



HATE CRIME

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an overview of hate crime and hate incidents in Dorset, the arrangements in place to scrutinise Dorset Police's response, and the work being undertaken by the Force and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) to support victims, improve investigative standards and strengthen community confidence. It also addresses the key lines of enquiry raised by the Dorset Police and Crime Panel.

Hate crime remains a relatively low-volume but high-harm area of policing. Local data shows overall offending has remained broadly stable in volume in recent years, although racially and religiously motivated hate crime have increased. Victims can experience significant and lasting impacts, making effective prevention, investigation and support essential.

The report highlights a range of activity designed to improve outcomes for victims and communities, including enhanced victim support arrangements, strengthened governance and scrutiny processes, the introduction of the Hate Crime Review Panel, targeted work with schools and communities, and activity to address online abuse and social media harms. It also outlines efforts to support officers and staff who are victims of hate crime through Op Hampshire.

While progress has been made, challenges remain around under-reporting, community confidence, online harms and wider community tensions. The OPCC will continue to scrutinise Force performance and delivery of the commitments within the Dorset Police and Crime Plan to ensure there is a robust response to hate crime and effective support for victims across Dorset.

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To provide members with an update on hate crimes and incidents in Dorset and outline the work undertaken to hold Dorset Police to account for dealing with perpetrators and responding to victims. This paper will also seek to address the following Key Lines of Enquiry, as provided by the Dorset Police and Crime Panel:

- I. What categories of hate crime and incidents are being considered? Is there information on incidents linked to race, religion, gender and sexual orientation?*
- II. Could more detail be provided about the Force Hate Crime Panel in terms of its composition and available data being examined?*
- III. Is there any ongoing work in relation to abuse and intimidation faced by both adults and children on social media?*
- IV. To what extent is bullying, body shaming or discriminatory language from in and outside of a school setting categorised as 'Hate Crime' when reported to the police? What prevention and response measures has the PCC and Force taken to combat this risk?*

area? What data is available relating to police referrals in reference to school related incidents?

- V. How does the Victims Champion link with victims of hate crime, what support is offered, and how do the police respond to this in terms of actions against perpetrators?
- VI. How is Dorset Police working internally and in collaboration with others to deliver Op Hampshire? What outcomes have been delivered? How is verbal abuse or predatory behaviour dealt with within this? Does Op Hampshire data separate out assaults from online hate crime etc?

1. INTRODUCTION

Definitions

- 1.1. Hate crimes and hate incidents are harmful actions or behaviours that target individuals or groups, or their property, because of their actual or perceived identity.
- 1.2. A hate crime is a criminal offence that is motivated by hostility, prejudice or bias directed at a person or their property because of their actual or perceived identity, and that meets a criminal threshold (i.e. it would be a criminal offence even without the hate element).
- 1.3. A hate incident is an incident that is motivated by hostility, prejudice or bias directed at a person or their property because of their actual or perceived identity, that does not meet a criminal threshold (i.e. would be recordable by police as an incident even without the hate element).
- 1.4. The law¹ recognises five types of hate crime: race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, and transgender identity. The police and Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) have agreed the following definition for identifying and flagging hate crimes:

“Any criminal offence which is perceived by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by hostility or prejudice, based on a person’s disability or perceived disability; race or perceived race; or religion or perceived religion; or sexual orientation or perceived sexual orientation or transgender identity or perceived transgender identity.”
- 1.5. CPS advise that as there is no legal definition of hostility, they rely on the everyday understanding of the word which includes ill-will, spite, contempt, prejudice, unfriendliness, antagonism, resentment and dislike.
- 1.6. In hate crime cases the CPS is also responsible for asking the courts to increase the sentence that an offender receives – to reflect the fact that the crime they committed was a hate crime.

Offences

- 1.7. Hate crimes can include offences such as assault, criminal damage, harassment, threatening behaviour, online abuse (including social media), or vandalism where hostility towards a protected characteristic is a motivating factor. Hate incidents may involve offensive comments, derogatory language, exclusion, or other actions that create fear, distress, or humiliation but do not necessarily breach criminal law. The distinction between the two can sometimes be complex, particularly where intent, context, and evidence of hostility are difficult to establish.
- 1.8. Furthermore, a series of offences linked to racially and religiously aggravated crime also exist. These serve to uplift the possible sentencing linked to the basic offence to recognise the additional aggravating factor. For example, the maximum penalty of the basic form of actual

¹ [Hate crime | The Crown Prosecution Service](#)

bodily harm is five years imprisonment. This maximum penalty increases to seven years in the case of an aggravated form of the offence (racially or religiously aggravated actual bodily harm).

- 1.9. The Crime and Policing Act 2026 legislates to extend the existing racially and religiously aggravated offences to cover also hostility related to disability, sex, sexual orientation and transgender identity. While Commencement Regulations relating to specific provisions in the Act regarding police powers, ASB and safeguarding have now been enacted the hate crime provisions remain pending an official start date.

Impact

- 1.10. The complexities surrounding hate crime and hate incidents extend beyond legal definitions. Victims may be reluctant to report incidents due to a significant lack of confidence in policing and the wider justice system, concerns about not being believed, the fear of retaliation or previous negative experiences.
- 1.11. Whether a hate crime or incident, the impact on victims can be profound and long-lasting, with victims potentially experiencing issues such as anxiety, depression, loss of confidence, social isolation, and an increased sense of vulnerability. As hate crimes and incidents target a person's identity or perceived identity, victims often report feeling personally attacked for who they are, rather than for something they have done. This can make the emotional and psychological effects particularly severe.
- 1.12. Consequences of hate crimes and incidents extend beyond individual victims to wider communities as they often create fear among people who share the targeted characteristic, damage community cohesion, and increase tensions between different groups. This can lead to a lack of reporting and further exacerbate mistrust in policing and other agencies.
- 1.13. Hate crime is also observed at a societal level. When hate-motivated violence occurs repeatedly, it ceases to be just an isolated criminal act and becomes a deeper social strain. This strain can be compounded when initiatives specifically designed to promote equality, inclusion, and support for marginalised groups are stigmatised potentially reinforcing resistance to measures intended to reduce discrimination and improve community wellbeing.
- 1.14. Over time, this contributes to an ongoing climate of threat and exclusion and can erode trust, reduce community cohesion, and leave lasting impacts on wellbeing, opportunity, and community resilience. Effective responses therefore require not only enforcement and support for victims but also education, prevention, community engagement, and efforts to promote understanding and inclusion. It is therefore paramount that victims are appropriately supported, and scrutiny is effective, meaningful and learning is reviewed and put into practice.

2. GOVERNANCE

- 2.1. There is a wide variety of work ongoing across both Dorset Police and the OPCC to improve all aspects of the response to hate crime and incidents. In this digital age, it is especially important to get this right, with the ability for police activity to be recorded and shared for the world to see and for commentators to provide instant analysis and opinion based on a limited understanding of the law and/or circumstances of the case.
- 2.2. Such factors can often lead to misinformation, hate and bias to be widely shared without any factual basis. This means that the impact on victims of hate crime can be worsened by ill-informed debate, a trivialisation of the issues, or even a repeat of the behaviour that had been reported. Members of the Police and Crime Panel will be aware of several high-profile cases both in the UK and other countries which have caused social divide, as well as ongoing debates about non-crime hate incidents.

