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# Assessing the Impact of Racist Incidents on the community in Plymouth.

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UNIVERSITY OF  
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Plymouth & Devon  
Racial Equality Council

# Assessing the Impact of Racist Incidents on the community in Plymouth.

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2022.

Dr Christopher Pac-Soo and Emma Taylor, July 2023.

# Assessing the Impact of Racist Incidents on the community in Plymouth

## **Introduction**

This report details the findings of research, funded by the University of Plymouth, to evaluate and assess the impact of racist incidents on the community in Plymouth. It has been acknowledged by Plymouth and Devon Racial Equality Council (PDREC) that since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020, they have recorded an increase in racist incidents within Plymouth, particularly in the postcode PL1 area. This research aims to provide a resource for PDREC, the local authority, agencies, and communities to address racist incidents and to provide a platform to help build resilience towards racism. The research was a collaborative project between researchers from the University of Plymouth and employees of PDREC. Research team members included Dr Chris Pac-Soo of the University of Plymouth School of Society and Culture, Emma Taylor of the University of Plymouth School of Society and Culture, as well as Lavinia Porfir, community engagement worker, of Plymouth and Devon Racial Equality Council.

## **Objectives**

This research report seeks to examine and explore the social contexts and factors that inform the experiences of racism towards ethnic minority communities within Plymouth. In addition, the research project aims to examine the impact such experiences have had on the victims, exploring intersections between hate incidents and areas of poverty, and how this might contribute to increased levels of isolation, poor mental health, and wellbeing. It is hoped that through this research further insight into the development of resilience for victims of hate crime and how the PDREC can help to facilitate this. It should be noted that it is imperative to explore both the multiplicities and consequences of racial discrimination, as well as the structures and support systems that may be able to facilitate healing from the trauma associated with these vicarious, personal, and collective experiences.

## Research Methods

The experiences of racial hate can have detrimental effects on an individual's physical health and mental well-being, and due to its traumatic influence, engagement in research for individuals with lived experiences can pose the risk of sustaining or exacerbating the effects of racial hate and discrimination. It was therefore imperative that this research used a highly collaborative approach to establish the safety of participants. It is due to the vulnerability of this demographic that participants with lived experiences were recruited through their affiliation with the Plymouth and Devon Racial Equality Council. Throughout this research, 14 one-to-one, semi-structured interviews with individuals who had (self-reported) experiences of racial hate took place. The interviews explored individuals' experiences of hate and its impact. All of the participants resided in the Plymouth area and consisted of 5 males and 9 females of varying ages and ethnicities. Each interview lasted between 1 and 2 hours, included an interpreter when needed, and covered a range of topics, including their experiences with support agencies and how they felt acts of racial hate may be prevented across the city. Therefore, this placed the participants at the centre of the research process as key experts in their own lived experiences.

Furthermore, an additional 4 semi-structured interviews were held between the research team and organisations across Plymouth that may offer support to victims of racial hate. These consisted of an interview with the Plymouth and Devon Racial Equality Council, Citizens Advice, Plymouth City Council (Community Safety Department), and the Devon and Cornwall Police's Diverse Communities Team. These interviews were also semi-structured and lasted between 1-2 hours. These interviews were then all transcribed and the subsequent transcripts were then analysed. It should be noted that all participants within this research, were given pseudonyms to provide full anonymity throughout. Additionally, a Freedom of Information (FOI) request was also granted by Devon and Cornwall police. The information requested consisted of all recorded hate incidents within the Plymouth area between 01/01/2010 and 31/08/2022. This data also incorporated the age and gender of the victim, the type of hate crime (by protected characteristic), the type of offence, and where possible, the postcode area of the incident.

