

Home Affairs Committee

Oral evidence: [Hate crime and its violent consequences](#), HC 609

Tuesday 21 February 2017

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[Watch the meeting](#)

Members present: Yvette Cooper (Chair); James Berry; Mr David Burrowes; Byron Davies; Nusrat Ghani; Mr Ranil Jayawardena; Tim Loughton; Stuart C. McDonald; Naz Shah; Mr Chuka Umunna; Mr David Winnick.

Questions 287-406

Witnesses

I: Sarah Green, Co-Director, End Violence Against Women Coalition, and Melanie Jeffs, Manager, Nottingham Women's Centre.

II: Superintendent Ted Antill, Hate Crime Lead, Nottinghamshire Police, Paul Giannasi, Hate Crime Policy Advisor to the National Police Chiefs Council, Assistant Chief Constable Mark Hamilton, National Policing Lead for Hate Crime, National Police Chiefs Council and Greater Manchester Police, and Claire Light, Head of Profession, Neighbourhoods, Confidence and Equality Team, Greater Manchester Police.

Written evidence from witnesses:

- [National Police Chiefs' Council \(HRC0059\)](#)
- [National Police Chiefs' Council \(HRC0085\)](#)

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Sarah Green and Melanie Jeffs.

Q287 **Chair:** Welcome to this session of the Home Affairs Committee in our inquiry into hate crime. May I ask you both to introduce yourselves?

Sarah Green: I am Sarah Green. I am from the End Violence Against Women Coalition.

Melanie Jeffs: I am Melanie Jeffs. I am the manager of Nottingham Women's Centre.

Q288 **Chair:** Thank you very much. Ms Jeffs, you worked with Nottinghamshire Police to get them to monitor misogyny as a hate crime. Can you tell us why you did it and what you were aiming to achieve?

Melanie Jeffs: It was a piece of work that started in 2014, and it came out of a wider piece of work on hate crime—an inquiry into how hate crime was being handled in Nottingham city. As part of that, there was a research exercise in which we spoke to local people. We heard very strongly from local women that they felt that things were happening to them on a regular basis—on an everyday basis, in some instances—that were very similar to hate crime. They perceived those things as hate incidents towards them because of their identity—their gender—but they were frustrated that they were not recognised in law as hate crimes. That came through very strongly in that piece of research, which was conducted with Nottingham Citizens. There was a recommendation in the final report that Nottinghamshire Police should work with us at Nottingham Women's Centre to investigate that more thoroughly and see if we could put in place a policy that would pick up misogyny—the hatred of women—as a hate crime locally.

Q289 **Chair:** So what has happened in practice? What has your experience of it been?

Melanie Jeffs: We initially worked with the police to develop the policy wording, to pick up misogyny as actions committed by men towards women that were unwanted and uninvited. We developed the policy and then we worked with the police to implement some training. We felt it was really important that before everything went live, we had an opportunity to train the staff—the call handlers and also the police officers. We did about 45 sessions of training with the police, to cover most of their operational staff, and then we worked with the public to raise awareness of the new policy as it went live and to encourage women to report. We did about 45 sessions of training with the police, to cover most of their operational staff, and then we worked with the public to raise awareness of the new policy as it went live and encourage women to report.

Q290 **Chair:** What kinds of incidents have ended up being picked up in practice?



Melanie Jeffs: It has been a real range. Women have rung through where they have received verbal harassment. One woman was shopping and a man was very aggressive towards her, using misogynistic language that made her feel very threatened, so she phoned that through. There have also been incidents of assault. A woman was stopped in the street and asked to give her phone number. When she refused, she was punched in the face. There were some more serious things as well—to be fair, that was very serious—involving weapons. The kinds of things that are coming through are very similar to what we heard women tell us in the research: on an everyday basis, things are happening to them that are making them feel very threatened. This is not an issue that is in any way unique to Nottinghamshire; this is a national issue.

Q291 **Chair:** What difference does it actually make to have incidents identified as misogyny or a hate crime as opposed to being investigated the way the police would have done before you did the work with them?

Melanie Jeffs: The difference that it has made locally is in terms of recognition that these incidents are not acceptable. Women told us that they felt before that these were things that you just put up with as a woman—they were just part of being a woman and that you grew up understanding that you just had to deal with it. The police taking this stance means that in Nottinghamshire women can have the confidence not only to recognise that it is not okay but to report it through to the police and feel that it will be taken seriously.

We saw with some of the initial media interest that there was a lot of trivialisation of women's experiences. Some of the initial headlines were very much focused on things like wolf-whistling and why we would look to ban wolf-whistling in Nottingham. Of course, what women were telling us was that it was not about wolf-whistling; these were things that were affecting their everyday lives. It is about having the confidence to report that, knowing that it will be taken seriously.

The impact on women has been huge, but there has also been a positive impact on the police, because it means that they now get better intelligence. If women are ringing through things that they would not otherwise have reported, the police have a better understanding of what is happening and where, so they can then try to disrupt activities and catch potential perpetrators before more serious incidents happen. For example, there was an issue around a school before the policy came into place. There was a man who was harassing women who were taking their kids to school, but none of them reported it, because they felt, "This is just a typical thing that we deal with. It is typical behaviour." What actually happened in the end was that he assaulted one of them. I feel that with this policy, one of the women might have spoken up sooner and said, "Okay. I recognise this. This isn't okay. This is a hate crime. I will ring this through and the police will deal with it and do a risk assessment."

Q292 **Chair:** So you think that a key part of this is increasing reporting.



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Melanie Jeffs: I think part of it is increasing reporting. I think we have to be careful, because what women have told us is that they still will not report some of the time, because they feel that it is not something that they will always need to use. Some of these things they can just handle, but to know that it is there gives them confidence.

More than the reporting, it is about sending a message about what is and is not acceptable in our society today. I think we have done that very well in the UK on issues such as racism and homophobia, but there is still an issue with sexism and it seen as different and trivial. If we transpose some of the headlines around wolf-whistling that we saw last summer to racist incidents, people would be quite shocked. We recognise that any form of hate is not acceptable, because it creates a culture that allows hate to grow. It is the thin end of the wedge, if you like.

Q293 **Chair:** Do you think this has been particularly effective with particular kinds of crime, or is it across the board? For example, street harassment or online abuse—are there any particular areas or wider aspects of violence against women where this has been particularly significant, or do you just see this as a more general approach?

Melanie Jeffs: It is still very early days of having this policy in place. Initially we have concentrated on street harassment particularly, because it is very hidden, but the issue is completely applicable to online harassment as well. We know that the experiences that women have in online spaces are very similar. Social media is the public space of now. It is where people socialise and where people meet people. Women's access to that public space is being restricted in the same way that their access to the shops or parks is restricted offline. Although our focus has been very much on street harassment, I think it is applicable to both.

Nottingham city has a very big student population, so we are a very young city. We know that the street harassment that happens to students is quite acute. We hear some pretty horrific stories about what happens to young women in bars and clubs. So I think we really want to focus on that and look at sexual assault as an area where we can push up reporting, because a lot of that is going unreported at the moment.

Q294 **Chair:** Ms Green, can I ask you what areas of crime or harassment or abuse you see this as particularly relevant to?

Sarah Green: In my field of those who study and campaign against violence against women and girls, we see what we call a continuum—a relationship between street harassment, sexual harassment in public places and other forms of abuse, and sexual violence in particular. Some of the limited amount of research that has been done on the perpetrators of that behaviour seems to bear that out.

Shall I give you some statistics first about what we know about prevalence nationally? What is happening in Nottingham is unique and really interesting, in terms of an intervention, but in terms of what we know about what goes on, from a national survey that we did on sexual harassment in public places last year, we found that of UK adults, 85% of



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younger women aged 18 to 24 had experienced unwanted sexual attention in public places. That is everything from shouts, insults and sexual suggestions to being followed, having names shouted at you, being stared at and exposure; 45% of women in that younger age group had experienced unwanted sexual touching—actual contact. Some of that would amount to sexual assault if it were recorded appropriately.

Across the population, two thirds of all women report having experienced sexual harassment in public places and a third of having experienced unwanted sexual touching, which is something that might amount to sexual assault.

There are a couple of interesting statistics. When we were doing our survey we asked those who had experienced sexual harassment whether somebody had intervened? Only 11% said someone had intervened, but 81% said they would have liked it if someone had. It would have made a difference to them.

We also asked what age they were the first time it happened to them, and I would say that academic research in this area bears this out. More than a quarter of those who had been sexually harassed said they were under 16 the first time it happened, and more than three quarters were under the age of 21. As I said, academic research bears out that women commonly have experienced this behaviour in childhood, on school journeys for example, and at a young age they are told that it is something that happens when you are an adult women in this society and something you have to learn to put up with. They are also swiftly told that it is trivial or is not that important and is something you should deal with, or sometimes that it is flattering and that that behaviour is appreciative of you, or something else. Those experiences at a young age are part of what encourages some women to put it aside and then, eventually, to ask themselves, "Do I report this or not? Is it a reportable offence or not? I am not sure how this crosses the line."

I want to emphasise as well that women experience this behaviour in different ways. It is a really interesting area because it is actually a very small minority of men who commit this behaviour, but they usually commit it repeatedly. The men who do not do it don't know a lot about it, because we don't have a lot of conversations about it.

What men commonly do not know for example is that when, as Melanie described, somebody makes a crude sexual suggestion in the street, and the woman knocks the guy back and says, "I'm not interested", or "Get lost", it is common for her then to receive some more abuse that can be nasty, pejorative or very offensive. We made a short film with young black women who live in London last year asking them about their particular experiences. They described having sexual suggestions made towards them when they were out and about at night and then, when they told the guys they weren't interested, receiving racist insults. I do not need to repeat that stuff, but it was stuff that all of us would deplore hearing.



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Similarly, we know that there are extremely high levels of sexual harassment and sexist harassment of Muslim women. So, when you talk about Islamophobic abuse, the majority of that abuse happens to women and some of the remarks and some of the behaviour is very sexualised. It is bound up with those women's identities and so on. That is really important to think about.

Similarly, as I have said, some of this behaviour is actually just hateful, pejorative and nasty from the start. Quite a bit of attention has been paid to women of a larger size being fat-shamed in public, and commonly finding that they are spoken to in a certain way by strangers. That is on a continuum of sexual harassment, because the men who are doing it feel entitled to comment on those women's bodies. That is something we need to think about when we think that this is not just wolf-whistling or appreciative, flattering behaviour when a guy tries to get a date—that kind of thing.

In answer to your question, which you asked some time ago, there is a gamut of behaviour and we need to think about how it feels, who is doing it and why they do it, as we think about interventions and what interventions can work.

Q295 Chair: If you were asked the top three things that you would want done to try to change this in some way, what would they be?

Sarah Green: First of all, we are really interested in what the police in Nottingham have done with the local women's organisation and other local voluntary organisations. The debate last year focused on wolf-whistling and criminalising free speech or something at worst—I think that is the Breitbart take on it—but when you record it you can quite quickly get a map of where it happens more, who might be doing it, what the offenders seem to be like and at what times of day it happens. Once you have got a map and you can see a bit more about the behaviour, you can go about making multiple interventions.

So, you do not have to criminalise this behaviour. A lot of what I have described isn't criminal behaviour, but it does affect the way women feel about themselves in the public space. If you've got a map of it, you can come up with better interventions. So that kind of recording is great and something that other police forces are already looking at.

Secondly, somebody like me—from a women's organisation—is going to say that if we are serious about this behaviour, getting to zero tolerance of it and having a better standard overall for the way that men and women, as girls and boys, treat each other when we respect each other, and so on, action in schools is really important. That is something the House has looked at for some time. There is a new amendment at the moment on relationships education. I think much more radical action in schools on sex and relationships education is really important, because without it we are not getting the kind of conversations that young people need to have about how we treat each other when we respect each other. So that is absolutely vital.



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After that, we have to think about having really visible public leadership on this issue. Again, somebody like me would say that, but it is incumbent on people in public life to do exactly the counter to minimising this and saying it does not matter. So, those who hold office locally, nationally, in leadership positions in the police and all our public services need to be involved and active in doing something about this.

I can talk at more length about this if you like. We know from academic research on sexual harassment at work, from a bit of work on harassment in universities, which can be at a very high rate in some of our universities, and from what we know about schools—I have got some figures for sexual harassment in schools, as well—is that the environment is extremely important. The small minority of men who do this are making decisions about whether they will get away with it and whether it will be tolerated according to the environment.

So it is very important that those in leadership positions create an environment and give the message, "This is not tolerated, so don't try it. You might not necessarily get a criminal sanction, but you will be disapproved of, because this is not culturally acceptable here."

Q296 Chair: The police have the ability to record hate crime as misogynist, but it is obviously not currently a strand within the law. Do you think the law needs to be changed?

Sarah Green: I do not have a yes or no answer; it is complicated, because of the way it relates to crimes like domestic and sexual violence. It is difficult to look at domestic violence or sexual violence, which this is related to, because it is about the fact that some men feel entitled to talk to women in this way. Those things are not straightforwardly hate crimes, as they often happen in the context of knowing somebody already and in a relationship where somebody is domineering and having power over somebody else. A colleague of mine uses a good phrase for that—she says that these are not so much crimes of hate as crimes of dominion and power. That needs investigating if we want to understand where you can and where you can't codify this as straightforward hate crime.

Having said that, when it is street harassment by strangers, it can be compared with racist abuse, homophobic abuse and abuse against disabled people. Again, that brings me to where part of the answer is: leaders and also bystanders. Our question, "Would you have liked it if somebody else had done something?" is very significant. There is something about the rest of us standing up for people who are getting a hard time.

Chair: Thank you very much.

Q297 Mr Winnick: As far as the police are concerned, you indicated, Ms Jeffs, that at first there was a reluctance to take the issues sufficiently seriously. Is that right?

Melanie Jeffs: I'm not sure that there was a reluctance. I think there was a lack of understanding messages that were not getting through to



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women. Some of the things that women are reporting now are crimes, and they could have always reported them. I don't think the police were aware that women did not know they could report things. That probably sounds ridiculous, but I had many conversations with women, including some of the journalists who reported on this work, where after a whole conversation with me about misogyny hate crime they would turn to me off-camera and say, "What number do I ring if I want to report this?" There was not even an understanding that they could just ring 101 or 999. It really felt that women perceived this as a second-class issue that needed to go through some kind of different filter. I think the police did not realise that. I think the police felt they had a good awareness of what was happening locally and just didn't see there was a block there.

Q298 Mr Winnick: After this session we are going to hear evidence from Nottinghamshire Police and others. Ms Green, you set out the three priorities. The first was on the police, and you mentioned Nottingham. Are you both satisfied—particularly you, Ms Jeffs, as you have a Nottingham connection—that the police are doing precisely what police forces should be doing up and down the country?

Melanie Jeffs: Yes. I am really proud of Nottinghamshire Police. All police forces have the ability to do this. All police forces can set up their own local qualifier for hate crime, depending on local need, but others have not, and I am really proud that Nottinghamshire Police listened to what women in the community were saying and used that power to send a really clear message. The police can only deal with what comes forward to them, so what we need to do is create a shift in culture that encourages women to recognise that this behaviour is not acceptable and to report it and for men in the community to recognise that these behaviours will not be tolerated. But the police can only deal with what is presented to them.

Q299 Mr Winnick: How far do you consider it possible to eliminate, for example, the whistling that goes on if males consider a woman is attractive and should be the subject of such whistling, to which women in the main—with very few exceptions, I imagine—take exception to? I agree with you that that is a form of harassment, but do you think it is really possible to eliminate that altogether?

