The experiences of victims of hate crime

Final Report

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At **NatCen Social Research** we believe that social research has the power to make life better. By really understanding the complexity of people’s lives and what they think about the issues that affect them, we give the public a powerful and influential role in shaping decisions and services that can make a difference to everyone. And as an independent, not for profit organisation we’re able to put all our time and energy into delivering social research that works for society.
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Executive summary

Aims, objectives and methods

- Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) commissioned this research to gain insight into victims’ experiences of hate crime. Specifically, it sought to understand victims’ experiences of these crimes; motivations for and barriers to reporting them; and experiences with the police, criminal justice system and support services. The findings fed into HMICFRS’s Hate Crime Inspection1 and provide robust evidence for future work to improve support for victims.
- One-to-one qualitative interviews were carried out with 26 individuals who had been victims of hate crime, to explore their experiences in depth. Some participants were members of the public; others were police officers. Diversity within the sample was achieved in terms of geographic areas, protected characteristics, and hate crime experiences.
- Data was analysed using Framework, a case and theme-based approach to qualitative data analysis.

Definitions, experiences, and impacts of hate crime

- Victims’ understanding of the types of incident that could be categorised as hate crime varied. It was not clear to some whether incidents needed to have a physical element to constitute hate crime, and confusion was particularly evident when considering incidents that took place online.
- A broad range of direct experiences of hate crime were described, including violent assaults, threats to harm or kill, stalking, verbal abuse, slander, and plotting physical violence online.
- Participants described a range of ways in which they were affected by the crime, both in the immediate and longer term. The physical impact of hate crime ranged from nausea to irreversible physical damage, while the emotional and psychological impacts ranged from fear and shock through to long-term mental health conditions. Participants also described changes to their world view and their behaviour resulting from their victimisation.

Reporting and experience of response

- Some motivations for reporting hate crimes related directly to the victim themselves: victims might report their experiences as a way of finding relief or restoration, or because the perpetrator could then be held to account. Broader considerations related to prevention of repeat offending, setting an example, and contributing to accurate recording of hate crime.
- Practical barriers to reporting included inaccessible reporting facilities and the perceived amount of time that reporting would take. Other reasons not to report hate crimes included feeling the incident was not serious enough, or that there was too little supporting evidence for further steps to be taken. Previous poor

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experiences with the police also contributed to a reluctance to report in some instances.

- Those who had reported their experience did so to the police (rather than to other agencies) by phone, online or in person. Awareness of different reporting options varied among participants. Timeframes for reporting varied from immediately to about two months after the crime.

- Responses to participants reporting hate crime or incidents varied. Those that had their expectations met were regularly updated or not expecting further communication. Those who did not have their expectations met discussed receiving a lack of information and update about their case and difficulty contacting and/or accessing the police.

- Police and community participants had different experiences of reporting, with police participants reporting more uniform and positive experiences than their community peers, including with the formal response and the case outcome.

**Support**

- Participants described emotional and practical support received from informal sources such as friends, family and colleagues, as well as from formal sources including support organisations and community groups.

- Support was accessed through different pathways, including independently by the victim themselves or their families, signposting and referrals. Referrals included being directed towards hate crime officers (particularly police participants) and Victim Support.

- Some individuals had declined support for a variety of reasons, such as their own sense of need and perceived benefit of support services. Some participants felt they could cope autonomously.

- Barriers to accessing support and to support delivery were identified. Some participants did not know what support was available to them, or felt it was not available or accessible. Not meeting victims’ needs and communication breakdowns during the referral process were also raised.

- There were examples of good practice which included organisations that were accessible, responsive, proactive and timely in their interactions with and responses to participants.

**Areas for improvement**

- Participants discussed the importance of support services being more clearly signposted and visible. This could encourage people to seek support as well as improve confidence in the support received, including from the police.

- Improving the way that police communicate and the training they receive in relation to hate crime may assist with the provision of a quality service to victims. This could in turn assist with managing their expectations when interacting with the police following experiencing a hate crime.

- An increased focus on online hate crime both in terms of resource provision and understanding could assist police and community members.

- Multi-agency coordination may assist organisations in improving their understanding of hate crime; public awareness-raising; and the overall victim experience. Public engagement could assist with deterrence and prevention.
1 Introduction and methodology

1.1 Context

Crimes motivated by hate can have a profound and lasting effect on victims and communities. Policy around the prevention of and intervention in hate crime is complex, particularly as categorising and defining these crimes differs within the relevant legislation. The definition of hate crime adopted by criminal justice organisations is:

‘Any criminal offence or incident which is perceived by the victim, or any other person, to be motivated by hostility or prejudice towards someone based on a personal characteristic.’

Police forces monitor hate crimes related to five protected characteristics: disability, race, religion sexual orientation and transgender identity. Some police forces also monitor crimes committed against other vulnerable victim groups in responding to local concerns. For example, Greater Manchester Police monitors hate crimes directed towards members of alternative subcultures, such as goths and punks.

According to Home Office statistics from 2016/17 taken from police recorded crime data, there were 80,393 offences recorded by police in which one or more protected characteristic was considered a motivating factor. Compared with 2015/16, this was an increase of 29% across all five monitored characteristics. Increases were likely driven by improvements by police forces in recording crime and identifying which offences constituted hate crime. Police recorded crime data also suggests that events such as the EU referendum in June 2016 and the Westminster Bridge terrorist attack on 22 March 2017 have led to an increase in these figures.

The Crime Survey for England and Wales highlighted that victims of hate crime were less satisfied with criminal justice agency responses than victims of other forms of crime, for example, burglary or robbery. Combined 2012/13 and 2014/15 survey

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4 This common definition was agreed in 2007 by the Association of Chief Police Officers (now the National Police Chiefs’ Council), Crown Prosecution Service, HM Prison Service (now HM Prison and Probation Service) and other organisations in the criminal justice system.
7 Greater Manchester Police (2014) Hate crime: Policy and procedure. Available at: http://www.gmp.police.uk
figures illustrated that victims of hate crime were also less likely to think the police had treated them fairly or with respect when compared with victims of crime overall.\(^\text{10}\)

Recent research also demonstrates that a significant proportion of victims do not report their experiences of hate crime to the police or any other relevant organisations, do not feel their support needs are recognised or adequately addressed, and do not feel they have access to justice.\(^\text{11}\)

### 1.2 Research aims and objectives

Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) commissioned this research to gain insight into victims’ experiences of hate crime, including decision-making, motivations for and barriers to reporting these crimes and experiences with the police, criminal justice system (CJS) and support services. It also intended to identify good practice within the CJS in terms of responses to victims at the reporting stage and afterwards, and in relation to support provision.

This research fed into HMICFRS’s Hate Crime Inspection and supports their overarching aims of minimising the effects and distress caused by victimisation in England and Wales, improving police practice, and understanding the role of multi-disciplinary partnerships in providing rehabilitative/restorative support.\(^\text{12}\)

### 1.3 Research methodology

A total of 26 qualitative interviews were carried out with victims of hate crime to explore their views and experiences; some were members of the public and others were police officers. Participants were identified and invited to take part in the study through support organisations and via social media. Further details of the recruitment process and achieved sample breakdown are provided in appendix 1, along with discussion of some of the challenges faced over the course of the research.

Interviews were carried out between May and July 2018, lasting between 30 and 90 minutes. These were carried out using a topic guide developed in consultation with HMICFRS (a simplified topic guide is provided in appendix 2). Throughout the recruitment process and at the start of each interview, researchers made clear that participation was voluntary and participants could opt out at any time. An informal and flexible approach was taken in the interviews to respond to participants’ individual needs and circumstances and to ensure they felt comfortable sharing their experiences.

With participants’ permission, interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Where permission was not given, written notes were taken instead. The transcripts and notes were managed and analysed using the Framework approach, whereby data is organised using matrices that enable thematic analysis both within and between cases, allowing descriptive and explanatory analysis to be undertaken.

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\(^\text{10}\) Ibid.
\(^\text{11}\) See, for example, Corcoran, Lader and Smith (2016) *Hate Crime, England and Wales, Statistical Bulletin 5* and Hardy and Chakraborti (2016) *Hate crime: Identifying and dismantling barriers to justice*.
Verbatim quotations and case illustrations are used throughout this report to provide examples of themes and findings where appropriate. Quotations have not been attributed to protect participants’ anonymity.

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2 Background and overview of participants

This chapter provides an overview of the characteristics of participants who took part in the research, and the type of hate crimes they experienced.

The results presented here are drawn from the 26 interviews with participants who identified as having experienced a hate crime. Interviews were conducted with 21 members of the public and 5 police officers. Twelve participants identified as female and 14 as male. Their ages ranged from early twenties to late sixties.

2.1 Characteristics

Participants had experienced hate crime related to the five recognised protected characteristics: ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, disability, or because they were transgender. Participants also discussed the role of non-protected characteristics, such as gender. One view was that certain personal characteristics (other than the five protected ones) could exacerbate hate crime or increase the risk of victimisation. For example, one participant suspected that she was the target of a race-based hate crime because she was also female.

‘There were other people around, but you singled me out […] was there a bigger thing […] not just about race; was it about gender?’

Some participants’ experiences related to a single characteristic. Others were targeted in relation to different characteristics at different times or multiple characteristics at one time.

Ten participants’ most recent hate crime experience related to disability, 14 to race, 7 to religion, 5 to sexual orientation, and 2 to their transgender identity. This breakdown totals more than 26 (the number of participants) because participants experienced hate crimes related to more than one protected characteristic. In addition, both the race and the religion categories include 5 individuals whose experiences related to anti-Semitism; it was not always clear to them whether the crime was motivated by race or religion.

The ways in which participants understood and defined hate crime are explored in chapter 3.

2.2 Types of case

2.2.1 Type of incident

The type of hate crimes participants had experienced included verbal abuse, physical abuse, threats and stalking. The type of incident did not appear to be linked with the motivating factor for the hate crime.