## **FOI Results**

The purpose of collecting secondary official data was to provide a sense of what is known about current levels of racist incidents in Plymouth. Variations in levels of reported crimes differ across recent years and it should be acknowledged that reporting processes have improved significantly over recent years and as a result, this may be impactful on the statistical data being presented. At the same time to suggest the data provided below from official agencies and institutions as entirely accurate representations to the extent of such crimes would be problematic. Research and work conducted by academics and advocacy groups consistently argue a hidden dark figure of victimisation that goes unreported (Myers and Lantz, 2020).

The data revealed the following:

- Between 01/01/2010 and 31/08/2022, 5256 hate crimes were reported to Devon and Cornwall police, of these hate crimes 3879 (73.8%) had a race or religious motive. While it is recognised that many other minoritised communities experience hate crimes, it remains the case that hate crimes based on race and/or religion are the most prevalent.
- These 3897 race/religious motivated hate crimes can be further broken down into each year:

Hate crimes between 2010 and 2022

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022*
No. of reported incidents	346	275	250	262	246	198	284	289	340	388	382	353	266

\* 2022 data up to 31st August only.

It is evident here that there has been an increase in reported hate incidents in recent years, as acknowledged by PDREC. A correlation with the period of the pandemic and associated lockdowns can only be regarded as suggestive. Before 2018 saw a period in which reported cases were recorded increased.

- The age of the victims was documented in 3348 of the recorded cases of racial/religious motivated incidents, and it is evident that individuals aged between 30yrs-39yrs are more likely to be a victim of racial hate:

Hate Crime victims between 2010 and 2022 by age

Age (years)	10 -19	20 - 29	30-39	40 -49	50-59	60 - 69	70 -79	80 - 89	90 - 99
No. of reported incidents	461	799	1011	607	334	100	20	11	5

Young adults and adults of a working age are more likely to be victims of hate crimes, or at least report such experiences. Previous academic research indicates that such age groups are more likely to be socially (and economically) mobile and thus occupy and make use of public spaces thereby potentially exposing themselves to higher levels of public incidents (Laverick and Joyce, 2019).

- Furthermore, of the 3879 racial/religious motivated incidents, 2485 records included the gender of the victim, highlighting that men are a lot more likely to be a victim of racial/religious hate:
  - Female – 114 (4.6%)
  - Male – 2371 (95.4%)
- It was noted that PDREC saw a rise in hate crime, particularly within the PL1 area. The data presented through the FOI corresponds with this, evidencing that the PL1 (postcode) area has more incidents of racial/religious hate than any other area within Plymouth (36.2%). Of the 3879 reported racial/religious hate incidents, 2152 records included the postcode of the incident:

Hate Crime victims between 2010 and 2022 by postcode

Postcode	PL1	PL2	PL3	PL4	PL5	PL6	PL7	PL9
No. of reported incidents	778	216	136	508	215	194	55	50

This data suggests a correlation with social and economic mobility among younger adult groups who would make use of areas of commercial and social activity, such as Plymouth City centre.

### **PDREC vision**

Plymouth and Devon Racial Equality Council (PDREC) has a Vision to help create a country with mutual respect between people from varying cultures, faiths, and ethnic backgrounds. They work with individuals from Black and Minority Ethnic communities, from a diverse range of backgrounds. They support both families and individuals by providing information, advice, and advocacy, whilst regularly taking action to represent people's interests, securing their rights, and helping them to get the services that they need. To fulfil their vision PDREC stated that a 2-step approach was needed:

*So top down is where we work within health, education, police, local authority, and other organisations to make sure their policy and procedures are good, and we are a part of local reference groups you know. Um, we have been a part of hate crime scrutiny because actually if nothing's being dealt with from a strategic level, we won't be able to make changes, and everything will continue as is. From a bottom-up level, it's about providing the training to raise awareness about the issues and delivering events like the respect festival to bring everyone together to remove that 'us and them' that fear, that xenophobia, that bias both conscious and unconscious to get people to understand each other more. It's going to be difficult especially now we are going through another round of recession, and with recession comes the othering, comes the 'it's your fault', 'you*

