

FAQs – hate crime

Your questions answered

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What is hate crime?

Hate crime is any criminal offence where anyone believes the victim has been targeted because of their race/ethnicity, religion/belief, gender/gender identity, disability, age, sexual orientation or any other actual or perceived difference.

Hate incidents are incidents that do not constitute a criminal offence but cause alarm, distress or harassment where anyone believes the victim has been targeted because of their race/ethnicity, religion/belief, gender/gender identity, disability, age, sexual orientation or any other actual or perceived difference.

Hate crimes and incidents can also be directed at whole communities – for example desecration of graveyards, vandalism of places of worship, offensive graffiti in public places, or acts of terrorism.

Hate crime can include verbal abuse, threatening behaviour, offensive graffiti, harassment, malicious communications, damage to property and violence. This includes all of the following:

Disability incident - any incident which is perceived by the victim or any other person on the grounds of their disability.

Racial incident - any incident, which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person.

Religion/Belief related incident - any incident, which is perceived to be religion/ belief related by the victim or any other person.

Disability related - any incident, which is perceived to be disability related by the victim or any other person.

Gender identity related - any incident, which is perceived to be gender identity related by the victim or any other person.

Sexual orientation related - any incident, which is perceived to be sexual orientation related by the victim or any other person.

Age related incident - any incident, which is perceived to be age related by the victim or any other person.

Gypsies and travellers – any incident which is perceived by the victim or any other person to be motivated on the grounds of their status.

Newcomers – any incident which is perceived by the victim or any other person to be motivated on the grounds of their immigration status or nationality.

Why report hate crime?

Hate crime is a violation of personal and civil rights. Effective action against hate incidents can only be taken if these crimes be reported, to the police, council and all other appropriate agencies.

Only if hate crime is reported can we, together, take action to deal with it. No one has the right to harass, threaten or assault you because of who you are.

How do I report an incident?

- You can report an incident to the police on 999
- You can report an incident to the Council through our 24 hour free phone Hate Crime Reporting Line on 0800 138 0521
- You can [report an incident online](#)
- You can report incidents to the police and/or the council at [third party reporting centres](#). For details of a centre near you, call the Hate Crime Policy and Partnership Team on 0207 364 6188
- You can report an incident at your Local Service Centre.

What is the eligibility criteria?

- Anyone can report hate crime to the council including:
- Residents
- Visitors to the borough
- Private tenants
- Local businesses
- Community and faith groups
- Employees

What evidence is required?

Any kind of evidence can help the council or the police in the process of investigation. In particular, it can help an investigation if you are able to provide:

- A description of the perpetrator(s)
- Details of any witnesses to the incident
- A diary record of any ongoing incidents and previous incidents you have experienced
- Original copies of any hate mail that has been sent to you
- Evidence of damage to property, graffiti etc. It is advisable not to clear these up before reporting the incident if possible.

I can't provide any evidence, is it still worth reporting?

If you are not able to provide any of the above, do not let this deter you from reporting the incident. Even if we are not able to identify the perpetrators on this occasion, the information you provide may help us build up a picture of a problem in a particular area, and we may be able to take proactive action to try to tackle the problem.

Can I make an anonymous report?

Yes, it is possible to make an anonymous report. The information you provide will help us to be aware of problems in particular areas, but it will not be possible to offer you individual support following an anonymous report.

What will happen once I have reported an incident?

- The council aims to make contact with you within 48 hours of the incident being reported. This applies to incident reported via the internet, customer contact centre or in person.
- You will be sent a letter confirming receipt of the report within 48 hours of the report. The letter will contain the name and contact details of your investigation officer.
- If requested, the Community Safety Victim & Witness Support Team will contact you to discuss support options. If you wish they will be able to organise an appointment to see you to assess your support needs and give you information about the investigation process and other agencies that may be able to help you. You can contact the victim & witness support team on 020 7364 6318 9am – 5pm Monday – Friday.

I am in danger now, what can I do?

- Call the Police and Ambulance Service immediately on 999
- Stay calm, keep yourself and your family safe, don't retaliate and wait for the police to arrive.

How long does it take to investigate an incident?

The length of the investigation is dependent upon each individual case. The more complex cases will take longer to investigate.

Your investigation officer will keep you informed about the progress of your case. As a general rule a case investigation can last from three to six months.

Should I report the incident to the police?

Yes. If you believe a crime has taken place, report it to the police immediately on 999 or contact the Police Community Safety Unit on 0207 515 1212.

I am concerned about confidentiality, what can I do?

The council takes confidentiality very seriously. If you are concerned, please inform the investigating officer. If the matter is not being resolved to your satisfaction you should follow our complaints procedure.

A dedicated investigation officer will be allocated to your case, which will involve interviewing you and any witness that can provide evidence to support your allegation. The investigating officer will decide on the appropriate outcome.

I am a private resident, can you still help me?

Yes we can help you but we advise that you check with your current landlord to see if they have a community safety or anti-social behaviour team, if so please report the incident to your landlord.

If your landlord does not have a community safety or anti-social behaviour team we can take your report and initiate an investigation.

I am a business can you help me?

Yes we can. If this is the first time you are reporting an incident we can take a report now.

What type of support can I get from the council?

If requested, the Victim & Witness Support Team will ensure that victims and witnesses feel safe at home and can provide safety steps by supplying a fireproof letterbox, a spy-hole camera, personal alarms and other appropriate emotional and practical support according to individual needs. They can also refer you to other agencies for specialist support and advice.

The team will also brief and prepare witnesses throughout the court process to provide evidence in court.

