Wales Anti-Hate Crime Project Executive Summary The Environment in Wales

“The British Crime Survey 2009/10 indicates that 19% of disabled adults were crime victims in Wales and England last year. This amounts to around 100,000 people in Wales. Of course, not all crime experienced by disabled people is related to their disability. Equally, however, much disability-related harassment does not involve criminal behaviour. So the numbers experiencing harassment may be much higher.”¹ Young people are also victims of disability related harassment. Safer Wales have recently been advised of an 11 year old boy with learning difficulties being shut in a telephone box which was then set on fire.

We do not know the true extent of disability related harassment in Wales and work needs to be done to increase reporting and improve our understanding.

Recommendations

Safer Wales feel it is important that the Welsh Government take steps in respect of the following initiatives which link in with the EHRC’s own recommendations:

1. Reporting Centres – increase the number of inclusive reporting centres enabling all forms of hate crime and harassment to be reported
2. MARACs – develop all Wales strategic group to embed Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences processes for high risk cases
3. Deliver training with frontline staff (housing officers; social services and benefits officers; adult and child protection officers; medical practitioners; transport staff) to raise awareness of hate crime and identification and support of vulnerable victims
4. Develop and deliver impactful media campaign across all public transport operators across Wales including the introduction of a text reporting service.

¹ Hidden in plain sight – An Equality and Human Rights Commission Inquiry into disability-related harassment. Wales summary, September 2011.

Background to Anti-Hate Crime Project at Safer Wales

The Safer Wales Anti-Hate Crime project tackles the issue of under-reporting of all forms of hate incidents and crimes but also works to counter the causes of this type of behaviour.

The project has developed out of our experience in tackling homophobic and transphobic hate crime (through the Cardiff-Wales LGBT Mardi Gras) and in 2008 our remit was expanded to cover all strands of hate crime.

Research shows that only one in four cases of racially or homophobically motivated attacks are reported to the police² but in the case of disability related attacks under-reporting is far greater with only one in ten cases being reported³.

We launched “Report Hate – Safer Wales” in July 2009 working in partnership with all four Welsh police forces, British Transport Police and with support from the Welsh Government. The scheme acknowledges the reasons why people are reluctant to report direct to the police and enables victims, witnesses or third parties to report all forms of hate attacks either online through www.saferwales.com or by completing a freepost leaflet available across Wales. Full details of incidents reported are passed to the police only with the consent of the person making the report however brief details, to enable intelligence led policing operations, are passed to the police on a regular basis.

What works?

With support from all Welsh Police forces we employed a variety of distribution points (eg doctors; dentists; community settings; places of worship) for freepost leaflets and posters promoting the web address. This, together with our marketing campaign, resulted in reports received in the first quarter for all Welsh Police forces. We also received cases covering all recognised strands of hate within the first six months and with the scheme allowing the reporter to identify more than one motivating factor we have regularly received cases indicating these multiple motivators. Notably 62% of multiple cause cases include disability as one of the motivators.

Improvements made 2011

Although the scheme has continued to generate incidents across all strands and with multiple causes, we were concerned at the low level of reported cases indicating disability as a motivator. Working with disabled people and various

² Cardiff Race Equality First “Race Hate Crime In Cardiff 2009” and Stonewall’s “Homophobic Hate Crime – The Gay British Crime Survey 2008”;

³ Scope – Getting Away With Murder

groups representing them, we reviewed and simplified the standard reporting leaflet to:

- Clearly separate English and Welsh text
- Amend language used to be more publicly accessible
- Increase font size to standard size 14 Arial font
- Amended colour scheme to reinforce separation between Safer Wales and the police

Working with Learning Disability Wales we have produced an Easy Read English version of the leaflet (Easy Read Welsh version is currently under development). The leaflet has also been translated into 16 additional community languages.

Amendments have also been made to the Safer Wales website to include Browse Aloud software; increased font sizing and alternative font and background colouring. A BSL video explaining what hate crime is and developed by Gwent Police will shortly be added to the website.

Initial data since the enhancements to our scheme has shown a dramatic increase in the number of cases identifying disability as a motivating factor.

Partnership working

Disability Hate Crime Action Group, Cymru - working in partnership with Disability Wales we have set up the Disability Hate Crime Action Group, Cymru referred to in the EHRC's Wales summary of the report. Membership of the group now includes Disability Wales; Learning Disability Wales; Scope Cymru; Mencap Cymru; Mind Cymru; Deafblind Cymru; RNIB Cymru; South Wales Police (representing all Welsh Police forces); Equality and Human Rights Commission; and Crown Prosecution Service. The group focuses on raising awareness amongst the disabled people of Wales and improving reporting systems and police response. The group will also be adopting the Disability Wales, The Police Services of Wales and Disabled Peoples Organisations Disability Consultation and Involvement Forums Action Plan and monitoring/contributing to its implementation.

