



How to... tackle hate crime

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Introduction

What are hate crimes, hate incidents and racially motivated hate incidents?

Hate crime is 'any criminal offence which is perceived, by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by hostility or prejudice'. A hate 'incident' is a report to the police (or other authority) that might then be classed as one or more crimes. A key test (called the 'perception test') is whether the crime or incident is perceived by the victim to be motivated by hate: if it is, then it should be recorded and investigated as such. Hate crime might relate to race, religion or belief, disability, sexual orientation, and gender reassignment (five of the nine 'protected characteristics' in equalities legislation).

This 'How to...' focuses on:

- racially motivated hate incidents, which we define as any behaviour which causes alarm or distress to individuals or groups, because of their colour, race, nationality or ethnicity
- hate incidents based on religion or belief, especially Islamophobic (anti-Muslim) incidents.

Hate incidents related to housing and neighbourhoods could involve verbal abuse, threatening behaviour, damaging property or leaving graffiti, demanding that people leave the area or carrying out more serious assaults such as arson or physical attacks. Applying the 'perception test' (see above), all levels of incident should be taken seriously, recorded, and lead to an appropriate response.

Why is this an issue for housing?

Social landlords are strongly committed to equalities principles, to tackling anti-social behaviour and to promoting good relations between different communities in the areas where they work. In many cases they will already be in partnerships with local authorities, the police, and other bodies to tackle hate crime. They will want to be at the forefront of dealing with prejudice and discrimination, countering the toxic reactions that have resulted from the referendum debate.

The recent hate crime increase appears to have been biggest in areas that voted most strongly to leave the EU. About two-thirds of council and housing association tenants voted for Brexit, and attitudes towards migrants among people living in estates and neighbourhoods with social housing might have worsened as a result of anti-immigrant messages during the campaign. Although as yet there is no indication of direct links between social housing areas and increased hate crime, landlords will want to be vigilant in ensuring that relationships between tenants do not result in such incidents and that community relations do not deteriorate.

As well as responding quickly and effectively to hate crime, housing managers may wish to reappraise their policies, staff training and community engagement to ensure that maintaining and improving relations within neighbourhoods is a priority. They may also want to look at what wider initiatives might be taken to promote contact between recent arrivals and longstanding residents, tackle myths (for example, about housing entitlements), assist integration and provide neighbourhood-wide services that encourage social mixing.

How should social landlords deal with race and religiously motivated hate crime?

This section looks at ways of responding to hate crimes once they have occurred. The next section is about proactive intervention in neighbourhoods and estates to reduce such crime and improve community relations.

1. Having a hate crime policy

Having a specific policy covering the different types of hate crime (not just those motivated by race or religion) is essential to establish the importance of the issue for the organisation, both for staff and tenants, and to set out some of the principles that will be followed. For example, it might make a clear commitment to using the 'perception test' (see above), taking a 'victims first' stance, and recording every incident and following them up (especially where perpetrators and/or victims are customers of the organisation).

A strategy should also outline the steps that will be taken in response to hate incidents, depending on their seriousness. For example, it may set out a policy mix of non-legal and legal remedies, up to and including possession proceedings where justified. It may also set actions to respond to hate crime in the context of more pro-active work to promote better community relations

If you decide to deal with hate crime as part of a wider anti-social behaviour strategy, you should ensure that it is a prominent element and the special features of hate crime are fully covered.

Futures Housing Group (FHG) – a combined hate crime and ASB policy

FHG's policy was adopted in July 2015. It makes a clear commitment to the group's 'zero tolerance' approach to hate crime, putting victims first and ensuring all staff are aware of the policy. It briefly sets out the legislative context and has a clear list of aims for the policy. One of these is to achieve a 'positive impact on communities' through work to improve relations within neighbourhoods. The policy sets out staff responsibilities and external partnership arrangements for dealing with hate crime. It also describes how victims will be supported.

The policy covers staff training arrangements and monitoring of hate crime, including giving feedback to residents so they are encouraged to feel they can safely report hate crimes to FHG. It includes the recording system to be used when an incident or crime occurs.

