



**Nottingham Trent
University**

**Evaluation Report: Dimensions' Workshop on
“Tackling Learning Disability and Autism Hate
Crime” for Policing Students and Police Employees**

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Foreword

I am Dr Mark Brookes MBE. I have a learning disability and work as Advocacy Lead for Dimensions which is one of the largest not for profit providers of care for people with Autism and Learning Disabilities in the UK. I am a passionate advocate for those who do not have an equal voice in the world or equal power over their lives.

One of my proudest achievements is the work I have done for victims of disability hate crime. This is a very personal topic for me because I have also been a victim. I work to raise awareness of disability hate crime and what people with learning disabilities and autism can do to report it. Shockingly, disability hate crime remains underreported. This can be due to people living with abuse on a daily basis and not realising that a crime is actually being committed but also due to a lack of positive interactions with police and first responders. Often, police lack confidence communicating with people who have learning disabilities and autism which can lead to victims and witnesses not being understood or viewed as credible.

Dimensions has worked with Nottingham Trent University to address these issues by developing a face-to face training package for police and the wider criminal justice sector which is presented alongside local self- advocates with lived experience of a learning disability and/or autism. The purpose of this is to increase an officer's confidence when communicating with people with learning disabilities and autism so that they are better able to understand and encourage people to come forward and be seen as credible. All people with learning disabilities can communicate. It is just a matter of thinking differently and more creatively when working with victims or potential victims.

Nottingham Trent University researchers Associate Professor Irene Zempi and Professor Loretta Trickett have evaluated the impact of this training by mapping feedback against objectives. The findings are presented in a briefing paper outlining how to best use the training as part of university Policing courses. Importantly, the training is adaptable to other professional courses including within the wider criminal justice sector, health, medicine and paramedic science, all of whom become frontline workers and may encounter people with learning disabilities and autism without warning. It is crucial that upon that first encounter, they are trained to communicate and effectively support the people who require their assistance.

Martin Tangen, course leader for BA (Hons) Professional Policing at Nottingham Trent University, endorses this approach and states "Hidden disability and neurodiversity are critical

conditions that affect and impact upon modern policing. The work we have done with Dimensions in order to raise our future police officers awareness of these issues is crucial to those officers providing a better service to victims, witnesses and suspects who may have such a condition. By raising their awareness and giving them information about these conditions, those future officers will have a greater understanding, and be able to provide a better and more considerate service to the public."

The importance of lived experience training cannot be underestimated. As a person with a learning disability, I believe it is vital that initial training and re-training of police officers, along with other criminal justice professionals, be mandatory, and completed face-to-face with people who have lived experience. This creates a safe environment to ask questions, brings a greater understanding of the barriers people with learning disabilities and autism face and creates knowledge of potential reasonable adjustments and support an officer can easily provide at first contact. This alone would make a huge difference to the disability community and reduce the hesitancy and anxiety of people, who are historically voiceless, to report crime and interact confidently with law enforcement.

Yours faithfully



Dr Mark Brookes MBE
Dimensions UK

Introduction

Hate crime is any criminal offence that is perceived by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by hostility or prejudice based on a person's characteristics such as race, religion, sexual orientation, transgender identity, and disability (The Crown Prosecution Service, 2022). The Equality Act 2010 defines disability as a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative influence on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. According to the recent crime statistics released by the Home Office (2023), out of 145,212 recorded hate crimes in England and Wales, 13,777 were directed at disabled people. These crimes can range from hurtful words and harassment to physical attacks perpetrated by either people who are known to the victim or strangers (Healy, 2020).

Indeed, the case studies considered in the 2011 Equality and Human Rights Commission's report indicated that hate crimes against disabled people are often repetitive and committed by known perpetrators, including family, neighbours, carers and friends (Thomas, 2011; 2013); within the home environment and/or neighbourhood. The abuse of the victims often starts with incidents that do not meet the threshold of a crime before escalating into more dangerous incidents (London DDPO Hate Crime Partnership, 2021). Examples of escalating situations have involved so-called 'mate crime' (Roulstone and Mason-Bish, 2013), said to involve a 'counterfeit friendship' where perpetrators initially befriend and then exploit and abuse the disabled person. Whilst this type of offence occurs against people with a range of disabilities – it is most prevalent against those with learning disabilities or mental health conditions (EHRC, 2011; Healey, 2015). A key example within the EHRC (2011) inquiry involved the case of Lee Irving, illustrative of the extreme nature of such targeted crimes.

Lee Irving, a 24-year-old with a learning disability from Newcastle, was befriended by a group of people who exploited and harmed him... they drugged, robbed, and

repeatedly beat him. In 2015, his body was found with 27 rib fractures, a broken nose, and a shattered jaw, highlighting the severe abuse he endured. His tragic death underscores the need for stronger protections for vulnerable individuals (Scully, 2023).

The case studies in the EHRC (2011) report on disability hate crimes in the UK reveal that such incidents are far from isolated. A further example within the inquiry was the case of David Askew, a 64-year-old man with learning disabilities who tragically died of a heart attack collapsing minutes after local youths had harassed him by tampering with his mother's mobility scooter and throwing a wheelie bin around his property. Despite enduring harassment from at least 26 individuals over 12 years and having his address marked as 'vulnerable' by police, responding officers were reportedly unaware of this. Following David's death, authorities acknowledged delays in their response, communication gaps, and a failure to recognise the risks the victim faced. Despite clear indications of prejudice, the prosecution did not classify the crime as a hate crime. The report into David's death critiques the responses of various law enforcement agencies, highlighting deficiencies in urgency and strategic planning to address these issues effectively (EHRC, 2011).

Overall, the EHRC (2011) inquiry reviewed ten cases where disabled people had either been killed or seriously injured, including those previously discussed. Serious criticisms were made both of the police and the CPS in these cases, highlighting a systematic failure by public authorities to recognise the extent and impact of harassment and abuse of disabled people, to take preventative action and to intervene effectively when it happened. Key findings were that the public authorities had often been aware of less serious incidents yet little action had been taken, the harassment often occurred within the context of exploitative relationship, involving a socially isolated victim, if left unchecked non-criminal behaviour and low level crime had rapidly escalated to more violent behaviour, resulting in death. Victims were often advised to

alter their own behaviour, rather than perpetrators being effectively tackled, hate crime was rarely considered as a motivating factor, incidents were accorded low priority and appropriate hate crime policing and legislative frameworks were not applied. Further examination of the evidence of such harassment discussed in the EHRC (2011) inquiry and other sources underscores the widespread nature of the issues in combatting disability hate crime (Quarmby, 2012) including on-going challenges of under-reporting and under-prosecution (Hamilton and Trickett, 2014).

Other high-profile inquiries have further illustrated the aforementioned issues, as being part of the manifestation and nature of hate crimes against disabled people, including public inquiries into the deaths of Fiona Pilkington (2011)¹ and Bijan Ebrahimi.² In order to tackle the reality of hate crimes against disabled people, the term ‘disablist violence’ has come to be considered as focusing attention on the bias, motivation and discrimination involved in perpetrator’s targeting and abuse of disabled people. This term is thought to be preferable to a narrow focus on ‘hate’ or use of the term ‘mate crime’ which masks the reality of the abusive situations involved (Perry 2013).³ In terms of impact, the consequence of hate crimes goes beyond physical harm, causing psychological distress, often forcing victims to withdraw from society and retreat into isolation. While the Home Office (2023) report indicates a one percent decrease in recorded disability hate crimes from the previous year, underreporting remains a concern, potentially influenced by inadequate responses from law enforcement leading to the victims ‘suffering in silence’ (Chakraborti, 2018).

