VICTIM SUPPORT

“It’s who I am”:

improving the support available to victims of hate crime in Wales

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September 2022

www.victimsupport.org.uk

"It still exists now. I couldn't believe it happened on my own doorstep here that I got racially attacked… we're still putting up with racism. The fact that he called me 'a black bastard', excuse my language, and his mates attacked me from behind as well and they were kicking my head like a football."

Male, victim of Race-related Hate Crime

"I am more frightened now than I have ever been. I can't see people, I am full-blown blind. So, for me, I am relying purely on my hearing, my sense of smell. And it's made worse now by Covid-19, having to wear a mask… I am frightened of people more than ever and I don't like people being anywhere near me [and] don't really want to go out. I don't want to get on with certain things that need doing. I don't wish to be anywhere near people. I have received death threats. I have been punched, kicked, pushed down stairwells. I've had my white cane snatched off me and smashed, on multiple occasions. I've had people trying to run me over deliberately, by mounting the pavement."

Male, victim of Disability-based Hate Crime

"It creates a lot of fear… trans is something that can trigger people, whether that be domestically or outside. You're constantly on edge… when I'm out and about… I always use the ladies' toilets, even though I identify as a man, for safety. I will do things like I won't comfortably 'out' myself in every situation because I know that can sometimes be dangerous, so I'll let people misgender me just to feel safe. It does impact daily life then."

Male, victim of Sexual Orientation-based Hate Crime

"I've gone from being funny, outgoing, confident, riding the horses, walking country roads to feeling trapped, agitated, scared and my life in tatters… I went from very confident, funny, outgoing, to be introverted, depressed, anxiety, very severe depression, very severe. I don't know in myself what was going on… I didn't go to bed at night and then I'd be up far too early in the morning and I was quite wild-eyed and very, very stressed, because I thought, 'If I get caught on this piece of road they can kill me and there's nothing that will be done.'"

Female, victim of Disability-based Hate Crime

Acknowledgements

We are particularly grateful to the victims who generously gave up their time to share their experiences with us. We would also like to thank the support staff and caseworkers from the National Hate Crime Report and Support Centre in Wales who shared their knowledge and expertise. In addition, we would also like to thank a number of people for their valuable contributions to this report: Tamar Dinisman, Jessica Rees, Tom Edwards, Rachel Almeida and Chris Davies.

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Executive summary

Hate crime and hate incidents have a negative impact upon many aspects of victims' lives. To be a victim of crime because of who you are, or what you believe in, can have a lasting impact on the individual, their families and wider communities. Previous research illustrates the significant emotional impact and physical damage that hate crime has on the wellbeing of individual victims, their families and their wider communities.[1] Consequently, victims can have a range of multi-layered and complex support needs after the event.

While there has been a rise in the reporting of hate crime across Wales in recent years, it is widely recognised that hate crime continues to be underreported.[2] Welsh police forces recorded 4,023 hate crimes for 2019/20, with South Wales having the highest rates, accounting for 2,007, nearly half of all reported hate crimes within the reporting period.[3]

In 2014, the Welsh Government provided funding to set up the National Hate Crime Report and Support Centre (NHC R&S), a Wales-wide support and report mechanism for victims of hate crime. The NHC R&S Centre was established to provide immediate and ongoing support to victims of hate crime in Wales. This service received further funding in 2017 under the Equality and Inclusion programme, and the funding runs until 30 September 2021. The NHC R&S Centre has supported 2,427 victims of hate crime since April 2017.

The aim of this research was to provide learning to inform an ongoing improvement of the NHC R&S Centre. It explored what aspects of the service were working well and what needed to be improved. The research included the support needs of the victims and barriers to engagement with the service and to reporting the crime. Two methods were used to answer the aim of the research: 15 interviews with victims of hate crime and hate incidents, and three focus groups with practitioners who worked within the NHC R&S Centre. In total, 23 participants took part in the research and data collection. The data collection took place during the Coronavirus pandemic with its associated lockdown periods.

Key findings

The impact of hate crime and hate incidents and victims' support needs

Each individual victim described their own bespoke range of support needs, and staff described variance from victim to victim, but there were four common support needs identified across the hate crime victims. The first was the need for emotional and psychosocial support. Victims spoke about how sharing their experiences and being listened to helped them to cope with the emotional and psychosocial effects and enabled them to move on following the hate crime. Second, there was a need to feel safe and secure. The impact of the hate crime incident left many victims feeling on guard, unsafe and unable to relax. This was especially true for victims who knew the perpetrator.

Counselling and access to mental health support were also identified as a need, and victims talked about their own difficult experiences and frustrations with trying to access mental health support. Lastly, a need was reported for information and advocacy to understand, navigate and be supported through the criminal justice process. The Covid-19 pandemic, and the associated lockdown periods, accentuated the support needs for victims.

"When you're not seeing those people [friends] and you're not sharing it, you internalise it all in and you become so used to it. I had the police twice; they spoke to him to stop coughing over me and doing various things. It was just like psychological things he was doing to me… yes, it was just very scary… I just felt detained. You know, you couldn't just go to your GP and speak to your GP. You couldn't go out to a pensioners' club and speak to your friends… to me, it became like a prison sentence. You know, just four walls with a monster."

Female, Victim of Age-, Gender- and Disability-based Hate Crime

The findings highlighted the negative impact that hate crime incidents have upon many aspects of victims' lives, often leaving them with a range of multi-layered and complex support needs to enable them to cope and move on.

Areas of strength in the NHC R&S Centre

The NHC R&S Centre provides valuable emotional and personal safety support to victims of hate crime and creates an important opportunity to alleviate some of the emotional burden to help victims cope and move forward. Participants acknowledged how the proactive support of the service has the potential to prevent further additional needs or more complex support in the longer term. The independent and impartial approach to the support given is valued by victims, especially when victims are unable to disclose or unburden their thoughts and feelings to anybody else. The strength of the service is in providing emotional support for those victims who cannot gain support from their family and friends. Victims valued the flexibility and longevity of the support that they receive. The need for emotional support that has longevity was identified as important, so that victims can be supported when they are most affected. The service addresses this need among those who would otherwise have struggled to cope. In addition, the practical tools and devices that the service was able to send to victims gave reassurance and addressed their security need when other services had been unable to improve victims' sense of safety. Victims were grateful for this need being met and addressed by the service.

Areas for improvement in the Hate Crime NHC R&S Centre

A number of areas for improvement were identified as the existing service does not currently meet all of the needs identified by victims. Victims reported common gaps in current support provision, particularly around navigating the criminal justice process, counselling and mental health support services. As well as increasing the type of support available, the NHC R&S service could be improved by prioritising reducing the waiting time between when the incident is reported and when the victim receives support. Victims also report that they want NHC R&S support staff to have more information about the specifics of their incident from the police, to improve dialogue and the subsequent support they receive.

Barriers to and opportunities for reporting hate crime and gaining support

Victims described numerous barriers that prevent them from reporting hate crime and receiving support, including awareness of hate crime and its impact, and the normalisation of hate crime in society. Poor experiences and a lack of confidence in the police and criminal justice process were identified. Victims expressed seeing little point in reporting incidents if they perceived that nothing would be done. Past poor experiences involving the police, where nothing was done about previous complaints, fuelled this feeling of hopelessness. Victims also had a level of fear about what the repercussions and implications might be of reporting an incident. Lastly, victims described how emotions and thoughts can create a barrier, including overcoming issues about identifying as a victim, and the shame experienced by victimisation.

Increasing public awareness of hate crime via campaigns was acknowledged as important to help raise awareness of hate crime. The need to use a range of communication channels to increase recognition of what constitutes a hate crime was identified. Validating victims' experiences of hate crime and raising understanding of the range of options available have the potential to encourage more victims to report hate crime and to receive support. Victims described the need for a seamless reporting and support process which would minimise the need for repetition, with just one point of contact to take them from the initial stages through to conclusion.

Translating evaluation into practice

The NHC R&S Centre has recognised that waiting times for support can have a detrimental impact on a person's ability to cope and recover from hate crime moving forward. The service welcomes the findings from this report and will be looking at ways in which to increase capacity across the team so that waiting times are reduced. There will be a review of the initial contact processes to ensure that the first conversations with victims of hate crime are informed and mapped out clearly with regards to what will happen next with their support (in a way that the victim can understand and process). Lastly, the service will be looking at the current relationships it has with existing partners (such as the police and housing associations) and how these can be strengthened with more regular communication, and understanding, of the impact of hate crime. The service will look to identify any gaps in provision and work closer with new partners who can help fill those gaps. The NHC R&S Centre will prioritise these recommendations and changes to develop the service and deliver high-quality support.

