"It's soul destroying"

Conversations with children and young people affected by hate crime in Wales

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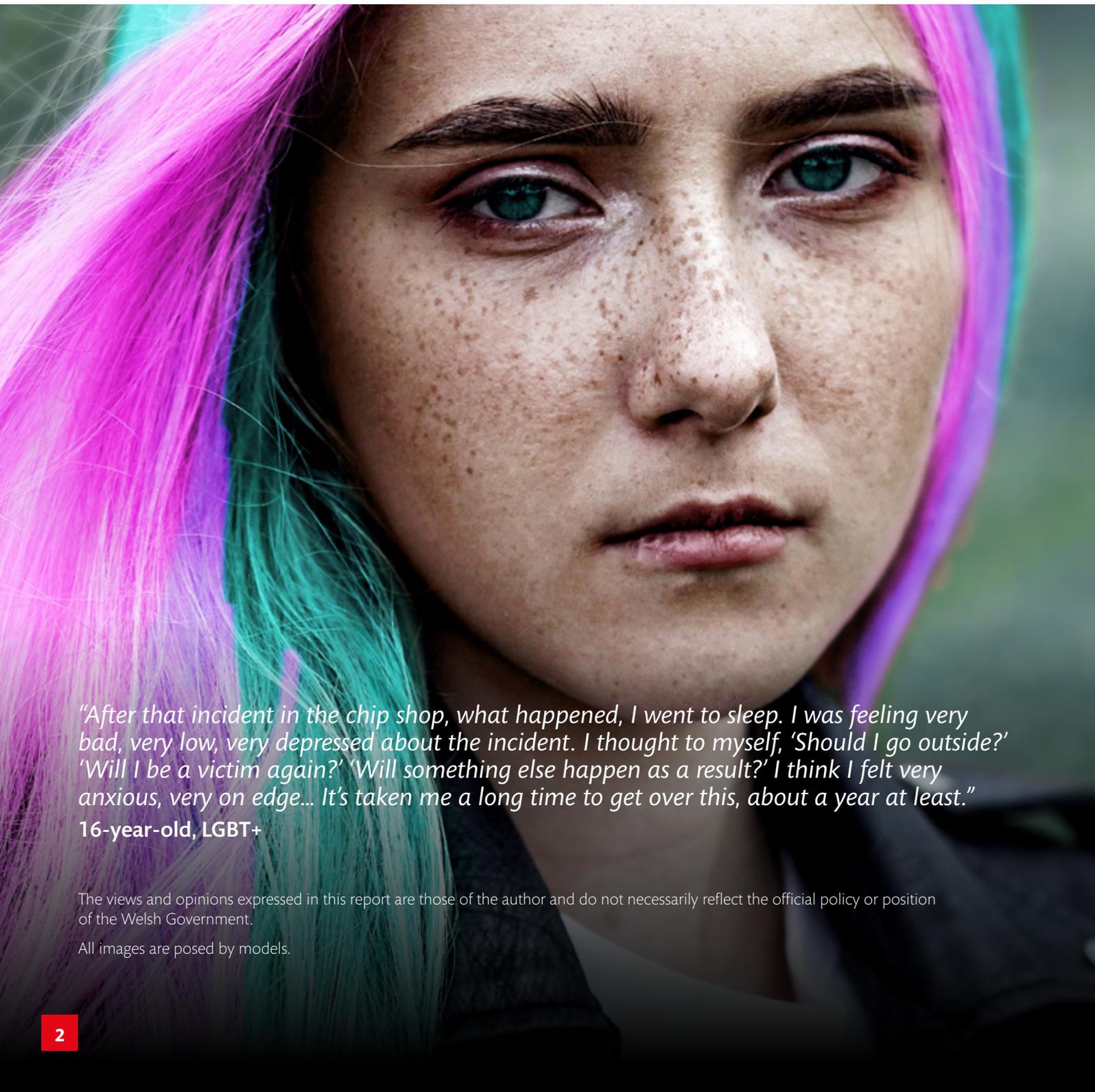
"After that incident in the chip shop, what happened, I went to sleep. I was feeling very bad, very low, very depressed about the incident. I thought to myself, 'Should I go outside?' 'Will I be a victim again?' 'Will something else happen as a result?' I think I felt very anxious, very on edge… It's taken me a long time to get over this, about a year at least."
16-year-old, LGBT+

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Executive summary

In 2019, the Welsh Government's Equality Team initiated research on children and young people (CYP) (11–16 years old) affected by hate crime in Wales. The first phase of this research focused on mapping and describing the current provision and the support in place for young people affected by hate crime and hate incidents in Wales. Based on the learning and knowledge of the first phase, the second phase of this project focused on conversations with young people about hate crime. It aimed to provide a snapshot of the knowledge and awareness of hate crime and hate incidents and support provision, better understand the perspective of current provision and explore barriers to engagement with support services. The research also aimed to provide recommendations on how to improve the engagement of, and support for, CYP affected by hate crime in Wales.

Focus groups with CYP who have protected characteristics, and interviews with young victims of hate crime and hate incidents, were used to collect the data. In total, 38 CYP took part in this research, of whom 23 (60.5%) reported that they had been victims of hate crime and hate incidents.

Key findings

Experiences of hate crime and hate incidents and their impact on CYP

- A high percentage of participants in this research (60.5%) had been victims of hate crime and hate incidents. Most of the CYP had been victimised in school, while a few had been victimised in the community.

- There were differences in the proportion of participants in the groups who had experienced hate crime. Older (14–16 years) religious children, those from ethnic minority communities, and those who identified as Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT+) reported a higher percentage of victimisation due to hate crime and hate incidents.

- Victimisation due to hate crime and hate incidents had a profound and detrimental effect on the lives of the CYP.

Level of knowledge and awareness of hate crime and hate incidents and of support provision

- The CYP had largely heard of hate crime before, or they were able to make an educated guess about what it is. CYP tended to link hate crime with racism or homophobia.

- CYP with prior information about hate crime usually acquired this knowledge in school. Others, however, had not been taught about hate crime in school or had never had any conversations with adults about it.

- The level of knowledge about the support provision that is available to young victims of hate crime among the participants was low.

CYP's views and experiences of the current provision of services for CYP affected by hate crime and hate incidents

- CYP who had fallen victim to hate crime and hate incidents revealed that, for the most part, they turned for help and disclosed the incident or incidents to an adult they knew – either a parent or a member of the school staff.

- A worrying number of CYP had not disclosed the hate crime or hate incidents they experienced to anyone.

- Those who sought the help of their parents had mostly been satisfied with the support they received from them.

- Some CYP who reported to their school had a positive experience, while others felt that the school had failed to support them and also failed to stop the abuse. The lack of support from the school had a damaging effect on the CYP. They were left feeling distressed and upset.

- The CYP did not perceive the police as an appropriate source of support.

- Youth clubs and counselling (in schools or elsewhere) were also identified as sources of support.

- None of the CYP who had been victims of hate crime or hate incidents had been offered support by voluntary sector organisations for victims, or by those offering support to people of their community or with shared characteristics.

The barriers and gaps that prevent CYP affected by hate crime and hate incidents from accessing help in Wales

Two gaps in provision and five barriers to accessing support were identified as hindering CYP affected by hate crime and hate incidents from accessing help in Wales:

Gaps in provision

Lack of awareness raising of hate crime and lack of available information about possible sources of support for CYP affected by hate crime

Shortage of support for CYP, particularly those who need emotional support

Barriers to accessing support

Preference for self-reliance

Concern about what their peers would think of them

Fear of retaliation or that the harassment would get worse

Getting used to hate crime and a belief that nothing would change, mainly among older religious CYP and those from ethnic minority communities

Fear among those who identify as LGBT+ of being 'outed' as a result of seeking help

How the mechanism for engaging CYP in hate crime and hate incidents advice and support could be improved

The CYP's opinions about how to improve engagement with services for CYP affected by hate crime revealed five themes:

- Seeking help and support from any source was primarily a matter of trust and confidentiality.

- CYP are more likely to seek help and support if they know they will be taken seriously and be assured that something will change.

- The potential helper, mainly as a first point of contact, is more likely to be someone with whom the CYP have a strong prior relationship.

- Some services might be seen as scary, and thus CYP are more likely to engage with services that are child-friendly and child-oriented.

- Flexibility and choice were stressed as key features of any service supporting CYP affected by hate crime.

Further support that should be provided to CYP affected by hate crime and hate incidents in Wales

- Provide specific hate crime service. There is a need for a specialist CYP team as part of an existing service, or a dedicated CYP service for those affected by hate crime.

- Educate and raise awareness of hate crime, its harmful impact, and the support available.

- Empower CYP who have protected characteristics.
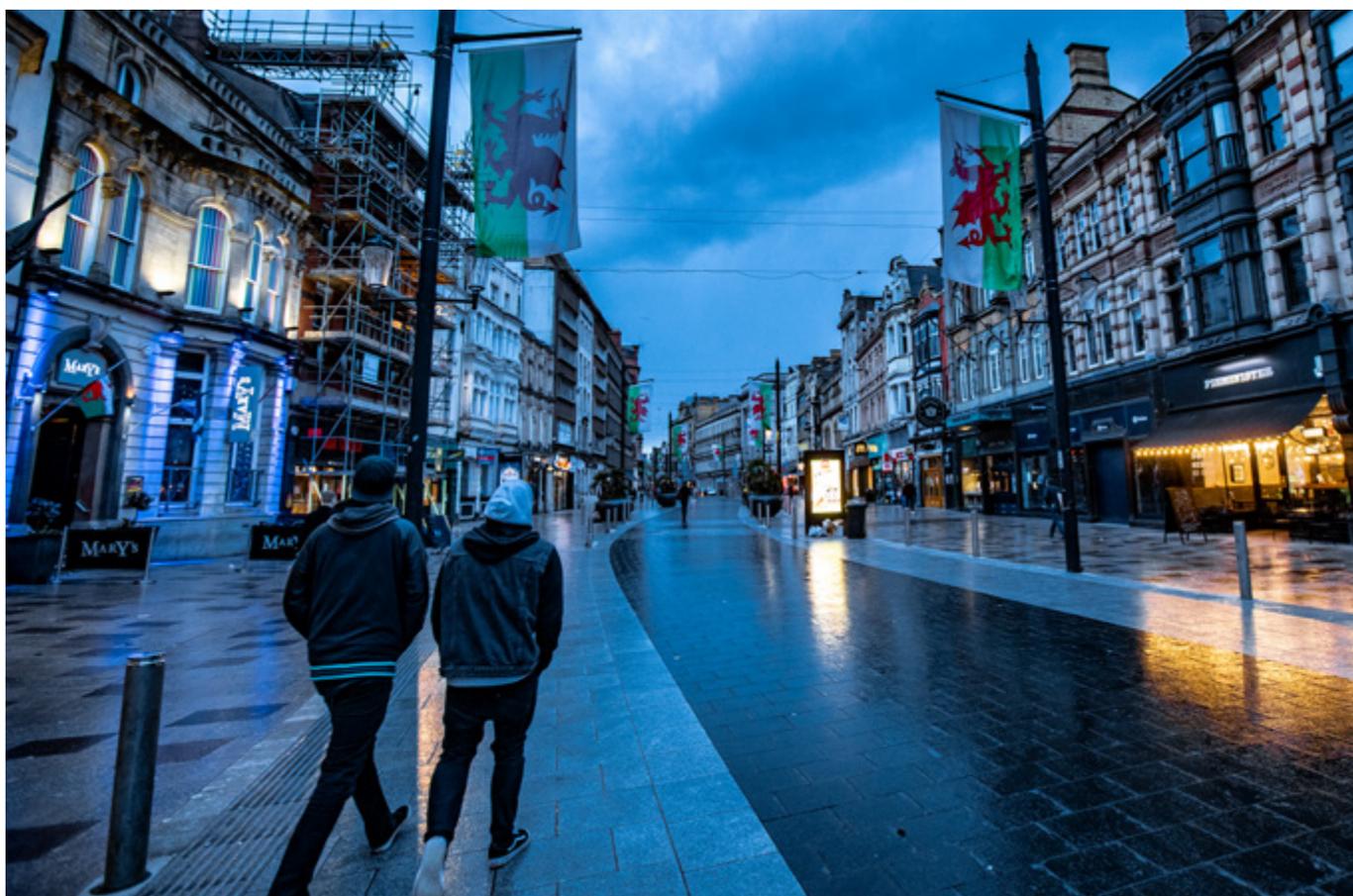
Introduction