The social model of disability views disability not as an individual attribute, but as a complex collection of barriers created by the social environment (World Health Organisation, 2024).

¹ IPCC 2011.

² Safer Bristol Partnership (2014).

³ Disablist hate crime is also more akin to the social model of disability.

This view suggests that the underreporting of disability hate crimes can be addressed by empowering disabled individuals to voice their needs and offering training to frontline workers so they can respond effectively to such incidents.

The Victim's Code outlines the standards that victims can expect from criminal justice agencies in England and Wales. According to the Victim's Code, individuals with physical disabilities, mental health conditions as defined by the Mental Health Act 1983, or significant impairments in intelligence and social functioning are considered vulnerable. These individuals are entitled to enhanced rights, including supportive measures such as referrals to specialist support services, special arrangements to reduce stress during trials, and communication aids. This highlights the responsibility of police officers as frontline workers to identify the diverse needs of the individuals that they are responding to. Despite the prevalence of harassment targeted at disabled people, not many victims report these incidents. Moreover, evidence suggests that, despite legislation for enhanced protection, services remain inaccessible for many disabled individuals (Sin, 2013; Wilkin, 2020). Victims frequently encounter disbelief in their version of events and/or inability from authorities to prevent incidents from re-occurring. This occurs as the manifestation of disability hate crime is poorly understood, as it often appears that it fails to 'fit' the legal threshold of hate crime, leading to disability being overlooked in hate crime cases (Macdonald et al., 2023).

Victims often express frustration with the initial response from police, describing it as slow and intimidating, and highlighting the lack of empathy of many frontline workers. Additionally, police often fail to provide updates after the initial reporting, leading to further disappointment and frustration (Chakraborti, 2018). These strained incidents diminish trust in law enforcement among disabled individuals (Healy, 2020).

Indeed, despite police officers being the first point of contact for disabled people who are either victims, witnesses to a crime, or because they are being arrested, they are likely to have received limited training in recognising disability and assisting disabled people. The incident outlined below provides an example of this issue, where police officers often fail to recognise that someone has a disability and/or to ensure that they respond appropriately to them (Chown, 2010). In some of these cases, as the following example illustrates, police officers can depict the disabled person as being uncooperative and in some cases as potentially criminal:

In May 2019, a 17-year-old girl who has a learning disability, had run away from a group on an escorted walk. After becoming distressed, a concerned member of the public called the police, and the girl also flagged down a passing police car and agreed to accompany the officers. However, the situation quickly escalated when the teenager attempted to exit the police vehicle. An officer attempting to restrain and handcuff her, responded with excessive force, reportedly striking the victim at least 30 times with a baton. The incident ultimately resulted in the dismissal of the police officer involved (Guardian, 2021).

Further examination of this incident indicates some of the barriers for police in effectively assisting a disabled victim during a distressing situation. Stereotypical assumptions about disabled people can lead to the responding officer making ill-informed decisions about disabled people and being dismissive of their concerns (Sin et al., 2013).

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS, 2018) reported a lack of a national hate crime training package for police forces and as a result, the training given to the officers is 'neither co-ordinated nor provided to everyone that needs it'. In an attempt to understand the existing state of hate crime training, we have sent Freedom of

Information (FOI) requests to 43 police forces in England and Wales. The questions asked in the FOI were:

1. Does the police department provide hate crime training for its officers? If yes, is the training conducted online or in person?
2. Does the police department provide specific training for its officers on disability hate crimes? If yes, is the training conducted online or in person?

We have received responses from all 43 police forces in England and Wales regarding the existing disability hate crime training provided to police employees. The responses indicate that all the police forces provide hate crime training to their new employees. However, only a very few (6.97%) mentioned that refresher courses were provided beyond the initial recruitment phase. The training content in most police forces primarily focuses on providing an overview of hate crimes, with a specific section dedicated to discussing disability hate crimes as one of the protected strands. The only force that did not have a dedicated training session for hate crimes was the South Yorkshire Police; however, the content is integrated into various other training sessions. The below tables show the details of the FOI responses received from all 43 police forces in England and Wales:

Freedom of Information (FOI) Responses

Table 1: The table shows the statistical distribution of the hate crime training provided by the police forces based on the FOI responses received.

FOI Responses				
		Number of forces	Percentage	
Was hate crime training provided?	Yes	Offered to as part of initial training	20	46.51%
		Offered as part of CPD	3	6.97%
		Unclear	23	53.48%
	No	0	0	
	Did not respond	1	2.3%	
Did the hate crime training cover disability hate crimes?	Yes	42	97.67%	
	No	1	2.3%	
What was the mode of delivery?	In-person training	25	58.13%	
	Online training	4	9.3%	
	Combination of online and in-person training	13	30.23%	
	Did not specify	1	2.3%	

Percentages are calculated based on the total number of responses received to the FOI requests (n=43). (Adapted from Hardy et al., 2020).

Please also see Table 2 and Table 3 in the appendix, which show how police forces responded to the FOI request, and the details of the hate crime training provided, respectively.

Notably, literature from other research studies on police hate crime training indicates that experienced police officers often criticise the training for its lack of interactivity and failure to depict the real-life experiences of disability hate crime victims (Trickett and Hamilton, 2016; Hardy et al., 2020; Tyson, 2022). A review of hate crime training provided to one of the forces found that the training did not improve the confidence of officers in dealing with hate crimes (Trickett & Hamilton, 2016). Both Trickett and Hamilton (2016) and Hardy et al. (2020) recommend greater engagement with victims in police training, particularly for disability hate crime training.

In response to this recommendation, Dimensions, a non-profit organization supporting individuals with learning disabilities, have developed a Disability Hate Crime training session as part of the #ImWithSam campaign. This training incorporates real-life anecdotes from hate crime victims to engage attendees and enhance learning outcomes. These training sessions have been previously conducted with Surrey Police and have generated positive learning outcomes with 22% of the officers feeling confident in supporting victims with neurodivergent conditions (Dimensions, 2018). A collaborative initiative between Nottingham Trent University and Dimensions has made this training program accessible to students at various universities across the United Kingdom.

Aim of the current report

This evaluative report aims to assess the effectiveness of the ‘Tackling Learning Disability and Autism Hate Crime’ training provided by Dimensions in enhancing officers’ understanding of neurodivergent conditions and helping them feel more equipped to support a vulnerable victim, witness, or suspects. Training was provided in person for policing students and police employees. Based on the feedback collected through the online survey, this report will highlight the key learning outcomes of the workshop, in addition to providing suggestions for

improvement to Dimensions. The feedback will also be shared with the College of Policing to improve the disability hate crime training currently offered to police officers.