Police officers described experiencing hate crimes while on duty, and before they were police officers. Incidents which occurred while they were on duty included verbal and
physical abuse and threats. These incidents were motivated by their ethnicity or gender.

More detail about the types of hate crimes experienced by all participants is given in chapter 3.

2.2.2 Incident location

Participants experienced hate crimes both online and offline. In some instances, online and offline hate crime formed part of a single hate crime experience.

Actions that perpetrators defined as online hate crime included hateful messages directed specifically at the individual, discriminatory or offensive remarks that were not directed at an individual (such as racially-motivated abuse witnessed on public web pages), slander, and using a forum to plan physical violence.

2.2.3 Number of incidents

Where participants provided details of more than one hate crime experience, the number of experiences ranged from two to more than they could recall.

‘God, it’s which one, there’s so many…’

Some participants described having experienced only one incident they defined as hate crime. However, these participants also described similar incidents that they did not define as hate crime. These included, for example, racial verbal abuse and other incidents which could fit the formal definition of hate crime (discussed further in chapter 3).

2.2.4 Case status

For participants who had reported a hate crime to the police, the status of their case at the time of interview varied. Some had made the initial report to the police in the weeks prior to the interview, some had been through the court process and been notified of the final outcome, and others fell somewhere in between. Police officers had either been notified of a final outcome, or were currently going through the court process at the time of the interview.

2.3 Context

The timing of the research interviews, and the context in which they took place, is detailed in chapter 1. Participants also contextualised their experiences. A number of key events were mentioned, including the EU referendum (23 June 2016)\(^{14}\), the election of Donald Trump as President of the United States (8 November 2016)\(^{15}\), the Manchester terrorist attacks (22 May 2017)\(^{16}\), and accusations of anti-Semitism in the

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Labour Party.¹⁷ These events were described by participants as catalysts for hate crime. One view was that the prominence of some of these occurrences had normalised hate and emboldened individuals to commit hate crimes. Another was that these events incited individuals to target particular groups for abuse.

‘Life wasn’t so bad a couple of years ago, but the Brexit vote and Trump getting in has basically proved to people you can be a bigot and you can get away with it.’

‘I think things have got a little bit worse because of Brexit […] I always used to think […] racism really isn’t that bad over here, but […] I’ve noticed there’s a bit of a difference, almost like people feel like a bit more brave, they feel like they can get away with a little bit more.’

3 Views and experiences of hate crime

This chapter will consider participants’ definitions of hate crime, their experiences of hate crime, and the impacts these experiences had on them.

3.1 Defining hate crime

As outlined in chapter 1, the definition of hate crime adopted by criminal justice organisations is:

‘Any criminal offence or incident which is perceived by the victim, or any other person, to be motivated by hostility or prejudice towards someone based on a personal characteristic.’

Participants’ definitions of hate crime were informed by a range of factors. Those who had worked for the police, local government or the third sector had encountered the term in their work. Some participants’ previous experiences of discrimination or their families’ views on racism further informed their understanding. Some participants also suggested their own research into the term and use of it in the media contributed to their understanding.

Participants’ definitions of hate crime centred on the negative targeting of a particular group or individual due to their characteristics. The range of characteristics participants identified as motivating hate crime included the protected characteristics defined in the Hate Crime Action Plan (2016) as well as others such as gender, class, nationality, occupation and ‘looking different’. The negative targeting aspect of a hate crime included being physically or verbally attacked, threats, being discriminated against, or being treated with hostility.

‘[A hate crime is] any kind of prejudice or hostility towards a person because of a personal characteristic.’

One view was that for an incident to be considered a hate crime, it had to be a criminal act in its own right, aside from the fact that it was motivated by hate. Physical assault was given as an example. An alternative view was that actions that by themselves would not constitute a crime, such as hostility, could be defined as a hate crime when an individual had been targeted due to their characteristics.

Some definitions of hate crime centred on the interpretation of the victim or bystanders. Participants felt that if an incident was perceived by a victim or bystander to be motivated by prejudice then it should be considered a hate crime.

3.2 Defining their own experiences

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18 This common definition was agreed in 2007 by the Association of Chief Police Officers (now the National Police Chiefs’ Council), Crown Prosecution Service, HM Prison Service (now HM Prison and Probation Service) and other organisations in the CJS.
Victims understood and defined their own experiences in a number of ways.

3.2.1 Defining experiences as a hate crime

Participants defined experiences as a hate crime where:

- **The perpetrator made it clear that it was motivated by a personal characteristic(s).** For example, the perpetrator used language related to the characteristic, such as derogatory terms for their ethnicity.

- **They suspected they or others were targeted due to personal characteristics.** For instance, the perpetrator targeted them rather than others in the vicinity who did not share their characteristics.

- **They had previously experienced similar incidents which had been classified as a hate crime.** This had raised awareness of what constitutes a hate crime. Incidents could also be part of a pattern of repeat victimisation.

- **Other external factors led them to define the incident as a hate crime after the incident.** These included talking to the police; conducting their own research into the definition of hate crime; exposure to the term in a professional context; and referring to the definitions of authoritative bodies, such as the Crown Prosecution Service’s (CPS) guidelines on hate crime. Some participants also said that discussing their experience during the research interview brought them to the realisation that their experience was a hate crime. In these instances participants had taken part on the recommendation of others.

Two factors impacted on whether participants defined their experience as a hate crime: whether the incident involved physical violence, and whether an individual was targeted directly. Views on both varied. For example, for some participants the targeting of specific individuals was central to an incident being considered a hate crime.

> ‘Because it wasn't just you know graffiti, or vandalism, it was personal […] It was very much directed at me. That was quite unequivocal.’

An alternative view was that individual targeting was not necessary. For instance, participants described speeches made to large numbers of people or online articles as hate crimes.

The definition of an incident as a hate crime in some instances was due to the cumulative impact of the factors described above. For example, the perpetrators’ actions made it clear they were targeting the participant due to their ethnicity, and physical violence was involved.

3.2.2 Experiences not defined as a hate crime

Some participants discussed experiences which were similar to the hate crimes they were being interviewed about but which they did not define as hate crimes. These experiences included verbal abuse, physical threats and online abuse. Participants discussed a number of factors that stopped them from defining these experiences as hate crimes:

- **The experience did not meet the participant’s ‘threshold’ of a hate crime.** The reasons for this were that it had minimal impact on the participant, was regarded as a common occurrence, or would not be classed as a crime if it were not motivated by hate. Views on the threshold for a hate crime varied: some participants regarded only incidents involving physical violence as hate crime, whereas others considered
incidents that occurred more frequently and that had a lower impact, such as verbal abuse, to constitute less severe hate crimes.

- The perpetrator had the same characteristic that they targeted the participant for. For example, a perpetrator used a racial slur against an individual of the same ethnicity.
- They felt there would be negative consequences if they defined their experience as a hate crime.
  - Some participants felt that defining their experience in this way would mean they would have to report the incident to the police. They were reluctant to do this either because of the time this would take, particularly where incidents occurred frequently; or because they were put off by previous negative experiences of reporting.
  - Others felt that viewing the incident more seriously would in turn make it hard for them to 'move on' from it psychologically.
    ‘If you think of them as crime then that escalates them in your own head […] you then start focusing more attention on it and you then start asking yourself why and what.’

Participants also suggested that they would use other terms to describe these experiences. This was particularly the case for hate crimes related to ethnicity. For example some participants described experiences that occurred in the 1980s and 1990s or within specific communities as racism, rather than a hate crime. This appeared to be because racism was a more widely known and commonly used term, rather than because of objections to the term ‘hate crime’. In some instances participants came to define the experience as a hate crime later on, either when hate crime became an accepted term for these incidents or due to their exposure to the term in a professional context.

3.2.3 Uncertainty in defining hate crime

Community participants expressed uncertainty about how to define both online and offline experiences of hate crime. This included uncertainty about whether there needed to be a physical element to the incident, or whether the incident needed to involve an element that would be classed as a crime had it not been motivated by hate. Some participants also described not realising that their experience could be considered a hate crime until they spoke to the police.

Confusion was also expressed over how to define online incidents that did not involve the participant being personally targeted; for example, where they read an online blog expressing prejudice against their ethnic or religious group. Participants associated their confusion to the frequency with which such incidents occurred and how seriously they anticipated they were likely to be taken by the police. This was in contrast to incidents where participants were directly targeted online or experienced an indirect hate crime offline, in which cases they defined the experience either as a hate crime or as racism. It appears that the combination of the online medium and the indirect nature of the incident contributed to participants' confusion.

These feelings of uncertainty were weighed against elements of the experience that made participants feel it should be considered a hate crime, for instance the level of distress or injustice they felt following the incident.

‘There’s a massive disjunct between sort of how you feel about experiencing racism and then how seriously you think anyone will take it as a crime.’
The inference here is that the incident was significant, needed to be addressed, and that it was important to prevent similar incidents from happening in the future. Some participants also highlighted the public context in which the incident occurred or the involvement of an authority figure, as these factors increased the number of people likely to be exposed to the incident.

Harry had previously reported many online instances of racism to social media providers. When he read racist discourse published on a web page by a public figure, however, Harry felt this was a more serious incident, particularly as the potential audience was sizeable. Despite consulting the legal definition of hate crime before reporting it to the police, he was unsure whether his experience fit the criteria because he had not been directly targeted, and was concerned that the report would not be taken seriously.

3.3 Experiences of hate crime

As outlined in chapter 2, participants’ experiences of hate crime included various types of harm including physical abuse, threats to hurt or kill, stalking and verbal abuse (both online and offline). Actions that participants defined as online hate crime included hateful messages directed at the victim, discriminatory or offensive remarks that were not directed at an individual, slander and using a forum to plan physical violence. The types of harm experienced did not appear to vary according to the protected characteristics of the victims.

