



**Hate Crime Risk Assessment: Lessons from
the front-line of Nottinghamshire Police**

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Across the globe, many countries have taken steps to address hate crime by introducing policy¹ and legislation. In recent years, in Europe and beyond, there have been hate crime rises alongside increases in the Far Right Movement (Muis and Immerzeel 2017). In the UK much of the increase has involved racial and religious hate crime with peaks associated with terrorist attacks and the EU Referendum but there have also been increases related to other hate crime categories including transgender, sexuality and disability (Home Office 2017 – 2018). Further rises are anticipated following the predicted exit of the UK from the EU in 2019 (HMICFRS 2018).

As gatekeepers to the Criminal Justice System (CPS), the role of the police is of fundamental importance to victims. (Thornycroft and Asquith 2015). Yet, data from the CSEW has continued to indicate that hate crime victims express less satisfaction with policing than victims of other offences (Home Office 2017 – 2018).

To deal effectively with hate crime officers must recognise and address the additional dimensions over and above those of the underlying offence including the additional risks of harm to both the victim and communities. In 2015 NTU published *The Policing of Hate Crime in Nottinghamshire*; a report based on in-depth interviews with front line officers. The research sought to find out whether hate crime training equipped officers with sufficient knowledge to respond to hate crime effectively and to gain feedback on training and risk assessment. NTU subsequently re-modelled the Nottinghamshire Risk Assessment with the (then) Hate Crime Manager.

Hate crime risk assessment tools are designed to identify the overall level of risk posed to a particular victim or group from the offender and to ascertain the procedures, interventions and safeguarding that may be required.

¹ Home Office: Hate Crime Action Plan 2016.

Effective risk assessment is necessary in hate crime cases because hate crimes are said to have a more detrimental impact upon a victim than non-hate offending, due to their personalised and targeted nature but also because of the potential for wider community impact (Iganski 2001 & 2009; Leicester Hate Crime Project 2014).

Hate crimes and incidents at the lower end of the continuum of seriousness can quickly escalate into more serious offending; an example is provided by the tragic case of Bijan Ebrahimi. As well as escalations in seriousness, the accumulative impact of lower level offences and incidents can have a devastating impact on victims as demonstrated in the example of Fiona Pilkington in Leicestershire. Both of the aforementioned cases have involved disability hate crime which the police and CPS have often struggled to deal with (CJJI 2013; 2015).

Whilst hate crime is on the rise, it must be remembered that police officers still tend to deal with much less of it than other types of offending and unless effective risk assessments and associated procedures are embedded within police practice, officers may fail to implement effective safeguards and prosecutions may be undermined.

This need for police vigilance around hate crime particularly within community contexts is of particular concern given the findings in the HMICFRS Report in July 2018 and following hate crime rises around national events and predicted rises around Brexit as previously outlined.

To date, there is no standard risk assessment across the 43 police forces of England and Wales (Trickett and Hamilton 2015). This means there is no consistent standard in identifying levels of threats posed to victims, nor of the type of interventions that are implemented resulting in a postcode lottery of response. Of the few forces that have used hate crime risk assessment, some have used stand alone forms

whilst others have combined hate crime with anti-social behaviour or included it under the umbrella of 'vulnerable victims'(HMICFRS 2018: 63).

In 2016 the HMICFRS were commissioned by the Home Secretary to conduct an inspection of Police Forces on hate crime. Part of the remit of the HMICFRS inspection was to examine the risk assessments that forces conduct to determine their response and ongoing support to the victims including risk management

As highlighted by the HMICFRS (2018: 16):

Victims of hate crime can be extremely vulnerable, and are more likely than victims of other offences to become repeat victims. So the process of assessing the risks victims of hate crime face – and deciding how to keep them and their family and friends safe (as well as the wider community) - is critical.

The reviewers found that most forces they visited did not use a structured risk assessment process for hate crime victims and in many forces there was no risk management plan or plans did not clearly explain how the risks to victims would be managed (p16). In response to their FOI request the reviewers were told that 12 forces had a bespoke hate crime risk assessment, 18 used a generic risk assessment that applied to all victims, 5 used a risk assessment for hate crime that was combined with Anti-Social Behaviour and 8 had no secondary risk assessment process at all (page 63).

Nottinghamshire Police were singled out for praised and provided as a case study to show how an enhanced risk assessment for victims of hate crime can work in practice (HMICFRS 2018: 64). The four sections of the current Nottinghamshire Risk Assessment model were outlined including questions about the incident reported, information

about perpetrators, questions about previous victimisation and information about impact.

The HMICFRS report noted how at the end of the Risk Assessment, the member of staff asks four diagnostic questions about current harm, risk of harm through repeat victimisation, community cohesion and confidence in Nottinghamshire Police. The officer then uses their professional judgement to provide an overall assessment of Low/Medium/High. The risk assessment is then subsequently reviewed by a supervisor and a final assessment of overall activity is endorsed. This risk assessment defines further levels of activity in the case beyond investigation.

The reviewers noted that whilst the College of Policing Operational guidance (2014) does stress the importance of Risk Assessments it doesn't give definitive guidance as to the best model to use but recommends a more general approach (HMICFRS 2018: 63).² It was noted that, the NPCC Hate Crime Working Group had previously considered whether to endorse a specific risk assessment for hate crime but decided to include an emphasis on the importance of risk assessment in a forthcoming training package instead.

However, the reviewers recommended that within six months Chief Constables adopted a system of risk assessment for vulnerable victims of hate crime. The NPCC lead for Hate Crime and the College of Policing should give Chief Constables advice about how to do this. The reviewers acknowledged that the College of Policing is considering the use of a general risk assessment for vulnerable victims and suggested that the aforementioned recommendations could be usefully applied within this work (page 65).