Hate crime can be defined as "any criminal offence which is perceived by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by hostility or prejudice, based on: a person's **disability** or perceived disability; race or perceived **race**; or religion or perceived **religion**; or sexual orientation or perceived **sexual orientation** or transgender identity or perceived **transgender** identity".[1] These aspects of a person's identity are known as 'protected characteristics'. Some people, criminal justice agencies and organisations also include alternative subcultures as a protected characteristic[2] and misogyny as a hate crime.[3]

A **hate incident** is similar to hate crime in nature but is a non-crime incident (an incident that does not meet the threshold to be categorised as a criminal offence). The incident is perceived by the victim or any other person to be motivated by hostility or prejudice based on a person's protected characteristics.[4]

Identity-based bullying shares some similarities in nature and characteristics with hate crime, and especially with hate incidents. Identity-based bullying is defined as any form of bullying related to the characteristics considered unique to a child's identity or perceived identity, such as their race, religion, disability, immigration status, sexual orientation, gender identity or physical appearance. While most forms of bullying are targeted at a single individual on the basis of one of their personal characteristics, the nature of identity-based bullying means that it can be considered as an attack against an individual's whole social network.

The distinction between hate crime, hate incidents and identity-based bullying can be vague, making it difficult to distinguish between these different categories. This may pose a challenge to how bullying and hate crimes are monitored and recorded.[5] This report focuses on hate crime and hate incidents. However, the young people who participated in this research might have shared their experiences of identity-based bullying and referred to it as hate crime or hate incidents.

While statistics on hate crimes against adult victims are published by the Home Office (both reported and unreported incidents),[6] Victim Support has not been able to find any official, freely available data on the prevalence of hate crime and hate incidents against CYP in England and Wales. This gap in knowledge hampers the ability of policymakers and commissioning bodies to gain an understanding of the scale of the problem in order to develop effective services and policies. Nevertheless, data from various organisations suggests an alarming rise in hate crime against CYP in recent years. On March 2021, *The Guardian* reported that more than 60,000 racist incidents had taken place in schools in the last five years in the UK. The true number is thought to be far higher, because in 2012 the Government advised schools that they had no legal duty to report racist incidents to local authorities.[7] In 2018, the NSPCC found through Freedom of Information requests made to police forces that race hate crimes against children had reached a three-year high.[8] Similarly, data from 29 police forces in England and Wales illustrates a rise between 2015/16 and 2016/17 in the number of hate crimes reported to the police that took place at or near schools and colleges. More specifically, recorded hate crime relating to transgender identity showed a 167% rise, followed by sexual orientation (141% rise), disability (112%), ethnicity (48%) and religion or belief (37%).[9] However, the actual number of young victims may be much higher, as many hate crimes are not reported to, or accurately recorded by, the police.[10] In addition, this data refers only to hate crimes and not to hate incidents.

Hate crime and hate incidents can take many forms, including physical violence, threats of violence, criminal damage, and verbal abuse or insults.[11] Additionally, young people are at risk of falling victim to hate crimes and hate incidents online. The rise of the use of social media platforms has been accompanied by an exponential increase in cyber hate; the UK Safer Internet Centre reported that 82% of 13–18-year-old respondents were exposed to hate online, and one in four young people said that they had been targeted with online hate.[12] Another research project with young people aged 15–18 in Finland revealed that 67% were exposed to hate material on Facebook and YouTube, and 21% had fallen victim to hate crime on these platforms. Exposure to hate material was associated with high online activity.[13] The nature of social media also means that those targeted are unable to escape their attackers, even in the safety of their own home.
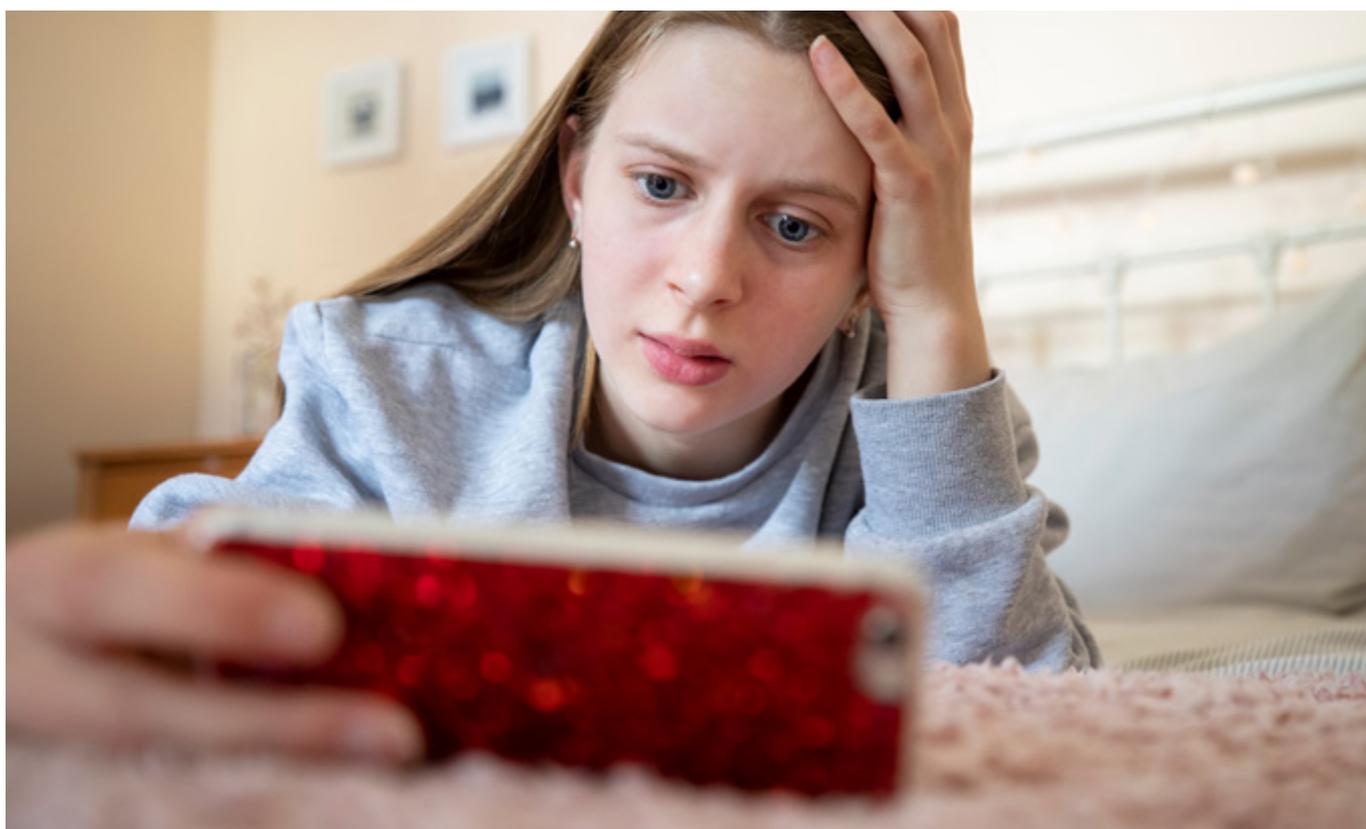
Despite being a growing social problem, evidence about the effect of hate crime on young people is limited. Nevertheless, from adult victims, we know that hate crime can have a significant effect because the victim has been attacked for a central element of their identity. Victims can feel more traumatised by hate crime than by equivalent crimes with no such motivation.[14] CYP who have fallen victim to hate crime reported feeling less safe and more isolated. Young Wales found that 24% of participants in its survey felt unsafe as a result of victimisation by hate crime. It also left them feeling more isolated as they withdrew from social interactions with friends and family.[15] Some evidence suggests that hate crime can have harmful emotional effects, such as feelings of anger, shock and distress,[16] and that these are also associated with poor school attendance and performance.[17]

Not much is known about the help-seeking behaviour of CYP affected by hate crime and hate incidents. The literature suggests that CYP who are victims of hate crime often do not confide in their parents or school staff.[18] The UK Safer Internet Centre found that 58% of adolescents aged 11–16 who were targeted directly by hate online ignored, it and only 13% indicated that they told a parent, a teacher or another adult.[19] Some evidence shows that this trend may change with age, and that younger adolescents are more likely to speak to an adult following victimisation compared with older adolescents.[20] When CYP did confide in and report the abuse to adults, the support and treatment they received were not always satisfactory. CYP from England and Wales reported poor or inadequate responses from schools. This experience was shared by pupils with learning disabilities,[21] Muslim pupils[22] and LGBT+Q+ students.[23] Nevertheless, more up-to-date evidence is needed to better understand the level of support and treatment available to CYP.