3.3.1 Relationship between perpetrator and victim

Three types of relationship between the perpetrator and victim were described:

- They were strangers;
- They had seen or interacted briefly with each other before (including perpetrators who had previously been arrested by the police officers they targeted); and
- They were in regular contact either personally or professionally, such as a family member, a nurse and their patient or because of repeat victimisation.

Where the participant experienced repeated victimisation by the perpetrator, this had either always been considered a hate crime by the victim, or had developed into a hate crime as the interactions continued. Some also described hate crimes in which the perpetrator was in a position of power over the victim, for example a police officer or a nurse.

3.3.2 Context for the hate crime experience

Participants described four contexts in which they experienced hate crime:

- The victim had no interaction with the perpetrator prior to the hate crime.
- A one-off contact escalated into a hate crime. Events leading to these escalations were described differently by victims who were police officers and those who were members of the public. The latter described asking an individual to change their behaviour; for example, asking them not to cycle in a pedestrianised area, or reporting an individual to the authorities. For police officers, it was characterised by approaching, arresting or booking an individual into police custody. This type of lead-up to a hate crime was not described for the online hate crimes.
• The victim previously had a neutral or positive relationship with the perpetrator who went on to commit the hate crime. For example, playing in the same sports league.
• The hate crime was part of a pattern of repeat offending/victimisation.

3.4 Impacts of hate crime

3.4.1 Physical and emotional impacts

Participants described physical and emotional impacts arising from hate crime. Impacts did not seem to be based on victims’ characteristics, whether or not they were a police officer, or whether it happened online or offline.

Physical impacts ranged from nausea, bruising and sprains; to cuts, broken bones, the loss of a finger and long-term physical disorders. Generally, these were experienced in relation to violent assaults, but participants described physical impacts (like nausea) of non-physical incidents such as verbal attacks. Emotional and psychological impacts included fear, shock, sadness, shame and long-term mental health issues. Participants also described behavioural impacts and an altered world view. These are discussed in more detail below.

When discussing the immediate impact of the hate crime, participants emphasised emotional and psychological impacts. First, participants described feeling afraid as the hate crime occurred. This ranged from participants feeling intimidated by the perpetrators, to fearing for their lives.

‘At that time, I just thought, 'I'm going to die' […] ‘I'm not going to see my kids no more.’

Longer term participants described feeling scared, either where the hate crime took place or in public spaces generally.

‘I don't like going out into [city] now on my own […] especially at night, I'm very careful of where I go.’

Participants also described feeling shocked, angry, confused and isolated by their experience and its aftermath, as well as shaken and upset. At their most extreme these impacts led participants to have an uncontrollable emotional reaction, for instance not being able to stop crying.

Sharon felt shocked, uncomfortable and hurt when she was racially abused in the street. Though aware that she had done nothing wrong, she also felt a sense of shame about what had happened. She was aware that similar things could happen to her again, and felt that some people will always treat her negatively due to her ethnicity. ‘It doesn't matter that I've got a nice family. It doesn't matter that I may know some influential people in the community. If you're black that's the way you get treated.’

Participants also described being critical of themselves after the incident, including feeling ashamed, weak or ‘stupid’, either due to their vulnerability during the incident, or because they felt they did not take the actions necessary to help the police catch the perpetrator. Experiences also had an impact on participants’ confidence or self-esteem.
‘The moment you get this happen to you [...] you seem to take six paces backwards and it really does damage your psyche and how you feel about yourself.’

Participants said experiencing hate crime had also significantly affected their mental health in the long-term. They described becoming quiet or withdrawn as well as increased stress, nightmares, sleeplessness and anxiety. Some participants had been prescribed medication.

‘Every time I had to talk about it, I'd have nightmares or flashbacks and [...] anxiety [...] I would just have a really bad trauma reaction.’

The nature and extent of the impacts varied. For some, the incident had little impact, whereas for others the impact was intense and long-lasting. The severity of physical impacts tended to relate to the seriousness of the physical assault. However, the reasons behind the strength of the emotional impacts were not clear. In some instances there appeared to be a link between the perceived severity of the incident and the intensity of the emotional impact. However, some participants described experiencing intense emotional impacts by incidents they did not consider severe, for instance the use of derogatory language online. Individuals’ resilience, their previous experiences of hate crime, and the wider context they experienced the hate crime within could all have been influencing factors.

The hate crimes that police officers experienced on duty had varying impacts. In some instances these were limited because participants had come to expect this type of behaviour, they were supported by colleagues and they had positive reporting experiences. In contrast some experiences led to long-term emotional and physical impacts. This was due to the physical severity of the incident and whether it made police officers think about their place in society; for instance, becoming aware that others in society viewed them as ‘different’.

Participants were not always able to separate the impact of the hate crime itself from the impact of their interaction with the CJS when they reported the hate crime. Experiences of reporting and subsequent processes are discussed further in chapter 4.

### 3.4.2 Behaviour and attitude changes

Participants described behaviour and attitude changes as a result of their experiences. Both police officers and victims who were members of the public described becoming more cautious. For example, planning and preparing to go on patrol more carefully, being wary of who they were passing on the street, or not going out at all.

‘It's destroyed my life, really. I don't even go out [...] Before, everyone will tell you [...] 'he constantly used to be out' [...] I just don't feel comfortable going out no more.’

Participants also described feeling isolated and unable to socialise or access their support networks. This was for one of three reasons: they had lost their confidence, their physical mobility had been affected by the incident, or others had responded negatively to them experiencing or reporting the hate crime. In some cases this was because they were part of the same social network as the perpetrator, and this led to the participant being excluded.

Participants also reported an increase in violent thoughts and feelings, for instance carrying weapons for protection.
Some participants deliberately altered their behaviour in an effort to reduce the likelihood of being targeted again. Such changes included avoiding the activities they were engaged in at the time of the incident, or changing the way they spoke or behaved to distance themselves from negative stereotypes of people with whom they shared characteristics. In contrast, other participants deliberately changed their appearance to associate more closely with the characteristic for which they had been targeted; for example, growing a full beard to cultivate a more stereotypically Muslim appearance. This seemed to be either an act of defiance, or because they felt a sense of resignation and anticipated that, as a member of the protected group, they would be treated negatively however they presented themselves.

Participants also described positive changes. These included becoming involved in volunteering and community activities to try to improve society.

3.4.3 Participants’ world view

Participants’ hate crime experiences changed how they thought about society and their understanding of how others viewed them. Participants described an increased awareness of their difference from those around them, and a belief that they would be targeted again due to their characteristics.

‘[Experiencing a hate crime] heightens you to understand that there are people out there and you don’t have to do anything, say anything; they will hate you.’

Participants described questioning or altering their life choices as a result of their experience. For example, some questioned whether working for the police was the correct career path if they would be exposed to this type of discrimination, and whether it was safe for them to live in the UK given their experience and the rise in hate they were witnessing. Related to this, participants described feeling concerned about society as a whole after their hate crime experience. This impact was intensified by the contextual issues discussed in chapter 2, such as a perceived increase in hate crimes after the EU referendum.

Participants also expressed concern about the CJS more widely, including that they did not feel appropriately protected by the police. This was either because they did not trust the police due to the involvement of a police officer in their hate crime; or because they were concerned that the police were not properly policing certain areas or mediums, such as online platforms.

3.4.4 Factors that mitigated the impact of the experience

Extrinsic and intrinsic factors mitigated negative impacts. Police officers described extrinsic factors including the availability of support from colleagues and the response of the CJS. Participants also suggested their experience had a limited impact on them due to the incident not being severe, not resulting in injury and or ultimately not feeling unsafe.

Intrinsic factors included personal resilience, positivity and a sense of resignation. Participants described not being surprised by their experience and being used to it.

‘I’ve experienced quite a lot of homophobia […] It’s just a regular occurrence, and you become immune to that.’
Coping mechanisms such as ignoring the experience, or trying to find humour in it also mitigated the impact on victims.

‘I was told [...] that if you ignore the speech then it doesn't hurt as much [...] You won't spend time thinking about it [...] You won't get it into your system that you're a problem.’
4 Reporting

This chapter explores victims’ experiences of reporting hate crimes. It begins by exploring participants’ decision-making and examines the facilitators and barriers to reporting incidents. The chapter goes on to explore the experiences of participants who decided to report the hate crime. The chapter addresses victims of online and offline hate crimes together, as experiences were common across the two groups.

4.1 Reasons for reporting

Participants who did report their experience fell into two groups: those who chose to, and those whose choice about whether or not to report was limited.

4.1.1 Autonomy in reporting

Among the participants who made the decision independently, reasons for reporting fell into two categories: individual and broader considerations.

Individual considerations

These focused on participants wanting an immediate outcome for themselves as a result of the hate crime they experienced.

- **Immediate benefits.** Reporting was perceived by some participants to have immediate benefits, such as enabling them to let off steam or simply feeling ‘good’ about having reported the incident.

- **Holding the perpetrator to account.** The manner in which participants wanted the perpetrator to be held to account varied. One group of participants described wanting to see the perpetrator sentenced for their crime.

  > ‘I just wanted him to be convicted of it and for it to show up on the system that he has been dealt with for this.’

  However, another group of participants highlighted how it would have been sufficient for the perpetrator to be linked to the crime and for the police to give them a warning and/or explain that their actions were illegal.

- **Restoration.** Restorative reasons for reporting were reliant on the perpetrator being identified, with participants hoping that they would be able to receive an apology or be able to speak to the perpetrator personally.

  > ‘I would have liked to have met her, and said … ‘What you said was juvenile, immature, inappropriate, illegal […] Did you have a really bad day? Do you want to start this again?’

Broader considerations

Broader considerations focused on wanting to raise awareness of and prevent hate crime more widely.

- **Prevention of repeat offending.** Participants hoped reporting the hate crime would prevent the perpetrator from targeting others (particularly those less resilient or able to cope with the impact).
- **Prevention of legitimisation.** Victims wanted to set an example to others that hate crime is not acceptable.