What can the Council do to take action against perpetrators?

- The council has a number of tools available to take action against perpetrators of hate crime. These may include one or more of the following:
- Issuing a warning letter
- Referral for mediation
- Setting an Acceptable Behaviour Contract with the perpetrator
- Seeking an injunction
- Demoting the tenancy - if the perpetrator is a council tenant
- Eviction or notice of seeking possession - if the perpetrator is a council tenant
- Securing an anti-social behaviour order (ASBO) against the perpetrator.

What can the police do?

The police can investigate the incident. If a crime has been committed the police can arrest the perpetrator, and if there is enough evidence to support a prosecution they can be charged with a criminal offence.

The case will then be taken to Magistrates or Crown Court for a trial. You may be asked to appear as a witness in court. If the perpetrator is found guilty they could face imprisonment or other forms of sentence (such as a probation order).

The Police Community Safety Unit is a specialist team that deals with all hate crime investigations. You can contact the CSU on 020 7275 4757.

What is the Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNTs) and what do they do?

Dedicated teams of police officers and police community support officers (PCSOs) based on each ward in Tower Hamlets provide additional policing resources to the Borough of Tower Hamlets and therefore provide additional reassurance to those who live, work or socialise in Tower Hamlets.

Safer neighbourhood teams each consist of a minimum of one Police Sergeant, two Police Constables and three Police Community Support Officers.

When and who refers customers to the Safer Neighbourhood Team?

Customers should only be referred to the SNT if they want to get involved or wish to know more about the services provided by SNTs in their local area. The Community Safety Service will deal with long-term disputes between neighbours while the SNT will deal with the more day to day issues such as abandoned vehicles. See below for description.

What will the Safer Neighbourhood Team do about the problem?

The team, with the community and partner agencies, tackles locally identified issues - such as quality-of-life problems like graffiti, abandoned cars, noisy neighbours, drunks and vandalism.

What is an ASBO?

Anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs) are civil orders made by a court which prohibit the perpetrator from specific anti-social acts and from entering defined areas on a map (exclusion zones). An order lasts for a **minimum of two years**. The purpose of an ASBO is to protect the public from behaviour that causes, or is likely to cause, harassment or alarm or distress, not to punish the perpetrator.

ASBOs are community-based orders that involve local people in collecting evidence and helping to enforce breaches of the prohibitions in the order. They are designed to encourage local communities to become actively involved in reporting crime and anti-social behaviour, thus building and protecting the community.

The police, local authorities, registered social landlords and the British Transport Police can apply for these orders.

What is an acceptable behaviour contract (ABC)?

An acceptable behaviour contract (also known as acceptable behaviour agreement) is an intervention designed to engage an individual in acknowledging his or her anti-social behaviour and its effect on others, with the aim of stopping that behaviour.

An (ABC) is a written agreement made between a person who has been involved in anti-social behaviour and their local authority, Youth Inclusion Support Panel (YISP), landlord or the police. ABCs are not set out in law, which is why they are usually called Agreements. Any agency is able to use and adapt the model.

Although ABCs have often been made with young people, they are a tool that can be used for a person of any age. The informal, flexible nature of the contract means they can be used for various types of anti-social behaviour.

ABCs can be used to promote effective partnership work with a range of agencies. For example, it is important that the Youth Offending Team is contacted and becomes involved when completing an ABC with a young person.

My child has been a victim of hate crime at the school, what can I do?

- Tower Hamlets schools have zero tolerance policy of combating race and hate crime in schools, colleges and educational establishments, if your child has been a victim, at first point report the incident to the school and inform his/her teacher. If the matter has not been resolved speak to the head teacher.
- Alternatively you can report the incident to us or to the local police.

My family is being affected, what can I do?

Inform the investigating officer of everybody who is being affected. The officer will assess the situation and recommend an appropriate action.

How can the housing services help me or should I go to homeless services?

Your officer will assess your situation and take all appropriate actions including referrals to local agencies (homeless services, victim support).

I have youths hanging around outside, what can be done?

You will need to make a report on the free phone number, which will be used to initiate an investigation.

A dedicated investigation officer will be allocated to this case, which will involve interviewing the victim and also any witness that can provide evidence of allegations. The investigating officer will decide on appropriate outcome.

At this point we are unable to provide any solutions without a proper investigation.

I think gangs of youths are about to fight, what can be done?

The Rapid Response Team (RRT) will respond to any incident involving groups of youth that is likely to escalate into serious youth disorder and violence. This would include:

- fights involving groups of youth
- incident involving youth, which is likely to escalate
- serious or life threatening injury
- any serious incident likely to have a adverse impact on the community
- discovery of weapons

Customer Contact Centre Staff can refer customers to RRT for any of the above on 07957 44 19 36 (24 hour)

What if I am not happy with the way my report is dealt with by the council?

If you are not happy with the service provided you can either:

- Speak to the Community Safety Operations Manager, Heather Mallinder on 020 7364 6107.
- Complain via the council's [corporate complaints procedure](#).

You can view our [support services and useful contacts page](#) for a list of support agencies and contacts for victims of hate crime.

I am not satisfied with the case investigation outcome, where do I complain?

- Speak to the Community Safety Operations Manager, Heather Mallinder on 020 7364 6107.
- Complain via the council corporate complaint procedure, call 020 7364 4161 or email complaints@towerhamlets.gov.uk . You could also write to:

The Corporate Complaints Team
Mulberry Place (AH)
6th Floor
PO Box 55739
5 Clove Crescent
London E14 1BY