In 2019, the Welsh Government's Equality Team initiated research on CYP (11–16 years old) affected by hate crime in Wales. The first phase of this research focused on mapping and describing the current provision and the support in place for young people affected by hate crime and hate incidents in Wales. The findings of this phase were published in March 2020.[24] The report identified 20 services as offering some aspects of hate crime related resources to CYP in Wales, and highlighted two main gaps in the current provision of support: (1) lack of direct face-to-face support for CYP affected by hate crime; and (2) limited services and support in North Wales and rural areas.

Based on the learning and knowledge of the first phase, the second phase of this project focused on conversations with young people about hate crime. It aimed to provide a snapshot of the knowledge and awareness of hate crime and hate incidents and support provision, better understand CYP's perspective on current provision, and explore barriers to engagement with support services among CYP aged 11–16 years (secondary school age) in Wales. The research also aimed to provide recommendations on how to improve the engagement of, and support for, CYP affected by hate crime in Wales. In line with the hate crime definition used by the criminal justice system, this research focused on the following protected characteristics: disability, race, religion, sexual orientation and transgender identity.

The findings of these conversations are presented in this report. The first section outlines the level of victimisation experienced by the participants and describes the impact victimisation has had on them. The second section assesses the knowledge and awareness of hate crime and hate incidents and the support available for CYP in Wales. We then move on to discuss their views of the current provision in the third section. The fourth section presents the barriers to engagement with support services and CYP's views on gaps in the current provision. The fifth section looks at ways to improve the mechanism for engaging CYP with advice and support following hate crime and hate incidents. And the last section suggests further support that should be provided to CYP affected by hate crime and hate incidents in Wales.

Methodology

Two methods were used to collect CYP's views and experiences of hate crime and hate incidents in Wales: focus groups with CYP who have protected characteristics; and interviews with young victims of hate crime and hate incidents. In total, 38 CYP took part in this research, of whom 23 (60.5%) reported that they had been victims of hate crime and hate incidents. The data collection took place between August and November 2020.

1. Focus groups with CYP who have protected characteristics: Four online text-based chat groups were organised by an external market research company (YouGov). Respondents were recruited from YouGov's panel of 21,200 people in Wales in combination with free-find recruitment via their Welsh-based recruitment partner. To ensure that younger respondents were safeguarded, the groups were split by age (11–13 and 14–16 years). Thirty-two CYP from Wales took part in these groups. While victimisation was not a requirement to take part in the groups, 17 CYP who participated reported that they had been victims of hate crime and hate incidents. Due to data collection limitations (eg small sample size) and because some CYP had more than one protected characteristic, a couple of protected characteristics were consolidated into one group. This means that, when reporting the findings, we cannot distinguish between religious CYP and those from ethnic minority communities or between sexual orientation and transgender identity. The groups were divided as follows:

1. CYP with disabilities (including those with learning impairments) (age 14–16): eight participants

2. Older religious CYP and those from ethnic minority communities (including Black, Asian, Gypsy, Traveller and Roma) (age 14–16): eight participants

3. Younger religious CYP and those from ethnic minority communities (including Black, Asian, Gypsy, Traveller and Roma) (age 11–13): seven participants

4. CYP who identify as LGBT+ (age 14–16): nine participants.

2. Interviews with young victims of hate crime and hate incidents: We conducted six in-depth qualitative interviews with young victims of hate crime and hate incidents from Wales. Four victims were recruited with the help of organisations for CYP in Wales and two through social media advertising. Four participants were female and two were male, and their ages ranged from 11 to 16 years. Two participants had been targeted because of their disability, three because of their race and ethnic minority affiliation, and one because of their LGBT+ identity.

For both focus groups and interviews, informed consent was granted both by parents and by the CYP. Any identifying details have been omitted and participants' responses were coded using thematic analysis.

While we were able to engage with a good number of CYP who have protected characteristics and those who were affected by hate crime and hate incidents, as qualitative research, the findings in this report cannot represent all CYP with protected characteristics in Wales.

Experiences of hate crime and hate incidents and their impact on CYP

A high percentage of participants in this research (60.5%) were victims of hate crime and hate incidents. Most of the CYP had been victimised in school, while a few had been victimised in the community.

"Yes I have heard of it [hate crime] and it has been aimed at me at school. I am bi and had hate crime aimed at me. I was called 'faggot' by a group of boys at school."
15-year-old, LGBT+

"I've been bullied for the past four years for my sexuality, it started off only in school with people making up rumours about me, then became people using slurs against me."
15-year-old, LGBT+

"I have had it a little because I'm effeminate. It began with the normal silly name-calling and rose to physical bullying at one point... I've had the gay name tag for some time... And school is the worst place for that because it gets around so quickly."
15-year-old, LGBT+

"I was targeted in a chip shop near my area. Three lads came up to me, started to abuse me... come out with comments, like, 'You're a basher, you are. You take it up the ass,' and all of this."
16-year-old, LGBT+

"I have been verbally abused by – I call them strangers, I don't know who these people are. Simply for the colour of my skin, and my ethnicity. Despite not causing any harm to them, or not bothering them in any way, just simply going about my own business. Mostly the language they used wasn't exactly the nicest. And it was particularly directed about my skin colour, and it was a slur that they used. Which was very emotive for me."
15-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

"I used to get called 'curry muncher'."
16-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

"I was getting called a 'smelly gypo' and a 'pikey' so I asked what it was and they said it's racism."
13-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

There were differences in the proportion of participants in the groups who had experienced hate crime. In the younger (11–13 years) group of religious children and those from ethnic minority communities, and the group of CYP with disabilities (14–16 years), fewer participants said that they had fallen victim to hate crime (three and two respectively). In the older (14–16 years) group, the numbers were alarming: six (out of nine) of the participating children from religious and ethnic minority communities, and six (out of eight) of those who identified as LGBT+, disclosed that they had fallen victim to hate crime.

These CYP shared the impact hate crime and hate incidents had had on their lives. While exploring the impact of victimisation caused by hate crime and hate incidents was not within the scope of this report, we think it provides valuable context for understanding and discussing their experience of support and their engagement with services.

The CYP talked about the profound and detrimental effects, victimisation caused by hate crime and hate incidents had on their lives. The most common effect was emotional. Participants shared feelings of anger, loneliness and anxiety. It also had a devastating impact on their self-esteem and confidence.

"I experienced racism and I felt as if I had been mistreated, and lonely as well as anxious."
16-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

"It made me feel angry and frustrated."
16-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

"I used to feel like my confidence and self-esteem just vanished. It makes me feel very alone, not worthy. I get very angry too."
14-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

"It impacted my mental health severely after being told to kill myself. I went into a really dark place."
15-year-old, LGBT+

Some were also made to feel confused about, and to question, their identity. They tried to change their appearance to avoid further abuse or to not be associated with their community. Others changed their behaviour or avoided certain places.

"I think as well because I was quite young, definitely vulnerable. Because you don't understand why you're treated differently simply because your skin tone might be darker than theirs… I think before, I used to think I shouldn't be – it sounds weird, clichéd – black, I tried to almost wash myself. I thought, 'If I fit in with the crowd, and fit in with the majority, that maybe everything would be fine'."
15-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

"I think it was always a question in the back of my mind thinking I'm different and what should I do about this in terms of trying to keep this pretence and these appearances when clearly it's too difficult… It did leave me a victim where I thought to myself, 'Is this what I am? Should I change in any way?'"
16-year-old, LGBT+

The incidents also had a harmful effect on their relationships, especially with peers when the abuse occurred in school. They felt isolated and struggled to make friends.

"I have always felt different because of boys. I was always made out to be disgusting and un-normal because of other boys. Because of it I struggle to make friends with boys, due to the fear of them judging me and making me feel less than them."
15-year-old, LGBT+

A few CYP also missed school due to the abuse, either because they did not want to attend school after being victimised, because of the negative impact it had on them emotionally or because they were expelled after confronting the abusers.

"It hurt my feelings… I felt sad… I didn't really want to go to school."
11-year-old, Disability

"I suffer with anxiety, so I've missed loads [of school]."
15-year-old, LGBT+

"School is a nightmare for anyone who is different from the 'norm'."
16-year-old, LGBT+

"I have been excluded from school for it… Yes, it's because when I went to school, if someone would say something, I'd retaliate and get excluded. So, I was off school for a week then."
15-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

The level of knowledge and awareness of hate crime and hate incidents and of support provision

CYP's level of knowledge and awareness of hate crime and hate incidents

Our first focus was to learn what level of knowledge CYP have about hate crime and hate incidents – had they ever heard about them and, if so, where? The CYP who participated in our research had largely heard of hate crime before or were able to make an educated guess about what it is. They also identified hate crime as a negative behaviour. When asked about hate crime, the terms they used included "name calling", "online trolling" or if someone is "unkind" or "nasty" to someone else. These behaviours would not reach the threshold of being considered hate crime and would instead be considered hate incidents.

"Being nasty to someone."

16-year-old, Disability

"Trolling you online, sending horrible stuff all the time."
12-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

A key part of the definition of a hate crime is the motive for the crime: a person who is targeted because of their protected characteristics or because of the protected characteristics the perpetrator perceives them to have. Awareness of this element was less stressed by the CYP; if it was mentioned, it was mainly by older CYP. However, they mostly linked hate crime with racism or homophobia. Only a handful of CYP acknowledged other protected characteristics, such as disability, or hate crime against people who do not come under current hate crime laws, such as belonging to an alternative subculture.

"Hate crime is when a group of people are targeted with hate for being different and such."
16-year-old, LGBT+

"Racism and homophobia."
13-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

"Being nasty to people from different countries."
11-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

"A physically violent person who attacks people based on their skin colour or their religion."
13-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

Older (aged 14–16 years) religious children, those from ethnic minority communities, and those who identify as LGBT+ were more likely to have had prior knowledge of what hate crime is. In contrast, the participants in the disability focus group had very little prior knowledge about what hate crime is or had had any conversations about it before. As indicated in the previous section, CYP with disabilities also reported a lower rate of victimisation due to hate crime and hate incidents compared with the other two groups of older CYP. Previous reports show that children with a long-standing illness or disability are more likely to have experienced a violent incident compared with children without an illness or disability.[25] Therefore, it may be that lower levels of knowledge and awareness on the subject can lead to a lower level of recognition of various behaviours as hate crimes or hate incidents.

When asked when they had heard about hate crime, most of those with prior information about hate crime stated that they had acquired this knowledge in school. However, some also said that the focus of conversations or assemblies in schools was on equality and diversity, and that the phrase 'hate crime' was not mentioned directly; thus, they were only able to make an educated guess about what it is. Others had not been taught about hate crime in school or had never had any conversations about it. Others noted that they were exposed to the subject in the media, mainly following the recent killing of George Floyd in the USA and the 'Black Lives Matter' protests. Only a few mentioned having conversations with family members or friends about hate crime.