The reviewers went on to highlight how risk assessment should be aligned to a risk management process and stated the results

² Citing College of Policing Hate Crime Operational Guidance (2014) p63.

of their examination on whether forces identified cases which had the potential to become critical incidents bringing them to the attention of senior managers on a daily basis. The reviewers found only 44 out of 180 cases had a risk management plan. They were concerned about the lack of systematic and structured approach (HMICFRS 2018: 66).

They noted that whilst the College of Policing Operational guidance stresses the importance of risk assessment, the process of risk management is unclear; recommending that the College of Policing Review should examine the incorporation of risk management plans into risk assessment forms.

The reviewers recommended therefore that within six months, Chief Constables work with partner organisations to adopt a system of risk management for vulnerable victims of hate crime. The NPCC lead for Hate Crime and The College of Policing should give Chief Constables advice about how best to do this. As over half of forces examined used a MARAC approach to risk management, with West Yorkshire Police being cited as a particular example of good practice in this regard, consideration should be given to whether the MARAC model provides a way forward for managing hate crime risks (p68).

Following the HMICFRS Report (2018) the challenge now is to *how* best to help police forces develop practical and effective risk assessment tools with the potential for standardisation across forces which are practical for officers and victims to use, enable identification of the appropriate grade of risk, are clearly aligned with procedure, determine what safeguarding measures are appropriate and direct officers to agencies that can assist.

Nottinghamshire Police were singled out for praise in the HMICFRS report for their comprehensive hate crime risk

assessment to keep victims safe (p12)³. The emphasis on sharing examples of effective ways of working and good practice in the HMICFRS Report has previously been advocated in the Neyroud Report on Policing (2010). Given this, the research findings on Risk Assessment from NTU's research with Nottinghamshire Police are outlined below.

In our 2015 research study criticisms of the Nottinghamshire Police combined Hate Crime and ASB risk assessment form were:

- Hate Crime/ASB combination was confusing for officers and victims
- This confusion hindered rapport building with victims
- There were only 2 levels of risk – these being Standard and Raised which was insufficient to deal with the range of hate crimes and a 3rd category was needed
- Many cases were put in 'Raised' as officers were reluctant to put them in 'Low'
- This meant that there was a 'poor fit' between chosen risk levels and the actual level of risk with the majority of cases ending up in 'raised' which rendered the 'Low' category as somewhat superfluous
- As a result, officers perceived risk assessment to be a largely 'tick box' procedural exercise giving less thought to the reasons behind assigning risk levels and whether the associated interventions were appropriate
- The largely procedural perception of risk assessment was also due to a lack of training on risk assessment tools, why they were used and how the different levels were linked to particular procedures and interventions

As a result of these findings NTU highlighted the case for a standardised police risk assessment for England and Wales

³ Other forces where examples of good practice for learning were identified on different issues includes Gwent, Greater Manchester, West Yorkshire, Avon and Somerset.

and argued that risk assessment should be incorporated into police training.

NTU subsequently designed and piloted a new Hate Crime risk assessment model with the (then) Hate Crime Manager of Nottinghamshire Police incorporating feedback from their research. This was a 'stand alone' rather than 'combined' form which included 3 categories of risk and which built up a more nuanced view of available evidence particularly in light of hate crime concerns raised by some communities in Nottinghamshire (Nottingham Citizens 2015) and also considering the local Leicestershire case of Fiona Pilkington.

In 2018 NTU carried out individual interviews with Senior Police Officers and focus groups with front-line police officers⁴ to obtain feedback on the current Nottinghamshire Police Risk Assessment Tool. The key generic findings are outlined below:

- Overall, officers believed that HC Risk Assessment tools were required due to the potential for detrimental impact upon victims and also potentially communities
- Clear preference was expressed for 'Stand alone' HC tools as being less confusing than 'combined' tools which merge hate crime with ASB or under the umbrella of 'vulnerability'. Hate crime is thought to be a unique offence which should be reflected in risk assessment tools
- The previous combined Hate Crime and ASB Risk Assessment tool used by Nottinghamshire Police was unpopular and some questions were not directly relevant to hate crime
- Neither were officers in favour of including hate crime risk assessment under 'vulnerability'. Again there was not be an exact fit and so 'stand alone' hate crime tools were preferred and considered more practical
- The risk levels of 'Low/Medium/High were considered sufficient to address the range of risks covered. Officers

⁴ Sample total of 50 police officers.

were not in favour of more than three risk levels as this would be 'impractical' and would over-complicate the process

- A number of officers felt that risk assessment questions are most useful if they directly affect the outcome i.e. where a case ends up – factual questions were often considered better in this regard by some officers
- The category of 'Low' Risk was felt to be useful for intelligence purposes but not in terms of interventions as all that was required was in terms of future a follow up phone call and referral to a Victim Support Agency
- Officers felt that although many of the questions were relevant to situations involving Medium and High Risk cases, a lot of them were superfluous to those that were low risk
- Examples included where incidents were between unknown parties in situations where they were unlikely to meet again. Or where individuals such as Third Parties had reported to the police but the actual victim did not wish to pursue the matter or complete the Risk Assessment
- Hate Crime Risk Assessments should therefore involve a gradient system where initial questions were designed to identify the risk of repeat victimisation and future harm early on. (Questions about whether the offender was known, place of victimisation for example). When answering these questions if the risk of future harm was identified as 'Low' it could be recorded at that point for intelligence and monitoring purposes with the standard level of intervention being a follow up phone call and referral to a Victim Support Agency, but the remainder of the questions would not need to be asked.
- Alternatively, however if it was decided at that point that the Risk Level was likely to be above 'Low' then additional questions would be asked and a categorisation of 'Medium' or 'High' would then be chosen