Introduction

A **hate crime** is defined as a crime that the victim or any other person perceives to be motivated by hostility or prejudice towards any aspect of a person's identity.[4] These aspects include: a person's disability or perceived disability; their gender identity or perceived gender identity; an individual's race, ethnicity or nationality or perceived race, ethnicity or nationality; a person's religion, faith or belief or perceived religion, faith or belief; or their sexual orientation or perceived sexual orientation.[5] A **hate incident** is any incident that is a non-crime incident and that the victim or any other person perceives to be motivated by hostility or prejudice based on an aspect of a person's protected characteristic.[6]

Welsh police forces recorded 4,023 hate crimes for 2019/20,[7] a 36.8% increase since 2016/17,[8] when 2,941 hate crimes were reported. However, it is widely recognised that hate crime is an underreported crime.[9] South Wales has the highest rates of reported hate crime across Wales, accounting for 2,007, nearly half of all reported hate crimes within the reporting period 2019/20.[10] The most recent reporting shows that race hate crimes continue to be the most prevalent (2,634), followed by sexual orientation hate crimes (763). However, there has been a sharp increase in transgender hate crimes in Wales in the last four years, with 132 transgender hate crimes in 2019/20,[11] up from 45 in 2016/17.[12]

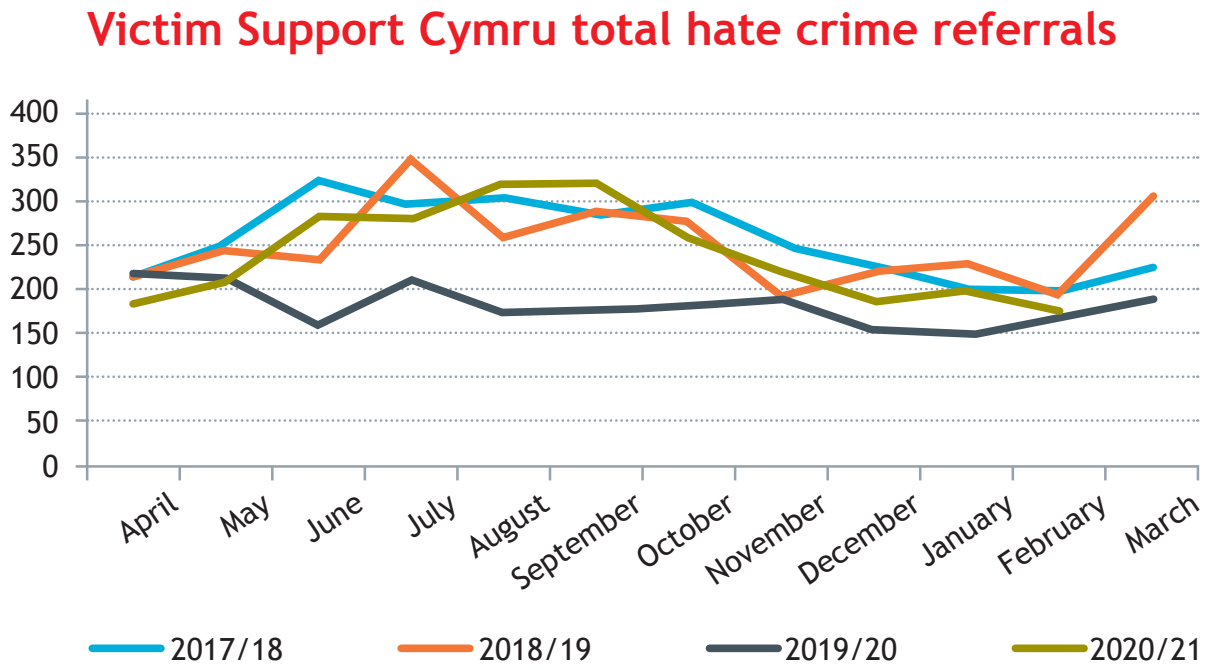
To be a victim of crime because of who you are, or what you believe in, can have a deep and lasting impact on the individual, their families and wider communities. Previous research illustrates the significant emotional impact and physical damage that hate crime has on the wellbeing of individual victims, their families and their wider communities.[13]

Victim Support

Victim Support is the leading independent charity in England and Wales for people who have been affected by crime and traumatic incidents.

The National Hate Crime Report and Support Centre (NHC R&S) is a Wales-wide support and report mechanism for victims of hate crime. The NHC R&S Centre provides immediate and ongoing support to victims of hate crime in Wales. Referrals are sent via the police, local agencies or self-referrals. There is a team of victim care officers (VCOs) who provide initial support and carry out a needs assessment to set up ongoing support. The VCO contacts the victim usually within 48 hours (and up to a maximum of 14 days during very busy periods). A team of caseworkers and volunteers then provides ongoing support on a one-to-one basis. This can be via telephone, email or Skype (or face to face when there are no lockdown restrictions). The support is confidential and tailored to the victim's needs. This includes: emotional support; practical support (such as police or housing advocacy); providing safety items (such as personal and home alarms); education advocacy; information about the criminal justice process system and the victim's case; and signposting. The centre also has a Training and Engagement team that delivers hate crime awareness sessions to key partners and communities, as well as other engagement

methods across Wales. The service has been running since first receiving funding in 2014, with further funding — under the Equality and Inclusion programme — provided to the current service until 30 September 2021. The NHC R&S Centre has supported 2,427 victims of hate crime since April 2017.



The research

The aim

This research aims to provide learning that will inform ongoing improvement of the NHC R&S. It explores what aspects of the service are working well and what needs to be improved. The research includes the support needs of victims and barriers to engagement with the service and reporting the crime.

To meet this aim, the report is divided into the following topic areas:

1. the support needs of the victims, what help enables them to cope and move on following the hate crime and whether they receive the help they need
2. aspects of the service that are working well
3. areas for improvement within the service
4. identifying what will encourage more victims to come forward to report hate crime and receive support.

Methodology

Two methods were used to answer the aims of the research: interviews with victims of hate crime and hate incidents; and focus groups with practitioners who work within the NHC R&S Centre. In total, 23 participants took part in this research and data collection took place between July and November 2020.

The two methods used for data collection included the following:

1. **Interviews with victims:** 15 in-depth semi-structured qualitative phone interviews were conducted, 11 with victims service users and 4 with victims who did not engage with the service. Eight women, six men and one victim who identified as transgender took part in the interviews. The age range of the victims was 22 to 77 years old. Six participants were targeted because of their disability, five because of their race, three because of their lesbian, gay or bisexual orientation or transgender identity and one because of their age, gender and disability.

2. **Focus groups with the NHC R&S practitioners:** Three focus groups were conducted, each with between two and five staff participants. Practitioners included four caseworkers, two victim care officers (VCOs) and two education and training officers.

The data collection took place during the Coronavirus pandemic with its associated lockdown periods. Although the impact of the pandemic and its lockdowns are beyond the scope of the research, it is important to include the effect of this context where it is relevant to victims' experiences.

All quotes presented in this report are from the victims and practitioners who were interviewed. The quotes were anonymised and any detail that may lead to the identification of the participant or the incident was omitted to maintain the interviewees' anonymity.

The impact of hate crime and hate incidents and victims' support needs

The victims, and practitioners, involved in this research outlined a diverse variety of hate crime experiences and impacts on the individual targeted, their family, community and friends. Crimes and incidents experienced by victims range from harassment and intimidating behaviour to violent attacks. These can affect the physical, psychological and emotional wellbeing of the victim.[14] Some victims described how the crime had affected every aspect of their life.

"It's impacted everything. It's impacted, more than anyone could say, on my life. You know what someone might think normal, to pop to the shops at maybe 10 o'clock, I would have to think a few times about that… it's altered my perception of a lot of things… Yes. I am over 65 with health conditions, so it made me extremely unwell really… mentally and physically… I felt very alone and very vulnerable… it was just very scary."

Female, victim of Age-, Gender- and Disability-based Hate Crime

Each individual victim described their own bespoke range of support needs, and staff described variance from victim to victim, but there were four common support needs identified across the hate crime victims:

- Emotional and psychosocial support
- Security and personal safety planning
- Counselling and mental health support
- Information and advocacy to understand, navigate and be supported through the criminal justice process.

It is important that a hate crime service meets these needs.

