

## **Hate incidents and hate crimes**

A significant priority within West Sussex County Council's work on developing stronger, more resilient communities is to tackle hate incidents and hate crimes. As part of this work, we commission a Hate Incidents Support Service from Victim Support, and work closely with partners to monitor hate incidents and hate crimes, respond to emerging concerns and patterns, support victims and witnesses, and educate our communities about how they can tackle hate incidents and hate crimes.

### **What are hate incidents and hate crimes?**

'Hate incidents' mean actions or words that are targeted at a person because the perpetrator is hostile or prejudiced towards the victim's actual or perceived disability, race or ethnicity, religion or belief, sexual orientation, or transgender identity.

A victim does not have to be a member of the group at which the hostility is targeted. In fact, anyone could be a victim of a hate incident or hate crime – it is what the perpetrator perceives about their victim, and whether that influences their actions, which is important.

When the actions or words also amount to a criminal offence, it becomes a hate crime.

Hate incidents and hate crimes can happen anywhere – for example, on the street, in the workplace, in social spaces, or online. They can take many forms, including abusive words, physical attacks, online comments, damage to property, bullying, or a campaign of harassment.

### **Why should I report hate crime?**

Hate incidents and hate crimes are harmful and hurtful to the people who are subjected to them. They can cause fear, distress, and a range of physical and psychological consequences. They can also lead to tension in communities.

Sometimes, an incident or crime is not isolated but instead might be part of a wider pattern, in which case it becomes important to stop the perpetrator as soon as possible. By reporting them, you may be able to prevent these incidents from happening to someone else.

Reporting is therefore vital. You can obtain support, counselling and information for yourself or the person affected. You can stop it happening to someone else and you can stop it spiralling into a wider problem.

### **How can I report a hate incident or hate crime?**

There are several ways you can report an incident or crime, whether you have been a victim, a witness, or you are reporting on behalf of someone else.

In an emergency, always remember that you should call 999.

West Sussex County Council commissions a Hate Incident Support Service from Victim Support. They can offer support and guidance as well as recording the incident so that appropriate action can be taken.

You can contact them by email or phone:

- Email: [sussexhateincidentreport@victimsupport.org.uk](mailto:sussexhateincidentreport@victimsupport.org.uk);
- Phone: 0808 168 9274 (Freephone).

You do not have to give your name, although you can obtain follow-up support if you need it by leaving your details. You will not necessarily need to give a formal statement, have contact with the police, or attend court.

For more information, and an online easy-reporting form, see <https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/fire-emergencies-and-crime/report-problems-in-your-area/report-hate-crimes/>.

### **What does being a Hate Crimes Ambassador involve?**

Sussex Police has launched an initiative that will see Hate Crime Ambassadors established in the communities of Sussex. West Sussex County Council actively supports this and we have recruited a significant number of Ambassadors from our staff cohort and within our communities.

They are looking for people who are interested in raising awareness of what hate crime is and encouraging victims to report to police or partner agencies across Sussex. Ambassadors attend a two hour coaching session at a time and location that is convenient, and have the opportunity to refresh and enhance knowledge and understanding at regular intervals. Ambassadors are given information about what hate crime is, how it can be reported and what happens when it is.

There are no firm expectations of Ambassadors, and no monitoring. The Police simply want everyone who signs up to consider how they can integrate the role into their daily lives, work and interactions, in any way that is appropriate for them. So far, this has included giving talks to community groups, being a visible advocate of reporting, challenging incidents and inappropriate language, and simply being aware of hate crime in order to support people when necessary.

This is an important initiative which can help us to raise the profile of hate crimes and how they can be reported and tackled. In doing so, you can help to make West Sussex a safer place for everyone.

### **Where can I obtain more support if I need it?**

West Sussex County Council has a dedicated team that is working on hate incidents and hate crimes. They are called the Vulnerable Individuals Team, which sits within the Community Safety and Wellbeing Team.

The manager of the team is Beverly Knight and you can contact her at [Beverly.knight@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:Beverly.knight@westsussex.gov.uk) or 0330 222 4223.

Rob Rhodes-Kubiak is the Principal Community Safety Officer, Vulnerable Individuals who leads on our work to raise awareness of support and reporting mechanisms. You can contact him at [Robert.rhodes-kubiak@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:Robert.rhodes-kubiak@westsussex.gov.uk) or 0330 222 3858.

Otherwise you can talk to your local Principal Community Officer for more advice.

## **What is the Hate Incident Support Service, and what do they do?**

This is a service that WSCC commissions from Victim Support.

They offer a place to report hate incidents and hate crimes and they monitor, report on and support action in response to hate incidents and hate crimes. As well as this, they offer an expansive service to anyone who has experienced, witnessed or reported a hate incident or hate crime. This takes a range of forms and is always negotiated with the individual concerned to ensure that appropriate measures are put in place.

As such, they can offer free, confidential emotional and practical support for as long as the individual needs it, which can include counselling, one-to-one discussion spaces, or accompanying people to police stations or court if necessary. Also, as well as practical adjustments to help people to feel safe – alarms, added security measures, co-ordinating repairs to property and so forth – they can also act in an advocacy capacity to help individuals to feel confident in reporting hate incidents and hate crimes, and to help them to tackle the problems that they may face as a result. This can include negotiating with partners and statutory authorities to enact adjustments in their lives which will help them to regain feelings of safety and wellbeing.