



Police and Crime Panel

24th March 2025

Hate Crime Scrutiny Panel – Update Report

Report Date	24/02/2025
Report Author	Clare Hornbuckle – Evaluation and Scrutiny Officer
Security Classification	Official

Purpose of Report

1. This report is brought to the Police and Crime Panel to provide an update to the work being commissioned by the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) in relation to driving up trust and confidence of people to report Hate Crime offences.
2. This paper focuses on two elements:
 - a) Hate Crime Scrutiny Panel
 - b) Online Hate Crime Hub.

Request of the Panel

3. In their role to scrutinise the actions and decisions of the PCC, the Commissioner requests that the panel examines the contents of this report. He would specifically like to ask the panel their opinion on the following questions;
 - a) Is the Panel supportive of the work update provided by the PCC?
 - b) Would the panel like to make any recommendations to the PCC in relation to any of the work outlined within the report?

Summary

4. The Commissioner believes strongly that he should do all he can to support victims of hate crimes locally as per his refreshed Police and Crime plan. He feels that the members of the panel are highly engaged and already delivering excellent work and outcomes for the residents of LLR.
5. It is the opinion of the PCC that the LLR-wide Strategic Hate Crime Board, comprising of community safety partners is making good progress with the online Hate Crime Hub and is anticipating the launch scheduled for later this year.

Background, Relevant Data and Trends

Current performance information relating to Hate Crime Statistics

6. The below table outlines the volume of recorded Hate Crime Offences by year from 2020 to Oct 2024. Although this report only captures data up to October 2024, figures are anticipated to be far below levels seen in 2023 by the end of the calendar year.

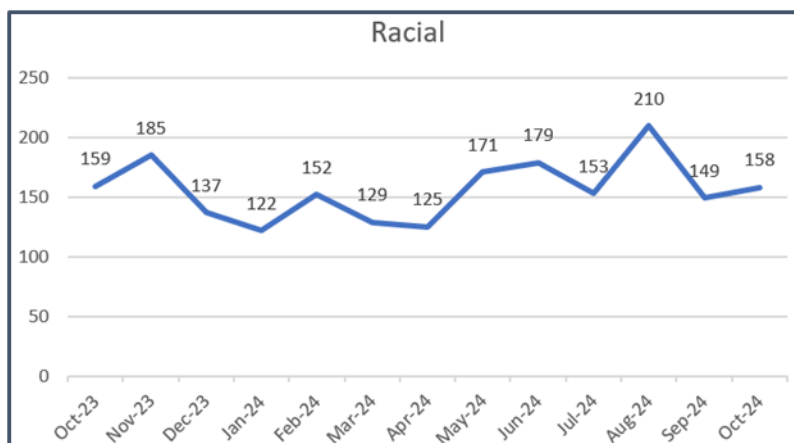
Annual Hate Crimes		
Year	Recorded	Monthly Average
2020	2691	224
2021	3250	271
2022	3440	287
2023	2807	234
2024	2029	203

7. There have been significant contextual factors such as Op Acanthus (Israel/Palestine conflict) and Op Signpost (Southport stabbings on 29th July 2024) which led to temporary (monthly) rises in hate crime reports last year. The overall annual reduction is significant as despite the occasional increases, hate crime reporting levels remain lower than any previous years, ultimately supporting the Force's theory that there is still under reporting of hate crime in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland.

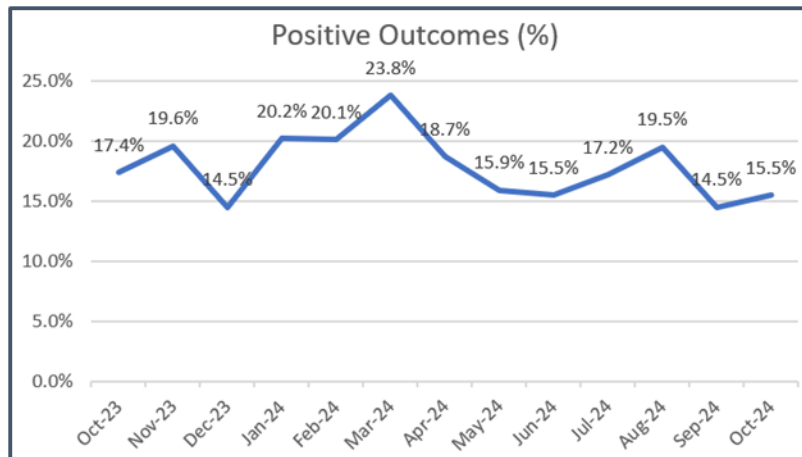
Month	Total Crimes
Oct-23	228
Nov-23	237
Dec-23	192
Jan-24	174
Feb-24	191
Mar-24	183
Apr-24	173
May-24	223
Jun-24	223
Jul-24	202
Aug-24	263
Sep-24	201
Oct-24	196