Details of the training

The training was led by representatives from Dimensions, a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting individuals with a range of learning disabilities, including autism. The session addressed the issue of disability hate crime, with a particular focus on learning disabilities and autism. The content of the training included an overview of learning disabilities and autism, challenges associated with these conditions, and practical strategies and tips to be more inclusive in interacting with and supporting people with these conditions. Videos and activities to facilitate discussions were incorporated throughout the presentation. There was also the option to access an online training platform online.

Methodology

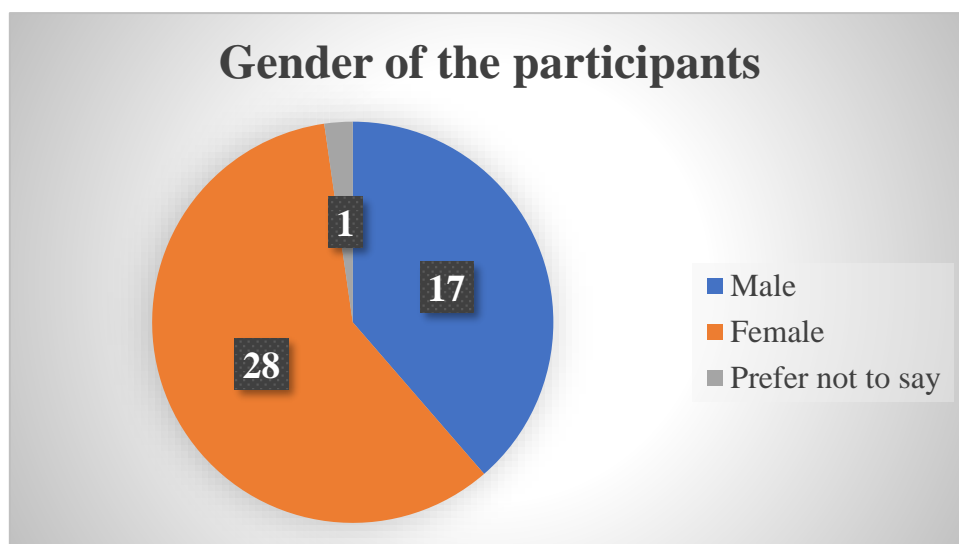
The attendees who completed the survey included Professional Policing students from Nottingham Trent University, Plymouth University, and Easton College (part of City College Norwich), along with Social Science and Criminology students from Liverpool Hope University. Additionally, responses were gathered from police employees of the Nottinghamshire Police Force who attended the training session. In total, the survey received responses from 44 individuals who attended the training in person and 2 individuals who participated online.

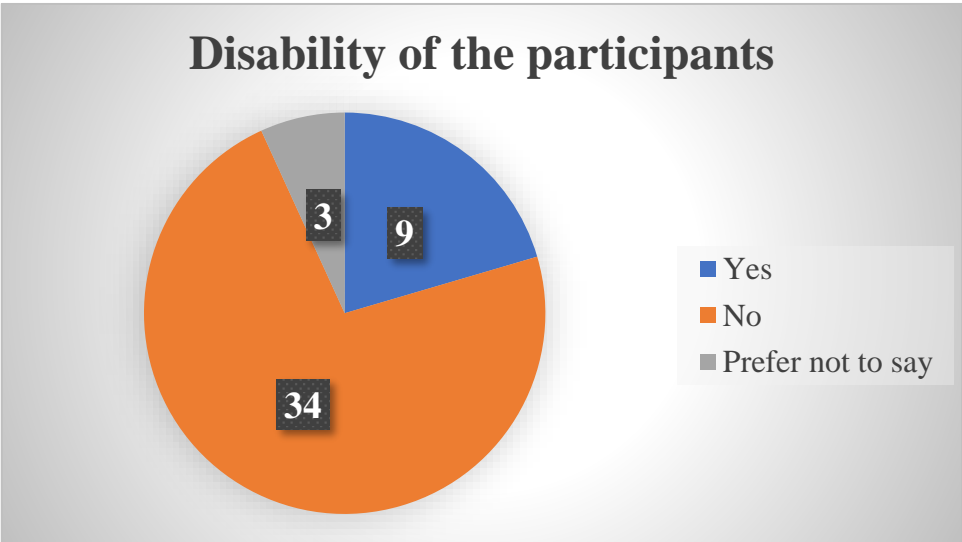
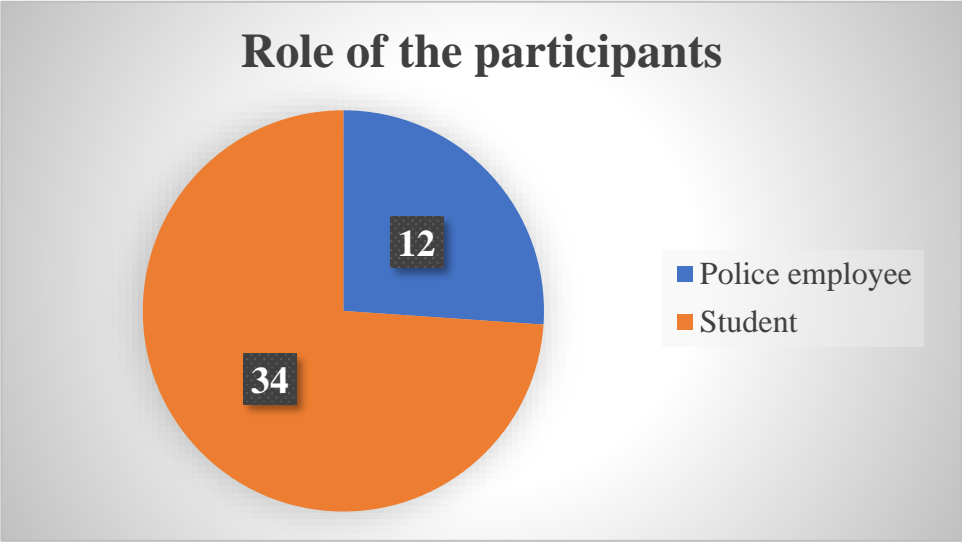
The ethical approval for the research was obtained from Nottingham Trent University's School of Business, Law and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee which is governed by the research ethics of the Social Research Association.

The online evaluation survey was distributed at the end of the ‘Disability Hate Crime Training’ session. The first section of the evaluation survey included a participant information sheet explaining the purpose of the evaluative research, the nature of participation, and how the collected data would be used. Participants were also informed that their involvement was entirely voluntary and that they could withdraw from the survey at any point without consequence. They were also provided with the option to request the removal of their data on or before 15th April 2024. Following this, consent was obtained for participation in the evaluation and the use of data for research purposes. Participants proceeded to answer open-ended and close-ended questions which aimed to capture their feedback and perspectives on the training. Support contacts were provided at the end of sessions for participants to access, in case of any distress as a result of attending the training and/or taking part in the survey.

