

HATE CRIME AND TENSION MONITORING IN SUNDERLAND

**REPORT OF THE CHAIR OF THE HATE CRIME AND TENSION MONITORING GROUP
AND SUNDERLAND PARTNERSHIP MANAGER**

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present current trends and statistics on hate crime in the Sunderland area, and to outline the action that is being undertaken to raise awareness of hate crime, encourage hate crime reporting by the public, and the support mechanisms in place for victims of hate crime.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In December 2018 it was agreed by Sunderland City Board that Hate Crime was a key issue that needed to be dealt with at a strategic level. Partners agreed for a senior representative from each of their organisations to establish a Hate Crime and Tension Monitoring Group. The group would be led by Northumbria Police and Sunderland Partnership.
- 2.2 This decision had been influenced by the impact of the 2016 Brexit vote on the city, which saw Sunderland, having been the first city to declare in favour of 'leave', labelled a "racist" city. The recognition of Sunderland as the first 'leave' city was perpetuated in the national media and saw the city become a hotspot for far-right activity, frequently visited by a variety of prominent figures in the far-right movement including, most notably, Tommy Robinson. It has since been uncovered that the majority of those taking part in far-right demonstrations in Sunderland had travelled into the city from other towns and cities across the UK, with little involvement from Sunderland residents.
- 2.3 In order to promote Hate Crime awareness a Hate Crime Champions scheme was officially launched during National Hate Crime Awareness Week 2019. The training was developed in collaboration between Northumbria Police and Sunderland Partnership. The purpose of the training is to raise awareness of what constitutes a hate crime, the impact on victims and their families and/or community, and how hate crime can be reported. Individuals trained as Hate Crime Champions are then asked to be a point of contact for colleagues within their organisation and for their service users.

FIGURE 1

Northumbria Police Hate Crime Statistics for the Sunderland Area

2018

Hate Type	Count
Racial	285
Disability	30
Homophobic	58
Faith	46
Transphobic	6
Age	1
TOTAL	426

2019

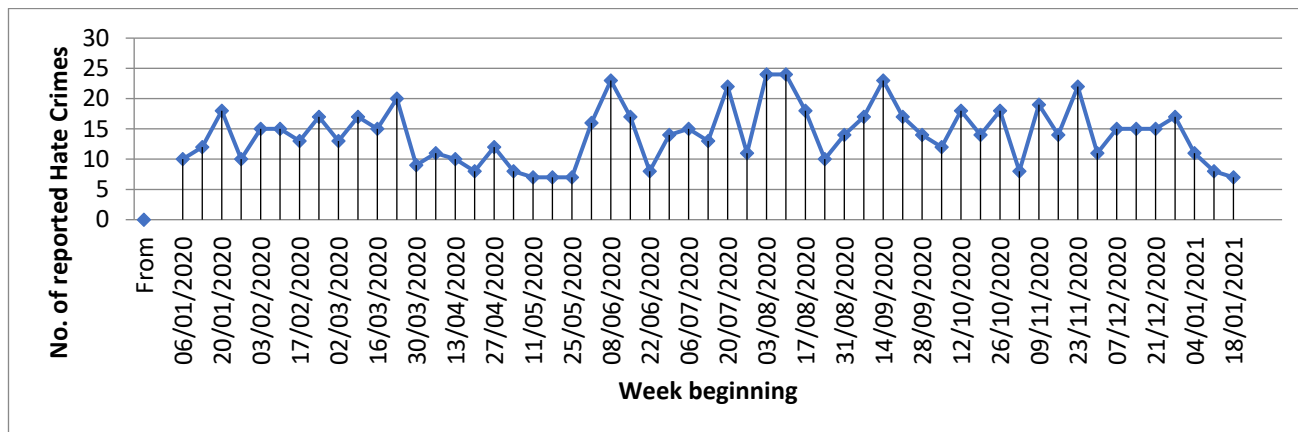
Hate Type	Count
Racial	270
Disability	61
Homophobic	62
Faith	13
Transphobic	7
Age	0
TOTAL	413

