

Raising Awareness of Hate Crime and Promoting Diversity

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In the Northwest, especially Oldham we live in a vibrant and diverse community which includes people from various religious, cultural, social and ethnic backgrounds. We celebrate diversity and inclusion but unfortunately sometimes a small number of people can, as in any community, challenge diversity in a negative way. This can lead to a hate incident or a hate a crime.

A hate incident occurs when someone perceives hate or discrimination against themselves and a hate crime is when an actual crime is committed because of a person's disability, gender identity, race, sexual orientation, religion, social diversity or alternative sub-culture. Greater Manchester Police are one of only a few police forces who recognise incidents/crimes against someone with an Alternative Sub-culture, the majority of forces in the country are yet to recognise and include this.



A hate crime doesn't always include physical violence. Using offensive language towards you or people harassing you because of who you are, or who they think you are, is also a crime. This also applies to them posting abusive or offensive messages about you online. Not all hate incidents are criminal offences, but it is still important that incidents are reported so they can be recorded by the police to help them improve how they police the area. Even if do not personally perceive the incident to be hate related, it is enough that another person thought the incident was hate related.



Unfortunately this can happen to anyone at any time and should not be tolerated, we would encourage people to report this either directly to the police or through a reporting centre if you want to remain anonymous and don't want to visit a police station.

At Total Communication Services CIC we were recently awarded a grant from Oldham Council to help raise awareness of hate crime and encourage reporting. During our work we have found that people with learning disabilities often have been a victim of hate crime or hate incidents. Through discussion with our Communication Advocates (read more about the group here <https://www.totalcommunication.org/single-post/2018/07/21/Introducing-our-Communication-Advocates>), we realised that everyone in the group had experienced some form of hate incident in the past and wanted to contribute toward raising awareness.

Using the funding from Oldham Council, we have co-produced with our Communication Advocates a set of 10 coloured A4 line drawings. Each drawing depicts a different scene showing some form of Hate Crime or discrimination. Each image represents something that one or more of the group have experienced or an idea of a hate crime that they wanted to highlight. These pictures can be used as a tool for discussions around hate crime and discrimination. The pictures also help people with Learning Disabilities, speakers of other languages, people with limited understanding or those who have other communication difficulties to understand and/or express their views or experiences.

Having a picture to support understanding can make it easier for people of all abilities to communicate more openly when reporting or discussing hate crime. We have created other resources using this format and they have always been well received in the past.

This project has allowed us to create a valuable resource that can be used by adults with learning disabilities, children, day centres, schools, charities, social workers, police, counsellors or anyone else who supports people around hate crime. We have donated a set of the images each to two charities, (1 children's and 1 adults), in Oldham and made the images available from our website in an electronic format for ease of use. We are a not for profit organisation and have kept the cost of the images minimal to allow as many people as possible to have access to them and use them as needed.

We hope our work may help increase awareness and acceptance of the diverse community we live in and in a small way may contribute to reducing discrimination. We are happy to have achieved both our aims to co-produce the images from the point of view of a group of people with learning disabilities and we are also grateful to Oldham Council, for the initial grant which helped us achieve this and recognise the unique opportunity we had to contribute to raising awareness.



Thank you for reading this blog, the number for reporting hate crime/ incidents is below. I can be contacted on shahnaz@totalcommunication.org. If you would like to purchase a set of images, they are available as a download in the online store on our website <https://www.totalcommunication.org>

For more information on hate crime please visit letsendhatecrime.com or call the Victim Support Services Helpline: 0161 200 1950, Text Relay, 18002 0161 200 1950. Extra support is available for people who wish not to contact the police or for those who need extra support.

This can be accessed at the Stop Hate Helpline - 0800 138 1625 - a free confidential 24-hour hate crime reporting service.