Briefing Paper
Tackling hate crime using an outcomes approach in Edinburgh
May 2012
Project summary

The Improvement Service, the Equality and Human Rights Commission and Scottish Government worked in partnership to deliver the action research project, Improving Local Equality Data (ILED), over twelve months from February 2011.

The project provided hands-on, tailored support to four local authorities/Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs) to develop and use the equality evidence base to measure progress towards equality within the outcomes approach.

Each local project team selected areas for support based on their unique priorities and circumstances.

Edinburgh’s Hate Crime Strategic Development Group (HCSDG) is developing an outcome action plan to tackle hate crime in Edinburgh.

The HCSDG comprises partners from the council, police, NHS and third sector. Specifically, the third sector organisations represented are the Edinburgh and Lothians Regional Equality Council (ELREC) and Ecas. ELREC works towards eliminating discrimination, reducing inequality and promoting good relations between people of all protected characteristics. It works across the City of Edinburgh and the Lothians. Ecas is an Edinburgh-based charity that provides friendly and practical help to physically disabled people. The Group meets quarterly to discuss its approach to tackling hate crime, with the bulk of its work in 2011 focussing on the development of their outcomes focussed action plan.

After taking the action plan through various iterations, the Group organised an initial meeting followed by a workshop with support from the ILED project team. The ILED project team was asked to support the HCSDG to refine the outcomes; consider its priorities; and clarify its performance measurement and management within the latest iteration of its action plan. This support led to the Group developing its outcome action plan so that the outcomes were refined, a context for the work was provided, and a clear path was set to be able to develop actions and indicators.
Strengths of the approach

The project is midway through its development. The main strengths of the project to date are detailed below.

• By taking a partnership approach, the HCSDG encourages a range of perspectives, as well as shared ownership of outcomes and shared accountability. The HCSDG see tackling hate crime as the responsibility of a range of services. The group discussed the role of schools and youth clubs; neighbourhood and housing services; the police; and others. If all partners are involved from the beginning of the outcome development process, it helps everyone to understand their role and responsibilities in achieving each outcome. It is also easier to assign actions this way.

• The ILED project team facilitated a challenge and discussion session with the group. The aim of the session was to explore and refine what was meant by each outcome in the hate crime action plan. To do this, the facilitator picked out key words within each outcome and asked the group to describe exactly what they meant and whom they were meant to address. For example, the group unpicked terms such as ‘effective’ and ‘impact,’ which can be interpreted in a number of ways. By discussing the concept of effective services, the group agreed they meant integrated services. The group thought that integration was fundamental in ensuring that victims of hate crime/incidents felt as though they were taken seriously, were supported and were kept informed – which was how they interpreted the term effective. This also expanded the potential for the group to adopt a clear and logical approach to action planning for better integration of services. When discussing impact, the facilitator asked the group upon whom the impact was meant to be. For example, in the case of an outcome on reducing the impact of hate crime, is this for victims, for police, for services? This helps to clarify whether the outcomes are aimed at the right people.

• The group identified intermediate outcomes for several groups whose behaviour should be addressed in order to improve outcomes for victims of hate crimes/incidents. The emphasis that the group gave to tackling the attitudes and behaviour of perpetrators and wider society, and increasing the integration of services to support and help victims of hate crime, is intended to send a positive message to victims of hate crime that they should not feel as though they are in the wrong. By focussing on this range of groups, the outcomes also take on a
proactive and aspirational tone, as opposed to supporting victims once the damage has been done.

• The HCSDG has clearly shown how the outcomes it has developed link and contribute to the wider work of the CPP. The group identified a clear link between national outcomes, Edinburgh’s Single Outcome Agreement and the outcomes it developed for hate crime, and illustrated this on a logic model, which it included in its action plan. There are several benefits to this approach. It helps to show how hate crime focussed outcomes contribute toward the CPP strategic outcomes and national outcomes; helps others who are not directly involved in the HCSDG to understand the rationale of the work; it communicates the value of the work in a field of competing priorities; it helps to outline that everybody has a responsibility to tackle hate crime.
What we did

The HCSDG developed its outcome action plan throughout 2011. Once the broad areas of focus had been identified, the Improvement Service supported the HCSDG to clarify its outcomes, priorities and performance measure and management approach through a facilitated challenge and discussion session.

In November 2011, an initial meeting was held between the ILED project team and HCSDG. Following discussion at the meeting, the group agreed that the outcomes action plan would be revised so that:

- the outcomes within it would be classified as long-term, intermediate and short-term. This would help encourage a logical approach and help to prioritise actions to achieve each outcome.
- the work of the HCSDG was shown to clearly link into the wider work of the Community Planning Partnership (CPP). This would help to mainstream the work and encourage others to see that they too were accountable for improving outcomes around hate crime.

Following the initial meeting, a discussion-based workshop took place in January 2012, using the updated action plan.

The structure of this workshop allowed participants to work backwards from their long-term outcome to then identify the steps that would be necessary to meet that outcome. An important aspect of this was developing the group’s intermediate outcomes.

One participant at the workshop identified the following reason as to why the group were developing outcomes for hate crime. They wanted “people feeling safe being who they are, wherever they are.” Workshop participants regarded this as a really helpful statement, as it was clear, simple and aspirational. This statement formed the basis of the long-term outcome that was included in the updated outcome action plan:

“Individuals and communities who are affected by, and victims of, hate crime feel safe and secure.”

In order to make progress toward achieving the long-term outcome, the group identified three intermediate outcomes that collectively:

- empowered victims of hate crime/incidents;
• firmly established accountability and responsibility that lay with services to offer adequate support to victims of hate crime/incidents;
• importantly, focused on the problem lying with perpetrators of hate crime/incidents as well as placing it with society more broadly.