*shouldn't be here' 'we can't afford you to be here', which sadly I think means it's going to be a rough time ahead.... (PDREC worker)*

This vision appeared similar across all of the organisations that we had spoken to. Each of them emphasised the importance of engagement with the varying communities and the inclusion of all individuals. For Citizens Advice, they wanted to:

*'reach out to those different communities and raise awareness about what we do.'*

Whereas Plymouth city council states that they have a:

*'commitment as a whole to Equality Diversity and Inclusion and one of the key things of that is making sure that the city is a welcoming city where everybody feels that they can be a part of it.'*

For the Diverse Communities team, they highlighted the significance of their engagement work:

*individuals will only report a crime if we break down those barriers, reach those communities, reach the community leaders, and we are always building on these contacts and relationships. That allows us to understand what is going on in the city and give support to the victims. We will always be there to support the communities where we can, and we do go to a lot of community events, things like the respect festival, pride festival, meet with the South Asian society, go to all of the religious festivals. If we know about it and are invited to it, we will go and speak to the community. It's important for us to be there because it shows that we care, and we are there to be the face of policing within these communities.*

However, as noted by Plymouth City Council, these visions and ideologies can prove difficult, and being able to eradicate or reduce acts of racism may not be a simple process:



*How do we make communities cohesive, how are we as a city welcoming? What do we need to do to become welcoming? For that, I don't know the answer.*

To help illuminate the impact of racial hate, and to begin to recognise what benefit those who have experienced racial hate can bring to broader understanding, it is important to unearth the complexities of these experiences. For these individuals, their life experiences leading up to the incidence(s) may also impact their ability to build resilience and improve their self-esteem.

## **Research findings**

The findings from the qualitative interviews with participants are now presented in key areas suggested by the data.

### **Accessibility:**

For many of the participants, England is not their first home, they consist of people of different ethnicities, cultures, and backgrounds, and have had varying experiences of Plymouth. For Damsa, who arrived in Plymouth following the Afghanistan relocation scheme in 2014, adjusting to the change was difficult at times:

*It was confusing for me, everything changed, the weather, the length of the days and night, even the culture back in Afghanistan, the ladies dress, when a lady in a scarf was passing, I was happy. I was trying to put the clothes in the sun to dry them once, and 2 minutes later it is raining.*

This adjustment to a different country and culture proved difficult for a few of our participants, with the language barrier appearing to be the most difficult aspect. Maria, a nurse from Romania, Transylvania, moved to Plymouth in 2014 to be with her husband who was offered a new job opportunity. She had attempted to learn about England to make the transition easier however:

*The English, I noticed what I learned at home is not what it is like here, like when I went to the bank to open a bank account, I was not able to understand what the woman was asking me.*

Firas' and Nasira's experience appears to correlate with Maria. When asked whether he had experienced any difficulties in their move to England they stated:

*Well in the beginning yeah, it took I would say at least 2 years, to get use to the system, how things work, applying for anything. It's completely different.*

*Yeah, because even though I've been living here for quite a while now (2014), I still don't know a lot about the laws and procedures.*

Within our discussion with Plymouth City Council, the Safer Communities team acknowledged the difficulties that can arise around integration and the adjustment to living in a new country. They explained some of their recent projects with individuals from minority communities and highlighted the following:

*Well, my personal experience, most of the issues that people wanted to talk to me about weren't around hate crime, it was about integration. So how can you help me with all of these things I need to do, in order to integrate into my community. So, it was things like housing and how do I tax my car?*

*I think one of the suggestions that has been had, is providing some sort of information book to, let's say the drivers (Deliveroo, Uber and Just Eat), with information in around things like, if you need to get benefits, housing, that sort of stuff, but also around that community safety element too.*

This lack of awareness for the minority communities in Plymouth can be incredibly troublesome, however, The Citizens Advice Bureaux highlighted that they found some communities particularly difficult to access when attempting to educate and inform them of their services and the type of support that they can offer.

