

Preventing hate crime in London - evidence & policy brief

Prepared for MOPAC by Protection Approaches

This evidence and policy brief has been prepared by Andy Fearn, Co-Executive Director at Protection Approaches. It sets out four key findings from PA's longstanding work across London on hate crime, identity-based violence and prevention, and our emergency response programmes to support communities facing COVID-related and anti-Asian hate. This work is funded by the Mayors Shared Endeavor fund, the Home Office Community Hate Crime fund, the National Lottery, and The London Community Response fund.

The findings and recommendations set out below are intended to support the Mayor of London and the Mayor's Office for Police and Crime respond to the social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, confront the risks of growing division, and engage with increasing perceptions of insecurity among certain community groups in the capital.

Our work has found:

1. *Training community organisations to support their community members to respond to hate crime works, especially when there is a sudden or unexpected increase in hate crime against a specific group*
2. *Access to small amounts of funding for community organisations is crucial to ensure local hate crime work becomes sustainable*
3. *The police still need more comprehensive training on hate crime, victim support, and community liaison, including with and from community experts*
4. *There is a need for a 'Tell Mama-style' organisation led by and for ESEA communities to encourage hate crime reporting and to ensure reporting is matched with support on advocacy, prevention and representation in national policy conversations*

Times of crisis, health disasters, and economic uncertainty can undermine social cohesion and inflame prejudices. Before the pandemic, Protection Approaches had long been concerned about the trajectory of risk factors for identity-based violence in the UK, documenting in our 2019 'Gathering Storm' series (See [here](#) and [here](#)) how the EU referendum and its consequences exacerbated divisions. In the years since, hate incidents, public prejudice, disinformation, and social tensions have continued to rise. COVID-19 is exacerbating these challenges in London and across the country: The spread of misinformation and conspiracy is fuelling xenophobia, discrimination, and polarisation, undermining already weakened social cohesion. We judge that there are serious short and long-term risks of increased social fracture, identity-based violence, and hate crime. Building back better must mean placing our communities at the heart of recovery strategies and ensuring that both prevention and protection are central, cross-cutting priorities.

The evidence of what works:

1. *Our model of training community organisations to support their community members to respond to hate crime works, especially when there is a sudden or unexpected increase in hate crime against a specific group*

Key findings from Confronting COVID related hate project: In December 2020 Protection Approaches, Chinese Welfare Trust and Newham Chinese Association launched [Confronting COVID-related Hate: Standing with Britain's Chinese, East & South East Asian Communities](#), an emergency project that is

supporting a nationwide network of British Chinese, East, and Southeast Asian community organisations to respond to the rising levels of hate crimes. The outbreak of COVID-19 saw an increase of anti-Asian hate crimes of 300% in the UK, and recent hate attacks in the UK and US have further increased anxiety.

Since January our team has delivered our 'Responding to Hate Crime' training to 190 staff members and volunteers from 24 East and Southeast Asian community groups across England, as well as distributing between £2,000 and £5,000 in funding to each of these organisations to support them to increase their capacity to respond to hate crime and support their communities at this time of heightened anxiety.

This programme, written up [in the Independent here](#), has been exceptionally well received by community members. Our evaluation shows that so far, activities undertaken by community groups following the training have reached more than 40,000 community members helping to raise awareness of hate crime, hate crime reporting, and how best to support victims. We have also found that community groups and community members feel more empowered to support each other around issues related to hate crime. There is [a short clip here](#) of Andy Fearn and Gill Tan from Newham Chinese Association speaking briefly about the programme and its impact at a conference we were invited to speak at in the U.S.

We asked those staff and volunteers who we trained to undertake a pre training questionnaire and then the same questionnaire 2 months after the training – the findings show that the training made those working at community centres feel far more able to support victims and witnesses.

- I am confident that I can explain to other people what a hate crime is
 - Before training 64% agreed or strongly agreed
 - After training 100% agreed or strongly agreed
- I would feel confident advising a hate crime victim or witness on different ways to report a hate crime
 - Before training 45% agreed or strongly agreed
 - After training 100% agreed or strongly agreed
- I would feel confident supporting a hate crime victim or witness to make a hate crime report
 - Before training 50% agreed or strongly agreed
 - After training 91% agreed or strongly agreed
- I would feel confident explaining to a hate crime victim or witness the possible benefits, and possible negatives of reporting a hate crime
 - Before training 27% agreed or strongly agreed
 - After training 91% agreed or strongly agreed
- I would feel confident signposting a hate crime victim or witness to different support services that they could access
 - Before training 41% agreed or strongly agreed
 - After training 95% agreed or strongly agreed

Key findings from the 'Safe Newham' project: this project was developed by Protection Approaches, in partnership with Newham Council. The project set out to dismantle barriers to reporting and preventing hate crime in the culturally, religiously, and linguistically diverse London Borough of

Newham. The project included training for Newham Community Neighbourhoods staff, Newham Council frontline workers, faith and community leaders, and youth champions to build understanding of hate crime law, protected characteristics, impact on victims, the role of police and the wider criminal justice system, how to report incidents, and support mechanisms. 236 individuals were engaged through this training. We also organised 18 workshops and talks across Newham, engaging at least 3,200 individuals.

