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Evaluation of “Citizens at the Heart: A Citizen Centred Approach to Tackling Hate Crime” Project - Executive Summary

Funded by Nottingham City Council and Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (with delivery through Nottinghamshire Police) through the European Union’s Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014 – 2020)

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Project outline

‘*Citizens at the Heart: A Citizen Centred Approach to Tackling Hate Crime*’ was a two-year pilot project funded by the European Union’s Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme. In line with Nottingham City’s values of ‘Nottingham Together’ and ‘More in Common’, the aim of the project was to prevent and tackle hate crime in new and innovative ways, bringing together policing, the criminal justice system, voluntary sector, communities and other statutory services. The project used the five key areas of focus identified in the UK government’s action plan for tackling hate crime (2016, 2018): Preventing hate crime; Responding to hate crime in our communities; Increasing the reporting of hate crime; Improving support for the victims of hate crime; Building our understanding of hate crime.

Elements of the project

The project comprised of two streams of work: “**Communities Tackling Hate**” and “**Enhanced Options Model for victims**”, with the support of Communication Campaigns.

Communities Tackling Hate

This element of the project aimed to equip communities and citizens to challenge intolerance and hate, and to produce counter-narratives, functioning to build community resilience and promoting individuals and communities as active agents of change. Activities included “counter-narratives”, which were delivered via Community Conversations and Conversations Toolkit.

Enhanced Options Model for victims

The aim of this model is to reduce the time from reporting to outcome and improve service and options for victims of hate crime. In practice, this means that – dependent on where and how victims report a hate incident and the nature of the incident – the victim is offered a menu of ‘next steps’ including the criminal justice route, restorative justice processes, mediation, and

community support. Activities included “Shift Experts”, “Pathways to Justice: Multi-agency Practitioners’ Framework” and “Behavioural Change for offenders”.

Evaluation of the project

The evaluation of the project was funded by Nottingham City Council and Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (with delivery through Nottinghamshire Police) as part of the grant from the European Union’s Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014 – 2020). The evaluation was conducted by a research team based at Nottingham Trent University comprising of Dr Irene Zempi (Principal Investigator), Dr Paul Hamilton, Dr Katerina Krulisova and Associate Professor Loretta Trickett. Throughout the evaluation project, the research team was flexible in their approach and adopted methods responsive to the project as it evolved and to the methodological challenges of Covid-19. Specifically, the research team employed mixed methods research, drawing on the collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data across the different strands of the project.

In total, 484 individuals took part in the study. Participation to the study was voluntary. Access to participants was facilitated by Nottingham City Council and Nottinghamshire Police. The first element of the project (Community Conversations) included: survey of 72 individuals who facilitated Community Conversations; survey of 59 individuals who received Community Conversations training (although only 37 completed the post-training evaluation); 11 individual and 3 focus group interviews with facilitators; creative methods with 106 attendees of Community Conversations (taking place in the physical space); survey of 49 attendees of Community Conversations (taking place online); 3 individual and 2 focus group interviews with the project team. The second element of the project (Shift Experts) included: survey of 159 individuals who received Shift Expert training; 1 individual and 2 focus group interviews with Shift Experts; 1 individual and 1 focus group interview with the project team.

The findings presented in this executive summary (and in the report) were collected only for the duration of the project itself. The research team had to rely on feedback that participants provided on the day or shortly after training and/or relevant event. As such, longitudinal data is not available for this project. This limits the research team’s ability to discuss the long-term impacts that the project will have. Nevertheless, the analysis of available data shows the added value and importance of the project, and allows to recommend actions that should be taken into consideration, should such project be replicated.

Key findings

Communities Tackling Hate - Community Conversations:

- The training was successful in equipping facilitators with the knowledge, skills, tools and confidence to facilitate Community Conversations.
- However, facilitators noted that they would benefit from further training, more opportunities for de-briefing as well as access to resources on how to challenge and respond to prejudice (which would be especially useful after the project had ended).

