

Hate Crime Conference Report August 2015



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Introduction

The purpose of this report is to update Board members with information on the planning, delivery and outcomes of the Hate Crime Conference held at City Hall on Tuesday 30th June 2015.

The Leicester Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) had within its 2012/13 Business Plan a business project priority to increase children and young people's participation. The purpose of this was to ensure that they were listened to and consulted on safeguarding issues, and that their views and opinions were taken into account.

A task and finish group was established, chaired by the Head of Service, Children's Safeguarding and Quality Assurance in the city council. Participation leads from across the children's workforce joined the group and were invited to give their views about how best to take this agenda forwards. This led to the creation of a Participation Federation (see Appendix A) which was tasked with delivering a Safeguarding Summit during which children and young people would be consulted about their experience of being safe.

The Safeguarding Summit took place at De Montfort Hall on Thursday 17th October 2013 following which a report containing an analysis of the event, the outcomes and a series of recommendations was produced.

Members of the Participation Federation continued to meet. Working with children and young people from their groups, they planned and delivered a Youth and Culture Summit on behalf of The Mighty Creatives in July 2014. Following this, their attention turned again to safeguarding issues because children and young people were expressing their concerns about intolerance, prejudice and hate crime. Officers from the LSCB were invited to attend Federation meetings as it was felt that their advice and support would be invaluable, as well as them having a shared interest in an important safeguarding issue.

The Task

After considerable discussion, the Federation and its LSCB colleagues decided that the most helpful and constructive format would be to organise a one day event for young people of 11 years plus. The aims of this were twofold –

1. To facilitate consultation with them about:

- What they knew about hate crime and whether they had experienced it
- If they, a family member or a friend was a victim of hate crime, would they know what to do about it
- What support is, or should be provided for someone who has been a victim of hate crime

2. To provide young people with an introduction to the LSCB

- To create an understanding of the role and work of the LSCB
- To consult young people on what the LSCB participation strategy is for and what should be in it.

The planning process

The conference had to be delivered before the end of the summer term – schools closed on Friday 10th July. Choosing a date had to take into account that GCSE, AS and A level exams were taking place until the end of June; schools would be running end of term trips and activities during the last couple of weeks of term; City Hall was only available on a limited number of dates.

The Federation titled the event 'Let's T.AL.K. Hate Crime Conference'. Tuesday 30th June was chosen as the date; to accommodate the timings of the school day and transport arrangements, it was decided the event would run from 9.30am to 2.30pm.

The day was organised by members of the Federation in consultation with young people from their groups, advised by colleagues from the LSCB.

A programme for the day was devised that would provide a variety of activities to engage delegates, including a street poet, a keynote speaker, round table discussions, a young people's and an adult's panel and an 'auction' involving bidding for aspects of the work done by the LSCB. (See Appendix B)

All reading material was provided in a standard and an easy read format.

All city educational establishments with students of 11 years plus were invited to send a representative group of young people to the conference. Those that responded positively were sent information about arrangements for the day, appropriate risk assessments and a delegates' pack. In return, they were asked to provide details about students so badges and a registration sheet could be prepared. Because lunch was being provided, they were also asked for sandwich choices and any specific dietary requirements.

On arrival, delegates were provided with colour-coded lanyards so they could identify which group they were in and where they would be sitting.

The tables in the room were arranged in cabaret style. Each accommodated eight delegates supported by a facilitator and a scribe. These roles were generally allocated to young people or youth workers who were provided with a pack outlining their role and responsibilities.

Accompanying adults and those with an interest in the event sat at tables at the back of the hall because there was an agreement that they would not involve themselves in roundtable discussions.

The young people's panel consisted of four specially invited young people, all of whom had been victims of hate crime. They had previously made it clear that they were prepared to talk about their experiences and to respond to questions from delegates.

The adults' panel consisted of a representative from the LSCB, the police, a school and Stonewall.

Arrangements for the afternoon session were finalised after consultation with colleagues from the LSCB.

The Conference

On Tuesday 30th June, young people from all over Leicester gathered at City Hall to take part in the Hate Crime Conference.

On arrival, young people went through a registration process and received their colour-coded lanyard with a name badge. They were then directed into the main hall where they were seated with other young people at the appropriate colour-coded table. They stayed in these groups for the rest of the day. Accompanying adults received a name badge.

Supporting adults, facilitators and scribes also had to register and were given a specific coloured lanyard and name badge so they could be easily identified.

The day was compeered by a young person, supported by a youth worker. The programme can be found in the appendices.

Water was provided on all tables and tea and coffee was available on trestle tables at the side of the hall. Lunch bags were provided; sandwich fillings had been chosen beforehand in order to facilitate ease of delivery.

At the end of the morning and afternoon sessions, delegates were asked to complete an evaluation. They had also been able to record what they thought and make comments on two graffiti 'walls' during the course of the day.

The afternoon session ended with a plenary which enabled delegates to reflect on what they had heard and discussed. They were asked to do two things –

1. To devise a pledge or promise regarding what they were going to do as a result of the conference.
2. To consider the best way for the LSCB to engage with young people and for them to engage with it.

Attendance

In total, 72 young people and 33 adults attended the conference. Unfortunately, several schools withdrew at short notice due to staffing issues.