- An alternative would be to offer a N/A option for some of the later questions although many officers and the researcher felt this would be less satisfactory
- Given the feedback from some officers on the need to focus only on factual questions which impact on where a case ends up (in terms of Low/Medium/High categorisations and subsequent actions) and the emphasis on more space for professional judgement – an alternative approach is to have a more streamlined primary risk assessment tool for front-line policing and a secondary more detailed risk assessment for neighbourhood policing teams and/or partner agencies using more of a ‘case worker’ approach (This option is currently under consideration)
- For Disability Hate Crime Officers felt that you did not need a separate risk assessment for people with a learning disability. A streamlined gradient tool with questions being built up around ‘medium’ and ‘high’ risk would be sufficient. Effective training for staff on how to best communicate with some victims that had a learning disability developed and delivered by Learning Disability Agencies and Victims was recommended. This could include the production of guides to best communication practices by Learning Disability Agencies which could then supplement Risk Assessment tools

Findings Specific to the Nottinghamshire Police Hate Crime Risk Assessment

- Instructions to officers on the current hate crime form were considered as clear and easy to understand
- Nottinghamshire Police hate crime procedures aligned with Low/Medium/High Risk levels were also clearly understood by officers and considered effective⁵

⁵ Nottinghamshire’s Hate Crime risk assessment procedures were singled out for praise in the HMICFRCS Report (July 2017).

- A background box “What Happened” at the beginning of the form would be useful
- Questions could be streamlined to make completion of the form less onerous for officers and victims and easier to convert into a format for electronic devices (majority finding). Gradient system as outlined above should be considered (situational examples given below)
- Officers felt that although many of the questions were relevant to situations involving Medium and High risk cases, many were superfluous to determining Low risk. Examples included where incidents were between unknown parties in situations where they were unlikely to meet again. Or where third parties had reported the offence but the actual victim did not wish to pursue or talk to the police and the third party did not wish to complete the form – See aforementioned suggestions on Risk Gradient.

Ideas for streamlining questions

- It should be noted that some officers did not consider that there were too many questions and some suggested that only two or three questions should be moved or merged
- In contrast, some officers felt that questions should only be included if they related to factual information
- Some officers felt that opinion based questions should go as they did not affect the outcome of the case as they were not relevant to what had happened – Example: Q5. Are you aware of any other similar incidents in your area because of hostility to people from different background? (Other officers felt that these questions were important to gain context around what had been reported and/or were relevant to intelligence gathering i.e. due to low reporting by some minority groups)
- Similarly to above, some officers also felt that Q6 was not necessary as it had no bearing (in their opinion) on the incident in question. Q6 - Do you think that this incident is

or could be a reaction to other incidents or events elsewhere?

- Officers felt that Q13 was something of a duplication and could be subsumed under Q2 as you can tick more than one box
- Officers felt that question 16 was not helpful as it involved speculation and additionally there was no space to enter why victims held that point of view. So that it should either be taken out or a space for why that view was held should be provided.
- Officers felt that the ranking system under Q7 sometimes encouraged people to tick 10, especially those victims that wanted to get 'better treatment'. It may be that the categories should be reduced here
- A couple of officers felt that questions 19 and 20 could be amalgamated in some way, although the researcher feels that they are asking about different things
- Officers felt that we could learn from the DASH risk assessment forms which can be completed electronically and which have been reviewed on a number of occasions but that problems identified from these reviews should be considered and that DV and HC were very different crimes in terms of the evidence base which needed to be accounted for when designing risk assessment tools – (See Learning from DV Risk Assessment below).

Training considerations

- Hate Crime Risk Assessment should be incorporated into training including why they were needed, the Risk Levels of Low/Medium/High, and associated interventions and types of support (see also Trickett and Hamilton 2015). Supplementary guides for victims for whom English is not a first language and to help improve communication with victims that have a Learning Disability should be developed as supplements to the Risk Assessment tool and also be included in training.

A range of interview extracts can be found under Appendices at the bottom of the report.

Learning from the DASH Model

The DASH (2009) DV Risk Assessment provides support for an evidence based model increasing the likelihood of appropriate risk identification and responses. Lessons on developing Hate Crime Risk Assessment can be learnt from the experience of developing the DASH model⁶ which provides a multi-agency tool used by first response staff conducting the initial risk identification and then specialist staff conducting a fuller risk assessment. It can also be used by call handlers and other police staff.

Risk factors are based on extensive research on domestic homicides. The model has been continually developed by an academic for ACPO in partnership with CAADA (now called SafeLives) alongside a Risk Assessment Expert Panel. Consultation has involved national and international academic experts, police and other practitioners and victim focus groups.

An example of evaluation in 2008 involved three IDVA services, three police forces and partner agencies via the Blackpool MARAC. Feedback was cross referenced with a comprehensive evaluation of the previous checklist by CAF/CASS, RESPECT and RELATE.

As well as improving risk identification and response, as a standardised model, DASH also gives practitioners common criteria and language; if victims and/or perpetrators move they can be easily referred to another MARAC who, having undertaken DASH training, will subsequently have a similar

⁶ The DASH (2009) evidence based SPECSS+ Risk Identification, Assessment and Management Model and the South Wales Model has been piloted and evaluated from 2003.

understanding of risk (HMICFRS 2018). Training is essential so that practitioners fully understand the risk factors and how they co-relate as well as understanding how the context and detail of the behaviour is relevant.

Despite the advantages previously outlined, lessons must be learnt from some of the problems identified. Following criticisms made in the HMIC (2014) review of domestic abuse, The College of Policing carried out research investigating the ways in which risk-led policing of domestic abuse takes place across England and Wales. The study found significant variations between primary and secondary risk grading and inconsistent approaches to recording data from the DASH questions meaning that the quality of information gained was sometimes questionable.