"I've never had an assembly before about it."
13-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

"I have never spoken to anyone about hate crime."
16-year-old, LGBT+

"[In school] there's been awareness around it – equality and diversity – in terms of telling you about different faiths, different religions, but nothing about hate crime."
16-year-old, LGBT+

"In English we covered it during lockdown and talked about George Floyd stuff... it was also in [the] media too on news everywhere."
13-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

"The Black Lives Matter protests made me realise how bad racism actually is, and made me think about it more."
12-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

"I can't recall learning about it in class, but more with conversations with family and friends."
13-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

The participants were asked who might be at risk of falling victim to hate crime, and all were united in the opinion that CYP are also at risk. They thought that hate crime can mainly happen in school or online. Others – mostly religious CYP, those from ethnic minority communities and those who identified as LGBT+ – disclosed that they were worried they would be abused because of their identity, or they felt unsafe in the area where they lived.

"Yes, hate crime is a local issue because most people in my area are of different race and religion and they sometimes mistreat us."
16-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

"I think of it a lot, as I see a lot of people talking about Black Lives Matter over the internet and in school."
13-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

"I do worry about how I'm going to be treated in the future, once it gets out about me being trans."
15-year-old, LGBT+

The CYP acknowledged the harmful impact of hate crime on young victims and highlighted the effect of long-term exposure to it. They thought that children who were victims of hate crimes could experience negative emotions such as sadness, stress and anger. They also believed that it could lead to depression and a loss of confidence.

"Because they would have taken so much discrimination that they would start to feel like what they are saying is true, and they start to hate themselves."
13-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

"It's soul destroying to be bullied and hear those same words day after day."
15-year-old, LGBT+

CYP's level of knowledge and awareness of support provision

We were also interested in understanding the level of knowledge about the support that is available to young victims of hate crime among the participants. The level of knowledge and awareness reported by the participants was low.

"I don't know who else to tell– school maybe."
11-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

"I don't know if there is any support or where to go or where to access support."
16-year-old, LGBT+

When asked whether they knew of any sources of support for CYP affected by hate crime and hate incidents, Childline was most often mentioned as a possible support provider. However, some participants assumed that Childline would not be suitable for young people who have been victims of a hate crime, as it is only for "more serious issues", or they thought their problems were "not big enough". Some participants also expressed the view that it is more appropriate for younger children. The CYP told us that they heard about Childline mostly in school and from the media.

"Actually, Childline – I feel like my problem wouldn't be big enough to worry them."
16-year-old, LGBT+

"Oh right! Childline! I just always see it as being for very small kids or domestic abuse."
14-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

"I have heard about Childline a lot of times in school and it was taught at a young age."
14-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

While our previous report identified 20 services as offering some aspects of hate crime related resources to CYP in Wales,[26] only three children mentioned organisations such as The Samaritans and Victim Support, while a handful of participants also referred to the police as a possible source of support. This lack of awareness can be linked to some extent to the gaps in provision identified in our previous report. Out of the 20 services that were identified, only three – Victim Support, the Islamophobia Response Unit and Race Equality First – are dedicated hate crime services. Furthermore, the classification of existing services indicates that there is a gap in service provision. We found that there is no direct face-to-face emotional support for all CYP affected by hate crime in Wales, and limited availability of services in North Wales and in rural areas.

What might come as a surprise is the lack of awareness among religious CYP, those from ethnic minority communities and those who identify as LGBT+ about the specific services for young people from these communities. The previous report identified six services that focus on religion, race or ethnic or national origin, and another three services devoted to gender identity and sexual orientation. None of these services were mentioned by the CYP who took part in our research. This finding is noteworthy, given the high percentage of victims among these groups of CYP.

CYP's views and experiences of the current provision of services for CYP affected by hate crime and hate incidents

The majority (23 or 60.5%) of the CYP who took part in the research said that they had been victims of hate crime or hate incidents. We asked these CYP who they turned to for support following the incident and about their experience of the support they received.

The CYP revealed that, for the most part, they turned for help and disclosed the incident or incidents to an adult they knew: either a parent or a member of the school staff. In other instances the school was made aware of the abuse by the parent or by other children. A couple of the CYP also reported it to the police. Nevertheless, a worrying number of CYP did not disclose the hate crime or incident/s they experienced to anyone.

The CYP had mixed experiences with the support they received: some found it very helpful, while others were very disappointed and were left feeling upset and unsupported.

Those who sought the help of their parents were largely satisfied with the support they received. They felt that their parents listened and tried to help them. When the incident/s took place at

school, the parents approached the school, disclosed the abuse and asked the school to intervene. However, we heard that, when the hate incident/s took place elsewhere, parents were uncertain about where to turn for help.

"My dad always boosts my confidence and tells me to be proud of who I am."
14-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

"My parents are really supportive."
15-year-old, LGBT+

"My mum was very helpful, she helped me."
13-year-old, Disability

"My mum was talking to the teacher and explaining what was going on."
11-year-old, Disability

While the majority of the CYP were positive about the reaction of their parents, a few were disappointed by their parents' reaction and felt that their parents did not understand them or take the situation seriously enough.

"Sometimes parents do not take the issue into full action."
16-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

"I can't talk to my parents, because I've tried with my mum, but she does not understand so I gave up with her."
16-year-old, LGBT+

CYP who disclosed the hate crime or incident/s to a member of the school staff were more likely to ask for help from a staff member with whom they had a close relationship or who they felt would understand their situation. A few of the CYP were led by the need to stop the abuse immediately and so they approached the member of staff who was closest to the incident at the time it occurred.

"Yes, [I talked about the abuse] with the safeguarding and well-being officer, because I trust her more than most people when I was scared to come out... We built a very good relationship and I trusted her with a lot more information than most people in my family... she was very supportive and gave perfect advice, supported me so much."
16-year-old, LGBT+

"I told a teacher. He was walking past. I would have told anyone to make them stop."
16-year-old, Disability

Whether the CYP disclosed the hate crime or hate incident to a member of staff, or the school was made aware of it, the CYP who took part in the research were very much divided about their experiences and the level of support they received from the school. Some CYP had a positive experience, while others felt that the school had failed to support them and also failed to stop the abuse. The CYP who had a positive experience told us that the school had been very supportive, responded immediately, put a stop to the abuse and made them feel safe. Several of the CYP who identify as LGBT+ told us about their positive experiences with the way their school handled hate crime and hate incidents. They felt that the school staff understood their unique needs and challenges.

"I reported them to the Head... she dealt with it straight away."
15-year-old, LGBT+

"My parents spoke to my Head of Year over what I'm going through and she deals with things like this. She's really approachable and friendly."
15-year-old, LGBT+

The CYP who had a negative experience of the support offered by the school told us that they thought it was not taken seriously enough by the school, or that the school failed to act to stop the abuse. Some CYP were advised to change their behaviour or even to remove visible signs of ethnic or religious affiliation, in order for the abuse to stop. For example, one of the CYP told us that they were asked by the teachers to take off their kara (a religious steel bracelet) and to keep to themselves to avoid being harassed again by fellow students. This worrying conduct can convey a message that victims are responsible in some way for the actions of their abusers. Others lost hope that things could be different or had to change schools. It is important to note that this dissatisfaction and feelings of frustration with the way in which the school dealt with the situation were shared more by older religious CYP and those from ethnic minority communities who were victims of a hate crime or a hate incident at school.

"In school I got told to take my kara off. I obviously didn't take it off... Teachers are useless in those types of situations."
15-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

"Yes, I told my mum and a few teachers. The teachers don't really care, to be honest, they never really do. Well my mum told them. I don't think they did support me in the end, because I ended up moving schools because of how bad that school was."
13-year-old, Disability

"Teachers only do something if parents get involved. Because they don't believe the child or don't understand how bad the situation is, so decide to ignore it. But when a parent gets involved, they actually realise something needs to be done."
14-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

The perceived lack of support from the school had a damaging effect on the CYP. They were left feeling distressed and upset. Some told us that they had lost all trust in school or stopped seeing it as a source of support, and that they would refrain from turning to the school for support should the abuse recur. Others felt that the message to the abusers was that their behaviour is permissible; not only did this not stop the abuse, but in some cases, it even made it worse.

"It affected me emotionally, because I felt judged, and every time I confronted it I would get hurt, or if I reported it, it would get overlooked and not dealt with... I've talked to teachers, but I don't know if they didn't want to get involved or anything, but nothing much was done... They said it would stop eventually, but it really didn't... they had spoken to us about that they can help with the hate crime, but it never felt like we could get that help from the teachers."
16-year-old, LGBT+

"Nothing really changed sadly – if anything it was made worse because the people I talked about knew and became even more hateful towards me... One of my bullies was so looked after by teachers because of the scholarships he was promised."
16-year-old, LGBT+

"Nothing gets done about the hate crime and the bullies get more confident, and it can get a lot worse for the people who are the victims. When teachers don't do anything then the harassment gets worse."

14-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

"They [teachers] advised that I just kept to myself and not to bother with other people as it could only get worse... TBH [to be honest] the teachers don't really do much except for saying 'ignore', but I guess it makes us upset even more."

16-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

In addition to parents and the school, a couple of CYP reported the incident to the police. They had mixed views about their experiences. While one young person felt that the police reaction was good and made them feel safe, another CYP was disappointed with the way the police treated them. They felt that the police did not take it seriously, and they were made to feel as if they had done something wrong. It is worth noting that, while the one young person who was pleased with their experience with the police was accompanied by their parents when reporting the issue, the CYP who had a negative experience was alone and without the assistance of an adult.

"I stood up for myself and told her to stop. I started to get angry but my friend pulled me away from the situation. I got home after school, told my mum and then we called the police about it. They have logged everything that has happened between me and that person, so it was best to keep them updated about it... It was different, because I didn't know the person I was talking to, but it felt good to tell someone and to get it out of me instead of hiding it."

15-year-old, Disability

"I feel that when I told the police about that incident, what has happened, it isn't taken seriously with my issues. So they just gave me a card and that's it. I reported the incident, nothing happened after that. All they did is that they've acknowledged it and that was it... If the police didn't have judgement, asking me all of these questions inappropriately, so I don't feel comfortable answering some of the questions. I've been in an incident and I told you what's happened, why have you not listened to me in terms of I'm not a criminal?"

16-year-old, LGBT+

Most of the CYP who took part in this research did not perceive the police as an appropriate source of support. Some found the police intimidating and said that they would feel scared turning to them, or they feared that the police would not believe them. Others thought that the police would not be interested in such incidents or that they were not serious enough to involve the police.

"I wouldn't feel comfortable talking to a police officer about anything. They make me feel really uneasy."

15-year-old, LGBT+

"I would feel uncomfortable talking to the police officer in case I say the wrong thing. I would feel very intimidated."