Melanie Jeffs: I have hope that we can change attitudes. It takes a lot of time. Because this policy sits within the realm of hate crime, it is very much victim-led. There are women who will not want to report a wolf-whistle and will not see that as significant, but then if a woman wants to report it and wants the police to take action, they have the ability to do that, in which case the perpetrator may well find there is a knock on the door and a policeman having a word with them.

Like I said, it is not just a policing issue; it is a societal issue about the way that women are objectified. As Ms Green said, we need to look at schools and at the media. I don't think that the police on their own can deal with this issue, but the more that is visible to them, the more we can start to make some movement on that.



Q300 Mr Winnick: We are now going into the wider issue of what has been happening very recently in the United States. Do you think there is a danger that people who are prone to such harassment of women could say, "Well, the new—incoming at the time—President of the United States made those remarks"—which were sexist in the extreme and which he did not deny and tried to justify—"If he can do that and be leader of the United States of America, why should we be held to be doing something that is wrong?"? Do you think that it is a possibility that those sorts of remarks, which became so publicised, could be an encouragement of the type of harassment that we deplore?

Melanie Jeffs: It is quite stunning, isn't it, when a President can make remarks like that and still be elected? That says a lot about how things are tolerated. I do not know whether it encourages it, because sometimes it feels as if so many aspects of our society encourage that behaviour or, at the very least, do not take any action against it. I do not know whether it adds to it or just reflects some of the issues that we are grappling with.

Sarah Green: We should remember that roughly as many women as men voted for Trump, which tells you something about how women will belittle, minimise and tolerate this behaviour as well.

Q301 Mr Winnick: Just one last question. I am very much opposed to censorship. For example, the campaign against page 3 females I fully endorsed. Tribute should be paid, for example, to Clare Short, a former colleague of mine, who was mocked when she raised the issue on the Floor of the House of Commons—it was obvious that she was being mocked. Do you make a clear distinction, perhaps not, between those sort of photographs and the rest, which obviously so many women consider offensive—although the newspaper in question claims otherwise—and literature that is explicit in many respects, not in my view pornographic? To go back many years, there was the controversy over Lawrence's novel. My question is, I take it that you are not in favour of that sort of censorship which existed at the time.

Sarah Green: Maybe your question is getting at this issue around who is allowed to say what to whom, and if you tell people they cannot say something you are controlling speech, banning free speech or something. We have to look at the question and at what the question means, because the impact on women being called at and shouted at, in our experience and from our surveys, is that women make different decisions, for example, about how they will travel home after a night out.

In our survey, we asked, "What do you do if travelling late at night?" More than half of women are doing conscious safety planning, which is to say, "I take taxis", "I plan not to travel home by myself", or "I go home earlier than I might do otherwise", and, "I take different routes at night." You can talk about a man's entitlement to say stuff to women in a public place, but the consequences are that women are made to feel unsafe by behaviour that is slightly sexually aggressive.



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Similarly online, if you talk about—as lots of people do, from Reddit and beyond—people’s entitlement to say whatever they like online, the effect on some women is that they are chilled out of that space, because the space becomes vicious and women cannot participate fully.

Lawmakers and leaders should be interested in who even gets to speak if other people are creating an environment that is really intolerant. That does not mean censorship, Soviet behaviour or something; that means we need to be smarter about who gets to participate, what matters and what is at stake.

Q302 Mr Jayawardena: Ms Jeffs, should people not get a second chance?

Melanie Jeffs: Yes, of course.

Q303 Mr Jayawardena: So when the President of the United States has apologised for what he said, and has said that those remarks were wrong, which clearly they were, should we not move on from those things?

Melanie Jeffs: The discussion we are having today is really about hate crime in this country and—

Q304 Mr Jayawardena: You said words to the effect that it is shocking that he got elected—but he has apologised. Should we not move on? Should we not be talking about educating people?

Melanie Jeffs: Yes, but I stand by what I say in terms of finding it to some extent shocking and, I guess, not shocking that this would happen. What I am not clear about is whether there is ever really an apology for that kind of behaviour, or whether there is an acknowledgement that it is wrong.

Q305 Mr Jayawardena: So people should not get a second chance then.

Melanie Jeffs: We live in a world, we live in a society where I hope people get second chances and where people can acknowledge the harms that their actions have on other people. There is evidence to say that exposure to misogynistic jokes or what some of us might call “banter” can have an impact on someone’s likelihood of committing a rape or a sexual assault. The concern is that—

Q306 Mr Jayawardena: Can I pick up on that point—

Chair: Let her finish her point.

Mr Jayawardena: I am just conscious that other Members want to speak. I want to pick up on the point about the word you used, “banter”. What is banter to one person might be deeply offensive to another. I understand that point, but is this really the most important issue facing our communities? For example, in this Committee we have discussed the issue of child sexual exploitation. If the police have to take difficult decisions on what they should be doing, what is more important: children or wolf-whistling?



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Melanie Jeffs: I don't think the two are mutually exclusive. I think the police are very capable of tackling more than one issue at once.

Q307 **Mr Jayawardena:** My question was: if they have to make those difficult decisions, what should they choose?

Melanie Jeffs: But I don't believe that they do.

Q308 **Mr Jayawardena:** But that's my question.

Melanie Jeffs: If the police had to make that decision, it would have to be up to them to look at their resources. One of the concerns that was raised when we started this piece of work was that the police would be inundated with women ringing up and reporting wolf-whistling, but we have been testing this since April last year and that has not happened. Women are not going to use this kind of policy with some kind of malicious intent or to clog up the 999 line. They ring through when they have a real concern and they feel that reporting it might help to stop the perpetrator to do something else—when they want some kind of action. We have had no experience of women ringing up and reporting wolf-whistling.

In terms of police resourcing, it is focusing the police on things that need to be dealt with. Women make up over half of the population, and this has an economic impact. As Ms Green said, we hear about women who have talked about how they change their behaviour. One thing that really stayed with me was when a woman said, "My local corner shop shuts at 9 pm, but for me it shuts at six, because that is the last time I will go out after dark." There is an economic impact—it affects how women shop and whether they go to work—and an impact on health, because women say, "If I go jogging or cycling, I will get shouted at and I will get sexist behaviour." It has such a broad impact on half of the population that I feel that it is something important to focus on. But of course the two are not mutually exclusive.

Q309 **Mr Jayawardena:** As the father of two very young daughters, I hope that they can live very good, safe, healthy lives in the future, but I come back to my point: is it a good use of time for a policeman to be knocking on the door of someone who is a perpetrator? Or is it better for that policeman to be out there keeping my daughters safe when they are out late at night or jogging—actually being on the beat as a visible deterrent to that behaviour in the first place?

Sarah Green: Do you want to maintain that something like child sexual exploitation is completely separate from street harassment of women? I wouldn't. I think that in any local area—

Mr Jayawardena: I didn't say anything like that.

Sarah Green: I think you are trying to make Melanie say that she should choose one or the other, and if a community—

Q310 **Mr Jayawardena:** Please don't put words in my mouth. I said, "If there is a choice between taking actions to investigate allegations of child sexual exploitation or knocking on the door of people who have been accused of



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wolf-whistling, what should the priority be?" That is what I said.

Sarah Green: That's a choice on one day. But I think that if the community sends a message that abuse of women is not tolerated and that there needs to be respect between men and women in the local area, teenage girls who are in their early relationships or are vulnerable in some way will stand a better chance of understanding that message: "People who like me are not allowed to talk to me this way or treat me this way." They are not separate concepts. The PCC, the local authority leader, other public leaders and people in public life should all engage with both of them—it is not about ranking one above the other.

Q311 **Mr Jayawardena:** But if on one day they have to make those choices, I think it should be clear which one is more important.

Sarah Green: It's an idle question.

Q312 **Chair:** I think we've covered that point.

The briefing that we were given suggested that by September 2016, Nottinghamshire Police had investigated 11 misogynistic hate crimes and offences, including harassment, kidnapping, possession of weapons and causing public fear, alarm or distress. Does that fit with the information you have? It suggests that quite serious crimes have been investigated and categorised as misogyny.

Melanie Jeffs: Yes, that's correct.

Q313 **James Berry:** I just have one question, Ms Jeffs. You gave an example about a lady being punched in the face. That is plainly misogynist. Misogyny aside, it is a serious criminal offence, but it is very useful to know that it had a misogynistic element and it is clear what the police have to do in that case. But in the case of wolf-whistling, for instance, if two or three ladies called the police and said, "There's this building site with builders making comments and wolf-whistling", what in practice would you expect your local police force to do in response?

Melanie Jeffs: I don't work for Nottinghamshire Police, so their decisions about the action they take is up to them.

Q314 **James Berry:** But what do they do?

Melanie Jeffs: I would hope that if they had calls about that, they would go to the building site and try to speak to someone to make them aware of the distress that the behaviour of the builders is causing to women passing by. Sometimes it is about raising awareness. There was another example where a typical white van man, if you like, had shouted at a woman as he was going past in his van. The police were able to track down the owner because of the registration number and they went to try to speak to him. The person who opened the door was not actually the owner of the van but he said, "It is actually my colleague. He is always doing this. I hate that he does it. He just doesn't realise how offensive it is." He then pointed the police in the direction of his colleague and the police went and had a word. Sometimes it is just about saying, "Do you realise the impact that this has? A woman has reported this because it has



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caused alarm and distress to her.” There is not always criminal action to be taken, and it is not appropriate for there always to be criminal action, but the police being visible and actually speaking to perpetrators might just nip things in the bud before they escalate.

Q315 **James Berry:** So it is informal words of advice rather than criminal action.

Melanie Jeffs: Yes.

Q316 **Chair:** Just to pick up on the point you have made, you are not suggesting that there is any typical behaviour for particular drivers of particular vehicles of particular colours.

Melanie Jeffs: No.

Chair: Just to make that clear.

Q317 **Mr Umunna:** Very wisely put. First, thanks very much for giving evidence to us. Some of the figures are absolutely shocking. For the record, and for what it’s worth, I do not think we should be giving the President of the United States a second, third or fourth chance. What he has said about women on multiple occasions is a complete and utter disgrace and unbecoming of somebody holding his office. Unfortunately we do not get to vote in that election—we have enough to vote on here.

May I just ask you one question? I think that a lot of people find it hard to get their heads around how wolf-whistling, for example, can be so offensive. Then we can make the analogy, which I was thinking of as you gave evidence just now, with how people of colour have been treated in the past. For example, when my father arrived here in the mid-’60s it would not have been uncommon when walking down the street—you would not walk down the street at night as a black man in the 1960s in parts of London—to have monkey noises made to you. When you put it in that context people go, “Okay, I understand why this is so offensive and unacceptable.”

Why is it that, after all these decades, that kind of casual street harassment, as people see it, is still not considered unacceptable in the way that if I was walking down the street and somebody made monkey noises to me, it would be seen as grossly offensive? I do not think that there would be a question about there perhaps needing to be police involvement if that was happening to someone on multiple occasions. Why is this kind of street harassment still not seen as unacceptable in the way that other forms of harassment are?

Sarah Green: First of all, I recommend you have a look at our short film. It is a five-minute film with young black British women talking about abuse. One of them does report having a guy making monkey noises at her after he has tried it on with her and she has said, “I am not interested”.

Q318 **Mr Umunna:** Afterwards?



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Sarah Green: Yes. It was recently—she is a young woman living in London at the moment. Similarly those black women talk about being spoken to in particular racist sexual stereotypes and being expected, because they are black, to accept being touched in a particular way that you might not touch a white woman in a club, for example. That is really interesting because those women are being treated in a racialized and sexualised way at the same time. They are trying to talk about that now and to have that heard because, again, street harassment is constantly picked up as wolf-whistling and as fairly minimal—so that is quite real.

As to the larger question about why this persists, it is partly because of the conversations that we don't have about it. I would hold to it being a small number of men who do it because of how they feel about women and because they feel entitled to behave this way in public spaces. The small amount of academic research that has been done on perpetrators says that the behaviour is much more likely where the context permits it. I gave the examples of where we have got a problem in some universities.

The TUC did a really interesting piece of work last year on sexual harassment at work and found—you wouldn't believe it—that it is much more likely and much more common where there is insecurity in the workplace. Where there is zero-hours and in management lines, it is going to be more common. It also found that the men who do it are more likely to do it in a group, perhaps because the anonymity and bonding of a group creates some kind of incentive. When the men who do it are asked about their attitudes to women—attitudes do not map exactly to behaviour—they are more likely to hold sexist attitudes about gender norms and more likely to hold to the myth around sexual violence that some kinds of women ask for it.

That smaller group of men who are doing it are not held to account by other men or the community as a whole. Again, President Trump did not just make remarks; he owned some behaviour. He said, "I've committed this behaviour. I've got hold of women again and again, and no one touches me for it."

Mr Umunna: Normalised.

Sarah Green: Presumably other men do not say, "Don't do that. Why are you doing that? That's not acceptable." More anecdotally, a lot of women who have worked and done research in this area find—we talk about it again and again—that when you tell other men in your life about it, they are often not familiar with the dynamics of it. You might begin with how it happens, and it might be quite funny, and then you say, "And then the guy chased me, and I was quite frightened." Those regular guys will be horrified, but they do not even know that is how it is happening. It is under-researched, unlike other areas of abuse of women and girls, but the conversations also are not happening, in a way that they haven't about race and—

Q319 **Mr Umunna:** We have been provided with some figures about the level of it that show that 63% of women have been groped in the last year.



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Sarah Green: No, 64% of all adult women in Britain have experienced unwanted sexual attention in their lifetime, and 35% have experienced—

Mr Umunna: In the last—

Sarah Green: No, in their lifetime. I do have “last year” figures from 2012. In those 12 months, 40% in the younger age group and 20% of all women experienced sexual harassment—unwanted sexual attention—and 4% experienced what would amount to sexual assault, so sexual touching. That is one in 20 in a year, which gives you an idea of how prevalent it is—and of how minimalised it is, because you are not really supposed to talk about it or report it.

Q320 **Mr Umunna:** There was a question about whether the police should be empowered to take further action and we should tighten up the law, but what is your experience? Obviously, Ms Jeffs, you bring a Nottingham experience to this. How proactive are the police in actually taking action in relation to this street harassment? Connected to that, given police funding and the resource issues that they have in terms of dealing with all the other things, do you think they have sufficient resources to materially make a difference at the moment? I did not agree with everything that Mr Jayawardena said, but clearly, when we are talking about street harassment, the presence of police on the street and their visibility is going to have an impact. In Lambeth, the borough that I represent, our neighbourhood policing is just not what it was in terms of numbers and visibility, because you have fewer officers having to look after a bigger space.

Melanie Jeffs: I think there will always be challenges for the police because of their limited resources. As I said, they can only deal with what is presented to them. I do not think it is just an issue for the police. Bars and clubs, universities, schools, bystanders and the voluntary sector have roles to play. We can all play our part in trying to tackle this behaviour and empower women to report and recognise it.

For me, one of the issues that we have is that this is not something that is generally written into violence against women and girls strategies. On the question about why this has not moved forward and we have not done more, women and girls have had a lot that we have had to work on, and some fantastic work has been done around domestic abuse and sexual violence, but there are so many things to do. We all recognise that this is part of the continuum, but it is still being overlooked in strategies that are produced. The resources are not being focused on this, but it is creating the fertile soil that allows other things to develop.

Q321 **Stuart C. McDonald:** Just a couple of questions from me. You have spoken about some of the extraordinary numbers that are involved here but only just a little about the impact that that can have in terms of changing travel routes and not going out at certain times. Can you say a little bit more about the impact that this has on individuals who are affected by this behaviour?



