**WHAT IS THE CENTRE FOR HATE STUDIES?**

The Centre for Hate Studies – based in the Department of Criminology at the University of Leicester – offers a wide range of research and professional development services which inform and improve organisational responses to hate crime. The services offered by the Centre are coordinated by Professor Neil Chakraborti and Dr Stevie-Jade Hardy and are based on more than ten years’ worth of pioneering research within the field of hate studies.

**WHAT IS OUR EVIDENCE BASED ON?**

This written evidence draws on the findings from three of our groundbreaking studies:

**Study 1: Identifying the nature and impact of hate crime (Funder: the Economic and Social Research Council)**

The Leicester Hate Crime Project – Britain’s biggest ever study of hate crime victimisation – uncovered new insights into the nature and forms of hate crime and their impact upon victims, families and wider communities (see Chakraborti, Garland and Hardy, 2014). It was designed to capture hate offences suffered not just by the officially monitored sets of victims but by all of those other groups and communities whose experiences can often be overlooked by academics, policy-makers and practitioners. Over the course of this two year study we heard from a total of 1,421 victims who had experienced hate because of range of factors associated with their identity or ‘difference’, including their age; their asylum seeker or refugee status; their ‘different’ modes of dress, appearance or lifestyle; their learning disability and/or physical disability; their mental ill-health; their race; their religion; their sexual orientation; and their transgender identity.

**Study 2: Identifying the barriers and solutions to hate crime under-reporting (Funder: the Equality and Human Rights Commission)**

In 2015 we conducted a tailored piece of research designed to develop a more nuanced understanding of the barriers preventing lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGB&T) people from reporting and to identify practical solutions to overcome these issues. The data collected from 50 in-depth semi-structured interviews was used to produce best practice guidance for agencies locally and nationally (see Chakraborti and Hardy, 2015).

**Study 3: Identifying how best to support hate crime victims (Funder: the Office for the Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire)**

In 2016 we conducted a major new piece of work to assess the specialist support needs of hate crime victims. More than 1,600 actual and potential hate crime victims shared their experiences and expectations of support services through a survey and/or an interview. This research generated much needed knowledge on the emotional, physical and health support needs of hate crime victims, and on how statutory and voluntary sector service providers can meet this demand (see Hardy and Chakraborti, 2016).
What are the barriers and solutions to hate crime reporting?

In 2014-15 the Police Service recorded 52,528 hate crimes (Corcoran, Lader and Smith, 2015). However, it is widely acknowledged that police-recorded figures offer only a partial estimate of the actual number of hate crimes taking place 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, 2015). The issue of under-reporting has been further highlighted through research which illustrates that the majority of hate crime victims do not report their experiences to the police or through available third-party reporting systems (Chakraborti, Garland, Hardy, 2014; Christmann and Wong, 2010).

Our research demonstrates that there are a number of reasons as to why hate crime victims do not report their experiences to the police or to an alternative organisation. Many victims:

- ‘normalise’ their experiences of hate crime;
- feel concerned about not being taken seriously;
- worry about retaliatory violence or making the situation worse;
- have a shortage of confidence in the criminal justice system; and
- lack the time and emotional strength required to talk to a third party about their experiences.

The recommendations for dismantling barriers to reporting outlined below are based on the needs and expectations of hate crime victims with whom we engaged with as part of our research. They are important, achievable and victim-centred, and their implementation will improve existing reporting strategies for hate crime victims.

1. Use more extensive methods of engagement

Research evidence shows that hate crime policy is commonly shaped by narrow engagement with a limited number of community leaders and representatives. Reporting strategies based on organisational assumptions are often ineffective. Victims want to see wider and more meaningful engagement between frontline practitioners and different groups. It is felt that this would not only lead to a greater understanding of diverse communities, but would also help to inform appropriate and relevant policy and practice. Frontline practitioners should spend much more time informally engaging with members of diverse communities through groups and community 'hubs' to develop rapport and trust.

2. Develop more imaginative campaigns to encourage reporting

Existing mechanisms for encouraging reporting were commonly criticised by victims for failing to convey the value of reporting and for putting the onus to report exclusively on the individual victim. Generating greater publicity around real-life successful criminal justice outcomes could be a key way of challenging the widespread scepticism and indifference that surrounds hate crime reporting. Equally, the development of campaigns which encourage witnesses, family members or friends to report on a victim’s behalf would generate a heightened sense of collective and civic responsibility in the context of hate crime reporting.