A. NATIONAL GOVERNANCE

- 2.3. Hate crime does not have a single governance structure. It sits across several structures at the national level – central government, policing, criminal justice and prosecution, local government/community safety and victim support – with the Home Office holding the principal strategic responsibility on hate crime policy, and the police holding the principal operational responsibility for recording and investigating criminal hate crime.
- 2.4. The College of Policing provides the professional framework for operational policing, through its Authorised Professional Practice (APP). Its current guidance on hate crime² includes, as a selection, guidance on:
- Community engagement and tension
 - Partnership working
 - Responding to hate crimes
 - Responding to hate incidents
 - Intelligence
 - Victim and witness care and support
 - Criminal justice processes
 - Online hate
 - Hate crime and counter terrorism
 - Performance management
 - Supervision and oversight
 - Strategic leadership

² [Hate crime | College of Policing](#)

2.5. This guidance, according to the College, is for police officers and staff at all levels of the police service, working alongside partners where appropriate, to deliver a consistent, proportionate and robust policing response to hate crime and hate incidents.

2.6. There are also significant tranches of national work focused on individual protected strands, for example:

- Race – Police Race Action Plan
- Religion – Antisemitism, Islamophobia
- Gender – Violence Against Women and Girls

Other strands including disability, sexual orientation, and transgender identity are more fragmented, and not necessarily subject to a nationally coordinated workplan. This does not, however, in any way diminish their priority or effort.

B. LOCAL GOVERNANCE

Strategic

2.7. The Police and Crime Plan contains five key commitments relating to hate crime, under the priority of Putting Victims and Communities First, these are:

- Continue to raise awareness of the support available to victims of all types of hate crime and work with partners to not only encourage better levels of reporting, but to make reporting easier too;
- Work with people across communities to understand and identify concerns and ensure that policing feels a part of those communities, rather than something that is happening to them;
- Provide additional specialist training so that officers and staff are best equipped to not only tackle hate crime, but communicate with victims in a way that is sensitive to their needs;
- Use the real-life experience of the workforce to ensure that the Force is understanding of hate crime victims' needs; and
- Continue to work with partner agencies to address discrimination.

2.8. These commitments provide the strategic basis and direction for the OPCC to engage with the police and other key agencies.

Operational

2.9. At the local level, Dorset Police has detailed policies and procedures for the management of hate crime and incidents. These collectively aim to:

- enable officers and staff to correctly identify hate crimes and incidents;
- ensure that all such crimes and incidents are recorded correctly;
- ensure that all such crimes and incidents are investigated thoroughly and professionally, and wherever possible perpetrators are brought to justice;
- ensure that the level of support offered is appropriate to the needs of victims and witnesses;
- ensure that public confidence and satisfaction in the way Dorset Police investigates and deals with the victims of hate crime is high; and
- ensure that staff who are subjected to hate crimes and incidents receive appropriate support and that hate crimes and incidents against staff are treated in the same way as any hate crimes and incidents reported by members of the public.

2.10. The corporate policies convey high priority to the investigation of hate crime and that a wide range of investigative and forensic tactics will be considered and deployed as appropriate.

These also confirm that such offences will receive an especially high level of scrutiny and victims a high level of care.

2.11. Dorset Police has set out several Hate Crime Objectives:

- Increase public awareness about hate crime, impact, and importance of reporting
- Provide effective support to communities and police employees affected by hate crime
- Improve data collection and analysis collection methods to track hate crime
- Foster relationships with diverse community groups to build trust and confidence, encouraging collaboration in addressing hate crimes.

2.12. Operationally, these objectives are understood and managed through a standard 4P plan that Members may have seen used elsewhere in policing:

Prevent	Protect	Prepare	Pursue
• Education and awareness • Community engagement • Training • Secure positive outcomes	• Support victims • Safeguard communities • Improve reporting mechanisms • Multi-agency work • Engage internal networks	• Ensure partner support • Foster resilience within communities • Ensure suitable communication • Build relationships with communities and internal networks • Improve working with Neighbourhood Policing Teams	• Ensure robust investigations • Enhance investigative practices • Collaborate better with CPS • Introduce internal and external scrutiny panels • Ensure compliant recording processes • Review investigation standards

2.13. This approach enables a clear view of progress to be taken at any point and quickly identifies areas of potential opportunity. This model is also well understood by policing and its partners, which proves helpful to delivery.

Tactical

2.14. Finally, the strategic objectives and operational activity are tactically delivered through the **Hate Crime Delivery Plan 2025-26**. This plan sets out three phases of delivery within the current year and is the primary mechanism through which the hate crime work is overseen (current position in brackets).



3. DELIVERY

- 3.1. As outlined above, hate crime and incidents are an area of focus and critical importance to both the OPCC and Force, with a considerable amount of activity undertaken to tackle perpetrators, support victims and improve community relations. The following section of this report seeks to summarise key activity undertaken by both the OPCC and Force but is not intended to be exhaustive.

Victim Support

- 3.2. Victims of hate crime can access support through the OPCC commissioned victim service with Victim Support, who provide practical and emotional support. While the service may not be specific for hate crime, it is staffed by a professional team with experience supporting a wide range of victims with a variety of needs. Victim Support will also help victims understand their rights and the services available to them. Victim Support is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and is available regardless of whether the crime has been reported to police. Victim Support continuously collect feedback from victims, review and ensure learning is considered and put into practice.

Process Improvement

- 3.3. Hate Crime Review Panels have been established with themed focus areas to review victim experiences and identify lessons learned, with attendance and support from the Victim Champion. Victim withdrawal data and Victim Needs Assessment (VNA) compliance data for

hate crime is presented quarterly by the Victim Champion at this panel to better understand why victims disengage and to identify opportunities for improvement.

- 3.4. Victim feedback is actively reviewed through existing victim satisfaction mechanisms and the Hate Crime Review Panel, ensuring that the voice of hate crime victims informs service improvements.
- 3.5. Victim Needs Assessment reviews are regularly conducted to ensure victims' needs are properly identified, understood, and supported. This helps deliver a more victim-centred response to hate crime victims. Staff training, guidance and resources have been enhanced through Victims Code of Practice (VCoP) training, Victim Focus sessions, VNA briefing materials and the Victims Toolkit, helping officers and staff better understand victims' needs and deliver a consistent service to hate crime victims.
- 3.6. Dorset Police has also worked to improve the VNAs – now including mandatory fields and improved quality controls, helping ensure hate crime victims' individual needs, risks and support requirements are identified and addressed from the outset. The latest victim satisfaction performance on hate crime (rolling 12-months to Quarter 4 2025/26) reflects:
 - Whole experience: improvement to 85.3% (increase from 66.7% in Q3)
 - Ease of contact: improvement to 100% (increase from 84.6%)
 - Actions taken: improvement to 83.3 (increase from 60.0%)
 - Kept informed of progress: stable at 82.4% (from 83.3%)
 - Treatment by staff: improvement to 94.1% (from 73.3%)

Victim Champion

- 3.7. The role of the PCC-funded Victim Champion is to embed an improved process of victim-first policing and to ensure the Force adheres to the VCoP rights from the start of the victim's journey and throughout. The role is working to create a workforce where every officer and staff member recognises their role in delivering a victim-first service – one where victims are informed, empowered, and given a voice. This extends to all victims of crime.
- 3.8. The Victim Champion does not directly engage with victims of crime, rather works to implement systemic changes within the organisation to ensure the collective response is victim centric. Support for victims of hate crime is delivered by the PCC commissioned provider, Victim Support, who provide practical and emotional support.
- 3.9. The work of the Victim Champion also includes:
 - Strengthening of Victim Needs Assessments to include mandatory fields and improved quality controls, helping ensure hate crime victims' individual needs, risks and support requirements are identified and addressed from the outset.
 - Ensuring victim withdrawal data is being monitored and analysed, helping the force understand why victims disengage from investigations and develop targeted improvements to reduce attrition.
 - Expanding victim satisfaction and feedback mechanisms, to provide greater understanding of victims' experiences, allowing themes and learning from hate crime victims to be identified and acted upon. The Victim Champion now provides advice and support to Inspectors when dealing with complaints involving VCoP.
 - Improving victim information provision through refreshed victim-focused correspondence, enhanced guidance for officers and the development of digital solutions to ensure victims receive clearer and more consistent information throughout their journey.