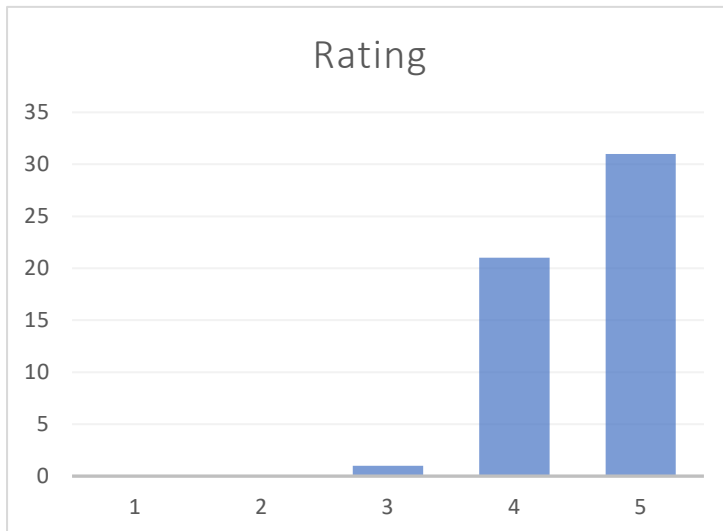
Survey Demographics and Responses

The following charts depict the demographic information of the participants:





The participants were asked to rate the workshop on a scale of 1-5 with 5 being the highest score. The average rating received for the training based on the responses provided by 44 respondents is 4.68. Two people who answered the survey did not respond to this question.



Average rating: 4.68

What are the key questions in the survey?

What are your key learnings from this training?

Has your understanding of learning disability and autism hate crime changed as a result of this training? Why?

This question applies to policing students. How does this training support your learning for the policing course?

This question applies to police employees: How does this training support you in your role as a police employee?

What (if anything) would you change about this training?

What do the responses from the survey tell us about the training outcomes?

The training deepened participants' understanding of various disabilities and the need for diverse communication methods.

Participants learned strategies to support disabled individuals effectively during crime incidents.

Training fostered empathy and shifted perspectives on disabilities beyond 'labels'.

Participants recognised practical application of training in their policing roles, particularly in supporting vulnerable victims.

Suggestions for improvements of the training included more interactivity, trigger warnings and longer duration of training.

Thematic representations of open-ended questions

The responses of the participants for each open-ended question of the feedback survey on the training are grouped into key themes below:

Q: What are your key learnings from this training?

HATE CRIME UNDERSTANDING

The training session effectively helped the attendees develop a basic understanding of hate crime, as evidenced by the survey responses.

“People can be a victim of a hate crime without realising it” (Student 13)

“The harassment of people with mental disabilities is far more common than what you see online” (Student 36)

“Different ways in which they are targeted and become victims of hate crime.”
(Student 2-online).

The majority of these responses came from the policing students. The two police employees who listed this learning outcome commented that:

“Interesting to hear the work being done on a national level.” (Police employee 16)

“To ensure an understanding of what can be done to support victims of hate incidents or crime.” (Police employee 21)

Understanding of underreporting that often occurs in disability hate crimes was also listed as a key learning.

“People with disabilities are common victims of hate crime and their lives are negatively affected by it. People with disabilities have been unlikely to report crimes against them in the past...” (Student 11)

“That not many people report hate crimes” (Student 9)

DISABILITY AWARENESS

The training session facilitated a notable increase in participants’ understanding of various disabilities. Many participants expressed that the training helped them to better understand the definition and symptoms of these conditions.

“Wider research and understanding autism and disabilities full meaning and definition.” (Student 26)

“Really informative especially as delivered by people who have lived experience.”
(Police employee 16)

“Defining what autism is. The key aspects of it. The symptoms of this.” (Student 32)

“Life is harder for people with mental disabilities than first thought.” (Student 26)

A police employee noted that along with improved knowledge on the subject, it also allowed them to reflect on their existing attitudes towards disabled people.

“Greater understanding of autism, increased knowledge of learning disabilities, a reflection on my attitude towards autism and learning disabilities.” (Police employee 19)

LEVELS OF DIFFICULTIES

An understanding that there are different levels of difficulties in neurodivergent conditions was listed as a learning outcome by both police employees and students. This could indicate that the existing police training modules do not emphasise the differences in presentation that can occur in neurodivergent conditions.

“That there are different levels of neurodiversity. That some people struggle with simple tasks” (Student 8)

“There are different levels of learning disabilities.” (Student 6)

“How learning difficulties differ for different people.” (Student 24)

COMMUNICATION NEEDS OF NEURODIVERGENT POPULATION

The training facilitated the understanding that people can adapt diverse forms of communication to communicate. Patience, understanding and empathy were highlighted as important qualities that could enhance the quality of interaction between a police officer and a neurodivergent victim.

“Everyone can communicate just in different ways.” (Student 6)

“You need to be patient when communicating with people who have learning disabilities.” (Student 12)

“Understanding the range of ways people communicate and why it’s important to respect everybody.” (Student 1)

Participants also shared that they learned about various ways to support diverse communication needs, which would help them assist neurodivergent individuals in expressing themselves more effectively.

“People with disabilities may need extra support when communicating (e.g. giving them some more time).” (Student 13)

“How to better communicate and work with people with disabilities” (Student 38)

One participant highlighted effective communication as a very important skill that is needed for police officers when handling disability hate crimes.

“Awareness and knowledge on how to properly approach and communicate with people with disabilities when they are victims of crime is crucial for police officers.” (Student 11)

SEEING BEYOND ‘LABELS’

The training facilitated a shift in participants’ perceptions, empowering them to see beyond the stereotypes and ‘labels’ of disability.

“Autistic people aren’t rude.” (Student 12)

“That each person with a learning disability is unique and shouldn’t be defined by a label.” (Student 6)

“People with disabilities are not defined by their label (they are people).” (Student 13)

The feedback also shed light on the judgemental attitude that some law enforcers have towards disabled people.

“That the police do not think that those who are neurodivergent don’t pose as good witnesses.” (Student 8)

UNDERSTANDING HOW TO OFFER SUPPORT

The training was noted to be successful in helping the attendees familiarise themselves with different strategies and techniques that could be used to support disabled people in the event of a crime. This aspect also emerged as a key learning point for the majority of the police employees who attended the training.

“Better understanding around police interaction with people with learning disabilities. Better ways to support victims. To be able to provide a better service and become approachable.” (Police employee 22)

“To further help and understand those victims that do have learning disabilities and or difficulties. Learn of tools to use to support everyone. To ensure an understanding of what can be done to support victims of hate incidents or crime.” (Police employee 21)