16-year-old, LGBT+

"I think almost reporting it seems almost like a step too far, or a step out of the comfort zone, perhaps... And I think as well, when it's your side of the story, it's hard to tell that to another person, to have them believe you, and have them give you that sympathy."
15-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

"I'm not so sure they would take it seriously."
15-year-old, LGBT+

"I would feel as though they've got bigger problems to be dealing with than name calling so [the police] wouldn't have the time to listen."
16-year-old, LGBT+

Several CYP who were victims of hate crime mentioned the youth workers and the youth club staff in their area as a source of support. They felt that the staff at these clubs understood them and that they could trust them and disclose what they were going through. However, they told us that, sadly, these youth clubs had closed, pre-Covid-19, and were no longer available as a possible source of support for them.

"I used to talk to a youth worker but the club closed down a year ago."
15-year-old, LGBT+

A few CYP were also referred to individual or group counselling, mainly through or at school. This was either as a result of the hate crime or due to other issues, which also allowed them to talk about the abuse as it was happening.

"I was told to go to counselling, so I had a school counsellor and I have [counsellor name]. I think it's called 'group counselling', where pupils go and talk about problems and feelings."
13-year-old, Disability

None of the CYP who had been victims of hate crime or hate incidents who took part in this research had been offered support by voluntary sector organisations for victims or by those offering support to people of their community or with shared identities. This is not surprising given the finding on the lack of awareness of these services and their scope among the CYP who took part in this study, as described earlier in this report. Nevertheless, it is somewhat alarming that those who reported to the police or the school were not referred to any such support. It might be that school and police staff are unaware of the current provision and the support available. Or it could be that the support is not available or appropriate for these CYP due to the gaps in provision: namely, the lack of emotional support for CYP affected by hate crime, and the insufficient availability of support in some areas of Wales. Additionally, this may also be because parents would have to consent to a referral to a voluntary sector organisation, and not all CYP would want to share with their parents that they had been victims or admit the impact the hate crime or hate incident had had on them.

"No. I've spoken to police but no special helpline."
15-year-old, Disability

"I've never signed up to any support services, because the issues didn't get too serious."
16-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

The barriers and gaps that prevent CYP affected by hate crime and hate incidents from accessing help in Wales

Some of the CYP who took part in this research had not disclosed the hate crime or hate incident they had experienced to anyone.

"I kept it quiet for a long time, hoping it would just stop."
15-year-old, LGBT+

"It was something that I mostly kept to myself."
15-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

We further explored what hinders CYP affected by hate crime and hate incidents from accessing help in Wales. Two gaps in provision and five barriers to accessing support were identified:

Gaps in provision

Lack of awareness raising of hate crime and lack of available information about possible sources of support for CYP affected by hate crime

Shortage of support for CYP, particularly those who need emotional support

Barriers to accessing support

Preference for self-reliance

Concern about what their peers would think of them

Fear of retaliation or that the harassment would get worse

Getting used to hate crime and a belief that nothing would change, mainly among older religious CYP and those from ethnic minority communities

Fear among those who identify as LGBT+ of being 'outed' as a result of seeking help

Gaps in provision and barriers to engagement with support services not only directly disrupt victims' access to support but may also affect their longer-term perceptions of isolation, acceptance of abuse and reluctance to report or seek help as they transition into adulthood.

Gaps in provision

Two gaps in the current provision were identified as hindering CYP from seeking help. The first gap is the **lack of awareness raising of hate crime and lack of available information about possible sources of support for CYP affected by hate crime**. As already indicated in this report, some CYP had never heard about hate crime and had not been told about it in school until they faced it as victims. Therefore, they struggled to acknowledge what it is and how it differs from bullying. If a CYP or their support network does not recognise a hate crime, they cannot search for relevant help.

"No, I've never heard about hate crime, I haven't really heard. None of my friends talk about this. I don't know if there is any support or where to go or where to access support."
16-year-old, LGBT+

"I've had it before in school, but I guess it's hard, I guess, with schoolchildren to gauge whether it's as malicious, perhaps, than with adults."
15-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

Some CYP told us that, after being victimised, they did not know where to turn for help. This is especially evident when the incident does not happen at school. If it happens at school, teachers are mostly seen as the primary source of support. However, when it happens elsewhere, the options for sources of help are less obvious, and CYP lack the knowledge about where to turn for help outside school. As previously discussed, CYP who took part in this research were not aware of the voluntary sector organisations that can offer support to those affected by hate crime or those with protected characteristics.

"I've never heard about this [support for victims]. I've been a victim but I don't even know about this."
16-year-old, LGBT+

"Often people don't know where to go for these things."
13-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

Others told us that, even when they tried to search the internet for help, they were unsure about how to seek help – what phrases to use or what information to search. A few said that nothing relevant had come up in their search; while they found information about bullying or what hate crime is, there was no information about possible sources of support for CYP affected by hate crime. This might be because of a lack of information online, or due to a gap in the provision: namely, a lack of relevant support for CYP affected by hate crime.

"I don't know where to look, the internet, but I don't know what these companies would be called or what information I would be looking for."
16-year-old, LGBT+

"I thought to myself, 'Where should I look? I need to speak to someone, I need to access support because I've been a victim.' I thought to myself, 'Where should I go, where should I look?' I couldn't find any information. There was information about bullying, about internet harassment and all of that, but nothing about victims of incidents to do with hate crime, very little information. There was a lot of information about what it is, that was it really."
16-year-old, LGBT+

The second gap in provision is the **shortage of support for CYP, particularly those who need emotional support.** As previously mentioned, the CYP who took part in this research identified youth clubs and counselling (in schools or elsewhere) as sources of emotional support. However, they told us that some of the youth clubs had been closed in their area, before Covid-19, and so they were no longer available as possible sources of support for them. Other sources confirm the CYP's observations: a report by YMCA found that youth services in Wales have had their funding cut by 38% since 2010.[27] The BBC found that 163 youth clubs have been closed by councils in the last five years.[28] Furthermore, long waiting lists for school counselling were also reported by some of the CYP who were referred to this service, and this prevented them from being supported when they most needed it. While Wales has statutory provision of school counselling for all secondary school pupils, concerns have previously been raised that these counsellors are overwhelmed, and that the provision of these services varies between schools.[29]

"There's only, I think, five or six youth centres now, which... there used to be, they were in double digits."
15-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

"In my school we've got one [counsellor], but she's part time. She's only there for certain days a week, and at certain times. And she's fully booked most of the times. So, even if anyone did want to see her, then you'd have to wait weeks, maybe even months... [pupils] are still going through the issues that they can't seek actual support for..."
15-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

Barriers to accessing support

Five barriers were identified as hampering the CYP affected by hate crime to access support in Wales. The first barrier is a preference for **self-reliance**. Some of the CYP who took part in the research preferred to rely on themselves rather than seek external help for their problems, either because they were reluctant to share their difficulties with others or because they did not want to worry others with their problems. Previous research identified this preference for self-reliance through difficult times during adolescence and linked it to the growing need for autonomy and independence during this developmental stage.[30]

"I don't tend to talk to anyone about anything that goes on in my life."
15-year-old, LGBT+

"I feel like it's personal so I don't really tell anyone."
15-year-old, LGBT+

"I think it's something that I've kept to myself, mostly, rather than let others know about it... I think it's just something that's a lot harder to do, especially for someone else quite independent, and, you know, you view yourself, perhaps, as a strong character that doesn't really look to others for help."
15-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

"I don't talk to anyone about it because I don't want to bring anyone else into my problems."
15-year-old, LGBT+

"I don't talk to a lot of people as I don't want to drag them down with me."
16-year-old, LGBT+

The c**oncern about what their peers would think of them** emerged as another barrier to accessing support. Interestingly, the CYP who took part in this research did not perceive their peers as a good source of support if they were affected by hate crime. The CYP were concerned that, if they reported the hate crime or hate incident, they would be seen as a "snitch" by their peers. They were worried that it would damage their reputation and their status among their peers, and that their relationships with peers would be adversely affected as a result. This concern was largely evident when the incident occurred at school.

"Your whole reputation could be ruined, then nobody will gain trust for us again."
16-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

"Then everyone knows and they'll come up to you and say 'you snitch' or 'you snake'."
13-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

Others felt that their peers would not understand them, especially if they did not share the same identity. One CYP told us that they are the only black person in their group of friends, and so they find it difficult to share their challenges around race and their experiences of hate crime; they felt that their friends could not fully understand these experiences.

"Because, especially in my friendship group, I'm the only black person… And it's hard to relate to other people, talk to people about it. Because they might not understand, or they haven't gone through the same experiences as I have, so it's hard for them to empathise with me."

15-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

The third barrier that we found was a **fear of retaliation or that the harassment would get worse.** This barrier was also mainly related to hate crime in school. Some of the CYP reported that they were fearful that reporting hate incidents would not only be ineffective at stopping the abuse, but that it could "make things worse", as the perpetrator would know they had reported it and would seek retaliation. Furthermore, if they had reported it and nothing had been done, it would only encourage the perpetrator to continue. Worryingly, some CYP said that they would not intervene or help a friend if they saw that they were experiencing a hate crime; they would be deterred by the fear that they would then be targeted.

"Sometimes I've had someone hit me, but I've not said anything in case it makes it worse… plus they always get away with it so it makes you feel powerless too."

14-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

"People don't tell, [they] keep it to themself. They'll be scared it might get worse."

11-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

"They might do the same thing to you, then what are you supposed to do?"

13-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

"When reporting on another, [they] will end up coming to you."

16-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

The gaps and barriers detailed above were shared by CYP who have different protected characteristics, but some barriers emerged as unique to specific groups of CYP. **Getting used to hate crime and a belief that nothing would change** emerged as a barrier that was expressed mainly among older religious CYP and those from ethnic minority communities. They said that they got used to hate incidents, especially hate speech. They perceived hate crime and racism as a routine part of society. Moreover, this group also doubted that anything would change if they reported it or asked for support. Previous research has reported similar perceptions among adults from ethnic minority communities.[31] Nevertheless, it is of particular concern that these perceptions and beliefs normalising racism and prejudice are already evident at a young age.

"Yes it happens quite a lot and it's not that worrying any more as it's just so common now and there's nothing we can really do about it."

16-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

"I'm used to it now. Society is messed up nowadays… I think even if someone told the teacher, it wouldn't make no difference."

16-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

A CYP from a Gypsy or Traveller community also shared a similar barrier, explaining that hate crime is perceived as something that one should put up with. Previous studies have highlighted the high prevalence of hate crime and hate speech experienced by people from these communities.

