Introduction

1. Stonewall warmly welcomes this opportunity to respond to the Home Affairs Committee’s inquiry into hate crime and its violent consequences. This inquiry is particularly welcome given the surge in reported hate crimes in recent months.

2. Stonewall is a national charity which campaigns for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) equality in Britain and abroad. Stonewall works with police forces, the Crown Prosecution Service and other criminal justice agencies across Britain to make sure the appropriate support is available to LGBT victims of hate crime.

3. Stonewall is concerned that LGBT people continue to face increasing levels of hate incidents and hate crimes yearly because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Statistics from the Home Office show that hate crimes based on sexual orientation and gender identity increased - between 2013/14 to 2014/15 - by 22 (4,584 to 5,597) and 9 per cent (557 to 605) respectively. Available statistics are likely to underestimate the severity of the issue as many LGBT people continue to face barriers that prevent them from reporting.

4. Stonewall welcomed the UK Government’s commitment to tackling hate crime in the recent Action Against Hate plan. We await to see how the commitments are implemented and look forward to working with the Government to ensure that they are inclusive of LGBT people.

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

5. There is currently a different legislative approach to different types of hate crimes, from recording to sentencing. Stonewall is concerned at the varying levels of protection and approaches for victims depending on the perceived basis of the hate crime and believes that this must be streamlined. Stonewall would like to see aggravated offences extended to include sexual orientation and gender identity as this would improve confidence in reporting and send a clear signal that LGBT hate crimes are taken as seriously as others. Additionally, we support a review of existing enhanced sentencing procedures, to determine if they are being used effectively in tackling hate crimes based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

6. Stonewall is also conscious that existing legal protections are still often poorly understood by the public and at times, police forces. There is a clear need for continued efforts to raise public awareness through regularly updated, plain English
guidance that is clearly signposted across the criminal justice system - for example, the CPS’ guidance on prosecuting cases of homophobic and transphobic hate crime. Furthermore, police forces across Britain should receive clear guidance reinforced by regular training that outlines when abuse is considered a hate crime and how cases can be accurately monitored, recorded and dealt with accordingly. The College of Policing’s Hate Crime Operational Guidance outlines the responsibility of police officers responding to hate crimes – these should be easily accessible and reinforced through targeted training for officers to help them handle LGBT hate crimes more appropriately.

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

7. LGBT people can face significant barriers that prevent them from reporting hate crimes, including concerns that they may be subject to discrimination because they are LGBT, or a lack of general awareness on how to report. YouGov polling of over 2,500 lesbian, gay and bisexual people across Britain for Stonewall’s Homophobic Hate Crime: The Gay British Crime Survey (2013) found that two thirds of LGB people who had experienced a hate crime or incident did not report it to anyone. Two in five victims did not report because they thought it would not be taken seriously.

8. Homophobic Hate Crime: The Gay British Crime Survey (2013) found that more than three quarters of LGB hate crime victims do not report it due to a lack of confidence that their case would not be dealt with appropriately by the police. Stonewall recommends that police forces across Britain introduce mandatory training, supported by the Hate Crime Operational Guidance, which ensures that officers are equipped to identify, monitor and deal appropriately LGBT hate crime effectively. To further support training, we would like to see the College of Policing develop and promote national training standards, and best practice, which is inclusive of LGBT hate crime.

9. Police forces should continue to develop work alongside third party LGBT reporting centres and community groups such as Galop to fully understand what helps victims of hate crime to report and also in supporting them to identify particular trends within their area. The longer term vision must be to improve confidence so that they report directly to the police – it is vital therefore that police forces use this information to ensure officers and frontline staff are trained to effectively tackle LGBT hate crime.

10. Stonewall has a range of hate crime resources and runs a Diversity Champions programme to support employers on creating inclusive and accepting environments for LGBT people including through training, and on embedding LGBT equality throughout their work. We work with police forces across the country and have seen first-hand how creating inclusive environments and encouraging the visibility of LGBT staff and members from within the communities they serve – including through
LGBT networks and associations – can improve service delivery for LGBT victims of hate crime.

11. For example, Sussex Police have created advisory groups which comprise membership from the LGBT community in Sussex and have since consulted them on issues related to hate crimes on social media. Additionally, Lancashire Police have also increased their focus on engagement with LGBT staff and communities and have recruited allies from across all sectors of the force to work closely with the LGBT Staff Network to ensure work towards inclusion is rolled out across the whole workforce.

