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## **Making it Stop**

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# **Tackling Hate Crime against Deaf and Disabled people in Merton**

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## **Executive Summary**

Stay Safe East on behalf of Merton Centre for Independent Living  
August 2016

## **Making it Stop: Tackling hate crime against disabled people in Merton**

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The research for this report was carried out by Ruth Bashall and by Christine O'Mahoney, an independent disability equality consultant. This report was written by Ruth Bashall, Director of Stay Safe East.

### **Thank you**

Our thanks to the Deaf and disabled people who took part in the research focus groups or completed a questionnaire.

Our thanks to Lyla Adwan-Kamara and Colin Finch at Merton Centre for Independent Living for their assistance with this research.

Our thanks also to those who assisted us with gathering data (particularly Maria Gray at the Metropolitan Police) and to those who offered their expertise and comments, and in particular to those who attended the round table in early May 2016.

Thank you to London Borough of Merton who funded this work

We hope that this research marks the start of a positive partnership between disabled people, voluntary and statutory services on hate crime in Merton.

Ruth Bashall and Christine O'Mahoney

July 2016

# Making it Stop: Tackling hate crime against disabled people in Merton

## Executive Summary

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## Foreword

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I was very pleased to be asked to pen a foreword to this report. For far too long disability hate crime has not been recognised as a major issue by either the criminal justice or law enforcement agencies. This has led to disabled people having little faith in reporting incidents, even where they have the confidence and knowledge to do so.

At last thanks to funding from the London Borough of Merton and hard work by Stay Safe East, this research report can raise the profile of this important issue.

Moving forward, we intend to support disabled people to report disability hate crime and support them to deal with the affects of this crime. In this way the true scale of the problem in Merton can be assessed and responded to.

**Roy Benjamin**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Roy Benjamin'.

**Chair  
Merton CIL**

# Executive Summary

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## Overview

This is the summary of a comprehensive piece of research on hate crime against disabled people which was carried out in 2016 by Stay Safe East on behalf of Merton Centre for Independent Living.

The research is about the impact of hate crime and harassment on disabled people from all communities and backgrounds, and what can be done to prevent these crimes and to support victims.

The report looks at the definition of hate crime, and the legal, national and London picture. The report then looks at the current situation in Merton, including levels of reported hate crime, where disabled people can report hate crime or harassment, how the Council, police and housing agencies deal with reports. The results of a survey of disabled people in Merton are set out in detail. The report makes a series of recommendations for the police, Merton Council, housing providers, the voluntary sector and Merton centre for Independent Living.

### **The full report can be found at**

<http://www.mertoncil.org.uk/services/hate-crime/>

For this research we:

- conducted a literature review
- a desktop audit of local resources
- focus groups with local disabled people
- a survey with local disabled people
- interviews with regional and national organisations working to tackle hate crime

The executive summary consists of a summary of findings and a summary of recommendations. The full report follows this section, for readers who would like to read the detail behind these summaries

## Summary of Findings

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### **The context: crimes against disabled people**

Disabled people are more likely to experience abuse or violent crime than non-disabled people. Violent crime generally is increasing for disabled people. A detailed analysis by Victim Support in 2016 of the Crime Survey for England and Wales shows that, although violent crime has fallen by almost half (48 per cent) for the non-disabled population over the past 10 years, over the same period the proportion of people with a limiting disability or illness who were victims of violence increased by 3.7 per cent. **Disabled people may be victims not only of disability hate crime but of other forms of hate crime such as racist or homophobic hate crime.**

### **Disability is the second most common factor in hate crime, after race**

Based on combined data from the 2012/13 to 2014/15 Crime Surveys there were an estimated 222,000 hate crimes on average per year for the five monitored strands. The most commonly reported motivating factor in these hate crime incidents was race, with an average of 106,000 incidents a year. The second most common motivating factor was disability (70,000 incidents per year), but carries the lowest conviction rate of all the hate strands.

### **A key feature of Disability Hate Crime is one of escalating violence**

A hate crime is defined as any criminal offence which is perceived, by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by hostility or prejudice based on a personal characteristic, specifically actual or perceived disability, gender identity, race, religion or faith and sexual orientation.

Disability hate crime is about targeting the individual because of who they are, it strikes at the victim's sense of self and therefore can have a greater impact than other types of crime.