- Supporting the enhancement of staff training, guidance and resources through VCoP training, Victim Focus sessions, VNA briefing materials and the Victims Toolkit, helping officers and staff better understand victims' needs and deliver a consistent service.

Conditional Cautions

- 3.10. Additionally, from April 2026, Dorset is a pilot force for conditional cautions for certain hate crime. Previously all cases of hate crime would have to be submitted to CPS for a charging decision (unless a community resolution was suitable). The new process allows a conditional caution with a mandatory offender rehabilitation programme delivered by Restorative Justice Dorset, a new scheme funded by the PCC.
- 3.11. This scheme enables swift justice for the victim, mandatory offender rehabilitation and avoids lengthy court processes. It also prevents the victim having to attend court but offers victims the choice to have an input on the rehabilitation within the restorative course process – which can be particularly beneficial to recovering from the incident should it be agreed that the offender will offer a personal apology to the victim.

Restorative Justice

- 3.12. Through the PCC-commissioned Restorative Justice contract, the Force and OPCC, following a pilot, agreed to formally roll out the Hate Crime Awareness Course, to be used as part of an Out of Court Resolution. The course aims to challenge perpetrators on the impact of their behaviour both on victims, and themselves, using examples of hate crime and how it affected victims, and it works with perpetrators to identify how they might behave differently in future.
- 3.13. In the last 12 months, there have been 31 referrals into the Restorative Justice service in Dorset, of which has resulted in 18 Hate Crime Awareness Course being delivered. In cases where the perpetrator did not attend a course, they were provided in intervention through other restorative pathways, such as meetings, mediation or written correspondence with the perpetrator.
- 3.14. For one incident, by way of example, following attendance of the awareness course, the perpetrator was remorseful and asked whether they could write a letter of apology to the victim, which was facilitated by Restorative Solutions. The individual also spoke of their struggles with alcohol abuse and Restorative Solutions was able to signpost them to a substance misuse support provider.

Children and Schools

- 3.15. Dorset Police's Safer Schools and Communities Team (SSCT) are vital in the response to incidents relating to children and incidents in the school environment. There is a particular nuance to dealing with young people as they may not entirely understand the impact of their words and actions.
- 3.16. Available data from the Dorset SSCT over the last full school year evidences a stable demand, with slight fluctuations that mainly appear around school holidays and half-terms. SSCT has also identified that Poole and Bournemouth North are areas of concern, accounting for 43% of incidents (21% and 22% respectively).

Chart 1: Hate crime notified to the Dorset Police Safer Schools and Communities Team



- 3.17. The distinction between hate crime, malicious communications, bullying, body shaming and other forms of abuse can be particularly complex in relation to children and young people, especially when conducted online. Social media platforms, messaging applications and online gaming environments can expose children to a wide spectrum of harmful behaviour, ranging from teasing, exclusion and cyberbullying through to targeted harassment and hate-motivated abuse. While much of this behaviour may not meet the criminal threshold, it can still have a significant and cumulative impact on wellbeing, mental health, educational attainment and feelings of safety.
- 3.18. Children may be both victims and perpetrators of harmful online behaviour, often without fully understanding the potential consequences of their actions. Content shared impulsively between peers can quickly escalate, becoming widely distributed and causing substantial distress. In some cases, behaviour that begins as bullying or online conflict may involve hostility towards a protected characteristic, thereby crossing into hate-related behaviour and potentially constituting a criminal offence.
- 3.19. The online environment can also normalise prejudicial attitudes through repeated exposure to discriminatory language, harmful stereotypes and hostile content. As a result, effective prevention requires a whole-system approach involving parents, schools, policing, social media platforms and community organisations, with a focus on education, early intervention and safeguarding alongside criminal justice responses where appropriate.
- 3.20. Although, policing is not responsible for managing bullying that does not meet relevant thresholds, SSCT routinely attend schools to undertake preventative education and to speak one-to-one with students who have bullied others, or used discriminatory language, if the communication constitutes a hate crime or incident. Often the tactic would be to engage and inform to increase their understanding and reduce the likelihood of repeat use.

Abuse on Social Media

For cases that involve the use of derogatory language on social media platforms to abuse or cause distress, the Force will actively review and respond if the threshold of a crime has been met or there is a belief that the victim may be at risk of further harm. Officers would utilise the THRIVE risk assessment. THRIVE is an acronym for 'Threat, Harm, Risk, Investigation, Vulnerability, Engagement' which is used to determine an appropriate response considering all potential risks to the recipient/victim.

Dorset Police review every hate crime matter reported and ascertain if a hate crime is made out. If not, other offences may be relevant, for example:

Malicious Communications Act 1988

Sending electronic communications that are: grossly offensive, indecent or obscene, threatening, or known to be false and sent with intent to cause distress or anxiety.

Communications Act 2003

Using a public electronic communications network to send messages that are: grossly offensive, indecent, obscene or menacing.

Fear of Violence / Stalking Offences

More serious offences can arise where conduct causes: fear of violence, serious alarm or distress, or is otherwise linked to stalking behaviour.

Public Order Act 1986

Online communications can amount to public order where messages are threatening, abusive, or intended to stir up racial or religious hatred.

- 3.21. The Online Safety Act 2023 may yet help address the increasingly blurred boundaries between online hate crime, malicious communications and cyberbullying affecting children and young people. By placing legal duties on online platforms to assess and mitigate risks to children, remove illegal content and restrict children's access to harmful material, the Act shifts greater responsibility onto service providers to create safer online environments. While the Act is not solely focused on hate crime, its provisions have the potential to reduce exposure to online abuse, discriminatory content and harmful behaviours that can contribute to victimisation, poor wellbeing and community tensions.

Third Party Reporting

- 3.22. Due to funding challenges affecting the wider voluntary and community sector, the national network of third-party centres for reporting hate crime has undergone some changes in recent years, with many centres moving their provision largely, or solely, online.
- 3.23. Third party reporting remain hugely important given the reticence for many victims of hate crime to engage with policing, where they feel they might be further traumatised. Dorset Police and the OPCC now therefore emphasise both direct online reporting and signposting to national specialist organisations such as Crimestoppers, Tell MAMA, Community Security Trust (CST) and Galop, as well as highlighting the existing local third-party centres including Dorset Race Equality Council and Prejudice Free Dorset.

Op Hampshire

- 3.24. Op Hampshire is the national policing approach to improving the reporting, investigation and support provided to officers and staff who experience assaults, abuse or hate crime in the course of their duties. The programme is based on the principle that violence, threats, harassment and hate directed towards police personnel should never be regarded as 'part of the job'.

