



**POLICE & CRIME
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Hate Crime Scrutiny Panel Annual Report

12th November 2024

Report Date	12 th November 2024
Report Author	David Findlay – Hate Crime Scrutiny Panel Chair
Security Classification	Official

Purpose of Report

1. As an advisory body to the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), the Ethics and Transparency Panel is required to provide assurance to the Commissioner that ethics and integrity are embedded within Leicestershire Police and that the highest levels of professional standards and delivery of policing services to the public are being upheld, adding value beyond audit and scrutiny.
2. The Chair on behalf of the Hate Crime Scrutiny Panel (HCSP) brings this report to outline for the Ethics and Transparency Panel the key findings, notable practice, and areas for improvement found in the panel and how the HCSP panel are fulfilling their duty through the scrutiny of policies and procedure through the dip-sampling of hate crimes. The purpose of this report is to highlight the work of the Panel for the period of May - October 2024 for the consideration of the Ethics and Transparency Panel, enabling the Panel to identify recommendations for the PCC.

Request of the Panel

3. In their role to identify areas for improvement with the handling of hate crimes, the Chair on behalf of the Hate Crime Scrutiny Panel requests that the Ethics Panel considers the contents of this report. The Panel would specifically like to ask the Ethics Panel their opinion on the following questions;
 - a. Are the Ethics and Transparency Panel in agreement with the Hate Crime Scrutiny Panel on the identified areas for improvement?
 - b. Would the Ethics and Transparency Panel be willing to present the recommendations outlined in their annual report to the PCC?

Panel timeline to date

4. At the time of writing this report, only two panels have been held so far. A rough timeline of the panel to date has been provided for the benefit of the Ethics and Transparency Panel:

February 2024	Hate Crime Scrutiny Panel identified as potential area for community scrutiny following conversation with Force on their previous panel. Hate crimes remained a priority area for the Force with significant national conversation, and PCC felt appropriate to support the Force in their approach to hate crimes and building of trust and confidence with the public.
March 2024	Formal business case with costings submitted to SMT and authorised by PCC.

	Recruitment opens mid-March 2024 for 2 weeks.
April 2024	15 interviews held, 8 panel members appointed successfully.
May 2024	<p>Vetting ongoing – intermittent induction session held at request of several applicants to go over expectations and familiarise themselves with terms of reference.</p> <p>2 successful applicants failed vetting at end of May 2024 due to discrepancies in disclosed information. 2 reserve members were progressed by HR.</p>
July 2024	<p>First panel held (6 x panel members, ETP representative and Force representatives). Chair David Findlay elected and confirmed.</p> <p><u>Two panel cases reviewed:</u></p> <p>1 x Appropriate without Observation</p> <p>1 x Appropriate with observation.</p> <p>Two replacement panel members, Richard and Ajay, passed vetting and are provided with onboarding materials.</p> <p>Volunteers celebration week held in July with Independent Custody Volunteers and Hate Crime Scrutiny Panel Volunteers in gardens of FHQ, panel members met the PCC and networked with other OPCC volunteers receiving thanks from the PCC for their valuable volunteered time.</p>
October 2024	<p>Second hate crime scrutiny panel held with full attendance (8 x panel members, ETP representative, Force representatives and OPCC CEO observing).</p> <p><u>Two panel cases reviewed:</u></p> <p>1 x Appropriate with Observation</p>

	1 x Inappropriate and inconsistent with Force Policies and Procedures.
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Summary of findings

5. Quantitative (YTD)

1 (Appropriate and consistent with Police policies and/or the CPS Code for Crown Prosecutors)	1
2 (Appropriate but with observations)	2
3 (Inappropriate and inconsistent with Police policies and/or the CPS Code for Crown Prosecutors)	1
4 (Panel fails to reach a conclusion)	0

6. Contextual data – Hate Crime Statistics by Calendar Year up to October 2024

Annual Hate Crimes		
Year	Recorded	Monthly Average
2020	2691	224
2021	3250	271
2022	3440	287
2023	2807	234
2024	2029	203

