

The Hate Crime Project

Research Summary

The proposed research is centred around the issue of hate crime, a term that is used to describe crimes committed against people because of prejudice towards their identity characteristics or perceived 'difference'. The research will examine the nature and impact of hate crime (or targeted victimisation, to use the term preferred by the proposers) as experienced by those who are subjected to the types of violence, harassment and abuse associated with this harrowing form of crime. It will also investigate their perceptions and expectations of criminal justice agencies and other service providers in order to assess the needs of victims and to identify lessons for effective service delivery.

This will be achieved through the distribution of online and written surveys to a wide range of different communities susceptible to targeted victimisation and through the undertaking of interviews with members of these populations. Those groups who will be accessed include: minority ethnic and faith communities; lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities; those with physical or learning disabilities; the homeless; asylum seekers and refugees; and Gypsy Traveller communities. Equally, the research will have the capacity to capture the experiences and perceptions of those who may feel that they have been victimised because of mental health issues or their membership of an alternative subculture, or indeed because of other identity characteristics which do not form the basis of the more generic communities typically associated with hate crime victimisation.

The site for the proposed research is Leicester, one of the most plural cities in the UK containing a diverse range of communities who are targeted, or who are at risk of being targeted simply because of who they are. The research team have already secured access to in excess of 150 different community groups and networks, each containing large numbers of potential research participants who have suffered from this form of victimisation.

The research comes at a time when both official figures and academic studies show levels of hate crime to be rising and when people's fear of the 'other' continues to be exploited by far-right parties such as the British National Party and extreme protest groups like the English Defence League. As such the proposed research is both significant and timely, particularly as criminal justice agencies, local authorities and other organisations who could potentially offer support to victims, are facing converging pressures, including significant cuts to resources, the impact of organisational restructuring, civil unrest and a loss of public confidence in their policies and processes for responding to targeted victimisation. Against this background there is a danger that the forms of violence, harassment and abuse directed at some of the more vulnerable members of society could escape undetected as agencies are forced to prioritise what may be seen as more pressing, or more visible problems.

Within this context the study will make a practical contribution to knowledge about how agencies can develop cost-effective responses that meet the needs and expectations of victims of targeted violence. It will also contribute significantly to the academic literature on hate crime and victimisation, and the lessons learned at a regional level for both policy and scholarship will be extracted and disseminated to a national audience through publications, conferences and workshops.

Impact Summary

Who will benefit from this research?

The research proposal has the potential to benefit service users, vulnerable communities, academics and criminal justice policymakers and practitioners, including:

1. Potential and actual victims of hate crime
2. Community groups, networks and associations
3. The police service
4. Crown Prosecution Service
5. Local authorities
6. Victim Support
7. Ministry of Justice and Home Office
8. Charities and third sector organisations

How will they benefit from this research?

Achieving the aims and objectives will deliver a series of practical benefits. At one level, the research will involve community groups, networks and associations from the outset, ensuring that they are fully consulted throughout every stage of the research process and engaged in the dissemination of findings. Moreover, the study will contribute to debates about the scope and effectiveness of existing hate crime policies, and this will enable policymakers and practitioners to identify ways of tailoring services to meet the expectations of victims who require their support. Equally, it will help these organisations to develop responses to victimisation that are based upon the actual needs of victims, rather than assumptions about who their service users are and what their needs might be. At a broader level, the research will generate significant new data that will inform regional and national policy and practice. It has the capacity to make an important contribution to debates about the nature and impact of hate crime, the legitimacy and effectiveness of criminal justice policy, the use of engagement strategies with 'hard-to-reach' communities, and responses to victims of hate crime.

How will we provide opportunities to engage with the research?

The proposers have already established contact with gatekeepers and facilitators to each of the communities that will be involved in the research, and a representative cross-section will form a community working group which will be consulted at regular intervals. This will provide an important community interface to inform the research. The proposers have also secured the support of personnel from key local agencies, including the police, Victim Support and local authorities, who will form the project steering group and will help to maximise the policy impact of the research. Senior ACPO and Ministry of Justice leads on hate crime will also have an input. Other means for generating impact include:

1. A project website, which will be active throughout the study in order to publicise the research to the wider communities of Leicester and to promote ways of accessing support to potential and actual victims of targeted violence.
2. A plain English report summarising the research findings for non-academic users.

3. Translated copies of the report for intended beneficiaries of the research whose preference would be to receive a non-English language version.
4. Launching the findings at a national two-day conference (at the University of Leicester), which will devote separate days to considering the implications of the research for scholarship and for policy. National policy leads from the statutory and voluntary sectors will play a key role at this event.
5. Working with steering group members and senior national hate crime policymakers at a post-project workshop to develop an action plan to implement the research's recommendations.
6. Presenting the findings at four relevant academic and practitioner conferences.
7. Submitting articles based on the research to local media, community newsletters, relevant websites, practice-oriented academic journals such as 'Policing and Society', the 'British Journal of Community Justice', 'Criminology and Criminal Justice' and the 'British Journal of Criminology', and to magazines such as 'Criminal Justice Matters' and 'Police Review'.