Features of disability hate crime include:

- mocking aspects of someone's impairment, such as the way they walk or talk
- outing or threatening to out someone's impairment (or perceived impairment)
- verbal insults, often of a sexual nature
- damaging equipment or creating an obstruction which is particularly challenging for the disabled person
- malicious complaints
- Disability hate crime often looks different to racist and homophobic hate crime. Many perpetrators have a more intimate relationship with their victims, either as friends or carers.
- Incidents of disability hate crime often stem from low-level harassment; name-calling, intimidation and vandalism frequently escalate into more serious crimes, including murder

"I get a lot more creepy language used about me and my sexuality than my friends – much more sexually explicit, much more forceful, much more domineering. They expect me not to say 'no' ...there is a kind of fascination with what they see as vulnerability."

## **The typical victim profile is of someone who is already marginalised**

Although any disabled person can experience hate crime, it is more likely to be experienced by a person who is:

- disabled
- poor
- socially isolated
- living in social housing
- a woman
- part of a minority group eg LGBT or BME

"I grew up hearing the N... word all the time and being spat on. It is a bit like terms about disabled people."

## Typical perpetrators are motivated by contempt and hatred

[I was told] 'This is the problem with this country, but don't worry, we will soon get rid of you with this government'

Perpetrator profiles tend to reflect national crime profiles, ie they are most likely to be a white British male in their 20s. However, there are some differences:

- more likely to be close relatives or in an intimate relationship such as a partner, family member, or carer
- there are a higher than expected proportion of female perpetrators and disabled perpetrators
- group action is a feature of some disability hate crime

## Protection against Disability Hate Crime is weaker than some other hate crimes

The law on hate crime is not equal, partly for historical reasons. The Crime and Disorder Act allows the police to charge someone with an 'aggravated offence' relating to for example a public order offence, common assault, GBH or ABH. This offence becomes an aggravated offence in its own right and will be tried in court as such, for example "racially aggravated assault". If the suspect is found guilty, the offence carries a heavier sentence. This provision only applies to racist or faith based hate crime. At present, the aggravated offences do not cover hostility based on sexual orientation, transgender identity or disability.

Section 146 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 is the only statutory provision relating to disability hate crime. A suspect cannot be charged with an 'aggravated offence' as a crime in itself. However should the case go before a Court, the Court will be asked to consider increased sentencing on the grounds that the offence was motivated by disability (or other)

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hostility. This feature is underused.

A second set of hate crime offences are the offences of “stirring up hatred”. These are contained in the Public Order Act 1986. They tackle the problem of stirring up hatred on grounds of *race, religion* or *sexual orientation*. At present, the ‘stirring up’ offences do not cover hatred on grounds of transgender identity or disability.

At present, the aggravated offences do not cover hostility based on sexual orientation, transgender identity or disability.

## **There is significant under-reporting of Disability Hate Crime**

The difference between CSEW figures and Police Recorded Crime figures shows that hate crimes continue to be significantly under-reported.<sup>2</sup> The Crime Survey estimates that 70,000 people per year experienced disability hate crime in the two years 2013-2015. This is an increase on previous estimates of 65,000.

By contrast, there were 2,508 reports of disability hate crime to Police forces of England and Wales in 2014/15. There is no information about how many disabled people reported other forms of hate crime.

Whilst it would be expected that some incidents would not be reported, because they were one-offs and did not involve a crime, this very large gap between actual and reported hate crime shows the scale of the problem faced by disabled people’s organisations and their allies in tackling disability related hate crime.

## **Reporting is low due to systemic institutional discrimination**

Disability hate crime is mostly unrecognised by the authorities, the media, and the general public

- Bullying of disabled children at school is widespread and frequently

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<sup>2</sup> Action against Hate – the government’s plan for tackling hate crime. Home Office 2016. [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/540700/Action\\_Against\\_Hate\\_-\\_UK\\_Government\\_s\\_Plan\\_to\\_Tackle\\_Hate\\_Crime\\_2016.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/540700/Action_Against_Hate_-_UK_Government_s_Plan_to_Tackle_Hate_Crime_2016.pdf)

goes unchallenged. This lays the foundations for the harassment and disrespect that many disabled people experience in adult life.