3. Produce hate crime awareness campaigns which connect with people more effectively

The use of a variety of methods to promote what a hate crime is, and where victims and witnesses can report, is key to raising awareness amongst different sections of different communities. Participants have suggested a range of ideas to promote greater awareness, including making better use of both the mainstream media and the minority press, developing poster campaigns in appropriate community venues and ‘hubs’, and utilising social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook. Although many of these strategies are already in use within certain contexts and environments, the very fact that most participants have not seen them before demonstrates that existing awareness-raising campaigns are failing to connect with diverse and marginalised communities on a grassroots level. Awareness-raising mechanisms should be tailored, and where necessary adapted, to recognise the diverse profile of hate crime victims in order to be sufficiently far-reaching.
5. Make reporting procedures more victim-friendly
We have found that many victims are unlikely to share their experiences of hate crime because of the perceived amount of time and emotional stamina required to report a hate incident and because they are unfamiliar with and confused by existing reporting mechanisms. In order to break down these barriers the police and other relevant organisations should evaluate their own reporting processes in consultation with people from members of different communities, and take steps to simplify them.

6. Allow victims and witnesses to report hate crime anonymously
One of the recurring themes to emerge from our research is that both victims and witnesses would be more inclined to report hate crime if they could do so anonymously. The desire for anonymity is a factor that should be considered within awareness-raising campaigns. Participants have suggested that having the option of a website or mobile phone app which permitted quick, easy and anonymous reporting would encourage greater reporting of hate crime from both victims and witnesses.

HOW CAN HATE CRIME SUPPORT SERVICES FOR VICTIMS BE IMPROVED?
Through our research we have found that just 9 per cent of hate crime victims have received support as a result of their victimisation, meaning that the vast majority of victims are suffering in silence (Hardy and Chakraborti, 2016). One of the most commonly cited reasons for why a victim had not accessed any form of support was a lack of awareness of the existence of any support services. In order to improve support structures and organisational responses to hate crime victims we produced a series of recommendations based on the needs and expectations of hate crime victims.

1. Ensure that diversity and hate crime training is delivered to all frontline practitioners
There is a perception amongst hate crime victims that frontline practitioners lack the necessary knowledge and understanding of hate crime, and of diversity more generally, to be able to provide appropriate levels of support. This affects victims’ confidence and willingness to report to the police and to access support services. A significant proportion of the victims that we have heard from have identified the need for improved practitioner training. Organisations should commit to providing evidence-based diversity and hate crime training for all frontline members of staff. It is also important that these organisations take meaningful steps 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.

2. Encourage frontline practitioners to treat victims with compassion
Over the past four years we have heard from hundreds of victims whose basic support needs are not being met because they were not being listened to or believed. When hate crime victims are asked to describe the key attributes of an effective support service, many referred to being treated with empathy and kindness as a crucial first step. Whilst some hate crime victims might require a comprehensive support package, our research shows that a prompt, compassionate and sincere response is key to meeting the needs of hate crime victims.

3. Employ specially-trained hate crime police officers
Hate crime police officers can provide victims with tailored, specialist and meaningful support. Having a single point of contact throughout the investigative process helps victims to feel less intimidated by the criminal justice system and more supported during this difficult time. Our research has highlighted not only how the role of a hate crime police officer is well received by hate crime victims, but also how this role is valued by practitioners who work within the voluntary and community sector.
4. Identify opportunities to resource voluntary and community support services

When we have asked hate crime victims about which services they turn to when they need support they often mention small, community-based groups rather than the more familiar and mainstream organisations. Participants have often referred to their mental health well-being group, their disability day services, and their locally-run transgender social group (to name just some examples), as places where they feel supported and able to share their experiences of hate crime.

Given the important role that voluntary and community services play in providing support to hate crime victims and to some of the most vulnerable and marginalised members of society, it is unsurprising that both victims and professionals express great frustration at services being stripped-back due to ongoing austerity measures. Unsurprisingly then, when asked what would improve the quality of support available for victims of hate crime, a common response is to recommend for more council and government support for these kinds of voluntary and community-based groups.

5. Provide a specially-trained counsellor service to those most in need

Through our research we have found that there is a significant need for an ‘enhanced’ service for victims whose mental health has been significantly affected as a result of hate crime. It is these individuals who are in need of long-term counselling support from a trained professional. At present, these victims can only access this level of support through their GP and this process has been widely criticised by hate crime victims for being lengthy and ineffective. A more fruitful option might be to invest in trained counsellors who have specialist knowledge of hate crime, as well as other especially damaging crimes such as domestic violence and sexual assault.

6. Communicate investigative processes and case updates more effectively

There are two main issues which tend to undermine victims’ perceptions of how seriously the police, and other relevant agencies, are taking incidents of hate crime. First, many victims are often unaware of the procedures and practices that must be followed when investigating a hate crime. Secondly, victims are rarely kept up to date with case developments. Both of these factors can contribute to hate crime victims feeling that their case is not being dealt with efficiently or effectively. To a large extent these problems could be overcome through better communication. Frontline practitioners should consider how they can better explain the processes involved in investigating hate crimes and how they can utilise different methods of communication to ensure that the victim is kept informed.

