

REPORT TO: Safer Halton Policy & Performance Board

DATE: 14th June 2011

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director Communities

SUBJECT: Hate Crime Reduction Strategy and Action Plan

WARDS: All

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To provide members with a draft of the Hate Crime Reduction Strategy and Action Plan for Halton.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

- (1) Members comment on the content of the report and dependent upon their views put forward the strategy to the Council's Executive Board.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 Hate crime is a serious issue that can affect the quality of life for people and communities, and reducing the level of hate crime is a key priority for the Safer Halton Partnership. Hate crime can take various forms of either physical or verbal abuse and even the threat of attack.
- 3.2 According to the Home Office and Association of Police Chief Constables the definition of hate crime comes in five categories: Race, Faith, Homophobic, Transphobic and Disability, with the number of incidents being under reported nationally.
- 3.3 It is believed that there is an issue of under-reporting. This is not unique to Halton. It is in fact a national problem which is why a Hate Crime Cross-Government Action Plan was produced.
- 3.4 It should also be noted that not all reported incidents become crimes. A hate incident may or may not constitute a criminal offence once it's been investigated. However keeping a record of incidents can help build a picture of what is happening within communities.
- 3.5 In Halton, due to the low numbers of reported incidents and the knowledge that there is a smaller diverse community, work has been progressing to include the hate crime matters with the wider safeguarding issues, such as training front line service providers and using existing communication methods to raise awareness of reporting centres.

- 3.6 This strategy and action plan is for the wider Strategic Partnership, as it's been recognised that the Council cannot progress this work alone.
- 3.7 This strategy has been shared with a variety of Partners, groups and networks, such as the Partnership's Equalities, Engagement and Cohesion Group, the Community Cohesion Officers Group, the emerging BME Network for Halton, Halton Speak Out and the Safer Halton Partnership. The strategy has also been shared with the Safeguarding Co-ordinator and Manager for Adults and Children and Young People. There have also been 1-2-1 meetings with the two lead officers for the Community Safety Team, along with a large public consultation event held in November 2010 which included service users and providers.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Whilst this strategy doesn't require any additional funding, it does require Partners to review existing areas of work and methods of working and asks that they incorporate an element of the hate crime reduction work.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 These are contained within the Action Plan and there are no direct financial implications for the Council.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCILS PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

Hate crime and harassment affects children as much as it affects adults. Some forms of bullying in schools can have a hate crime incident element. Part of this strategy is to identify and eradicate those incidents through more robust reporting and clear measures to deal with incidents.

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

Hate Crime and Harassment are potential barriers to employment, learning and skills for our more vulnerable residents. Victims are less likely to try and take advantage of work or learning opportunities for fear of becoming a victim again. Tackling and reducing hate crime in all of its forms will remove these barriers potentially creating wider opportunities for those residents.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

Hate Crime can have serious implications for an individual's mental health. There is a clear link between repeated victimisation and mental health issues such as depression. Reducing levels of hate crime and

harassment in Halton will have a positive affect on the mental health of victims and potential victims.

6.4 A Safer Halton

Hate crime is a serious issue that can affect the quality of life for people and communities, and reducing the level of hate crime is a key priority for the Safer Halton Partnership. This strategy has been endorsed by the Safer Halton Partnership in May 2011.

6.5 Environment & Regeneration in Halton

None

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 This work will help to build stronger and more resilient communities and will help to empower local residents to report incidents of hate crime. This will in turn help to improve community cohesion across the borough. There is no risk in delivering the strategy – the risk lies in potential non-delivery, with under-reporting of hate crime continuing to be an issue in Halton.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 The Equality Act 2010 brings together into one Act all previous legislation around Equality and Diversity. Under the Duty a public authority must, in carrying out its functions, take into account the need to: -

- (a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conflict that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
- (b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
- (c) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it

8.2 The Act defines a number of characteristics which are protected: -

- (a) Age
- (b) Disability
- (c) Gender reassignment
- (d) Marriage and civil partnership
- (e) Pregnancy and maternity
- (f) Race
- (g) Religion or belief
- (h) Sex

(i) Sexual orientation

8.3 An Equality Impact Assessment is in the process of being completed for the Strategy