*Some communities are really hard to get into, like for ages we were trying to give awareness to the Chinese community, but they are really hard to get to, they tend to stick to themselves and trust their friends and I feel they possibly won't seek advice from elsewhere..., we find people who are not from England feel like they are unable to access this level of support.*

However, they did also note that as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, their service has become less accessible to minority communities and those who are more vulnerable within Plymouth. This is due to the closure of their 'one stop shop' in the city centre.

*Yeah, since the beginning of the pandemic, people who are minority ethnic, who struggle with English, people who have learning needs, people with disabilities we have seen the number of those users drop because they need and benefit from that face-to-face interaction. However, on our helpline we do offer translating services through language line, and we try and find the correct dialects. Some are difficult to get because there are a lack of interpreters for this and lots of variations in dialect too.*

For the British-born participants, gaining access to these services was not a problem, however, obtaining a good level of service has proven difficult. For Grace, a 51 year-old woman from London, receiving adequate treatment from different organisations has been difficult and she believes it was due to her ethnicity. She disclosed issues with her housing provider, her doctor's surgery, and even the local bus company:

*So, for instance, the bus pass that I thought I lost when I came in here, do you know how long it's taken for me to get that pass? I've been sending my picture, sending all my details, and they keep sending it back, as soon as I ask Julie to send it, it's done. I believe,*

*like I said to Julie (from PDREC), it's because they've seen who I am, that I'm Black.*

Clearly, it is difficult to substantiate Grace's belief that her ethnicity played a part. However, perceptions matter and may align with previous and learned discriminatory experiences and practices. These situations can cause a high level of upset and distress for individuals, and for a large number of people, not knowing where to seek help can only exacerbate this. Wherever possible, the Diverse Communities team within Devon and Cornwall police attempt to help with these scenarios and gave an example of helping a family with several issues that they were having. They state that:

*A family who sit under the race-protected characteristic, who had been displaced, needed access to a vet to get their pet seen, access a GP, get food vouchers. Now these are all things that PDREC and Plymouth City Council, Devon and Cornwall refugee support, can do, but sometimes we are the right people to offer this, sometimes we are not, but it's about going above and beyond to help families settle in...We understand that we sometimes aren't the best to deal with something because it's not our forte, but we can understand what the problem is and where to go to, so we are able to do that signposting.*

These scenarios of discrimination were not uncommon and were often evidenced within core institutions such as the education system. Laura spoke to us about her experiences as a mother of 3 'mixed race' children and in particular the experiences of her eldest daughter:

*I was in work, and she called me up and she said, 'mum I have been pulled out of my class, all the brown kids have been taken out of class and asked if they need extra help with their English'. I was like 'pardon?! She said, 'yeah they took me and some other children out*

*of our lesson and were just saying if we struggle and need extra support and all that.*

This situation was later dealt with appropriately, however, Laura's concerns lay around the ignorance, dismissal, and inequality in the treatment, of her daughter. These systemic and objective forms of racism are but one aspect of discrimination experienced by our participants. PDREC acknowledges these areas of discrimination, whether hidden or overt need to be addressed and tackled throughout Plymouth.

*Another thing we try and do, is we try and get peoples voices heard. So, we have this round table network, and the last meeting was in education, and we had someone from the education department in Plymouth City council and then everyone else had the ability to say their views and how they can challenge racism within education, and we are hoping to do this with other organisations.*

## **Impact of hate**

All of our participants have self-disclosed incidents of racial hate and it should be acknowledged that our participants regularly disclosed multiple incidents of racism. Acts of racism vary and can be subjective. However, PDREC were able to summarise some of their experiences with individuals and the impact it can have directly after the incident:

*When you first get a case through it's the first few days and weeks that you feel the most vulnerable, you have the police around and all that, and when it's a hate crime, that's an attack on you personally, on your identity and I think that is the most severe, it undermines your confidence, your safety, your self-esteem, and I think it is really intensive at the start.*