- **Accurate recording of hate crime.** Reporting was considered important in order to provide an accurate picture of the scale and nature of hate crime for the police, other criminal justice agencies, third sector organisations and the general public. This would help it to be tackled more effectively.

  ‘Even if you report it and you don't get the outcome that you want, at least you have a report on the system which goes to [the] overall count and at least, even at that level, there is a recorded incident or offence […] which can be taken into account as something that is happening.’

  Related to this, some individuals felt a particular obligation to report the hate crime because they actively encourage others to do it as part of their job.

### 4.1.2 Limited choice about reporting

One group of participants had limited choice as to whether or not to report the incident. For those who were not police officers, this was because police were present at the time or because a third party reported the crime. Police who experienced a hate crime while on duty described reporting it as part of the formal process they follow as standard.

### 4.2 Reasons for not reporting

Participants described a range of factors which played a role in their decision-making around reporting. Decisions often involved several factors rather than being driven by a single reason. There were three main reasons for not reporting: their experience of the hate crime (and previous experiences), previous interactions with the police, and fear of repercussions.

#### 4.2.1 Incident-specific reasons

For some, the decision not to report the crime related to their sense that it was not sufficiently severe, thereby not passing an individual threshold for reporting. This threshold naturally varied among participants. While some considered an experience serious enough to report only if it involved physical harm, others considered an online incident serious enough to report where the perpetrator was an authority figure rather than a member of the general public. This appeared to be due to the potential level of influence and reach of the individual’s message. The severity of the crime was also perceived to be important in terms of securing a police response. Participants felt that the police would only respond to a ‘serious’ crime, and so did not report incidents they felt were less so.

Having little or no evidence, including witnesses, also contributed to participants’ decisions not to report the crime, even those they considered to be serious enough to report. Participants thought that the police would not be able to do anything in these cases and were also reluctant to waste their own time and limited police resources where there was little evidence.

Participants’ previous life experiences played a considerable role in their decision-making around reporting. Participants described experiencing hate crime (especially verbal abuse) frequently and perceived it as an inevitable part of their lives as people with protected characteristics. For police participants, experiencing hate crime while
carrying out regular duties such as arresting or booking individuals had become commonplace. The normalisation of the experiences caused participants to be less willing to expend time and effort to report them.

‘When you’re a minority, like I am, it [experiencing hate crime] is part of your DNA essentially.’

4.2.2 Previous interactions with police

Previous negative interactions with the police contributed to participants’ unwillingness to report. This involved having previously reported a hate crime or another type of crime and being disappointed with the police response. Having heard of friends’ negative interactions with the police also influenced an individual’s decision.

4.2.3 Fear of repercussions

A third factor influencing participants’ decisions not to report related to the fear of potential personal and wider repercussions:

- **Personal repercussions**: Reluctance to report was driven by fear of the discovery of their own illegal activity, such as engaging in prostitution, at the time of the hate crime. It was also driven by worry about the disclosure of personal information. For example, the police revealing one’s transgender identity to family or friends when following up or investigating a report.

  ‘You’ve got to remember, with us, a lot of people who do cross dressing[^21] do this very quietly. And they do it very much undercover. And they don’t want anything to be told, or anything to come back to their families.’

  Another personal repercussion included concern about the consequences of reporting a respected member of the community and that person publicly denying or contradicting what the participant had reported, therefore damaging the participant’s reputation.

- **Wider repercussions**: This involved concerns about the wider ramifications of reporting. For example, that being reported could intensify a perpetrator’s prejudiced views about the protected characteristic group.

  ‘[Reporting] may make him hate [the protected characteristic group] even more. I might make it worse for the [protected characteristics group]. So leave it alone.’

4.3 Facilitators and barriers to reporting

4.3.1 Facilitators

Facilitators to reporting were generally not discussed by participants as they focused more on barriers. However, convenience was identified as a facilitator for those who had chosen to report. This related either to the ease of reporting in person where an officer was at the scene of the crime, or the availability of different ways of reporting - for those that were aware of them (see section 4.4.3).

[^21]: Transgender identity encompasses many gender identities of those who do not identify or exclusively identify with their sex assigned at birth. Cross-dressing is a form of gender expression and not necessarily indicative of gender identity. We understand that these terms are not mutually inclusive.
4.3.2 Barriers

Participants discussed three types of barriers to reporting. However, they did not always impede the participant from reporting.

- **Shame and blame.** Participants noted how the need to disclose the incident as part of reporting could be an intrinsic barrier. Some victims, for example, felt embarrassed or ashamed about the incident, while others blamed themselves to some degree.

- **Inaccessible reporting facilities.** Some participants discussed reporting facilities being inaccessible due to geography or the participant’s limited mobility.

- **Time required to report.** This was raised both by police participants and members of the public. A view among members of the public was that reporting and the potential follow-up process would be long-winded and demanding, which they would rather avoid.

  ‘When you report a crime, then you’ve got to go to court […] and it can be quite exhausting […] It can be an exceptionally […] long process, and you might not get the results you want, and it stays with you for a long, long time.’

For police participants, the fact that custody sergeants sometimes require officers to seek advice from the CPS before charging someone with a hate crime was discussed as a barrier. It was noted that the removal of this element of the process, especially in cases where other officers witnessed the event, would simplify and shorten the internal reporting process when experiencing hate crime on duty.

4.4 Reporting processes

4.4.1 Timeframe

The timeframe for reporting hate crime varied among participants. As discussed above, one group was invited to report the experience immediately by a police officer who was on the scene. A second group decided immediately that they would report the experience, and did so as soon as it was convenient for them. Another took longer to make the decision to report: the timeframe varied from one day to about two months after experiencing the crime.

These participants identified a range of reasons for why it took them longer to report. Some did not know that their experience constituted a crime or that reporting it was an option for them. This group was subsequently informed by others they discussed their experience with. Others were unsure whether their experience fit the hate crime criteria and undertook their own research (such as checking the definition of hate crime online or speaking to a helpline) to develop their understanding. A third group initially felt there was no need to report because they were sufficiently resilient and/or supported, or little point because they felt there was insufficient supporting evidence. These participants subsequently changed their minds, either because others suggested they could benefit personally, because it would contribute to accurate records, or because they came to understand that other victims had been targeted by the same perpetrator.

4.4.2 Reporting pathways

All participants’ formal reports of the hate crime they had experienced were submitted to the police. Participants contacted the police in different ways, outlined below.
In some instances, participants reported the incident to the perpetrators’ employers too. This was because the incident had taken place in an institutional setting (such as a hospital) or in the course of the perpetrator’s work, and participants wanted to ensure the perpetrator was held to account and that others within their care were not at risk.

Police participants described having a separate internal procedure for reporting which involved a colleague recording the crime into the system at the police station. Police officers experienced hate crime while they were on duty, so a perpetrator could be arrested by the participant or a colleague before the incident was officially reported.

4.4.3 Awareness of reporting methods

Awareness of reporting methods varied between participants: one group’s awareness of options was limited to calling 101 or reporting to the police in person. Another group was aware of additional reporting pathways such as online reporting. This knowledge came from participants’ work (including volunteering) in relevant fields or from researching reporting options after the incident. Those who were aware of different ways of reporting felt that this facilitated reporting, as they could do so in a way that was convenient to them.

4.5 Experiences of reporting

Participants submitted their initial report by one of the methods mentioned above. For the participants who reported to the police in person, this was the end of their reporting experience as no follow-up stage was necessary. For the rest, a follow-up was arranged, either in the form of a police visit, a meeting at the police station or a phone call. This follow-up stage was necessary to take the formal report and victim statement. The timeframe for this follow-up varied widely from the same day to ‘a couple of weeks’ after participants had submitted their initial report.

The initial stage of reporting was generally described more positively than the follow-up. Three factors influenced participants’ views on reporting: appropriateness of police officer response, communication, and practicality of reporting tools.

4.5.1 Appropriateness of police officer response

It was important to participants that officers were understanding, polite and professional at both the initial and follow-up stages of the reporting process. Where this was the case, participants viewed their reporting experiences positively.

‘[The police officer] was somebody who was doing their best to listen attentively, and take down details, and was polite and professional.’

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<tr>
<th>Phone</th>
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<tr>
<td>Police 101 number</td>
<td>Online police reporting</td>
<td>Police station</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct contact via number known to victim through their own role in community outreach/support</td>
<td>Police force’s hate crime reporting app</td>
<td>Officer on/close to scene</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Specific venue attended by police to take reports</td>
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Police participants in particular described feeling supported by colleagues in their decision to report their experiences, despite this process contributing to colleagues’ workloads.

‘It gave me a lot of confidence because he said, 'It's the one thing that definitely won't be tolerated and [...] I'm really happy to take this forward', you know. And it made me feel that [...] I was believed.’

Negative experiences related to three perceived shortcomings among police officers taking their reports: a lack of knowledge about hate crime, lack of empathy and lack of knowledge about protected characteristics.

**Lack of knowledge about hate crime**

As outlined in chapter 1, hate incidents and crimes should be considered such if they are perceived, by the victim or others, to be motivated by hostility or prejudice based on a person’s protected characteristics.\(^{22}\) As such, if a victim believes that what they experienced is a hate incident/crime, it should be recorded as such by the police. However, participants revealed that this is not always how reports are handled. Participants described instances in which their account of the perpetrator’s motivations were doubted, downplayed, or discounted by the officer receiving the report. As a result, participants had to try to convince the officer that what they had experienced was a hate crime.

‘I said, 'A hate crime is actually in front of your eyes and you have the audacity to say that [it wasn't a hate crime] to me?' and I am knowledgeable of the law and legislation and acts of parliament surrounding all of this, so I lectured her about it.’

In some instances, police actively obstructed participants’ attempts to report their experience as a hate crime. For example, one participant described how despite mentioning that she thought the perpetrator had targeted her due to her disability, the police officer taking her statement repeatedly refused to include this element in the statement. Instead, the statement referred to the experience as common assault rather than a hate crime involving assault. In these instances, participants made protracted efforts to ensure the experience was treated as a hate crime, repeatedly contacting the police and other agencies to achieve this.