Of concern was the tendency of some police officers to focus on physical violence and fail to appreciate the significance of coercive control both at the front line, but also at the secondary risk assessment stage. Indeed, in line with HMIC the reviewers noted an often process driven approach to domestic abuse, which was of variable and inconsistent quality. This study demonstrates therefore that in addition to the development of risk assessment tools it is essential that officers are trained on risk assessment and the reasons behind it.

In NTU's two policing studies with Nottinghamshire Police very few officers could recall training on Hate Crime Risk Assessment; there were 2 new police officers in the second round of the research that had some training on how to scan the forms onto the policing system. Informal on-the-job learning appeared to take place in the absence of force training as was the case in the aforementioned domestic violence review.

Another important point noted in the review of domestic violence is that risk assessment tools should be matched to the practical realities of frontline policing. Officers were often

frustrated at the 'perceived mismatch' between policing and the DASH DV Risk Assessment tool which they believe seemed better suited to a domestic abuse specialist who may be able to build a better rapport with the victim and devote greater time to providing detailed context for the responses to questions. Due to these practicalities, the review found that DASH is being circumvented in practice and is providing inconsistent data to secondary risk assessors

The reviewers concluded that a revised risk tool and more focused frontline tool (where officers did not need to complete all 27-items of the DASH Risk Assessment) could encourage officers to collect the most salient information in a more complete and consistent way, whilst encouraging them towards a focus on coercive control and dangerous patterns of behaviour.

A similar finding in the latest round of the Nottinghamshire Hate Crime Risk Assessment Research is that whilst officers appreciate that there are good reasons for asking the range of questions, practical considerations suggest that risk assessment questions be built on a gradient model and streamlined as outlined above.

Conclusion

This report has argued that we need to learn from police experiences of risk assessment to date. What the aforementioned reports from NTU's research with Nottinghamshire Police and the DASH DV Risk Assessment review have indicated is that (even with sophisticated development behind the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment that is DASH), it is imperative to gain officer feedback on their experiences of using these tools.

Therefore, a number of practical evidence based lessons can be learnt from the Nottinghamshire Police findings from front-

line officers on Hate Crime risk assessment and from any other police forces that have already been using some form of risk assessment. It is of course important to balance these findings which will, to a large extent, be evaluating risk assessment through a policing lens, by undertaking evaluations of risk assessment tools with victims.

Therefore these practical policing experiences can now help inform the debate on the development of Hate Crime Risk Assessment tools in England and Wales. Further consultation with academics, policing experts, practitioners and hate crime victims should also take place.

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Nottinghamshire Police Interview Extracts

The procedure for responding to Hate Crime

Someone rings in an incident, questions are asked in the control room. They will then categorise it as a hate crime. Officer is despatched, they will do the risk assessment form. Dependent on the risk level, if it is a medium/high risk that should be flagged to the demand management inspector, who will make sure that the necessary safeguarding is in place. Then the neighbourhood policing team would do the necessary follow up

If it's hate crime, DV or knife crime they know there is work they need to do. Officers attend and part of the process is to go through this hate crime risk assessment with the victim. From the initial meeting, we are already asking them questions that give us a risk ratio and then we can assess whether it's standard, medium or high. As a supervisor I would review the risk assessment form to make sure everything is covered surrounding vulnerability and that the correct procedures are put in place

Once an officer has carried out a risk assessment, normally that would get sent to a sergeant inbox, which would then get forwarded to our beat manager. We can then go around and perform target hardening or whatever needs doing depending on what the circumstances are.

It depends on the nature of the report that is given to us. The officer on the ground will gauge to see what has happened. Did they know the person involved? Then as part of Nottinghamshire police hate crime policy, we do the hate crime risk assessment. Sometimes that's not done with the individual because they will decline to fill it in and we have to fill it in based on our own observations, there is no obligation on the person to take part. However most of the time it's done with the person, so they can sign it.

I think we have a good understanding of hate crime in Nottinghamshire. I think with training input, with the scrutiny procedures we have, doubtless we could improve, but I think we are in a good position

The significance of victim perception

It's more about vulnerability and the risk posed to the victim. A lot of it is about how they feel, as well as their perception of the incident, any future issues etc. So although we may perceive the influence as minor the risk assessment form may show something different.

Is Risk Assessment needed for HC?

It is necessary because of the types of issues and the serious nature. Sometimes the incident that is reported or experienced, might not be the first incident. That's where the risk assessment comes in to ask about some of the background, the impact that it has on people. It helps us to inform our decision making about what are we actually going to do and to find out what is going on in an area. So yes, I think it's an important part of the process

No matter how good the call handler, there is a need for risk assessment to be done when an officer arrives at the scene and this needs to be kept under review

Yes, it's a vulnerability thing, because if they are minority in a specific area they may feel more at risk, especially if they don't have support. If other people in that area share the opinion of those who have committed the hate crime. It's to put important to check those things

These forms were brought in a to standardise it and if something does go wrong we can prove what we have asked them and what we haven't and what the risk was at the time. We used to just sit down with people and talk to them. However, I imagine that officers didn't get all the information and that's why we need them now.

Range of hate crimes and incidents

The majority that we deal with are racism. There are some homophobic hate crimes. More recently there's been a lot coming in to do with religion

I'd say 50 to 60% are to do with racism.

Some areas of [County] have quite a high concentration of Eastern Europeans, that can sometimes be an issue for some of the locals. What they will do is say something in the streets to them, attack their houses, knock on the door and shout abuse at them

Need to widen categories of hate crime on Risk Assessment tools

We are experiencing new elements of hate crime so it's not specific enough

The form needs to reflect society. Obviously the Gypsy and Roma community will experience very different things to victims of xenophobia around Brexit, or people who suffer cybercrime.