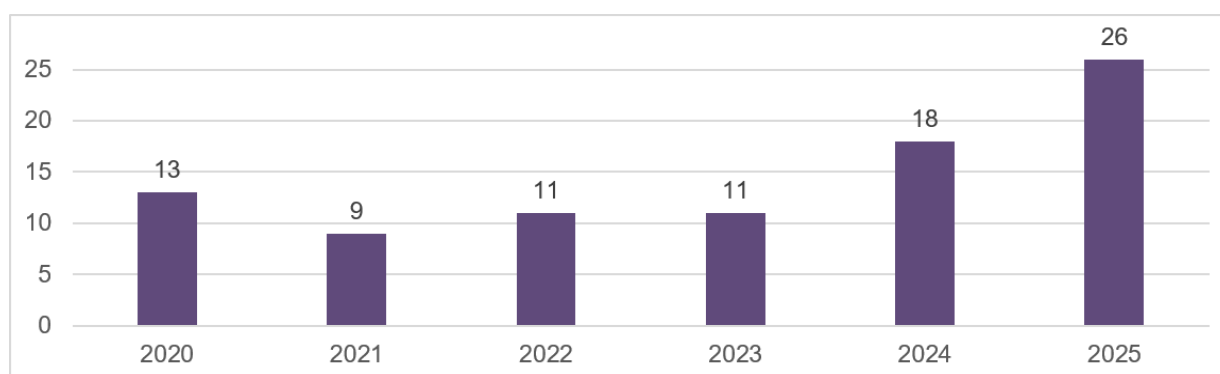
3.25. Within Dorset Police, the Op Hampshire principles include:

- Encouraging the reporting of assaults, threats, verbal abuse and hate directed to staff
- Supervisory oversight to ensure incidents are reviewed and investigated proportionately
- Victim-centred welfare support, recognising both the physical and psychological impacts
- Pursuing criminal justice outcomes where evidential and public interest tests are met
- Identification of trends, repeat victims, locations and opportunities for prevention
- Embedding learning into operational practice, officer safety training and wellbeing
- Strategic board oversight attended by Force leads, OPCC and staff associations
- Specific markers for those who target officers and staff, and for those who are known to abuse officers and staff on the basis of their protected characteristics.

3.26. The Force also works with criminal justice partners, including the CPS, occupational health and staff associations, to maximise opportunities for offender accountability and ensure appropriate support is available to affected staff.

3.27. However, local data shows that there has been an increase in hate crime experienced by officers and staff in recent years – with the prevalence rising from around one offence per month from 2020/21 through 2023/24 (noting Covid), to around 1.5 offences per month in 2024/25, and then further to a little over 2 offences per month in 2025/26. Data for 2026 thus far suggests there will be a further increase this by the end of this calendar year.

Chart 2: Hate crime* against Dorset Police officers, staff and volunteers, by calendar year



3.28. *It is important to note that the definitions used by Op Hampshire specifically relate to those officers, staff and volunteers who are victims of hate crime whilst on duty only. The vast majority of these offences (circa 90%) were recorded under Section 4A of the Public Order Act 1986, which makes it an offence to use threatening, abusive, or insulting words or behaviour, or disorderly behaviour, with the intent to cause a person harassment, alarm, or distress, and which actually causes that or another person harassment, alarm, or distress.

3.29. Whilst national data on Op Hampshire is not available, Police Oracle estimated³ – through Freedom of Information requests – that there has been a 24% increase in reported hate crimes with a police officer victim between 2024/25 and 2025/26, and that the true figure was likely to be higher.

3.30. Op Hampshire is not limited to physical assaults. The national guidance specifically references verbal abuse and hate-related abuse directed towards officers and staff, recognising that these behaviours can have a significant psychological impact. Where verbal abuse constitutes a criminal offence, the matter should be recorded, investigated and where the evidential threshold is met, progressed through appropriate criminal justice routes.

³ [‘Racist abuse of officers appears to be accepted in pockets of society’ - Police Oracle](#)

- 3.31. While the ethnicity of the victim is not always recorded (and ongoing work is underway to improve this) the data show that all offences committed were racially or religiously aggravated. Given the very small number of Black and Asian officers and staff within Dorset Police (2.1% of total) this means that a significant proportion of Black and Asian officers are repeat victims of hate crime whilst on duty, with some operational colleagues in visible frontline roles experiencing hate crime monthly.
- 3.32. Police officer and staff victims of hate crime also note that Dorset Police's response to their victimisation does not always meet the expected standards as laid out through the Op Hampshire principles. The Op Hampshire Improvement Group is tasked with turning this around and is significantly supported in this by practical work being proposed, led and delivered by the staff support network.

'Blue on Blue' Hate Crime

As part of the Police Race Action Plan, for the past three years a national survey has been conducted to monitor the perceptions and experiences of Black officers and staff.

Most respondents felt positively about aspects of their workplace culture, such as being proud to represent their racial or ethnic community in the police. However, many acknowledged that more progress was needed towards anti-racism and creating a lasting change. Respondents also reported challenges such as not feeling like they belonged or being able to progress within their force.

Racial discrimination, microaggressions and bullying and harassment were disclosed at a relatively high level. Microaggressions and discrimination were more frequently reported than bullying and harassment – aligning with local findings in Dorset.

45% of respondents reported experiencing racial discrimination or bias from the public in the previous 12 months, however, 62% of respondents reported experiencing the same from colleagues in the previous 12 months, with 42% of respondents furthermore stating that they had personally experienced racial discrimination from colleagues in the previous 12 months.

Those officers and staff who had had experienced racial discrimination from their colleagues in the last 12 months most frequently said that:

- their supervisors or line managers had contributed to the racial discrimination they had experienced (56%),
- the racial discrimination they had experienced had led to them being treated unfairly in relation to promotion or development opportunities (45%), therefore, as a result
- around one-third (32%) said that they did not report their experiences of racial discrimination.

These findings reflect a recent survey undertaken by the Dorset Ethnic Police Association (DEPA) which extended the national survey locally to include the perceptions and experiences of all ethnic minority officers and staff within Dorset.

That local survey found that, within the workplace, within the previous two years, respondents reported the following experiences of discrimination from colleagues:

- almost 90% (87%) experienced racial bias of some sort,
- two-thirds (67%) had heard racist language being used,
- just under two-thirds (63%) had experienced microaggressions, and
- a little under half (44%) had experienced discrimination or abusive behaviour which was not explicitly racist, but which respondents suspect was motivated by ethnicity.

4. PERFORMANCE

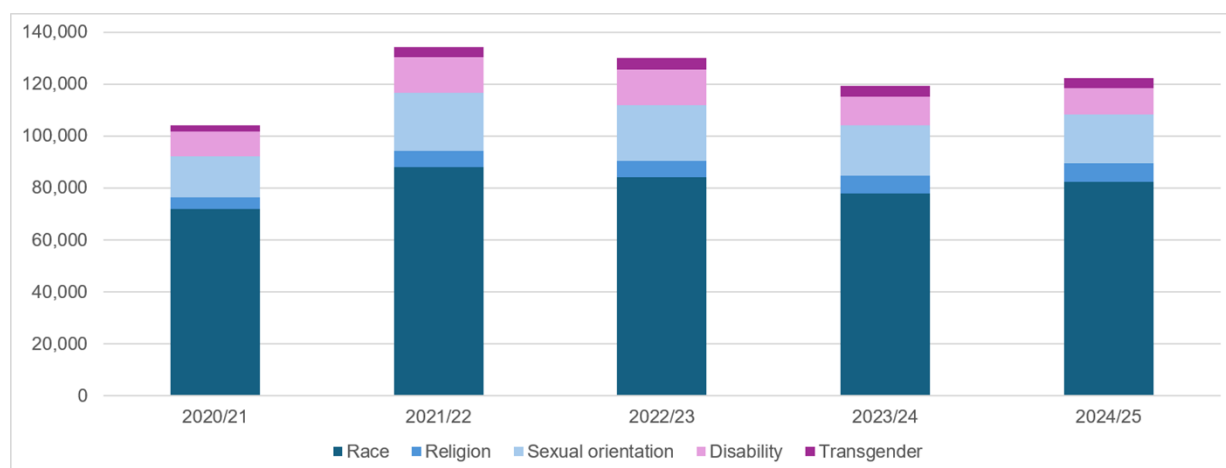
- 4.1. It is widely recognised that hate crime and hate incident data do not fully reflect the true scale of the problem. This is due to several factors, including under-reporting by victims, lack of confidence in policing and the wider criminal justice system, fear of reprisals, fear of exposure of personal details (notably sexual or gender identity), practical concerns about accessibility barriers to reporting (such as communication skills), and, in some cases, a lack of awareness that the behaviour experienced may constitute a hate incident or criminal offence.