‘The steps I’ve had to take to get them to record it as a hate crime has been phenomenal. I should not have had to go to [an elected official]. I should not have had to keep saying, 'This is a hate crime, this is a hate crime.'

It must be noted that these participants were aware of and able to draw from specific hate crime legislation to argue against officers’ decisions to overlook the hate crime aspect of their reports. This suggests that crimes reported by victims who do not have such detailed knowledge may be recorded differently. There is a need to ensure that all officers who may respond to hate crime incidents have an accurate understanding of relevant policy and practice.

**Lack of empathy**

A second factor that negatively influenced participants’ reporting experiences was a lack of empathy on the part of the police officers receiving their report. In some instances, participants described how the receiving officer considered participants’

experiences from their own frame of reference rather than that of the participants and the protected characteristics for which they had been targeted. For example, a participant who was targeted due to their ethnicity described the officer noting the similarity in their age as a marker that he understood the participant’s experience, although age was not why the participant was targeted.

‘He was asking me about what age I am and, ‘Oh yeah I’m about that same age and it’s terrible when things like that happen.’ I don’t think it was relevant […] and I’m like thinking, ‘What are you talking about? I’m not like you. You don’t know me. I don’t know you […] What you’re saying to me is not helping.’

Individuals’ reports were also not always taken seriously or responded to in a professional manner. For example, a police officer downplaying the participant’s experience due to them not being visibly hurt and responding by saying, ‘But you look okay, you’re not damaged […] it’s best just to go home and have a cup of tea’. In another instance, the police officer smiled while the participant was discussing a traumatic violent assault.

‘I’ve just been in a brutal attack where I thought I’m going to die, I thought I was not going to live at that time […] then […] getting an officer having a grin and a laugh about that.’

Lack of knowledge about protected characteristics
A lack of knowledge and skills about protected characteristics among responding police officers was discussed both by participants who were transgender and those who had a disability.

- **Transgender-specific**: Participants described poor experiences in reporting transphobic hate crime, and some also mentioned similar experiences among people in their wider networks. For example, a participant described an officer insisting on knowing her assigned birth name and surgical status as a requirement to be able to take the report, actions which she perceived to be transphobic. These experiences left victims feeling that there was insufficient training for police on transgender issues and best practice in dealing with transphobic incidents.

  ‘So my question is, why was he sent out to take my report when they should have sent somebody out that had trans training, that knew how to deal with trans people, that have opted-in to the training?’

- **Disability-specific**: Participants with either a physical or learning disability experienced a lack of consideration by police towards their disability at the initial reporting stage and at follow-up. Participants described how officers did not check at the reporting stage whether they had a disability, and did not understand that reasonable adjustments needed to be made to address their needs.

  ‘The police are unsure how to approach someone with a learning [disability] […] to ask them, have they got a learning disability, but then also how to talk to someone with a learning disability.’

Participants with previous experience of police officers who had received training or specialism in hate crime were particularly disappointed by this lack of knowledge, because they were able to compare their experiences. One view was that specialised hate crime officers were particularly valued and should be routinely in place.²³ This

²³ Hate crime officers work within a police force and focus specifically on hate crime. They support anyone who has been a victim of hate crime, working with the local policing team and relevant support organisations.
highlights the need for the police to provide training about the needs of victims with protected characteristics consistently across forces and police rank.

4.5.2 Communication

Being told what to expect and the timeframe for next steps contributed positively to participants’ reporting experiences and was highly valued. Good practice involved participants being told approximately when they would receive a follow-up to their initial report and a description of what it would involve (such as the number of officers attending, and the process for taking an official statement). However, delays, errors and difficulties communicating with the police were described as contributing negatively to the reporting experience.

At the initial reporting stage, communication issues generally related to victims not being provided with crime reference numbers. Participants had to chase their police contacts for these details in order to follow-up on their cases.

Other communication challenges related to the process after the first stage of reporting. One issue was the length of time between the initial report and the follow-up. As mentioned above, this could take up to two weeks for some participants. There were two key impacts of such delays: first, participants perceived them to reflect a lack of prioritisation of their cases, indicating that their experiences had not been taken seriously. Second, delays could reduce victims’ willingness to take their cases forward, with some deciding not to complete the report because they had ‘moved on’ or become busier in the meantime. Participants acknowledged the strain on police resources and it was noted that managing their expectations of the length of time needed to wait would have improved this process.

‘Within 24 hours [of receiving the report] there should have been some contact, somebody should have said, ‘Right, we’ve got this and we want to action it, but we can’t get an officer to you for a week’ – that’s fair enough.’

Inconsistencies between information about the next steps given at the initial reporting stage and what actually happened subsequently also influenced participants’ views on their reporting experiences. They could feel that their case was not being taken seriously where follow-up was not delivered as initially set out, particularly where it was delayed or it appeared that less resource had been dedicated to it, for example, when one officer visited where two had been anticipated.

Communication errors within the force were also evident in some instances, and again resulted in victims feeling that their case was not being taken seriously or handled carefully handled.

Jessica, a transgender woman, did not report her most recent experience of hate crime because of previous poor reporting experiences. Most recently, she was disappointed to have waited two weeks from submitting an online report before the police contacted her. When she was interviewed, she was asked questions that focused on her being transgender in a level of detail which was not relevant to her case and which she found inappropriate and offensive. In another instance about a different experience, police questioned her definition of her experience as a hate crime. As a result, Jessica said she will not report again.
4.5.3 Practicality of reporting tools

Issues with reporting tools and systems made reporting hate crime challenging for participants who experienced online hate crime. They found the online reporting systems unsuitable because they appeared to focus on offline hate crime, and it was not always possible to provide links to web pages where incidents had occurred. It was felt that being able to submit evidence such as photographs or videos could improve reporting experiences.

4.6 Support

Experiences of support provided by the police during the hate crime reporting process differed between victims who were themselves police officers and community participants. Police participants discussed being offered and provided with a range of support, including informal support from colleagues, support from senior colleagues (such as supervisors, inspectors or superintendents) and being assigned a hate crime officer. However, this was not the case for all police participants. One described not being offered a hate crime officer and not having heard of one being offered to colleagues victimised on duty either. Police participants particularly valued informal support from colleagues and spoke positively about their experience of support at the reporting stage.

The experience of community participants was less consistent. Some discussed the police supporting them by, for example:

- Accommodating their preference for the follow-up face-to-face meeting by visiting them at their work rather than at home;
- Offering to set up a meeting with all victims of the same online perpetrator; and
- Allocating a support worker that the participant could speak to.

However, a number of unmet support needs were also described, which point to a lack of needs and risk assessment by police at the reporting stage. These included:

- Not accommodating preferences for communication mode. For example, follow-up contact being offered only by phone rather than face-to-face visits for victims preferring to have the formal report taken in person.
- Reasonable adjustments for individuals with disabilities. For example, follow-up visits being offered only at particular times, rather than being scheduled at a time when the victim could arrange for somebody to be there to support them.
- Support and protection for participants who felt particularly vulnerable. For example, measures put in place to address victims’ fears of being re-victimised by the same perpetrators.

Participants highlighted the importance of support being offered, regardless of whether or not they would have taken it up. The offer of support contributed positively to their reporting experience and perception of how the police were handling their report.

In addition to providing support directly, the police can also refer or signpost victims to external support. However, this was not being done consistently. Some participants were referred to Victim Support or received an offer of signposting; some described unclear experiences where support organisations were mentioned briefly but no further details were provided, and others did not recall being referred or offered any signposting. These experiences are explored in chapter 6.
5 Formal response

This chapter explores participants’ experiences of formal responses to reported hate crime, including any police investigation and wider CJS responses. The findings presented are drawn only from participants who had reported hate crime. Police and community participants are discussed separately throughout the chapter due to key differences in their process journeys and experiences.

The chapter begins by providing an overview of the process journeys of both participant groups. It then explores community participants’ experiences, followed by the experiences of police participants. While community participants seemed to attribute the issues discussed in section 5.2.2 to the police, the research team found it challenging at times to distinguish between what was the responsibility of the police and that of other CJS agencies in these processes. Nevertheless, the issues are still relevant to understanding victims’ experiences of the formal response to their hate crime report. This is because such issues can still be seen by victims as a police failure due to the fact that their reporting experience began with the police and the police are the criminal justice agency with whom they have had the most contact.

5.1 Overview of process journeys

5.1.1 Community participants

Among the members of the public who had reported a hate crime, some cases had been closed (participants were not always informed of the reason for this). Other cases had progressed to subsequent stages of the criminal justice process, up to and including a court trial. At the time of the interviews, some participants were part-way through the process. This ranged from victims awaiting the outcome of an investigation after having submitted their report less than a month prior to interview, through to victims having an imminent court date in place.

5.1.2 Police participants

All of the hate crimes reported by police participants had been formally followed up. These cases were concluded either immediately after investigation or after being taken to court. This is in contrast to the less consistent experiences of community participants outlined above. The circumstances surrounding police officers’ experiences facilitated follow-up. This was because the hate crime experiences described by police participants had all taken place while they were on duty and interacting with the perpetrator in some way, either asking them to obey the law, arresting them, or booking them into custody. As such, the investigatory process was more straightforward as perpetrators had either already been held or could easily be apprehended. Moreover, the offences were often caught on footage from body-worn cameras or witnessed by other police officers, giving immediate access to evidence which helped the cases progress to court.
5.2 Community participants’ experiences of responses to reports

Experiences of formal responses from the police can be categorised according to whether participants’ expectations were met or not.

5.2.1 Experiences where expectations were met

Victims’ expectations were met in two distinct ways: those who did not expect to receive any further information or updates, and those who were consistently updated by the police throughout the process.