12. Stonewall is aware that many LGBT people also choose not to report a hate crime as they believe there is little chance of conviction. We therefore support the CPS’ commitment to develop a hate crime communications strategy to improve publicity about successful convictions across all strands of hate crime as outlined in paragraph 93 of the Action Against Hate plan. We would urge that the CPS work closely with LGBT groups and specific press groups – including the LGBT press – to ensure the promotion of successful convictions is done sensitively, in a targeted way and is as far reaching as possible.

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

13. Stonewall is concerned that cases of hate crime and abuse are increasing in occurrence on social media and other online platforms. Homophobic Hate Crime: The Gay British Crime Survey (2013) found that one in twenty LGB people had experienced homophobic and biphobic abuse online. Nearly half of LGB people had also encountered homophobic and biphobic abuse aimed at someone else.

14. Social media companies and other online platforms have a key role to play in ensuring everyone can use their services safely and without fear of falling victim to an online hate incident or crime. Stonewall is concerned that there remains a lack of transparency around the frequency of cases that affect specific groups and that this means the severity of the issue is not fully known. These platforms should begin to track and record more frequently incidences of online hate crime so that the scale of the problem can be gauged, and the appropriate measures implemented.

15. Furthermore, social media platforms must also ensure they put in place clear and simple-to-use reporting tools which allow users to block online hate incidents before they escalate further. Social media companies should work with affected groups to ensure that reporting tools are effective and appropriate to the relevant group. For
example, in partnership with Facebook, Stonewall produced *End bullying be kind online* – a plain English guide specific to stopping LGBT abuse online.

16. Lastly, Stonewall welcomes commitments to tackling online abuse in the *Action against Hate* plan. We urge that targeted social media advertising for young people about online safety – as outlined in paragraph 72 - is inclusive of all groups, including LGBT young people.

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

17. The voluntary sector continues to play a vital role in supporting victims of LGBT hate crime from reporting to support following the incident. The best responses to hate crime are where police forces have developed strong relationships with community groups.

18. Stonewall works with workplaces, schools and individuals in a range of innovative ways to show support with the LGBT community and challenge attitudes that underpin hate crime.

19. This includes a well-established Diversity Champions programme, through which we support 750 employers, including police forces, across the private and public sectors. By creating inclusive work environments, empowering LGBT staff and, vitally, sharing best-practice, employers are equipped to play a key role in challenging the attitudes that underpin LGBT hate crime. Significantly, the Diversity Champions gives police forces the opportunity to network and to share and develop best practice (including cascade training models) as well as innovative ways to signal a clear commitment to tackling LGBT hate crime to the wider community, by for example senior figures championing Stonewall’s *No Bystanders* campaign publicly or attending Pride.

20. Additionally, Stonewall has supported thousands of teachers through our School Champions programme to tackle homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying in schools, and to create more inclusive environments through a range of best practice education resources and teacher training programmes. This ensures that schools can tackle stereotypes and attitudes that underpin LGBT hate crime.

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

21. Stonewall welcomes the Home Office’s public efforts to collate and analyse statistics on hate crimes and racist incidents which are recorded by the police. However, we
know that these figures are likely to not be a true representation and that the real amount of cases is higher. Stonewall recommends that police forces work in partnership with LGBT third party reporting groups to establish what encourages victims to report a hate crime, how best they should monitor emerging cases and also, how to identify trends in hate crime and implement solutions specific in the forces area.

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

22. Effective support is vital to help those affected by LGBT hate crime - however this is often lacking. *Homophobic hate crime: The Gay British Survey* (2013) found that just one in nine of those reporting a hate crime or incident to the police had contact with a police LGBT liaison officer, and just one in four who reported were referred to a specialist group or agency. Police forces should regularly review what support services are available in their area, and should ensure that the training of officers and frontline staff makes specific reference to the *Hate Crime Operational Guidance*’s specific chapter on providing support to victims and witnesses.

23. Stonewall welcomes the CPS’ commitment to will provide increased support to victims of hate crime by improving the use of Victim Personal Statements, as outlined in paragraph 107 of the *Action Against Hate plan*. We also warmly welcome the support that will be offered to communities through their commitment to produce guidance on community impact statements. Stonewall would like to see this guidance produced in partnership with victims of hate crime across all strands - including LGBT.

For further information, please contact:

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