For one of our participants Abdur, who was born in Bangladesh, shared his experiences of hate which span from early childhood. He shared the impact that they have had on his life and in particular his identity:

*They kept pointing it out that I was different. I went through racism, and they had a special word for people with my kind of skin or someone who is different from them. It's that average normal name (paki) that I have been going through my whole life you know, Paki, there's nigger, brown monkey, melted chocolate, you touch him, and you'll get his colour, blackjack, all that lot. When I grew up my language improved vastly and I learned what it meant and I was like 'oh you're using that word to hurt me', it's a nasty word to put me in my place to show me that I'm wrong, or I'm bad, or disgusting, or ugly, that was the whole idea. They wanted to exclude me and it was a very traumatic experience, it ruined my mental health, and I had an identity crisis you know, I still struggle now.... I did cry over it, when I was kid, I'd cry in seconds, but I don't cry as an adult now. I got upset but I also got furious, because it was hate, where did it come from? Why has it happened? Why me?*

The incidents disclosed throughout this work ranged from verbal hate and threat to violence, with one individual being hospitalised after a racial attack. As with the range of incidents, the impacts are complex, individualistic, and last over varying time frames. Three key areas that were raised when discussing the impact of their experiences were at home, at work, and impact upon mental health.

Incidents happening within the home, particularly within social housing appeared common throughout this work, with 4 of our 13 participants experiencing this in social housing, and 1 within a privately owned home. As with many of our participants, Nasira shared several incidents of racial hate throughout our discussion, taking place in public spaces and within her home (social housing). Nasira, who moved to Plymouth in 2014 due to the war in Syria, described how her neighbour had been racially abusive to her for a prolonged period of time:

*She was saying that I am lying about being oppressed and that I am just here to take the benefits...She has been causing me so much trouble, she throws nails, pens, lit charcoal from the bbq, rubbish, dirty and even oil on my balcony and my clean washing. She's been abusive and called me so many names, and I found that when I wasn't doing anything, it would get worse. She's thrown so much mud and dirty water onto mine and my children's clean clothes, it's horrible. She doesn't care if I have friends or family over either, she will still shout and call names. Now the reason she is in prison and that I ended up in a hotel, is because I woke up one morning and my flat was flooded with water everywhere, because of here.*

These incidents meant that Nasira and her family were displaced from their home, for a long period of time causing further stress and isolation for them.

Nasira also disclosed how they were being threatened by 2 individuals in the city centre, stating that they would make their dog attack her and her family. She expressed that she:

*felt helpless, like I can't do anything, that I can't protect my children. People don't want us in this country, and I can't protect my children from that. They even told me to go back to my country, that this is a civilised country, and we can't be here. My children were petrified, holding on to me. They were scared to go into the city centre for a while.*

Abbas, a single father who resides in the Devonport area, experienced verbal threats and continual harassment from a neighbour. These continual events not only affected him, but also his young daughter, leaving them both feeling ostracised and fearful in their own home.

*I looked out the window because it was firework night and people were in the streets coming home and he was there again shouting 'f\*\*k you, f\*\*k you', 'Paki, Paki, go back to your own country', 'I don't*

*know why they gave you housing here', 'go home Paki, f\*\*k you'..... I was not happy and did not want to stay in this country.... I started feeling this is not my place, not my home because of this man banging every day. I had to sleep in with my daughter and she didn't even want to go outside.*

Quite often the experience of racial hate is inter-generational, and the Diverse Communities Team often does its best to go 'above and beyond' to help support not only the victim(s) of a hate crime, but also their families and any other individual who may be vicariously affected:

*A family who were having some problems settling in Plymouth and they had young boys, so we took the boys around the police station, and gave them a tour of the police station. It's about that fear and breaking down that fear.*