There is also evidence that the 'normalisation' of hate incidents and a lack of trust in the police and other authorities are factors that prevent people from Gypsy and Traveller communities from reporting incidents of hate crime.[32]

"Being part of the Gypsy and Traveller culture, people don't like us speaking up about it... as they think it's nothing."
13-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

A previous negative experience of seeking help, as reported by some of the participants in this research, can also contribute to the belief that nothing would change. A CYP who was disappointed and was left feeling upset and unsupported after asking for help would be less likely to ask for help with similar incidents in the future.

The last barrier identified by this research is **fear of being outed as a result of seeking help.** This barrier is unique to CYP who are LGBT+ and have not told their parents, friends or teachers; or those whose parents and community do not accept their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Because the crime they were a victim of was motivated by the very thing they kept secret, seeking help was not seen as an option, and especially not from their immediate support network – family, peers and teachers. Some of the CYP who took part in this project told us that they also feared asking for help from those who did know about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity, or from services in the community, as they did not trust these sources of help not to share information with their parents. As a result, these CYP were left to deal with the effects of victimisation on their own, and they shared feelings of loneliness, hopelessness and anxiety. This was especially a concern for CYP who were from communities where LGBT+ identities are not accepted.

"Imagine if my parents found out, imagine if the community found out... They're going to say, 'You're choosing to be like this.' 'You're influenced by the West.' I feel scared and anxious, on edge. If I told anyone, if I discussed it, how would people react, how would people see me? It's just these questions that come to mind."
16-year-old, LGBT+

"Probably not [seek help], due to the fact that I don't open up because I don't trust anyone not to go tell my mum."
15-year-old, LGBT+

"Too personal. They [youth workers] are normally local to the area and could gossip about it [sexual orientation]."
15-year-old, LGBT+

"I told one teacher, she listened to me and said, 'Is it okay if I speak to your parents about this?' I said, 'No, I don't want my parents involved.' That was it really. I don't want my parents to be involved in this because it would only make things harder for them, more problems."
16-year-old, LGBT+

How to improve the mechanism for engaging CYP in hate crime and hate incidents advice and support

The CYP's opinions about how to better engage with services for CYP affected by hate crime revealed five themes:

Trust and confidentiality	Being taken seriously and being assured that something will change	A strong prior relationship with the first point of contact	Child-friendly services	Flexibility and choice
1	2	3	4	5

The first theme that emerged is **trust and confidentiality.** The CYP who took part in this research stated that seeking help and support from any source is primarily a matter of trust and confidentiality. It seems that one of the most important factors for them is reassurance that the person they confide

in will not share details of the incident or that they are seeking help unless agreed. As discussed earlier in this report, some are scared that their peers or the perpetrator will know that they have sought help, and some are reluctant to tell their parents. This theme was raised by almost all the participants. School staff, practitioners and any service for CYP affected by hate crime should ensure that confidentiality can be provided and that the CYP are aware of when and if what they have disclosed will be shared further. It is also recommended that this element is included when promoting a service for CYP.

"They have to be trustworthy."
12-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

"Privacy is very important. You feel you can say anything there and it's not going to be repeated."
15-year-old, LGBT+

"I don't want anyone knowing what I have told someone. I would prefer it to stay private. I don't open up to someone unless I 100% trust them."
15-year-old, LGBT+

"If you want your information to be kept confidential, it shouldn't be shared because of embarrassment and shame."
16-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

Having the possibility of seeking help anonymously was also suggested as an option that should be available to CYP affected by hate crime.

"If it is anonymous and no one needs to know you."
15-year-old, LGBT+

"I'd report it to the police if I could be anonymous."
14-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

"Online perhaps under another name to keep some form of privacy."
16-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

The second theme that appeared as important in CYP's decision about whether to seek help is **being taken seriously and being assured that something will change.** CYP are more likely to seek help and support if they know that: they would be listened to and be taken seriously; their difficulty would be acknowledged and validated; and the supporter would try to help them. Concerns that they will be brushed off, or that nothing will change, will hinder them from seeking help. Additionally, not being judged or blamed for what happened is also fundamental to CYP's decisions to seek help. These elements should be central to any engagement with and services for CYP affected by hate crime.

"I think, as a young individual, you want to be listened to, you want to be acknowledged and supported, but how would you feel if no one listens to you or listens to what you are trying to say to them? … So someone who listens to me, non-judgemental, offers me information I need, speaks to me in confidentiality, acknowledges my concerns and is sympathetic towards listening to me, being observant. I think all of these ideally, and escorting you along your journey so you don't feel devalued or dismissed in any way."
16-year-old, LGBT+

"Be very understanding and patient, [it] may take a while for someone to open up fully to somebody... Listen carefully and give the best advice possible... also point them in the right direction and advise next steps."
16-year-old, LGBT+

"I would want them to be honest and respectful."
14-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

"Reassurance that I won't get judged by the person I'm talking to."
12-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

"Knowing that it would get sorted."
16-year-old, Disability

"If I had confidence that something real would get done then I'd be more likely to tell someone."
14-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

A strong prior relationship was found to be an important theme in CYP affected by hate crime engaging with support, mainly for the first point of contact. CYP associated the decision about whether to seek help and who to seek help from with their relationship with this person. This potential helper is more likely to be someone with whom they have a strong prior relationship. Parents, teachers, other school staff and youth workers were all mentioned as potential helpers, mainly as a first point of contact. Therefore, these adults should have sufficient knowledge of hate crime, its impact on CYP, and available services and sources of support, should the CYP need additional support. Support services should also make sure they form a link with these potential helpers. Additionally, some CYP, especially the younger ones, said that they would like their parents to be involved in any support they received. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that some CYP cannot confide in people in their immediate network due to fear of being outed as LGBT+.

"I think some people definitely prefer people they know. Because they have that reassurance that this person won't cause them any more harm, or this person might keep it more confidential. And that, they have that relationship, which I think is important as well... Because they know me, they supported me before, in previous things, so it's not like it would be something new, or something they'd judge or be surprised by."
15-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

"Talk to those I know well, like my family first, I can talk to them first."
13-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

"I would feel uncomfortable talking face to face to a stranger about it."
16-year-old, Disability

"I wouldn't trust an adult unless I know them personally."
15-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

"I could trust a youth worker because they are local."
16-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

"I'd like my mum to be involved, if I'm talking to people."
15-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

Some CYP suggested that they would be more likely to contact someone from the same background or someone who had faced similar issues. Therefore, culturally diverse support services should be encouraged, to appeal to CYP from different backgrounds and with different protected characteristics. Support services should also explore ways to recruit support staff with lived experience, include case studies and voices of victims in materials and communications about the service, and develop a peer support offer.

"I've always found that it is easier to talk to someone that happens to look like me, or happens to have the same skin colour as me, happens to live in the same area as me… And I think having that person that has the same level of empathy, and knows what you're going through, and they can draw upon their experiences as well, makes it a lot easier."
15-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

Child-friendly services was the fourth theme that emerged as improving CYP engagement with services and support. The CYP who took part in this research emphasised that some services might be seen as "scary" and thus they are more likely to engage with services that are child-oriented and friendly and are perceived as being less formal. The service might also have a different approach to providing support – for example, through creative activities – compared with an adult-focused service.

"I think it would be better for them [service for CYP] to kind of make it more informal, make it more for young people. Child-friendly, in that kind of way, that it's not this big scary thing; it's almost like a normal conversation, to find out what happened, and how they can help in any way… And that this is easy to approach, and not just some big scary figure that you may think is judging you, or taking notes about you, or almost, they're on a higher level than you. But someone on the same level as you, that's easy to communicate with."
15-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

"Someone who can work with young people and not get frustrated easily and an open-minded and generally a nice person."
14-year-old, LGBT+

"Acting like a friend, letting them talk freely while you do something else with them like draw or something so it doesn't feel too pressured."
15-year-old, LGBT+

They also recommended not pressuring the CYP to talk and making them feel at ease before asking them to share anything. The police in particular were regarded as scary, and so a child-friendly reporting mechanism is recommended.

"Make sure they're as comfortable as possible and not pressure them into anything, and ask what they want to talk about so they know what control they have."
14-year-old, LGBT+

"I think I would love to get in contact with a referral agency to report the incident first, and then someone asking me questions."
16-year-old, LGBT+

The CYP who took part in this research stressed **flexibility and choice** as key features in any service supporting CYP affected by hate crime. They did not agree about the best method of support. While some favoured a group setting where they could meet and share with other CYP in similar situations, others preferred one-to-one settings because they felt less comfortable sharing with peers. Additionally, some would rather meet face to face, while others preferred methods that felt more confidential and could be anonymised, such as support over the phone or online.

"Because of their problems they might have low self-confidence, so phone is best maybe until you get to know a little better."
15-year-old, LGBT+

"A group would be good because everyone can share their experiences and it can help you feel less alone, or maybe going through the same thing."
15-year-old, LGBT+

"I would rather speak to a trained adult if I wanted advice, but I would also like to speak to a peer that may feel the same way."
15-year-old, LGBT+

"I prefer technology because I speak too quietly and I mumble because I'm nervous."
15-year-old, LGBT+

Therefore, the CYP recommended a service that could offer different methods of support, such as face-to-face and group support, online chats and telephone support, to meet the needs and preferences of all CYP.

"Give the option, speak over message, phone or face to face to see their preference."
15-year-old, LGBT+

"I feel like people should have a choice on how they communicate to one another."
13-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

"Everyone likes talking in different ways."
13-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

As previously stated, a choice about whether to involve their parents was also acknowledged as important.

"I think there should be an option as to whether you want your parents there and to be informed or just by yourself."
16-year-old, LGBT+

The CYP also said that any service should offer support at different times of the day.