Op Acanthus

8. The effect of Op Acanthus on the levels of racially motivated hate crimes recorded for 2024 can be seen in August with a spike of 210 offences recorded for the month as shown on the chart below. This increase can be attributed to Op Acanthus based on the types of hate crimes recorded and reflects increases in this area seen nationally for the same period.



9. Positive outcomes have remained stable around 17% on average for 2024 up to October (national comparison data not available therefore unable to state how Leicestershire Police compare), this is shown on the chart below. The current target for 'achieving' is set at 22%. The most recent data (January 2025) shows a positive outcome rate of 17.9%.



Hate Crime Scrutiny Panel Establishment:

10. The levels of reporting of hate crime came to the attention of the Commissioner in early 2024. As an area he felt would benefit from community scrutiny, he requested that the Hate Crime Scrutiny Panel be reinstated to support the Force in their approach to this crime type, with the aim of building of trust and confidence with the public.
11. Hate Crime Scrutiny Panel (HCSP) involves the scrutiny of closed hate crime cases selected at random, reviewed by an independent and community led panel. There is a chair appointed, independent of the OPCC. Further to this, a member of the OPCC Ethics and Transparency Panel (ETP) also attends each panel. This Ethics panel member is an active participant and is also required to report back to the ETP on themes. Further assurance on individual updates of immediate actions and learning for individual officers is tracked through an electronic feedback form.
12. The panel reviews closed and redacted cases in full, considering case details and officer practice. The panel will refer to scrutiny questions which relate to Force policy and procedure for hate crimes and, using these questions, determine whether or not the case has been handled appropriately by the responding officer and reviewing officers.
13. Recruitment for panel members opened mid-March 2024 for two weeks. Adverts were drafted to encourage engagement from those who have had previous interactions with police regarding hate crimes or crimes generally. Advertisement of the panel was circulated with the OPCCs full distribution list of 600+ recipients, plus advertisements in the local news and across social media platforms.
14. A full HR recruitment process was run for the panel. Interview questions focused on awareness of hate crime and impact on victims, dealing with conflict of opinion and how members feel their personal experience and input can help shape victims experience. The highest scoring candidates were progressed and all other candidates who passed interview were held on a reserves list to minimise cost and labour of future recruitment.
15. When recruiting members with lived experience, it is expected that members experience will impact how materials are interpreted. This is not always a negative,

as personal experience can often provide some insight and understanding when reviewing cases.

16. There is always a risk however that sometimes these experiences can significantly alter a member's views and capacity to review neutrally. To mitigate any significant impact of personal experience, unconscious bias training has been made available to all panel members with 100% completion rate, and emphasis has been placed on members from the start that all cases must be treated on an individual bases from a neutral stance.
17. As previously referenced, to ensure impartiality, panel members are provided a scrutiny question set (appendix A) to work through to focus the discussions. These questions were formulated by the OPCC based on local and national policy and procedures around hate crimes. The question set ensures that scrutiny between each panel is consistent and has a reliable basis for outcomes and highlight's themes and trends with the outcomes.
18. There is huge benefit to including members with lived experience and the OPCC feel greatly privileged to have individuals engage with us on such an open level within the panel.
19. The OPCC must also consider potential impact of retraumatising victims. The OPCC has offered support to all panel members and made them aware of how they can access support, and counselling should they wish to. Members are also advised that should a case be too distressing for a member to review; they are encouraged to not partake in discussion and be provided with a safe space away from the materials until discussion is over.