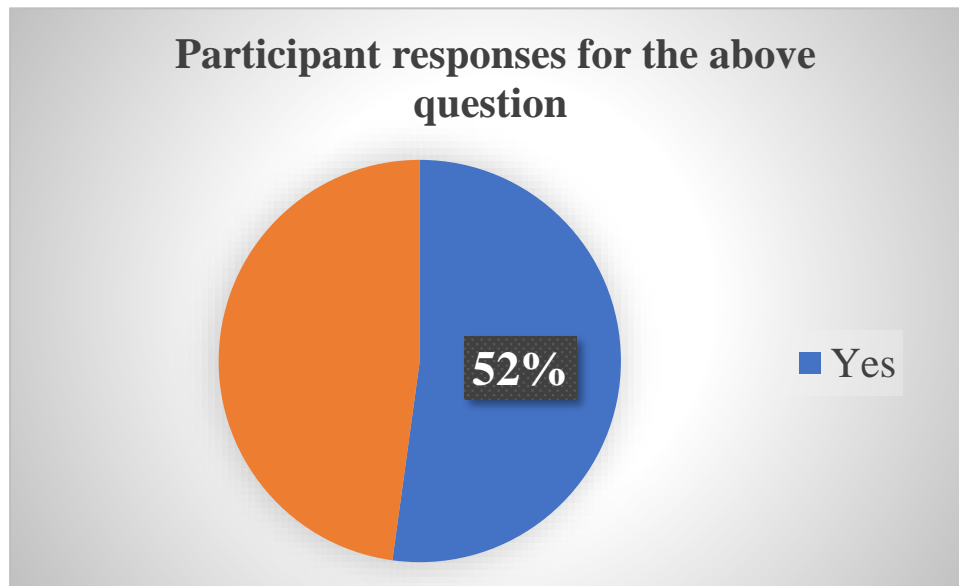
“To ensure an understanding of what can be done to support victims of hate incidents or crime.” (Police employee 21)

“That there are multiple ways to provide support to people with disabilities and autism.” (Student 46)

An understanding of the needs of disabled people when considering the potential for reasonable adjustments was also recognised.

“How to make reasonable adjustments for someone with learning difficulties.” (Police employee 35)

Q: Has your understanding of learning disability and autism hate crime changed as a result of this training? Why?



The majority of the participants responded with ‘Yes’ to this open-ended question. The responses that were detailed are grouped under different themes are follows:

HATE CRIME AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

The training’s strength in providing a well-rounded view of disability hate crimes was emphasised again in the responses, with participants acknowledging the role of the training in helping them understand the consequences of disability hate crimes.

“Yes, this has gave me a better understanding around learning disabilities and autism hate crimes. Thus to better support potential future victims.” (Police employee 22)

“Yes. I understand much more about hate crime and what it is and the reality of this.”
(Student 32)

One participant emphasised the importance of this knowledge in the prevention of hate crimes:

“Yes. I did not realise it was classed as a hate crime before being educated. I would also assume a hate crime is to do with race etc. I now know signs to look out for and what I can do to prevent this.” (Police employee 35)

While two participants noted how the training strengthened their existing understanding:

“I wouldn’t say it has changed however it has certainly helped to reinforce the effect that hate crimes have on individuals.” (Police employee 16)

“I think my understanding has improved a lot. However, I did study hate crime when joining the police so I already had background knowledge.” (Student 46)

UNDER-REPORTING AND STATISTICS

From the responses, it is evident that the training was effective in conveying the magnitude of disability hate crimes.

“The statistics shocked me!” (Student 24)

“My understanding of the topic has changed quite a lot due to realising how much of a problem a hate crime of this kind is and how common it is.” (Student 36)

“I am more aware of how severe and high the statistics are.” (Student 2)

“Yes, because we never really hear or see this happening so hearing about it from Dimensions has made me have a better understanding of what goes on.” (Student 44)

Participants also expressed feeling shocked at the rate of underreporting that happens in the context of disability hate crimes.

“Yes because I didn’t realise how many hate crimes weren’t reported due to embarrassment and so on.” (Student 9)

“Yes , I realised that there is more hate crime than it seems, people just don’t report it.” (Student 8)

CHANGE IN PERSPECTIVE

One impact of the training was to enhance participants’ understanding of neurodivergent conditions, which resulted in participants developing a wider outlook regarding the challenges faced by disabled people.

“I was aware of some of the problems but the training has given me a different perspective on how people with disabilities are affected and has given me a greater understanding towards the underlying issues and what can be done to help.” (Student 11)

“Yes, it has given me a deeper understanding of how people with learning disabilities are treated in society.” (Student 13)

A better understanding of the diverse communication needs of neurodivergent individuals was seen to translate into the participants expressing more awareness on how to engage with them.

“Yes, now I know how better to engage with neurodiverse people when a crime has been committed.” (Student 4)

“Yes because it can be easy to disregard or not properly consider the needs of others sometimes.” (Police employee 19)

“Often people will judge someone with a learning disability by saying they’re rude before they learn that they don’t typically communicate the same way as others.” (Student 12)

Q: This question applies to policing students: How does this training support your learning for the policing course?

BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF VULNERABILITIES

The policing students who attended the training reported that it helped them to be more aware of the diversity of the population that they will be dealing with, and also raised their awareness of the rights of disabled people.

“It has helped me understand diversity and the importance of equality.” (Student 1)

“Helps understand disability and include it in policing.” (Student 10)

Following the responses to previous questions, an understanding of the diverse communication needs of neurodivergent individuals was mentioned again.

“It helps us understand and realise how they are treated what their differences are and how to talk to people with disabilities by changing our communication skills.”
(Student 9)

“Victims, witnesses and even suspects all have the right to be understood and to understand what is happening. It is important to assess a situation and adapt the ways in which we communicate.” (Student 6)

USEFUL INFORMATION BEFORE A CAREER IN POLICE

The respondents shared that the knowledge that they gained from the training would be useful in their careers as police officers, especially when supporting vulnerable victims.

“It supports my course very well, especially when it comes to communication with somebody with a disability as it has taught me how to best adapt to each person’s comforts so we can do our best with their case. When taking a statement, the comfort

of the victim/witness is vital so we can get as much information from them as possible while they feel safe and comfortable.” (Student 11)

“This supports my learning as I can apply the information into my career, having a wider understanding of the issue.” (Student 7)

“How the police can adapt or implement policies to enable reasonable adjustments and how officers can be educated in supporting vulnerable victims.” (Student 34)

“It allows you to understand how you can treat individuals with disabilities for practical use later on.” (Student 42)

One participant noted that it enabled them to learn from other police officers’ mistakes and be prepared to support someone in need.

“It has given me an insight into some of the mistakes that previous police officers had made when dealing with people with learning disabilities and what we can do as future police officers and not make the same mistakes that were made before.”

(Student 13)

SUPPLEMENTARY TO COURSE WORK

Two policing students also noted that the information provided supplements their coursework.

They remarked:

“It supports me because in my coursework I’m going to talk about disabled people and their opportunities in workplaces.” (Student 44)

“This training I believe anyway is and will be extremely helpful especially in the modules aiming toward inclusion.” (Student 36)

Q: This question applies to police employees: How does this training support you in your role as a police employee?

SUPPORT IN DAILY WORK

Police officers mentioned that along with a greater understanding of disabilities in general, the information provided in the training supports their daily activities offering them useful tips to dealing with vulnerable victims more effectively.

“It helps to understand what is being done with CPS and some useful tips for operational officers to best support individuals.” (Police employee 16)

“Will help with day-to-day work life and incidents we come across.” (Employee 15)

“Gives me a greater understanding on how to help support victims of crime who may have such difficulties or disabilities. Helps to provide them with the help they need.”
(Police employee 33)

One police employee listed how the knowledge gained can be used to educate other colleagues:

“I now can educate other staff members on what to look out for, how to make reasonable adjustments and how to prevent hate crimes like this.” (Police employee 35)

The training was also found to reinforce the confidence in currently implemented techniques to support victims.