Not expecting updates

Participants in this group did not actively follow-up on their report as they did not expect that any action would be taken. One group of participants anticipated this when they reported the hate crime, as they knew there was little or no evidence. Another group was told by the police officer at the second stage of reporting that investigation and/or identification of the perpetrator was unlikely and that although the report would be logged, it would most likely not be taken any further.

Consistently updated

Some participants received consistent updates by the police as their case progressed. This group included individuals whose cases were closed following investigation as well as those whose cases were taken further. Participants’ experiences of how the police handled their reports were overwhelmingly positive due to being kept informed of developments throughout.

‘He has been phenomenal. He has been, not only the most practical, efficient, handler of this matter, he’s kept me up-to-date with absolutely everything.’

Participants whose cases were eventually closed described a distinction between satisfaction with the outcome of the investigation and with police conduct during the investigation. Disappointment with the outcome did not necessarily mean participants were disappointed with the overall police handling of the case. Though participants described being disappointed that the perpetrator was not brought to justice, or with legal constraints that prohibited further investigation, they were satisfied with the police interaction throughout the investigation. This satisfaction was driven by the officer in charge of the case being routinely in contact to provide updates. These included: explanation about the outcome of lines of enquiry (even if these had proved fruitless), communication of next steps, and eventually to advise the victim that the case would be closed and the reason for this decision.

After calling the police to report a homophobic hate crime, Maria was visited by two police officers that same afternoon. Both officers were professional and respectful and the officer who questioned her ‘was doing their best to listen attentively, and take down details, and was polite’. She felt her case was being taken seriously because they told her they would put time and effort into trying to find the perpetrator. One of these officers called three days later to update Maria on the investigation and let her know that they had not identified the perpetrator. They offered to extend the search, but Maria declined as she was satisfied with the lines of enquiry that had been followed up, so the case was closed. Although Maria felt sorry that the perpetrator was not identified, she was very satisfied with the way the police handled her case.
5.2.2 Experiences where expectations were not met

Expectations were not met for some participants. The negative experiences described by these participants related to: lack of information and updates, difficulties contacting the police, and accessibility issues. Timeliness of updates and of cases progressing through the CJS also contributed to participants’ negative experiences. As discussed, it was not always clear which elements should have been the responsibility of the police, CPS, courts, or other criminal justice agencies.

Lack of information and updates
Participants whose expectations were not met included those who were not proactively updated at any stage of the process, which disappointed them.

‘I was hoping to hear something back from the police and I did not. I didn’t hear anything. I didn’t hear about any outcomes or any results or any progress.’

Other participants described not being kept fully informed about developments in their case. Examples included not being given an explanation for a change in charges or having to chase information such as the outcome of a plea hearing. Participants were not always given information about delays to their case. For some, these delays were protracted, such as the CPS taking over a year to decide whether or not to charge the perpetrators.

Participants sought updates through various ways, including by phone, email and visiting the police station in person. After seeking updates, participants either discovered that the case had been closed, that the investigation was ongoing or that a criminal justice process had ensued.

It was important for participants to be notified about the case outcome (even if their case was closed immediately without investigation) to avoid them being left unsighted about the status of their report. In some instances where the case had been closed, the participant felt that this had been a mistake and escalated the matter to a senior police officer. Participants in this group did not recall being informed at the reporting stage that it was unlikely that further steps would be taken. As such, it is possible that their expectations were not set in the same way at the reporting stage as for participants whose expectations had been met.

Difficulty contacting the police
The process to secure an update was not always straightforward. Difficulties involved being in a phone queue for over an hour and needing to contact the police multiple times and in various ways (such as phone and email) before receiving an update. Some participants described persistent difficulties in getting in contact with the relevant police officer.

‘Whenever I was ringing her either she was not in the office, they were going to leave a message, they’ll get back to you, whenever I did ring she’s on a holiday, on [leave] and when she gets back, ‘We’ll give her an email and she’ll get back in contact with you.’ And this went on for so long.’

At times, participants did not receive information about the case until external organisations (like Victim Support or others) became involved in seeking updates on their behalf, although responses to these organisations were not necessarily immediate. Such instances had a particularly negative impact on participants’ views of the formal response, as they felt their case was not treated as a priority.
‘I was getting ignored, they didn’t think of me as a priority or nothing, I was just shoved in a corner and forgotten about.’

Lack of consideration of accessibility needs
Participants with disabilities felt that their accessibility needs were not always considered, by both the police and other criminal justice agencies. These can be categorised as physical and communication needs.

Physical accessibility needs that were not taken into account included a participant having difficulty entering the court building via a turning doorway and having to go through the standard security screening. These issues occurred despite the participant having already discussed the support they needed with the officer accompanying them.

Examples of communication issues included some participants with learning disabilities and with visual impairments receiving written information about their cases (by letter or email), which were inaccessible without the support of a third party. Other issues included a lack of flexibility around modes of contact, such as the police officer in charge of the case only being contactable by email and not phone.

‘Basically, their system is too rigid to cope with everyone’s needs.’

In some cases, disability was not the motivating factor for the hate crime the participant experienced and as such it was not necessarily discussed as part of their victim statement or report. This highlights the importance of a needs assessment at the reporting stage.

Participants with disabilities also discussed the negative impact of last-minute changes to their case. This could involve, for example, a plea hearing being moved 100 miles from where the participant lives at short notice, or the CPS changing the defendant’s charge one week before a court date, resulting in the case being heard by a magistrates’ court instead of a Crown Court. Such changes had particularly negative impacts on participants who had conditions that made travelling difficult or required extensive planning for court visits.

5.3 Police experiences of responses to reports
The experiences of the formal response to police participants’ reports were more uniform and more positive than those of community participants. Reporting was followed by a structured and formalised process, which involved colleagues submitting witness statements as evidence.

5.3.1 Formal response
All police participants discussed receiving a positive and supportive response from colleagues. Participants described how the arresting officer and other colleagues who witnessed the incident promptly submitted statements and sometimes helped the participants with their own statements to ensure they were comprehensive.

Participants thought that the time scales in which their case progressed were appropriate, and described receiving updates about their case. They involved updates about the perpetrator being formally charged, often received via email; information about court dates; and information about court outcomes.
‘I thought it was really quite good because I was kept informed all the way through and […] supported by my team members.’

Participants were overwhelmingly satisfied with the type and timing of updates provided in relation to the investigation. However, some mentioned that information about the outcome of court hearings was either not provided or not provided within a timeframe they considered reasonable. In some instances, participants only found out the outcome of their case when they received a letter informing them that they would be awarded compensation, or after actively seeking out the outcome themselves.

5.3.2 Case outcome

Satisfaction with the case outcome was linked to whether the participant felt that justice had been achieved. Participants were pleased with the outcome where the perpetrator either pled guilty or was found guilty in court. Participants who were awarded compensation described it as unimportant. However, formal acknowledgement of the hate crime element of the conviction was essential.

‘I wouldn’t have worried if he was sentenced for racially aggravated battery [rather than racially aggravated actual bodily harm], but it was the fact that he was […] actually sentenced for racially aggravated that actually made me a lot happier, ‘cause it was actually recognised by the courts that his motive was racially aggravated.’

When the case did not go to court or did not result in a guilty verdict, the sense of whether justice had been achieved differed between participants. One view was that the outcome was disappointing even if the perpetrator was found guilty of a different offence (other than the hate crime against the participant) and given a custodial sentence. The disappointment was driven by the fact that the hate crime committed by the perpetrator would not go on their criminal record. As a consequence, it would not be used as a bad character reference if the person were to commit a hate crime in the future. Other participants were satisfied if the perpetrator did not go to court for the hate crime against them, but received a custodial sentence for an unrelated crime. This appeared to be due to the perpetrator being removed from the community, thereby preventing them from committing further crimes against the participant or others. In none of the cases described by police participants did the perpetrator go to court and was found innocent. Nevertheless, police participants clearly distinguished between satisfaction with police handling of the case and the case outcome, and disappointment with the outcome did not impact on how participants felt their case was handled.

‘From the police point of view, it was superb. Everything my organisation did for me was brilliant.’
6 Support

This chapter focuses on participants’ views and experiences of support in dealing with the aftermath of hate crime. This includes an overview of the types of support that were offered or sought by participants, access and barriers to support, and experiences of support delivery.

6.1 Importance of support

Access to support was described as a key factor in ensuring participants did not feel they were ‘suffering alone’. Those without access to appropriate support could feel let down or even ‘ignored’ by the CJS and associated third sector organisations, compounding the impact of the crime. One such view was that ‘they’d prefer I didn’t exist.’

However, provision of support was considered part of a wider picture. One view was that official organisations needed to take the crime seriously and process the case fairly in order to ensure victims’ wellbeing.

‘I was able to deal with it in terms of feelings. So for me I just wanted something to be done in terms of someone was made accountable for it.’

6.2 Types of support

The types of support that were offered and/or taken up by participants responded to the impacts on victims identified in chapter 3, and centred on emotional support, information, advice and guidance, and practical support. Support was provided in person, by phone and via email.

Formal sources of support included Victim Support, hate crime officers within both police forces and local authorities, and specific third sector or community organisations. Some participants were receiving ongoing support for unrelated issues, from support workers from their local authority, voluntary or community groups. Informal sources of support included friends, family, and colleagues.

6.2.1 Emotional support

Participants described a range of emotional support which was given by both formal and informal sources. This included talking through what had happened, discussing possible next steps, and being reassured both by hearing about others’ similar experiences and by becoming aware of relevant organisations’ activities to address broader issues around hate crime.

‘Sometimes it’s the fact you can talk about things and put them out there, and hear that someone is listening and understanding that can make a difference – having a group for people to talk to is maybe as good for [some] people as reporting [the hate crime].’
6.2.2 Information and guidance

Information and guidance included:

- Information and updates about the case itself, such as informing victims about case outcomes or next steps;
- Guidance on the responsibilities of agencies involved in progressing the case and information about what to expect from them; and
- Encouragement and support to request further information or action from criminal justice agencies, or to submit complaints about poor performance.