- We observed through our interactions with communities during community workshops and reporting site visits that levels of understanding of hate crime among some communities are exceptionally low. This is particularly the case amongst those who are first generation immigrants and may have not encountered the concept of hate crime or may have had a different understanding of hate crime based on their country of origin. During community workshops we spent the majority of the time explaining hate crime as most participants had no understanding of the concept. This underscores the need for more intensive efforts to raise awareness about UK hate crime laws amongst vulnerable communities.
- Repeatedly during the qualitative data collection as well as during community conversations, we heard from individuals from marginalised communities that they believe hate crime to be 'normal' or simply a part of daily life that is not worth reporting to the police. One person stated that if they reported every hate crime or incident, they would be "reporting all day, every day." It will take a concerted and ongoing effort to not only break down this belief, but also break down the structures that perpetuate the normalisation of hate crime.
- Spending the time to give in person training or workshops on hate crime is powerful. Beyond the data on the measured outcomes, we have recorded participants telling us how impactful the trainings were in helping them understand hate crime and creating a learning environment that made them feel someone cared about their views and personal experiences. Our trainings have been well received, with 98% of those who completed evaluations provided a rating of 5 (very much) and 4 when asked whether they would recommend the training to others. We have also recorded many comments from participants expressing how the trainings helped clarify concepts that empowered them to report a hate crime or better support their communities.
- We must go to where people are – the only way to reach the most vulnerable and isolated is by going to them directly by visiting the community centres, forums, and other spaces they occupy.. It is vital to build relationships based on trust and sensitivity.
- Posters and flyers are not effective as a means of spreading awareness if not accompanied by ongoing, meaningful community building activities. Though the third-party reporting sites each had posters at the reception area, few customers were aware that they could make a hate crime report at the site. There is a strong need for ongoing community discussions that raise awareness about hate crime and break down negative attitudes towards reporting.

Full evaluation from the project Protection Approaches ran with Newham Council to dismantle barriers to reporting and preventing hate crime can be found [here](#)

2. Access to small amounts of funding for community organisations is crucial to ensure local hate crime work becomes sustainable

Community organisations are trusted local experts best placed to reach the most isolated and vulnerable in their communities. However, this largely untapped resource of community resilience faces fundamental barriers to access even the modest resources they need to transform spontaneous

responses to rises in hate crime into sustainable and safe solutions. The lack of funding also creates a reliance on overworked and stressed volunteers and goodwill which privileges those more able to give their me and divests local organisations of the modest funds they need – and deserve – to carry out their important activities.

Our work with BESEA organisations as part of the [Confronting COVID-related Hate: Standing with Britain's Chinese, East & South East Asian Communities project](#) (see above) has demonstrated how vital small funding pots have been in allowing them to put training into action. Most of the organisations we have been supporting are run by volunteers and others by staff funded by restricted grants preventing them from spending time on other projects. The relatively small grants of £3000 - £5000 has proven to be vital to success.

The funds have allowed the organisations to hire part time members of staff or increase hours of current staff allowing them to focus on increasing awareness of or responding to hate crime. As an example, following a recent horrific racist attack on a Chinese student in Sheffield. The Chair of the Sheffield Chinese Community Centre contacted us to say:

“I wanted you both to know that the training from the Hate Crime Project has been instrumental to the support provided to the young girl. We have been able to dedicate a member of trained staff to supporting the student during this very difficult time.”

Others, such as Gill Tan from Newham Chinese Community Centre have described these funds as a “lifeline for community organisations”

On 9th March 2021, Chinese Welfare Trust, Newham Chinese Association, and Protection Approaches, hosted the first national conference on confronting COVID-related hate, bringing together representatives from a UK-wide network of British Chinese, East and Southeast Asian community groups that have received training and support as part the project. The conference was an opportunity for community representatives to discuss their concerns around hate crime, the impacts the pandemic is having in their local communities, what support they would like to see in the future.

Following the conference an [outcomes paper](#) was published with a series of recommendations based on the learnings from the conference and agreed by all 28 organisations who took part. A key recommendation from those 28 organisations of was for funders to:

“Create quick-release, easy-access grants for ESEA organisations: A BESEA community fund where small community-led organisations (under £500,000 annual turnover) could access small pots of money in a short period of time through a simple application processes would transform community-

3. *The police still need more comprehensive training on hate crime, victim support, and community liaison, including with and from community experts*

As lockdowns across the UK continue to ease, we project likely further increases in hate crime, hate-based attacks and identity-based violence. We urge authorities to be prepared.

