

Major reforms for police hate incident recording

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A new approach to non-crime hate incidents, following a review by the College and the National Police Chiefs' Council

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Policing in England and Wales is proposing major reforms on how it handles reports of hate and hostility that fall below the criminal threshold. The current non-crime hate incidents (NCHI) system will be replaced with a new approach to keep individuals and communities safe, while making clear that lawful free speech is not a police matter.

The changes follow a review of non-crime hate incidents by the College of Policing and the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC). The system of recording NCHIs needs significant reform to reflect the realities of modern policing, particularly in an era of social media and online communication.

The principles stemming from the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry remain unchanged. Police will continue to ensure that reports which may lead to genuine harm and risk are actioned effectively and proportionately, safeguarding the most vulnerable individuals from harm and monitoring community tensions.

Those who experience abuse motivated by hostility towards their race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, sex, or transgender identity should feel confident in reporting it and know it will be taken seriously.

The new approach

The review has found inconsistencies in the current system. Recommendations under the new approach include the following:

- A new and more focused definition of an incident will be introduced, so that policing is only recording matters where there is a clear policing purpose. This will apply to all reports, including those believed to be motivated by hate or hostility.

- Every report will go through a triage process by specially trained staff, who will assess whether there is a genuine policing purpose before any further action is taken and where there is, that the response is effective and appropriate to the risk posed.
- The police database for recording crimes will no longer be used to record incidents motivated by hate.
- Personal data will only be recorded where there is a policing purpose to do so.
- Incident records will not use crime terminology, such as victim and suspect.
- The Home Office considers commissioning His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) to inspect forces on how well they implement the new changes, providing an independent check on whether reform is delivered in practice.

Significant work will now be undertaken to develop guidance and training materials to assist police forces in implementing the new system, which will be shaped through consultation with policing as well as with communities.

The current NCHI code of practice will be revoked by the Home Office through the Crime and Policing Bill.

[Go to the full review](#)

Assistant Chief Constable Tom Harding, Director at the College of Policing, said:

Non-crime hate incidents are being replaced with a system that better serves both the public and modern-day policing. We have clearly established the current approach does not meet the expectations of either.

Today we are setting out a fundamentally different way of handling reports so that officers can focus efforts on their core duties of preventing crime and protecting communities, while making clear that lawful free speech is not a police matter.

Recording of non-crime hate incidents represents a very small proportion of overall police demand and while well intentioned, there has been a disproportionate use of the process which has eroded public trust.

We are recommending that the robust new standards set by us should be independently checked by the policing inspectorate so that the public can have confidence they are being implemented consistently across 43 police forces in England and Wales.”

Chief Constable Rachel Swann, vice-chair of the NPCC and national lead for diversity, equality and inclusion, added:

Policing is clear that this new system must recognise vulnerability, ensure hate crimes are properly recorded, and that community tensions and potential precursors to violence and other crimes are identified.

The proposed changes aim to ensure policing absolutely respects an individual’s right to freedom of expression, while protecting and maintaining the trust and confidence of those who experience hate and are vulnerable to crime. It is about ensuring things like hate crimes and risks to vulnerable people are recognised and recorded in a robust, consistent and lawful way.

It is vital that we know this works for our communities and builds public confidence in our service. That’s why today’s publication is just the start of this process and we will now be working with both policing and our communities to work through these changes and ensure the new system is clearly understood, fair and effectively implemented.”

Tags

Hate crime