A. NATIONAL TRENDS

- 4.2. In the year ending March 2025, the latest period for which national data are available⁴, there was a 2% increase in police recorded hate crime compared to the previous year. However, within this, there was a 6% increase in race hate crimes and a 3% increase in religious hate crimes recorded by the police over the last year, and falls in the other three strands, sexual orientation (down 2%), disability (down 8%) and transgender (down 11%).
- 4.3. As with previous years, over a half (56%) of hate crime offences were recorded as being either racially or religiously aggravated offences. Within religious hate crimes there was a 19% increase in hate crimes targeted at Muslims, with a spike seen in these offences following the Southport murders and subsequent disorder.

Table 1: Hate crimes recorded by the police by monitored strand, year ending March 2021 to year ending March 2025, England and Wales (excluding MPS)

Hate crime strand	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Race	71,995	87,905	84,039	77,901	82,490
Religion	4,527	6,510	6,513	6,973	7,164
Sexual orientation	15,668	22,317	21,306	19,127	18,702
Disability	9,418	13,611	13,637	11,131	10,224
Transgender	2,510	3,920	4,477	4,258	3,809



Source: Hate crime, England and Wales, year ending March 2025 (Home Office)

- 4.4. The most recent pattern of offending is similar in previous years, with most offences being associated with racially or religiously motivated prejudice. Offending motivated by the victims' sexual orientation or disability tends to fall comparatively more within the other notifiable offences category, which include offending such theft, burglary, fraud and sexual offences.

⁴ [Hate crime, England and Wales, year ending March 2026 - Official statistics announcement - GOV.UK](#)

Table 2: Hate crimes by monitored strand and offence subgroups, year ending March 2025

Hate crime strand	Violence against the person with injury	Violence against the person without injury	Stalking and harassment	Public order offences	Criminal damage and arson	Other notifiable offences
Race	64%	72%	56%	73%	65%	57%
Religion	6%	6%	7%	6%	19%	7%
Sexual orient.	18%	14%	17%	14%	8%	17%
Disability	9%	6%	15%	4%	7%	15%
Transgender	4%	3%	5%	2%	2%	4%

Source: Hate crime, England and Wales, year ending March 2025 (Home Office)

- 4.5. As in previous years, Table 2 shows that racially and religiously motivated hate crimes (which tend to be considered together) accounted for the majority of police recorded hate crimes, therefore a further breakdown has been provided below. Details on the targeted religion of the victim(s) were provided in around 90% of cases:

Table 3: Proportion of religious hate crimes recorded by the police, by the perceived targeted religion, year ending March 2025

Perceived religion of the victim	Proportion of religious hate crimes 2024/25 (%)
Buddhist	0%
Christian	5%
Hindu	2%
Jewish	29%
Muslim	45%
Sikh	3%
Other	6%
Unknown	11%

Source: Hate crime, England and Wales, year ending March 2025 (Home Office)

Health Warnings

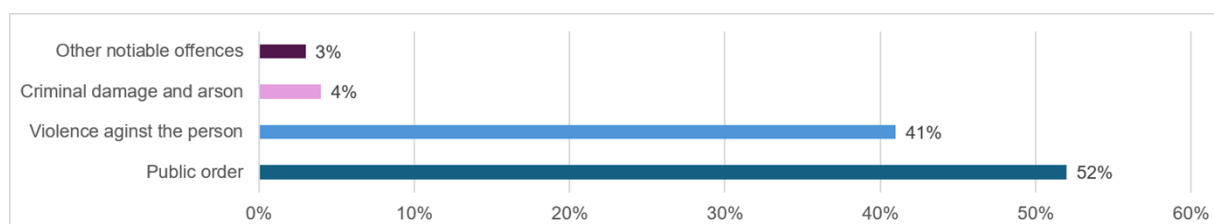
- 4.6. ONS advise caution when interpreting hate crime statistics. Indeed, OPCC would take this a step further and advise that national hate crime statistics not be considered a direct and absolute measure of the amount of hatred or hostility in society at any one point. Furthermore, we reflect the Home Office view that police-recorded hate crime is not a good measure of prevalence but is a useful indicator of hate crime related demand on the police over time.
- 4.7. Police recorded crime does not equal actual prevalence – police figures tell us about crimes that come to police attention only. They cannot tell us how much hate crime actually occurs.
- 4.8. Victim motivation matters – changes in the number of recorded hate crimes can reflect changes in victims' willingness to report, the availability of third-party reporting mechanisms, community awareness or confidence in the police – not necessarily changes in offending.

- 4.9. Police process matters – changes systems, processes, training and the identification and accurate recording of hate crime affect the numbers independently of changes in offending.
- 4.10. One crime does not equal one victim, or one motivation – an offence can be flagged against more than one monitored strand. Therefore, strand totals cannot simply be added together to produce a total number of hate crimes. Equally, one person can experience more than one offence at the same time, and a single incident can generate multiple recorded offences (this is particularly true of protests or criminal damage carried out on places of religious worship).
- 4.11. Hate crime is victim based – offences are perceived by the victim or witness to have been motivated by hostility or prejudice. It does not necessarily require the offender to admit the same. This definition can be criticised by some because a hate crime can be recorded without the offender accepting that motivation. However, this is not unusual in criminal justice, as offences are not dependent on an offender admitting that they committed them or accepting the victim's account. Indeed, the focus on the perception of the victim or others can be a strength, ensuring that potentially hate-motivated offending is identified and recorded rather than allowing the offender's denial to determine whether it is recognised as such.

Recording Improvements

- 4.12. The number of hate crimes recorded by the police increased from 31,844 offences in the year ending March 2013 to 128,485 in the year ending March 2022 (the high point). This rise was thought to have been driven by improvements in crime recording by the police following a critical inspection by HMICFRS in 2014.
- 4.13. The 2025 HMICFRS report *'How effectively do the police record crime?'*⁵ estimated the proportion of hate crime that is reported and ultimately recorded by the police. This estimate increased from 80.5% in 2014, to 94.8% for the 2023-25 period. This compares to their estimation, for example of police recording 66.9% of violent crime and 74.2% of sexual offences in 2014, compared to 93.6% of violent crime and 95.9% of sexual offences in the 2023-25 period.
- 4.14. This report found that improved crime recording has had a particular marked impact on violent crime and on public order offences. This is important given that these two offences account for 93% of hate crime offences recorded in 2024/25:

Chart 3: Distribution of offences recorded by the police flagged as hate crimes, England and Wales, year ending March 2025



Source: *Police Recorded Crime (Home Office)*

Prevalence and Victimisation

- 4.15. National data on prevalence and victimisation are taken from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) and are based on an aggregation of the last three years – so the surveys for the years ending March 2023, March 2024 and March 2025. The latest CSEW estimate is that there are around 176,000 hate incidents per year.