"All hours because sometimes hate crime never stops."
15-year-old, Disability

"Young people might be too nervous to ring when their mum is awake."
14-year-old, Disability

"24/7 because it might hit people more at night or when they are alone."
14-year-old, Ethnicity and religion
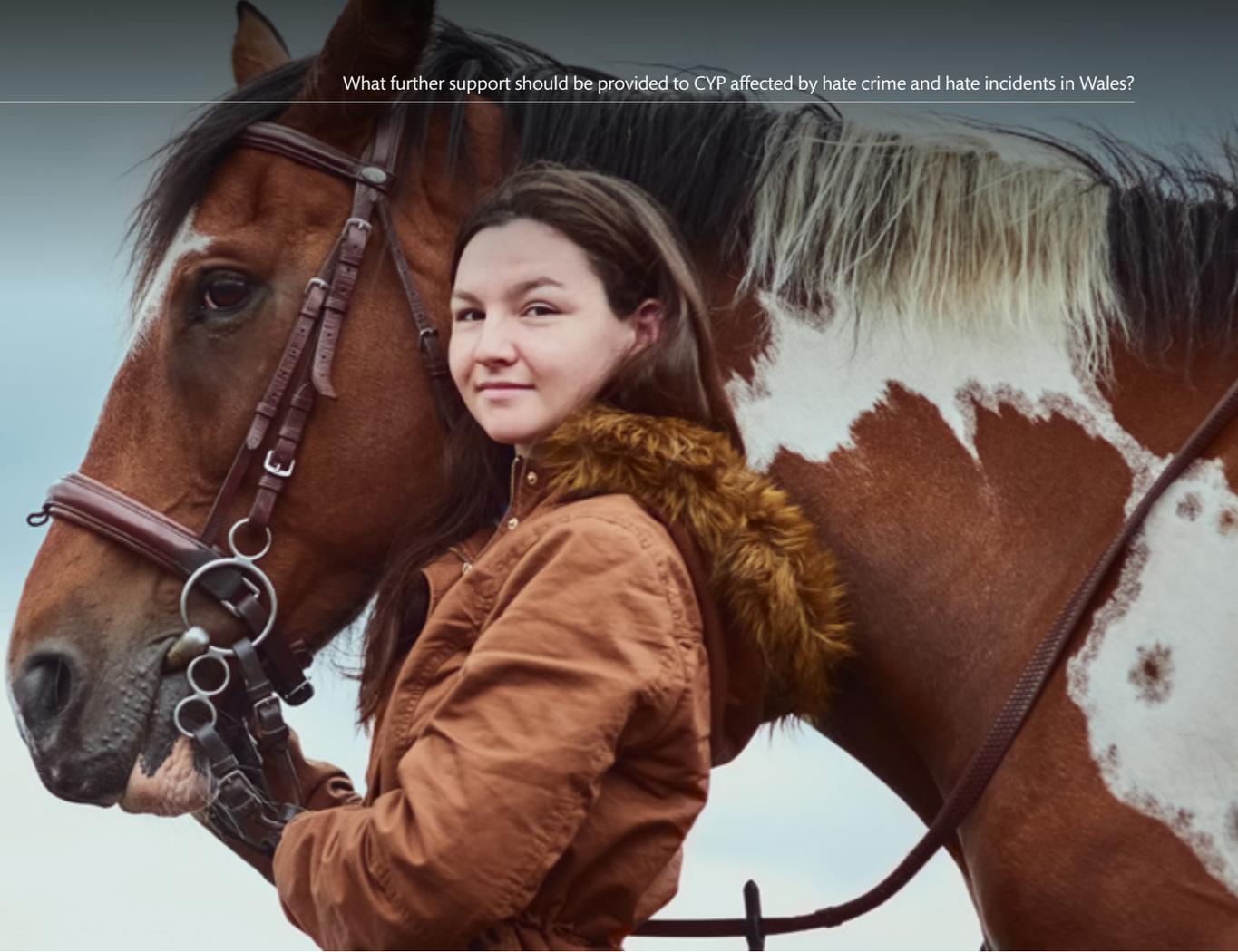
What further support should be provided to CYP affected by hate crime and hate incidents in Wales?

Based on the conversations with CYP and the accounts they provided, we recognised three areas of support that are needed to address the current gaps in provision and to support CYP affected by hate crime and hate incidents in Wales:

Provide specific hate crime service

Educate and raise awareness of hate crime, its harmful impact, and the support available

Empower CYP who have protected characteristics

1

2

3

Provide specific hate crime service

The shortage of service provision for CYP affected by hate crime in general, and for those who need emotional support in particular, was acknowledged earlier in this report. There is a need for a specialist CYP team as part of an existing service, or a dedicated CYP service for those affected by hate crime. As highlighted in this report, CYP affected by hate crime and hate incidents are affected profoundly; they have unique support needs and experience a range of barriers that hinder them from seeking help and engaging with the support services that are currently available. Moreover, the alarming number of CYP who have been victims of hate crime but have not sought help also implies that the current provision is unable to support all those affected by hate crime. Similarly, the CYP who took part in this research emphasised the need to be supported by trained adults with a vast understanding of hate crime and its impact on CYP. They also stressed that a dedicated service would be easier to find should someone need it.

"I think if there was a company or a support organisation who you could speak to about concerns, your issues you've been through or what's been going on."
16-year-old, LGBT+

"Hate crime can happen at any age and it's important for people of any age to feel they can go somewhere for help or advice."
13-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

"Just knowing there's someone out there, whether I could send a text or if I don't feel comfortable talking to my parents, there's always someone there."
11-year-old, Disability

"I think it definitely helps having that, like, a tailor-made service for this specific one [hate crime]. Because it is a big issue, and it clearly needs that specific platform. I think it makes it easier for us to find it, rather than just having one that covers such a big thing; may be a bit vague. To have a specific one makes it a bit easier for looking up something."
15-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

They also mentioned that some CYP might be put off contacting general services for CYP and would prefer a service that focused on CYP affected by hate crime.

"Childline covers such a wide range of different things. But perhaps it would be better as well to have a specific targeted helpline or service."
15-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

"I think it should be separate so, when you call, they know what it could be about."
16-year-old, Disability

"Specific for hate crime because the phone lines might be too busy."
14-year-old, Disability

As already highlighted by this report, CYP are more likely to contact a service that is for children, one that is child-oriented, child-friendly and less formal. It should also be flexible and offer a wide range of support options, including one-to-one support and group support, as well as ensuring confidentiality and allowing some form of anonymity if desired by the CYP. CYP affected by hate crime should also have a choice about whether to involve their parents or not, when appropriate.

"Free support service open all hours, and just deal with young adults. Phone call or online chat that is there daily."

14-year-old, Disability

CYP can benefit from support methods that are more appealing to CYP; group support and online support were suggested as being particularly helpful for CYP affected by hate crime. Meeting and sharing with other CYP who have gone through similar experiences was indicated as being therapeutic and has the potential to reduce feelings of loneliness.

"You can make friends, perhaps, with people that have had similar experiences to you. So it's a way to find out that you're not alone, and that there's others around the same age as you, or may have the same experience, skin colour as you, or be the same religion, or sexual orientation, and have gone through these things too."

15-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

"Talking to all of you is refreshing. It helps to know I'm not the only one going through something."

15-year-old, LGBT+

"A chat room would be my choice... It's more private and not so direct."

15-year-old, LGBT+

Emotional support was specifically highlighted as something that is needed in order to help CYP cope with the impact of hate crime and hate incidents. Nevertheless, a gap in the provision of emotional support for CYP affected by hate crime had already been identified by this project;[33] this element of support should therefore also be included in any service for CYP affected by hate crime.

"I think emotional support is probably the most important. Because it's the things that people don't see that perhaps affect you the most. Because you're not having these bruises, you're not having these scars that just go to the hospital or the school nurse to sort out."

15-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

"Emotional help, support would be the best way in order to help you through certain periods. Like, the incident that happened and that you have been a victim of this incident, and listen to me and help me in these desperate times."

16-year-old, LGBT+

Some CYP have more than one protected characteristic. For example, in this research one of the participants was a CYP who identifies as LGBT+ and is from an ethnic minority background; they talked about the difficulty of being 'out' to their family and community, which hinders their ability to seek help. CYP will therefore benefit from services that are inclusive and understand the complexity of having more than one protected characteristic, and how this may affect CYP and their support needs. As mentioned earlier, the CYP also shared a preference for being supported by someone from their background or who had similar experiences; culturally diverse support services, and services that include staff with lived experience, should therefore be encouraged.

However, due to the small sample size and the qualitative nature of this research, more work is needed to establish the best approach to supporting CYP affected by hate crime.

Educate and raise awareness of hate crime, its harmful impact, and the support available

The CYP who participated in our research have largely heard of hate crime before, or they were able to make an educated guess about what it is. However, some of the participants had not been taught about hate crime in school or had never had any conversations about it with an adult. This report has raised concerns about the gap in awareness and information that is hindering engagement with support services. This echoes earlier findings from Young Wales, which found that many CYP do not know enough about hate crime or do not receive sufficient education about it.[34] Therefore, support for CYP affected by hate crime ought to include an element of education and awareness raising about what hate crime is, its harmful impact, and the support available.

"I think it's important for schools to talk about hate crimes."
15-year-old, LGBT+

"I think that people just need to talk about it more."
14-year-old, LGBT+

"I think everybody needs to become more aware of the effect it has on people."
16-year-old, LGBT+

"I feel that people should be taught about hate crime so that they can be more aware of it in the future."
16-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

The CYP who took part in this research thought that there were not enough activities in schools about hate crime and recognised the importance of raising awareness in schools. They mentioned that if young people were more aware of their harmful impact, it might prevent hate incidents. They also stressed that this can help those with protected characteristics to feel less alone and would encourage them to seek support if needed.

"I think certain people may see it, that it's only them that may be targeted, or it's only a certain group of people that might be targeted. But in reality loads of different people, of loads of different categories or characteristics, may have experienced this... And just sharing – I think knowing that they're not alone, that other young people have gone through these experiences, or have faced hate crime... I think tell them that you're not alone, or to seek help, and speak up about these things. Because if you keep it quiet, these things can manifest over time, or lead to more negative things that happen internally, or perhaps in worse kind of situations, physically as well."
15-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

"I think it is [important to raise awareness] because it gives you the courage to say something."
15-year-old, LGBT+

"Explaining to them from a young age can have a huge effect because they'll grow up knowing that everyone is equal, not brought up to think anything different."
16-year-old, LGBT+

"It is [a] very important subject to be taught in school. In a way it can prepare children how to react in those situations and it could prevent children from carrying out crimes related to hate."

13-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

As indicated by this research, young victims of hate crime and hate incidents who sought help preferred to turn to someone they knew – a parent, a school staff member or a youth worker – but they did not always receive appropriate support. Therefore, parents and those working with CYP should also be aware of hate crime and its impact on CYP, and be informed about available sources of support. Furthermore, school staff, teachers and youth workers have a duty to make themselves approachable about these issues.

"For teachers to be more open about telling [CYP about] these support systems."

16-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

Participants welcomed the increased reference to hate crimes and racism in the media; however, they stressed the absence of discussions in relation to hate crimes and CYP. The way in which hate crime manifests among CYP and its impact on them should be given more attention. The CYP suggested that this and available services should be promoted on social media and in schools.

"I think they should be mentioned more on social media."

15-year-old, LGBT+

"A lot of young people are using social media [and] are struggling with hate crime."

16-year-old, LGBT+

"I really love the Starbucks adverts – they feature transgender people and it makes me feel valued and included."

15-year-old, LGBT+

"In school, maybe in an office somewhere. In my school, I have a reception. When I walk in, I go through reception, then to my classes. So maybe we could have a box with all the leaflets in there."

