

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT TO CABINET COMMITTEE - EQUALITIES

29 SEPTEMBER 2010

REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE – CORPORATE DEVELOPMENT & PARTNERSHIPS

PRESENTATION ON COMMUNITY COHESION AND TACKLING HATE MOTIVATED VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

1. Purpose of Report.

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to introduce presentations from partner organisations and inform the Committee about how the Authority and its local partners are responding to issues relating to hate crime and national strategic developments on community cohesion.

2. Connection to Corporate Plan / Other Corporate Priority.

- 2.1 This report links with the strategic theme of strong communities and assists the Authority to meet its moral and statutory duties in respect of equality and human rights.

3. Background

- 3.1 At the Committee meeting on 19th July 2010 it was agreed that Members would receive reports on certain topic areas related to their remit and that relevant representatives would be invited to the meeting to speak on a topic so as to achieve a broader review and wider engagement of the work area. The first topic for the Committee to consider is community cohesion and tackling hate motivated violence and harassment based on race, disability, sexual orientation and religion or belief. (See Appendix 1 for definitions relative to hate crime).
- 3.2 Hate incidents or crimes, where people are targeted because of the nature of their diversity, affect not only the primary victim but also the wider family and sometimes wider communities. It is a serious crime often committed against victims who are particularly vulnerable due to their individual circumstance. Victims of hate incidents / crimes face the added trauma of knowing that the perpetrator's use of words or actions are motivated by hatred or prejudice relating to the victim's perceived difference. An incident or crime that might normally have a minor impact becomes, with the hate element, a very intimate and hurtful attack that is likely to significantly undermine the quality of life of the victim, their family and sometimes the wider community.

4. Current situation / proposal.

4.1 The Committee are invited to receive presentations from South Wales Police and Bridgend Community Safety Partnership, Bridgend People First and the Valleys Regional Equality Council on the work these organisations are undertaking on the issues of community cohesion and hate crime.

4.2 The role of South Wales Police

4.3 The police service has a responsibility to investigate and bring to justice, where appropriate, perpetrators of hate occurrences / crimes. The police service takes a holistic approach in respect of the manner in which it deals with such victims and raise the confidence levels of victims and communities to report such incidents to the police. Identifying hate incidents correctly enables the police service to:

- Allow an opportunity for victims to be provided with support at an early stage;
- Give an early indication of community tensions;
- Provide a means to gather intelligence;
- To better understand and respond to community needs.

4.4 It is important to identify an incident being a hate incident because of the impact of any incident is greatly increased by any elements aggravated by a perception of an impersonal hatred/intolerance of some feature that they may be perceived to share with a group of others. Such incidents can have a lasting and deep impact on entire communities. Failure to identify and deal with such incidents lead to increased community tension and reduced confidence in the police service. National research and case studies have also shown that without intervention there is a very real risk of repeat victimisation. Under reporting remains a common feature of all hate crimes. Frequently, victims are reluctant to report incidents and have often suffered repeated problems before they contact the police. South Wales Police is totally committed to fair and appropriate treatment for every individual in the community, however there are some occasions when appropriate treatment can and does mean different responses depending on cultural, individual or local needs. Responding to hate incidents falls into this category. The perception of the victim is the reality that determines the impact of a hate crime on quality of life.

4.5 There are two aims to investigating and managing hate incidents locally:

- **Primary Aim:** To investigate, identify and prosecute perpetrators to the satisfaction of the victim and the community. However, where a criminal prosecution of a perpetrator is not feasible;
- **Secondary Aim:** To identify and pursue alternative courses of action where appropriate with partner agencies. These aims are not mutually exclusive. Consideration is always given to pursuing both aims simultaneously when appropriate.

Victim care is paramount and every effort is made to support the victim based on their individual and specific needs. Partners play a key role in this process.

4.6 The identification and investigation of hate incidents / crimes is an issue for all staff in South Wales Police and various roles play an important part in ensuring calls are dealt with swiftly, effectively and sensitively. There are however a number of

specialist roles and processes in place that enhance how hate incidents are dealt with. These include:

- **BCU Hate Crime Officers (HCO)** - Local dedicated expertise for managing/co-ordinating the response to hate incidents with an emphasis on co-ordinating victim reassurance and support.
- **Minorities Support Unit.** – A department that supports the police locally with Community Engagement officers (building links and confidence with diverse communities). They also have expertise in:
 - Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transsexual and Transgender issues
 - Honour based violence
 - Asylum Seekers & Migrant workers
 - Female Genital Mutilation
 - Forced Marriage
 - Gypsies and Travellers
 - Community tensions and Community Impact Assessments
 - Disability
 - Community Cohesion
- **Daily Management Meeting** – Any hate incidents from the previous 24 hours are scrutinised, prioritised and fast track actions identified and allocated.
- **Monthly Hate Crime Review Group** – This group reviews all hate incidents from the previous month to ensure all opportunities to support the victim and bring offenders to justice have been maximised.
- **Community Safety Partnership resources** – Several specialist Community Safety Partnership roles have been combined to form a Neighbourhood Management Team. This has ensured staff are not working in isolation and the links between issues such as anti-social behaviour and hate crime are tackled jointly and holistically.
- **Community Cohesion Group** – This Community Safety Partnership steering group has responsibility for developing and delivering a Community Cohesion strategy. Several Partners and community members attend the group from a diverse range of backgrounds. One of the functions of the group is to receive reports from SWP relating to hate incidents, stop and search data, emerging issues and trends etc. The group acts as a critical friend to partners, adds vital information with recommendations, ensures transparency and improves communications between minority communities and partners.
- **Training** - All officers involved in managing hate incidents receive training specific to their role. Due to the often complicated, sensitive and impactful nature of this type of incident it's vital that officers identify critical issues at the earliest stage and involve the right people to ensure an effective investigation and victim/community support. All front line staff have recently received follow up additional training around hate crime with a focus on victim support.
- **Risk Assessed Victims** - Hate crime is under-reported (by comparison with burglary for example). Accordingly, it is highly likely that when a hate crime is reported, there would have been previous occurrences which have gone