Emotional and psychosocial support

Victims of hate crime and hate incidents are targeted because of who they are, which is deeply personal and distressing. Practitioners reiterated the challenges this creates for victims: *"Because hate crime is an identity-based crime that is attacking your identity, we know it can cause a multitude of different emotional and behavioural challenges for people."* Victims interviewed described the significant emotional damage that the incident has had on their emotional wellbeing, something that previous studies have also identified.[15,16]

According to the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW),[17] victims of hate crime were more likely to be affected emotionally and psychologically following a crime than victims of all crime. It found that 42% of victims of hate crime felt a loss of confidence or felt vulnerable after the crime, compared with 19% of those for all crimes. In addition, 29% of hate crime victims had difficulty sleeping subsequently, in comparison to 13% for all crimes. Victims who took part in this research described how the emotional impact affects other aspects of their lives:

"I'm starting to look a bit mad, you know, I was wild-eyed, I was constantly agitated, and like I said, I had depression, insomnia, panic attacks. I suffered from memory loss and the physical thing was of course my epilepsy worsened."
Female, victim of Disability-based Hate Crime

"But this incident, and other matters that have gone on within that period of time, have basically broken me. I am not the person I once used to be. It has changed. I have changed. And not in the ways that I want… I can't cope with people being there and being near me."
Male, victim of Disability-based Hate Crime

Staff talked about the range of emotions victims describe and the impact that they have on them:

"Feedback you get from victims of hate crime is that the actual crime or the incident is dealt with okay sometimes, but it's the actual hate element. The fact that you've been targeted because of specific characteristics that you can't change, and shouldn't change, is the hardest thing, and just to be listened to… you just get this 'Nobody cares' all the time said down the phone to you. It's an emotive issue, isn't it, the hate element, and it doesn't necessarily always have evidence attached to it, and it's difficult for people who don't experience it or don't work within it to realise possibly the impact it does have on people's lives."
Practitioner

"Sadness, I would say, is something I encounter more than anger, but a real deep, kind of [sadness that] goes into questioning everything, everyone, themselves."
Practitioner

"There's such an anger there. You know, it's almost a hatred towards the police because of what they've gone through, and it's such a complex case, but that anger… he's a really nice person, and he doesn't want to have those feelings, but it is. It's a hatred, I would say, you know, and you can, kind of, understand where they're coming from. It's destroyed their lives, and… the sadness."
Practitioner

The data collection took part during the pandemic and the victims spoke about the impact of Covid-19 and the way in which lockdown has accentuated the emotional and psychosocial support need.

"When you're not seeing those people [friends] and you're not sharing it, you internalise it all in and you become so used to it. I had the police twice, they spoke to him to stop coughing over me and doing various things. It was just like psychological things he was doing to me… yes, it was just very scary… I just felt detained. You know, you couldn't just go to your GP and speak to your GP. You couldn't go out to a pensioners' club and speak to your friends… to me, it became like a prison sentence. You know, just four walls with a monster."
Female, victim of Age-, Gender- and Disability-based Hate Crime

Victims spoke about how sharing their experiences and being listened to helped them to cope with the emotional and psychosocial effects and enabled them to move on following the hate crime. For most victims, this need was met through the social networks they had. The ways in which the needs are met by the NHC R&S Centre will be discussed in more detail later on in the report in the section 'Areas of strength in the NHC R&S service'. A practitioner described how victims need to *"reach out… so that they can actually freely speak about the emotional impact"*.

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the victims of crime. Recent research has found that victims have had to face additional challenges to accessing support services during the pandemic period. There have been numerous factors that have exacerbated the impact during this period for victims, such as increased isolation, mental health issues, fewer opportunities for positive activities, increased anxiety and reduced access to statutory services, which have all impeded recovery. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has therefore increased the need for emotional support for victims.[18] A practitioner described the impact of Covid-19 on isolation and the importance of giving victims the time and space to describe and discuss their feelings:

"They have to have your ultimate time and respect… to speak about how they're feeling. I guess on the phone, that's become longer, because you're on the phone… phone calls are getting longer as well because people are feeling more isolated."

Practitioner

"They just want that emotional support that they haven't got."

Practitioner

"I guess the difference with lockdown is…the nature of the calls have got so much more traumatic. So many more suicidal people… so many more safeguarding concerns, so many more safeguarding queries… the nature of the calls have got so much worse. People are so much iller. Every other support, apart from us, seems to have disappeared."

Practitioner

"During Covid, we've had a lot more incidences of hate crime around neighbours. So, a lot of it — I think something like 70% of it — is around neighbours. And during lockdown, a lot of people aren't going out to work, so you can't escape from that either. So, I think, again, that has had an effect on communities, as well."

Practitioner

Security and personal safety planning

The second need identified was the need to feel safe and secure. The impact of the hate crime incident left many victims feeling on guard, unsafe and unable to relax. This was especially true for victims who knew the perpetrator:

"I am very much more alert. I watch out for him and I'm just more protective of myself as well. I don't relax very often. I'm always on edge and thinking, 'Right,

if I'm in this situation, how do I get out?' When he had me in that corner I was stuck. He weighs 24 stone. I couldn't move him. You think in your head, 'Right, I'm vulnerable. How can I do this better?' You're constantly thinking of self-defence and things."

Male, victim of Sexual Orientation-based Hate Crime

"I had genuine fears he was going to get on the train over to [place] and come and pan my door in… and be really physically violent, which he's got history of."

Female, victim of Sexual Orientation-based Hate Crime

Hate crime support staff described the impact of changes in behaviour — fuelled by the need to feel safe — that perpetuate further anxiety, fear and isolation, thus creating a vicious cycle of fear, anxiety and isolation resulting in loneliness.

"They are afraid to go out in the community, or particularly if the offenders are neighbours, they are afraid to go out. They are always checking whether they are outside… I think they isolate themselves away to prevent being a victim of a crime further. I think one of the main things that's come out is their fear of being targeted again, and that just increases their anxieties."

Practitioner

"It could be just aspects of their everyday life, going to the shop, they stop, because their neighbour will be outside and they don't feel comfortable going outside. It could be that they change their bus routes because they know the perpetrator will be around or they will see them… not going into the back garden if they are scared of going outside."

Practitioner

During the interviews, victims spoke about the strategies that they had developed to help cope with what had happened to them and to prevent, or minimise, the potential of it happening again. Many victims talked about practical safety devices and security and said that surveillance equipment helped them feel safer. For victims who had this need met, it was facilitated through either self-financing the devices or being provided with them by an independent agency such as the NHC R&S Centre.

"I received a panic alarm in the post, which has actually saved my life on a few occasions this year."

Male, victim of Disability-based Hate Crime

The way in which the needs are met by the NHC R&S Centre will be discussed in more detail later on in the report in the section 'Areas of strength in the NHC R&S service'

Counselling and mental health support

For some victims, the emotional support provided to them by their family and friends is sufficient in supporting them to cope. For others, the additional support of services such as the NHC R&S Centre are enough to alleviate the emotional impact of experiencing a hate crime incident. For other victims, additional professional support from counselling and mental health services is required to enable them to cope and to move on from the incident.

Victims and practitioners identified a need for better access to counselling and mental health support. According to the CSEW,[19] 34% of victims of hate crime suffered from anxiety or panic attacks, compared with 14% for all crimes. It found that 18% of victims reported feelings of depression after the incident, compared with 9% of victims of all crimes.

Victims talked about their own difficult experiences, and practitioners' frustrations, with trying to access mental health support. Staff were unanimous in their feedback about this need, and the lack of services available. NHC R&S service staff can only advise victims to access their GP for onward mental health support, or to access a charity such as MIND. More recently, the service has used some underspend to secure some counselling sessions for vulnerable victims with a private company, but this has been a short-term provision. For the majority of victims this was identified as an unmet need:

"I have been waiting to see a counsellor for three years, and I'm still waiting. That's how bad things are."

Male, victim of Disability-based Hate Crime

"Massive, massive gap in the system, and counsellors are the same. You know, with people going through traumatic experiences with hate, they're continuously going to the GP, they're waiting and waiting and waiting, months and months and months, and before you know it, a counselling session that could've possibly have been provided quite early on, they've got mental health issues as well then, with anxiety, depression and all sorts… the majority of the ones I'm dealing with have also got mental health issues and very, very, very little support to assist with that."

Practitioner

The need for, and shortage of, mental health support services became even more evident through conversations with victims during lockdown, as practitioners described the gap that coronavirus has exposed in support services.

"I mean, in a perfect world, we'd have well-funded mental health services because I think I speak for a lot of people here… what I found over lockdown is it's really exposed that gap, I guess. You know, we've been supporting people, probably longer than we should, and having intense difficult, horrible conversations with people because they have no mental health support… you know, they have no community mental health team when they need to. So, we have become mental health workers and we specify that to them. You know, we're not trained. We don't want to make people feel worse, but they have no one else."

Practitioner

"So, for me, you know, to have a properly funded mental health service because I think the majority of our cases… people have mental health issues whether because of the hate crime or before, and there's nowhere for them to go. You know, 'Oh, go to your GP.' I'd be on a waiting list for a billion years, you know, and we end up picking it — especially in lockdown."

Practitioner

Although it is not in the remit of the NHC R&S Centre, the practitioners reported that they are supporting an increasing caseload of victims with mental health problems. With a gap in NHS mental health service provision, practitioners are having to fill that gap as people are in crisis.

"I mean, I've not long done my training… in that training, it specifically tells you that you are not to deal with any form of mental health, but quite a high volume of who I deal with, and I'm sure the other caseworkers are dealing with, there is a background or an issue with mental health, with very little or no support at all."