Sarah Green: In our survey, we asked men and women for a comparison about how safe they feel, and we found a significant difference of around 20%: 45% of women talk about not feeling safe sometimes in public spaces, compared with 45% of men. Actually, young men are kind of the most vulnerable in public spaces—they are the group that is most often actually subject to violent attacks and so on.

So there is a significant difference in feelings of safety; then, as I said, there is all of that active safety planning work going on. Our survey found that around half of women are avoiding public transport in the evening, arranging to take taxis, ensuring that they won't be travelling home by themselves, and taking a different route. When we ask them about what action they think should be taken, inasmuch as you can itemise that in a survey, there was a popular choice around a greater police presence, better and more street lighting in different places, more transport staff, and awareness campaigns. There have been some of those, including in Lambeth, which ran a good campaign three or so years ago which had a tagline of "Real men know the difference between flirting and harassment" and so on.

Q322 **Stuart C. McDonald:** Are there recorded effects in terms of self-esteem or levels of depression for example?

Sarah Green: There is some other academic research that is more qualitative—so not numbers—that went into depth with women about how the behaviour makes them feel. It inquired about how some women would make different decisions about the way they dress and the way they portray themselves. One of the women in our film said, "I am really careful when I'm out. I don't look anybody in the eye. I don't look strangers in the eye because I don't want to invite a conversation." That is a very significant change in your behaviour as a young adult, to think, "I'd better not get into a conversation because it might lead somewhere it has led before, and I don't like it."

When we asked about the behaviour and whether women thought it was unimportant, none said that they thought it was trivial or that nothing should be done about it, which is contrary to what we know women are told as girls about how it is unimportant and you have to leave it.

Stuart C. McDonald: Ms Jeffs?

Melanie Jeffs: I would echo all of that. I think that the safety planning that women do is really quite extreme sometimes. I recall seeing some research that Hollaback! did—it has done a lot of work on this—asking women the kind of things that they do. They were the things about getting a taxi or holding keys in your hand in case you get attacked. The one that stuck out for me was a woman saying, "I try and walk down the middle of the road so it is easier for me to be seen and harder for someone to drag me into their car." That immediately makes you think that someone has tried to drag her into their car before and she sees that as a realistic possibility when she goes out. Living with that kind of constant fear impacts on how women behave, on their self-esteem and on their mental



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health, because it is a daily thing. Now that it is happening online as well, on social media, you have to question where women can go. Where can women go and feel free of that fear?

Q323 Stuart C. McDonald: Given those consequences, what support is available to victims of crimes such as street harassment or unwanted sexual touching? What sort of support should be available to people who experience that sort of behaviour?

Melanie Jeffs: It is difficult. We will offer support to women locally if they report it, in terms of giving them a space where they can talk about it. I think that is one of the most important things—to offer women a forum where they can see that it is not just them that it is happening to; other women have similar experiences and it is not okay. The work that Laura Bates did with Everyday Sexism has been a big part of encouraging this national conversation, because she gave women a platform to share those experiences and receive peer support.

Where it is sexual touching or sexual assault, we have very good rape crisis centres around the country, although they always struggle to maintain funding, but in a lot of cases it will not reach the level where they would access a rape crisis support service. Perhaps there is a little bit of a gap there.

Sarah Green: The support services are really up against it. That is a whole long discussion. If you have been sexually assaulted, you won't find good coverage all over the country if you needed it, and you can't always get it through the health service for example. That is a huge, serious crisis.

Part of the answer to this is not only about what the police do but about bystanders. As we found in survey, it is about the people who look on and don't challenge the behaviour. That is not to blame third parties. I have been a third party. You often make the decision, "I'm not going to get involved—that person might be really violent," which is totally understandable, but women who have been interviewed say that it is not just that nobody intervened and stopped it, but that they looked on. That means something. It means, "I am unsafe next time, because I won't be protected."

Notably, in our survey black women said they experienced that more. They had a greater sense that, "Nobody is going to stop this if it happens to me," and that really matters.

Q324 Mr Burrowes: Let me move on to preventive measures to reduce street harassment and abuse, especially in relation to schools, which you have touched on, and sex and relationships education and so forth. In respect of Ofsted, do you see any gaps? Its guidance from September 2015 on bullying includes racist, disability and homophobic bullying, the use of derogatory language and racist incidents, but it does not mention sexual harassment or sexist bullying. Do you think that gap has a meaningful impact?



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Sarah Green: Yes, it is a huge gap, which we pointed out in the Women and Equalities Committee's inquiry last term into sexual harassment and sexual violence in schools. It is a very obvious gap. In individual schools, there is a set of policies that you have to have, including your bullying policy and your equalities policy, which also rarely mentions this behaviour. The child protection and safeguarding policies in schools are also very lacking in this area. There is no guidance to workers in the school and to others on how you should respond to that behaviour.

We gave evidence to that inquiry after we had an expert human rights and equalities lawyer look at the current guidance. She said that the existing guidance is arguably already unlawful because it does not make it clear that schools have a duty to provide an environment where the girls are not discriminated against by being subjected to this behaviour without any measures being taken to try to stop it. To be clear, as your question alludes to, a survey that we did some time ago, when we started our work on schools, found that a third of 16 to 18-year-old girls reported having experienced unwanted sexual attention in school when they were there—the 16-to-18s were just leavers—and more than three quarters said that sexual name-calling was endemic in schools and that teachers commonly didn't challenge it. That inquiry has very thick evidence. We know that this issue is enormous in schools and it is not properly addressed by policy at all.

Q325 **Mr Burrowes:** Presumably you agree with that, Ms Jeffs.

Melanie Jeffs: Yes.

Q326 **Mr Burrowes:** Why do sexual harassment and sexual bullying seem to be taken less seriously than racist harassment and bullying?

Sarah Green: I am very careful about saying it is less so because, as I said in a previous answer—

Mr Burrowes: Let's say it appears to be.

Sarah Green: Black women won't report that—it is less so for them, because what they will experience is often racialised and sexualised all at once. But to acknowledge what you are saying, there have been responses on race and homophobia, for example. In the school where my children are, the inspectors will ask, "Are the children asked about homophobic bullying and is that checked up on?" in a way that there is not a comparable measure or indicator around this. I think part of it is because it is easy to say it is simply unchallenged. We are where we are now. Young people and children are living in an extremely sexualised atmosphere with unfortunately, whatever your attitude to adults and online porn for example, an extreme prevalence of it and access to it. Every survey will show you that more than half of young people have seen explicit imagery by a very young age, certainly by the time they enter secondary school. The availability of that imagery, the failure of adults to have good conversations with them about it and the attitudes that are within that material, which are usually about dominant men and submissive women and so on, give permission for some of this behaviour,



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when the real adults in the room are not challenging it. It is complicated, but we have to look at young people's cultural context at the moment.

Q327 Mr Burrowes: What gaps do you see in terms of education in schools on relationships?

Sarah Green: Compulsory sex and relationships education is critical because that would be actual curriculum time where you would go through the law, respect and attitudes. That conversation has been hung up on the biology of reproduction and sexual health for many years. Those lessons are where you would go through the relationships between men and women and so on, and disrespectful behaviour.

Women's organisations have also campaigned for some time for how we need to improve policy and practice in school, because there is no point in doing good sex and relationships education on Tuesday if you let sexual harassment in the classroom or corridor go on Wednesday. So we need better equalities, bullying and child-protection policies and training for teachers, where there is confidence to intervene. A bit like when younger women and adult women are made to feel sexual harassment is kind of trivial and not something big to complain about, teachers need to be empowered to be able to say to the young people they are with every day, "Sexual name-calling at girls in the class and so on is not trivial and you should stop it, because it is comparable with racist or homophobic bullying." Hearing that stuff again and again is what creates these attitudes of "Some kinds of women deserve it when it happens to them," or, "Only a certain kind of man commits this behaviour," and so on. It is a seeding of some very harmful attitudes that can create great harm in the future, if not at the time.

Q328 Mr Burrowes: Finally, in terms of other preventive measures beyond schools in relation to Government or other bodies, is there anything you have not mentioned yet that you want to mention?

Sarah Green: Beyond schools?

Mr Burrowes: Yes, beyond schools, are there any other preventive measures that other bodies need to take account of or should be doing more about?

Sarah Green: I think on a different occasion you are going to talk to the social media companies and so on, because once you are in that environment the companies have responsibility, certainly equal to policing, bystanders and so on. In public life it is particularly police, schools and public leaders—community leaders.

Melanie Jeffs: And universities.

Q329 Nusrat Ghani: Ms Jeffs, you mentioned how safe spaces are being reduced to a minimum. You also mentioned abuse online. I want to raise some questions about misogyny online. You have faced a torrent of abuse online, generated by publicity of the work that you did with Nottinghamshire Police. Can you tell us about the nature and scale of



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abuse that you received, please?

Melanie Jeffs: When the story broke in the media, it got a huge amount of attention. I was subject to a number of tweets on Twitter. They had got hold of my photo, and what happened was somebody put my photo next to a woman who was wearing very little: she was very busty—she looked like a model—and there was a strapline underneath that said “Can you guess which one is the manager of a women’s centre?” It escalated from there, with many people retweeting it and lots of very witty remarks about how I look—none of which came as a huge shock to me.

It was quite interesting, because I had never experienced this before and I did not feel equipped to deal with it really. I feel like I am quite a competent social media user, but having never had this happen I genuinely did not know what to do.

It reached a crescendo when someone tweeted out a comment about wanting to find me and tie me up and then a gif image of a woman having a dagger plunge through the back of her head until it came out of her mouth. For me, that crossed the line, so I think I reported it and blocked them, but I was kind of fumbling around—I did not really know what to do. I did not screenshot it because I did not even think—I just wanted to get rid of it—so then it immediately disappeared and the perpetrators of that said it never happened, so I felt a bit silly.

Q330 **Nusrat Ghani:** That was all done on Twitter?

Melanie Jeffs: That was all on Twitter.

Q331 **Nusrat Ghani:** Did you contact Twitter?

Melanie Jeffs: I do not think I did. I might have reported it—I cannot remember if I blocked it or reported it. It was a shock, and I was getting that many messages coming through that I just could not keep track of what was happening. When you look at your notifications—there were just too many to see, so I was just glancing through and that one stood out. In hindsight, I wish I had really thought about how I was going to deal with it, but I think I was just a bit shocked.

There were a few things on Facebook. Our organisational Facebook page had a lot of comments going on and some of the women commenting were getting attacked by men. We had a few direct messages, one of which was from a schoolboy telling me to get cancer, which I reported, because he was clearly a young man and I think he felt anonymous doing it, and I felt he needed to be told that he will be found if he does this and it is not acceptable.

Most of it I was able to brush off, but there was a point where I can remember thinking, “What if this crosses over into real life?” because my picture, name and place of work were out there. So there was a moment when I did feel a bit concerned, but then, looking at the kind of abuse that other people have had, I guess I minimised it because I did not get rape threats—because I was not attractive enough to be raped. I guess, to some extent, I minimised it and thought that I got off lightly, because I



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could see how other women were affected by this. I have often withdrawn from social media for a while because it can be a very toxic atmosphere—particularly for women.

Q332 Nusrat Ghani: It is interesting that you minimised it, but if it was someone coming in to seek your support, you probably would have behaved very differently. That is another way of controlling women; we do not share those experiences, especially when it is done anonymously online. You are sharing an experience that many MPs around this table have faced at one point. In the same situation as you, the first time that we received that abuse we just did not know how to deal with it. The issue is that, when you contacted Twitter beyond the click button, or if you contacted Facebook, what happened?

Melanie Jeffs: I did not contact Facebook, and I cannot honestly remember if I contacted Twitter or whether I just blocked it. My first thought was that I just did not want to see it. I think that what I did was block it, and then made a comment about blocking, and then they took it down. I then felt that I couldn't do anything because it no longer existed. I just thought that I had lost an opportunity there to do something about it. If it happened again I would contact Twitter and ask them to deal with it; I have seen other people do that.

Q333 Nusrat Ghani: Do you think Twitter and Facebook should make it easier for that content to be removed? When you have decided it has crossed a threshold, you have to hit a button, and they then make a decision whether it should come down. If you have already decided it has—you have mentioned a point where there was a knife involved—it should just come down immediately and they should then get back in touch with you to say maybe they will put it back on. Half of the problem is that you sit there and are fretting. You are not sure how real the threat might be, and you are just clicking buttons and hoping that the content will be removed before it escalates and continues to be retweeted.

Melanie Jeffs: What we have done at the women's centre is produce a guide on what to do if you are attacked on social media, so that hopefully other people can go to that and see what they need to do. I think that, when it happens for the first time, you don't really know what you're doing. I think Twitter is very different to Facebook because of its anonymity. If we lived in an ideal world, there would be no problem with people having anonymous profiles, but we do not, and people hide behind that anonymity to commit those kind of acts that they would not do if their name was out there. I feel much safer on Facebook because you have to register with a real name.

The other thing that was interesting for me was that the sort of abuse that I got online was so similar to the sort of abuse that I get in the street. When I am in the street I do not get wolf-whistled or cat-called. I do not get men asking for my number. I get comments that I look like a boy, that I am not attractive—"Why do you dress like that?" It was the same content online. It felt like it was just juxtaposed in a new space. That was interesting to me.



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Q334 **Nusrat Ghani:** So you have not contacted Twitter or Facebook beyond just clicking buttons?

Melanie Jeffs: No.

Q335 **Nusrat Ghani:** Would you contact Twitter or Facebook going forward?

Melanie Jeffs: I would now, yes—now that it has happened and I feel more equipped, I guess.

Q336 **Nusrat Ghani:** Rape threats are common now online. There was coverage recently that some MPs have faced rape threats as well. It is quite difficult to gauge how threatening those threats are, because occasionally they can be anonymous, and quite often you diminish the threats that you actually receive. Do you think that the police take these threats seriously, and has any progress been made in this area over the last few years?

Sarah Green: Indications are that the police are taking it seriously and that they have gone on something of a journey. We obviously have very decentralised policing, but many police forces are listening to the argument that behaviour online is equivalent to behaviour offline—a rape threat online is equivalent to a rape threat in the street. I understand that many police forces will therefore will take it seriously if it is reported and will record it properly.

The social media companies still have a lot of responsibility for how they respond to that, and I think they were slow to recognise and codify that. We are at the point now where, although they have put facilities in for blocking an individual account or for removing an individual instance or image, it is known that this behaviour is commonly committed by the same people who do it again and again, and who set up multiple identities, for example. The people who run Twitter know that, and they know that it is possible, to some extent, to locate the people who are doing that and to ensure that they block that person when they create a new account. I think Twitter recently promised that it would take further steps towards doing that. That is different from just dealing with the individual instance. It is trying to actually track those perpetrators and do something about them.

Nusrat Ghani: As far as I am aware, they track only quite overt threats, but sometimes perpetrators get very clever and make subversive threats. That is a grey line. Do you think that hate crime has to be recategorised or reassessed, especially in the online sphere?

Sarah Green: It is really difficult, and I don't have a yes or no answer. It needs a lot of people to participate in "How does it feel to you?" You are right. If you are, say, somebody in public life or a women's rights activist, and you have got somebody who is quite low level but absolutely persistent and won't leave you alone in your mentions, it is nasty but it doesn't breach the criminal code line. What are you supposed to do about that? My first thought is that, again, that's where we need other people to chip in. It is important that bystanders and the rest of the community are



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involved in saying, "That behaviour is not okay. Can you stop?" It is not only about what the police can do.