Hate Crime Scrutiny Panel Meetings to Date

20. The first HCSP was held in July 2024, and to date 3 panels have been held and the summary of the findings from the first two panels is outlined in the table below;

1 (Appropriate and consistent with Police policies and/or the CPS Code for Crown Prosecutors)	2
2 (Appropriate but with observations)	3
3 (Inappropriate and inconsistent with Police policies and/or the CPS Code for Crown Prosecutors)	1
4 (Panel fails to reach a conclusion)	0

21. Each panel aims to review three cases per meeting, however two cases per meeting have been achieved so far. This is due to a number of factors;
 - a) panel members not receiving any materials prior to the panel - due to having no access to police issue laptops panel members have to schedule reading time during each panel (usually 10-15 minutes) to familiarise themselves with cases.

- b) Panel members also receive in depth crime reports and papers from the Force to review; this is done to allow members a full picture of each crime and is reflective of strong transparency between the Force and the panel. However, it does require panel members to navigate papers manually during each meeting which adds time pressure that electronic review may otherwise resolve.
- c) Panel members also work through a set of scrutiny questions for each case to allow consistent and robust scrutiny across each case. Panel members are all active participants in discussion and while the Chair moves discussion along in a timely manner, a balance must be struck between progressing through questions and allowing members sufficient time to articulate their interpretations fully.
- d) Cases are also individual, and some may be considerably longer in their materials than others.

22. As the panel have not yet been running for one year, we anticipate that panels will soon become more familiar with the processes and be able to work through 3 cases per panel, dependent on the length of each individual case.

Notable practice identified:

- a) **Representation of lived experience** - Due to a successful recruitment drive, the panel has several members with lived experience of hate crimes, and additional members who have been victims of crimes in the force area. The openness of panel members sharing their lived experience is highly respected and appreciated by all involved in the Hate Crime Scrutiny Panel. This is a notable success as it can often be difficult to effectively engage victims of crime, particularly when panels are held on Force sites. The OPCC has observed positive impact made by members with lived experience to date, for example one member in particular shared rationale from a victims perspective when discussing how a crime was reported and explained in detail how and why this reporting could have been emotionally traumatic for a victim. This, along with other observations, is captured in feedback to both the wider force and the individual handling officers and is invaluable for shaping how victims are treated moving forwards.
- b) **Knowledge sharing** - The panel has already had interest from other regional and national Force's on its successful recruitment of volunteers. Members of the OPCC have been in contact at various points through the year to provide learning on a successful recruitment drive for Voluntary Community Scrutiny Panels. There has been interest from regional Force's on observing panels which is reviewed and approved with the Chair on a case by case basis. The OPCC was approached to share notable practice with Merseyside Police in February 2024 and to offer advice while setting up their own HCSP. Merseyside were very complimentary of the processes involved in Leicestershire PCCs HCSP and were keen to learn more about the whole process, particularly with recruitment of lived experience members and how the accountability is robust and transparent. Best practice has been shared with a view to continue to provide support and insight as Merseyside establish their panel in 2025.

- c) Introduction of e-learning** - The Hate Crime Scrutiny Panel is the first scrutiny panel in the OPCC to exclusively utilise e-learning for its members, reducing strain on volunteers' time in attending FHQ for training sessions. Three individual sessions have been recorded and circulated with panel members. These include: OPCC values training, including equality and diversity and the role of unconscious bias; Panel member training session; Panel Chair training session. These training videos provide key tips and skills for members, aimed particularly at how to be a confident and active contributor on scrutiny panels, and how to support fellow members to encourage the most effective discussion. This is unique to OPCC Leicestershire and has been well received by panel members. The OPCC are also looking to provide insight to panel members around the training given to officers on identifying hate crimes. An additional in person Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is not mandatory for HCSP volunteers however is offered to all members as additional training that can be accessed by the panel.