Practitioner

"You know, you can literally be talking life and death with people, and I think it's important that that is recognised"

Practitioner

Previous research has shown that victims of hate crime who have experienced multiple forms of hostility and discrimination often need specialist support to be able to deal systematically with the layers of hurt and victimisation, and this kind of support is often unavailable.[20] There is evidence for the importance of properly resourcing services that provide specific support to those who are the most vulnerable victims, such as people with poor mental health.[21] However, it is important to recognise that victims with mental health problems are not a homogeneous group. Previous research has made a clear distinction between whether the mental health problem existed before the crime or emerged as a result of it, as well as the severity of the impact of the crime on the victim.[22] This distinction is important in terms of addressing the need for support services. Victims who had prior poor mental health are affected further by the cutback of services due to a lack of government funding.[23]

"You've got people with severe mental health who you think would tick all the boxes for support, but even that support isn't that great. Then you've got people who are, I guess, low and medium anxiety and they have nothing, you know, there's just nothing there for them. Even when you say you're suicidal: 'Oh, well I'll see you in three weeks' time.' 'Okay.' Yes, it's just a really massive gap"

Practitioner

Information and advocacy to understand, navigate and be supported through the criminal justice process

Victims identified a need for information, knowledge and advice about the process of reporting a crime. Victims who had experienced previous hate crime identified that they had a lack of understanding about navigating the process before they were in the NHC R&S service.

"I think it has taken me, probably, about four years — three and a half to four years — to actually wise up and be a little bit more savvy as to, if an incident takes place, first thing you do: get in contact with the police. Get in contact with them straightaway because, as they've already pointed out, the person that calls is the person that's supposedly regarded as the victim. So, first thing you do: get onto them and just report it. Just report it."

Female, victim of Disability-based Hate Crime

"When you make a complaint with the police it should just be standard. This is being issued. This is the support you're entitled to, not referring me to solicitors that only deal with criminals."

Female, victim of Disability-based Hate Crime

A number of needs were identified around the criminal justice process if the case progresses to trial. Victims struggled to navigate the criminal justice process and expressed fear and concern for their safety when they need to give evidence in court. Many of the victims interviewed would have benefited from support to explain the court environment and what to expect in terms of contact with the alleged perpetrator and their supporters. The Code of practice for victims of crime outlines that, as victims of hate crime are considered victims of the most serious crime, they are eligible for enhanced entitlements. One of these entitlements is special measures to assist vulnerable or intimidated witnesses when they give evidence in court.[24] In line with the Code of practice,[25] victims of hate crime should be informed and should be informed about these options and able to discuss them if they need to give evidence in court. This is usually done by the witness care unit.

Victims described a need to understand different options for giving evidence and not having to face the perpetrator face to face:

"We've been told that we may be required to attend court. I would've liked some information on what that entails because I've never been to court."

Female, victim of Race-related Hate Crime

"I think I might have said I didn't want to go to court. I did want to pursue it, but I didn't want to have to face him, which was the problem. I was very scared at the time… I think fear is fear. I think just having to face someone in court. Maybe if it was through a video link, maybe I would have felt a bit more comfortable about that… maybe some kind of video evidence might have been easier to do rather than appearing in person."

Female, victim of Sexual Orientation-based Hate Crime

"It was very difficult because I'd never been to court in my life before. I went for the first time to the court, and the perpetrator was with me in the same room."

Female, victim of Race-related Hate Crime

"Obviously, these two men here are local lads and they're going to have mates. Where the court is, I'm going to be like a walking, sitting duck. I'm making my own way… Obviously, I'm not going to go there on my own, but I'm going to be going past them and then they know where I live. Do you know what I mean?"

Male, victim of Race-related Hate Crime

Victims described a need for information about what to expect if they do have to attend court and give evidence.

- **Key evaluation point 1:** Hate crime incidents have a negative impact upon many aspects of victims' lives and victims can have a range of multi-layered, and complex, support needs in order to help them cope and move on.

Areas of strength in the NHC Report and Support service

Practitioners acknowledged the positive impact that a supportive management structure had on their ability to support victims. Having the opportunity to discuss issues and reflect on cases with their line manager was particularly important. This was highlighted as imperative during the lockdown periods as practitioners were working from home and not in the office, where they would normally gain peer support from other practitioner colleagues.

The participants and practitioners were asked about the aspects of the NHC R&S service that were valuable to them. This section will detail three particular aspects of the NHC R&S service's strengths:

1. **Emotional and personal safety interventions**
2. **Flexibility and longevity of support**
3. **Independent and impartial person-centred support.**

Emotional and personal safety interventions

The main area of the service's strength, identified by victims and practitioners, was that the service provided a comforting safe space and valuable emotional support. Providing an opportunity and a space to listen to victims and offer assistance at such a critical time, when victims are often feeling at their most vulnerable, was of value and benefit to victims. The caseworker role within the NHC R&S Centre was identified as key to meeting this need. The support victims received enabled them to move forward from the experience.

"To have that one contact that you know weekly is like a bit of a comfort… I was just lucky… I don't know if I'd be here now without that. So a very big impact."

Female, victim of Age-, Gender- and Disability-based Hate Crime

"For me to accept help is a very new experience… It probably took me two or three months to build up that trust with [caseworker], but then it was awesome because it was like, 'Ah, where has this been all my life?' It's really helpful… Yes, it's just like, well, that's the starting point, as a victim, but actually we're moving forward from that… I've come so far with the support I've had."

Male, victim of Sexual Orientation-based Hate Crime

"It's been really good. She knows the case… they've helped me build my confidence a lot. They've helped me understand my rights and all about hate and things like that. It's been helpful. Life is still… as a trans person, but it's a lot easier when you know these people are there who support and understand and actually have no issue with you being trans, which is really another big thing."

Male, victim of Sexual Orientation-based Hate Crime

Participants acknowledged how the proactive support of the service has the potential to prevent further additional needs or more complex support in the longer term. Some of them credited the service and the support they received with rescuing them when they are at their lowest point emotionally:

"Emotionally now, I think if she [caseworker] weren't there, if she weren't helping me, I would have gone under. I've still got my family and all that there, but it felt as if the weight of the world was against you."

Male, victim of Race-related Hate Crime

"She has even, obviously, come around to the house when she could, providing that support there. Basically, I'd be at sea. I'd be in the ocean there without — what you'd call — a life ring and I'd be struggling. If [caseworker] wasn't there, I can guarantee I wouldn't be speaking to you now, would I?"

Male, victim of Race-related Hate Crime

Victims and practitioners identified the value of the independent and impartial support that caseworkers provide for victims, as victims sometimes report reluctance to talk to their family and friends, or the police advised them not to share what is going on with their loved ones to prevent it from escalating. The strength of the service is in providing emotional support for those victims who cannot gain support from their family and friends.

"I have family and I have friends that I wouldn't have shared it with, because I didn't want them involved really. It's a difficult one because if I phoned my son and I told him, and I was crying, he would want to come and speak to the neighbour. The police said, 'Do not inform your family because we don't want your family knocking the door and speaking to him.'"

Female, victim of Age-, Gender- and Disability-based Hate Crime

"A lot of cases I come across, they don't really like to tell their family and friends about how they are feeling about it, and just having us just to talk to, to get it off their chest, is one of the big aspects, I find, that helps them."

Practitioner

As detailed in the support needs section of the report, victims identified a need to feel safe and secure. The practical tools and devices that the service was able to send to victims gave reassurance and addressed this security need when other services had been unable to improve victims' sense of safety. Victims were grateful if this need was being met and addressed by the service.

"She got me this CCTV camera installed. I was asking many times the police and the landlord, housing association, and they wouldn't do anything. They wouldn't help me, so she was the one who helped me. I think you have done everything possible you could do. She dedicated her time and effort to help and full attention."

Female, victim of Race-related Hate Crime

Flexibility and longevity of support

Victims and practitioners expressed a range of points in time when victims needed support. For some it was immediately after the incident; for others it was at key points through their journey, such as when the case came to court or after the court hearing. Similarly, previous research has identified that many victims need support before, during and after court.[26] The need for emotional support that has longevity is identified as important, so that people can be supported when they are most affected. The service addresses the needs of people who would otherwise have struggled to cope:

"She had her court case a few weeks ago… She was told quite, sort of, emphatically by different support workers and by people that she knows that basically, she should get over it now because the court case had happened, he's gone to prison. Whereas for her, she is now actually only starting, in the past couple of weeks, to even be able to process what happened. So, you know, I spoke to her on Monday and said, 'How was your weekend?' and she said she didn't sleep all weekend because she was too scared to go to sleep because she was having such vivid nightmares about the defendant pulling her and assaulting her… up to this point, it's literally just been damage limitation and getting from day to day… I have so many people that say to me they're scared almost when a case has reached a [peak], that they're going to lose our support, and it's hugely important for them to know that Victim Support will support them as long as they need that support and that it is obviously relevant to the case… that's a massive fear of a lot of people, that we're just going to drop them like everyone else has."