Reporting Centres - Mencap Cymru; LGBT Excellence Centre and LGBT Anglesey have become formal reporting centres for Report Hate – Safer Wales. Citizens Advice Cymru will also display our leaflets and posters in all their outlets across Wales. We will also be expanding this work in North Wales to increase the number of reporting centres promoting and using the scheme.

As highlighted in the EHRC report, under-reporting of disability related harassment needs to be addressed. We consider it key to increasing the number of hate crimes reported we need to expand the number of outlets where people may access reporting mechanisms.

In raising awareness of the issues and beginning preventative work, we feel that schools should become reporting centres enabling young people to report incidents they have experienced or witnessed in or out of their schools.

Multi Agency working - Through our alliance with Mencap Cymru we are currently working in partnership with them and South Wales Police in relation to one case involving a victim who has Aspergers syndrome.

We are also working with one client who has a mental health condition and is a victim of homophobia and have referred him to Valleys Regional Equality Council (VALREC) who are working with South Wales Police and his social worker to evaluate his needs.

Domestic Abuse parallels with Hate Crime

Safer Wales has been at the forefront of domestic abuse cases in the UK for many years. The Safer Wales - Women's Safety Unit piloted the use of the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) for high risk cases of domestic abuse and has developed referral mechanisms from other bodies to the MARAC. This has included our work with health professionals including midwives and in particular A & E nurses where we fully trained one nurse then worked with her to design a risk assessment tool to enable all nurses to easily identify high risk cases of domestic abuse. We feel working again with health professionals to enable them to identify high risk cases of disability related harassment and other forms of hate crime is key to building a reliable network within Wales on hate crime reporting.

Our work with social workers under the Flying Start initiative has also enabled identification of high risk cases of domestic abuse and again we would wish to extend this work to enable social workers to identify high risk cases of disability harassment.

“Low level” reporting

With our experience in domestic abuse but also our work on hate crime we recognise that victims will endure several incidents of verbal abuse before considering reporting to the police or other parties. For many victims, witnesses and agencies this may be because they do not consider what has happened is important enough to bother the police or they may doubt whether what has happened is actually a crime. Many of the recent high profile cases including the Pilkington case, reflect that this “low level” abuse does have an impact on victims and often leads to more serious cases as we have seen in case review as a member of the CPS hate crime scrutiny panel.

Anti-Hate Crime training

Hate Crime or harassment can start at an early age and our own data from Report Hate – Safer Wales indicates that 64% of incidents (which indicated an age of the perpetrator) were perpetrated by someone under 18. We recommend that work is undertaken in all our schools in Wales to raise awareness of hate crime and prevent today's bullies from becoming hate crime perpetrators in the future.

We have developed and delivered hate crime awareness sessions covering all currently recognised strands of hate in the last year. The sessions which are case study led, raise awareness and discuss the barriers to reporting hate crime. We have delivered the session 37 times to a total of 596 people of which 20 sessions were delivered in schools to a total of 433 pupils aged 13-15 and their evaluation evidenced that:

- 87% of pupils felt that their understanding of what hate crime was, had improved
- 80% felt their understanding of the barriers to reporting hate crime had improved by attending the sessions.
- 82% found the session overall to be useful

Two hate crime school assemblies were also delivered in one Cardiff school raising awareness and encouraging reporting with approximately 400 pupils aged from 11 to 16.

Hate Crime awareness raising sessions have also been carried out with Cardiff Young People First; Headway and Riverside Youth Centre however evaluations not taken here due to informal nature of sessions.

Transport Issues

The EHRC's report clearly identifies issues in respect of disabled people's experience using public transport across Wales. We have also had similar feedback when working with disabled people. We recommend that the Welsh Government requires all train and bus network operators to carry out training with their staff to increase their understanding of what constitutes hate crime. This training should also enable them to report incidents that they have seen in their daily operations.

We also recognise that currently there is not a mechanism to report hate attacks by text service direct to the police or through agencies. We feel that many people may witness disability related harassment, or other forms of hate crime, as a passenger on a train or bus but be too frightened to call police thereby bringing attention to themselves. We feel the introduction of a textline enabling reporting of hate crimes would increase the number of reports in these circumstances.

We would also recommend that a poster campaign highlighting what is unacceptable behaviour, together with details of how to report hate incidents (including a text service), is implemented on all transport operators and at bus and train terminus.

Recommendations:

1. Reporting Centres – increase the number of inclusive reporting centres enabling all forms of hate crime and harassment to be reported
2. MARACs – develop all Wales strategic group to embed Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences processes for high risk cases, to include development of risk assessment tool for agency use.

Suggested membership of strategic group – police; housing; education; benefits/social services; safeguarding agencies; third sector organisations working with disabled people

3. Deliver training with frontline staff (housing officers; social services and benefits officers; adult and child protection officers; medical practitioners; transport staff) to raise awareness of hate crime and identification and support of vulnerable victims
4. Develop and deliver impactful media campaign across all public transport operators across Wales including the introduction of a text reporting service.

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