23. The areas of success/notable practice identified from the panel already include;

- a) Terminology change on Niche (Gender Identity)** - The panel has made a significant positive change with regards to terminology and representation of victims on the Niche recording system. The change concerns the definition of 'transgender' on a police software system called Niche which is used by several forces to manage all aspects of data collection including crime recording, investigation, intelligence, vulnerability etc. Previously, 'transgender' was defined on the system as 'gender expression' which insinuated that a person's presentation reflected their identity choice. As a result of observations made by the panel, the force formally submitted a suggested change to Niche with support from regional forces to redefine 'transgender' as 'gender identity' which has now been implemented. The move was welcomed by the PCC who said individuals who encounter the force in future would feel better represented and understood by the updated definition.
- b) Panel reflections on openness of Leicestershire Police** - Over the last three meetings, the engagement from officers representing Leicestershire Police has been one of constructive openness rooted in transparency and honesty. There is assurance that identified learning through discussion is fed back to those officers concerned and acted upon. Attending officer's including the Force Hate Crime Lead Inspector have an open attitude to discussion and are happy to take questions and provide detailed information when queries arise in the meetings.
- c) SPOC allocation in hate crimes** - During the discussion of one of the cases at the October meeting, it became apparent that Single Point of Contact (SPOC) was not allocated within the standard practice time frame of 10 days. As a result, the case ended up being mis-recorded. It is important that when dealing with cases that a SPOC is appointed so that victims can be assured that their case is being handled according to best practice. The force lead fed back that the delayed handover was a result of annual leave, however this should not be happening as it fails victims. Based on panel feedback, the

panel have since had assurance from the Force that all SPOC allocations are overseen by the Force's hate crime team to avoid situations like this in future.

24. There have also been some areas identified for improvement by the panel, some examples of these are outlined below;

- a) **All reasonable lines of enquiry** - In one case which involved school children, concerns were raised by the panel on the investigation carried out by officers. It transpired that officers had the identities of both the victim and the perpetrator of the hate crime however they did not make contact with the perpetrator at all. This should not have happened as the mother phoned the police with the intention that they would take action. On reading the case it appeared that the officer was unclear whether the case should be handled by the school or the police. This prevented proper investigation due to lack of understanding and ultimately lack of investigation and victim support. As per the terms of reference, the Force promptly provided feedback and learning to the Officer in Charge, as well as the Neighbourhood Policing Inspector to raise awareness and prevent the issue reoccurring within their NPA. The Force noted that the OIC responded well to the feedback and took it on board.

25. In relation to areas of learning and improvement, it has been noted that officer's have been receptive of the panel's comments and in more than one case, shared their own thoughts in relation to standards of practice.

Tracking Impact

26. There is a robust system in place for tracking officer feedback collected during the panel meeting in which feedback is collated, and the Force Hate Crime lead then shares details of the feedback (positive or negative) with the handling officer and their supervisor and keeps details of this on a monitoring spreadsheet.

27. This database is managed and reviewed by both the Force and OPCC and tracks the stages of relaying officer feedback in relation to each individual case, both in recognising good work of the officer, or relaying recommendations for acceptance.

28. This clear, auditable system is reflected across other scrutiny panels in the OPCC and is shared openly with panel members at the beginning of each panel, closing the loop on individual officer feedback and providing clear assurance to panel members that the Force and OPCC are doing all within their power to relay comments and feedback from the panel. This system also allows for easier identification of wider issues in Leicestershire Police regarding the handling of hate crimes and is reviewed by the Chair and the OPCC lead.

29. Reflections from the Chair of the HCSP, Mr David Findlay, can be found below:

"Over the months since the Hate Crime Panel has been formed, and being elected chair, the panel has successfully reviewed a number of cases and acted as a critical friend to the Force who have been engaged and open to feedback in all meetings so far.

Considering for some panels members that this is the first time they are scrutinising hate crime cases, or any Force-related documentation for that matter, I have noticed a significant growth in panel member's confidence to be able to provide effective feedback, prompt insightful discussion and give critical thoughts and questions directly to Leicestershire Police officers present.

The panel have demonstrated their ability to hold strong discussions on issues that have arisen as a result of reviewing each case. This includes both critical conversations on the handling of the cases but sometimes diverts into wider issues regarding hate crimes and reporting. Whilst this is still an important discussion to hold in this environment, I reflect that going forwards I will work on... striking a balance of maintaining these conversations while still ensuring we move along the papers in a timely and focused manner.

I am immensely proud of the panel members, for being able to provide robust discussions and not being afraid to ask questions that help them to fully understand the issues being discussed in the short time that the panel has been running. The relationship between the panel members, the police and OPCC is one of openness and respect. I am confident that this will only continue to develop over time and the panel can continue their vital role as a critical friend to the Force with the reviewing of hate crime cases in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland."