Practitioner

"People apologising that they're still upset after so long, or still, sort of, trying to deal with it and say, 'Oh, I'm sorry. I know I'm going on,' and it's absolutely not the case. So, they're almost apologetic for what's happened to them because they need to talk about it."

Practitioner

Independent and impartial person-centred support

Victims talked about the need for individual person-centred support that is bespoke to their needs and dependent on their circumstances. They welcomed the fact that support from the NHC R&S service was bespoke to their needs and person-centred, built from their own circumstances, and they felt listened to. Victims appreciated that practitioners were experts in hate crime and understood the impact it has on victims, which meant that they didn't have to justify or explain why they were experiencing their feelings. Similarly, previous research has identified that, although the impact of hate crime on victims varies and necessitates a multi-layered approach to support, the most prevalent immediate need is to be taken seriously and to be listened to.[27]

"I was certainly listened to. I was offered some guidance as well… But then, it's good that it's left a little bit open-ended, shall we say, because it just allows for any kind of input from the person, like myself, receiving the support, to lead the actual support process… I think everything humanly possible was done. The arrangements were quite flexible, informal. The people I spoke to were quite sympathetic, understanding… my experience has been very positive."

Female, victim of Disability-based Hate Crime

"Very easy. She was very straightforward and very helpful from the beginning. Supportive and sympathetic and also impartial, so that was very good."

Female, victim of Race-related Hate Crime

- **Key evaluation point 2:** The NHC R&S Centre provides valuable emotional and personal safety support to victims of hate crime and creates an important opportunity to alleviate some of the emotional burden to help victims cope and move forward, especially when victims are unable to disclose or unburden their thoughts and feelings to anybody else. Victims value the flexibility and longevity of the support that they receive.

- **Key evaluation point 3:** The NHC R&S Centre provides independent and impartial person-centred support that is valued by victims.

Areas for improvement in the NHC Report and Support service

The research explored what improvements could be made to the NHC R&S Centre. Three areas for improvement of the service were identified:

1. **Waiting time from incident to receiving support from the service**
2. **Managing victims' expectations and providing clearer communication about the service**
3. **Strengthening multi-agency liaison and advocacy.**

Waiting time from incident to receiving support from the service

In 2019/20 there were 4,023 hate crimes reported to the police in Wales.[28] Hate crime reporting has steadily increased over the last few years, from 2,941 hate crimes in 2016/17[29] to 3,370 hate crimes in 2017/18,[30] and then to 3,932 in 2018/19.[31] A rise in reported hate crime has impacted on the service; although the victim care officer (VCO) who provides the initial support and carries out a needs assessment usually contacts the victim within 48 hours, it can take up to 14 days during very busy periods.

Some victims need time after the event to process what has happened and cope with the initial shock of the incident. Only after the shock has subsided do they realise that they need support. For others, the additional early support of services such as the NHC R&S Centre are needed to alleviate the emotional impact of experiencing a hate crime incident. If the victim requires ongoing support from a caseworker, in some areas victims have to wait for up to eight weeks to receive this support. Staff expressed frustration about the waiting list and the impact it had on the initial contact, and on their subsequent relationship with the victim. They identified the waiting time as creating an additional barrier to support. Victims also talked about the need for immediate support as close to the incident occurring as possible. This supports previous research which has shown that victims' top priority when accessing a support service for hate crime is to 'be able to access support quickly'.[32]

"I think the only thing that really lets it down is the waiting list times, and that can be a barrier for us to offering the support, because we are flat out saying, 'You can have it, but you can't have it for two months.' It puts some victims' backs up."

Practitioner

"I think if cases were picked up within a couple of weeks period, obviously given they [the victim] have got the room and attention to do so, it would be much better for them because they could have a real heart-to-heart with me and [other staff members] on the phone in the initial contact and then silence for two months. I think it is a real lump in the road towards their journey to recovery with us."

Practitioner

"To get in contact with people a lot sooner, because four, five months after the fact, in that time, things could very easily have calmed down. Things could have moved on, so it's probably best to make that contact at the time, in the actual heat of battle, as it were."

Female, victim of Disability-based Hate Crime

"The incident was just before Christmas 2019, or just before December 2019. And communication with yourselves would have been about February this year [2020]. From my perspective, the support I received, it could have been a lot better done, in all truth."

Male, victim of Disability-based Hate Crime

Practitioners felt that waiting times would be improved by having additional staff to be able to meet the demand for services.

"I like what we got, but more staff, because then we don't have to support people eight weeks down the line when they don't actually need it. You know, it's a hard job for caseworkers… to feel like you're letting people down because you've got these mad waiting lists."

Practitioner

"We are a professional team. You know we've got… enormous waiting lists, but that's not due to a lack of professionalism. That's due to a lack of staff."

Practitioner

While there has been a rise in the reporting of hate crime across Wales, at the same time the numbers of staff working in the NHC R&S Centre have not increased proportionately. Additional funding in 2018 supported a slight increase in staffing hours; however, it was not enough to meet the demands on the service. This has affected the time victims have to wait before receiving support from a caseworker. An increase in additional staff capacity has the potential to improve the service victims receive.

Managing victims' expectations and providing clearer communication about the service

Many of the victims who used the service were new to it and were unsure about what to expect — including understanding the range of support available to them. One area for improvement identified by victims was to have the offer of support clearly and concisely communicated to them at the initial contact, and to be reminded of the support offer as and when it was needed. Many reported being unaware of the objective of the initial call and were unclear about what outcomes they should expect as a result of engaging with the service. One area for improvement within the service is to build on the initial discussion and set objectives with victims at the earliest opportunity.

"I think there does need to be a little bit of structure as well, to exactly what is the objective here. What was the outcome? What are we hoping to achieve from this support? What is it about? What support are you offering?… What exactly. Because it's still very sketchy, I think, in parts. There needs to be a little bit of structure, I think."

Female, victim of Disability-based Hate Crime

"I think it was more of a case of 'Is there anything we can do for you?' Not knowing what it is that you guys do, then no… because, as far as I'm aware, I'm alright. I'm okay. My family is okay, so no. I think if somebody was to more say things like 'This is what we do. This is what we can do. This is what we can offer' — and, as a result of that conversation, also be clear about what it is that you can't do. 'I don't know what it is you do.' That needs to be made so much clearer, right from the beginning."

Female, victim of Disability-based Hate Crime

"Then it's been coming and going… As I said earlier, different timescales, sometimes quite regularly, sometimes I wouldn't hear from them for a good while. I think it's finished now, I haven't heard from it for ages… it would've been better if they'd known a bit about the background rather than it be just a very generalised 'How are you feeling?' and a sympathetic tone… Well, I don't know whether that's deliberate. Had I been able to talk about the details of things, I think that would've got it off my chest a bit more. You know, the specifics."

Female, victim of Race-related Hate Crime

It is important that a clear outline of what the service can offer is communicated to victims at the earliest opportunity. This will support the management of victims' expectations about what the service can and cannot offer, to avoid disappointment. This would prevent any false assumptions that victims may have, such as the service being able to solve issues relating to housing or the police. Caseworkers identified this need:

"I think sometimes people come to us and they don't know really what our service is. Some people come to us out of desperation because they're like, 'Well, I've tried the police, I've tried housing, nothing's worked.' So, they're looking for that practical result, and some of the people, yes, come to us because they just want that emotional support that they haven't got. I feel like,

sometimes, a lot of our role is, not apologising, but being that bridge between the other agencies, but always delivering the bad news, you know, as much as we try, and sometimes we're just apologising basically on behalf of the police or on behalf of housing."

Practitioner

A common misconception reported by victims was that they had thought that the NHC R&S Centre was part of the police and hadn't realised that it was an independent service. This misconception may add additional barriers to engaging victims and may create a level of misunderstanding about what the service can and cannot do. Victims and practitioners recognised how communication about the service can break down these misconceptions that have the potential to be a barrier to engagement with the service. Providing clarity about the independence of the service at different contact points was also suggested as an improvement.

"You know, I think people, when they start… they know that we're in their corner, but there's that huge misconception that we are part of the police, and that is a massive barrier, I think. When I think of some of the people I've supported in [place], you know, a lot of [Victim Support] officers are in police stations."

Practitioner

"Something I can see is that a lot of people are under the misconception that we are part of the police and, therefore, immediately, wouldn't want to trust us. So, that would be an initial barrier."