FHG find this is working well: complainants/victims are updated throughout the investigation and have input on the decision making process for investigation and enforcement, putting the victim first and involving them in the process from the outset, has helped manage their expectations and confidence in the process.

More details: Carl Harper
carl.harper@futurehomescape.co.uk

Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) taking a stand against racism

Hate incidents and crimes have grown in number in recent years even though they remain comparatively few. The Northern Ireland Housing Executive (landlord of 88,000 social dwellings) has been particularly active and has introduced a range of measures to prevent incidents and support victims. It has also published a 'hate harassment toolkit'. The toolkit aims to provide a wide range of practical information and advice to staff, community workers and other professionals throughout Northern Ireland.

NIHE's actions and current plans include:

- mapping of BME and migrant worker households – where they live, how they use NIHE services, their use of the private rented sector, etc (data from which can then be used for 'myth-busting' at local level)
- various race relations initiatives and publications to develop intercultural understanding at community level
- a scheme called 'supporting tenancies for people from ethnic minorities' (STEM) STEM aims to support people who could be at risk

of being victimised because of their perceived ethnicity, and to strengthen positive community responses in dealing with incidents of intimidation.

NIHE works in partnership with the Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NIACRO) to provide staff who are available to support housing staff and tenants when dealing with threats and/or incidents of hate crime or hate harassment.

More information on the toolkit: www.nihe.gov.uk/hate_harassment_toolkit.pdf

2. Encouraging people to report hate crime

Crime surveys suggest that hate crime is severely under-reported. Only by taking action to encourage reporting can the full scale of such crimes be seen and victims properly helped. As organisations which have a trusted relationship with their customers, social landlords are in an excellent position to encourage them to report such crimes. In-house publicity, resident newsletters, website articles and social media can all encourage victims, family members or neighbours to inform their landlord of incidents that are hate-related.

A variety of routes should be available for people to report incidents (e.g. in person, by phone, text, social media). Ideally these will allow for people with learning disabilities/difficulties and also be available in languages other than English. Victims are unlikely to be familiar with the procedures that must be followed when investigating a hate crime. They can be complex and investigations can be time-consuming and difficult. Having an agreed reporting route with which all agencies are familiar can help make the process as smooth as possible.

Viridian tackle under-reporting of hate crime

Viridian is urging residents to tackle hate crime by reporting problems as soon as they happen. Every household has been sent a card containing the message 'Give crime and anti-social behaviour the red card'. The card contains the phone numbers needed to report hate crime and for help with anti-social behaviour.

Viridian's operations director Matt Campion said: "Crimes committed simply because of who a person is have no place in our communities, but sadly they are under-reported. Our red card campaign urges everyone to take a stand against hate crime and report it. No one has to suffer in silence."

When reporting crime, residents are asked to tell Viridian who is responsible, the nature of the incident, when and where it happened and the impact it had.

Find out more: www.viridianhousing.org.uk/off-off-off-give-crime-anti-social-behaviour-red-card/

There is growing use of hate crime reporting apps which enable reports to be sent anonymously and to be accompanied by video clips etc, such as in [West Yorkshire](#). The [True vision](#) website can be used to report crimes in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, with the reports going to the appropriate local police force.

Giving victims the opportunity to report hate crime without approaching the police directly – for instance to a third party such as a housing association – has been shown to improve access to the criminal justice system. Some groups, such as refugees and new migrants, Roma people and Gypsies and Travellers, might be particularly reluctant to report hate crime. Third-party reporting helps victims to feel comfortable in coming forward to receive the necessary support. It can offer opportunities for reporting through different channels – including face-to-face, by phone and online. Police Scotland encourages third-party reporting and provides [a list of reporting centres](#) that people can use. This includes a number of Scottish social landlords who receive hate crime reports from local people, whether or not they are not tenants.

3. Working in partnership with police and other agencies

Many social landlords are involved in partnerships dealing with crime in general or specifically with hate crime. Partnerships which specialise in hate crime can be cost-effective ways to deliver reporting routes (including in other languages), specialised victim support, community education and staff training. They may work to standardise and simplify procedures to assist reporting and help ensure that all critical staff (e.g. police officers) are familiar with procedures.