“Will help with my role as an emergency call handler. Some of the techniques I was already doing like allowing more time, explaining in a different way and speaking slowly but this gives me more confidence I am doing the right things.” (Police employee 20)

Additionally, one employee noted that this training was superior to previous training in improving the understanding and awareness of learning disabilities.

“Gives a massive understanding in how to deal with a situation regarding someone with learning difficulties as I feel this is not covered enough during police training.”

(Police employee 35)

Q. What (if anything) would you change about this training?

Out of 32 responses received for this question, 15 people said that they would not change anything about the training. The rest of the responses are grouped into themes below.

MAKE IT INTERACTIVE

Participants acknowledged that while the training included interactive elements, they desired a greater level of interactivity, particularly through group activities.

“Make it a little more interactive.” (Student 8)

“More emphasis on the group activity elements.” (Student 37)

“I would include more exercises to involve the audience a bit more and put more complex scenarios forward to challenge them and give them a better understanding instead of the audience just being told what would happen in a specific situation.”

(Student 11)

There was a preference for incorporating additional real-life examples, particularly focusing on past police errors and lessons learned.

“I would give more examples of errors that the police had made in the past and touch on how future police officers cannot make the same mistakes about previous officers (e.g. give more real-life instances of other mistakes officers have made when dealing with disability hate crimes).” (Student 13)

LONGER DURATION

Four participants expressed a preference for longer training with two of them suggesting inclusion of discussions to further enhance the understanding of hate crimes.

“Let a bit more time to have more productive discussion.” (Student 25)

“Nothing, potentially longer.” (Police employee 22)

However, one participant had a differing opinion:

“Slightly shorter incorporate as part of existing hate and or diversity training.”

(Police employee 14)

INCLUDE TRIGGER WARNINGS

Three participants recommended adapting the training to better accommodate the needs of neurodivergent individuals, specifically by incorporating trigger warnings before videos that could potentially cause overstimulation.

“Before the sensory overload YouTube clip - ask if any participants have autism as it can cause them to have a sensory overload.” (Student 34)

“I would change the training to suit the audience of those who have autism or learning disabilities. Though going through case studies was very informing and helpful.” (Student 30)

“Maybe some more trigger warnings.” (Student 31)

Q. Please provide any additional comments you would like to share with us in the space below.

A few responses that were received for this question are mentioned below:

“Really enjoyed this, really well done and well presented. I found this really informative and it relates heavily to our current learning.” (Student 6)

“Amazingly inspirational, shows anyone can do it irrespective of background or wellbeing.” (Student 37)

“Thank you for sharing your stories and experiences.” (Police employee 16)

“A good atmosphere in the training.” (Employee 19)

Summary

The feedback from the participants reveals that the workshop had a strong impact on helping them develop a holistic understanding of disability hate crimes. One of the most prominent learnings that occurred in both the police employees and the policing students alike is the enhanced understanding of disabilities, particularly neurodivergent conditions. This awareness not only expanded their knowledge but also prompted reflection on existing attitudes towards neurodivergent people. The workshop also facilitated a shift in the participants’ perspective encouraging them to see beyond ‘labels’ and stereotypes commonly associated with disability.

The participants also noted a greater appreciation for the challenges faced by neurodivergent individuals, especially people with autism and learning disabilities. It is possible to infer that this could translate into efforts to make interactions with vulnerable victims more inclusive. Another important takeaway is the recognition of different levels of difficulties within neurodivergent conditions. This could indicate a drawback in the current police training or learning modules in providing information on the differences in how disabled people may present according to particular neurodivergent conditions. Awareness of these differences would help attendees tailor their approaches and support strategies to fit the needs and requirements of the individuals they are catering to.

The responses in the feedback form also revealed that the participants gained insights into the prevalence of hate crimes and the shocking rate of underreporting associated with these crimes

along with the devastating consequences for victims, including secondary victimisation. The majority of the attendees mentioned that the workshop has helped them learn new skills and techniques equipping them to support vulnerable individuals in the event of a hate crime. This insight was particularly evident in the understanding of the communication differences that exist in neurodiverse individuals and learning ways to help bridge the gap.

For the students, the workshop was reported to enhance their understanding of disability and the specific needs of disabled individuals. The majority of the students also noted that the workshop provided them with practical knowledge that they could apply to their future roles within the police force. They felt that this knowledge would equip them with essential skills for engaging with a diverse population with empathy and compassion. Additionally, a few of them also noted how this workshop supplemented their existing modules.

Similarly, the police employees also found the workshop to help them learn new strategies and ideas to support vulnerable individuals. Even among the police officers who had an idea about considering and adapting to the needs of disabled victims, the information shared helped to reinforce existing strategies. For some employees, it reinforced their confidence in supporting disabled victims. It is interesting to note that one employee shared that this knowledge would be good to share with other colleagues.

In terms of improvement, participants suggested bringing more interactivity to the workshop through discussions and group activities to make it more engaging. A few participants also suggested extending the duration of the workshop to make room for more in-depth discussions. One important recommendation was to include trigger warnings before videos are used to show sensory triggers in individuals to make it more suitable for individuals with neurodivergent needs. Given the content of the training, this was a particularly pertinent point.

Overall, the feedback emphasises the workshop's success in expanding participants' awareness, fostering empathy, and equipping them with various practical strategies to better support disabled individuals and address disability hate crimes within their respective roles.

Conclusion

Participants' feedback has revealed the workshop to be a very positive learning opportunity for policing students and police employees alike. It is notable that the positive feedback on the training indicates that it addresses many of the issues raised in previous examinations of police hate crime training, particularly on disability training, as discussed earlier in this report (Trickett and Hamilton, 2016; Hardy et al., 2020; Tyson, 2022).

This is particularly important given that the FOI feedback indicated that whilst most of the police forces do provide hate crime training, a dedicated section to raise awareness and knowledge about disability hate crimes is necessary so that officers can better equip themselves to assist a disabled person in their policing roles. Dimensions' training provided this whilst also helping to understand that there is a wide range of neurodivergent conditions, affecting those who might be victims of hate crimes. The feedback provided by the students indicates that providing such training before they start working in their policing roles would potentially help officers become competent in preventing disability hate crimes, responding to victims, and interacting with disabled people more empathetically.

Recommendations

- Include comprehensive disability hate crime training for police forces and other criminal justice agencies to adequately prepare law enforcement officials in addressing these critical incidents.
- Implement more interactive elements into the presentation such as interactive exercises, case studies, and group discussions to foster engagement and reinforce learning.
- Adapt the training session to fit the needs of the neurodivergent population, include trigger warnings before the videos that could be potentially distressing to individuals with sensory sensitivities. It would also be useful to provide an option for the participants to opt out of certain materials during the training.
- Consider extending the training duration to allow for deeper discussions and reflections on key topics related to disability hate crimes and effective support strategies.
- The content could be tailored to align with the roles and backgrounds of the audience, for example, more incident-based activities could be used in the training sessions with police employees.
- Provide supplementary information that participants can access after the completion of the session. Providing refresher courses would also help in retaining the learning outcomes.