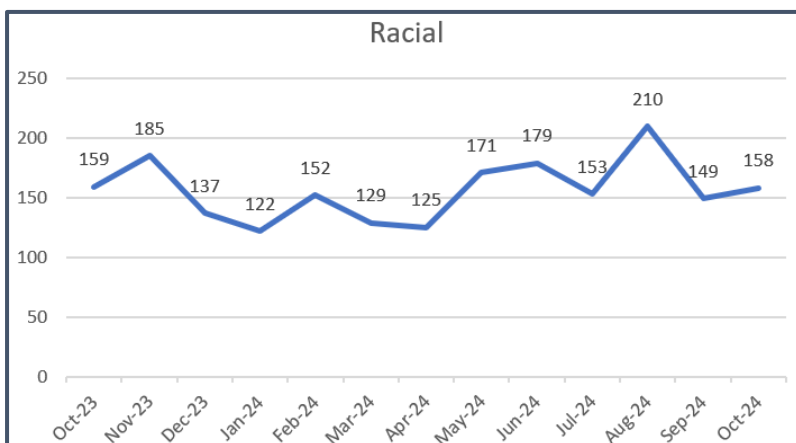
Hate Crimes have noted a significant decrease throughout 2024 in Leicestershire. Although 2024 only captures data up to October 2024, figures are anticipated to be far below levels seen in 2023 by the end of the calendar year.

There have been significant contextual factors such as Op Acanthus (Israel/Palestine conflict) and Op Signpost (Southport stabbings on 29th July 2024) which led to temporary rises in hate crime reports. This is significant as despite these increases, hate crime reporting levels remain lower than any previous years, ultimately supporting the Force's theory that there is still under reporting of hate crime in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland.

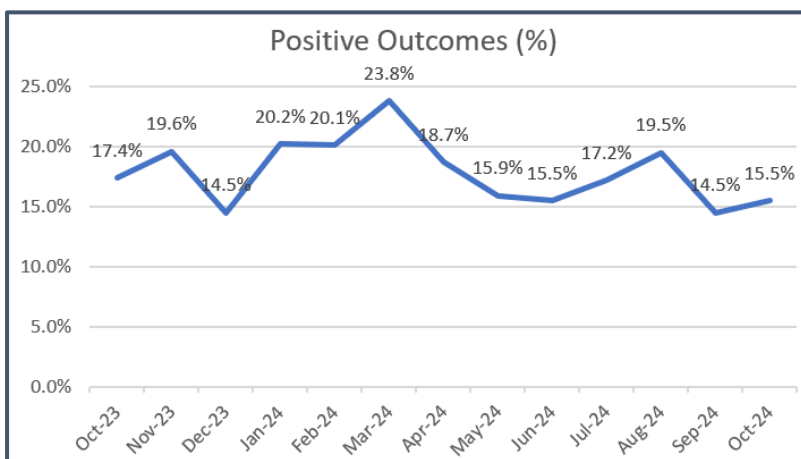
As part of the recruitment process and included in the terms of reference for the panel is the onus on panel members to share the positive work of the panel within their communities and networks. Although there is wider work to be done beyond the remit of the panel to increase confidence locally, we hope to promote increased confidence in Leicestershire Police in their handling of hate crimes which will lead to increased reporting.

Month	Total Crimes
Oct-23	228
Nov-23	237
Dec-23	192
Jan-24	174
Feb-24	191
Mar-24	183
Apr-24	173
May-24	223
Jun-24	223
Jul-24	202
Aug-24	263
Sep-24	201
Oct-24	196

Op Acanthus



The effect of Op Acanthus on the levels of racially motivated hate crimes recorded for 2024 can be seen in August with a spike of 210 offences recorded for the month.



Positive outcomes have remained stable around 15% on average for 2024.

7. Areas of success/notable practice from the Hate Crime Scrutiny Panel

Terminology change on Niche (Gender Identity)

6.1 Most notably, the panel has already made a significant positive change with regards to terminology and representation of victims on the Niche recording system as a result of the first ever panel. The change concerns the definition of 'transgender' on a police software system called Niche which is used by several forces to manage all aspects of data collection including crime recording, investigation, intelligence, vulnerability and more. Previously, 'transgender' was defined on the system as 'gender expression' which insinuated that a person's presentation reflected their identity choice.

6.2 As a result of observations raised by our ETP representative Lisa Vine, the force formally submitted a suggested change to Niche with support from regional forces to redefine 'transgender' as 'gender identity' which has now been implemented.