Q337 Nusrat Ghani: Do you think there should be a different threshold for, say, Members of Parliament or other women who are in a public space? When they are abused and threats are made, should there be a lower threshold for the police to investigate and prosecute?

Sarah Green: It would be difficult to make a two-tier distinction. There are lots of women—say, like Melanie. You would have to have many, many categories. I think for any individual—

Q338 Nusrat Ghani: It should be all the same.

Sarah Green: Yes. Different women experience it differently. We have to remember that some women who are harassed, for example, or receive rape threats have been sexually assaulted earlier in their lives. It might feel different, if that is you, to have those threats made at you again and again, compared with people who haven't. Then again, you may never have been assaulted, but the threats may ring something in you that chills your ability to be involved in public life in the way you want to be. You can't predict that each victim is going to respond in the same way, which is why we need a line for it to be taken seriously.

Q339 Nusrat Ghani: Germany and, I believe, Israel, are looking at fining social media companies for not taking down hate crime content. Do you think that should be the same for sexist and misogynist content? Should social media companies be fined for not taking it down once it's been reported?

Melanie Jeffs: I think so. It should be given an equal standing and dealt with in the same way as any other form of hate.

Sarah Green: Yes, I do. Facebook responded after some time on the rape pages, for example, but a fine might have deterred it in the first place.

Q340 Naz Shah: Would you like to comment on the issue of intersectionality—particularly around what has happened recently with Diane Abbott? There has been a call for an investigation and a change in the law. Would you like to comment on your experience of it? Is it at the forefront of your work? There is one issue about racism, in terms of colour, and one issue about Islamophobia. There are reports that suggest that women who appear with the hijab are even more discriminated against and experience even more misogyny. I would welcome some thoughts on that.

Sarah Green: Did you miss the beginning of the meeting?

Naz Shah: Yes.

Sarah Green: I talked a little about a national survey of adults that we did last year. We found that—

Chair: No need to repeat the same facts and figures.



Sarah Green: Our work—qualitative interviews with young black women, for example—has found that they experience racism and sexism all bound up in sexual harassment. For example, they get racist abuse after they knock somebody back who has tried it on with them. As I have already said, if you are looking at Islamophobic abuse, the large majority of those who experience it are women, and they experience sexism and racism all mixed up in one. That needs examining by the community and by those who are not intervening and not doing anything about it. It is not just about making the women the subject of inquiry.

It is absolutely there for those who are trying to look at prevalence and the dynamics of it—why it happens. We are most interested in who does it and what would stop them. You can't just generically look at women, as if it just happens to women. It doesn't; it is being targeted at particular groups. Young women are most sexually harassed, and that is partly for the reason that the men doing it feel more like they will get away with it.

Melanie Jeffs: We produced a video with Nottinghamshire Police called "Because I Am a Woman", in which women were speaking to camera about their experiences of street harassment. We really wanted that video to reflect the myriad of women's experiences across the different boundaries of race, class, age and religion. Aside from what we have already heard, there is also an issue around disability. There was a disabled woman who spoke to camera about how the kind of harassment she experienced was very different because of her disability. Men would target her around things such as disabled toilets or where she couldn't get away because she physically couldn't move. It is absolutely vital that we understand the different types of harassment that women experience, depending on all those intersectional characteristics.

Q341 **Chair:** I have two final, very quick, questions. The first is overall about the police response to dealing with this online abuse. This is mainly a question to Ms Green—Ms Jeffs, you obviously have good experience of working with Nottinghamshire Police. Overall, what is your assessment of the current policing response to online criminal abuse?

Sarah Green: I think the recording is improving, so we can tell something about what is happening. I do not know enough at this point about the prosecution outcomes and whether they are comparable to offline. The rule needs to be: it needs to be the same online as offline and regarded the same.

Q342 **Chair:** Thinking about the social media companies, which we will be taking evidence from in a couple of weeks, in terms of their response to both criminal and non-criminal abuse, on a scale of 1 to 10 for assessing their response to individual complaints and incidents, with 10 being brilliant and 1 completely rubbish, where would you put them?

Sarah Green: I am still down at 3 or 4. I think that the intention is there and that some of the people who work there want to do well, but they really wait for incentives and pressure from Government and so on and are not going to do a lot voluntarily unless they are made to.



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Chair: Thank you very much for your evidence. We really appreciate it. I invite our second panel to come and join us.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Superintendent Ted Antill, Paul Giannasi, Assistant Chief Constable Mark Hamilton and Claire Light.

Q343 **Chair:** Thank you very much for coming to give evidence. Can I ask you all briefly to introduce yourselves?

Assistant Chief Constable Hamilton: My name is Mark Hamilton. I am the National Police Chiefs' Council lead for hate crime.

Claire Light: I am Claire Light. I am head of Neighbourhoods, Confidence and Equality for Greater Manchester Police and hate crime is in my portfolio.

Paul Giannasi: I am Paul Giannasi. I act as an adviser to the National Police Chiefs' Council on hate crime and I was a police officer for 30 years.

Superintendent Antill: My name is Ted Antill. I am the force lead for hate crime in Nottinghamshire.

Q344 **Chair:** We want to come on to some of the Nottinghamshire issues that were reflected in the first evidence session in a moment. Can I start where we left off with the previous panel, by asking you specifically about online hate crime, focusing on the criminal aspects, not on wider non-criminal abuse? Do you think that the police do a good enough job of dealing with online hate crime at the moment?

Assistant Chief Constable Hamilton: The truthful answer is that we are still in the foothills of online crime and online hate crime. Obviously, online crime, known as cyber, is a burgeoning area of criminality across the globe. All police forces around the world are struggling just to catch up speed with the level of criminality that now occurs online. I think that we all probably know that you are more likely to be a victim of attempted or actual crime online than in your home. When was the last time someone tried to burgle your house? You may or may not have any experience of that, but most people will have had some sort of experience online of a phishing scam or something that tried to take money off them. It is such a huge and burgeoning area of crime.

Where hate crime is concerned, what we are seeing, particularly over the last 24 to 36 months, is a real expansion of online abuse—particularly towards females, celebrities and politicians—of a highly offensive nature. There is a lot of criticism of how the police have responded, particularly in terms of incitement to hatred and so forth, and we have done a lot of work with the CPS, but in these areas it is difficult to prosecute, difficult to establish where the crime has occurred and difficult to bring people to justice. We are, to be truthful, still trying to develop our full response. If it is an international incident and there are posts being made from other



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countries, it is almost impossible to carry out a criminal justice investigation, except in the most extreme circumstances. Certainly in the lower levels of hate crime it is almost impossible to bring a perpetrator to justice.

The most interesting thing, however, is the response from the previous speaker, Melanie, about the impact upon the victim. Where we can start to make far greater development is in understanding the impact of this on people, giving them the tools personally and as communities to address it—right down to being able to address it with Facebook, Twitter or another online service—as well as getting the right support from the police service and from victims' groups and giving them the strength to cope with what is going on.

In my experience as a police officer, any crime, abusive activity or conflict situation is very, very stressful and impactful for victims. Where the police are hopefully getting better is in understanding their needs and not just trying to pursue the criminal to the nth degree, because that won't always get us the outcome that everyone wants, but also trying to produce some sort of outcome for victims that helps them to deal with the situation and restore some part of their dignity to them. That then helps us have a broader structural response. I would, however, turn to my colleague Paul, who has been specifically working on this area for us in the hate crime portfolio.

Paul Giannasi: First, let me talk about some of the challenges. The first one is about the international legislative disparity. European countries tend to have some incitement to hatred legislation or Holocaust denial legislation in place, but the US, where most of these intermediaries are based and headquartered, has the first amendment, which says that Congress shall pass no law that restricts, among other things, freedom of expression. So there is a very different legislative approach.

One of the problems is that there was a real change, in terms of the public harm that I believe it did, from the internet to social media and Web 2.0. Before that, if I wanted to post material, I had to have my own space that I was responsible for, or I had to ask you if I wanted to post on your space, and you would have the editorial control. Web 2.0 changed that, and I could suddenly be anonymous and post on anybody's website; I could post on the comments page of the newspapers. While some of the far-right groups claim to be among the longest-running websites in existence, with probably some merit to their argument, the reality is that they were in some seedy, dark corner of the internet where the only people who really saw it were those who were observing what they were doing or were like-minded. So the community were not purposefully affected. The emergence of Web 2.0 has made it significantly more of a challenge in terms of the victim focus, not necessarily in terms of the content.

One of the challenges for us is jurisdiction. International jurisdiction was eased for us somewhat with the Sheppard and Whittle case, which went to the Supreme Court. They argued that because they were posting on an



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American website, they were subject to US jurisdiction. The court rejected that and said, effectively, that where you press the send button is where you commit the offence. That helped us in that respect. For us to go to a provider like British Telecom and ask for their subscriber details, if we have a court order or some other power to do so, we need the IP address. We can only get the IP address from the host. If someone is based in the US, their stance has been, "Well, bring us a subpoena from the Supreme Court in the US and you can have what you will. Without that, we're not going to give it."

We have had a number of successful prosecutions of people for online abuse. I would be so brave as to say that our response is among the strongest in Europe in terms of policing. There are some inherent challenges in getting the information. The success we have had has tended to come through additional investigation—for example, because someone was linked to a football offender group or the intelligence was known because they've tried to be anonymous but have failed and put up a picture of themselves wearing their work T-shirt.

The real challenge for us is prevalence versus capacity. Any one of us could think of 100 terms to google and find 100 offensive bits of material in a discussion that are 100 different offences. It is not one offence by 100 people. There are 100 different offences in 100 potentially different jurisdictions. So capacity is a real issue for us.

There is a lot of work going on with the industry to try to find common ground. I don't think we will ever close the gap between the two extremes of views. And we have been working for the last six or seven years with the social media companies, with intermediaries and with academics to try and find the common ground, and to say, "What is there that we can do outwith legislation? What is there we can do to try and find the things that are communally valuable to all of us, and the solutions?"

Finally, the issue for me is that there isn't one solution. I would suggest that legislation has a really strong part to play in drawing a line in the sand and bringing some perpetrators to justice, but the holistic response for me is about education, it's about self-management from the industry, it's about the counter-narrative that we've just started exploring with some charitable contacts, and it's also about educating on what is the common norm that we are prepared to accept in this new area of social life that we all have. And I do not think that we have, as a society, defined what that norm is yet.

Q345 Chair: Before we come on to some of the more detailed things in the different police forces, let me just press you again a bit more on the overall policing response at the moment. You've raised interesting questions about capacity, international jurisdiction, the nature of the legislation and so on, but do you think that the overall attitude towards online abuse, hate crime and rape threats—those sorts of things—across the police force is yet where it needs to be?

It's when public figures raise this issue that it tends to make the news,



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but we know that there are an awful lot of private cases affecting people right across the country that are similar. We have received reports of similar examples, but in Diane Abbott's case she has spoken out about it and her office reported a series of death and rape threats, and racist and sexist threats. To quote from a letter that her office wrote that was quoted in a paper, "Not once, not ever has there been some sort of result or have we been told that anyone has been reprimanded. I find this confusing and concerning, as the offender has often provided an email address and sometimes even a postal address."

Obviously I wouldn't expect you to comment on the details of that case; you don't know the details and nor do we. However, would you take the view that for someone to report death and rape threats online and not have any kind of response or any sense that the perpetrator has been reprimanded would be in any way acceptable?

Assistant Chief Constable Hamilton: Regarding the online space, I would expect anybody who reports matters of that nature to police to get a far more fulsome response than that you have just described, Chair. In keeping with our promises to victims, there's a lot more that can be done and should be done in the circumstances that you described. I don't want to get into the specifics of them.

There are two bits to this. There is the response of the police service generally to crime, and to victims. I think the police service in the UK has moved vastly forward over the last couple of decades, particularly in addressing vulnerability and also in understanding the needs of victims. Are we there? No, I don't think so, because there will be plenty of anecdotal and empirical evidence to prove in some cases that we aren't.

We know that with hate crimes the satisfaction levels with police response are lower than they are for other areas of crime; that's a fact and one we fully admit. So we also accept that there is a lot of work to be done there.

We believe there was also a correlation between the investigation of hate crime and people's general confidence in the police. Setting aside some of the earlier discussions, but particularly in the areas of race and sexual orientation, there have always been general concerns about people being taken seriously by the police and also about the attitudes of police. If we wind all this back to the horrific murder of Stephen Lawrence, which is actually the genesis of the whole hate crime procedures and policies for policing in the UK, then we know we have been on a very lengthy journey to address the response of the police service to these issues.

That said, Chair, I think I could say with some confidence not that we are meeting all the needs of all victims, but that comparative to other law and enforcement jurisdictions around the world I am confident that we are very much at the front of these responses. I am also very confident that we are doing better than we were, but I would also accept that for many victims the service is still seen to fall short.

However, that's not through lack of strategic commitment by senior officers, nor, I think, through a lack of commitment by individual officers,



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but it's potentially down to inconsistencies across the 43 forces, in terms of application. We consistently see that different forces sometimes do things differently. Some are very good at some of these issues, and some are less good. That is also borne out in some of the statistics.

Q346 **Chair:** Do you think that most police officers have the training and skills to be able to deal with online abuse cases that are reported to them?

Assistant Chief Constable Hamilton: No, not every police officer will have that level of training. In most services, online criminality tends to fall under more of a specialism. More and more police officers are becoming more adept at understanding the very basics of this—for example, screenshots and so forth, which I have described before; things that I would not have understood in my day—but no, we are probably not there yet, in terms of every police officer having the requisite skills to deal with the online space.

Q347 **Chair:** I want to push you a bit on this. I know that you guys are in charge of setting out the strategy, doing the cutting-edge work and so on, but it does sound like a pretty rose-tinted description compared with the victims' stories that we very often hear from people, particularly women, who complain to the police and then feel that they get no response at all, even when they have had death threats or rape threats.

People end up feeling that they have to do the investigative work themselves in order to identify where the perpetrator is. They find out, and then still feel that they get no response. Often, because the perpetrator is not abroad but is in another part of the country, the transition between police forces just does not work, and again they get no response. Somebody somewhere takes a decision in the system, but nobody communicates that back to the victim, case after case.

I have not heard somebody come to me and say, "I had a really good experience with the police investigating a case of online abuse or online hate crime." I have had lots of good examples of offline crime investigations where the police did a good job, but all the online cases that I have heard about are negative ones. I cannot be the only person to have, as a result, a serious concern that policing is just not responding to the scale of the problem.

Assistant Chief Constable Hamilton: I am not trying to give a rose-tinted spectacles approach to this. I fully admit that the police service is behind the curve in terms of the scale, capacity and volume of this. The backlogs for cyber examinations across the piece in the UK are considerable, not just for online hate but for child sexual exploitation, people trafficking, drugs offences and so forth. There is so much online criminality that speediness of response is extremely difficult. I fully accept that, Chair.

I also fully accept, as we frequently do in the hate crime arena, that generally, what we get are negative messages about what happens, because that is what is brought to us. Equally, it would be remiss of me not to say that around the country, there are beacons of excellent



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practice. There are police officers who are clearing these crimes and bringing people to justice, and there are satisfied victims. That said, in the area of hate crime, victims are proportionately less satisfied than others. Paul, do you want to add to that?

Paul Giannasi: The one thing that I would add is that there is often a consequence to action as well. You will know of examples of Members of Parliament who have been abused, and when somebody has been prosecuted, the abuse has multiplied in response to what is seen by detractors as a breach of their right to free speech. It can have unintended consequences in terms of increasing the problem for action. I can give examples of people who have had a good response, but I am the first to accept that they are not as common as we would like them to be. Some of the challenges with people being targeted, including MPs, involve somebody orchestrating attacks by setting out the method for multiple people to attack.