Practitioner

"Yes, I was thinking that it was a police organisation. Now maybe I missed that, at the start, when they said who they were. Yes, so, maybe then Victim Support should make it really clear that they're independent of the police, make it really clear each time they speak, because it's very stressful. When you're going through something, sometimes you're not listening properly because your stress levels are high because it brings the incidents that you're suffering from to the fore and that brings on the stressful feeling, so, you know, you're missing stuff."

Female, victim of Race-related Hate Crime

Clear communication to dispel this misconception that the service is within the police force, at a variety of time points, has the potential to improve victims' engagement with the service and assist with building trust.

Strengthening multi-agency liaison and advocacy

The referral pathway into the service varies across the different police force areas. In North Wales and Dyfed-Powys all victims of hate crime are referred. In South Wales the police gain consent before referring victims to the service; this is due to happen imminently in Gwent. A few improvements were identified in relation to the referral pathway from the police to the NHC R&S Centre. Victims expressed a lack of clear communication from the police with regard to the NHC R&S Centre and what it provides; this was also stressed by staff. If the police do not make victims aware of, or refer them to, the support service, this creates a barrier to engagement with the service. Increased collaboration with the police – to raise awareness and to highlight the service's benefits — may increase referrals and improve the offer for all relevant victims in a meaningful way.

"The vast majority of our referrals, obviously, come through on ADT (automated data transfer) from the police, I don't know how the police actually discuss or how our offer is presented to the victim at the time, because recently… some people… they've given consent for Victim Support to contact them, but they're like, 'What's all this about?' So, clearly, there has been some, I would suggest, miscommunication or misinterpretation between the victim and the police officer… Depending on how our service is put to the victim, they might, sort of, think, 'Oh no, I don't want any part of that.' So, that could make a difference."

Practitioner

"I hadn't been aware that there was a specific arm of Victim Support that specifically dealt with hate crime. I just believed Victim Support was Victim Support: 'If you are a victim, we are here to support you.' I wasn't aware that there were specific with regards to the type of crime. I think the police [should be] being a little bit more proactive."

Female, victim of Disability-based Hate Crime

"Because the police were not advertising too much. There was lots of police involvement before they referred me to this. The police should refer pretty much sooner rather than later."

Female, victim of Race-related Hate Crime

Victims identified that if NHC R&S support staff knew more about the specifics of the incident from the police it would benefit dialogue and the subsequent support they received. Staff also expressed a preference for having more details about the case from the police.

"Well, I'd say provide more details to be made accessible to [caseworker] and all that stuff there because I got the impression that she got all she could [from the police] and I can't fault her enough for that, but there was stuff she wanted to get, but she couldn't get."

Male, victim of Race-related Hate Crime

"You get the initial referral which, let's face it, is absolutely pants. I mean, you just have no information. It's rubbish. It really is."

Practitioner

Staff also identified the complexity of boundaries between the NHC R&S Centre and other support agencies. While the need for independence and impartiality in supporting victims is acknowledged, there is recognition of the value and limitations of advocacy within the service. The service's ability to make agencies talk to each other is a unique asset and a strength of the support it offers. Nevertheless, staff identified feelings of frustration at their lack of power to influence other agencies (such as housing associations, the police and council departments) to make changes and improvements for the victim and how this makes them feel powerless, and how it impacts on feelings of letting down the victim they are supporting:

"There's something that I think is important that we do… if we're working with another agency, like a housing association and say if the person's already been trying to move or something like that, and they say, 'Oh no, it's a neighbourly dispute. So, that's how we're going to do it,' something we need to fight for it to have it recognised by them as hate, and there's a hate element, particularly when something doesn't go to court. Like, standing up for someone, that you believed in them, I think that's a big part of what we do as part of our role."

Practitioner

"Another thing that we do is, kind of, making agencies talk to each other… no-one is taking responsibility for it, and people are still having serious, serious incidents… like petrol poured through their letterbox. 'Oh, well, that's a police incident,' housing are saying. Police will have sometimes done what they need to do, but, realistically, housing need to come in to ensure that that person is safe. These agencies do not talk to each other all the time… where it requires a multi-agency response and you need them all in a room with us… I think a lot of the time, if they hadn't have come to us and if we didn't get involved, then the victim would still be having these conversations where police are just telling them it's housing and housing are just telling them that it's the police. The victim is in the middle just getting nothing."

Practitioner

To improve the offer to victims in a meaningful way, work is needed at a strategic level to increase and strengthen the range of multi-agency collaborations with the police and other agencies, to encourage positive change.

"I think the problem is there doesn't seem to be any accountability… As an organisation, you know, we don't have much clout, obviously, so it can make the job really, really frustrating because you have to act professionally and you have to try and maintain these relationships between other organisations and other agencies. You feel personally that you're letting your [client] down because you're not able to, sort of, move things forward in the way that you would like."

Practitioner

"You are relying solely on the police or council sometimes, and then that's a whole other nightmare… I think certain members of staff in other agencies, you know, they value the work we do and they're grateful, but then a lot of the time, we don't have that respect because, yes, we don't have much power and they think we're just there to listen to people, which we are, but we don't have the respect."

Practitioner

- **Key evaluation point 4:** The NHC R&S service could be improved by prioritising reducing the waiting time between when the incident is reported and when the victim receives support.

- **Key evaluation point 5:** Clear communication from the NHC R&S Centre is needed to give each victim a concise outline of what the service can provide, to manage victims' expectations around support effectively.

- **Key evaluation point 6:** The NHC R&S Centre to increase and strengthen multi-agency collaborations with the police and other agencies, and improve referral pathways, to ensure that all victims are offered the service.

Barriers to and opportunities for reporting hate crime and gaining support

Barriers to reporting hate crime

The research explored what the barriers are to victims reporting hate crimes and accessing support. Four key barriers were identified:

1. Poor experiences and lack of confidence in the police and criminal justice process
2. Normalisation and acceptance of hate crime — a lack of awareness and understanding
3. Fear of repercussions
4. Admitting to being a victim and shame.

Poor experiences and lack of confidence in the police and criminal justice process

One of the key barriers to reporting hate crime expressed by victims was the feeling of hopelessness. Victims expressed seeing little point in reporting incidents as they perceived that nothing would be done and so it was a waste of time trying. Past poor experiences involving the police, where nothing was done with previous complaints, fuelled this feeling of hopelessness. Previous research identified that this sense of apathy is experienced because the reporting process is perceived as unclear and time-consuming, with an improbable successful outcome for victims.[33]

"It becomes frustrating thinking that nothing is going to be done. All these things are all a build-up of things that've been going on for years. It becomes frustrating and you lose faith in the system, in the policing. You look around at things that are happening and you think, 'Oh God, it's never going to fit in, there's never going to be anything done about it.'"

Female, victim of Race-related Hate Crime

"It's made it worthless everything I've done. I think that can put people off reporting because you don't see an outcome. That's quite important, I think, for these kinds of cases."

Female, victim of Sexual Orientation-based Hate Crime

"You just feel like you're wasting someone's [police] time… I kind of felt like it was a bit of a slap in the face, I suppose. When you have so many comments, people comment loads online, and then the police go and say, 'Don't do that again'… it doesn't really show people that it's wrong, it's like a slap on the wrist, a kind of telling-off."

Male, victim of Sexual Orientation-based Hate Crime

"After what I've been through, and phoning the police and phoning different services, and not having a good response… Just the lack of… Why bother?"

Female, victim of Age-, Gender- and Disability-based Hate Crime

Victims reported not wanting to appear to be wasting police time, linked to a perception that the hate incident or hate crime is not important enough for the police's time. Similarly, previous research studies have identified this as a prevalent barrier for certain communities, particularly the LGBTQ+ community.[34]

"I just didn't want to waste anyone's time."

Male, victim of Sexual Orientation-based Hate Crime

"'Well, it's only the odd comment, there are bigger things going on in the world' — that was kind of the way I see it from my head… When you think to report things, I always thought there are people's houses getting robbed and people getting assaulted and more serious crimes like that, and I kind of felt it was a waste of police time to phone up and say, 'Someone has called me something horrible online.' That was kind of the biggest thing; I just thought it was tiny in the grand scheme of things, and I thought this only affects me, whereas other crimes can affect numerous people. So that was kind of my reason for not reporting it really, mainly not wanting to waste time."

Male, victim of Sexual Orientation-based Hate Crime

The other issue in relation to perceived futility is the lack of trust and the potential implications for the individual if they do report the incident to the police. Similarly, previous research has found that victims' mistrust of the police and concern about how the police will respond — or what they will do with the information — creates a level of fear and apprehension.[35]

"The biggest barrier is that the police will not do anything. It's true in most cases… I know, for example, the [BAME] minorities or communities in certain areas in [Place], they don't have trust in the police. They don't care. There are a lot of policies that have been introduced and impacted the trust, like 'Stop and Search' and things like that, so it's complicated."