6.3 The move has been welcomed by the PCC who said individuals who came into contact with the force in future would feel better represented and understood by the updated definition. He said: "I am grateful for the work of the panel in identifying areas where improvement is needed to ensure the force, and its colleagues nationally, can better represent the communities and residents they serve. One of the chief aims of the panel is to increase the opportunity to learn lessons and initiate positive reform and I am pleased to see this is already happening."

Representation of lived experience

6.4 Due to a successful recruitment drive, the panel has several members with lived experience of crimes, and additional members who have been victims of crimes in the force area. Of course, we hope that nobody is subjected to hate crimes, or any crime for that matter. However, as a panel we feel extremely honoured to welcome discussion from voluntary panel members who have knowledge and lived experience of the crimes that we are scrutinising, who are already comfortably discussing and sharing highly insightful inputs to panel discussions. The openness of panel members sharing their lived experience is highly respected and appreciated by all involved in the Hate Crime Scrutiny Panel. This is a notable success as it can often be difficult to effectively engage victims of crime, particularly when panels are held on Force sites.

Knowledge sharing on recruitment of Voluntary Community Scrutiny Panels

6.6 The panel has already had interest from other regional and national Force's on its successful recruitment of volunteers. Clare Hornbuckle has been in contact at various points through the year to provide learning on a successful recruitment drive for Voluntary Community Scrutiny Panels. There has been interest from regional Force's on observing panels which is reviewed and approved with the Chair on a case by case basis, with the view that the panel will accommodate a maximum of 2 observers per panel where able to do so.

Panel reflections on openness of Leicestershire Police

6.7 Over the last two meetings, since the inaugural meeting of the Hate Crime Scrutiny panel, the engagement from officers representing Leicestershire Police has been one of constructive openness rooted in transparency and honesty regarding how police officers have handled cases, and there is assurance that identified learning through discussion is fed back to those officers concerned. Attending officer's including the Force Hate Crime Lead Inspector have an open attitude to discussion and are happy to take questions and provide detailed information when queries arise in the meetings. This was also noted positively by our ETP representative on both feedback forms. On behalf of the panel I am confident that this constructive openness will continue.

Officer feedback

6.8 In relation to successes, it was noted that officers were receptive of the panel's comments and in more than one case, shared their own thoughts in relation to standards of practice. There is a robust system in place for tracking officer feedback collected during the panel meeting created by the Evaluation and Scrutiny Officer in consultation with the Force lead, Inspector Will Prince. Insp Prince shares details of the feedback (positive or negative) with the handling officer and their supervisor and keeps details of this on a monitoring spreadsheet.

6.9 This spreadsheet is managed and reviewed by both the Force and OPCC and tracks the stages of relaying officer feedback in relation to each individual case, both in recognising good work of the officer, or relaying recommendations for acceptance.

6.10 This clear, auditable system is reflected across other scrutiny panels in the OPCC and is shared openly with panel members at the beginning of each panel, closing the loop on individual officer feedback and providing clear assurance to panel members that the Force and OPCC are doing all within their power to relay comments and feedback from the panel. This system also allows for easier identification of wider issues in Leicestershire Police regarding the handling of hate crimes and is reviewed by the Chair and the OPCC lead.

6.11 At the time of writing this paper, of the 4 cases reviewed, responses have been received for 3 cases, either acknowledging their areas for improvement or recognising the positive feedback of the panel. Where responses are not received, the Insp Prince

routinely sends a follow up email to both the officer and sergeant, however little further action can be taken on an individual basis, as it is not mandatory for officers to respond.

Introduction of e-learning

6.12 The Hate Crime Scrutiny Panel is the first scrutiny panel in the OPCC to exclusively utilise e-learning for its members, reducing strain on volunteers time in attending FHQ for training sessions.

6.13 Three individual sessions have been recorded and circulated with panel members. These include: OPCC values training, including equality and diversity and the role of unconscious bias; Panel member training session; Panel Chair training session. These training videos provide key tips and skills for members, aimed particularly at how to be a confident and active contributor on scrutiny panels, and how to support fellow members to encourage the most effective discussion. This is unique to OPCC Leicestershire and has been well received by panel members.

6.14 An additional in person Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is not mandatory for HCSP volunteers however is offered to all members as additional training that can be accessed by the panel.