We also heard a lot about misogyny recently and I think things have moved on since the form was released and it needs updating

What we're seeing is more of is that members of the community are calling someone a paedophile and that could be seen as a hate crime. However, we don't have the option on this form to put that

The need to get victim perspectives on Risk Assessment questions

I think we need to speak to victims and ask to have we got this form right. Most police officers are white males between the age of 20 to 50 who are likely not to be a victim of hate crime. So, creating some empathy and trying to walk in their shoes. I think it would be really useful to find out if we're asking the right questions, are we asking for too much detail. From a policing perspective we are always really good at making our own minds up, but in actual fact we should probably consult with the people who are going to be receiving this form.

Surely, we should be asking victims of hate crime if the form suits them because it's them who should be at the heart of this.

I think what would be useful is having someone on the phone to get feedback so once they are finished just ask them what they thought about the questions could get us some really good results.

Preference for Stand-Alone hate crime tools

ASB combinations

Is the new Hate Crime Risk Assessment an improvement on the previous one?

Yes, because it was one or two pages and there was very little on it. There was not enough information

When it was mixed with the ASB one, I couldn't believe that it was not a dedicated risk assessment form for a hate crime

It's better because it targets hate crime and isn't combined with ASB, with that being an entirely different ball game

I thought that the hate crime in the ASB all-in-one was a real blanket approach in every sense of the word. I found that none of the questions fitted so I think it's very important to keep them separate

The second you start mixing stuff about hate speech and hate crime with stuff like ASB you are actually lowering the effect of what the hate crime could actually be.

I think when things like this occur and they are attached to a hate crime I think the hate crime element is the primary thing that we deal with because it far outweighs anything to do with ASB.

Vulnerability

You are not necessarily vulnerable just because you are a victim of a hate crime. If you are vulnerable you are more likely to be the victim of a hate crime however that doesn't always go hand in hand.

I believe that vulnerability stretches it far too wide and we don't have a one size fits all. This would lead to questions that were quite vague or questions that would just not apply to certain groups of people

If you have a form that deals with multiple crime types [vulnerability] the questions could become a bit irrelevant.

Are the Low/Medium/High Risk Categories sufficient?

I am pretty comfortable with Low, Medium and High categories, I think it works well

I think it does. Calls that are made to us are which are clearly of a concern, might be a passing verbal comment in the street, which is a one off. The member of the public would want to report it to us. We would want to record it. But there'd be little likelihood of a further interaction, so that would tend to come out as Low Risk. We would then have a slightly more concerning issue, something we could investigate. It might be a dispute between neighbours, which has gone on for a period of time and there's been verbal comments over the garden fence, some sort of ranting including racist names. That would likely be medium. There's the impact this is having on the person that is receiving the abuse and the likelihood of repeat. So we'd look at intervention, what support we could put in. The high risk would be those which include crime of another sort, perhaps might be an assault but also with a racial element, for example, a neighbour's dispute where one neighbour has been attacked with a weapon and there has been a racial motivation. So those three categories give us the right range of how should we assess and inform decision making on how we should respond

I don't think there is any need to go more than Low, Medium, and High. There can already be some grey areas so introducing more will only make that worse. So I think Low, Medium and High is about right. It covers it all really.

Low medium high is appropriate it's what we do. We know Low means very little intervention, Medium needs intervention and High means there's a massive issue and we need to do something now. So changing it would complicate

The more complicated you make it. The more likely it is that someone is likely to get it wrong and you would get more random results

Another one I've dealt with if there's some guy who's a third party, reporting. The incident happened on a bus on an unknown bus route so there are no lines of enquiry. The person who he had spoken to had been racially abused and haven't even noticed it happened, So what are we physically going to do. Is it worth doing all the questions and putting it as Low. There's no risk or anything we can do around it

The need for officer judgement

It's good that officers are allowed to make a judgement. You can tell whether a person is actually at the end of their tether or if they are just using the form as a tool to get something else to they want. There is a lot more to it than just filling out this form

One of the most important parts of this form is on the back page which gives officers the option to put their opinions in. If we didn't have that bit and just went off what people had said all incidences would end up high risk. We need a buffer of how serious it is

I feel we have to use professional judgement as well because some people will exaggerate

We get people that ring in all the time and make the job sound worse than it is. Hate's sometimes a trump card and there's absolutely no evidence to suggest that, looking at it from a purely objective perspective

More space needed for officer's opinions

3 or 4 pages of questions and then only a little bit at the bottom for an Officers opinion, or where a supervisor can put some comments where we as officers can justify the decision making. There is just no space to do that

I think it's so small that officers don't realise that it's an ideal opportunity to get their thoughts on the incident across.

For somebody who may look at this and pick it up later on having the opinions and the comments of the officer on the scene is really handy when evaluating the form. If there is more personal stuff then it will help them understand what is going on. As you need to be able to explain yourself as to why it may be High, Medium or Low.

Although you're thinking it in your head there's no space to write it, so you don't write it. Plus, when supervisors are signing it off he can read the comments to get a better understanding of the incident and it will help them agree or not with what you said.

If it is not written down some details may get forgotten so that box needs to be made two or three times bigger.

The form needs to give voice to the officer's opinion, so you could sit down with someone who could say, 'Yes, it's a horrendous incident and its making my life a misery', and you can think, 'Actually, I have my doubts about that'. You could sit down with someone from a community, who are quite insular, who doesn't really want to talk and they might play it all down and you might think 'I am worried about this person, because they've not told us about things before'

Risk assessments can feel like a 'tick box' if not done carefully and appear too impersonal

I do appreciate the tick boxes because I suppose they help from a stats point of view. Sample how many instances occurred at home or at school or how many times did they happen. So, I do get why these forms are designed this way because I guess it must help process the data. However, it can take away from the personal aspect when you're sat there with a clipboard and a tick box and you may not get the best out of victims

We create a bit of a robotic experience which probably depersonalises the interaction between the officers and the victim because there are too many questions

As an organisation I understand why we do it. As managers, we feel more reassured that if we give them a form and tick boxes that they are not going to miss something. We've got this risk aversion and lack of trust for officers. I think we should give a bit more credence to our officers.