The research was also able to highlight the impacts of racism has a debilitating effect on individuals to the extent it causes isolation both emotionally and socially. As Mohammed revealed:

*It's still not good, because I don't really have a friend, no one, I'm always leaving home, I am always out because I feel so alone all of the time, I feel broke, I feel sad.*

Damsa was accused of stealing from a clothing store in Plymouth and felt the staff had targeted her because of her identity:

*yeah definitely, they targeted me because of my scarf and because I look different. I usually stay at home most of the time, but my husband was encouraging me to go out more. After this has happened, I just thought it would happen over again. .... I didn't even want to go to the local shop after that, I couldn't even look at the (shop name) sign after that, I was put in a small room and treated*



*like a criminal. When I was first in the room the guys tried to block the door too and they were watching everything I was doing.*

Such experiences exacerbate feelings of vulnerability and are likely to affect people's ability to feel safe, secure, and included in social life. These experiences also extended to work environments. Maria, a nurse, experienced a hate crime at work which resulted in her taking time off work, but the effects remain:

*It's the same, just this incident made me feel very unwelcome, unwanted and I even tried to look for a job in my own country because I felt really bad.*

Such stories in public spaces and work environments were common ranging from aggressive verbal racist crimes, to perceived targeting of people based on their racialised identity. The impacts can be seen as contributing to and informing feelings of; isolation, vulnerability, mental health and well-being, economic viability and security as well as crisis in identity.

The research suggests significant social and economic harms, physical and mental harms, and cultural harms. Combined together, or in isolation, the effects are profound, long-lasting and can be difficult to undo or repair. The consequence of these harms can be that individuals and associated communities may be perceived as withdrawn or hard to reach further exacerbating their own ability to engage as active citizens but also hinder efforts made by supportive groups and individuals whose work centres on supporting vulnerable groups.

*PDREC - People need to be listened to, they need that validation, they need to know that support is there. Depending on the case, it may be a text or a visit every day, and often some victims need that kind of support.*

## Interaction with services/organisations

Participants expressed many issues in dealing with services and key institutions ranging from educational institutions, housing agencies, commercial companies, and local social services. Many such interactions were frustrating with some having clear evidence or discriminatory practices, it was clear that existing difficulties, especially for those with language issues or people from a foreign country, were apparent. Understanding and navigating processes were problematic and were experienced in a broader context of racism, isolation, and perceived neglect.

Often when dealing with specific cases of racism participants felt unresponsive or inactivity to their complaints was common. Abbas experienced abuse from a neighbour and contacted the police and housing association:

*No, it was easy to get hold of them, but all they did was this form.  
They never even went to my neighbour to speak to him.*

Abbas highlights a common theme of dissatisfaction with the responsiveness and actions of key agencies dealing with racism. This dissatisfaction was common for many victims of crime but is exacerbated for victims of racist crimes due to their vulnerability, isolation, and for those not from the UK unfamiliarity with British systems.

Kita reported a hate crime to the police and felt dissatisfied with the responses:

*they call me about it, maybe every other month, it happened in July,  
and she called me in September to say something is happening in  
the background. I wrote to the local MP also and the police have said  
they will do something.*

The effect of perceived inaction and the time that it takes for action to be taken added to the feelings of isolation and harm to individuals and their family. Kita's case highlights a common experience. It adversely affected her and her family's well-being to the extent that the uncertainty, lack of action, and perceived silence by the police affected her ability to do her job and they actively sought to relocate.

Perceived unresponsiveness by agencies can lead to further isolation, harm, and belief people are being targeted due to their racial identity. As Nasira put it when complaining to her housing association about racist abuse:

*Yes, I feel like the owners of the house, I think they are a company (housing association) were very, very, unhelpful and I think they are racist also. When they were completely ignoring me, I felt helpless.*

It can be seen from many participants that problems with interacting with key institutions such as the police and housing associations can lead to perception and lived-experience that the racism extends beyond the incident they experienced. However, some participants also expressed aspects of contacts with services and organisations that were beneficial and positive. Many highlighted the work of PDREC and other support agencies as helping with practical issues but also providing an environment in which they felt listened to, believed and supported.