Female, victim of Race-related Hate Crime

"To be honest, the general thing around the community of trans and that is the police don't do anything. That's why you don't report it, because it's a waste of your time. They won't, and you risk possibly coming across an officer that will be totally unaware of trans and then be whatever. You just think, 'It's not worth it.'"

Male, Victim of Sexual Orientation-based Hate Crime

Normalisation and acceptance of hate crime — a lack of awareness and understanding

Victims talked about having to live their daily lives with abusive comments or remarks and how this, over time, had become the 'norm' that they had learned to live with and accept. This tolerance of behaviour led to a normalisation and acceptance of incidents which resulted in a lack of recognition of a hate crime. For some victims, the normalisation of hate crime, and the regularity of it, became a part of their daily lives that they accepted as part of belonging to a particular community or what they believed in.

"I mean, for me, obviously because I'm used to it, I kind of internalise it all the time. You kind of just think, 'Okay, well I've had that before, that's fine, I'll deal with it how I did before,' rather than getting help."

Male, victim of Sexual Orientation-based Hate Crime

"When it first starts happening, you're like, 'Well, I can't change anything about this, so I don't know why people are being so nasty,' etc., but you kind of just get used to it, and I think your tolerance level builds up."

Male, victim of Sexual Orientation-based Hate Crime

"And I think that's the problem with underreporting. I mean, if I had to report every incident of hate crime I've had in the past, then it would have bumped up the numbers, I'm sure. But obviously because I suppose it's been so entrenched for a number of years, you kind of forget that it is a crime, and I think maybe recognising that as well… Some of the victims think that the incident is trivial, like, 'It's just some verbal abuse. They called me a terrorist,' or, 'Take off your rag,' or something like that. Or, 'It's okay. It's just a word. It doesn't mean anything,' so they don't report it."

Female, victim of Race-related Hate Crime

Victims and staff also highlighted the lack of awareness among people from marginalised protected characteristic groups of what hate crime is.

"I was so young and naïve, I didn't know at the time what [hate crime] was… I am still not quite sure what is available."

Male, victim of Disability-based Hate Crime

"A lot of people are not aware that what they've experienced is a hate crime. So, it's raising that awareness really… Imagine somebody with a disability, for example, that they've had since childhood. They've experienced prejudice, ignorance, every single day, so they don't do anything about it, even when it becomes more serious sometimes, because they just feel that that is something that they just have to put up with and experience."

Practitioner

Fear of repercussions

Victims had a level of fear about what the repercussions and implications of reporting the incident might be, either from the perpetrator, their family or the wider community. There was a concern that by reporting the incident it would make the situation worse and create further issues for them and their family. Previous research has found that where victims of hate crime knew the perpetrator, they were less likely to report the crime through fear of retaliation or embarrassment.[36]

"One thing that used to stop me from reporting anything in the past was that I thought, 'If I do, it's going to attract more attention to myself, I'll get more comments, it's really not worth the hassle.'"

Male, victim of Sexual Orientation-based Hate Crime

A lack of knowledge around the reporting process (and general data protection regulation), and around potential outcomes, perpetuated concern and fear.

"I didn't — and probably still don't — understand police process and 'When you report a crime this is what happens and this is what we do' — that sort of thing. I suppose what I didn't want is to report something, the police go and obviously would make them aware that I'd reported it to whoever made the comment. And then they, instead of reacting, 'Oh yes, I was wrong,' kind of reacting the other way, and then all their friends start making comments as well. And that was my fear."

Male, victim of Sexual Orientation-based Hate Crime

"Sometimes the abuse comes from neighbours or family members. Some victims who convert to Islam and their family is from a different background — either white or [of a] different background — they can sometimes receive harassment and bullying from their own family. It is very hard to report your own family. Or you get an abuse from your neighbour and you know that there will be consequences if you were to report it to the police… You would rather just leave the entire area and look for a house somewhere else because you don't want to face what could come next."

Female, victim of Race-related Hate Crime

Admitting to being a victim and shame

Victims described that reporting a hate crime incident, and seeking support, involved dealing with a series of emotions and thoughts that can create a barrier for the victim. These included overcoming issues such as having to identify as a victim and the shame experienced as a result of victimisation.

"Some people, as well — this probably isn't just LGBT — they don't like thinking of themselves as a victim… It's getting people to accept support. Even with myself, I had to admit then that, 'Oh, I have to admit that I need help,' which

makes you feel weaker. That's one of the barriers you face… Deniability sometimes is how you cope, isn't it? You've got to break through that."

Male, victim of Sexual Orientation-based Hate Crime

"Obviously, we don't want to talk about the fact that we're scared or we feel humiliated too much. Making that as seamless and confidential as possible is critical, I think."

Female, victim of Sexual Orientation-based Hate Crime

Being able to break through these emotional barriers takes strength and energy for victims to face their fears and risk self-perceived humiliation. Similarly, previous research has illustrated the lack of understanding and awareness among statutory agency practitioners around the levels of bravery, persistence and stamina that are required by victims to be able to disclose traumatic experiences to someone they don't know.[37] Research confirms that victims report shame and many blame themselves for what has happened, creating additional barriers to reporting the incident.[38]

Encouragement to report and receive support

The research explored what would encourage victims to report hate crimes and receive support. Three key barriers were identified:

1. **Awareness and understanding of hate crime**
2. **Increased awareness of third-party reporting, advocacy and support**
3. **An easy and seamless reporting and support process — one point of contact.**

Awareness and understanding of hate crime

Recognising when an incident is a hate crime is an important first step towards encouraging people to report hate crime. Education and awareness of what constitutes a hate crime were recognised by victims as the initial step in increasing reporting. Similarly, previous research studies have identified low levels of awareness and understanding around how hate crime is defined and what particular forms it can take among actual and potential victims.[39] Previous research studies have also identified a lack of awareness of hate crime, particularly within economically, socially and politically marginalised communities in society, such as asylum seekers and refugees, people with learning and/or physical disabilities, Muslim women and trans people.[40]

"As far as a hate crime, I was new to trans and stuff like that. The definition of 'hate' I hadn't really looked at. Then they referred me to [Victim Support]. I think it was probably when I spoke to [Name] at [Place] that I clicked that it came under the banner of hate and stuff like that… I think it's just teaching people that it is a hate crime… unless you see a particular advert or you get told about it, you don't realise that you're actually protected under this, this is for you as well… I learned it was a hate crime and actually trans is classed in that now. What I thought was a hate crime, I thought it was always down to racism.

I didn't realise it included everything else. I think it's slowly becoming more known, but it isn't very well known, especially for those that aren't active on social media. Also, word of mouth. As more people are supported, if they spread the word as well, then that is helpful."

Male, victim of Sexual Orientation-based Hate Crime

"There's so much hate crime, I think, that's just verbal. It can be very subtle, so people then are fighting in their own head, 'Should I report this or should I not?' I think there needs to be clearer information out there about the fact that hate crime is not just getting beaten up."

Female, victim of Sexual Orientation-based Hate Crime

"I wasn't aware as to exactly what it is that constituted a hate crime. In my mind, a hate crime would be if somebody was to call me… Let's say it was racially motivated inasmuch as they were calling me the N-word. They were referring to my nationality. They were referring to something to do with — directly to do with — my race. At that point, only then does the hate crime bell go off in my mind. What I didn't know is that all of these other incidences could also be regarded as such. Nobody has told me that. Nobody gave me that sort of information."

Male, victim of Race-related Hate Crime

Victims felt that campaigns were important to raise awareness of hate crime, using a range of communication channels to get proactive messages out to the general public. This includes increasing recognition of what constitutes a hate crime. A mixture of media coverage and paid promotion was suggested.

"Some kind of either television, radio or online campaign [giving] people that sort of information, giving people that level of information before — before they fall victim — because, if I'm already a victim of something but I don't know that I'm a victim of something, then maybe I'm looking in the wrong places for the support for that something, because I don't know."

Male, victim of Race-related Hate Crime

"More publicity about you know… On social media… there's been quite a bit about domestic abuse in the recent Covid months. I've noticed that, on the media… there's been quite a bit to encourage people to report that, so… a campaign."

Female, victim of Race-related Hate Crime

"I think what would break the barriers, though, is, if any perpetrator of hate crime is found, is to publicise that, is to share positive stories and things like that. I think one of the incidents that I was faced [with] and it was successful… he [the perpetrator] was found. He was fined and we publicised this as a positive story. It was shared. The community started to think, or the victims started to think, 'There can be results.' I think it's important to share the positive stories of successful cases."

Female, victim of Race-related Hate Crime

There was recognition that the police, and other statutory agencies, are not always aware of what constitutes a hate crime or of the support that is available to victims. This has been touched upon earlier in relation to a gap in referrals to the service. A way to address this, and to improve awareness, is through training and increased collaboration with the NHC R&S Centre. The police, and other statutory agencies, have a large part to play in raising awareness of what constitutes a hate crime and how to report it and in communicating the support that is available to victims. There is also a need to increase victims' awareness of what a hate crime is, how to report it, and what their rights are under the Code of practice for victims of crime in relation to criminal justice agencies and support services.