- The language used to describe crimes against disabled people (e.g. 'abuse' instead of 'sexual assault', or 'bullying' instead of 'harassment') plays a big part in concealing the prevalence and impact of disability hate crime
- Hate crime is flagged by the police as 'vulnerable adult abuse' or hidden in reports of anti-social behaviour
- Repeat incidents are not linked and treated as a pattern of hate, so anti-social behaviour escalates into hate crime
- Adult protection policies and practices often prevent local statutory agencies taking appropriate action to stop disability hate crime and in some cases undermine disabled people's right to live independently in the community.
- Agencies do not communicate effectively with each other or take prompt and effective action
- Police officers are not trained to recognise hate crime against disabled people or to deal with disabled victims. Disabled people are routinely denied access to justice, either by not having the crimes committed against them recognised as hate crimes, or because they are dismissed as unreliable witnesses.
- Access, communication and information barriers prevent disabled people from reporting hate crime or from getting justice or resolution
- Preventing the harassment of disabled people requires more than organisational change. There is a need to transform the way disabled people are viewed, valued and included in society.

"When you are drunk and also paranoid you think 'I am alright' when you are clearly not alright. I would think 'Why am I in Springfield again?' I did not have any insight into my illness. I was clearly not alright and they saved me from being stabbed or raped.

"Some (of the police) were respectful, others were: 'Why are you wasting our time? You are a disgrace, why can't you pull yourself together? Just snap out of it.' A lot of people with mental health issues hear that but you are clinically depressed!"

## Disabled people often see little point in reporting

Disabled people do not report harassment because they fear consequences; fear police and fear they will not be believed or taken seriously

- Disabled people don't have confidence that anything will happen
- Disabled people are worried about retaliation if they report hate crime
- Disabled victims don't necessarily want to report to the police, they may want to speak to an independent agency
- Reporting to the police is not always people's priority, they may want to put the incident behind them
- Many disabled people accept harassment as inevitable

## Launch of Disability Hate Crime Matters means London-wide reporting has been increased

Disability Hate Crime matters is an initiative which came out of the Metropolitan Police Hate crime Diamond Group. This is a high level strategic working group which involves police and independent advisors, as well as key experts, including Inclusion London and Stay Safe East. In effect, it sets out a reminder of the process that should be used when dealing with disabled victims, and could in fact be used for any victim of hate crime.

### **DISABILITY HATE CRIME**

- M** Must use Vulnerability Assessment Framework
- A** Ask the victim the right questions
- T** Think Disability Hate Crime & Flag VH (disability hate crime)
- T** Take Immediate Safeguarding Action
- E** Ensure corroborative evidence is obtained
- R** Record all DHC on CRIS Not Airspace
- S** Supervisor MUST be informed

In January and February 2015, there were 25 disability hate crimes reported to the Metropolitan Police. In January and February 2016, after the start of the Disability Hate Crime Matters training for officers, 177 disability hate crimes were reported. Between January 1st and 30th April

2016, 213 disability hate crimes had been reported to the Metropolitan Police – almost as many as in the whole of the previous year.

This substantial increase shows one of the reasons for the low number of reported disability hate crimes – the failure of the police to recognize and correctly 'flag' hate crimes where the victim is a disabled person.

## **The Equality Act Public Sector Duty<sup>3</sup> includes responsibility for tackling hate crime**

The Equality Act 2010 places a specific duty on public bodies (the Public Sector Equality duty) and requires them to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it. This involves tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

This duty would include and responsibility for tackling hate crime and targeted harassment against disabled people. It is especially relevant to Merton Council, the Police and Housing providers but would also apply to health and other public bodies.

## **Failure to act can result in deaths**

A number of reports following the death of disabled victims of hate crime have been produced over the years<sup>4</sup>. All follow the same pattern: lack of communication between agencies, procedures which either failed or did not exist, a victim who has in most cases told people what was happening

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<sup>3</sup> For further information, please see:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/85041/equality-duty.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/85041/equality-duty.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> These include: Serious Case Review: the death of Steven Hoskin

[http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/media/3630284/a\\_e\\_SCR\\_Executive\\_Summary1\\_Dec\\_2007\\_.pdf](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/media/3630284/a_e_SCR_Executive_Summary1_Dec_2007_.pdf)

Serious case review: the murder of Gemma Hayter

<http://apps.warwickshire.gov.uk/api/documents/WCCC-779-97>

to them but no one listened or 'joined the dots', and a lack of access to support for disabled victims of hate crime.

