

4 September 2018

The Rt Honourable Sajid Javid MP
Home Secretary
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

Dear Home Secretary

RESPONSE TO HMICFRS INSPECTION ‘UNDERSTANDING DIFFERENCE: THE POLICE’S INITIAL RESPONSE TO HATE CRIME’ PUBLISHED ON 19 JULY 2018

While the tone of the report was one of concern about the national response to hate crime, I welcome the thematic inspection. Hate crime destroys lives, instils fear and rocks communities. It will not be tolerated in Avon and Somerset and it is important that we understand the effectiveness of policing in this area. When we understand where improvements are needed, we are a step closer to delivering it.

The causes of concern and corresponding recommendations documented in the inspection report that require direct action within forces were:

Cause of concern	Recommendation
We are concerned that flagging hate crime incorrectly has serious implications for forces in terms of their ability to understand hate crime and how it affects victims and their communities, and then respond appropriately. Incorrect flagging also undermines the integrity of published national data and analysis.	We recommend that, within three months, Chief Constables make sure hate crimes are correctly flagged, and that forces have good enough processes in place to make sure this is done.
<p>We are concerned that some hate crime victims may be vulnerable to being targeted repeatedly and, at the moment, the risks to them aren't being assessed well enough.</p> <p>We are concerned that the risks to some hate crime victims aren't being managed well enough or consistently enough, and some hate crime victims are less safe as a result.</p> <p>We are concerned that the recurring risks to some hate crime victims aren't being managed well enough or consistently enough, and that the most vulnerable victims would be safer if the</p>	<p>We recommend that, within six months, chief constables adopt a system of risk assessment for vulnerable victims of hate crime. The NPCC lead for hate crime and the College of Policing should give chief constables advice about how best to do this.</p> <p>They should also consider whether the principles of the multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARAC) process are a good way to manage the risks to hate crime victims.</p>

police routinely worked with partner organisations to manage risks to victims.	
We found that forces don't consistently use the Home Office cyber-enabled flag. This means forces and the government may not have good enough information to understand how much different groups are targeted online, which means they can't make sure effective decisions are made about how to respond.	We recommend that, within three months, Chief Constables make sure that the Home Office cyber-enabled flag is consistently applied, and that forces have adequate systems in place to make sure that this is done.
In our view, forces don't gather and use intelligence about hate crime consistently enough. This means forces don't have enough information to understand fully how different groups are victimised and make sure that officers make effective decisions about how to respond.	We recommend that Chief Constables make sure officers know it is important to find and record more intelligence about hate crime and use it to inform the police response.
Our inspection shows that some hate crime victims get a better service than others. This is because forces apply the national minimum standard of response to victims of hate crime inconsistently.	<p>We recommend that, within six months, the NPCC lead for hate crime works with the College of Policing to review the operational guidance about the minimum standard of response to establish if it is still appropriate and relevant for forces</p> <p>We recommend that, following the review, any agreed minimum standard of response for forces should be monitored by force governance processes, including external scrutiny.</p>

I was pleased that the report picked out areas of good practice in Avon and Somerset, such as the delivery of hate crime training, and the support mechanism in place through Lighthouse. I have recently carried out a service delivery assurance on the areas of vulnerability, looking specifically at victims who are persistently targeted and also victims of hate crime. Consistent with the tone of this inspection, the assurance work showed that the Constabulary had significantly improved its response to hate crime, but still had areas to work on. For example, missed opportunities to flag crimes as hate crimes was identified as an issue.

I can confirm that the Constabulary is:

- in the process of designing some internal scrutiny activity (to be carried out with independent parties and partner agencies) to evaluate the consistency of service provided to hate crime victims
- working with partner agencies to develop and implement a joint action plan that will improve its collective response to hate crime.

I note also that there were causes of concern which will be progressed by the NPCC hate crime lead and the College of Policing, in conjunction with policing partners. These included the need to deepen understanding of how groups are victimised, to refine operation guidance to sure hate crimes are identified (flagged) appropriately, to consider how to update guidance to appropriately

tackle online offending, and to improve communications with and support offered to victims. I will ensure the Constabulary supports this important work as it is undertaken.

In conclusion, I have discussed the findings of the report with the relevant Chief Officer and Strategic Lead for Hate Crime, and I hope to see the Constabulary build on its strengths and use the insights in this inspection to generate further improvements in both its response to hate crime and in its preventative activities.

This response is published on the OPCC website (<http://www.avonandsomerset-pcc.gov.uk/Openness/Audits-and-Inspections/Her-Majestys-Inspectorate-of-Constabulary.aspx>).

Yours sincerely



SUE MOUNTSTEVENS
Police and Crime Commissioner
for Avon & Somerset

cc. Wendy Williams, HMI
Chief Constable Andy Marsh, Avon & Somerset Constabulary

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