- Facilitators suggested that future training/Community Conversations should be more open to a wider and more diverse audience.
- Facilitators employed the techniques they learnt in the training in order to encourage sharing and promote positive dialogue in Community Conversations.
- However, a key challenge highlighted by participants was facilitating Community Conversations on specific topics such as RSE, LGBT, radicalisation, abortion, and domestic violence. In this regard, facilitators said that they felt more confident to co-facilitate these conversations with more experienced facilitators.
- Facilitators described Community Conversations as a ‘powerful tool which brings communities together’. They argued that Community Conversations ‘work’ in terms of challenging and responding to prejudiced attitudes; thus, preventing prejudice from escalating to hate crime.
- People who attended Community Conversations noted that they benefited from these events as it was a safe environment for people to share their views, hear about other people’s experiences, and explore different opinions with people from diverse communities.
- People who attended Community Conversations also noted that these events improved their understanding of hate crime and increased their awareness of local organisations and local strategy on tackling hate crime.
- People who attended Community Conversations argued that these events could be improved by sessions being longer, and providing attendees with resources that they could use after the session.
- Community Conversations were one-off events (with potentially short-term impact). Facilitators and attendees of Community Conversations indicated that they would benefit from access to relevant resources after the end of the project. Correspondingly, the ‘Conversations Toolkit’ was developed as a free resource for people to use in order to challenge and respond to prejudice in the physical space and/or online (which shows the long-term impact of the project in tackling prejudice and hate).
- Legacies of this element of the project include: Key learnings from Community Conversations, professional network established as a result of Community Conversations, Difficult Conversations Group, and relevant resources (including Conversations Toolkit).

Shift Experts:

- Training was very well-received.
- Participants valued the use of interactive case studies in the training, sharing good practice, and being given a supportive space to reflect on their experiences and practice.
- Clear guidance on how to respond to hate crimes/incidents was commended.
- Majority of participants noted that the training provided them with clear direction on agency signposting.

- Qualitative feedback revealed that the training had been instrumental in helping participants understand the impact of hate crime on victim and how to better support victim needs.
- However, none of the respondents cited an improvement in their understanding of hate crime perpetrators - this is an important omission that further professional development should consider addressing.
- A minority of participants felt the training had not provided them with any new understanding of hate crime. Whilst this was a minority, this might be an area for improvement.
- The survey revealed some misunderstandings in distinguishing between hate crime and hate incident in a minority of participants.
- Some participants noted that the training was too police-centric whilst others noted that it was too focused on partner agencies rather than the police.
- Respondents further highlighted the need for learning and practising so-called soft skills, such as active listening.

Recommendations

Future Trainings and Events

- *Revise the length of the training and events.* Community Conversations participants noted that they would like more time for the training and for the Conversations. Shift Experts found a full day of training too long.
- *Consider the location of the training and events.* Some attendees of Community Conversations suggested that these events should take place outdoors. Shift Experts participants noted that some trainings were held in rooms that were too hot or that were too many people.
- *Provide more opportunities for active learning.* Most participants reacted positively to use of case studies and group discussions. Consider whether more active learning would be useful.
- *Consider how Community Conversations and Shift Experts trainings/events can complement each other.* The two key strands evaluated did not appear to be clearly linked. Yet, the Community Conversations facilitators might provide a valuable insight into their expertise and experiences to Shift Experts, and vice versa. Consider merging/connecting the two strands at some point.
- *Focus on perpetrators.* While we understand that this project was focused on addressing the complex needs of victims, we recommend that future training includes analysis of hate crime perpetrators. This would offer a more holistic understand of hate crime in local and national contexts and lead to more effective policies and practices.
- *Devise continuous professional development programme.* While this project has provided an important opportunity for participants to develop their skills, participants received one-off training sessions. As highlighted throughout the evaluation report, there was a lot of appetite for more training. Ongoing professional development would be beneficial to the participants and improve policies and practices. Shift Experts

participants noted that they would like more training on ‘soft’ skills like communication and active listening.

- *Signpost support to individuals.* Dealing with hate narratives can have a negative impact on participants’ wellbeing. To avoid burn-out, ensure that participants have access to de-briefing and mental health support organisations.

Future Research

- *Collect and analyse quantitative data on hate crime reporting.* This would allow for analysis of trends in reporting. Data collected should be as detailed as possible.
- *Collect and analyse qualitative data regarding victimology.* In order to understand the effectiveness of the support offered to victims, long-term qualitative data needs to be collected and analysed.
- *Collect and analyse qualitative data on hate crime perpetrators.* In order to effectively tackle hate crime, more nuanced understanding of hate crime perpetrators is needed.
- *Collect and analyse qualitative data on different forms of resolution.* This is related to the Restorative Justice Hub part of the project but also more broadly to all other stands of the project.
- *Collect and analyse qualitative data on Shift Experts.* While Shift Experts see themselves as repositories of knowledge and champions of good practice, it is necessary to analyse whether and how they can impact others who may be more resistant to ‘buy into’ the existing policies and practices. Qualitative data could provide an important insight into institutional barriers and cultures, and how these can be challenged and overcome.
- *Collect and analyse qualitative and quantitative data using creative and arts-based research methods.* This type of research methods can generate deep insight into people’s views, and provide new ways of understanding people’s lived experiences.

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