Bijan Ebrahimi was an Iranian disabled man who had been the subject of continued harassment and hate by neighbours on his estate in Bristol.<sup>1</sup> He had repeatedly reported incidents to the police but was dismissed as a 'timewaster' by local officers. After taking pictures of the children and young people who were harassing him, he was accused of being a paedophile and was arrested. He returned to his home and was assaulted and beaten about the head and rendered unconscious. The perpetrators then dragged him outside, set fire to his body and burned it. In the 24 hours before his murder, Bijan had made 12 calls to the police.

Lee James was convicted of his murder and jailed for life. Subsequently three police officers were jailed for misconduct in public office and dismissed from the police for failing to assist Mr. Ebrahimi.

## **Disability in Merton is lower than the London average, but linked to deprivation**

The wards with highest deprivation also have highest proportion of disabled people. Census data <sup>5</sup>states that there are around 25,000 disabled people in Merton. Merton has a lower rate of long-term limiting illness than most London boroughs. Disabled people are from all communities, though there is a lower rate of impairment amongst Eastern European communities, who tend to be younger.

## **Disabled people are more likely to be worried about crime**

The crime rate in Merton in 2013/14 was 5 per 1,000 people – the London average is 7.2 per 1,000. The main crimes were Anti-Social Behaviour and violence against the person.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/qs303ew>

The 2014 Merton residents' survey<sup>6</sup> showed that 50% of Merton residents were worried about crime, 42% about anti-social behaviour. As also shown in national surveys, it is likely that disabled people are more worried than non-disabled people about crime. Significantly, only 29% of respondents to the survey said they felt fairly or well informed about tackling anti-social behaviour. Disabled people are less likely than non-disabled people to have confidence in the Council.

There is no separate data for disabled people, but national police surveys have shown that disabled people are less likely than other members of the public to have confidence in the police.

## **There has been little increase in reporting in Merton in 2016**

There were 12 recorded disability hate crimes in the 12 months to April 2016<sup>7</sup>. Unlike a number of other London boroughs, Merton has seen no significant increase in the first half of 2016, in spite of the rolling-out of the Disability Hate Crime Matters initiative.

There were a total of 12,594 crimes in Merton in the 12 months to January 2016, a rise of 500 crimes from the previous year.

- How many of these crimes were targeted at disabled people and were in fact hate crimes?

There were 106 rapes and 180 other sexual offences, and 1,429 domestic violence crimes

- How many of the victims of sexual and domestic violence were disabled people? How many of these crimes included an element of disability hate?

There were 312 reported hate crimes in the 12 months to January 2016 across racist and religious, homophobic, anti-Semitic, and Islamophobic hate crime.<sup>8</sup>

- How many of the victims of these hate crimes were disabled people?

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<sup>6</sup> [http://www.merton.gov.uk/presentation\\_charts\\_merton\\_residents\\_2014\\_.pdf](http://www.merton.gov.uk/presentation_charts_merton_residents_2014_.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> source: Community Safety Unit, Merton Police

<sup>8</sup> Source: MOPAC briefing on crime in Merton

There were 405 reports of ASB to the police and 521 ASB incidents in 2015/16 reported to Circle Housing.

- How many of these ASB reports were in fact hate crimes, and how many were incidents which were part of a pattern of hate crime against disabled people?

## **There are an estimated 500 hate crimes against disabled people in Merton every year**



"It's an everyday experience. Right now it's happening to someone."

Using data from the national crime survey, an estimated 500 hate crimes against disabled people should be recorded in Merton every year. This means that only 2% of incidents were reported to the Police in Merton.

Merton's disabled population is 25,000 people. Using the data from the Crime Survey for England and Wales, if 0.5% of disabled people in Merton have been victims of disability hate crime in the past year, this is around 125 people per year. This does not include disabled people who have been victims of other forms of hate crime.

Using the data from the government Life Opportunities survey, if 2% of disabled people in Merton have been victims of a hate crime in the past year, this is around 500 people per year.

It is likely that the true picture is around 500 people if other forms of hate crime are included. This means that only 2% of incidents were reported to the MPS.

## **Disability Hate Crime has fallen off the agenda in Merton**

The researchers had some difficulty piecing together the approach to hate crime in Merton, particularly from the Council's perspective. It is clear that there is an urgent need to develop a strategy for hate crime as there is

currently no hate crime strategy in place.