30. The annual report of the Hate Crime Scrutiny Panel, panel member profiles and detailed minutes of the panel meetings can be found on the OPCC website.
(<https://leics.pcc.police.uk/Transparency/Meetings/Hate-Crime-Scrutiny-Panel/Hate-Crime-Scrutiny-Panel.aspx>)

Hate Crime Hub:

31. There are many known reasons that victims do not often report hate crimes; lack of evidence, fear of police, lack of awareness that a hate crime has even taken place, no known suspect to prosecute (i.e. unknown perpetrator makes verbal comment on scene and is gone before police arrive, no CCTV to investigate etc).
32. Partnership data from Victim First indicate that hate crimes are being identified at point of support being provided for an unrelated crime such as assault. This has been picked up by Leicestershire Police who are focusing their hate crime training to ensure cases are captured wherever possible.
33. In response the Commissioner has funded an online Hate Crime Hub to help raise awareness and encourage victims to report, which is being progressed by the LLR-wide Strategic Hate Crime Board, comprising of community safety partners including; CSP representatives, victim support services, probation and police.
34. It was highlighted through feedback from outreach projects and community engagements that there is very little local online support and guidance for victims of hate crime locally.
35. There is currently a national resource online (truevison.com) but this does not meet local need, and it was therefore agreed to prioritise the development of a local online hub co-designed with communities and supported by community safety partnerships.

36. The Hub, which is now called “Speak Out Space” is currently towards the end of the design-phase. This has been led by Leicestershire Police, but members of the strategic board have been fully involved. The purpose of the Hub is to raise awareness of what a hate crime is and the difference between hate crime and non-crime hate incidents. It will also inform communities about support groups, agencies, programmes and initiatives. Pathways to reporting mechanisms will also be built into the site, as well as quarterly performance data from police and local authorities.
37. During the design phase, the commissioned developer, Hitch, have held two focus groups wherein the target audience have been involved in the design phase to ensure relevance and accessibility. In February 2025, a stakeholder meeting was carried out where all partners were updated and sign off secured. The Hub project is currently at the website build phase, prior to a content creator/copywriter assisting with content. Partners have been requested to provide organisational information and there has been a swift response to this.
38. In terms of launch plans, a social media tool kit will be created to be shared to all partners for use on launch. There will be a paid for targeted Facebook and Instagram campaign. Leicestershire Police are also hosting a launch event in May 2025. Hitch will be carrying out audits and reviews of the use of the website. We will also be monitoring and providing the data for the routes to the different reporting mechanisms (to LA or the Police’s single online home). Social media engagement analysis will also be completed.
39. The plan is for Speak Out Space to go live in April 2025.

-----**End of Report**-----

Appendix A**Scrutiny Panel Questions:**

1. Has the hate element been recognised at the point of reporting ?
Was it picked up by the call taker / crime bureau staff / attending officer
2. **Did the recording officer complete VCOP ?**
3. Was the victim contacted within the 24hrs of allocation by the OIC ?
If there were any delays were these avoidable ?
4. Was the victim updated in line with their wishes or at least every 28 days ?
5. Did the Hate Crime SPOC make contact after 7 days and if opened longer than 28days did they make further contact ?
If there were any delays were these avoidable ?
6. Were victim support or specialist services offered ?
Were they accepted or declined
7. Was the victim consulted on how they wanted the matter dealt with and was this taken into consideration ?
8. **Was there a supervisory footprint on the occurrence, if not was this appropriate?**
9. Was an investigation plan evident on the report?
10. Was the occurrence correctly recorded?

Decision Maker's Rationale:**11. Was there a supervisor's review and rationale recorded prior to filing? (Yes/No)**

* Please note that the three bullet points above in **bold text and underlined** are to be classed as a major fault if not met. If one or more of these bullet points is marked 'no' by the panel, the case should be considered 'inappropriate and inconsistent with police policies and procedure'. All other points not highlighted as such are to be classed as a minor fault. If 4 or more minors are marked 'no', the panel should consider whether this case should be classed as 'inappropriate' overall based on their discussion.

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