⁵ [How effectively do the police record crime? - His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services](#)

4.16. As a victim-led survey, the CSEW can derive useful information on victimisation, and the most recent data shows that 0.2% of adults were the victim of a personal hate crime (an offence that is directed against an individual person rather than a household or general property). To put these figures in context, across all CSEW crime, 2.8% of adults were victims of personal crime.

4.17. The risk of becoming a victim of hate crime was highest among:

- those whose gender identity was different from the sex registered at birth (1.3% were a victim) compared with those whose gender was same as the sex registered at birth (0.2%),
- gay and lesbian individuals (0.9%) compared with straight individuals (0.1%),
- Asian/Asian British adults (0.6%) compared with White adults (0.1%),
- Muslims (0.6%) and Sikhs (0.5%) compared with, e.g. Christians (0.1%) or Jews (0.1%),
- men aged 16 to 24 (0.4%) compared with all adults (0.2%), and
- disabled individuals (0.3%) compared with not disabled people (0.1%).

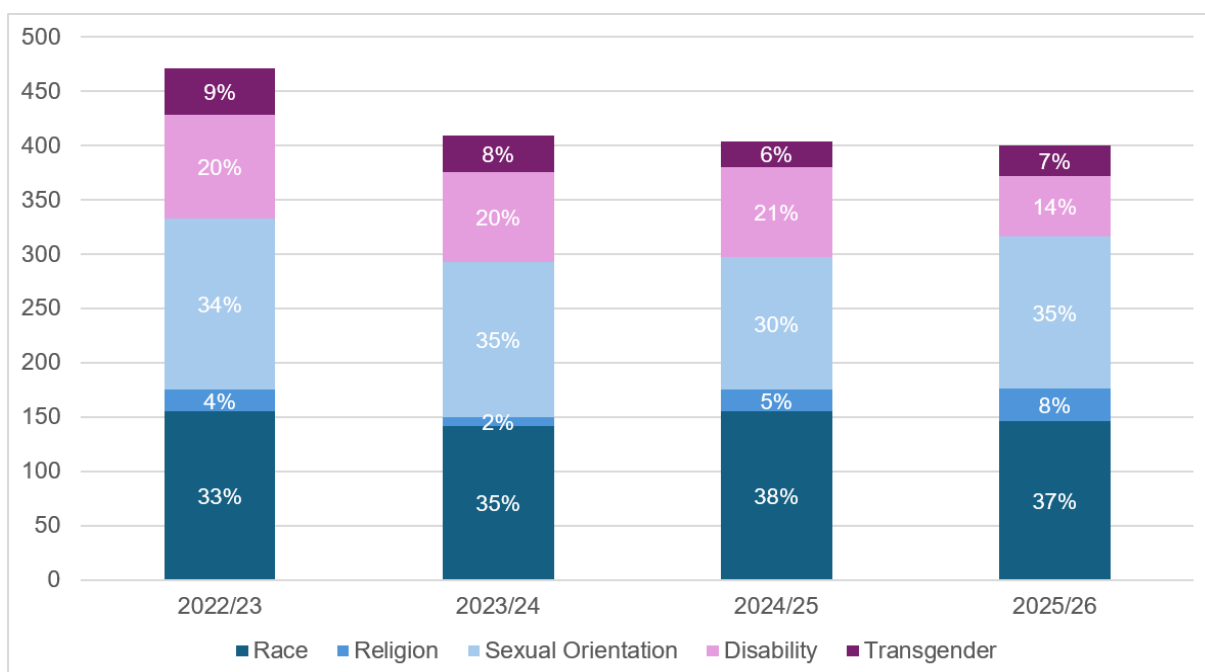
B. LOCAL TRENDS

Hate crime

4.18. Locally, the available data relating to hate crime in Dorset is as follows:

Table 4: Hate crimes recorded by Dorset Police, by monitoring strand, by year

	2022/23		2023/24		2024/25		2025/26	
	Crimes	Solved Rate*	Crimes	Solved Rate	Crimes	Solved Rate	Crimes	Solved Rate
Race	155	22.6%	142	14.8%	155	12.9%	146	14.4%
Religion	20	25%	8	12.5%	20	5%	30	6.7%
Sexual Orientation	158	17.7%	143	12.6%	122	20.5%	140	18.6%
Disability	95	7.4%	83	7.2%	83	9.6%	56	7.1%
Transgender	43	7%	33	9.1%	24	25%	28	10.7%



*The provided statistics are ‘solved rates’ which were previously known as ‘positive outcomes’. These include where an outcome for the victim has been achieved in line with National Crime Recording Standards NCRS (i.e. a charge, summon, caution, community resolution, etc.).

- 4.19. The local hate crime data largely mirror the national in that they have reduced from a higher period around 2021 to 2023 to a more stable (and slightly lower) position now. While the overall volume of (non-aggravated) hate crime has remained steady since 2023/24, there has been a reduction in the number of hate crimes that have been motivated by the victim’s disability and a significant increase in the number of hate crimes motivated by religion.
- 4.20. Whereas analysis by Dorset Police has not identified a reason for the reduction in disability hate crime, the uptick in the number of religiously motivated hate crimes does appear to align with the ongoing conflict in the Middle East. Specifically, 29 antisemitic hate crimes were reported in the most recent year, which were subject to increased oversight and internal review process reviews, along with proactive patrols where places of worship had been targeted. Community engagement at the time reported a positive police response.
- 4.21. Race hate crime remains a persistent issue, with little overall reduction in offending levels and a notable deterioration in investigative outcomes compared with 2022/23. Although the volumes of religiously-motivated hate crime remain comparatively low, the increase in 2025/26 coupled with low detection rates indicate an emerging area of concern.
- 4.22. Sexual orientation continues to account for the greatest number of hate crimes throughout the reporting period. While volumes fluctuate, investigative outcomes have generally improved since 2023/24.

Aggravated hate crime

- 4.23. In terms of aggravated offences, these have seen a significant increase in recent years:

Table 5: Aggravated hate crimes recorded by Dorset Police, by monitoring strand, by year

	2022/23		2023/24		2024/25		2025/26	
	Crimes	Solved Rate	Crimes	Solved Rate	Crimes	Solved Rate	Crimes	Solved Rate
Racially/Religiously Aggravated	408	17.6%	447	20.6%	551	15.1%	560	22.7%

- 4.24. Table 5 shows that racially and/or religiously aggravated hate crime has increased by 37% in the four years to 2025/26. The data show a modest improving trend in the solved rate.
- 4.25. Nationally, racially or religiously aggravated harassment increased by 21% in the year ending March 2025, and racially or religiously aggravated assault without injury increased by 10%.
- 4.26. Dorset Police has no specific explanation for this increase other than what has been suggested elsewhere in this paper (global threats and concerns manifesting in increased local tension and community unrest) and noting the parallel increase in the national statistics. As a result, it is reasonable to consider this to reflect a true increase in aggravated hate crime, rather than any reporting or recording artefact.