Our research indicates that hate crime has slipped off the agenda in Merton, as in many other London boroughs, and that there are inadequate multi-agency processes for tackling anti-social behaviour, let alone hate crime. Nevertheless there is a commitment from the police, the Council, in housing and in the voluntary sector to make changes.

Merton is not unique in this regard; other London boroughs, in line with government and MOPAC priorities, shifted the focus from hate crime to anti-social behaviour and to the Prevent agenda focused on preventing extremist radicalization.

In Merton, the Anti-Social Behaviour Team hold case meetings about repeat and high risk cases, but there is no input from community partners or from other key departments. This poses a real risk to victims, particularly those who are disabled; the lack of multi-agency working was cited as the key failure in a number of cases involving the deaths or murders of disabled victims of hate crime, including Fiona Pilkington and her daughter Francessca.

Incidents involving disabled people who are 'adults at risk' are reported, usually by a third party, to the Council's Safeguarding Adults Team. These reports are seen by the police as they are recorded on a shared system known as MERLIN. The scrutiny process as part of the MPS Disability Hate Crime Matters initiative showed that a substantial number of adult safeguarding reports involved hate crime.

## **There are some Merton-specific barriers to reporting**

Anyone can report a crime at a Police station. Wimbledon is now the only police station that is open 24 hours a day. The front counter is accessible to wheelchair users. Mitcham is open Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm but is not accessible, and Tooting is accessible but is only open only 3 hours a week

For disabled people who prefer to report a crime or incident face to face, and particularly for those in the east of the borough, the distance from a police station may be a considerable deterrent to making a report.



There is currently no established network of third party reporting centres in Merton and no process for reports to be passed on via a secure e-mail. Third Party reporting sites are independent organisations which provide a safe and confidential space for people to report hate crimes. Most offer ongoing support. Third party reporting sites are a key part of gaining community confidence. To cater effectively for disabled people, they must offer a good standard of accessibility.

In discussions with the local police at a round table meeting about this research, representatives of the local Police Community Safety Unit welcomed the idea of developing local third party reporting sites.

There is a dearth of useful information produced by statutory partners in Merton that would be of use to a victim of recent hate crime. Googling "report hate crime in Merton" led us to the general information on the central MPS website but gave us no explanation of what a hate crime is. The Merton police website does not include any information on hate crime- it would be simple to add some basic, easily understandable information and links to local independent reporting sites.

The Council website itself does appear to meet basic AAA accessibility standards but if a site visitor starts at the Council home page, information on disability hate crime is almost impossible to find. As with most local authority websites, there is no information in Easy Read or BSL. The language used is that of a local authority, not everyday language that people would understand easily. Many disabled people and people with English as a second language would find the information almost impossible to access online. For example, they use the term 'disphobic' and has a leaflet on ASB in 11 point print

No single local organisation provides information in easy read, large print or in BSL. Disabled people in particular tend to see their local area as their main point of reference. What information there is relies on people having Internet access and if they have it, being able to negotiate their way around quite complex websites. This is clearly contributing to the low reporting rates and lack of awareness, but could be easily remedied.

“People try to bully me, being disabled. I’m not overly susceptible to that – it tends to stop. They call me names, take the mickey. A lot of language that would annoy most people doesn’t annoy me. The stuff based in hate is generally the name calling, the ‘spastic’s, the ‘weirdo’s, the swearing. It’s not usually even a name, just a lot of swearing. I’ve never reported.”

From our research, there appears to have been little engagement in recent years with disabled people and their organisations, or for that matter with other sections of the community, on either Community Safety nor specifically on hate crime and harassment. If the MPS, the Council and partners are to ensure that disabled people are able to report hate crime and to get a positive and proportionate response, engagement with disabled people is essential.

A start has now been made, which could develop into a constructive partnership, and both the Council and the Police are to be commended for their openness to starting a dialogue.

## **Local disabled people want more support to recognise and report hate crime**

The researchers conducted focus groups and a small scale survey. Both the focus groups and the survey showed variable levels of awareness of hate crime amongst the disabled people who responded, and a reluctance to report incidents, particularly those involving ‘only’ verbal or on-line abuse. However, half of those who responded to the survey have experienced being bullied or hurt in the last year with a third of those reporting it happening three or more times.

Disabled people who took part in the focus groups said they wanted to talk more about their experiences and understand what to do about hate crime. Do you want to add that you are not doing this e.g. as a result of the research, MCIL has set up a discussion and awareness-raising group for disabled people on hate crime.