I think it is a tick box. Officers will do the risk assessment form and go onto the next job. When you standardise something, officers won't use their judgement, because they tick the box, it comes out at such and such, my job is done. But really this is a responsibility on the officer to make the decision. I think they should look at circumstances of the job. If it [risk assessment] changes where the job ends up. I see the purpose of it, but I'm sceptical as to whether it does

Insufficient Training on Risk Assessment

We have not received any training, nothing official we learnt more by actually doing it on the job.

I did but I'm quite new, so I don't know if it's something just introduced but we did do risk assessment forms in training.

We got to see some copies that were scanned onto the system and it made it a lot easier to understand

The need for training on Risk Assessment

I do think that more training could help so the officers know what observations to look out for and what they need to be writing onto the form

I believe more training on spotting the signs of vulnerabilities as long as victims of hate crime would be very useful

We should talk about background and why we do it. It is really important to put it into context. Pilkington was enormous, the police were dragged through the mud but thousands of people have been victims of ASB and hate crime who haven't tragically taken their own lives. If we explain this is why we bought this in, we're not saying it's going to happen every day but have it in the back of your mind

I do feel that is pertinent to get that training in to improve understanding of it as often we bring things in and we don't always explain it to our cops.

On-going training is important partly because change is a constant. So if we don't refresh what is a high priority then it can fall off the radar so it is important to refresh officer's training

I think training is needed because a lot of the time they bring in forms without actually consulting the officer in the first place or they're not being told it's changed for example or how does it even benefit anybody

Yes. I think the best thing we could do is short videos that explain what we do and why we are doing it, they can watch it in five minutes as our frontline staff are really busy

I think we need to keep it short keep it interesting and it very relevant to the front line staff. Hate crime is so important that we have to do it. But if we sit them in front of a classroom for 2 hours in my experience only about 15 minutes goes in

Questions are appropriate

The whole point is to collate as much data as you can so that we can give them the right support and the right interventions.

I think the questions cover all the basics quite well and all aspects of what you need to assess really

I think they're quite straightforward really. It's just going through the questions.

I think it's about right. It doesn't take long to do does it?

If you are going to take some out, I think taking two or three out would be about right.

I think that they are clear I just think some are a bit too long.

The need for care in reducing questions

Those questions they are prompting you, sometimes, would you even think to ask that question if you haven't done that form that much before?

Reducing questions - It's not just about us though, it's about making people's lives better

I think there are a lot of questions there but they do cover all the bases.

It's kind of a Catch 22 because you don't want that many questions to make it as personal as possible for a victim however you probably do need all the questions so that you do get a uniformed response and to make sure that all aspects are covered

There should only be less questions if the officer is definitely going to be writing more of their observations in

We are so hung up on capturing every single bit of hate crime that happens in every single part of a community. A lot of this won't be relevant to things like Cyberbullying and other things that come under hate crime. Striking a balance between providing enough information and not having too much in there but also being relevant to the individuals that we speak to is important.

Good reasons behind the questioned used but not always practicable

We feel reassured about having so many questions. It will at some point trigger some thought process to whether it's a hate crime incident or ASB, because it is driven by Pilkington. Organisationally we were trying to see in the future. I think it created sickness in police officers, fear of them getting it wrong. Hindsight is a great thing but by creating 6 pages of work for an officer you almost pretty much switch their brain off. I don't think it happens all the time but I think there's always that risk when they've done a form that they don't need to do anymore. It's always the easiest route - the line of least resistance

I think what we need is to think 'Do these questions inform the response that the police provide', because some answers might be nice to know but may not be useful and if we have this information are we are sharing it and are we the right group of people to be asking these questions

Cut down the number of questions and options

It's not necessary to ask all of the questions for every example. The questions should be front-loaded so you ask the questions that indicate whether there is likely to be a repeat early on – like do they know the offender, where did it happen...if it's a situation where its verbal and the parties don't know each other, you could grade it at Low after asking the preliminary questions, if at that stage it is looking unlikely that it will be Low, you would then know its likely to be Medium or High and move up the scale and have to ask the remaining questions

I think we could probably cut it down. There are 27 questions which are on top of the additional questions that have already been asked such as name and address. Some streamlining of the questions, certainly on lower risk, would be helpful, and victims and people reporting would appreciate that as well.

I have found myself apologising to people because I had to read the question word for word, probably numerous times because it's about 6 pages long.

I just feel there are far too many questions. I think 10 is a good number, condenses it.

I think some of questions are the same, just worded differently. I suffer from dyslexia and I get to the back page and I think I'm sure that I've asked this question before

Very often I will answer some of these questions before the victim has told me because I know the answer anyway. It can get very tedious and sometimes people look at you and ask did "she really just asks me that" "When it has happened on their doorstep why are they asking me some of these questions"

That's why sometimes when I am talking to people and just having a conversation I will fill out parts of a form, so we don't have to go through it again without having to sound stupid. I think question 22 is a bit excessive to have to ask - Has the way you feel about your home changed? Surely that's encompassed within - Has your life been affected in any way. I think a lot of this you could put into the details section

The last one I did that was over the phone. Some of the questions are a bit lengthy and when you have read through the whole question, sometimes victims have forgotten what the question itself was

Keep it short and sweet some of these questions they're just too long

I think some of the questions do need simplifying to make it easier for the victim as well as the officer. Some of the questions have too much detail, especially if they are in a mind frame where they're not thinking straight

Ranking Questions

You can go to someone who puts themselves at a number ten, and you will be thinking you are not at a ten. You can then go to someone who puts themselves at a one who should be much higher.