2020

Hate Type	Count
Racial	316
Disability	66
Homophobic	86
Faith	22
Transphobic	6
Age	0
TOTAL	496

3. CONTEXT

- 3.1 At face value, Sunderland is understood to statically have the second lowest rate of hate crime across Tyne and Wear with only South Tyneside marginally lower. Figure 1 reflects total hate crime over a three-year period. The figures reflect the trend regionally and nationally in that 2019 had significantly lower figures than other years. Reflecting on the figures therefore for 2018, 2020 we see that whilst there has been a rise in hate crime in Sunderland overall the main area of concern is disability hate crime which has seen the biggest increase over the three year period. Two possible reasons for this may be that more people are being targeted on the basis of having one or more disabilities or, alternately, that people affected by disability hate crime are able to recognise that they have been a victim of hate crime and feel confident to report it via the police or other means. Homophobic hate crime has also increased in the city in contrast to Faith hate crime which decreased significantly between 2018 and 2020. Public Order Offences (verbal threat/harassment) and common assault (Section 39) are the two most recurrent offences associated with Hate Crime.
- 3.2 Although the increases look high we are still talking about relatively small numbers of incidents. We know there is still significant under reporting across all areas of hate crime despite the best efforts of partners to encourage people to report incidents to the Police or through other mechanisms. Reported hate crime nationally has risen every year since at least 2012 / 2013 with some rises being attributed to better police recording & more reporting. However, sudden spikes in hate crime can be linked to specific events e.g. the EU referendum, terrorist attacks and Covid.
- 3.3 In 2020 the Coronavirus pandemic & national lockdowns led to a number of noticeable changes in the nature of reported hate crime. As lockdown 1 progressed and the night time economy shut down there was a significant drop in hate crime reporting across the force. Reporting shifted to issues & disputes between neighbours leading to hate speech & public order offences.
- 3.4 Protests in the summer of 2020 linked to the Black Lives Matters movement led to a rise in reported race hate crime across the UK (also seen in Sunderland).



Weekly reported hate crime totals in 2020 (Southern Area Command – Sunderland / South Tyneside)

- 3.5 Locations of hate crime are sporadic across the city, with no major hotspots or areas of concern. Identified minor hotspots include Mowbray Park, though it is recognised that this is predominately due to the fact that it is a popular city centre location as opposed to an area of frequent hate crime incidents. Similarly, local businesses such as newsagents, off-licenses and takeaways are further examples of common locations for hate crime due to how frequented they are by residents and visitors of Sunderland. Hopewood Park Hospital is another minor hotspot for hate crime, accounting for 33 hate crime reports in 2020 with the majority of offences relating to race hate speech towards staff from patients.
- 3.6 Shopkeepers have been identified as those most likely to be victims of hate crime, this may be explained by how regularly both residents and visitors come into contact with them.
- 3.7 Despite this there are only a few repeat victims and no cases that raise concern, with no repeat offenders identified. In 2019, the youngest victim of hate crime was 11 years old, the eldest being 87 years old, and there was an equal number of male and female victims affected by hate crime.
- 3.8 Currently there is a trend of victim dropouts at various points of the system. Victim attrition continues to be a concern in relation to the prosecution of hate crime cases, exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic (with victims, witnesses & offenders falling ill) & delays in court proceedings over the year. Work is planned by the Southern Communities Engagement Team to understand why local victims of hate crime have disengaged from the criminal justice process.