Campaigns to raise awareness of hate crime amongst disabled people and the wider community were felt to be useful, and awareness-raising groups were suggested, where disabled people could talk about their experiences and increase their knowledge of hate crime and what to do.

There was a singular lack of confidence amongst respondents in the Police, with several people quoting instances of poor practice - inappropriate responses, being ignored or dismissed when they reported crimes, or being sectioned under the Mental Health Act. 90% of people said when reported to the police they didn't get any help and most were not happy with the way the police behaved.

Repeat incidents appear to have been poorly dealt with and allowed to escalate. Only one participant, who was a victim of a serious assault, had a wholly positive response from the Police. Participants stressed the importance of training for the police, provided by experienced disabled trainers, to address the lack of confidence and the poor responses by agencies to disabled victims of crime.

A number of respondents had been victims of other forms of hate crime – transphobic and racist hate crime were mentioned. Several disabled women who took part had experienced and were still experiencing misogynistic sexual harassment or threat of rape targeted at them because they were disabled women. Materials about hate crime need to recognise that disabled people experience other forms of hate crime as well as disability specific hate crime

Domestic violence, including 'carer' abuse were part of disabled women's and men's experience of abuse and hate crime. Yet there are no designated resources locally to specifically address domestic violence against disabled people.

There is clearly a need for a change in approach by partner agencies and a more positive response to disabled people who report harassment. There was positive support for setting up a Third Party reporting site at Merton CIL, as people felt that they must be able to speak to people who understood them, respected their experienced- and believed them. Over 60% of respondents said they would be more likely to report if they knew they could get help from a disabled people's organisation and if hate crime was taken more seriously.

## **Disabled people want the hate to stop and need ongoing support**

Based on the responses from disabled people in Merton, evidence from the research quoted in Chapter 3, and the experiences of a range of organisations (including Stay Safe East) working with victims of hate crime, all victims of hate crime want one thing above all else – for the abuse to stop.

Whilst this may seem obvious, in 'real life' even intervention by police or a landlord does not mean that once reported, incidents stop – especially in housing situations. They also want

- To be safe
- To be listened to and believed
- To understand what their choices are
- To understand what will happen next
- To feel they are in control again
- To have support when they report a hate crime and in the follow up
- To get justice or resolution
- To be able to go about their daily life without fear

“If someone else told me what had happened I would be like 'Report it!'”

Reporting is only the first stage of supporting a victim of hate crime. On-going advocacy will help the client benefit from support at all stages of the process. Features of advocacy specifically for disabled victims of hate crime include:

- Giving victims time to speak out : Disabled people may need more than one meeting to disclose the details of what happened, and should always be seen by the advocate at least once on their own, without a family member or 'carer'/PA present (unless there are specific impairment reasons why this should not happen). Disabled people may minimise the extent of the hate incident or incidents because they don't want to upset family members, or because they are worried their independence may be restricted.
- Working with clients long-term: Hate crime advocacy usually involves working with a client for some period of time. The organisations interviewed for this research support the majority of their clients for

a period of over a year, in some cases up to 4 years: investigations take time, getting victims re-housed is a slow process. This does not mean that the advocate will work intensively with the client throughout this period, but that they remain in contact with them until the client feels safe.

- Dealing with trauma: The long timeframe is also necessary because victims may be traumatised, not only by the incident they have reported but by a lifetime of abuse. Spending time listening to the person and helping them make sense of their experiences is a key part of a hate crime advocate's role, as is empowering them. Disabled people who have been victims of hate crime have been targeted because of who they are, and may have very low self-esteem, depression or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder as a result and may need to be referred for counselling. Self-advocacy groups also help people feel positive about themselves as disabled people, as well as encouraging people to develop safety strategies.

## Conclusion

The research showed that disabled people do experience hate crime, but rarely report. It also showed that hate crime against disabled people has slipped off the agenda of key agencies in Merton. There is clearly a need for a change in approach by partner agencies and a more positive response to disabled people who report harassment.

**The report made a series of in-depth recommendations which are set out below.**

## **SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

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### **Principle**

Hate crime against disabled people can only be tackled by a partnership between disabled people, statutory and voluntary agencies working together. Disabled people and their organisations must be equal partners in this work.