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Appendix

Table 2 shows the list of police forces who responded to the Freedom of Information Request

Number	Names of the Police Forces who responded to the FOI request
1	Avon and Somerset Constabulary
2	Bedfordshire Police
3	Cambridgeshire Constabulary
4	Cheshire Constabulary
5	City of London Police
6	Cleveland Police
7	Cumbria Constabulary
8	Derbyshire Constabulary
9	Devon & Cornwall Police
10	Dorset Police
11	Durham Constabulary
12	Essex Police
13	Gloucestershire Constabulary
14	Greater Manchester Police
15	Hampshire Constabulary
16	Hertfordshire Constabulary
17	Humberside Police
18	Kent Police
19	Lancashire Constabulary
20	Leicestershire Police
21	Lincolnshire Police
22	Merseyside Police
23	Metropolitan Police Service

24	Norfolk Constabulary
25	North Yorkshire Police
26	Northamptonshire Police
27	Northumbria Police
28	Nottinghamshire Police
29	South Yorkshire Police
30	Staffordshire Police
31	Suffolk Constabulary
32	Surrey Police
33	Sussex Police
34	Thames Valley Police
35	Warwickshire Police
36	West Mercia Police
37	West Midlands Police
38	West Yorkshire Police
39	Wiltshire Police
40	Dyfed-Powys Police
41	Gwent Police
42	North Wales Police
43	South Wales Police

Table 3 shows the details of the hate crime training provided by police forces

Number	Names of the Police Forces who responded to the FOI request	Type of disability training offered
1	Avon and Somerset Constabulary	Hate crime training is built into course programmes, such as the Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship. This input is provided face to face as well as online. Some courses provide in-person training, and the information is also available online on our intranet site and through the APP guidance from the College of Policing.
2	Bedfordshire Police	Bedfordshire Police, Hertfordshire Constabulary, and Cambridgeshire Constabulary have provided a joint response, as follows:
3	Hertfordshire Constabulary	
4	Cambridgeshire Constabulary	Digital Packages. Hate crime is trained to new recruits on all entry pathways. It falls in with a response policing phase of the training program around week 9. It is delivered in person using a variety of methods PowerPoint, video, and discussion. The training also goes into depth around section 146 Criminal Justice Act which was superseded by the Sentencing Act 2020 which allows sentencing to be increased by aggravating factors around disability, racial, religious, sexual orientation, or transgender.

5	Cheshire Constabulary	In-person training with additional online training packages that officers are required to complete.
6	City of London Police	Student officers are provided with training about hate crimes when they join the force in person. The training covers all protected characteristics, meaning disability is covered.
7	Cleveland Police	Face-to-face training on hate crime and disability hate crime is delivered to new student officers, and there are also online packages that are available.
8	Cumbria Constabulary	In-person. No further details provided.
9	Derbyshire Constabulary	<p>Hate Crime Training is delivered to all new officers as part of the College of Policing Entry in-person. There is no specific stand-alone session on disability hate crime, however, disability hate crime is covered within the session. The aims and objectives of the training (taken from the lesson plan) are:</p> <p>To have an awareness of what Hate Crime is, how to deal with it, and how it affects victims and the community.</p> <p>Lesson Objectives: By the end of this lesson participants will be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have an awareness of what hate crime is and the effects it has on its victims,

		<p>our colleagues and the community at large.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Have an awareness of the effects it has on its victims, our colleagues, and the community at large. 3. Have an awareness of which codes and forms to use when recording hate crimes. 4. Have an awareness of how to effectively support victims of hate crime. 5. Have an awareness of the requirement to be sympathetic to individual needs when dealing with hate crime.
10	Devon & Cornwall Police	<p>The delivery specifically covers hate crime legislation in relation to the monitored strands: Disability, Race, Religion, Transgender, and Sexual Orientation. This is currently delivered online during week 14 of the student officer’s training. As above, disability hate crime forms part of the broader ‘Hate Crime’ session. So whilst it is covered specifically, it is not a standalone session is currently delivered online during week 14 of the student officer’s training. As well as the Hate Crime lesson, the student officers are also provided with the “Hate Crime Operational Guidance” document from the College of Policing. This document contains a specific chapter on Disability Hate Crime. Whilst not specific to hate crime, disability is also covered in the session</p>

		<p>“Dealing with vulnerable victims and witnesses”. There is a clear overlap with sessions here, as the person with the disability could need extra help and support, no matter what the crime type.</p>
11	Dorset Police	<p>Student Officers cover these criteria through blended learning (some online and some in class) in their initial training and specifically in the following sections:</p> <p>Public Protection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Terms and offences associated with public protection policing, including Hate crime • Cultural considerations associated with some public protection offences (e.g., female genital mutilation, hate crime, and forced marriage) <p>Victims & Witnesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies to safeguard, manage risk and refer the victim care to appropriate specialist agencies/telecoms operators: Hate crime support <p>Digital Policing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common internet-facilitated crimes: Hate crime. <p>Conducting Investigations:</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hate crime (including the importance of proving hostility). • Enhanced sentencing for hate crimes <p>A Hate Crime e-learning package is also available to all officers, and below is an overview:</p> <p>Description:</p> <p>This module aims to provide an overview of the changes to the authorised professional practice (APP) for the recording and retention of non-crime hate incidents (NCHIs). By the end of the module, you will know: What an NCHI is, when to record an NCHI, and the additional threshold for recording personal data.</p>
12	Durham Constabulary	New police officers recruited to the Force receive in-person training on hate crimes which includes disability hate crimes.
13	Essex Police	<p>Foundation training for police officers is carried out in person. The lesson is called Hate Crime and covers all forms of Hate Crime. Officers receive training on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home Office crime stats on hate crimes, including disability, the definition of a hate crime. • Enhanced sentencing for crimes that have been aggravated by hostility towards the victim's (actual/presumed) disability (sec

		66 Sentencing Act), what hostility can look like and ways it can manifest itself.
14	Gloucestershire Constabulary	In-person. No further details provided.
15	Greater Manchester Police	Greater Manchester Police does provide hate crime training for its officers. This training is conducted in person; however, officers are also required to complete separate mandatory online e-learning packages that refer to the subject of hate crimes committed based on disability. Greater Manchester Police does provide training for its officers on disability hate crimes, although this is presented as part of a package that addresses all protected characteristics, not just disability.
16	Hampshire Constabulary	Hate Incident training is provided to all staff which includes disability hate crimes and incidents as one of the five protected strands. The training consists of both online & classroom-based training.
17	Humberside Police	Conducted in person and online. No further details provided.
18	Kent Police	Hate Crime training covers disability as well as race, religion, sexual orientation and transgender within the context of a hate crime and a hate incident. This training is conducted in person.
19	Lancashire Constabulary	Face-to-face training on hate crime and disability hate crime is provided to the force.

