

**Briefing to:** Sefton Safer Communities Partnership

**Briefing from:** Chris White, Localities Team Manager

**Date:** 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2020

**Subject:** The impact of COVID19 on hate crime

**Prepared:** Paul McCann, VCF and Equalities Officer

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### **Purpose/Summary**

The purpose of this briefing is to update Partners on the impact that COVID19 has had on hate crime in Sefton since the implementation of Lockdown, with particular regard to refugees and asylum seekers and gypsies and travellers. The briefing also covers any hate crime issues arising from the Black Lives Matter protests.

**Recommendation(s) That:** the partnership notes the briefing.

### **Background:**

The restrictions that were put in place at the end of March 2020 to reduce the infection rate and help to support the NHS led to many more people being at home for a long period of time, and a heightened sense of anxiety and nervousness in the community. The national press reported concerns around increases in hate crime, particularly directed towards the Asian community.

Sefton continues to have a significant number of unauthorised gypsy and traveller encampments in the area, in particular in Southport. This was the subject of a recent report in the local press:

<https://www.liverpooecho.co.uk/news/liverpool-news/area-merseyside-more-traveller-camps-18768494>

Sefton Hate Crime MARAC continues to meet on a monthly basis to receive and monitor referrals from partner agencies regarding hate crime.

Merseyside Police have Hate Crime Coordinators in each Local Authority area and the coordinator for Sefton, Kate Gore, has provided the following information.

### **Information from Merseyside Police:**

Whilst we update the Sefton MARAC on a monthly basis of our Hate Crime figures. We have compared the figures from 1<sup>st</sup> March 2020 until the 31<sup>st</sup> August 2020 and done a comparable from the same period last year. The tables below shows the increases broken down into strands.

1 <sup>st</sup> Mar-31 <sup>st</sup> Aug 2019	<b>224</b>
Disability	23
Racial	128
Religion	11
Sexual Orientation	46
Transgender	7
Sex Worker	1
Hate Incidents	8

1 <sup>st</sup> Mar-31 <sup>st</sup> Aug 2020	<b>337</b>
Disability	27
Racial	176
Religion	8
Sexual Orientation	62
Transgender	10
Sex Worker	4
Hate Incidents	50

(Hate incidents are incidents which have been reported to the Police as being hate related but which do not constitute a crime.)

Whilst we have seen an increase from the previous year's recorded figures we cannot attribute this entirely on COVID. Monitoring across the force was completed throughout lockdown to identify if people were specifically being targeted for the spread of COVID. There were no detailed incidents identified within the Sefton area. From reviewing the individual cases we do consider that lockdown did have a bearing on tensions that did culminate in hate related words being used as well as increase on hate related malicious communications.

In relation to the Black Lives Matters movement Merseyside Police were made aware prior to the Black Lives Matters planned, sit down, peaceful, protest held on the 13<sup>th</sup> June 2020 outside Southport Town Hall. This event passed without any significant hate related incidents.

Throughout this period hate graffiti has continued to be monitored. Whilst we continue to identify Far Right stickers across the borough we are not able to identify any pattern to this or any significant increase compared to previous years. Of note there was hate graffiti located in Victoria Park, Waterloo at the time of the BLM protests this was on a park bench and read "whites only bench". No further reports of a similar nature have been received since.

In relation to Asylum Seekers being housed temporarily at the Scarisbrick Hotel initially this did raise substantial media interest more particularly on social media platforms this has been continuously monitored by Merseyside Police and there has been no hate related incidents crimed for this location to date.

From the Irish Community Care Representative at the Sefton Hate Crime MARAC we are aware that there has been an increase in traveller movements across Merseyside. However there have been no incidents reported to Merseyside Police with regards to hate related crime incidents perpetrated against Gypsy and Travellers in the Sefton area.

We continue to drive Hate Crime Intelligence reporting. Our aim is to improve intelligence from our communities, officers and staff so that we can prevent more hate incidents, demonstrate we listen and develop/enhance partnership working and are actively encouraging our partners to report via

<https://www.merseyside.police.uk/advice/advice-and-information/hco/hate-crime/how-to-report-hate-crime/>

#### **Information from Sefton Hate Crime MARAC:**

The Hate Crime MARAC receives referrals from partner agencies when they are concerned about a victim of hate crime and wish to access support from other partners.

Since the start of the COVID pandemic and the lockdown there have been a number of referrals but not a significant increase on previous numbers. One referral concerned a traveller family who were spending the lockdown living in a house in Bootle and were having issues with the neighbours, and another concerned an asylum seeker who was resident at the Scarisbrick Hotel. The latter referral did not involve anyone external to the hotel.

There is anecdotal evidence from members of the MARAC who also work in other areas of incidents of hate crime linked to COVID, i.e. abuse of members of the Asian community. These incidents have not taken place in Sefton.