Our work continues to find that most local authorities do not possess the necessary knowledge to support victims of hate crimes, their families and communities effectively. Our work has found that this is even more the case for ESEA victims and their families. This is knowledge and resource gap is compounded by the distrust many community members hold towards local authorities, and particularly the police, especially those with uncertain or undocumented status. These factors widen the disconnect between local authorities, the police, and communities resulting in the underreporting

of hate crimes. This means victims of hate crime do not get the support and justice they deserve, and local authorities are misinformed about the scale of identity-based violence in their communities.

The evaluation of the Safe Newham project showed that it is imperative to include the police in any hate crime prevention efforts. Two individuals who took part in focus groups following our trainings explained that they felt empowered to report hate crime directly to the police following the training but were frustrated by the experience due to lack of sensitivity dealing with their cases. This discouraged one individual from reporting again in the future. It is essential that the reporting experience is as sensitive as possible as victims must relive a traumatic experience when recounting their story to frontline workers. Working with the police to provide training on the impact of hate crime on victims and building deeper trust with communities is vital.

Improved training of police and other frontline service providers, co-designed and delivered in partnership with community organisations and other affected communities, will strengthen trust, empower people to report, and foster a better understanding of the breadth, depth and complexity of hate crime. Local authorities will then be better placed to provide the necessary resources and recourse to victims of hate crime, their families and communities. Our national conference on confronting COVID-related hate found a very high level of support for community-informed training for police officers and other frontline staff. We know that relationships between community organisations, the police, and local authorities are essential to sustained prevention and protection. Our work in Newham found that community-focused methods to prevent hate crime are most effective when relationships based on trust and sensitivity are built between project leaders, vulnerable communities, local government, and the police.

As the Metropolitan Police builds out its new approach to hate crime, we urge widespread, grassroots and sustained engagement with community networks, organisations and the public. We also recommend the Met take a more holistic approach to hate crime, looking at prevention and reconciliation as well as victim support. Finally, we recommend mixed methodologies are integrated into police training at every level that prioritise community-led and community-informed curriculum development.

4. *There is a need for a 'Tell Mama-style' organisation led by and for ESEA communities to encourage hate crime reporting and to ensure reporting is matched with support on advocacy, prevention and representation in national policy conversations*

There is clearly a gap in support services available for, and specifically tailored for, BESEA communities. There is currently no national organisation or project funded by Government specifically to record and measure anti-ESEA hate incidents, while offering support and advice to victims and BESEA communities. As the rise in anti-Asian hate and anxieties surrounding that rise continue, this gap reinforces community frustrations and concerns. Our work has found that while there are many community-led organisations in the UK that support ESEA communities on issues related to hate crime but the majority are run by volunteers.

Over the past year, Protection Approaches has tried to fill some of these gaps in capacity building and network development but there has been no national organisation to lead national-level advocacy, to keep on top of the data, nor act as a 'go to' umbrella for all the communities.

Organisations and projects such as Tell MAMA – a project supporting Muslim communities on issues related to hate crime and recording anti-Muslim hate incidents, and the Community Security Trust (CST) an organisation doing similar work around Antisemitic hate, have shown just how vital such programmes are in tackling hate targeted against specific communities. Led by and for their

community these focussed support and reporting services are able to spend the time and resource necessary to build trust among community members for hate crime reporting, offer support and advice online and over the phone in languages appropriate to community members, provide services to those in areas where there are no community organisations or other visible networks, build awareness among community members on hate crime, and act as a mouthpiece for community members on these issues. Both Tell MAMA and CST receive funding for their vital work from Her Majesty's Government. Working with ESEA led organisations, particularly national organisations confronting anti-ESEA hate, funding an independent organisation or project supporting BESEA communities is an urgent and vital step that could be made immediately by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

It would be a mistake if MHCLG were to use the new Hong Kong arrivals budget to set up a reporting mechanism for only Hongkongers. It would miss the opportunity to set up the national reporting and advocacy organisation or coalition that is so much needed for BESEA communities - and would likely be divisive within the wider ESEA community. It is also crucial to acknowledge that perpetrators do not differentiate between people from Hongkong and people from elsewhere in ESEA. If the government believe that the arrivals from Hong Kong could lead to an increase in hate crime against ESEA communities then they need to support all ESEA communities on issues related to hate crime. Finally, as political tensions between the UK and China mount, including in response to human rights violations by the Chinese state in Hong Kong, Xinjiang and elsewhere, we are also seeing a rise of anti-Chinese rhetoric from some politicians, including some within government and media. There is a risk that the government has a responsibility to ensure that valid criticism of China is not accompanied by an increase of anti-Chinese hate, whether online or offline. It is our belief that the best way to do that would be through the Tell MAMA style organisation.

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