But it is important to ask that question to work out how it has affected the person, but yeah, they should be able to justify it. So, what has occurred that makes you think it's a ten?

Avoid leading questions

I think a good review of the questioning. I believe we need to be a bit smarter on some of the questions because it's kind of inviting people to use the system

Some of these questions may lead you down the garden path, for example, has anybody's health been affected, it's a leading question. I am not saying we shouldn't know about their health if they have been affected. We just need to be careful with the terminology

Avoid repetition

I think clearly they are valid questions. I think that we as officers just have to be realistic and realise that you are trying to capture a lot of different scenarios. Maybe make sure that there is not repetition. A NICHE based form with drop down boxes. That would cut out duplication and save a few questions. I know that it is not quite the same but Question 2. Did the incident occur at any of the following places and then 22 - Have you and your family changed what you do day to day?, which then uses much the same boxes

Repeat incidents from same perpetrator – no need for separate form

I think sometimes the requirement to fill out a form is unnecessary, a common one, taxi driver gets racial abuse in city centre, doesn't know perpetrator, is never likely to see them again, but we have to do a form. It's going to be Low, but we go through the form. Next week, another person, that's drunk, shouts some racial abuse at same taxi driver, again we fill out the form. They're often not interested in filling it out, they don't know the person, but there has to be a hate form

We often get people that are repeat callers to the police for things like hate incidents and quite often after the first time, we will have to fill it our own observations. This is because they know they get asked the same questions and don't want to do the form over and over again.

What's tedious is when you go out to an incident a fill out a form in the morning and then at 7 at night I have to go out to the same victim but for a separate incident and go through the same tick box exercise again. So, you could get 3 jobs a day and make the victim fill the same form in 3 times and that's ridiculous. We get people saying I've told you all this before

You could probably get away with a much shorter version of this for repeat instances just asking 'Has anything changed?'

Lack of clarity on some questions

Often what we get is people asking if we can repeat stuff and we have to explain what the question means

If they do not understand anything, we ask them to clarify and sometimes the form can take a lot longer because of this.

I think the questions can be so generic that people might not understand what we are driving at. So just looking at question 20 - Have any relationships being affected by what has happened? What I've had from that is a lot of people ask what it means, and we had to break it down for them and I think sometimes it suffers from the fact that it's striking a balanced between getting your point across but not being so vague,

I think that some of the questions are quite vague, for example Q25. Quite often we go to a job and they will respond but they don't know what we mean, people don't really understand it.

Some of the questions are a bit hazy, and I find that some people don't understand them such as - Do you think this incident could be in response to other incidents that may have occurred? I think a lot of people always ask if we can reword it or explain it a bit more, because people don't seem to understand. You end up leading them down the garden path because we end up giving him examples of what may be relevant to do with this question. I find it all too often people just asking what it means when it comes to that question which takes up more time

Changing, Merging or taking out questions

Have your relationships been affected or has anybody else been affected, how affected do you feel? From this there are a few questions that probably could be condensed down to 1 so if you had one question, it could probably cover all of those.

I'm not necessarily against risk assessment. It's whether it's useful and if it doesn't change the outcome then I don't see the purpose. Questions need to be very factual because that's we what work on. So, Question - Is the incident connected to you doing your job? For me, irrelevant, doesn't make any difference. Question - Are you aware of any similar incidents in your area because of hostility to people from a different background? It's important because communities spring up. It's a route into that community and how to support. How would I phrase it? I don't know? Might need thinking about. Do you think this could be a reaction to other incidents elsewhere? Again, I think irrelevant. You are just asking an opinion and we don't work on opinion, we work on facts, What are we going to do differently? I would want to know why you think its hate, what hate element it is, do you know the person, have you seen them before, is this a repeat? That would be what's important to me because that tells me - what's the risk?

Instead of just saying did the incident occur at a particular place - Please check the following - just put where did the incident occur

What would an improved Risk Assessment look like?

Electronic

It would be best on NICHE. There are already some templates. There is a supervisor out of court disposal OEL, if someone is going to be cautioned. So in certain situations an supervisor has to authorise a caution, we detail a rationale, what are the reasons for using a caution, there's some small drop down options, there's some Yes/Nos, so it would fit fairly well there in my opinion

Electronic might be good. It depends on how you designed it. If you designed it as a drop down menu, presumably you would have it on an electronic device and you would need to be able to sign it. The

aim is for all police officers to have laptops, and PCSOs to get mobiles and NICHE to be available on there

Potentially having an electronic risk assessment forms could help as it could bring up the hate crime information we already have and so we don't have to fill out the form over again. The only problem you've got is if you're in an area with no signal you may not be able to use it. You will need to have an offline version and loads itself up onto the system.

It has to be electronic now like an app or something. I think if we programmed an app properly, when a question is answered that answer can prompt our officers down a certain path to improve efficiency.

I think it would be easier if it was electronic. Basically, we are heading to an incident with some paper and a form, sometimes we can get there, and it's all crumbled up and it doesn't look professional

It would help because if somebody is filling out a form three or 4 times a week it could actually be putting them off for reporting future hate crimes

Each time they fill out a form it gets a new NICHE number and they are not linked so they'll be linked by the person but not by the number. Once it is all linked you're not just taking it as a one of incident and you can look at the bigger picture of it all. As don't forget it might not always be the same person going out to see the same victim so having something that connects all reported incidences under one number may be really helpful for the officer on the scene.