Chase against crimes of hate (CACH)

CACH is a hate crime partnership which brings together a range of agencies including social landlords and local councils in Staffordshire. It provides:

- a reporting service
- support – to suit the specific case and individual – this can range from acting as an advocate to simply offering a listening service for those who do not want to take matters further
- education – working in educational institutions, with staff in partner agencies and in communities to help people question the judgements they make about others and think about the ways they treat them
- promotion of the hate crime service so that there is wider knowledge of its availability.

More information: www.cachpartnership.org.uk

4. Assessing the vulnerability of victims

Following a report of hate crime, the vulnerability of the victim(s) should be assessed as soon as possible. The results should be shared with other agencies that are involved in supporting/protecting the victim. A consistent way of doing this is to use a risk assessment matrix, agreed between the agencies. CIH has a [risk assessment matrix for ASB cases](#) developed with the Home Office, which is now used by or has been adapted by many agencies. If such a tool is used, it must be integral to the handling of the case by each agency, not simply a bureaucratic exercise. Its identification of high-risk or medium-risk victims should guide the subsequent handling of the case by all the agencies involved.

5. Supporting victims of hate crime

Victim support can vary from basic, practical help to in-depth counselling. It might include:

- immediate practical steps like securing doors and windows if there has been an attack on the victim's home
- providing personal alarms – connected for example to a 24-hour repairs reporting service or support service for older or disabled tenants
- home security improvements
- victim reassurance or more in-depth counselling
- transfers to a new tenancy elsewhere
- keeping the victim informed of progress with the incident.

Note that victims are often not kept up-to-date with case developments, contributing to victims feeling that their case is not being dealt with efficiently or effectively.

It is unusual for housing staff to give in-depth support but this might be available via a partnership with a specialist agency like [Stop Hate UK](#). But victims often also appreciate support from small, community-based groups rather than the more familiar and mainstream organisations.

Northern Ireland's hate incident practical action (HIPA) scheme

HIPA is available to all householders who have been subject to a hate attack in the vicinity of their home, regardless of tenure, once the incident has been reported to the police and an incident number issued. The service is accessible 24 hours a day. The victim's home can receive immediate repairs to secure the property (if needed). Following a visit from a police crime prevention officer a range of repairs and possibly additional security measures can be recommended and the NIHE or housing association may be able to provide these at no charge. There is further support available for victims depending on the type of hate attack, from trained staff or volunteers. For example, Victim Support employs a bi-lingual support worker to deal with race hate incidents.

A total of 82 incidents were responded to in 2015/16.

Hate crime Victim Support advocacy service www.nihe.gov.uk/victim_support_advocacy_service_leaflet.pdf

More information is available from NIHE: www.nihe.gov.uk/index/community/anti_social_behaviour/hate_crime/hipa.htm

6. Training all staff

Even if an organisation has specialist staff dealing with hate crime, it is vital that all staff – especially those in face-to-face contact with customers – are trained in recognising different levels of hate crime, given understanding of the types of discrimination felt by different groups (preferably in discussion with willing representatives of those groups), shown how to respond sympathetically, be given practical examples and encouraged to work through how they would deal with different scenarios, including when they are themselves witness to discrimination or hate incidents. Staff training is not only necessary to ensure that hate crime is recognised and appropriately handled, but also to give confidence to potential victims that they can report incidents and that they will be properly dealt with.

More information

Further CIH resources on hate crime and promoting positive community relations:

[What you need to know about Brexit and how it might affect migration, housing need and eligibility \(2016\)](#) – CIH member only

[How to... tackle racially motivated hate incidents \(2015\)](#)

[How to... tackle disability-related harassment \(2012\)](#)

[Housing and Migration: A UK guide to issues and solutions \(2012\)](#)

[How to... manage anti-social behaviour cases effectively \(2011\)](#)

[A guide to engaging Muslim communities \(2008\)](#)



Chartered Institute of Housing

Octavia House
Westwood Way
Coventry CV4 8JP

024 7685 1700

www.cih.org