		CPD training can also be done, taking the form of online.
20	Leicestershire	Disability is covered within the wider hate crime training, however, there are no specific training products delivered separately for disability and are delivered in person.
21	Lincolnshire Police	Student officers during their initial training course receive face-to-face training relating to Hate Crime and disability is mentioned within this as one of the strands of diversity.
22	Merseyside Police	All student officers on initial police officer training courses receive in-person inputs on hate crime from both initial trainers and directly from the Hate Crime Team. Alongside this PCSO's also have hate crime training directly from the Hate Crime Team conducted in person. There is ongoing development to further their hate crime training by the initial trainers alongside training already being provided. Within the officer training from initial trainers, there is a section on disability hate crime, which is also delivered in person within the Training Academy at Merseyside Police.
23	Metropolitan Police Service	Hate Crime training is provided to all recruits (Police Officer, Direct Entry Detective, Police Community Support Officer as well as other new joiners in various roles within the Metropolitan Police). There is additional training provided for uniformed Police

		Officers going into the Detective Route as well as enhanced training provided to Detectives going into specific Safeguarding units tasked with investigation of Hate Crime (Community Safety Units). All training will have an element of some online training but will be predominantly face-to-face training. Disability Hate Crime training is conducted within the main Hate Crime training – there is no specific separate specific element.
24	Norfolk Constabulary	Norfolk and Suffolk Constabularies have provided a joint response, as follows: The Constabularies do provide hate crime training, which is taught by Anglian Ruskin University (ARU) to new students joining the constabulary; and is trained in person. Students are also assessed through select roleplays that are based around hate crime. Officers also have access to online E-learning material, which includes material in relation to hate crimes. The topic of disability hate crime is also covered as part of the ARU hate crime teach which is in person.
25	Suffolk Constabulary	
26	North Yorkshire Police	Online and in-person. No further details provided.
27	Northamptonshire Police	In-person training. No further details provided.
28	Northumbria Police	Online hate crime is available to all officers. It has also previously been run in person.

		Additionally, in- person training on hate crime is currently delivered to officers joining Northumbria Police within the first 17 weeks of their training. Disability hate is covered as one of the protected characteristics discussed.
29	Nottinghamshire Police	Training around hate crime is delivered in line with the National Policing Curriculum set by the College of Policing. This is delivered in person. Disability hate crime is covered in our hate crime session in line with the National Policing Curriculum set by the College of Policing. This is delivered in person.
30	South Yorkshire Police	No specific training is supplied for hate crimes or disability hate crimes. However, the principles of hate crime are of course embedded throughout a number of the training offered. All training programmes are delivered in person.
31	Staffordshire Police	Does not provide to officers any specific training in relation to disability hate crime. However, disability hate crime is covered within the hate crime awareness sessions provided to officers and is conducted in person.
32	Surrey Police	Online training for disability hate crime is provided. No further details provided.
33	Sussex Police	All new officers and PCSOs receive face to face hate crime training as part of their initial training phase. Contact officers also receive

		<p>similar face-to-face training as part of their induction training. Newly promoted Sergeants and supervisors receive face to face hate crime training as part of their mandated "Managing Inclusion & Widening Participation" course. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) training has also been delivered to officers in this area and has been virtual and via eLearning.</p> <p>Disability hate crime is discussed as part of hate crime modules for all new officers, PCSOs and contact staff as part of their initial / induction training.</p>
34	Thames Valley Police	In person. No further details provided.
35	Warwickshire Police	<p>Yes. There is online hate crime training via College Learn for operational officers and staff designed to help them identify and deal with hate crime and support victims, from initial police contact and through the investigation. This also includes a College of Policing module around the recording and retention of non-crime hate incidents (NCHIs). All new officers on the Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship (PCDA), Detective Constable Entry Programme (DCEP), and Degree Holder Entry Programme (DHEP) have a hate crime training input via the university and as part of the Initial Police Learning and Development Programme (IPLDP). This training covers the</p>

		disability aspect of hate crime, however there is no specific training solely around this.
36	West Mercia Police	Hate crime training is provided. But no specific disability hate crime training is provided.
37	West Midlands Police	<p>The e-learning package provided to the learners include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the early signs of Hate Crime and recognise vulnerability by encouraging the reporting of Hate Crimes/Incidents. • Define barriers to reporting hate crime and how they can be removed, thus increasing service provided and achieving trust and confidence from victims. • Identify the considerations of a victim when bringing offenders to justice and consider enhanced sentencing to those who it applies to. • State partners roles and responsibilities and their involvement in hate crimes, recognising what support they can provide to victims. • Summarise police actions when dealing with hate crimes and hate incidents. • Explain the impact of hate crimes and hate incidents on victims. There is an additional resource that the Officers are given on specific case studies relevant to the legislation to highlight failings and improvements on

		<p>previous and future records of hate crime. This is a blended delivery; this lesson can be delivered via (digital learning platform) online using the collaborate meeting room or in the classroom. The lesson is one of a dictated approach however trainers are encouraged to ask questions and allow students to ask questions to clarify information. Both online and classroom require the same approach where students can ask questions throughout to clarify or understand the information being given. Additionally, there is also an e-learning course</p> <p>Description: recording non-crime hate incidents duration approx.: 30 mins</p> <p>This module aims to provide an overview of the changes to the authorised professional practice (APP) for the recording and retention of non-crime hate incidents (NCHIs). By the end of the module, the colleague will know: what an NCHI is, when to record an NCHI and the additional threshold for recording personal data.</p> <p>Further to the e-learning package, there is additional assessed presentation on Hate Crime which includes the 5 strands- Race; Religion; Disability; Sexual orientation; Transgender identity. The presentation last 30 minutes split across the 5 strands. The</p>
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		<p>presentation requires a time lined case study for each, it must include:</p> <p>Who, what, where, when, how and why it is recorded under that strand,</p> <p>Were there other agencies involved?</p> <p>Was it a social media escalated case?</p> <p>What was the sentencing?</p> <p>How did it link to victim’s code relevant at the time?</p> <p>Was it subject to a serious case review?</p> <p>What were the outcomes?</p> <p>Was there any policy or training changes recommended?</p> <p>This means that to officers have to research and present this covering all the elements required.</p> <p>Training is conducted over a 2-day assessed period in a face to face classroom (the package can also be delivered online if the face to face option is not available (e.g. Covid scenario)).</p>
38	West Yorkshire Police	<p>West Yorkshire Police provide in person hate crime training. This training covers the nine protected characteristics that are protected by the equalities act 2010, included in this is disability. In addition to this there is also</p>

		online training resources available such as training related to Operation Hampshire.
39	Wiltshire Police	In-person. No further details are provided.
40	Dyfed-Powys Police	Hate Crime Training to all Police Officers, PCSOs and Special Constables both in person and online. Initial Training Courses in person, refresher courses are online. As part of Hate Crime training we look at each of the 5 x monitored strands, one of which is Disability Delivered in person and online. Students Officers also have an input from a local Disability support and advocacy service around Hate and the effects of Hate Crime for people living with Disabilities and how officers can support them.
41	Gwent Police	Hate Crime Training is part of the learning curriculum that is given to all of our new student officers joining the organisation, which is delivered by our qualified trainers in person. There is a specific standalone lesson on Hate Crime, however it is also threaded through the vulnerability lesson and diversity and inclusion. It is also covered on the Anti-Social Behaviour training that we provide to our Community Support Officers during their initial learning phase.
42	North Wales Police	In-person. No further information is provided.
43	South Wales Police	Online and in-person. No further information is provided.