I think if you did it electronically and it came back as a high rating, then it could send a red flag to your supervisor or another supervisor. This is because sometimes you can be on a different day off to them and trying to get hold of them is difficult. So, having some kind of central place showing a red flag means it could be looked at instead of waiting for your supervisor to get back.

From a PCSO point we don't have a laptop. We have to come back to the city centre print, the form out and then get the person to come back to the form to fill it out. So, if there was an attachment for the optic or that we can get onto with a mobile phone they could then sign it with a finger. Something to help us get the job done there and then and stopping it from delaying it, improving efficiency.

We want simple apps that we can just click and deal with it there and then we don't worry about coming back to the nick.

Risk Assessment should be more aligned to support guides

We should try and support and problem solve and obviously investigate where possible, but at the same time we are not a full time support agency, so we should signpost what additional services are available, what options for diversion there are. There are other specialists, so we can put them in touch with them if we had details

Yes, they're not signposting for every single type of hate crime. This can lead to some occasions where we do follow ups and don't have any additional information or support to give

It's one thing having information about Nottinghamshire but what can I do for the people that I'm supporting in my area locally.

If it's electronic is we can have certain details being filled in automatically because it's coming through on our network. Kind of like a hot spotting of services.

I think contacting different agencies and having their information linked to risk assessment could really help.

We have victim care, but there must be other agencies that we can sign post to them, so anything around that. It helps us, so we can move on to the next job straight away.

We have Easings and that does a similar thing. However there are a lot of agencies on there that we can use to help with the Victim. But whether it could be linked...it's a bit like NICHE but other agencies are also involved to help with Victim Support

A guide rather than a separate form for victims with a Learning Disability

It's not practical really is it how would you write a form for someone with learning difficulties like what level of learning difficulties and then will we have to apply a question differently if they have higher levels of learning difficulties you could risk offending someone

A different form does that have a stigma to it. So I would hope that the officer phrasing the questions in an appropriate way would overcome that difficulty. I think the key is having a good form that is user friendly, in the sense that its helpful for police and but for the victim as well. We as police have to be flexible and responsive in our service to meet that individual's needs. So if there is a further communication need, it might be a young person or it might be a person with a learning disability, we might need someone additional help with communication like an Appropriate Adult

No, I think it comes down to an officer's judgement. If the victim has a learning disability - you should be making an assessment yourself. Is this person vulnerable and a victim of a hate crime? We go through the same process. You should still say - do they know the offender, what is the behaviour against this person? What is the pattern, is it changing, is it getting worse, what has been done? What needs to be done?

I think if we genuinely want to engage with a cross section of people who might be victims of a hate crime for example not English-speaking, blind, deaf or learning disability. I think if you develop the electronic App, it can make it a lot easier, for example if you had a Polish speaking person you could have it a copy of the Risk Assessment with English and a copy with Polish. A person with learning disabilities, officers do get training, but you never really know how to deal with these situations so what we could use is a electronic guide. If a person has a learning disability, you could have pictures (i.e. as in Mencap) where you can basically point at one of these them to demonstrate how you're feeling. I think this is something we need to consider

I think it depends on the individual I think if we just had a bit more flexibility with the form and how we read it to them that's all is really needed in some situations.

I don't think it has anything to do with the form I think it's more of an environmental making them feel as comfortable as possible

I don't think we can start removing questions because if we start removing a question for someone with a learning disability then what we are really saying is that question is not important and so there has to be another way of going about it. The adaption should come from the officer not the form. As well as making sure there's an Appropriate Adult there to support the Victim

I don't think it's anything to do with the form I think it's to do with us as officers filling out the form. We just need it in the back of our minds thinking what we need to be considering to make it easier. For example, if we're sitting there trying to fill out this form with Hi-Vis and uniform on, maybe taking it off to put them at ease may help. Maybe some guidelines to offices about how to put people at ease.

Learning lessons from DV DASH Risk Assessment

I know DV is online and done all through the niche, which does make it 10 times easier. They automatically referred people, so we don't need to do that, so I put one in a couple of weeks ago for a child and they automatically put the referral in. So, I just fill in the form and they automatically get the referral, they give you feedback from niche and then you can go on from there

There's a lot of drop-down boxes and there's only 15 questions so it's quite good, I've not seen the older one

I've done a couple but when they are electronic they are not as easy to read format as if they were just paper.

I think we've got a very good system in place around that. Seeing that we prioritise high risk incidents, but that is not to the detriment of those that need support, so if there were parallels that we could learn from that

I think they are useful, there was a young woman from Poland come to this country to live with her partner. She had fallen pregnant by him. He had become quite abusive towards her physically and mentally. She reported a number of domestics and went into hospital to have the baby. Because we had done DV Risk Assessment we informed people like the maternity staff and the nurses. Everybody was able to get round the table to stop the ex-partner from getting to her at the hospital and when she came out. It was a really good multi-agency approach to protect her and she's managed to have the baby and settle down and they should keep him away.

I don't think you can measure it because domestic abuse is completely different to hate crime risk assessment, so you can't use the same questions I think they both got their good points and they both got their bad points.

There are different factors with DV. There are factual things that are precursors to serious domestic violence, like some of the questions – Has the [suspect] ever strangled you, harmed pets, used weapons. Most murders that are domestic related, if you look at statistics there are certain things that happens in those relationships, which is carried over to the risk assessment which pre-determines the risk and domestics generally there is a relationship, it is more likely to be partners rather than family – whereas with hate crime – there can be any number of relationships, you have a whole myriad of factors

HC and DV are two different things, quite often domestic violence is usually more urgent than hate crime...I know we have a case like Fiona Pilkington because of ASB and hate crime. However domestic violence is more immediate because the threat is greater