I go back to the issue that if somebody is confident in their ability to keep their anonymity, their email address does not necessarily help if their email service is with a California-based company that will not give us the ownership details or any linked information. To go back to the prevalence of resources, it is a challenge, and we have tried to get over it in whatever way we can.

On the True Vision website, our front portal for policing hate crime, we recognise that a lot of people abused online want to find solutions online. It has an internet page where people get advice about how they might complain to hosts or to the posters, and how they can ultimately report to the police. They can also report online, so we have got a slightly easier route into reporting there. There are things that we are trying to do to work with the industry to try to see where there are opportunities. It is a problem. Any of us could do a simple search and find 100 people who would commit what we would consider to be a recordable offence. It is about knowing which of those are prosecutable.

The one thing that I would suggest is a challenge for us—it slightly diverts off the question—is the link between physical offending and online threats. That is a real issue. We do not necessarily understand that in the way that we would want. Testimony from victims' groups says that there is a link. When we look at some people who use extreme violence, we know that they have been exposed to hate material as a precursor, but what we do not know is whether that was a cause or an effect. That is another example of where this is a relatively new element of policing, and we are not where we want to be. I am not sure we need assistance from academia to answer some of those questions, but we are still in the foothills of the response to this, as Mark said. It could easily be overwhelming in terms of the amount of material that is there, because the reality is that you have to do most of the inquiries that you do into a criminal complaint before you find out whether there is a UK-based offence or whether it is someone in a different part of the world. They are big challenges for us.



Q348 Chair: Our concern would also be that the cases that tend to make the headlines are MPs, and we all know our own experiences, but we are also deeply concerned about the people whose voices do not get heard and who end up retreating either offline or into the home. They end up feeling scared and threatened when it happens to them for the first time. In those cases, there is the problem of having no police response and not knowing what the appropriate police response should be. Before I ask other Committee members to join in, I want to ask something. Of the different possible reasons that would explain why the police response might not yet be what we want it to be, it could simply be that this is new and it takes time to train officers and to get new systems in place. Another issue might be capacity. Given the scale of cuts that we have seen to policing over the past few years—this is a new and changing crime—there is a question for you about whether you think the police have the capacity to deal with this kind of complex offence. There are the points that you have raised about international jurisdiction and the nature of legislation, and then there is also the issue about forces and how forces are organised. At the moment, that makes it harder. Of those four things, which would you say was the most significant in terms of why you are still only in the foothills, basically, and why there is still further to go? Or is there something else that I have missed?

Assistant Chief Constable Hamilton: From my perspective, capacity is the overriding issue. The other issues are structural and can be adjusted. In the online space there are millions and millions of users, so there are millions of people who could commit crime. It is an area of criminality that was never envisaged 25 or 30 years ago. It is a whole new space. The evidential recovery is the same level of evidence required for any crime, so police officers have to be skilled and equipped to do that. There may be technical equipment they need to do the evidential recovery. That is a huge investment. We are hoping that over time the next leaps forward should be that what is difficult and extraordinary now becomes routine in the years to come. Evidential recovery from the online space should therefore be something that we would hope would become a routine element of a police officer's business, but it is not at the minute.

As I said before, there are the issues of backlogs and digital media waiting to be examined for child abuse images, for example. Then there are the evidential thresholds. Child abuse images, for example—I know that issue is not quite in this space—occupy a lot of the capacity. Do you have to exhibit every single image before a court, having extracted thousands and thousands of images? There is all the time it takes to do that, to classify them and to put them before a court. Could it be just a sample? Similarly, in this space, do you have to extract every element of the crime and every piece of evidence and then exhibit that? That is the normal police investigative doctrine supported by the evidential standards you require to put a case before the court.

For me, if we go to do a search, for example, to arrest someone relating to an online crime, we would take not just their phone but all their digital media. They would all have to be examined. There are Twitter accounts



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and whatever else people have behind all that—the material they are storing. That might be evidence of the offence that they are committing, of the motivation or demonstrating the hostility that they have. We would expect a really extensive hate crime inquiry to get into that, particularly at the more serious end, so we might have to examine their laptop, iPad, Xbox or anything they might have digital stuff stored on, such as memory sticks. For me, it is a huge capacity issue. You are quite right to point to some of the structural issues in policing, but they affect not just this area of policing but pan-area policing in the UK. I would say capacity, but Paul and I have not choreographed this, so I do not know what his answer would be to that.

Paul Giannasi: I guess that the capacity point is very real. We deal with complaints; we do not trawl for or go and do those searches that I talked about. We tend to deal with complaints. There is that issue about the jurisdiction of the internet in general. If I walk into my local police station, when I have been horrified to find something online, to make a complaint, the chance of the offence being in that area is very remote. Consequently, what attention it might receive from individual officers when they have six current complaints that are ongoing in their own area might be a factor. For me, I recognised all of your list, but it is a combination rather than a single factor. It is a huge change to social life in the last 10 years, which requires a response from lots of parts of Government, but certainly from the police.

Q349 **James Berry:** I think we agree that some people now spend a lot of their time and social interaction online. For some people it is probably the majority of their social interaction with other people—through social media. There is no reason why criminal-level abusive behaviour online should be treated any differently from that kind of behaviour offline, is there?

Assistant Chief Constable Hamilton: No, there is no reason why they should be treated differently. It is just for the reasons that Paul outlined in particular that it is more difficult to detect.

Q350 **James Berry:** In a way it is, but in a way it is not. If you take—I will not use the word—a racist word used about black people, for instance, in any court of law that would amount to racism, but I could type it into Twitter now and find lots of references to people using that word in a derogatory way. Obviously assuming you could identify them as UK citizens, they would have committed an offence. That is quite easy to do.

Assistant Chief Constable Hamilton: When there is a crime attached to the derogatory word. So there is a lot of stuff on the internet that is deeply insulting or offensive, but it does not reach a criminal threshold. This has also been recognised by the CPS. Do you want to come in there, Paul?

Paul Giannasi: I was just going to give that as an example, because the point you make is very real. When we talk to police officers in training about this, we talk about it being 5% content and 95% context. I will give



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you an example. There was a time when Stan Collymore, the football commentator, was receiving lots and lots of online abuse. He would get something sent to him on Twitter that was an abusive message and he would immediately retweet it to show the horrors of racism. So a search for the content does not give you the context of that—not many people would suggest that Stan Collymore should be prosecuted because the 140 characters that he sent were exactly the same as the 140 characters sent to him. Sometimes the actual content belies the circumstances, which makes it slightly more difficult.

Q351 James Berry: Social media companies mainly, but newspaper comment fields as well, are providing the platform on which this abuse occurs. They are also making huge amounts of money from these platforms through advertising revenues. They have the tools that would enable you to identify and for them to block the offender, or to remove their content. This Committee has called on social media companies to do more. I have personally called for an independent centre to be set up, entirely funded by social media companies, so that they pay for the policing that we currently pay for with our taxes, to monitor behaviour online and provide you with a single point of contact and a rapid way to have things taken down, and to allow you to investigate criminal offences online. Is that something you would support?

Assistant Chief Constable Hamilton: I don't see why not. I am strongly of the view that a large percentage of the responsibility for addressing this lies before it reaches the criminal justice system. Prevention and the social and corporate responsibility of those who effectively make money out of these platforms is a significant issue for us. Policing is very complex and has many priorities, and we are consistently saying to people that preventing these things from occurring and people taking responsibility for actions within their own space is absolutely fundamental. Broadly, without getting into all the detail of your proposal, I would be fully supportive of more responsibility for the companies, and certainly of more support in the law enforcement arena, which is happening in various areas. As I say, it is quite difficult to have a discussion about online hate without actually dealing with the whole space of online criminality.

Q352 James Berry: I am sure social media companies could come up with an algorithm that at least funnels down and filters the content that needs to be reviewed manually.

Assistant Chief Constable Hamilton: They can take lots of the stuff off when it happens. You just talked about a word search for offensive words. It would probably save a lot of time and money if, before someone like me or officers had to investigate all those, they were removed and the offence was taken away and some sort of remedial action was taken with the victims, as opposed to a criminal justice response being sought. A criminal justice response will produce an outcome in some cases, but in most cases it probably will not. Finding a different response earlier in the system would be far better.

Q353 James Berry: In fact, quite a lot of victims of abuse online probably do



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not necessarily want us to go through a prosecution; they want the content to be taken down and the person to be blocked and not allowed to do it again. We heard from the excellent team at the Met who deal with online abuse and hate crime that the vast majority of what they do is not really criminal investigation and classic policing, but asking social media companies to take things down because they breach their own terms of use. That should be something that social media companies do themselves, not our hard-working police officers.

Assistant Chief Constable Hamilton: I absolutely agree.

Q354 **Mr Umunna:** I do not have much to add to Mr Berry's excellent questions, but I just want to go through every individual on this panel and ask for a yes/no answer to this question. Do you think the social media companies are doing what would reasonably be expected of them to take down this hatred and material from their platforms? Yes or no?

Superintendent Antill: No.

Paul Giannasi: No.

Claire Light: No.

Assistant Chief Constable Hamilton: No.

Q355 **Mr Umunna:** That is pretty damning. Is it not the case—I thought in some respects Mr Berry was quite generous to them—that the principal thing that is standing in the way of them doing more and meeting expectations is profitability? Their business models are predicated on making a huge amount of money with a small workforce, and if they really wanted to do something in a material way to increase detection and help you do your job, they would have to employ a hell of a lot more people, which would reduce their profitability. Do you think that their concern for profitability is standing in the way of them taking the action that we would reasonably expect of them?

Assistant Chief Constable Hamilton: On behalf of the NPCC, I couldn't actually give an evidenced answer to that, to be genuine. I understand where you are coming from, I really do, but I would just be giving an instinctive response. I couldn't really answer on the basis of their business model.

Q356 **Mr Umunna:** You are being very diplomatic and reasonable, and I do not blame you at all, but is it not the case that if they wanted to take more action, it would involve employing more people to do the job? You have said that you have capacity issues, for example.

Assistant Chief Constable Hamilton: I assume so. I do not mean to be disingenuous at all. I do not know their business model. I would assume so. I would reckon that it is their business and they are making money. My job is to protect people, prevent crime and detect it, so my philosophy is entirely different. Naturally, my appeal to them in this area would be to be in the same space as us, understand the vulnerability of victims, do everything they can within their social and corporate responsibility to



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understand the huge impact this is having on people—particularly the most vulnerable in our society—and take strong action to deal with it. I suppose that is as much as I can say.

Q357 Mr Umunna: Can I just come to my final line of questioning here? I have been a victim of some of this; I have a current case ongoing. I am lucky that I am in a position to be able to make sure that something happens. In many respects, I am much more concerned about my constituents, who are subject to the same thing and there is no action.

It seems to me that the ultimate way that we will be able to reduce the incidence of hate crime online is if people have the same fear that there will be consequences if they do it online as there would be if they did it in person to someone. The extraordinary thing is that when people are arrested and they do not know why, and it is then explained to them that they have been arrested because they have threatened to commit an injury to someone else, they express surprise and say, "I didn't really mean it."

Is that not an argument for making as many examples as possible of people who engage in this stuff? People will see, on a daily basis, that if you engage in this kind of behaviour online, the strong arm of the law will come down on you and it could result in you having a custodial sentence. People will have the same fear of doing this thing online as they do if they do it to people face to face. They just do not have that fear, do they?

Assistant Chief Constable Hamilton: I do not dispute that that should happen. I would not be convinced, from my experience of policing, that it would have the effect that you think it might have. I am not saying we shouldn't respond in that way, but it is a bit like having CCTV in the town centre—it doesn't stop lots of people from getting drunk at night and fighting with each other. It is only afterwards, when you show them the footage of it, that they can't dispute that they have committed the crime. Generally, it doesn't necessarily stop them doing it.

The deterrence of the law is an element but, from my experience, people could stand in the street and verbally abuse each other, and they could do it very quietly, and there might be no police response. Most people in their lifetime have experienced some sort of verbal abuse or threats and never reported it to the police. The online space is a kind of extension of that for people.

For me, this is in many respects about a strong criminal justice response, but also about some sort of societal understanding of how our whole culture has shifted in the last 10 or 15 years on to this online space. It is about children and young people, businesspeople, those in power and those with corporate responsibility understanding the culture of this and that they cannot and should not do this. I think people think they can.

Q358 Mr Umunna: Mr Antill, in your experience, when you have been engaged in cases in which people have been arrested and brought in for questioning over their online activity, are they surprised?



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Superintendent Antill: I have to say, I have no direct experience of that, but I am aware of cases where that surprise has been expressed, because the anonymity that they felt they had has been taken away.

Q359 **Mr Umunna:** Is that your experience as well, Mr Giannasi—that people do not necessarily expect that they are going to get arrested for some of the things that they say online?

Paul Giannasi: It varies. One example from which there was a successful outcome was the man who committed an offence of inciting racial hatred around the far-right march through Golders Green that was planned for 2015. He subsequently got three years in prison for inciting racial hatred. I would be surprised, because of his involvement in that activity and in that march, if it had not crossed his mind that he might be overstepping the mark. He chose to do so anyway and was convicted. That was very successful.

Coming back to the point you made earlier, one of the things we wanted to do was to highlight the success of that to set that standard. Colleagues in the CPS have a very strong message that you shouldn't do anything online that you wouldn't do in the street, because the law is the same and the response will be the same. That was an example of somebody who went to prison for over three years for that offence.

Q360 **Mr Umunna:** This will be my final question. What is being done to actually publicise these things? Say you pick up the *Evening Standard* here in London and people have been subject to sanction for stabbing somebody or for reckless driving or whatever, you often will see that reported. What is being done to publicise the consequences of these actions online, so that people understand that there is no difference between doing things to people online and face to face? What is being done to make sure people understand that?

Paul Giannasi: That was a really good example. As well as the traditional media around it, at one of the key stages, when the march was still being planned, the perpetrator was remanded in custody. The legislation in this country obviously means that that doesn't get a lot of coverage, because there is not much of the story that comes out. We use social media quite extensively to reach out to offending communities and victim communities. In the case of the latter, it is to reassure and for the former, it is to try to warn people off into decent behaviour.

What we utilised in that instance was social media to reach out to the Jewish community in the whole of the UK, because whereas Golders Green was being well-served by local community contacts and policing to reassure local people, the Jewish community in the whole of the country—indeed, in the whole of the world—was being traumatised by the nature of what was going on. We reached out through social media and paid-for advertising to Jewish people living in the UK. The advert was relatively cheap—less than £200, if I understand correctly—but it reached 76,000 Jewish people. So around about a quarter of the Jewish population of the UK were exposed to that message.



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I accept the issue about arrests and things, but we are talking about online worlds, so we need to communicate with people online and people need to be able to report online. That is where we have made some strides in using those sorts of methods and working with community groups to reassure and to send messages out. We do that quite extensively. It is more often about affected communities, but we use it for groups where perpetrators are present as well.

Q361 Byron Davies: My question has been more or less covered. In simple terms, do people really know that they are committing an offence? Do we do enough to publicise it? People know that it is wrong to steal a car or rob a bank, but do they know that they are doing wrong here? Do we deal with it sufficiently?

Assistant Chief Constable Hamilton: There probably are a fair percentage who don't know. I accept the challenge of publicising the nature of this offending as criminal offences. I would say it is probably correct that there are lots of people who do not realise. They think of it as innocent—no, not innocent. They think it is an anonymous, untraceable comment for which they can never be held to account. It is probably the nature of how some people engage with social media.

Byron Davies: Perhaps we need to let them know.