4. CURRENT ACTIVITY

- 4.1 The Hate Crime and Tension Monitoring Group was established in March 2019 and is currently chaired by the Chief Inspector of Communities. The purpose of the Group is to address the problem of under-reporting, a significant factor that can limit the improvement of the Criminal Justice System in areas such as directly tackling hate crime, supporting victims, and appropriately dealing with perpetrators of hate crime.
- 4.2 The Group identified that under-reporting can be caused by a variety of connected and complex key reasons including lack of knowledge amongst the public on how to report a crime, lack of confidence and trust in the police to take the incident seriously, fear of retaliation from the perpetrator or their associates, and that hate crime has become a regular, and therefore acceptable, aspect of some people's lives.
- 4.3 Examples of key objectives currently undertaken by the Hate Crime and Tension Monitoring Group are that proposed activity should be intelligence-led and evidence-driven to ensure interventions focus on emerging trends and themes. This is being followed through by members providing and sharing data in meetings that are related to Hate Crime. Furthermore, the Group will monitor key cases or events that may raise tensions within the Sunderland area, and share measures being undertaken by member organisations and/or the potential joint

response that may be required. Recent examples include Brexit and the potential targeting of Chinese communities due to fear of the Coronavirus.

- 4.4 Further objectives of the group are to respond to local concerns raised by the Sunderland Partnership's Equality Forums (Disability Independent Advisory Group, LGBT Forum, BME Network, Interfaith Forum) and Refugee and Asylum Multi-Agency Meeting. Due to their connections to various vulnerable communities, these groups are ideal to reach out to those people who may be disproportionately affected by hate crime. In addition, it is vital to ensure that education and prevention plays a significant part in increasing understanding, preventing and tackling hate crime, including in the development and implementation of hate crime training packages or community engagement activities when necessary. The Hate Crime Champions training is one of the schemes currently supported by the Hate Crime and Tension Monitoring Group.
- 4.5 The Hate Crime Champions training was officially launched during National Hate Crime Awareness Week 2019 and developed in partnership between Northumbria Police and Sunderland Partnership. Delivered by the Northumbria Police Southern Community Engagement Team across the Sunderland and South Tyneside area, and can be offered at any organisation to a group of 15-20 staff per session. The training discusses what a hate crime is, what constitutes a hate crime, how victims and family/communities can be affected by hate crime, utilising a range of local and national examples to illustrate the topic of hate crime further. A trained Hate Crime Champion will be able to help raise awareness of hate crime in their organisation, and act as a point of contact for people who believe they have been a victim of hate crime and require advice and guidance on how to report it. As of March 2020, there have been over 600 Hate Crime Champions trained in Sunderland although training did cease for some time due to lockdown.
- 4.6 The Hate Crime Champion Scheme has been so successful that Northumbria Police (Southern command) are now looking to develop a training package for schools, linking into one of the key priorities of education outlined for the Hate Crime and Tension Monitoring Group.
- 4.7 Going forward the local Hate Crime Champions Scheme will continue having been incorporated in a broader scheme across the force following a successful bid for funding from the national hate crime advisor to policing (Paul Giannasi) & PCC Kim McGuinness.
- 4.8 The new version of the scheme focuses on the impact of hate crime on victims, communities & business alongside a drive to increase reporting to the police to allow victims to receive support. To date in the region of 13,000 people have attended a variety of face to face & online hate crime awareness sessions (including schools, colleges, universities, industry & Police). Work is ongoing with Sunderland University to roll out the scheme to staff & students from Summer 2020. The training packages for the scheme are endorsed by NCFE (a national education awarding body). There is interest across the UK in this scheme with the latest being from the National Communication Workers Union (led by Southern Communities Engagement Team).
- 4.9 If the Scrutiny Committee or other Elected Members would like to become Hate Crime Champions training can be arranged virtually.
- 4.10 The three Community Engagement Teams in Northumbria Police have worked to improve hate crime data quality in the last year. This work includes checking incident reports on a day to day basis to ensure that all reports are correctly flagged & that victims are provided with offers of support in all cases.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1
 - To note the contents of this report
 - To consider whether the Scrutiny Committee would like to become Hate Crime Champions and to further promote the scheme within their networks

Key Contacts:

Jessica May, Sunderland Partnership Manager
Jessica.May@sunderland.gov.uk

Ch. Insp. Paul Walters, Chief Inspector Communities
Paul.Walters.7223@northumbria.pnn.police.uk