When participant Wren experienced racist abuse from other housing association tenants she described the valuable work PDREC case worker provided her:

*Just having a chat and her being understanding and supportive, that was lovely. She was calling on my behalf to make sure something was being done. She was calling the police; she was calling the housing association trying to see what else can be done.... I think the housing could have done so much more.*

The work of PDREC is crucial to helping support victims of racist crimes. As a key worker for PDREC put it:

*I think that is one thing that is amazing about PDREC is that we can offer that support, we don't offer a time frame to help people, we are there for as long as needed and even once the police case is closed, we will still be there to help and support. We have clients from many years ago who still come, and they have had support, and it's been*

*good support so they come back, or they refer their friends and their family members because they know they will be listened to here.*

PDREC and other such support and advocacy agencies can respond to victim's needs in a way that other formal agencies often struggle with. The Police for example, despite introducing victim care units, often struggle to account for the longitudinal and traumatising effects of hate crime.

Effective support from agencies such as PDREC is crucial in providing real practical help and support for vulnerable people who experience racist hate crimes. Other initiatives were also highlighted in the research that enabled resilience and helped overcome the isolating effects of such crimes such as the Respect Festival that agencies such as PDREC and Citizens Advice are involved with. As a worker from the Citizen Advice put it:

*Things like the respect festival is great because it means that these communities come to celebrate their culture and then talk to us.*

Initiatives such as the Respect Festival are to be welcomed but the research also revealed a greater need to address racism at a more strategic level across society and key services and organisations.

## **Improving Responses to Hate Crime**

The research identified many instances where there were either discriminatory practices or processes and systems within organisations that contributed to participants' sense of being targeted because of their ethnic identity. Responding to such lived experiences has been a long-standing aim for many key institutions, such as the Police, since the emergence of Institutional Racism in the 1990s. Since that period other key institutions have also felt the need to respond. These inevitably

take the form of awareness training aimed at employees of such institutions. However, the research evidenced a need to readdress this need. Laura reflected on her own experiences of racism at work and her children's school:

*I just think every organisation needs more training, the school, even my own organisation. Like we all have EDI training but it's not practical, when you're being talked at people just switch off. I think having a conversation like this, like we are, it's so much better.*

The worker from another support agency revealed current practices in training had been affected by the pandemic but also that information provision appeared to be a key method to ensure staff was well-equipped:

*I don't think we do any training on racial awareness specifically, we do have training on discrimination but not focusing on race. It's online reading and we used to have face-to-face sessions, but this went because of Covid.*

*We obviously have our EDI policy and that gets monitored and we do have an audit on that, but we do have listening sessions and feedback that is given to the management to be fixed. We try our best to make our company more inclusive, including providing material for non-English speaking individuals.*

The officer from the Diverse Communities Team demonstrated a great awareness of the many challenges faced by victims of hate crime recognising often the lack of understanding and knowledge of Policing processes and practices by those victims who were foreign or new to the country:

*So, by educating and giving people snippets, if they understand it, it helps build relationships with the police, then when people are approached by the police they're not frightened to engage and speak with the police officers.*

The Diverse Communities Team also outlined efforts made by them to become more aware of hate crimes:

*now if we are not linked into the local authority, the public health service, schools, organisations, and charities that offer the support, we aren't hearing what is going on in the city. If people are reporting to housing, but housing aren't telling us about it, that's no good. If they're reporting to the local authority and they aren't telling us about it, then that's no good, which is why we have the 'Safer Partnerships' board, and it is why the police are part of the panel for this.*

The Police outlined initiatives aimed at furthering their engagement with victims of Hate Crimes, including the use of an app that enables the reporting and support needs of victims of hate crimes and the use of formal translation services. At the same time, the Police recognised that there exist tensions which, they believed, might impede reporting or engagement with the Police such as issues of immigration and the need to have identified victims when reporting a hate crime. These issues were illustrative of current operational demands that they recognised as potentially acting as a barrier to initial contact with victims.