Q362 Chair: Can I just clarify something you mentioned before, in response to Mr Umunna? Are you saying that you think that when a prosecution takes place it can end up escalating abuse? I have separately heard from one woman who has been a victim of abuse that when you had the prosecution against the people who had been targeting Caroline Criado-Perez, that reduced the abuse and had a beneficial impact. You seem to be suggesting that the opposite happened.

Paul Giannasi: I was talking earlier not necessarily in answer to that question. We were talking about making people aware that the police had acted, that there was a prosecution and the CPS had made a decision to charge, and that somebody was remanded in custody. That was very much about raising awareness.

I spoke earlier about the unintended consequences of actions. I would hate to talk about individual MPs, but there is an MP who had somebody sent to prison for a month for racially abusing her, and that brought around an action from somebody we believed to be an American citizen living in Europe outside the UK, who set up instructions on how to abuse her and how to attack her. What that brought about is thousands of people from all over the world seeking to attack her, in defence of what they saw as a breach of their friend's human rights. The consequences and unintended consequences link to that issue of high-profile presence and people facing abuse whenever they are involved at any stage of society with a high profile.

Can I make a comment on that last point? I would commend some CPS resources. The Crown Prosecution Service, as part of its outreach, developed some schools packs, which are about educating people about



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the standards. They use examples of online abuse in a most fantastic way. They are resources for teachers to deploy in schools to deal with emerging problems, but also to educate people about why it is important not to behave like this and why abuse on social media can have a devastating impact on an individual. Some of the case studies relate to that. This is an utterly fantastic resource that is used in schools. Having it used more and more consistently would obviously have greater benefit, but there are lots of resources to try and overcome that educational issue.

Q363 Mr Winnick: I have a question for you, Superintendent Antill, about the situation in Nottinghamshire. The provisional figures from the Home Office show that Nottinghamshire had the second highest percentage increase in hate crime after the EU referendum last June. Did the volume of the increase come as a surprise to you when those figures came out?

Superintendent Antill: No, I don't think it did. There was an increase across all force areas in the country, as you will be well aware. We did experience a significant increase, and I think there were two main factors driving it. One was that the result of the referendum gave confidence to perpetrators of that type of behaviour—it gave them a licence to behave in that way, based on the result of the referendum. The other was that the resulting media coverage of the increase in that behaviour and in hate crimes reported to the police gave victims additional confidence to come forward and report them.

We work really hard to deal with under-reporting of hate crime. There are many, many reasons for it, and we have worked really hard in Nottinghamshire with lots of different communities that we know are affected by hate crime to increase their understanding of what hate crime is, to give them different avenues for reporting it to us and to increase their confidence to come forward.

The two things worked in tandem. Would I have been able to predict that we would sit second in the percentage increase? No. I think you have to be a little careful with percentages, because clearly a small number can give rise to a large percentage increase, depending on the baseline figure. We see it as coming predominantly from an increase in people's confidence in coming forward, which we welcome.

Q364 Mr Winnick: I agree that we have to be careful about figures, but the information that I have is that your police force recorded 189 hate crimes between July and September—an increase of 75%. It is no consolation that Lincoln was higher. Who were the main victims of such hate crimes? You have talked about many communities. Were they Polish?

Superintendent Antill: Certainly there were eastern European victims.

Q365 Mr Winnick: First and foremost Polish, or not?

Superintendent Antill: Of the behaviours that were directed and that were xenophobic in nature, I would say that, yes, Polish people were the predominant group. However, the increase was across all categories of hate crime. The largest increases were not actually in race-related hate



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crime but in homophobic hate crime. That, again, gives rise to our belief that this is not simply a response to the referendum result; it is an across-the-board increase in people's awareness of hate crime and confidence to come forward about it.

Q366 **Mr Winnick:** Was it against women as well? We took evidence earlier this afternoon about hate crimes that are first and foremost against women. Was there any increase in those?

Superintendent Antill: No, I don't think there was a corresponding spike in reports of misogynistic behaviour during that period. In fact, latterly we have seen the rate of reporting of misogynistic hate crime tail off, which we think is consistent with all forms of hate crime, where there is a need to constantly refresh the message about what those types of behaviour are and to encourage people to come forward and report them to us.

Q367 **Mr Winnick:** Arising from what you have said, should there not be some caution about the allegation that has sometimes been made since June that the result of the referendum is in itself an incentive for hate crime?

Superintendent Antill: I think that is definitely a factor. People have drawn confidence that it is somehow acceptable to behave in that way. That is particularly true in relation to race-related and specifically xenophobic behaviour; based on the result of the referendum, they somehow feel that it is acceptable to make people feel unwelcome in the UK.

Q368 **Mr Winnick:** People who voted to leave would obviously feel that they were being unjustly accused. The overwhelming majority of people, in Nottinghamshire or elsewhere, who voted to leave the EU are not in any way responsible for the sort of offences that we are talking about.

Superintendent Antill: Only a tiny proportion of the population are responsible for this kind of behaviour, as we have heard in previous submissions. That remains the case with this: 190 reports across all strands of hate crime is a tiny proportion of the population of Nottinghamshire who are offending, and only a small proportion of those were either xenophobic or racial in nature.

Mr Winnick: I entirely agree with you.

Chair: Would Ms Light like to come in on the same questions with regard to Greater Manchester?

Claire Light: On the impact post-referendum? We did see a rise. We monitored a 13-week period for the week before and the 12 weeks afterwards. In week three we had a peak of 190 a week—the highest peak we had ever had before was 162, so we definitely saw an increase. It tailed off after week seven and we were back to normal levels at that point, but we monitored 13 weeks in total.

Prior to the referendum we had been doing a piece of work to look at any factors that were increasing the likelihood of any spike in hate crime, so we were looking at local events, national events and international events



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as well. We were expecting it; because of protests and that kind of stuff we see spikes in hate crimes at different times of the year, so we felt that we would have an increase.

I suppose the other thing we did in anticipation was to ensure that we had the messages very strongly in our communities around how to report if you did experience something. We experienced quite a large number of reports coming through the True Vision system and through the partners that have additional reporting mechanisms. So we were very much wanting to ensure proactively that communities understood how to tell us what was happening to them during that time period. I hope that some of that effort made a difference.

Assistant Chief Constable Hamilton: On behalf of UK policing, I want to make it clear that we are not attributing the rise in hate crime to any voting demographic; we are purely reflecting to society the facts of reporting that occurred in that period. Between June and September there was an overall 28% increase on the previous year. In the week after the referendum there was a 41% spike in religious and racially motivated hate crime. During the year 2015-16 there was an overall 19% increase in hate crime, and then we saw this spike.

Spikes have occurred at other times in relation to other international incidents, such as Charlie Hebdo and the Gaza conflict. We are not saying that we are attributing this to any specific demographic of voter, but we tried to be open and accountable when we did it. We put the facts out there as to the reporting levels that we received at the time.

Q369 **Mr Winnick:** There is some understandable and justified anxiety on the part of the Polish community—we have taken evidence on that—because obviously they make up the largest number of EU nationals in the UK. On the basis that Parliament will agree to article 50—we will know that shortly—the chief executive of the East European Resource Centre fears that once Parliament approves that there could be another upsurge. Having been warned about what happened arising from the referendum, are the police more or less satisfied that preventive measures can be taken? There is no guarantee—there cannot be—when we are dealing with people whose minds are so obnoxious, but will sufficient warnings and protection be given to the people most likely to be affected?

Assistant Chief Constable Hamilton: That is a very fair question. We have been looking at a number of potential trigger points since the referendum. It is impossible to diagnose exactly why people have behaved the way they have. We have said that it seems to have given some people licence for hatred. It has increased levels of fear within particular communities. We have done some specific work with the Polish community since the referendum: I have been to the embassy myself, and Paul and my colleagues actually did a trip with the Foreign Office to Poland. We have done a piece of work with a number of embassies around these issues.



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What we do not want to do is routinely go out to people and say, "Something is about to happen in the political or community sphere and you might become the victim of hate crime." I do not want to be as crass as that. That is not the situation, either. Also, when you look at the type of hate crime offending that occurred post-referendum—this is by no means to diminish it—we use the expression lower-end: verbal abuse, lower assaults, spitting and stuff on the street. That is exceptionally difficult to prevent other than by very visible policing.

The police services are aware of these trigger events. The hate crime leads around the country are aware of these trigger events. What we are also genuinely hoping is that given the profile—it is always a two-edged sword—of this issue in our communities since the referendum, there will actually be less prevalence of this behaviour rather than more, and that if there is any sort of upturn there will be increased reporting and increased third-party assistance. We are seeing more and more people coming forward now, filming events, helping us to detect the offenders and so forth.

As difficult as it has been in some respects over the past six months, my glass is half full, not half empty, on this. We know more about these issues than we did before. People are more willing to report them, people are more aware of them and the police services have also learnt from the period. I am hopeful that we will be even better in our response than we were six months ago.

Q370 Chair: Can I just clarify? There were reports in the papers suggesting that the police were concerned that article 50 might be trigger and that the Met, in particular, was doing more work in anticipation of that.

Assistant Chief Constable Hamilton: Everyone is concerned. Given what happened after June, everyone is concerned that there may be more trigger events, but we cannot point to intelligence or specific information that says there is going to be. For everyone, it is the experience of what happened in the summertime that is creating more speculation that more tension and dispute in this area, politically or at community level, could then have a knock-on effect in the same way as it did in June.

Q371 Mr Jayawardena: Assistant Chief Constable, while there have been increases in many police force areas, there have also been some decreases in some areas—a small number, for sure. In Surrey, for example, hate crime dropped by 7%. Superintendent Antill said earlier that people are more willing to come forward to report hate crime—of course, that is crime that they see as hate crime and self-define as hate crime. What do you think of Essex Police saying that there is no evidence to suggest that any increase has been specifically and directly caused by any one event? You used the term "any particular voting demographic", but actually no particular event has caused anything. It is perhaps more the case that, as Superintendent Antill said, people are willing to come forward.



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Assistant Chief Constable Hamilton: I will make a comment, and I am sure my colleagues will have their own views. I commented quite a bit publicly at the time that hate was not born the day we had a referendum. People's views on these things did not happen that day, so you cannot blame any single incident. Last summer we also had the murder of a number of people from the LGBT community in a nightclub in Miami. We also had the Charlie Hebdo issues right across France throughout the previous year. There have been a number of factors that have increased the awareness in our community of hate crimes and a response to them.

What we cannot deny is that in the immediate aftermath of the June referendum there was an increased level of reporting. We have diagnosed that in three ways: first, increased awareness; secondly, people reporting stuff that they would not have reported pre-referendum because they were not aware or did not have the courage to do it; and thirdly, the prevalence of increased actual offending. We think that it was a culmination of all three. We are not saying that it was one of those three or one event, but we think that that event in our society has encouraged those three things to occur. I think that my colleagues will all have views on this.

Claire Light: I was going to add that during the 13-week period that I described and we were monitoring, we looked at the nature of verbal abuse, in particular, for all offences—crimes and incidents—during that period. We did have very specific reference in some of the incidents and crimes that we had. One that sticks in my mind was racist abuse towards somebody from a minority ethnic background, whatever that was. The bit that related to the referendum was, "I voted for you to leave, now you need to go home." We had about five or six during that period where it was really explicit that it was linked to the referendum.

Q372 **Mr Jayawardena:** Sorry, five or six out of how many?

Claire Light: In that whole period—in that 13-week period.

Mr Jayawardena: Out of how many?

Claire Light: It was about 150 to 200 every week.

Q373 **Mr Jayawardena:** It was a very small proportion.

Claire Light: Yes, it wasn't very many at all.

Mr Jayawardena: A tiny proportion.

Claire Light: But they were there.

Paul Giannasi: Regardless of what the cause of the division was, there was a division. There was a division in families and in communities, and it obviously made people more aware and alert, but it probably made people act out on the violence that they may have.

As Mark explained, we think that those three reasons all contributed. Anecdotally, we saw evidence of more bystanders reacting, recording



things on a mobile phone and reporting. People were telling us what happened to bus drivers, because the indignant response from decent people in this country on all sides of the argument to what they saw playing out on the TV and in their communities was really strong. That is a real positive about our society, going forward.

The other thing I would say is about how we try to understand the data. Ted mentioned an increase in LGBT hate crime. We would expect to see a rise in hate crime against LGBT communities being reported in the wake of the Orlando shootings, because we saw something similar in relation to anti-Semitism after the Paris attacks, when the only role of Jews in that tragedy was as victims. When we sat and went through the data with the community security justice partners and our expert advisers, we thought that was evidence of a greater awareness, alertness and fear of crime prompting people to report things they may not have done.

Mark mentioned the increases in recorded hate crime. We think that prior to this we were on a positive trajectory. The crime survey estimates on a two-year cycle, and the last one went down from an estimated 272,000 for England and Wales to 222,000. At the same time, we saw a rise in recorded crime from 44,000 to 62,000. The convergence of those two lines is what we are aiming for. In a sense, we are in a really good place, in terms of progress, although obviously we want fewer people to be victims. The crime survey will give us the best indication of which of those three factors was likely to have been most prevalent in the data we have been collating.

Claire Light: I just want to support one of Paul's earlier points about the effect it has had on members of the public. That, for me, is being sustained. We are still seeing that. We have had a number of cases where members of the public have been prompted to capture evidence for us, and it is very powerful in being able to achieve a positive outcome for a victim. We are finding that, particularly in cases on public transport, members of the public seem to be motivated to ensure that they capture some evidence on their phones and post it on social media as a mechanism for highlighting it to the police to react to.

Q374 **Mr Jayawardena:** May I have one very quick follow-up? In terms of the way people perceive all these crimes and their causes, is there not a risk that people's perception might be to link them, rightly or wrongly, to the Brexit referendum—or something else, or a range of different factors—and that we then take those perceptions as absolute gospel truth?

Assistant Chief Constable Hamilton: I suppose all I can return to are the facts of the reporting that we have, the timescales in which those offences were reported and their nature. We don't want to create too much alarm or stigmatise anybody, but we feel it is extremely important to be open and transparent and name these things what they are. That has created discomfort and some accusations towards my portfolio that we have unnecessarily created the wrong perception or hyped it up. Naturally, I would dispute that. I feel that if we can pull away some of the emotional end of all of this, there is a very positive message about crime reporting in



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the UK and about how we as a criminal justice family and the wider community want to stand up to this type of intolerance.

We quote some figures that show that there is more hate crime reported in London than there is in the whole of the United States. There is more hate crime reported in London than in the whole of Italy in 2015. We are far more robust, and we have a far broader, more accepting and encompassing view of hate crime and hate incidents in this country than anywhere else on the planet. Although I would accept that we are at the foothills in many areas, I also think we are further forward. In our interactions with international media post-referendum, we were at pains to say to them, "This is not about some sort of malaise in our society. It is definitely a problem for all societies, including the UK. We are trying to be very robust and at the front of trying to deal with it."

Q375 Mr Burrowes: Can I pick up on the issue of revenge porn? While it is welcome that there were 206 prosecutions last year, in the first year since the introduction of that law, I also understand that 61% of reported cases of revenge porn do not result in any action being taken against the perpetrator. Why is that?

Assistant Chief Constable Hamilton: First of all, generally revenge porn would not sit within the hate crime portfolio. It is not an area for which I am responsible. I don't mean to be evasive, but I don't have a specific answer. However, on behalf of the NPCC, I would be happy to take that away and give you a written answer on revenge porn. It is not an area for which I am normally answerable. That said, I don't know if other colleagues at the table would like to contribute—no. I apologise, but it is not a type of criminality that sits within the monitored area of hate crime. In terms of where we were at the start of the conversation—misogyny and the interaction between misogyny and the current reported hate crime strands—I understand why that question would be raised, but I do not have the answer for you.

