Written evidence submitted by Bradford Hate Crime Alliance (BHCA)

- The effectiveness of current legislation and law enforcement policies for preventing and prosecuting hate crime and its associated violence.

We consider the Law and due process to be adequate to challenge perpetrators of hate crime. However, there are gaps in frontline knowledge. If addressed, it would improve early investigation and detection of hate crimes, leading to increased charge & convictions. Police officers and other relevant workers need an in-depth understanding of aggravated and motivated factors in hate incidents when applying legislation. An informed police officer or community advocate may help to reclassify hate incidents as hate crimes. We know from the Crown Prosecution Service that charge and conviction is very dependent on a thorough detailed investigation.

Hate in itself is not a crime in British Law. It becomes a crime when an individual breaks the law that is aggravated or motivated by hate. Eg – if I kick a neighbour’s fence deliberately I will be arrested for criminal damage. If I kick the fence and it’s accompanied by “go back to her country you dirty paki” the criminal damage is criminal damage but aggravated or motivated by hate. Making it a criminal damage offence motivated by hate. WE NEED TO EXPLAIN THIS TO COMMUNITY AND FRONTLINE OFFICERS AS PART OF TRAINING AND AWARENESS.

- The Public Order Act section 4, 5 and section 18 should be applied as the above scenario. The PO Act states
  a) a person uses towards another person threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour, or
  b) distributes or displays to another person any writing, sign or other visible representation which is threatening, abusive or insulting

Section 4,5 and 18 can be aggravated or motivated by hate and therefore arrests must be made under these sections if there is evidence that there is a hate motivation factor.

Concluding that Public Order offences can be aggravated or motivated by hate.

WE NEED TO EXPLAIN THIS TO COMMUNITY AND FRONTLINE OFFICERS.

- The barriers that prevent individuals from reporting hate crime, and measures to improve reporting rates.

The barriers to reporting hate and improving reporting is simply a question of resources. To increase awareness and reporting requires reasonable resources that allows the Voluntary Sector to fulfill its public duty and thereby its contractual obligations. If we are unable to apply a full cost recovery, how do you expect organisations to fully meet its duty to the public? Full cost recovery is calculated with thoughtful value for money and cost efficiency considerations. For all those
considerations to be brushed aside and replaced with an arbitrary cost cutting figure by local authorities is discriminatory, ineffective and damaging in the long term. The Voluntary Sector is hemorrhaging long standing experienced staff leaving the sector due to arbitrary measures deployed by Councils. We strongly recommend an invest to save strategy.

• The role of social media companies and other online platforms in helping to identify online sources of hate crime and to prevent online hate incidents from escalating.

As partners we have not prepared and rolled out a preventative plan targeting social media users on consequences of illicit use of social media. In our experience very little is understood about does and don’ts (especially amongst young people).

We have very little prepared strategies and action plans that address grossly offensive communication under the Communications Act 2003 and Malicious Communications Act 1988.

WE RECOMMEND A CLEAR EDUCATIONAL STRATEGY TO HELP SOCIAL MEDIA USERS TO BE AWARE OF AND DECREASE COMMUNICATION THAT RISKS ARREST. IGNORANCE CAN BE ADDRESSED THROUGH EDUCATION, BUT FOR THOSE DELIBRATLY PEDDLING A VILE MESSAGE ON SOCIAL MEDIA MUST BE CHALLENGED USING LEGISLATION.

• The role of the voluntary sector, community representatives, and other frontline organisations in challenging attitudes that underpin hate crime.

• British politicians’ “anti-immigrant” rhetoric during the EU referendum campaign caused a significant spike in recorded hate crimes, according to the United Nations.
• The UN’s Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination said prominent political figures created prejudice during the campaign and failed to condemn racist abuse.
• The unchecked In/Out campaign political rhetoric has increased tension, anxiety, fear and intimidation. We consider the blatant anti-immigration political rhetoric built up by all parties has caused significant lasting damage to communities. Damage that may take years to repair. All said and done there has been no accountability of Local Councillors or Members of Parliament for their actions.
• The political rhetoric has unnecessarily put local relationships at risk. Unnecessarily impacted negatively of Voluntary Sector staff who have worked for decades to improve relationships in cities like Bradford. Political self-interest and collective unacceptable behaviour has caused significant distress to many communities and those who work to keep our communities safe.
• There is clearly in issue of underfunding the Voluntary Sector to support communities. Often Voluntary Sector staff are working in their own time to support victims of hate crime and arrange information sessions with limited resources. In Bradford we have managed to write a hate crime strategy for the first time in the Council’s history. This has provided structure under which there is a collective
undertaking to work in a partnership to agreed action plans that are auditable for clear outcomes.

- There is a general view that politicians cannot ignite community tension and claim that they are not to blame.

OUR SUGGESTION IS THAT EVERY COUNCILLOR AND EVERY MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOREGOES 10% OF THEIR ALLOWANCES AND CREATE A “LIBOR” TYPE OF FUND FOR VOLUNTARY SECTOR TO USE TO WORK AND REPAIR THE DAMAGE CAUSED BY POLITICIANS.

- Statistical trends in hate crime and how the recording, measurement and analysis of hate crime can be improved.

We consider the statistical analysis presented by West Yorkshire Police and Bradford Council to be proficient to develop strategies and action plans to challenge hatred in the district. What could be useful is a regular measure of community sentiments that enable partnerships to adjust, amend or add to our plans for tackling hate in the district. This year BHCA has completed a survey about sentiments of Islam from a Muslim and non-Muslim prospective. Surveying the five strands will enable communities to be participative, inclusive and involved in shaping strategies to meet their needs.

- The type, extent and effectiveness of the support that is available to victims and their families and how it might be improved.

WE ASK YOU TO REFER TO THE ROLE OF THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR ANSWER ABOVE.

Communication details

Jed Din
BHCA Director.