ARE CURRENT LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY RESPONSES EFFECTIVE?
The UK has introduced a number of laws which have significant value in terms of their capacity to express collective condemnation of prejudice; to convey a message of support to victims and stigmatised communities; and to acknowledge the additional harm caused by hate offences (Chakraborti and Garland 2015; Walters 2014; ODIHR 2009). However, the enhanced sentencing framework has also been criticised because of the unequal provision it offers to different strands. For example, aggravated offences only apply to race and religion meaning that those cases involving hostility on the grounds of disability, sexual orientation and transgender identity carry a lower sentencing tariff. As the Law Commission (2014: 14–15) concluded, this ‘sends the wrong message about the impact of such offending and the seriousness with which it is taken’.

On the surface the UK’s legislative and policy responses to hate crime appear robust but in reality, their effectiveness is debatable. Of the thousands of people that we have engaged with over the last five years only a small proportion knew what a hate crime was, very few had any knowledge of existing hate crime laws, and barely anyone had any prior experience of seeing their offenders brought to justice through the legal system. Research also highlights the significant gap between victim-centred reporting mechanisms and evidence-driven criminal justice prosecution processes which can leave victims – and in particular vulnerable victims of persistent ‘low-level’ hate incidents – frustrated and additionally traumatised by the absence of stringent evidential proof required for prosecution (Chakraborti, Garland and Hardy, 2014; Williams and Tregidga, 2013).

HOW CAN THE RECORDING, MEASURING AND ANALYSIS OF HATE CRIME BE IMPROVED?

The College of Policing guidelines stipulate that at the recording stage an incident or crime is to be recorded as either a hate incident or hate crime if it is perceived by the victim or any other person (such as a witness, a family member or a carer) as being motivated by hostility or prejudice. Therefore, in the context of hate crime recording it is the victim’s or any other person’s perception that is central, and not the discretion of investigating police officers. However, our research has found that the victim’s perception is sometimes ignored, and that victims are often not aware of what hate crime is and therefore do not report it as such (Chakraborti, Garland and Hardy, 2014). In order to improve hate crime recording, frontline practitioners within public-sector organisations such as the police, local authorities, and health and social care organisations, need to be appropriately trained so that they have a thorough understanding of hate crime victimisation and existing policy.

In order to improve the way that we measure the scale and nature of hate crime victimisation there needs to be better synergy between academic research, the public sector, and community and voluntary organisations. It is widely acknowledged that police recorded figures tell only a partial story when it comes to quantifying levels of hate crime. Our research, which documents the extent to which victims experience hate crime, indicates that the ‘real’ figure of hate crime taking place is likely to be higher than that provided by the Crime Survey for England and Wales. We will only improve how we measure and analyse hate crime by developing a more holistic, collective approach, involving:

- A multi-agency responsibility to collect data on hate crime
- Improved third-party reporting mechanisms
- Data-sharing between academia, public sector organisations and civil society
WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR, COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES AND
OTHER FRONTLINE ORGANISATIONS IN CHALLENGING THE ATTITUDES THAT UNDERPIN
HATE CRIME?

There have long been question marks over the appropriateness of criminal justice responses to punish and rehabilitate offenders. It is suggested that prison has limited deterrent value to hate crime offenders; prison may actually exacerbate intolerant attitudes and inadvertently encourage hate-related activity and recruitment; and the overcrowded prison environment offers little opportunity for the kind of rehabilitation that is necessary to truly address prejudicial beliefs (Hall, 2013). Therefore, while imprisonment and the use of enhanced sentences may be entirely appropriate in certain contexts, there are equally many forms and perpetrators of hate crime for which and for whom such punishment might not be especially effective.

In part, the focus on punitive responses to hate crime is based on the assumption that members of the public – and particularly hate crime victims – demand such responses to offending behaviour. Within the context of our research however, participants have shown an overwhelming preference for the use of educational interventions and restorative approaches to justice, as opposed to extended prison sentences or harsher regimes. Moreover, this preference was shared by victims of different types of violent and non-violent hate crime and from different communities, ages and backgrounds (Chakraborti, Garland and Hardy, 2014). The use of smarter punishment – and not harsher punishment – offers a more effective route to challenging underlying prejudices, and therefore to preventing future offending.

The voluntary sector and other frontline organisations are in a strong position to facilitate these forms of early intervention. In order for these responses to be effective, these organisations must be appropriately resourced and trained, and the restorative interventions and educational programmes that they develop must be evaluated.