



**Love
not hate
2017
Conference
Report**

February 14th, Nottingham

INTRODUCTION:

The increase in the reports of hate crime immediately after the EU Referendum on the 23rd June took everyone by surprise. The result polarised opinions in the country, dividing communities and in some cases families.

One of the worrying consequences was that it seemed to give those with racist and hostile views permission and confidence to act out their hostility against the backdrop of the leave decision.

Hate crimes and incidents continued to occur during 2016 and when the timetable for Brexit was announced, we felt it was important to consider the impact at a local level on community cohesion.

Love not hate was organised in partnership with Nottingham City Council and sponsored by Nottingham Trams Ltd. It was attended by over 120 delegates from a diverse range of statutory and community organisations.

SPEAKERS SUMMARIES:

Paddy Tipping (Police and Crime Commissioner for Nottinghamshire) – spoke about the importance of the event and reinforced that we all have a role to play in not only making people feel safe but also welcome in the city, sharing his own family's experience of fleeing persecution from France many years ago. He reiterated the need to value the fact that different people bring different things to a community and that everyone deserved to be treated with respect.

Cllr Nicola Heaton (Nottingham City Council) – spoke about how Nottingham was generally a tolerant city with a good track record of multiagency working. She shared work being done by the Council on cohesion and hate crime in partnership with the Police, Transport providers and Nottingham City Homes to ensure tenants are safe.

Rev Canon Christian Weaver (Pilgrim Church) – spoke about the role and importance of faith and faith groups in promoting cohesion.

Dr Beata Polanowska (The Signpost to Polish Success)– shared the experience of Polish communities following the referendum and how they faced abuse and hostility, making them feel unwelcome. Their response was to initiate a project to raise awareness of Polish culture in local schools as well as becoming a community hate crime reporting centre.

Omar Khan (Runnymede Trust) – spoke about the opportunities and challenges that Brexit posed. He stated that hate crime is a serious problem that is not just a criminal justice issue, but reflects the wider issues in society, highlighting the prejudice and discrimination that persists.

- We have an opportunity to be clearer about the extent and nature of racism. Statistics continue to show significant inequalities for minorities in employment, education, housing and health but is this evidence enough to enable the change that is required?
- We have an chance to build networks and coalitions and create opportunities for people from minority groups to come together to tackle the common issues of discrimination. The increasing diversity of minorities makes this more important but also more challenging.
- We have an opportunity to be part of the debate about who we are as a country going forward and our role in it. Migration did not start, nor will it end with Brexit, so we need to explore how it is part of the country's history and strength. Given that by 2051 minorities will make up 30% of the population regardless of Brexit, we have no choice but to learn how to offer everyone an opportunity. We need, however, to continue to call out inequalities where they exist. It's easier to condemn hate crime but to accept the inequalities in employment, education, health and housing.

TABLE DIALOGUES:

Four questions were posed for the table dialogues with each table looking at two questions. A brief summary of the discussions is highlighted below.

1. What lessons can we learn from the rise in hate crimes following the EU referendum?

- Given the level of misinformation on both sides of the campaign, we need to learn to question what we are presented with and not blindly assume we are getting the facts or even the right information.
- That prejudice, discrimination and racism is still rife in the country. Brexit only served to surface and legitimise in the minds of perpetrators that their views, feelings and attitudes are valid.
- The lack of leadership in condemning the hate crime reinforced the institutional racism underlying the wider inequalities agenda.
- There should have been more opportunities at a local level to discuss the pros and cons of leaving and staying, so that communities felt more informed and engaged in the process.

2. What can we do to create more cohesive and integrated communities ?

- Create more opportunities for different communities to interact through community events and activities.
- More agencies need to have community cohesion on their agenda and be playing a role in promoting it through their work.



- Negative stereotypes need to be addressed and myths need to be countered to prevent misinformation continuing to fuel prejudice.
- Schools and educational bodies have a key role in building critical thinking skills/knowledge amongst young people, so they can assess what information they are presented with and not just accept it as fact.

3. How can the hate motivated incidents and crimes that occurred after the EU referendum inform better agency responses?

- Need strong leadership to drive clear messages of why diverse communities are valued and challenge the prejudice and discrimination.
- Agencies need to have and facilitate more open and honest conversations with their staff/volunteers and users.
- Positive stories of cohesive communities need to be shared and promoted.
- Agencies need to build their capacity to raise awareness of hate crime, encourage witnesses to act and provide support to victims.

4. How can the hate motivated incidents and crimes that occurred after the EU referendum inform better agency responses?

- All frontline staff should be aware of hate crime, how to deal with incidents and how to support victims to report it, particularly within community organisations.
- The importance of reporting needs to be better promoted so people understand the benefits, even if it is anonymous.
- Criminal justice agencies need to foster more trust and confidence that reports will be taken seriously and dealt with as such.

NEXT STEPS:

Feedback on the event was overwhelmingly positive. People valued the opportunity to explore and discuss Brexit and the consequences they and their organisations faced. The majority of delegates reported increased confidence in being able to organise their own community cohesion activities and a better understanding of what other organisations are doing.

Delegates were asked if following the event they would be planning to do anything new to promote community cohesion and if so, what might this be. The majority of the responses centered on three themes:

1. Events and activities that bring different people together to encourage interaction.
2. Attending hate crime training to increase awareness and to support victims to report hate crime.
3. Developing activities that raise the awareness of hate crime within and through the organisation's work.

Delegates were also asked what they wanted Communities Inc to do regarding Brexit, hate crime and community cohesion. The key themes emerging from responses included:

1. Create more opportunities to discuss the issues in open and honest conversations, including follow up events to track progress.
2. Provide hate crime awareness training and support others to conduct awareness raising activities.
3. Develop activities/resources that challenge prejudice and bust common myths.

At a time of rising hate crime, I was impressed by this event showcasing a wide range of individuals and organisations working together to tackle racism and xenophobia in Nottingham. To combat hate crime - but also wider racial inequalities in Britain - we need this sort of wide-ranging alliance of organisations including the police, elected officials, migrant, refugee and race equality organisations, and of course practical actions to make equality a reality for all of our country's residents.

Omar Khan, Director, Runnymede Trust

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