Q376 Mr Burrowes: Fine. It would be useful if you could come back to us on whether there is a call for, for example, anonymity to be offered in taking cases to court and whether that would have an impact on ensuring that victims come forward, as well as other areas that you think would encourage more victims to enter into a prosecution.

Assistant Chief Constable Hamilton: On a general note, special measures for victims in all these areas of extremely sensitive crime are ones that we in our portfolio and the other portfolios across the NPCC, which would include this, are trying to drive forward in conjunction with the PPS. But I will take that back to the NPCC and provide you with an answer.

Q377 Mr Burrowes: The hate crime action plan that was introduced under the coalition Government suggested that under-reporting is greater when the victim is isolated and referenced the particular suffering of Gypsy, Irish Traveller and Roma communities and disabled and transgender people. What should be done about that in terms of greater awareness among



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those groups? In your response, you could perhaps focus on disability hate crime, where there seems to be a particular lack of improvement and which seems to be very much the poor relation in terms of attention.

Assistant Chief Constable Hamilton: I am absolutely delighted you have raised that. I fully accept that it is regarded by many as the poor relation. The England and Wales crime survey of 2015 indicated that we were 77,000 crimes short in police recording of the actual number of disability crimes—so there was a disparity of 77,000 crimes between our reporting and the England and Wales crime survey, which is totally unacceptable.

Interestingly, pre-referendum I would have said that disability was the critical focus for my portfolio. We have done a considerable piece of work with the PPS. Every PPS prosecutor in the UK—not only England and Wales—is trained now specifically in disability hate crime prosecutions. We did a two-day conference on it and race and religion, up in Ryton. We did some work with the Solicitor General in particular. We were focusing clearly on this issue, because there is a very real accusation from many that disability hate crime is the poor relation of hate crime.

There are some reasons for that. I am not sure how valid they are. The first reason is that it is probably the most complex area of hate crime offending we have, because there is such a range of disabilities. Also it is one of the biggest demographics, other than misogyny, which has the biggest demographic if we accept it as a monitored area of national hate crime. We are therefore still working to understand this exactly. For example, police officers are making sure that they actually ask the questions about whether the person has a disability, whether it relates to the offence and whether they perceive that it did.

One of the challenges that I have had with my own force is in relation to the use of registered intermediaries in court cases. You can look at 150 cases in which an intermediary has been used, and generally the victim will have a registered disability of some variety but the crime against them will not have been registered as a hate crime. The question will not even have been asked.

The report “Hidden in plain sight” from four or five years ago drew this into the public arena very brutally; it showed the extremes of hate crime issues for the disabled community. We are trying to focus on it. Over the last six or seven months we have been trying to do specific awareness programmes and work with police services locally and nationally to improve the quality of the response, but I have to say candidly that I think this has been pushed aside slightly in the last six or seven months. I know that my colleagues would like to chip in here.

Claire Light: Around disability hate crime, we have been doing some work nationally—

Q378 **Mr Burrowes:** Have you picked up on any other isolated groups as well?



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Claire Light: Okay, I can cover some of those as well. Specifically around disability hate crime, we have been doing some work supporting the national portfolio in Manchester. We have had some conversations with health and social care partners, because often other agencies will be in contact with victims or potential victims. They will hear stories about harassment and things that happen in somebody's life without their necessarily being aware that those things should be reported to the police. That is something that we can and should be doing something about.

We have had some support from local partners in Greater Manchester. They have all agreed that when we have a national package for health and social care partners around raising awareness of all hate crime, they will roll that package out over time to some of their frontline staff. We hope that that will be an opportunity to increase reporting into the service, which will be for the benefit of all forces nationally.

Paul Giannasi: Perhaps I can give some figures on progress, because disability was only included in the hate crime policy back in 2007, when we first had a common definition—it had been included locally in some areas before, but never nationally. In the first year, we recorded 800 disability hate crimes; last year, we recorded 3,629, so there has been quite some progress if you look at it in that respect. If you look at the OSCE measures of hate crime, virtually every disability hate crime recorded in the northern hemisphere is in the UK. You could argue that there has been good progress on that, but when we compare it with the 70,000 estimate we realise that it is still a mile off. We know that we need victims to understand that it is their right to be treated as a victim of disability hate crime if they are subjected to it. We know that we have a long way to go.

The transgender figures in the same period went from 254 to 858. Unfortunately the crime survey does not have enough data to give us reliable estimates for transgender, but we know that it is still massively under-reported.

I wanted to mention a couple of examples. There was one from Claire in relation to the migrant, asylum seeker and refugee communities. The other area that was identified was Gypsy, Traveller and Roma. We do not have separate figures because they would be classed as race hate crime, so they would be in that number.

One of the things that we have started to work on with our police Gypsy, Roma and Traveller staff associations and with community groups is trying to provide resources that are specifically tailored to meet Gypsy, Traveller and Roma needs. We are developing some videos with a charity that will be more meaningful and more culturally sensitive. We have put a separate landing page on True Vision, so that there is a culturally sensitive page there.

We know that we need to do more. There are lots of anecdotal examples, but we know that they are not going to be at the same level as a black family who have been born and educated in this country and work in a university where they may have the massive confidence of knowing that it



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is their right to be treated as a victim of race hate crime. We know that we have a long way to go, but there is some progress.

Claire Light: Not all forces will do this, but we do in Manchester: we have additional markers that supplement the main strand of hate crime. We would record a marker for Gypsy and Traveller people, asylum seekers and refugees, migrant workers and some others. Just to put some numbers on that, we have had 7,300 crimes and incidents in the last 12 months, with 10 for gypsies and travellers and 28 for asylum seekers and refugees. I support your point—that there is a journey to continue to go on around the levels of reporting for those communities.

Q379 **Nusrat Ghani:** I want to open a discussion on under-reporting and over-reporting. How do you report a hate crime if you can't speak English?

Paul Giannasi: There are downloadable resources on True Vision, although they are obviously of no value to somebody who can't speak English, because you've got to find it. When we set up True Vision, one of the things that we couldn't reasonably get was translation services, which are available now. We are about to refresh True Vision to make that more available. Access can be through telephone lines and third parties, like Tell MAMA and CST. We've recently met with the East European Resource Centre to help them to do work and to support them. The third-party relationships with the communities is probably key to the solution to that.

Q380 **Nusrat Ghani:** You mentioned Tell MAMA, so you know the organisation well. I do not want to get back to the discussion we had about social media companies, but one of the big issues, which Tell MAMA has raised and in the evidence we have taken, is that, if someone is the victim of a hate crime on social media and it is not taken down, it just creates more hate crime and makes the victim feel even more vulnerable. There is an issue about how social media companies respond. Earlier on you mentioned laws in America and in Europe, Mr Giannasi. Surely, if these social media companies were fined every time they didn't take down a hate crime, especially after being asked by you, they might take them down more quickly.

Paul Giannasi: I think there is lots more that they can do, whether or not they are fined; I am not sure I have a view on that, realistically. For one of the examples—where MPs or high profile individuals are repeatedly targeted—one of the things the social media companies could do is to look at block words that are a dual factor. If somebody uses my name on a message and then uses one of 10 words that have been thrown at me a thousand times, in relation to my race or gender, it doesn't seem beyond us to get algorithms that can help.

Some of the issue is about the victim-focused part—"How do I avoid this?" The point that you make is very real, if somebody has to stare every time they search their own name and they find the abusive message comes up first. One really horrible example is of a lady who is a holocaust survivor and who does fantastic work with us to raise awareness in schools and to promote positive relationships in schools. When you Google search her



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name, the first thing that comes up is some holocaust denial material that says she is a liar. Every time a child or family member searches for her, they see that. Those are the sorts of things that we can maybe start to impact on the availability of through the counter-narrative.

Q381 Nusrat Ghani: Or put the responsibility on Google, Facebook and Twitter, who we are inviting in. I just want to go back to over-reporting. You have mentioned True Vision a number of times. To log a complaint on True Vision, no evidence is needed; everything is instantly logged as a hate incident. My concern is that if people are just logging anything they have heard or seen in passing, and you are spending a lot of time dealing with that, how much time are you spending dealing with incidents that people are actually reporting as crimes that have taken place against them?

Paul Giannasi: True Vision is an open source. The issue about recording non-crime hate incidents, which I think is what you are alluding to, stems very much from the findings of the Stephen Lawrence inquiry. The then Government, and successive Governments, have accepted some of the key principles of the Stephen Lawrence inquiry, and the police and criminal justice agencies likewise. One of those is about perception-based recording. We record when something is a crime; Home Office counting rules obviously dictate whether something is recorded is a crime. If the victim perceives that it was motivated by a hostility based on those factors, it will be recorded as that.

In a sense, we allow anonymous reporting of hate crime. Lots of people from outside the UK will say that that is horrific, because we are allowing people to anonymously report crimes. We do not think it is a problem. In terms of numbers, the website and the reporting tool are based on allowing people to report online but encouraging them not to. It intervenes if they say no and it offers them the option of speaking to specialist officers or support officers who are from a given sexual orientation or whatever. We will try everything we can to get people to report, but ultimately, we will take anonymous reporting. It is a decision that goes back to the Stephen Lawrence inquiry. Among the more fundamental decisions that it made was that we would encourage the anonymous reporting of racism and perception-based reporting. A lot of people have challenged it and said, "You are allowing people to make false allegations." We do not believe that is a problem on a large scale; there may be individuals, but it is not on a large scale.

Q382 Chair: Ms Light, do you want to come in on that?

Claire Light: Yes, thank you Chair. To come back to your first point about victims whose first language is not English and the challenges about their ability to access services, we can do more work around that. We have sampled a number of cases where refugees have been victims of hate crime in Greater Manchester. We have been working with Refugee Action to learn from some difficulties in how we have handled those cases, including going back and listening to individual calls and looking at the nature of how a victim is able to access services at the point of calling, and then their continued victim journey.



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We have learned a number of lessons throughout that process. We can do more on the effective management of calls, using a third-party interpreter to understand the issues and risks that a victim has experienced, and on capturing their language needs and making sure that that continues for the victim throughout their victim journey. We can also make sure that the next officer who attends, when we know that a person has a language need, understands that that needs to be serviced when they attend face to face. It is also about doing training for our staff. There is a skill in managing an interaction when you have a third party present, either face to face or over the telephone. We are not the only force to do that; Cambridgeshire have done it before us, but we have looked at their training and we are working with academic partners from one of our local universities.

Q383 Nusrat Ghani: You are very comfortable identifying misogynistic hate crime. Through your work, have you identified communities who are in themselves misogynistic?

Assistant Chief Constable Hamilton: Can I clarify the national position on reporting misogyny-based hate crime? There are the five reported strands: race, religion, transgender, sexual orientation and disability. Those are the only ones that are monitored by all the police services. Five police services monitor misogyny-based hate crime locally. The work by Nottingham was carried out as a result of a local initiative led by the chief constable there. A debate is now developing in the police service about where we should go next with misogyny-based hate crime. Should it be a sixth reported strand of hate crime, or should it be dealt with as a separate area of criminality? There is no consensus or agreement on that, and papers have yet to go before the Chief Constables' Council. The definition that was used in Nottinghamshire is slightly different from the hate crime definition in our national guidance, which covers hate crime generally. Not all forces are identifying misogyny-based hate crime; only five are doing it specifically.

Q384 Nusrat Ghani: I want you to tell me whether you have identified communities that are in themselves misogynistic.

Assistant Chief Constable Hamilton: No, we don't do that.

Q385 Chair: Can we just pursue the approach to misogyny for a moment? Mr Antill, could you tell us a bit about what in practice has happened as a result of monitoring misogyny?

Superintendent Antill: To date, the number of reports made to us is in the mid-80s, and the percentage split is that around 40% of those are crimes and 60% will be non-crime incidents. Those incidents range from, at one end, wolf-whistling, which you discussed in some detail with Melanie previously, right through to criminal acts of violence and damage. To date, we have only one prosecution linked to one of those reports, which was an assault case. The extent of our investigation is very much based on the victim's wishes. In some cases, they simply want us to record it. We have been very open, as all forces are, that the simple act of reporting increases our intelligence understanding of hate crime across the



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board, in terms of where and when it is happening, and by whom and to whom, which enables us to be more intelligence-led with our patrolling and other policing activities to prevent and detect it.

Some of the most positive feedback we have had—this was referred to during the earlier panel—is that women are saying that even though they have not felt the need to come forward and report anything to us, the mere fact that we have identified this as unacceptable behaviour and invited people to come forward and report it to us has given them a greater confidence that the types of behaviour that were referred to before, such as changing routes to work, using different modes of transport and changing dress, are no longer necessary, because they understand that if they are victimised, they have recourse through the police, whether for a non-crime incident or an actually criminal act.

Q386 **Chair:** So you think it has had an impact on victims and on the community, in terms of confidence?

Superintendent Antill: Yes.

Q387 **Chair:** Do you think it has had an impact on police behaviour? Can you identify any example of where the police have done something differently because you now report it in this way?

Superintendent Antill: I can't point to any different patrol strategy; I can point to something else. We referred to the night-time economy—the Thursday, Friday and Saturday night-time in city and town centres. Addressing this misogynistic behaviour is very much part of the briefing that is given to officers now. All officers—all frontline officers, so the neighbourhood teams and the response teams—were trained in addressing misogyny, and Martha from Hollaback! was part of that training, and she was really effective in increasing people's understanding and breaking some of the barriers and the resistance to this from within that body of officers.

There is very broad acceptance of this as an issue among our officers, and they are briefed and tasked about the night-time economy particularly, because there was a greater prevalence of this link to city and town centre drinking, and that increases their awareness. They are looking out for it, and they will actively look to engage with, and be a presence around places where there might be a greater prevalence of, this type of behaviour, so in and around nightclubs and pubs.

Q388 **Chair:** Is most of the focus around street harassment and assault?

Superintendent Antill: Yes.

Q389 **Chair:** And that includes within clubs, or just outside, on the street?

Superintendent Antill: Both.

Q390 **Chair:** And not much online?

Superintendent Antill: No. The vast majority has been what you would refer to as street harassment, including in licensed premises.



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Q391 **Chair:** What would your response be to some of the questions you heard being put to the first panel about whether this was focusing on things that were trivial, or on a distraction, and not the core concerns that you should be focused on?

Superintendent Antill: I would disagree with that. I think this is a very real issue. We heard about the extent to which this happens—85% of 18 to 24-year-olds. I have delivered presentations to groups of university students and others, and my experience is entirely consistent with that. Generally, 100% of a female audience whom I have spoken to will put their hands up and say that they have experienced this, some from the age of 11 and while still dressed in school uniform. It is something that they have had to cope with and deal with, and almost consider part of everyday life. The stand we have taken is to say, "It's not part of everyday life. There's no reason for it to be. It shouldn't be, and there is recourse for you if you experience this."

Q392 **Chair:** How do you deal with non-criminal hate incidents that are reported?

Superintendent Antill: Again, it is very much victim-led, but if the victim wishes us to take some action, if we can identify a perpetrator, then you shouldn't underestimate the impact of a police officer tracking you down, knocking on your door, stopping your vehicle, approaching you in the street and impressing on you the impact that your behaviour has had on a woman or a number of women, in terms of—well, all the things we have discussed: changes of behaviour, confidence, etc.

Q393 **Chair:** Given the scale of harm that you identify as a result of harassment, misogynistic hate crime and so on, do you think that this is an approach that other police forces should adopt?