There was some discussion on the development of actions and indicators to support the outcomes, although within the time constraints of the Improving Local Equality Data project it was not possible to go into detail with the group. However, the group did agree that when developing indicators and actions to support its outcomes, these would be clear, specific and targeted. The indicators would be robust measures of progress towards the outcome. In terms of actions, the group agreed it should explicitly outline the budget that would be used, and name the member/s of staff who would be responsible for and lead on the action. This improves accountability and gives clarity on exactly how steps towards an outcome will be taken.
What impact the project had

• Clarity of long-term and intermediate outcomes.
• Clarity of overall vision and purpose for the group.
• The vision for a clear outcomes plan that links into the wider work of the CPP.
Issues or challenges

Hate crime is a notoriously complex issue. Developing and implementing an outcomes approach to prevent and tackle hate crime, as well as measuring and managing performance in this area, is also complex and will take time to embed.

The lack of comprehensive baseline information is a fundamental problem across Scotland, both at a national and local level. Recent research and anecdotal evidence suggests that many hate crimes are underreported, and some asks whether it is reasonable to expect that all hate crimes will ever be reported, by examining the role of victim-decision making in terms of reporting hate crimes, and the context of low levels of self-reporting of crimes more generally.¹ Consequently, we might assume that the data we do have gives an incomplete picture of the prevalence of hate crime across the country.

However, achieving a better outcome in terms of reporting hate crimes/incidents is not as simple as increasing numbers. Higher numbers of reported incidents will make little difference to the impact of a hate crime on the victim. Instead, victims of hate crime feeling encouraged, supported and more confident to report hate crimes/incidents is arguably a better outcome for victims and for public bodies.²

Furthermore, simply having a target to increase reporting makes it impossible to determine whether there has been an increase in reporting of hate crime, or whether the actual incidence of hate crime has increased.

Clearly, the overall ambition of public bodies is to reduce hate crime. In order to achieve this, there are a number of important intermediate steps to take, when attempting to achieve this outcome. If an outcome is simply to reduce numbers of recorded hate crimes, several problematic

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¹ Some of the following documents may be useful for readers to find more information about these issues: ‘Hidden in plain sight: Inquiry into disability related harassment’ (www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/disabilityfi/dhfi_exec_summary_scotland.pdf); Gay British Crime Survey (www.stonewall.org.uk/documents/homophobic_hate_crime_final_report.pdf); ‘The role of victim decision-making in reporting hate crimes,’ Wong, Kevin; Community Safety Journal, 7(2), April 2008, pp.19-35 – available on IDOX.

² See Hidden in Plain Sight Executive Summary (www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/disabilityfi/dhfi_exec_summary_scotland.pdf)
issues might arise, particularly if at the same time an important step is to increase confidence in reporting hate crime. If this outcome is met then there may well be a spike in apparent numbers of incidents if raw data is analysed in isolation from the policy context. If the focus is on lowering the numbers of reported hate crimes, without considering the complexities of the current baseline, in the worst case there is a danger that it could result in people skewing figures to meet performance targets. It is important to avoid problems of subjectivity and interpretation when recording or recognising a hate crime/incident.

Furthermore there is a difficulty for public bodies in terms of being clear about prevention. A recent report from the Equality and Human Rights Commission, Rehabilitation of Hate Crime Offenders, suggests that perpetrators of hate crime are often ‘generalist’ rather than ‘specialist’ offenders, meaning that they are likely to have been convicted of other, non ‘hate crime’, offences. There are also usually other motives present when a hate crime is committed, for example the perpetrator might have a sense of grievance, resentment, envy, or a feeling of being devalued or ignored.3 There is no clear and common profile of hate crime perpetrators. Figures show that men overwhelmingly perpetrate hate crimes. Most perpetrators are of white majority ethnic groups. Common features linked to when and where hate crime incidents occur are often difficult to address. Offenders are often drunk and have committed their crime in a city centre location such as a nightclub on a Friday or Saturday night. Commonly, hate crimes/incidents take the form of verbal abuse by customers directed at people at their place of work – for example security staff at nightclubs, or owners of convenience stores or takeaways. This gives public bodies very little to go on in terms of preventative action.

Another complicating factor in terms of preventing hate crime is addressing the wider, societal attitude towards it. Anecdotal evidence suggests that often incidents of hate crime escalate because there is a reluctance from others to step in to alleviate the situation, possibly because there is a lack of understanding about the severity of hate crimes/incidents.

Lessons learned

• It is important to be clear and explicit about what the outcomes are intending to achieve. Words like ‘impact’ or ‘effective’ can mean many things to many people. Specifying what you mean by these and for whom, develops a shared understanding among the partnership and makes the outcomes themselves clearer and more achievable.

• Making sure that outcomes are positive, preventative and aspirational helps to achieve better results for citizens.

• In order to ensure that outcomes are achievable, it is crucial to be able to measure progress towards them with relevant indicators. In terms of hate crime, and more generally with equality related indicators, it is difficult to have typically robust indicators because of gaps in the evidence base. Instead, ‘good enough’ indicators that require a range of evidence to measure progress with are more suitable. This might involve changing the information that you collect or how you collect it in order to be able to support the indicator.

• It is important to explain the context to the work of single-theme groups, such as the HCSDG, and show how the work contributes to the wider work of the CPP. This helps key partners to engage with, support, and understand their role within the work.

• A logical approach can help to create clear and refined outcomes.4

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4 Some of the tools that the HCSDG used to do this can be found at www.improvementservice.org.uk/improving-local-equality-data/
Further information

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