Hate incidents

- 4.27. The available data relating to hate incidents in Dorset is as follows:

Table 6: Hate incidents recorded by Dorset Police, by monitoring stand, by year

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Race	8	18	22	27
Religion	28	37	22	26
Sexual Orientation	75	98	93	103
Disability	17	13	23	12
Transgender	4	4	11	10
Total Incidents	126	151	156	166

- 4.28. Police-recorded hate incidents have increased overall from 126 incidents in 2022/23 to 166 in 2025/26, a rise of 40 incidents (31.7%) over the four-year period. The increase has been driven primarily by growth in incidents related to sexual orientation and race, while incidents relating to religion and disability have fluctuated.
- 4.29. Incidents motivated by sexual orientation remain the most prevalent form of hate incident and account for around three-fifths of all recorded incidents.
- 4.30. Race-motivated hate incidents have increased steadily year-on-year, and more than triple over the four years. Although these numbers remain lower than those for sexual orientation and religion, race-related incidents show the strongest and most consistent upward trend and warrant closer monitoring.
- 4.31. Religiously-motivated hate incidents fluctuate considerably from year to year, with no clear long-term upward or downward trend. This again support the apparent link of these offences to wider global tensions and conflicts.
- 4.32. While the volume of transgender-motivated hate incidents remains low, they have more than doubled compared with the start of the period.

Summary

- 4.33. In summary, Dorset Police-recorded hate crime levels have remained relatively stable over the four-year period, although significant variation exists between monitoring strands. Sexual orientation and race continue to account for the majority of offences recorded by police. Disability and transgender hate crime have shown a downward trend in recorded volumes, while religious hate crime increased during 2025/26. Detection rates remain variable and have generally declined since 2022/23, particularly for race and religion-related offences.
- 4.34. At the same time, however, racially and/or religiously aggravated hate crime has increased by 37% over the reporting period. This suggests that any change in hate crime may not necessarily be linked improvements in public confidence in reporting and awareness of hate-related behaviour within local communities.
- 4.35. A notable feature of the data is the contrast between the rise in reported hate incidents and the more stable or declining levels of recorded hate crimes. Given that the number of aggravated hate crime appear to be increasing, this has been flagged with Dorst Police for further analysis and consideration.
- 4.36. Dorset experiences comparatively low levels of recorded hate crime relative both to England and Wales as a whole and to many comparable police force areas. While neighbouring forces with larger urban populations typically record higher rates of hate crime, Dorset consistently

reports among the lowest rates nationally. However, as already stated, caution should be exercised when interpreting these figures, as hate crime is known to be under-reported and police-recorded data do not necessarily reflect the true prevalence of victimisation.

Recording of Non-Crime Hate Incidents (NCHIs)

The police recording of NCHIs has been the subject of national debate over the past few years.

The concept of recording NCHIs originates from recommendations following the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry (1999) which sought to improve the identification and monitoring of hostility and prejudice within communities. The inquiry argued that policing required a mechanism by which to gather and codify valuable intelligence, help identify escalating tensions, and allow early intervention before more serious offences occur.

Critics, however, have in recent years raised concerns about freedom of expression, proportionality and the potential impact on individuals who have not committed a criminal offence. This has led to increased dialogue from elected officials and the media, in particular, resulting in the College of Policing issuing revised national guidance that seeks to balance the prevention of hate-related harm with the protection of lawful speech.

Aside from the debate, policing continues to act against leaflets, posters, and graffiti that spread hate because of its ability to divide communities and incite violence. On that basis, it is reasonable to suggest that social media posts should not be held to a different legal test, especially given that their speed and reach arguably make them more dangerous.

A revised Statutory Code of Practice and corresponding authorised professional practice (APP) was introduced for officers and staff responding to reports of NCHIs and recommendations to further change APP remain under review at a national level. Dorset Police adheres to the APP, which is reflected in Force policy.

Not all incidents that are perceived by the complainant as being motivated by hostility or prejudice are recorded as a NCHI. Records are only made where specific requirements under the Code of Practice on the Recording and Retention of Personal Data ('the Code') are met – specifically where the incident: *“presents a real risk of significant harm to individuals with a particular characteristic(s) and/or a real risk that a future criminal offence may be committed against individuals or groups with a particular characteristic(s)”*.

For the purposes of the Code, a 'particular characteristic' means race, religion, sexual orientation, disability or transgender identity, as defined in legislation. This test will enable the police to intervene where necessary to safeguard vulnerable individuals and communities.

The Code seeks to strike a balance between the need to protect people from harm, especially individuals, groups and communities that may be subject to abuse, and protecting free speech. The Code and APP, taken together, along with the supporting materials are intended to help forces and their officers and staff to strike this balance.

5. SCRUTINY AND OVERSIGHT

- 5.1. Hate crime data and performance is subject to considerable scrutiny, with a well-established oversight process.

Force Governance

- 5.2. Oversight of the Force performance in relation to hate crimes and incidents, is undertaken by the Strategic Performance Board. This is chaired by the Deputy Chief Constable and attended

by the OPCC Chief Executive. Significant developments are subject to deep dives at this Board to ensure a wider awareness of the issues and a collaborative approach to problem solving.

- 5.3. Performance about the service provided to victims is also considered at the Strategic Performance Board, most recently in relation to VNAs and VCoP compliance – with an update being provided by the Force Victim Champion. Naturally, VCoP compliance is a matter considered by the Victims and Witnesses subgroup of the Dorset Criminal Justice Board, chaired by the PCC.
- 5.4. As the Force's handling of hate crime and hate incidents is a core component of the Force's overall legitimacy and the work to inform an inclusive culture, updates are also provided to the Legitimacy Board – chaired by the Chief Constable and attended by the Chief Executive and Director of Operations – and the Executive Culture and Inclusivity Group – chaired by the Assistant Chief Officer and attended by the Chief Executive and Director of Operations.

Police and Crime Plan Delivery

- 5.5. The priorities and commitments within the Police and Crime Plan are underpinned by a detailed delivery framework and as required, supporting project and/or programme plans. These are monitored through Force Boards, quarterly data updates, PCC-led scrutiny panels and other arrangements as might be necessary and appropriate.
- 5.6. As outlined at paragraph 2.7 the Plan contains several commitments under the theme of hate crime including to “Work with people across communities to understand and identify concerns and to ensure that policing feels a part of those communities, rather than something that is happening to them” and “use the real-life experience of the workforce to ensure that the Force is understanding of hate crime victims’ needs”. This paper, although not an exhaustive list of activity, provides evidence of both the action taken by the Force and, additionally, the data and information monitored by the OPCC.
- 5.7. In addition to that routine monitoring activity, the Force and OPCC undertake deep dive meetings so that Police and Crime Plan priorities can be considered in greater depth. Priority Five of the Police and Crime Plan – Putting Victims and Communities First – was subject to one such meeting on Tuesday 1 September, at which the PCC and his Senior Management Team considered a detailed Force hate crime progress update.
- 5.8. This deeper dive complements ongoing OPCC-led activity, including the PCC chaired Use of Police Powers and Scrutiny Panel and ongoing monitoring of relevant contracts, such as Victim Support and the Restorative Justice service.

Hate Crime Review Panel

- 5.9. Dorset Police implemented a Hate Crime Review Panel in January 2026 to hold a level of internal scrutiny into the operational responses to reports of hate crime. This is not a formal scrutiny panel, rather a panel used by the Force to review responses and identify potential failures and/or good practice.
- 5.10. The panel is chaired by the Force Hate Crime Lead, as was developed in conjunction with the OPCC. It is held quarterly, in person at different stations across the Force but has the option of Teams to ensure improved attendance.
- 5.11. The Panel is supported by a diverse network of Hate Crime ambassadors. These are volunteers who have received bespoke hate crime training from a specialised external provider (Stop Hate UK) to ensure that all had the confidence to discuss the topics sensitively and accurately, as well as to ensure that members had a good grounding in the legislation and authorised professional practice. Around 50 staff were trained and are a blend of police officers, and Force and OPCC staff. Future Panels will also bring in external expertise as needed, for example, an

upcoming Panel will look at hate crimes that have been flagged as 'no further action' by the Police and CPS, and CPS representatives will attend.