"Also, to get maybe social workers and police and that to be a bit more easily proactive in saying, 'Oh, by the way, these people will support you and this is something I'd recommend.'"

Male, victim of Sexual Orientation-based Hate Crime

"Number one is recognising the term 'Islamophobia' and knowing what it means. Sometimes, when I call [the police] and I say, 'I experienced an Islamophobic attack,' they would say, 'What, homophobic?' I said, 'No, it's not homophobic, it's Islamophobic incidents,' so recognising the term, and then training the staff on what the term means and how it can be translated into action."

Female victim of Race-related Hate Crime

"Standardising information that police give out on hate crime… we need to specifically have leaflets for hate crime that go out — when you make a complaint with the police, it should just be standard. This is being issued. This is the support you're entitled to."

Female, victim of Disability-based Hate Crime

"If I'm honest with you, what made me report it this time was that someone else who I work with in my current role said, 'You need to report this.' And otherwise, if I'm honest with you, I probably wouldn't have reported it. Because, if it was other people saying, 'This is really bad, you need to report that,' I would have said, 'It's nothing new to what I've experienced before.' So I think really it's encouraging people."

Male, victim of Sexual Orientation-based Hate Crime

Recognition was given to the need for organisations to work together to raise awareness of the support that is available for victims, and practitioners also identified the need for more promotion between organisations and professionals working in this area. There was also recognition of the need for organisations to have an increased awareness of their work practices and how they might think about preventative measures to minimise the risks of hate crime occurring in communities. This activity would need to be resourced.

"I think collaboration with other organisations. I think one of the really successful things that happened, I think last year, there was like a football tournament which… Victim Support, police and other organisations involved young people. Young people were introduced to Victim Support through games, through football. It wasn't through a stall, because you need to speak the language of the communities or the target audience that you're doing. Young people are into football, so maybe like joining this or like for Victim Support to

collaborate with other organisations — women's organisations, for example. Move beyond just having a stall, distributing leaflets, I think."

Female, victim of Race-related Hate Crime

"I don't think that we're probably sometimes as effective as we could be as an organisation in terms of promoting our offer to other professionals and agencies."

Practitioner

Increased awareness of third-party reporting, advocacy and support

There was consensus and recognition of the value of third-party reporting. However, many of the victims highlighted that they were unaware that hate crimes could be reported via a third-party organisation. Similarly, previous research highlights that a large majority of hate crime victims are not aware of or know how to access support services.[41] Those interviewed who had received support for a hate crime incident said that they would report any future hate crime incidents via the NHC R&S Centre. An initial positive experience of receiving support appeared to provide confidence to consider the option of using third-party reporting for any future incidents.

"I think, in a way, almost to report — yes, external. Because the police is kind of seen as the extreme official end of things, and I think sometimes it's quite nice to be able to report but not have to go all the way there yourself, or for someone to maybe… not hold your hand, but guide you through it. Yes. I definitely think if I'd have had more… hate crime again, I probably wouldn't bother reporting it to the police again, because it kind of felt like a bit of a waste of time."

Male, victim of Sexual Orientation-based Hate Crime

The benefit and value of the option to use a third-party agency to advocate for the victim, assuring anonymity, were recognised. Victims and staff said that a third-party reporting and support agency can provide victims with confidence and a sense of 'validation'.

"That's actually what I would do. I would go to [caseworker] first and be like, '[Caseworker], I've got this. Is this valid to go to the police and can you help me to present..?' I would actually do it that way now, knowing how much trouble I've had with the police taking things seriously before and how much Victim Support does take you seriously and helps you to say, 'Well, word it this way,' or, 'Have the confidence to talk it through because you can talk through me first,' or something like that. I would do it that route, unless it was a 999 bit. Then it would go straight — but yes, anything else I would go to Victim Support first and run it through with them… because you are waiting for the police to go, 'Oh, stop being so childish,' or, 'That's nothing big.' When you've spoken to somebody then you go, 'No, because Victim Support said this is valid. I am valid to come to you.' It gives you that confidence and almost that you've got a wingman, if you see what I mean. It really helps then to be able to talk to the police."

Male, victim of Sexual Orientation-based Hate Crime

An easy and seamless reporting and support process — one point of contact

Victims described the need for a seamless reporting and support process. This meant that they did not have to keep repeating themselves to the different agencies involved, having just one point of contact to take them through from the initial stages to the conclusion.

"Obviously, we don't want to talk about the fact that we're scared or we feel humiliated too much. Making that as seamless and confidential as possible is critical, I think. With that first incident I did feel like I was going over it constantly, having to go over what happened. It was the last thing I wanted to do. I really wanted to have something done about it. Trying to go over an incident is quite difficult, especially when it's just happened to you. Knowing you've just got one point of contact. Knowing it's just that one person… Also, knowing that you're going to find out at the end what happened. You're going to have a conclusion of some description, whatever that is. It might not be the conclusion you want, but at least it's a conclusion."

Female, victim of Sexual Orientation-based Hate Crime

"I think it's because a lot of the time the people have gone over and over and over it so many times. Like, I had someone who said that the hate crime themselves, that was bad, but what they found, and I get this quite a lot, they felt victimised again by the police, and that's something that's really common."

Practitioner

"I think it's sometimes very confusing for the victims because we're like, 'Oh, we don't do court support. We're going to take you to witness care.' It's just natural to want the same person to walk you through the whole event, isn't it? Otherwise… you're just repeating yourself continuously."

Practitioner

Practitioners identified the benefit of the NHC R&S Centre providing a single point of contact and continuity.

"I know that earlier on, somebody was saying how difficult it was for people to have to keep on retelling their story over and over again… that's why our service works so well… within the VCO role, that initial phone call, they get so much information out of the [client]. It's all recorded, everything is done in a very professional way. So, by the time it comes to the caseworker, we know the background. Obviously, we're going to ask more questions, but we can phone up and, sort of, say, 'I know you were talking to my colleague,' and explain about what's been happening. So, straightaway, that [client] knows, 'Okay, these are people that have taken the time to not only contact me and listen to me, but have acted very professionally. I have the confidence that what I'm saying to them is actually being listened to.'"

Practitioner

- **Key evaluation point 7:** Victims described numerous barriers that prevent them from reporting hate crime and receiving support. Raising awareness of hate crime and its impact on victims is important in promoting its significance and eroding any normalisation of it.

- **Key evaluation point 8:** Increasing public awareness of hate crime, validating victims' experiences of it and raising understanding of the range of options available (to report and gain support) have the potential to encourage more victims to report hate crime and receive support.

Conclusion

Hate crime and hate incidents have a negative impact on many aspects of victims' lives. Victims can have a range of multi-layered and complex support needs. Common needs include emotional support, safety, mental health support, and advocacy and information to help navigate the criminal justice process.

The NHC R&S Centre provides valuable emotional and personal safety support to victims of hate crime and creates an important opportunity to alleviate some of the emotional burden to help victims cope and move forward. Victims value the flexibility and longevity of the support that they receive. The independent and impartial approach to the support given is also valued by victims, especially when victims are unable to disclose or unburden their thoughts and feelings to anybody else.

However, the existing service does not currently meet all needs. Victims report different unmet needs, but there are common gaps in current support provision, particularly around navigating the criminal justice process, counselling and mental health support services. As well as increasing the type of support available, the NHC R&S service could be improved by prioritising reducing the waiting time between when the incident is reported and when the victim receives support. Victims also want NHC R&S support staff to have more information about the specifics of their incident from the police, to improve dialogue and the subsequent support they receive.

Victims described numerous barriers that prevent them from reporting hate crime and receiving support; these include awareness of hate crime and its impact, and the normalisation of hate crime in society. Increasing public awareness of hate crime, validating victims' experiences of it, and raising understanding of the range of options available (to report and gain support) have the potential to encourage more victims to report hate crime and receive support.

Translating evaluation into practice

The NHC R&S Centre has recognised that waiting times for support can have a detrimental impact on a person's ability to cope and recover from hate crime moving forward. The service welcomes the findings from this report and will be looking at ways in which to increase capacity across the team so that waiting times are reduced. There will be a review of the initial contact processes to ensure that the first conversations with victims of hate crime are informed and mapped out clearly with regards to what will happen next with their support (in a way that the victim can understand and process). Lastly, the service will be looking at the current relationships it has with existing partners (such as the police and housing associations) and how these can be strengthened with more regular communication, and understanding, of the impact of hate crime. The service will look to identify any gaps in provision and work closer with new partners who can help fill those gaps. The NHC R&S Centre will prioritise these recommendations and changes to develop the service and deliver high-quality support.

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Published by Victim Support
President: HRH, The Princess Royal

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