Superintendent Antill: I certainly think so. We are talking to a number of other forces, as Mr Hamilton has alluded to, and I think it is gathering some momentum. It is a matter for individual forces whether they take it up, but I would say that the feedback that we have had alone, in terms of the confidence of women to go about their daily lives, justifies in itself the action that we have taken.

We have not been inundated with calls. Yes, it brings with it a workload, and yes, there was a discussion before about prioritisation. Clearly, with limited resources, the police prioritise against threat, harm and risk every day, against a whole range of matters that are reported to us and against risk that we understand through an intelligence picture. Is that a valid use of police officers' time? Yes, I believe it is.

Q394 **Chair:** Can I ask the rest of the panel why you have not adopted it in other forces? What are the reasons?

Assistant Chief Constable Hamilton: Paul can comment on what happened four or five years ago. It was considered before as a potential monitored strand of hate crime, and it was not agreed at that time that it needed to be. We have identified 21 potential strands of it—of other types of hate crime that forces could deal with independently. Then there was

agreement between everyone, including Government, that we should stick to the main five.

The debate has now resurfaced, through the work done in Nottinghamshire, as to whether it should be classified as a monitored hate crime, and whether there should be the same response to it as to disability hate crime, racial hate crime and so forth, across all the strands. We are considering it. We raised it recently at the cross-governmental IAG. We have also raised it recently at our hate crime partnership group, and we are hoping to take it to the Chief Constables' Council to get a direction of travel.

To be candid, Chair, there are some concerns. The primary concern people have is: are we doing well enough in the five monitored strands that we have at this minute, nationally, to take on a national piece of work around another monitored strand? That is where the work that Ted's colleagues have done, about understanding the volume and scope of this, is very important, because this would affect more than 50% of the population, whereas the other strands tend to—though not exclusively—address areas of minority communities, as opposed to majority communities.

We completely accept that misogyny needs to be better dealt with by the police service, and also by society. We completely accept the premise that it is under-reported and under-understood and needs to be addressed. Ethically and morally, it is the right thing to do, but we have not yet decided structurally what is the best way to address it, given all the questions that various people have about it. We hope that debate will emerge over the next year.

Q395 Chair: Ms Light, do you have anything to add to that?

Claire Light: Nottinghamshire's narrative document was really helpful. To echo Mark's point, it has been useful to see them trailblazing in that respect, in order to be able to understand volume, because that would be one of the concerns. We discussed it as a region in the north-west and will be waiting for the national decision that Mark will also make.

Paul Giannasi: The only thing I would like to add to what Mark said is that back in 2007, when we went through this process, we recognised the importance of a cross-criminal justice response. Prior to that, there was a different understanding from the CPS and from police forces; also, different police forces had different understandings of what was a hate crime. I would not advocate that we unilaterally take that view. We have an independent advisory group, and other partners like the CPS and obviously Government.

When we applied the 21 strands of groups that people said should or could be included in hate crime policy, we applied a set number of criteria to it. One was obviously the legislation about enhanced sentencing. Does it occur in significant numbers? One was whether it needs to be included to improve services. In the consultation we had at the time, we dealt with rape and sexual violence, forced marriage issues, domestic violence and a



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number of different areas that would all come under gender-based hostility. The sense was that they were moving ahead at such a pace, in terms of responses, that it did not need to be included in hate crime.

Merseyside included attacks on street sex workers as a hate crime, because they saw parallels in the under-reporting, confidence in the police, the extreme violence that was used, and the long-term impact, and said that hate crime policy would help them to deal with that particular problem that they were facing. We used that as an example in the guidance. The guidance says that forces should understand what hostilities and what fear of crime exist in their area. If they think that hate crime policy being applied to it will help them to serve victims, then consider it along the way. Greater Manchester has included alternative sub-culture for just that reason and process.

Q396 Chair: Clearly, street harassment is something that obviously affects women, particularly young women, in lots of different areas. That is not a localised or community-based issue.

Assistant Chief Constable Hamilton: No, I don't think we are trying to argue that this is a Nottinghamshire problem. It is something that Nottinghamshire decided to deal with but the issue is clearly across the UK; it is a decision as to whether we deal with it as a national issue or allow forces to deal with it locally.

Q397 Chair: Those sound quite "processy" responses that you are giving. I can't actually see a substantial argument against it.

Assistant Chief Constable Hamilton: We have five monitored strands. All the effort in the hate crime portfolio over the last number of years has been solely focused in those areas, so that is where all the national work and national reporting have been. I don't mean to be processy but we are trying to decide whether we bring this into the bigger process or not.

Q398 Naz Shah: I want to move on to Islamophobia. The statistics suggest that women are more likely to be the victims of that hate crime. Are there any steps that you think should be taken to encourage women to report hate incidents?

Assistant Chief Constable Hamilton: First, I would recognise, particularly in the area of Islamophobia, that young Muslim women are particularly vulnerable. They are the highest category of people likely to be victimised, with it likely to happen in the street or on public transport. Quite often that will involve some sort of physical assault, verbal abuse or removal of the hijab or niqab. Misogyny, particularly as a motivating factor, is a very critical issue, we think, emerging in hate crime towards Muslim women.

We are working very closely with Tell MAMA and other third-party reporting, particularly to try to increase the confidence of Muslim women to come forward and report to us. I will let my colleagues, who are practitioners, talk about what is going on at the frontline.



Claire Light: I would say that we have a phenomenal level of support from our local authorities across all the boroughs in the work that we do around encouraging reporting for all communities, but specifically we have done a lot of work on Islamophobia and women have been recognised in that. Our commissioners recently funded local authorities to do a bit more work on that, on engaging with communities and raising awareness of reporting, because they have connections into communities that we may not have. That whole engagement piece around raising awareness is really important, so for me that has been critical.

Paul Giannasi: I would add that the work through relationships with organisations such as Tell MAMA is really important. We have a data-sharing agreement where we share information. That gives us swift information that it would take us some time to get through analysis.

The issue about the prevalence of women as victims of street attacks is really important. We have to bear in mind the mentality of the perpetrator in all of this. There is this weird sense that they are almost arguing that they are freeing the woman from their constraints of misogynistic abuse by pulling the veil from their head. Obviously, it is deeply upsetting and concerning. The kind of mentality there is a real issue.

One of the other things that we have not talked about with anti-Muslim hate crime is the situational risk. Somebody who works as a doctor in a hospital probably faces less risk than somebody who drives a taxi picking up drunken people on a Friday night. Also, the level of acceptance is much lower. Somebody who is abused every Friday and Saturday night by somebody who runs off from the taxi and shouts racist abuse knows that it happens and they almost accept it—they shouldn't, but they do. That situational risk is really important to understand when you look at anti-Muslim hate crime.

Q399 **Naz Shah:** Maybe I can clarify; perhaps I didn't make myself clear. I am asking what more you think can be done to increase reporting. We know there is under-reporting by Muslim women.

Paul Giannasi: More of the same, really. The things we talked about earlier, about the use of social media to reach out to people, we think have a big impact. The relationships that we have made with organisations such as Tell MAMA and local organisations are really important. Getting the message over to people that they have a right to be treated as a victim if they are subject to it, and that nobody has the right to abuse them in that way, is really important. For me, it is the same solution and the same tactics, but directed and localised.

Q400 **Naz Shah:** My colleague earlier touched on situational risk with regard to MPs attending public meetings. What do you think our risks are as women and MPs attending meetings?

Nusrat Ghani: Female, Muslim MPs—have you done a situational risk assessment for them?



Paul Giannasi: The tragic murder of Jo Cox was obviously a real focus in terms of politicians. In my understanding, there is not a centralised response, but every force has assessed the risk of their individual MPs and made contact with MPs and their offices, to look at their risk. It would be wrong for me to suggest a national approach in relation to this, because it is about taking all of the intelligence, all of the experience, and meeting people who are potentially at risk to assess their risk and discuss what measures could or should be taken to protect them. Obviously, I understand that it is a matter of significant concern to people in public life.

Chair: Unfortunately, we are going to have a vote very shortly and I want to get in the final set of questions if I can.

Q401 **Stuart C. McDonald:** I will turn briefly to far-right extremism, if I may. In the past, our predecessor Committees have recommended that the Government increase the amount of resources spent on tackling far-right radicalisation. Is there evidence that that has happened or, as some witnesses before this Committee have previously suggested, are counter-extremism strategies and resources overly focused on Muslim communities?

Assistant Chief Constable Hamilton: First of all, I would say that countering extremism is not part of what these folks do—they don't work in that area, Chair, and nor did I specifically, except in Northern Ireland a little bit. While we are part of the Prevent strategy, we haven't been focusing on that strand of work within this portfolio.

That said, very recently, through the Home Office disruption work and through my own portfolio, pieces of work are being commissioned around the correlation between far-right extremism and hate crime. There is anecdotal evidence, even stuff from Tell MAMA and so forth, that, with online hate, there is a higher prevalence of people who espouse far right-wing views of hate online than any other types of views.

Post-referendum, I suppose we are delving into this issue a bit more closely, but I don't know that I can give you a fully adequate answer to your question about far-right extremism and counter-extremism.

Q402 **Stuart C. McDonald:** In your work tackling hate crime, do you have specific policies or initiatives that are targeted at far-right groups, or is that left to a different department altogether?

Assistant Chief Constable Hamilton: It certainly doesn't fall within the work that I do; I don't do targeted work. The individual forces around the country will have their problem profiles for where they see their greatest levels of risk, and they will deal with that, but the national picture around counter-extremism and the far right doesn't sit within my portfolio.

Paul Giannasi: I will just add that every terrorist act, every far-right extremist violent act, would be a hate crime, but not every hate crime would fit into that. So, we see our role really as feeding into that process; we would share all information that we have with those who are making those operational decisions.



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One of the things that makes the blurring of the lines more significant is that the sorts of people who would commit racist hate crime or anti-religious hate crime are the sorts of people who will “like” things on social media that purport to be from far-right groups. Sometimes it is difficult to work out membership from somebody who “likes” three far-right groups; they may never have actually met anybody from those groups.

So, working out who of them are sympathisers and supporters from a distance, and who’s involved, is obviously an intelligence process that we don’t control. We would want to feed our information into that, but it is right that it is another part of policing that would make those assessments.

- Q403 **Stuart C. McDonald:** Thank you. Again, I’m not sure whether you will be able to comment, but in December the Government proscribed a neo-Nazi group, National Action. Is that an effective response or does it in some way risk drawing attention to that particular group, almost glamorising them or just encouraging people to interact with them and perhaps increase hate crime?

Assistant Chief Constable Hamilton: Proscription has the effect of criminalising them, which will always have a degree of effectiveness. The experience in Northern Ireland, where I have quite a lot of experience, is that proscription very rarely leads to lots of prosecutions, as it is very difficult to prove membership. However, it does lead to a dampening of it—it pushes stuff away and allows for a very focused criminal justice response. It is probably too early for any of the participants to give you an answer on that. Proscription is an extreme tool. It takes a lot of travel to get to proscription, so it would not have been done without great consideration.

Chair: Sorry, back to Naz Shah.

- Q404 **Naz Shah:** Is there an issue about intersectional or sectarian violence among Muslim communities internally, and would you classify that as a hate crime?

Assistant Chief Constable Hamilton: Yes, sectarian crime is hate crime. It is a burgeoning issue in the Muslim community and we are being alerted to it frequently, particularly in the Shi’a and Sunni communities. We also saw that with the Ahmadiyya community last year, with the murder in Edinburgh of Mr Shah, the shopkeeper. There is a correlation between local and international events. When things happen in Syria and Iraq and so forth, we see a correlation with interfaith hate crime here in the UK.

We think it is hugely under-reported. We probably only see the most extreme elements of it. Our third-party partners would see more of it than we do, but we are being warned of it on a frequent basis. It is something that we are talking about more in the arena now. It is not just about attacks on the Muslim community; we are clearly trying to work out what is going on inside that community.



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Paul Giannasi: One thing we have agreed to do is to have a national hate crime conference, and it is one of the subjects there. It is an issue that our independent advisory group, which we share with the Government's independent advisory group, have raised as being of significant concern. It is certainly one that we need to understand more. It is obviously not just about a single religious group. There are sectarian issues elsewhere and it is a real problem that we need to understand better. Communities need to know that they can and should report it as a hate crime.

Q405 **Chair:** Just a final reflective question: are you worried if you look ahead over the next five years? I know it is your job to be reassuring and to say that you will deal with whatever is thrown at you and whatever comes up, but if you look at prevalence, the causes, the interaction with online hate crime and the international interaction—particularly with the US, for example, where there clearly has been an increase in anger and hatred, both online and offline—are you concerned that if we do not have some sort of intervention, perhaps at a prevention level or a wider community level, hate crime will grow? Or do you feel that that is not the case?

Assistant Chief Constable Hamilton: If I may start, Chair, for me, there are two sides to that. I am encouraged by the awareness of what tolerance means in society. It is a burgeoning debate and, from my experience, it is really important that people understand these issues. I am encouraged that things that have heretofore always gone unsaid or been hidden are being brought out more and more into the open. We should all try to get behind that and push forward with it. I want the police service to be at the front, doing our bit on that.

None of us are certain about the levels of instability that seem to happen in so many spaces—locally, nationally and internationally—and the potential for that to foment or give licence to people to display extreme behaviours. There is national concern about mass casualty attacks. We as a community have been planning for those for a long time. I have a concern that if those things happened, communities could come under strain through hate crime in certain areas. I do not think it is unreasonable for us to be concerned about that. The UK is doing extremely well in trying to manage all these threats and harms and in trying to find a middle way through it.

I am really encouraged—and not discouraged at all—by the level of debate around these issues in the UK, but I would have some worries about extreme events and how those could impact on other communities.

Claire Light: I would echo Mark's point. I have some concern on a similar level, but I would also have some faith. I chair the regional hate crime leads group for the north-west, which includes the police service but also the Crown Prosecution Service. The amount of commitment that exists in those agencies and wider partners to get some of this stuff right and to respond, should we have any increased threat—

Q406 **Chair:** I guess I am asking you not about the institutional response, which you might be right to be encouraged about, but about the broader



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prevalence and whether there is a rising threat.

Claire Light: I would echo Mark's point about some concerns. I suppose the difficult thing is that it is hard to know, when we make so much effort to encourage reporting, whether what you are seeing is a result of all the work that we do with communities to report. It is a challenge that we debate constantly—is this a real rise or a reporting rise? Given the gap, at times it is hard to know.

Paul Giannasi: I am a pessimist. I see positives, and the point that Claire raised about the indignation from decent people standing up when before they would just have observed is a real positive. But I think the narrative around some major world events has really polarised views, not just here but around the world. The rise of, or the divergence of, extremes of politics and the extremes of political view, and the relatively successful use of populist nationalist stances in gaining popularity gives me cause for concern in a number of parts of the world. There are very few that are exempt from it and the world has some serious challenges to face in the next five or six years. This is an issue that we need to be on top of. We are better placed in this country than most, but it is something that everybody should be conscious of—the impact of what is going on and how it is dealt with.

Superintendent Antill: I acknowledge everything that you have referred to and that Paul has just alluded to. However, I would echo Claire's comments about the continuous improvement of the forces' responses and the really strong partnership response to this. I would also note the engagement effort that we are putting in with the many, many different communities who live and work where we deliver a police service, who recoil in condemnation of these acts. There are mounting threats that have been alluded to, but to offset those, there is the growing condemnation of those types of behaviour within communities. I have a sense that the one is not winning over the other as we speak.

Chair: Thank you very much. That is a very good point on which to end.