Pathways to Impact

The study aims to generate new data and knowledge relating to hate crime and victimisation. It will make a significant contribution to academic and policy debates about the groups of people subjected to violence and harassment because of their identity, 'difference' or perceived vulnerability; the nature and impact of these forms of violence and harassment; and criminal justice responses to hate crime. It will provide fresh insights into the perceptions, experiences and expectations of hate crime victims and the protection of the more vulnerable and marginalised members of society. Therefore, in relation to these target audiences of potential/actual victims of hate crime and practitioners and policymakers responsible for responding to hate crime, our impact objectives are to:

- secure the commitment to the research of key stakeholders, local community groups, associations and networks;
- raise awareness of the different forms that hate crime can take and the range of groups and communities who fall victim to hate crime;
- empower 'hard-to-reach' victim communities to become more involved in the criminal justice process;
- influence change and good practice in the context of responding to the needs of hate crime victims;
- influence relevant policy at local, regional and national levels.

The message that we wish to convey from the outset is that crimes targeted against minority groups and other vulnerable communities can have a devastating impact upon not just the victim but upon their families, their wider communities and the well-being of society as a whole. As such, accessing first-hand accounts of this victimisation, and of expectations from criminal justice responses, can shape the way in which agencies understand, prioritise and address the needs of those subjected to hate crime.

Communications and Engagement

In advance of submitting this application, and in consultation with diversity leads within the local authority, criminal justice agencies and other key service providers, the proposers have assembled a comprehensive database of contact points for the wide range of communities based within the city of Leicester. Included among these contacts are those from a range of faith communities, including Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Jewish, as well as

those from African and African Caribbean, Eastern European, Somali and Chinese backgrounds. Other groups, such as refugees, asylum seekers, Gypsies and Travellers, those from sexual minorities and those with mental health issues, are also incorporated. The applicants have therefore already established contact with gatekeepers, or facilitators, from each of the communities that will be involved in the research, thereby forging the necessary links and level of trust with them. All of these gatekeepers are keen to be involved in the research and a representative cross-section will form a community working group which will be consulted at regular intervals throughout the project. This will provide an important community interface to inform the undertaking of the fieldwork and dissemination of the findings.

The proposers have also secured the support of personnel from key local agencies (including the police service, Victim Support, the city and county councils and the prison service) through the establishment of a regional Partnership Against Targeted Hate (PATH). The proposers set up this partnership in September 2010 in order to bridge the gap between hate crime scholarship and policy, and it has encouraged closer working relations amongst regional criminal justice agencies and other partner organisations which will be of significant benefit to this research. Members of the PATH network have agreed to form the project steering group, as have national leads on hate crime policy, which will help to direct the research throughout its duration and to maximise its strategic impact.

A further key component in the communications and engagement strategy for the proposed research is a project website which will be designed during the early stages of the research and will be accessible to the public throughout the duration of the study. This will provide a mechanism for publicising the research to the wider communities of Leicester, with the website containing information about the project, details of how victims of hate crime can access support from service providers, and links to the final report and executive summary. The proposers will utilise their contacts within the local authority and local media to publicise the project website across the various communities within the city. In terms of disseminating the findings, the proposers will prepare an Interim Report, to be delivered to members of the steering group and community forum halfway through the project, and a plain English report summarising the research findings for non-academic users. Translated copies of the report will also be produced for intended beneficiaries of the research whose preference would be to receive a non-English language version. The report will be disseminated to relevant criminal justice agencies, third sector organisations and community groups in Leicester via the already established networks of contacts. The proposers also have extensive experience of utilising national and local media outlets to disseminate research findings, and this will be a strategy used for the proposed study. The findings will be launched at a two-day conference to be hosted at the University of Leicester, where separate days will be devoted to communicating the implications of the research to academic and practitioner audiences. National policy leads from the statutory and voluntary sectors will play a key role at this event. The policy implications will also be considered through the organisation of a post-project workshop, with steering group members and senior national hate crime policymakers, to develop an action plan for implementing the recommendations of the study. The findings will also be disseminated at four relevant academic and practitioner conferences. Finally, the proposers will submit at least four articles based on the research to the most relevant practice-oriented refereed academic journals within the field, including *Policing and Society* and the *British Journal of Community Justice*, and to some of the most respected academic journals within the wider

discipline of criminology such as Criminology and Criminal Justice and the British Journal of Criminology. The research topic centres upon a significant area of criminological scholarship and policy and its findings will have strong appeal to these journals. Articles will also be written for significant non-refereed magazines and journals in the subject area, including Criminal Justice Matters and Police Review, as well as for community magazines and relevant websites.

Resources for Impact Activities

We have anticipated that the cost of most impact activities will be absorbed within the funds directly allocated to the research staff. However, £19,654, just over 5% of the budget, has been allocated for specific impact activities. This includes the production, translation and distribution of an interim report, final report and its executive summary; attendance at relevant conferences; publicising the research in community magazines and journals; and for the presentation of findings at a two-day conference at the University of Leicester. In addition, a significant proportion of the research administrator's time will be devoted to activities designed to maximise the impact of the research, including liaison with community representatives and the design and maintenance of the project website.