## **Conclusion and recommendations**

The research has revealed experiences of hate crime, abuse, and harassment in Plymouth that occur in multiple sites including within social housing, work, and commercial areas of the city. The forms of racism and hate crimes take many forms but what is clear is that these experiences are exacerbated by broader experiences and perceptions of institutional and organisational responses that can be seen as unresponsiveness. Therefore, stakeholders and other actors who may come into contact with victims of hate should not view the crimes and experiences of hate in isolation, but rather as part of a broader experience of vulnerability, isolation, and exclusion. In doing so the harms of hate can be better understood. These harms are inter-related but can be conceptualised as:

1. Economic and social harm. Harms that impede or restrict victims' ability and agency to act in a way that enables social and economic autonomy. It may result in the inability to work or occupy and use public spaces.
2. Health and wellbeing harm. The traumatic effect of the experiences and crimes combined with a feeling of isolation emerging from a real or perceived lack of organisational response can cause and/or exacerbate both physical and mental health. In turn, these factors can have a significant impact on economic and social activity.
3. Cultural harm. The traumatising effects of hate crime and racism and the impact this has on well-being have also been revealed by participants as contributing to what one participant described as "an identity crisis". There can be challenges and damage to a victim's sense of cultural attachment and meaning.

The combined impact of these harms that emerge from the lived experiences of hate means that many victims find the day-to-day tasks and activities that most other people in society would see as normal and mundane a mixture of challenging, daunting, isolating, and part of a broader context of feeling insecure and unwelcome. These are the long-lasting effects of hate which key organisations that respond to hate crimes or instances of racism, such as the Police, are often unable to deal with. That is not to say such institutions such as the Police are unaware but their operational demands of dealing with specific crimes means they are strategically not necessarily steered to respond to these needs. Organisations, such as PDREC, are crucial organisations in providing support, guidance, and advocacy for victims of hate crime and tailor their services to provide support beyond the initial instance of hate. Many other institutions, however, do not necessarily have the same model of operations and may benefit from it.

In consideration of the findings and conclusions of this research report the following recommendations are suggested:

1. PDREC is a vital organisation with the skills and operational priorities that are crucial in providing support for vulnerable and minoritised people and communities. As such it is essential PDREC are able to secure funding.

2. Given the many forms of harm that emerge from hate crimes and the long-lasting debilitating effects, such crimes would benefit from a public health model approach that draws much more clearly together key institution partnerships that are victim focussed. At the heart of this victims' needs should be the key priority. Institutions and organisations should share best practice within the broader aim to tackle the long-lasting effects experienced by victims and communities.
3. It is clear that organisations and institutions, such as PDREC, within Plymouth have built expertise and knowledge when dealing with victims and should therefore be utilised more strategically by core institutions when developing their policies and practices centred on racism and hate.
4. Training and awareness education packages and toolkits should be developed further by key institutions and organisations such as education, health, and Policing. Expert organisations such as PDREC are the clear resource to develop generalised and bespoke training and awareness courses or sessions for key stakeholders.
5. These resources of training and awareness education should also be built into commercial environments such as shops and leisure industries.
6. Further research is recommended. This research project primarily focussed on victims of hate crimes and has gained valuable data and insights. This can be, and needs to be developed further on a larger scale drawing in a wider geographical area and participants. Further research is also recommended to explore in much greater depth and detail the practices, policies, perceptions, and experiences of institutions and organisations connected with experiences of hate crime and racism. This research has gained some insight into this context, however, it was not a core focus, and therefore further data and insight are needed.



## References

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