unreported. All victims undergo a risk assessment process and where appropriate a supportive action plan is put in place based on their individual needs. The central aims of managing a risk assessed victim are to:

- Reduce the opportunity for further victimisation.
- Enhance victim support, (whilst taking care not to increase the fear of crime).
- Target and prevent further incidents in partnership with public and local agencies and community groups.

4.7 The below table shows figures for each category over the last 6 months (April – Sept 2010). Figures in brackets relate to the 6 months previous as a comparison:

	Total incidents (non crimes)	Crimes	Victim Action plans implemented
Disability	11 (7)	4 (4)	3
Racist	31 (19)	40 (20)	9
Religion	3 (1)	1 (3)	2
Sexual Orientation	8 (12)	5 (2)	5
Transgender	0 (0)	1 (0)	0

Points of note –

- Many of the areas have comparable figures.
- An aim of SWP is to improve the under reporting of hate incidents. As such a more effective means of managing victims and improving confidence has seen previously unreported incidents captured and recorded. This is a positive development.
- A combination of capturing previously unreported incidents combined with a spike in Bridgend town centre and Caerau around business premises (eg Takeaways etc) has seen a rise in race incidents. Action plans and task groups have been set up for both areas and are proving very successful.
- The co-location of hate crime staff with Community Safety Partnership anti-social behaviour personnel has improved the identification and management of incidents relating to disability and learning disabilities.

4.8 Bridgend People First

4.9 Bridgend People First is an advocacy organisation whose main activities are:

- educating professionals and the public about learning disability;
- supporting people with learning disabilities to participate in forums which make decisions that will affect their lives;
- supporting people with learning disabilities to develop the confidence and competence needed to actively participate in the Bridgend Community.

4.10 Bridgend People First ran a summer school this year about hate crime, because people with learning disabilities:

- Have not had many opportunities to understand oppression and how it affects certain social groups.
- Can be extremely vulnerable.
- Are used to putting up with bullying behaviour without realising it can now be considered a crime.

- Deserve to be protected and made to feel as safe as anyone else in the Bridgend Community.

4.11 The 2-week course required participants to:

- Research and present a project relating to one specific hate crime victim.
- Design questions for a question-time with local professionals involved in hate crime.
- Design some teaching materials, which they will use in local schools as part of disability equality training (quiz, wordsearch, stories, etc).
- Spend a day doing drama to understand the role of the perpetrator, the effect on a victim, and the consequences of hate crime on a person, their family and their community.