### **Recommendations: all partners**

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1. Publish a joint “No Place for Hate in Merton” statement, with reference to recent hate crimes across the world including those against disabled people
2. Work together to develop an awareness campaign on hate crime and harassment, and obtain funding for materials to be developed in partnership with disabled people and other communities
3. Publicise all local agencies where hate crime or harassment can be reported
4. Police outreach and confidence building sessions, jointly with Merton CIL and other voluntary sector groups, to increase confidence in reporting hate crime and harassment against disabled people and other groups

### **Recommendations: Merton Council and partners**

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1. Revise information about hate crime generally, and hate crime against disabled people and other groups on the Merton Council and Merton Police websites, to include:
  - Plain English information about what hate crime is, how it affects people etc.
  - How to report hate crime
  - Links to local and other organisations supporting victims of hate crime, and to True Vision
  - A simple reporting form
  - An Easy-read version of the text with easy words and pictures

- Phone, SMS text and e-mail contacts
  - Information about agencies which support victims of domestic or sexual violence
2. Draw up a new Community Safety Strategy, including hate crime and harassment, in consultation with voluntary and statutory partners.
  3. Set up a Community MARAC to deal with high risk and repeat ASB and hate crimes cases and other cases involving adults at risk; the Community MARAC should involve key statutory partners (Police, Adult Safeguarding, Mental Health Services, Social Landlords etc.) and key voluntary sector partners including Merton CIL.
  4. Ensure that data about repeat and high risk cases is shared across statutory partners, and where relevant, voluntary sector partners – develop the necessary information sharing protocol
  5. Work with Merton CIL to review adult safeguarding cases over a fixed time frame (eg three months) to identify any hate crimes that may have been missed
  6. Provide training for front line call centre and other staff on how to recognise hate crime
  7. Review how domestic violence is dealt with where the victim is a disabled person, and of the accessibility of local support agencies, as well as police responses

## **Recommendations: Metropolitan Police**

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1. Initiate a Police-Disability Liaison Group involving disabled individuals, user-led organisations and selected organisations working with disabled people and other groups, to focus on key issues around policing and crime, including hate crime. The Liaison Group will need a budget for access and other costs.
2. Appoint a Hate Crime Liaison officer for Merton Police, in line with Metropolitan Police policy
3. Encourage more police officers or PCSOs to volunteer as Disability Liaison officers

4. Develop briefings for front line staff, including liaison officers, delivered jointly by MCIL and the police – either on hate crime against disabled people only, or on all/some hate crime strands
5. Invite applications from disabled people to join the Merton Police Independent Advisory Group
6. Develop a scrutiny process jointly with MCIL to review a sample of crime reports involving disabled people as well as cases already flagged as hate crime, to identify good practice and possible improvements
7. Develop a joint outreach programme between Police, MCIL and other community organisations concerned about hate crime, including the LGBT and BAME Forums and Victim Support
8. Train Safer Schools officers to work with young people in schools to inform them about hate crime

## **Recommendations: Social Housing providers**

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1. Update information on website to ensure that it is easy for tenants to find information about hate crime and how to report it
2. Include an article or information about hate crime and harassment against disabled people (and encouraging people to report incidents) in any newsletters sent to tenants and leaseholders – including contact for Merton CIL
3. Ensure that all reports of repeat anti-social behaviour against disabled people are scrutinised (where possible by a senior housing officer) in order to check if there is a disability hostility motivation.
4. Ensure repeat incidents are referred to the Community MARAC
5. Provide training for call centre staff, ASB officers and front line housing officers on identifying and understanding hate crime, and on supporting disabled victims



## **Recommendations: Merton Centre for Independent Living**

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1. Develop an accessible and safe third party reporting site for disabled people to report hate crime and harassment
2. Provide advocacy casework support to disabled victims of hate crime
3. Develop facilitated awareness raising groups or sessions for disabled people to talk about their experiences of hate crime and abuse.
4. Produce information leaflet and poster to promote the service and explain about hate crime
5. Develop a programme of engagement with disabled people in Merton
6. Develop support/awareness groups for victims and survivors
7. Hold workshops at events organised by other organisations
8. Raise the on-line profile of Merton CIL by intervening on local Facebook and Twitter sites, and challenging negative attitudes to disabled people
9. Develop briefings and training for Police officers and other agencies on Hate Crime and Disability, provided by experienced disabled trainers

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