8. Areas for improvement identified

All reasonable lines of enquiry

7.1 In once case which involved school children concerns were raised by the panel on the investigation carried out by officers. It transpired that officers had the identities of both the victim and the perpetrator of the hate crime however they did not make contact with the perpetrator at all. This should not have happened as the mother phoned the police with the intention that they would take action. On reading the case it appeared that the officer was unclear whether the case should be handled by the school or the police. This prevented proper investigation due to lack of understanding and ultimately lack of investigation and victim support, and also lack of clarity if further bodies such as Social Services being informed.

Inconsistencies in recording of hate crimes

7.2 In the July meeting it was noted that a case should have been identified as a homophobic hate crime, rather than racially/religiously motivated hate crime. However, by this being identified by panel members, it enabled the case to be correctly recorded. The panel understood that this misclassification can often be oversight/accidental entering on Niche, and sometimes this is genuine lack of understanding of the type of hate crime. This has been captured as a recommendation within this report under officer training as this should not be happening, it fails victims and feels easily rectifiable.

SPOC allocation in hate crimes

7.3 During the discussion of one of the cases at the October meeting, it became apparent that Single Point of Contact (SPOC) was not allocated within the standard practice time frame of 10 days. As a result, the case ended up being mis-recorded. It is important that when dealing with cases that a SPOC is appointed so that victims can be assured that their cases is being handled according to best practice. The force lead fed back that the delayed handover was a result of annual leave, however this should not be happening as it fails victims.

Chair's reflections

Over the last six months since the Hate Crime Panel has been formed, and being elected chair, the panel has successfully reviewed a number of cases and acted as a critical friend to the Force who have been engaged and open to feedback in all meetings so far. Considering for some panels members that this is the first time they are securitising hate crime cases, or any Force-related documentation for that matter, I have noticed a significant growth in panel member's confidence to be able to provide effective feedback, prompt insightful discussion and give critical thoughts and questions directly to Leicestershire Police officers present.

The panel have demonstrated their ability to hold strong discussions on issues that have arisen as a result of reviewing each case. This includes both critical conversations on the handling of the cases but sometimes diverts into wider issues regarding hate crimes and reporting. Whilst this is still important discussion to hold in this environment, I reflect that going forwards I will work on rebalancing discussion to focus on the main aims of the panel, so that we maintain focus with what we are there to achieve in the time frames. This will be managed sensitively to not discourage the confidence of panel members but to strike a balance of maintaining these conversations while still ensuring we move along the papers in a timely and focused manner.

I am immensely proud of the panel members, for being able to provide robust discussions and not being afraid to ask questions that help them to fully understand the issues being discussed in the short time that the panel has been running. The relationship between the panel members, the police and OPCC is one of openness, respect. I am confident that this will only continue to develop over time and the panel can continue their vital role as a critical friend to the Force with the reviewing of hate crime cases in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland.

Recommended areas for escalation through the Ethics and Transparency Panel

The Hate Crime Scrutiny Panel makes the following recommendations...

- Present to the CC that there should be a refresher virtual training roll-out Force wide for officers on the appropriate classifications of hate crimes, and adhering to timelines for allocating a SPOC to a hate crime. This can be recorded by the Force Hate Crime Lead and circulated on the Intranet. Ultimately, the incorrect classifications are avoidable with appropriate refresher training, and more correct classifications could be made in future. This training should be devised by the Hate Crime Team and should focus on identifying a hate crime successfully, completing a Niche recording from start to finish, reinforcing the importance of timely handling, utilising dummy scenarios and clearly demonstrating how officers can identify the correct prejudice and ensure that the crimes from start to finish are correctly inputted on the Niche recording system. This should be handled sensitively, in a way that does not create fear of the handling of hate crimes but encourages best practice.
- To encourage the CC to raise through the ACPO the need to improve the legalisation around how hate crimes are categorised to enable better effective recording of hate crimes. Currently, only racially/religiously motivated hate crimes have their own individual crime types. All other hate crimes are tagged on to existing crimes such as public order or assault. While racially and religiously aggravated hate crimes are most prominent locally and nationally, victims of other hate crimes should have their own individual crime types.

----- **End of Report** -----

Sign: David Findlay

Name: David Findlay

Date: 19th November 2024