6.2.3 Practical support

Practical support provided by Victim Support or other third sector support organisations included:

- Preventative measures to reduce the risk of re-victimisation. This included, for example, the provision of safety materials such as personal alarms and stickers to display on targeted homes to warn they were protected by CCTV surveillance;
- Offering to accompany individuals to court;
- Contacting statutory organisations (such as the police and CPS) to support the case and chase a follow-up response; and
- Connecting individuals with media contacts to draw attention to the case and prompt further action from statutory organisations.

Some participants were offered practical support that they did not take up. This included support with aspects of the reporting process, such as preparing a Victim Personal Statement, or preparing other documentation in an individual's second language.

Informal sources also offered victims practical support such as caring for them while they recovered from injuries, transport to and from hospital, and support with correspondence with statutory agencies about the case.

6.3 Accessing formal support

There were two pathways to accessing formal support: independent contact and signposting and referrals, discussed below.

6.3.1 Independent contact

Two types of independent contact were apparent. First, participants actively sought support from a new contact, such as advice and guidance from a third sector campaigning organisation or from the hate crime officer at their local authority. Second, individuals sought support from organisations with which they had an existing relationship. In these instances, the support provided was emotional and practical.

Some participants discussed unsuccessful attempts to access support independently. These experiences are discussed in section 6.5.3 below.
6.3.2 Signposting and referrals

Where participants had been offered information about sources of support, it was not always clear whether they had been signposted or referred. Some participants were offered, but declined, signposting to support services. Others had no signposting, or felt it had not been done clearly.

‘I think they talked about Victim Support, but you know […] I didn’t come away feeling like there were some things I could definitely go to.’

Referrals were made to hate crime officers and to Victim Support. Assignation to hate crime officers were mostly, but not exclusively, described by police officers. However, not all were assigned hate crime officers or signposted to additional sources of support. The reasons for this were not clear in the interviews.

Referrals were not always felt to be necessary or appropriate to individuals’ needs, and in these instances the support offered was not taken up. Participants’ explanations for this are explored in more detail below.

6.4 Declining formal support

Participants declined offers of support for a number of reasons:

- **The availability of alternative sources of support.**

- **Perceived need.** One view was that support was not required unless the experience of hate crime met a threshold of severity. For example, being ‘closer and more personal’ than previous incidents an individual had experienced.

- **Their personal resilience.** Some participants described feeling they could cope either alone or with the informal support of their existing network.

  ‘I’m a bit strong, I think, and there’s maybe people that need it a little bit more than me.’

- **Desire to move on.**

- **Anticipated usefulness.** For some, support was perceived to be useful only if it could make a tangible difference to the way in which the case was handled.

Patrick, a police officer, was victimised while on duty in relation to his race. Colleagues on the scene and at the station supported him emotionally, checking in on him and offering a listening ear. He knew what to expect of the criminal justice process, but was also given updates on progress as quickly as possible. Patrick said that this immediate support made a difference, and as a result he didn’t feel he needed formal support later on: ‘I thought it was really quite good because I was kept informed all the way through and […] was really sort of supported by my team members’. However, he had been told a Hate Crime Officer had been assigned to his case and was disappointed not to hear back from them.
6.5 Barriers to accessing support

6.5.1 Limited awareness of support provision

A lack of awareness of available support presented a barrier to accessing formal support services. Awareness was limited among participants who had been through the formal reporting process in relation to one or more incidents, as well as those who had not reported a hate crime. In some instances, these individuals were in contact with one or two services already, but had not been given other signposting information. Others had no awareness of support they could access as formal support was not offered.

‘To be honest I didn't know that you should be offered it, it wasn't until my friend [...] said that he'd had Victim Support and he said, 'Did you?' And I said, 'I didn't even know it existed, so no.' [...] I might have said yes if they'd have offered me that in the early stages.’

6.5.2 Availability of support

Some felt that appropriate support was not available. This related to geographic proximity: where services were not provided locally, transport and mobility issues affected individuals’ ability to travel to and access support. One view was that funding cuts had impacted the availability of meaningful support for specific needs. The extent to which this relates to a lack of awareness and limited signposting is not clear and would merit further exploration.

‘To a large degree that's nobody there. That's the way we feel [...] There's been so many cutbacks now around that whole area. Even within [a particular local organisation] they seem to have pulled back their help that they used to have.’

6.5.3 Accessibility of support

Some participants had found support to be inaccessible. For example, some support services proactively contacted by participants did not respond, and others said the organisational remit did not cover their needs. These experiences might be indicative of a lack of signposting to more appropriate provision.

In some instances, organisations declined a victim’s request to access their service on the basis that they were already in receipt of support from another source, regardless of the purpose or relevance of that separate provision. For example, a participant seeking emotional support was advised that the service could not be provided because they already had a support worker to assist with practical tasks relating to a longstanding disability. Individuals in such cases felt disappointed and ‘let down’.

Responses sometimes varied among staff at the same support organisation, with participants given contradictory information about whether or not they were eligible for support. In some cases, a poor first response left victims feeling unable to trust the organisation. At its most extreme, the impact was that the victim declined support subsequently offered to them by a different member of staff, despite continuing to feel it was needed.

Finally, where the participant had previously been in contact with a support provider to whom the perpetrator of the hate crime was connected, access to support could be cut
off. This was either because the victim no longer felt able to make use of support provision to which the perpetrator was connected, or because a service declined to offer further support (either actively siding with the perpetrator or having been persuaded by them to refuse service to the individual).

6.6 Barriers to delivery

Participants who were offered support, whether by signposting or referral, identified a range of problems relating to delivery of these services.

6.6.1 Referral pathway breakdown

In some instances, participants who had accepted referrals heard nothing back from support services. Experiences of this nature left individuals feeling let down. In one instance, a provider sent correspondence notifying a victim of completion of support that had not yet been received; in another, a hate crime officer was assigned but did not respond to the email sent by the victim.

‘There was no follow-up, nothing was said to me, and when I asked, […] ‘I thought that I was gonna be assigned a hate crime officer?’, they said, ‘Well, we did’ – but [the officer] never got in touch with me. And it’s all now finished and they still haven’t got in touch with me. So I thought that that was a bit poor, really, to be honest.’

6.6.2 Response delays

The amount of time between referral and response could be problematic. Participants who discussed this did not appear to have been informed of the likely waiting period, and were not aware why responses took as long as they did.

‘I think they phoned a couple of weeks after, and I thought well, if I needed support I would have needed it in those couple of weeks, not now.’

6.6.3 Accessibility issues

Issues relating to accessibility of services were also described. One of these issues was difficulty getting in touch with service providers where direct contact details were not available. A second was an apparent lack of cohesion between disparate services, which presented a barrier where support was required for specific processes or criminal justice settings. An example was where Victim Support was not connected to a particular court, which made it challenging for a victim to arrange a preparatory visit to the court to familiarise themselves with the environment prior to the scheduled hearing.

6.6.4 Limitations of provision

Participants described a number of limitations to the support provided. A lack of specificity or tailoring was identified as a particular limitation. Some of the support that was provided to victims was not felt to be useful for their particular needs. For example, an individual who wanted direct emotional support was instead given practical support including provision of a personal alarm and CCTV warning sticker for their front door.
The boundaries of support provision – such as particular eligibility criteria, the range of support that could be provided, and its frequency and duration – did not appear to have been clearly communicated or understood by some participants. In some instances, support had ended unexpectedly leaving the individual feeling abandoned. This might suggest a need for clearer communication of the role of support services, including any limitations.

6.7 Good practice

Participants particularly valued a number of facets of support they received from both formal and informal sources. These were:

- **Accessibility** – namely, the ability to contact a support service at any time;
- **Responsiveness and consistent engagement**, which made victims feel cared for;
- **Proactive offers** of specific support elements (rather than reliance on victims’ own requests); and
- **Timely responses.**

“That help, it took a lot of my stress away [...] I’ve had enough support off them. Whenever I needed help or I needed to talk to someone or anything, he always told me to pop down and then he’d give me a time when he were free…”

After he was victimised, David called a disability support organisation with which he had ongoing involvement. The call handler responded sympathetically, and he appreciated their proactive offer of additional forms of support. The organisation followed up with David the next day, and went on to support him by contacting criminal justice organisations on his behalf to prompt them to pursue the investigation and provide updates.

David also reported his experience to the police, but was not referred or signposted to any support organisations. He would have liked to have been offered a referral to Victim Support, but was not aware this was possible.
7 Areas for improvement

HMICFRS commissioned this research to gain insight into victims’ experiences of hate crime, including decision-making, motivations for and barriers to reporting these crimes and experiences with the police, wider CJS and support services. The findings informed HMICFRS’s hate crime inspection and so have key implications for HMICFRS, strategic and operational police staff as well as policy makers. This chapter explores the recommendations arising from the research. They relate to specific aspects of the victim experience as well as to victims’ needs more generally. They include both suggestions from participants themselves and those inferred from the research findings.

7.1 Training

Compulsory training should upskill police officers about hate crime so that their responses to victims include further consideration, such as:

- The needs of specific groups/protected characteristics;
- Awareness of hate crime legislation and guidance; and
- Ensuring empathetic and professional approaches to victims.

7.2 Enhancement of reporting tools

Reporting tools should be enhanced to maximise ease of use, including:

- Developing additional reporting methods such as web-based live chats; and
- Adapting existing forms and reporting methods to accept hyperlinks to sites where online hate incidents occurred and to submit evidence, such as photos and videos.

7.3 Consideration of individual preference

Individual preference should be considered and accommodated by police as far as possible during the investigative process, including:

- Mode of communication (such as communication via phone rather than email);
- Signposting and referral options;
- Language and terminology. For example, using ‘individual targeted by hate crime’ rather than ‘victim of hate crime’, or ‘prejudice-based crime’ rather than ‘hate crime’).