- 5.12. The Panels have been established with themed focus areas to review victim experiences and identify lessons learned, which rotate on a quarterly basis. With support from the Victim Champion, victim withdrawal data and VNA compliance data for hate crime is presented quarterly at this panel to better understand why victims disengage and to identify opportunities for improvement.
- 5.13. Each attendee is allocated one hate crime to review. They do so and complete a feedback form and then present their findings to the group to stimulate further discussions and testing. Examples of good work are fed back by the Chair, and any learning or improvement opportunities are fed back to the Force via Investigational Standards or local policing performance teams. Significant changes have been made to reporting process directly identified through the panel.

6. NEXT STEPS, OPPORTUNITIES, AND CHALLENGES

- 6.1. Given the scale of the issue and the breadth of work being undertaken currently, the opportunities, next steps and challenges could warrant a separate detailed report. However, a summary of some key areas has been outlined below.

Opportunities

- 6.2. Looking ahead, the aims of both the OPCC and Force are continuous improvement and to grow as an organisation to serve all of Dorset's communities with fairness and respect. This improvement will be delivered through the existing structures and programmes of work, including:
 - Further communication activity – utilising effective communications techniques to distribute more tailored information into local communities.
 - Continuation of the work under the Dorset Race Action Plan, driving forward systemic change both in internal policy and process and externally.
 - Engagement with DEPA and community-based organisations to help build trust in policing.
 - Engagement with third party reporting centres, encouraging reporting directly to Policing, but also via the centres.
 - Progression of the Hate Crime Review Panel to improve organisational learning, best practice and implement change
 - Undertaking a formal needs assessment, reviewing all areas of engagement with communities, how contact is responded to, how the Force responds to hate crime, and undertake a survey of victims and community members to better understand their views and experiences of policing.

Challenges

- 6.3. As set out in this paper, many hate crime victims do not report incidents because they lack confidence that the police will take effective action, fear reprisals from offenders, or have had previous negative experiences with policing. This is particularly relevant among minority ethnic, faith, LGBTQ+ and migrant communities, where hate incidents may become normalised or where cultural and accessibility barriers can make engagement with public services more difficult. As a result, official hate crime data is likely to represent only a proportion of actual victimisation, limiting understanding of the true scale and impact of the issue.
- 6.4. Addressing under-reporting requires a whole-system response and cannot be achieved by policing alone. While an effective police service is essential, trust and confidence are shaped by wider experiences across communities and public services. Local authorities, schools, health

providers, employers, housing organisations, faith groups and community partners all have a role in supporting victims, encouraging reporting and challenging the prejudice that underpins hate incidents. Strong partnership working can help create multiple routes to support, improve the quality of intelligence and data, and build the confidence needed for victims to come forward.

Community Tension

- 6.5. Hate crime happens everywhere, and therefore victims of hate crime live, work, study or socialise in the same communities as those responsible for their abuse, meaning that reporting an incident can carry significant personal risks. Many victims' fear retaliation, further harassment, damage to relationships, social exclusion, or becoming more visible within their community as a result of coming forward. These concerns can be particularly acute in close-knit communities, schools and workplaces, where victims may have ongoing contact with perpetrators and may feel that reporting will worsen an already difficult situation.
- 6.6. These fears contribute to under-reporting and can allow harmful behaviour to continue unchecked, potentially increasing community tensions and exacerbating the impact on victims. While encouraging reporting remains important, policing must carefully balance this objective with the need to safeguard those affected from further harm. Effective responses therefore require close partnership working with schools, local authorities, housing providers, employers, community groups and support services to ensure that victims receive appropriate protection and support. A coordinated approach can help reduce the risks associated with reporting, improve victim confidence and contribute to safer, more cohesive communities.

Social Media Impact

- 6.7. An increasing proportion of hate-related behaviour now takes place online, where social media and other digital platforms can enable harmful content, misinformation and hostility to spread rapidly and reach large audiences. Online abuse can have a significant impact on victims, particularly as content may be repeatedly shared, amplified and remain accessible over time. This can intensify feelings of fear, isolation and vulnerability, while also contributing to wider community tensions by reinforcing stereotypes, prejudice and division between different groups.
- 6.8. The speed and reach of online communication, plus the amplification by politicians, commentators or other activists can also create false narratives, including misrepresentations of police activity and decision-making. Where police take positive action to support vulnerable communities or respond to hate incidents, these actions may be portrayed by some online commentators as pandering to particular groups, regardless of the facts. These false narratives can undermine public confidence, increase mistrust between communities and authorities, and contribute to further hostility both online and offline. Addressing these challenges requires effective partnership working between policing, education providers, community organisations, regulators and technology companies to promote digital resilience, challenge misinformation and support safer online environments. Such work is, however, hampered by the increasing demand and ongoing challenges with resources.

Cumulative Impacts

- 6.9. It is helpful to recognise that the impact of hate crime may extend beyond the immediate incident. Whilst it is beyond the scope of this paper to consider the potential cumulative effects of prolonged exposure to discrimination, disadvantage and chronic stress on physical and psychological health, in the context of hate crime, it is important to note that repeated or sustained experiences of discrimination are often raised by those with lived experience as having direct and compounding effects on their wellbeing and trust, with some of those effects being transmitted across generations without clear experiences to the contrary.

Institutional Change

- 6.10. Policing continues to face scrutiny regarding the disproportionate outcomes and experiences reported by some minority communities. In late 2024, the then Chief Constable, supported by the current Chief Constable, took the decision to accept institutional racism, acknowledging that Force systems, processes, policies, structures and unwitting actions based upon unconscious bias influenced how policing services are delivered, meaning Black people are over-policed, under-protected, under-represented and have more negative experiences of policing in Dorset both internally and externally.
- 6.11. Such public recognition can help build trust by demonstrating a willingness to confront difficult issues, but it also raises expectations that meaningful and measurable change will follow. While this acknowledgement of institutional racism is focused on a single protected characteristic, given this acknowledges inherent biases in Force systems, processes, policies, structures and actions, it is expected that improvement brought about by this acknowledgement will – in time – be of benefit to policing services experienced by everyone.
- 6.12. Transforming organisational culture is a complex, long-term process that extends beyond policy changes alone. While procedures, training and oversight can be revised relatively quickly, lasting change requires sustained effort to address established behaviours, assumptions and working practices that may have developed over many years. Success will depend on strong leadership, effective scrutiny, engagement with affected communities and a commitment from staff at all levels to embrace new approaches. Maintaining public confidence will require evidence of continuous improvement and a willingness to learn from feedback, challenge and lived experience.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1. As set out within this document, there is a considerable and sustained focus on hate crime and incidents within policing. This is demonstrated through activity, plans and strategies from the local through to the national level.
- 7.2. The PCC is clear that there is no place for hate and has set out his approach within the Dorset Police and Crime Plan. He recognises the need to improve not only the police response to those crimes and incidents reported to the police, but also to improving the confidence that communities have in the police and need to protect the protectors from the impacts of hate crime and incidents too.
- 7.3. The PCC, along with his office, will continue to scrutinise Force performance in this area to ensure delivery of the commitments within the Police and Crime Plan.

8. RECOMMENDATION

- 8.1. Members are recommended to note the paper.

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HEAD OF POLICY AND COMMISSIONING

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