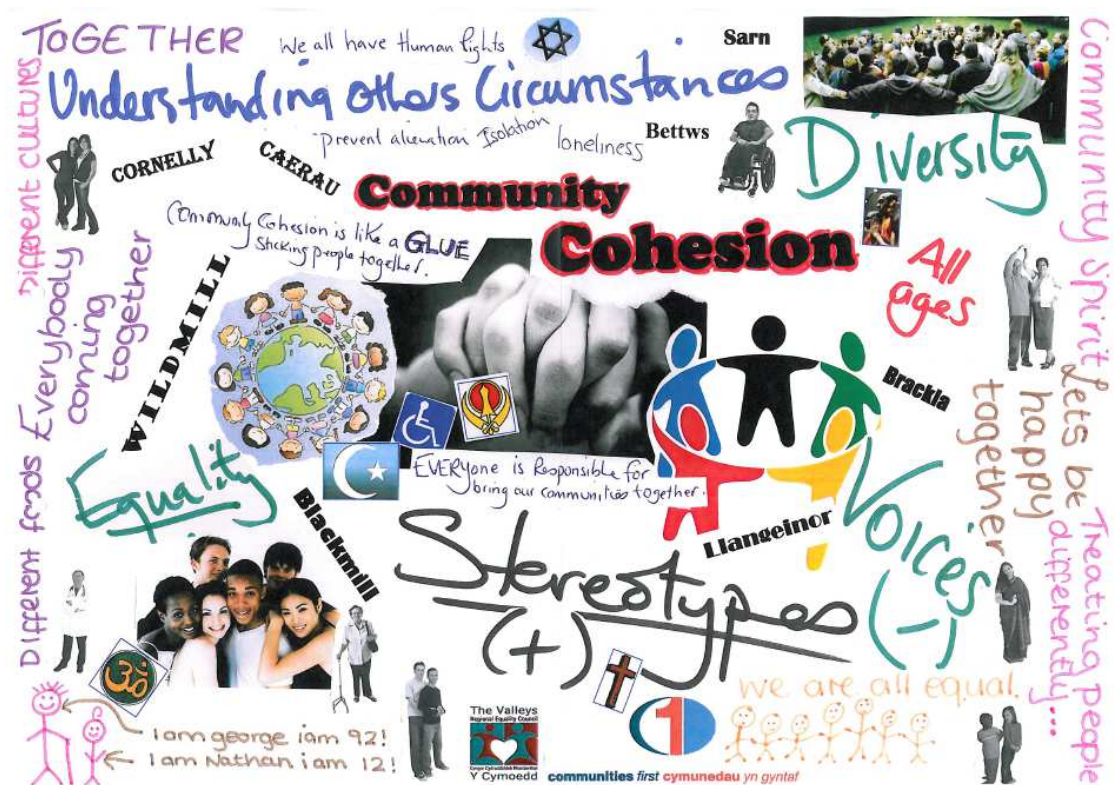
4.12 Valleys Regional Equality Council

4.13 VALREC is a generic regional equalities council. It operates in the South East Wales region across the following equality strands: age, disability, gender, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation. Its purpose is to provide an access point for members of the public and organisations seeking advice or support on equality issues, including community cohesion and hate crime.

4.14 In the Spring of 2010 VALREC secured funding from the Community Safety Partnership under the Welsh Assembly Government Community Cohesion Fund to carry out training and community activities focusing on the community cohesion in Communities First Partnership areas. The following Communities First wards participated:

- Sarn
- Llangeinor
- Caerau
- Brackla
- Wildmill
- Blackmill
- Bettws
- North Cornelly

4.15 Workshops were delivered in local venues. The workshops focused on the concept of 'community cohesion', what it is and who creates it, positive and negative forms of stereotyping and relevant equality legislation. The workshops provided an insight into the ways in which people view community cohesion within their local neighbourhood. In addition to these workshops a 'Diversity Day' was run to reflect on the work carried out with the Communities First Partnerships. This highlighted their high level of interest and commitment to creating, improving and sustaining community cohesion in and around the borough of Bridgend. The event included guest speakers Kate Bennett (Director of Wales, Equality and Human Rights Commission) and Keith Towler (Children and Young Persons Commissioner for Wales). Although it was disappointing that more people were not able to attend this event, those who attended felt that the day was successful, thought provoking, educational and enjoyable. Participants in the workshops were asked to document their thoughts and ideas in order to contribute to a poster to raise awareness of the importance of building cohesive and inclusive communities.



4.16 To assist the Council to deliver on its corporate commitments on equality and community cohesion VALREC will be working with local partnerships over the coming year to build on this work through the provision of services that will focus on community engagement and casework.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules.

5.1 There will be no effect on the Policy Framework & Procedure Rules.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

6.1 Whilst no equality impact assessment has been carried out this report provides the Committee with information which will positively assist in the delivery of the Authority's equality duties.

7. Financial Implications.

7.1 There are no financial implications.

8. Recommendation.

8.1 The Cabinet Committee - Equalities notes the content of this report and the presentations by the representatives of South Wales Police, Bridgend Community First Partnership, Bridgend People First and VALREC.

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Background documents:

Bridgend County Borough Council Corporate Equality Scheme 2009-2012.
Equality Act 2010.

Definitions relative to hate crime

All hate crimes are hate incidents. However some hate incidents may not constitute a criminal offence and for this reason will not be a hate crime. It is important that they are both identified at an early stage.

What is a Hate Incident?

*“Any non-crime incident perceived by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by a hostility or prejudice based on a persons **race, religion, sexual orientation, disability or transgender**”.*

What is a Hate Crime?

*“Any crime perceived by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by a hostility or prejudice based on a persons **race, religion, sexual orientation, disability or transgender**”.*

There are 5 areas where it is appropriate to record an incident under the category of Hate Occurrence or Crime. The five categories are:

1. Disability

The Disability Discrimination Act defines a person as “disabled” if they have a “physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities”. A “disablist incident” may affect a person due to a physical disability, a learning disability,

2. Race

This includes any racial group or ethnic background including countries within the United Kingdom and ‘Gypsy & Traveller’ groups.

3. Faith, Religion

Islamophobia is a commonly seen example of a faith hate incident but people of various faiths, religions or philosophical beliefs including people who **do not** have a religion, belief or faith may be affected by a “faith hate incident”.

4. Sexual Orientation

This includes any person’s sexual orientation including people who are ‘heterosexual’.

5. Transgender

In this context a “transphobic incident” may affect men and women who are transgender, transsexual or transvestite and also men and women who are perceived to be transgender, transsexual or transvestite.

Transgender people can be at complete disagreement with the gender on their birth certificate. Some resolve this by undergoing reassignment surgery (transsexual). Others live with the discomfort and, conform to the roles expected of them by society. The issue is one of gender and not sexual orientation.