7.4 Communication

Communication with victims should be regular and should aim to establish and manage victims’ expectations. It should be ensured that victims:

- Receive a crime reference number at the initial reporting stage;
- Are told at the reporting stage what they can expect in terms of any next steps, including timing;
Understand what is available in terms of support, how to contact services, and how long responses are likely to take;

Receive timely follow-ups, or if this is not possible, are told how long they must wait;

Are provided with timely information about any changes to their case;

Are updated when their case has been closed; and

Are updated about the outcome of a court case.

7.5 Signposting

Signposting for victims should be consistent and immediate. Signposting to multiple sources of support would better address distinct needs, including preferred methods of contact, and mitigate any impact of referral delays. Signposting should include:

- Emotional support (counselling and support helplines);
- Sources of information and advice (local organisations and websites); and
- Protected characteristic-specific information and advice.

7.6 Support around court processes

Victims should be provided with information and support around court processes, including:

- Information about what the court process involves; and
- Consideration of additional needs that people might have, especially in cases of victims with disabilities.

7.7 Focus on online hate crime

Greater attention and dedicated resources should be allocated to support clarity around the reporting and resolution of online hate crime. Focus should be aimed at:

- Producing clear guidance on what constitutes online hate crime, service provider responsibilities and reporting processes; and
- Monitoring and investigating issues in online spaces.

7.8 Awareness-raising and community engagement

Public awareness-raising should be undertaken to inform, prevent and deter further hate crime incidents, covering:

- What hate crime is, including online hate crime;
- The range of different reporting tools and processes;
- Prosecution processes and coverage of successful prosecutions;
- Signposting information about services and support organisations; and
Where resource allows, greater presence and community engagement work would ameliorate police relationships with the public and assist with reducing barriers to reporting.

7.9 Coordination between agencies

Finally, greater coordination is needed between organisations, both locally and nationally. This should involve:

- Building understanding of where incidents occur;
- Sharing research and evidence to improve awareness and understanding;
- Contributing to awareness-raising through community engagement events, education programmes, online and social media campaigns, public advertising and press coverage; and
- Smoothing the transition for victims between agencies to facilitate practical support to them at all stages.
Appendix 1: Methodology

Recruitment

A multi-pronged recruitment approach was used to ensure a diverse sample was included in the research:

1. **Identified police forces**: HMICFRS identified six police force areas and contacted Force Liaison Officers (FLOs) in each. FLOs identified a range of third sector support organisation contacts in their area that could be approached to introduce the study to individual victims. These support organisation contacts are referred to as ‘gatekeepers’ for this research.

2. **Third sector organisations**: Organisations that might support the research as gatekeepers were also identified through desk research and directly through existing contacts. The research team approached contacts working in the sector, including members of the HMICFRS Hate Crime Inspection Expert Reference Group, who supported recruitment by either signposting or facilitating an introduction to their own contacts at relevant organisations. This approach ensured that a breadth of organisations and relevant contacts were drawn upon to support recruitment directly and by signposting to other appropriate contacts.

3. **Social media**: Social media platforms were also used to advertise information about the study. This approach included a study web page on NatCen’s website, tweets from the NatCen Twitter account and a Facebook post. The social media strategy made the study more visible and accessible to a wider audience, and a number of support organisations and third sector contacts shared information and links to the study web page on their own websites and social media accounts with a view to reaching prospective participants.

As a result of the approaches outlined above, opportunities arose for the research team to attend a number of events specifically focused on hate crime, in order to raise awareness and disseminate information about the study to relevant gatekeepers and potential participants. The research was also shared in organisational newsletters online and offline, as well as on a local radio.

A staged opt-in recruitment process followed. In the first instance, gatekeepers spoke directly to members of the NatCen research team for a detailed briefing about the research prior to contacting any potential participants. The gatekeepers then provided individuals with an information sheet about the study and discussed the research with them. Following discussion, gatekeepers asked individuals who expressed interest in taking part for their permission to pass their contact details to NatCen or, alternatively, to contact the research team directly.

The research team then spoke to each individual to verify their eligibility for the research, and obtain verbal consent to arrange an interview for those who were eligible. Participants were eligible to take part if they had:

1. Experienced a hate crime since January 2017; or
2. Experienced the crime prior to January 2017, but were in contact with support services and the CJS since January 2017.

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24 Force Liaison Officers are special points of contact within police forces who have relationships and links with members of the community. These officers were an important resource for the purposes of the Hate Crime Inspection.
The achieved sample was closely monitored to ensure a diversity of experience across protected characteristics as well as across the type of crime and its mode (online and offline).

The sampling approach was adapted part-way through the recruitment stage due to challenges with recruitment (detailed in the Challenges and Limitations section below). Initially, recruitment had been limited to the six police force areas included in HMICFRS’s Hate Crime Inspection: Gwent, Avon and Somerset, Suffolk, Greater Manchester, West Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire – and strict quotas were in place across each of the protected characteristics. However, these eligibility restrictions were subsequently relaxed due to a low response rate. As such, the geographical scope of the study was expanded to cover all of England and Wales, a convenience sampling approach was applied, and initial sampling quotas were discounted.

## Data collection and analysis

The research team carefully scheduled interviews to ensure that participants would be able to access appropriate support if needed after the interview. Participants were able to choose whether the interview was conducted face-to-face or over the phone. At their request, some participants were interviewed at their home or at other neutral venues, such as gatekeeper organisations’ offices.

As described in the main report, interviews were conducted using a topic guide developed in consultation with HMICFRS to ensure a degree of consistency while also enabling an informal, flexible approach so that the researcher could respond to the participant’s individual needs and circumstances and to ensure they felt comfortable sharing their experiences. Researchers emphasised at the start of the interviews that participation was voluntary. At the end of each interview, participants were given £20 as a thank you for their time, and given a list of organisations providing support for victims of hate crime and/or to specific protected groups.

With participants’ permission, interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Where permission was not given, written notes were taken instead. The transcripts and notes were managed and analysed using the Framework approach embedded in the NVivo software package. In this approach, data is organised using matrices that enable thematic analysis both within and between cases, allowing descriptive and explanatory analysis to be undertaken (Spencer et al., 2013).

## Challenges and limitations

As a result of the challenges outlined below, the total number of qualitative interviews fell short of the 48 originally planned.

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Gatekeepers
Pressures on support organisations' resources affected their ability to recruit participants, with some unable to help identify participants due to limited capacity and more pressing priorities of delivering support services.

The recruitment largely relied on contact via police and support organisation gatekeepers. It is important to acknowledge that victims of hate crime do not always report their experiences or access support services, meaning a number of potential participants would not have been reached through these strands of recruitment. However, such individuals may have become aware of the research through the social media recruitment.

Over-representation of certain groups occurred because specific support organisations shared information about the research with the particular groups of people that used their services.

Eligibility
Some participants were unsure whether or not they had experienced a hate crime. This was often due to a lack of certainty around what constitutes a hate crime or as a result of their interpretation of the incident, perhaps not considering it to have been significant enough to be considered a hate crime. As a result, individuals who met the required criteria to take part in the study may not have recognised or felt that they were eligible.

Limitations to the eligibility criteria excluded a number of individuals who expressed an interest in participating in the research. Some potential participants had experienced a hate crime prior to January 2017 or outside the six police force areas covered by the study. The geographical scope of the study was expanded to include all of England and Wales part-way through the research, so that some additional participants could be included.

Burden
The sensitive nature of the research topic meant that some potential participants felt reluctant to speak with researchers about their experiences. The 15-minute screening interview used to check eligibility may have been perceived by potential participants as an additional burden, reducing their interest in taking part. To mitigate this, the screening process was adapted and reduced once the geographical scope and sampling quotas across protected characteristics were relaxed.

Resources
Capacity to accommodate specific needs, such as language requirements, was not always possible. However, individuals’ accessibility issues were accommodated as far as was possible within the research team. This included offering face-to-face or phone interviews in settings most suitable to the participant. Additionally, a multilingual researcher was introduced to the team so that one interview could be conducted in the participants’ native language, and participants with learning disabilities took part in interviews conducted by experienced members of the team and taking into account considerations discussed with the individuals’ support organisation.
Appendix 2: Interview topic guide

A tailored topic guide was used to ensure a consistent approach across all the interviews and between members of the research team. The guides were used flexibly to allow researchers to respond to the nature and content of each discussion, so the topics covered and their order varied between interviews. Researchers used open, non-leading questions, and answers were fully probed to elicit greater depth and detail where necessary.

The main headings and subheadings from the topic guide are provided below.

1. Introduction
   - Introduce self and NatCen (including NatCen’s independence)
   - Introduce research, aims of study and interview
   - Length (about 60 minutes)
   - Voluntary participation
   - Brief overview of topics to be covered in interview
   - Confidentiality, anonymity and potential caveats
   - Audio recording (including encryption, data storage and destruction)
   - Questions
   - Verbal consent recorded on tape

2. Participant background
   - Participant’s local area
   - Background (household, family and social networks, day-to-day activities)

3. Experience(s) of hate crime
   - Participant’s definition of hate crime
   - Hate crime experience(s) (including most recent experience and previous experiences)
     - What happened
     - What led up to experience
     - Why they were targeted
     - Impact on them
     - How they define their experience

4. Reporting hate crime (including most recent experience and previous experiences)
   - Information they had about reporting
   - Decision-making around reporting
   - Experience of the reporting process
   - Formal response after reporting
   - Support received from the police (or organisation reported to) and wider CJS
   - Signposting to support organisations

5. Other support (including support received during most recent experience and previous experiences)
6. Overall views and recommendations
   - Reflections on experience of support received throughout
   - Recommendations to improve how hate crime cases are dealt with
   - Recommendations for individuals in a similar situation to theirs
   - Ongoing engagement with support organisation
   - Final thoughts/anything not covered

7. Close
   - Stop recording: any questions, review confidentiality and check whether participant is comfortable with content of discussion, thank them for their time, close.