13-year-old, Disability

Empower CYP who have protected characteristics

The third area of support that is needed for CYP affected by hate crime and hate incidents in Wales relates to empowering CYP who have protected characteristics. The CYP who took part in this research shared a desire to meet other young people from similar backgrounds or who identify in the same way; they saw the benefits of meeting CYP who share the same experiences and face similar challenges, especially if they do not have this opportunity in school. This type of engagement can have value for all CYP, not just those who are affected by hate crime. Such meetings can also provide them with the opportunity to explore their views and feel empowered about their identity. Furthermore, some of the victims of hate crime and hate incidents who participated in this research shared feelings of loneliness and isolation following the incident. Meeting other young people who share similar experiences can mitigate the harmful effects of the hate they experience. The CYP suggested that after-school activities, such as youth clubs and other informal activities, are good places for such meetings.

"Having, like, places – like an actual, kind of, building, or an actual specific group to go to for things like that. I'd love somewhere after school, to be able to go somewhere like that, with people that are around my age, and, you know, mentors or such, and advisors. So, I guess more community things, or more local places that you have other safe spaces to go to, other than just home and school."

15-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

One CYP recognised the benefits of such activities and shared how they helped them develop their own views and opinions about their race and skin colour. They were also inspired to take part in activities and contribute to educating other people as well.

"I've learnt so much from going about this. I've been able to develop my own views and opinions as well, which I think is really important… through doing my own research, and through these activities and resources, I've been able to develop personally as, like, a human being, myself, and then hopefully it helps others to develop themselves… Because I don't want anyone to go through what I've been through, and I want to inspire other people who aren't just minorities, but also white people, that they don't have to be a part of this and that; we should all – this issue affects all of us, not just a specific group of people. And that we somehow all may contribute towards this in a negative way, and actually teach people, educate people, the right ways to go about these things."

15-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

The CYP who took part in this research also proposed having a mentor – a person who is close to them in age and has had similar experiences – as a source of support, advice, guidance and empowerment for young people with protected characteristics. The benefits of mentoring are widely acknowledged in the literature; supportive relationships between young people and non-parental adults, whether established via programmes or through more informal gatherings, can facilitate the growth and positive development of the mentee, and have great potential to help CYP in need, especially those who have specific characteristics.[35]

"A young person who they can possibly relate to and hear about their experience… someone who has maybe experienced the same as you so they can give advice."

13-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

"Like someone to be called a mentor… someone who had been there before and gets it."

13-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

"In my school, they have the services, Year 11 mentor, or can be advisors to the Year 7s and Year 8s. I think that's really helpful, because they've gone through the experiences before, and they're still going through experiences; they're not necessarily perfect. And they don't seem like a whole world away. They're still the same generation, they're still in the same, kind of, age range. They can still talk about, you know, their childhoods, similar experiences that they've had growing up."

15-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

Conclusions

Despite the growing concern in recent years about the impact of hate crime on CYP, not much is known about CYP affected by hate crime and hate incidents, their level of knowledge, their experience, support needs, help-seeking behaviours or services that can support their recovery.

The current research has provided valuable information about the knowledge and awareness of hate crime and hate incidents and of support provision among CYP aged 11–16 years (secondary school age) in Wales. A high percentage of participants in this research (60.5%) had been victims of hate crime and hate incidents. Most of the CYP had been victimised in school, while a few had been victimised in the community. These incidents had had a profound and detrimental effect on the lives of the young victims. The CYP had largely heard of hate crime before, or they were able to make an educated guess about what it is. However, participants' knowledge was low about the support available for young victims of hate crime.

The research also explored the CYP's perspectives on and experiences of the current support provision. CYP who had fallen victim to hate crime and hate incidents were most likely to turn for help and disclose the incident to an adult they know, either a parent or a member of the school staff. However, a worrying number of CYP did not disclose it to anyone. Those who sought the help of their parents were mostly satisfied with the support they received from them. However, the CYP were divided about their experiences and the level of support they received from the school: some had a positive experience, whereas others felt that the school had failed to support them and also failed to stop the abuse. The lack of support from the school had a damaging effect on the CYP; they were left feeling distressed and upset.

The research identified two gaps in provision and five barriers that hinder CYP affected by hate crime and hate incidents in Wales from accessing support that can help them recover from the crime or incident:

Gaps in provision

Lack of awareness raising of hate crime and lack of available information about possible sources of support for CYP affected by hate crime

Shortage of support for CYP, particularly those who need emotional support

Barriers to accessing support

Preference for self-reliance

Concern about what their peers would think of them

Fear of retaliation or that the harassment would get worse

Getting used to hate crime and a belief that nothing would change, mainly among older religious CYP and those from ethnic minority communities

Fear among those who identify as LGBT+ of being 'outed' as a result of seeking help

The research also provided recommendations on how to improve the engagement of, and support for, CYP affected by hate crime in Wales. Five themes for improving engagement with those affected by hate crime were identified in this research:

Trust and confidentiality	Being taken seriously and being assured that something will change	A strong prior relationship with the first point of contact	Child-friendly services	Flexibility and choice
1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Seeking help and support from any source was primarily a *matter of trust and confidentiality*.	CYP are more likely to seek help and support if they know they will be taken *seriously and be assured that something will change*.	The potential helper, mainly as a first point of contact, is more likely to be someone with whom the CYP have a *strong prior relationship*.	Some services might be seen as scary, and thus CYP are more likely to engage with services that are *child-friendly* and child-oriented.	*Flexibility* and choice were stressed as key features of any service supporting CYP affected by hate crime.

This research also highlighted three areas of support that are needed to address the current gaps in provision and to better support CYP affected by hate crime and hate incidents in Wales:

Provide specific hate crime service. There is a need for a specialist CYP team as part of an existing service or a dedicated CYP service for those affected by hate crime	**Educate and raise awareness** of hate crime, its harmful impact, and the support available	**Empower** CYP who have protected characteristics
1	2	3

As qualitative research, the findings of this report cannot paint a full picture of the prevalence of hate crime and hate incidents against CYP in Wales, nor can it represent all CYP in Wales who have protected characteristics. Additionally, while statistics on hate crimes against adult victims are collected and published by the Home Office, updated data about young victims is much more limited. Therefore, future research should include a quantitative exploration with a representative sample that can narrow this gap in the data. Due to the small sample size and the qualitative nature of this research, more work is also needed to establish the best approach to supporting CYP affected by hate crime in Wales and in other places.

Nevertheless, this research provided CYP affected by hate crime and hate incidents with the opportunity to share their unique voices and experiences of hate crime and hate incidents; it ought to be used to inform change in the support available to them, both in Wales and elsewhere.

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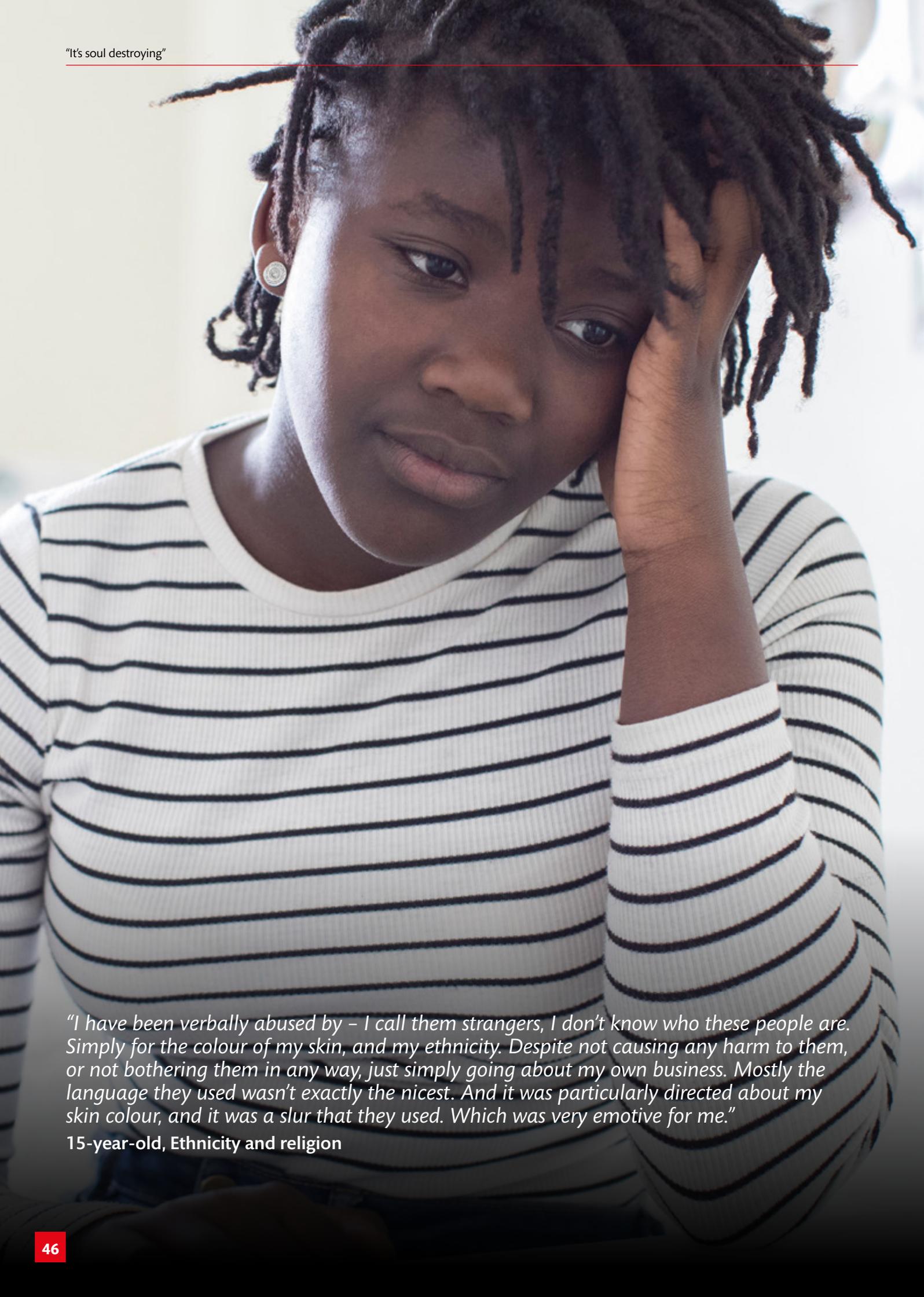
"I have been verbally abused by – I call them strangers, I don't know who these people are. Simply for the colour of my skin, and my ethnicity. Despite not causing any harm to them, or not bothering them in any way, just simply going about my own business. Mostly the language they used wasn't exactly the nicest. And it was particularly directed about my skin colour, and it was a slur that they used. Which was very emotive for me."

15-year-old, Ethnicity and religion

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