Young people represented the following schools and organisations:	Adult representatives:
Babington Community College Crown Hills Community College Ellesmere College Gateway College Jameah Girls' Academy The Lancaster School Millgate School Moat Community College Sir Jonathan North Community College The Big Mouth Forum Children in Care Council Leicester Children's Council Young Advisors Young People's Council The Youth Commission	The Big Mouth Forum Children in Care Council Leicester Children's Council Leicester Children's Services Leicester City CCG The LSCB Leicester University Hate Crime Unit The police The Police and Crime Commission The School Development Support Agency Schools and colleges Stonewall UHI Young Advisors The Y Education The Young People's Council Youth Involvement Workers

The voices of young people

During the morning session, the Federation and the LSCB did not set out to measure or gather data around how many young people had been the victims of hate crime or where this was taking place. Instead, the intent was to engage them in a structured dialogue that encouraged them to reflect on the nature of hate crime, why it happens and what can be done to combat it.

The afternoon session was designed to raise young people's awareness of the LSCB and its role, as well as to encourage discussion regarding its draft participation strategy, particularly in relation to its purpose and content.

During both sessions, round-table discussion was stimulated by a response to input from one or more of the invited contributors. The main points to emerge from each are recorded below.

Hate Crime

- Awareness of hate crime should be raised – it is a crime and should be reported.
- Society should stop treating hate crime as a “minor issue.”
- The findings from research on hate crime should be circulated more widely.
- It should be on the school curriculum – PSHE or Citizenship.
- Schools should be proactive in raising awareness of hate crimes – assemblies, guest speakers, campaigns (anti-bullying week), school nurses, community events; the Youth Service and youth centres should play a key role in awareness raising.
- People should be able to distinguish between a bullying incident and a hate crime incident.
- Young people should understand that hate crime isn’t just “banter” or “having a laugh.” It has a real impact on the victim – potentially, psychological or mental health problems.
- A stigma is attached to being a victim of hate crime.
- When reporting a hate crime, a young person shouldn’t feel that they are “just a victim.”
- Young people often do not have the skills to deal with being a victim of hate crime; talking about it can be hard.
- The police are perceived by some communities as being hostile; they are not always sympathetic or receptive to what young people say.
- If someone commits a hate crime, are they aware of what they are doing?
- The underlying reasons for hate crime should be analysed.
- If someone feels they can get away with it, they are more likely to commit a hate crime.
- It is more likely to happen when the perpetrators are in a group – “showing off or wanting to look good.”
- There is pressure on young people to “be cool and popular” and, “to fit in.” People “don’t like difference.”
- If people witness hate crime, they should do something about it and not be a bystander.

- People don't intervene because they are afraid that they will be abused.
- Not knowing the person who is being abused reduces the sense of personal responsibility to help them.
- Staff from services that deal with hate crimes are usually pro-active and focused. However, they sometimes lack the empathy to understand how distressing it is to be the victim.
- Young people do not feel safe reporting hate crime in schools; teachers are not supportive and do not help.
- Agencies that deal with hate crime should be more proactive. They should "put themselves out there" so young people understand and know where to get help.
- Social media is a major source of hate crime.
- The more diverse society is, the more hate crime there will be.

Pledge or promise

There was a general consensus from delegates that one effective way to tackle hate crime was to raise awareness about it amongst their peers. The most productive way to do this was in school or college through assemblies, publicity campaigns, guest speakers and resources that could be distributed. School councils would be encouraged to support and promote this work, as would members of staff. Opportunities for tackling the issue through social media, including internal systems, would be explored.

The primary concern was that hate crime should be made more visible as an issue and through working in partnership with adults, a clear message would be delivered that it would not be tolerated.

Leicester Safeguarding Children Board

- There needs to be improved communication with young people – many had never heard of the LSCB.
- The LSCB is important for some people but not for the majority.
- The LSCB needs to be more active in promoting itself and what it does in schools.
- The different organisations need to explain who they are and what they do before a young person would engage with them and use their services.
- The LSCB is too formal; it needs to adopt a more informal, personal approach.
- There should be a young people's panel; young people need to feel they are being listened to.
- The LSCB should have more regular contact with specific groups, such as SEND young people, because they are more vulnerable.
- A handbook outlining what support is available would be helpful.

Engagement and communication

It was clear that many of the delegates hadn't heard of the LSCB and were unaware of its role. However, once this had been clarified they were receptive to being contacted by and engaging with it.

The responses to this activity reveal that there wasn't a preferred channel of communication. Suggestions included face-to-face conversations and phone calls, both of which would allow for a better understanding of what was being discussed, although there were some concerns about the latter because of "cold-calling" and other people being able to access the phone's logs. SMS and emails were popular, although again there were concerns around confidentiality.

There was recognition that not all young people use Facebook or Twitter but these were popular choices. Information about the work of the LSCB could be uploaded and accessed via a school's local network. Alternatively, an app could be developed and downloaded onto mobile phones.

Perhaps based on the success of the conference, a number of young people felt that similar events would be a good idea so they "can listen and have an input." Indeed, one thread that ran through many responses was that they felt they needed to "have a say" and that their opinions would be taken seriously. One possible way to facilitate this would be by having "rotating surgeries" that would "visit different areas" or, "a community outreach programme."

Inevitably, schools and colleges were identified as being central to any engagement between the LSCB and young people. In its broadest sense, this would be to facilitate the sharing of information through leaflets and other publicity (which could be developed with young people). In a more focussed way, it could involve training for members of staff to deal with hate crime incidents, inputting into mentoring programmes, leading assemblies, liaising with school councils or focus groups and supporting anti-bullying ambassadors. Some of these things could also be done by working in partnership with participation groups and through youth centres.

Evaluations

Young people were invited to provide feedback on the morning and afternoon sessions. In total, 45 completed an evaluation. These were generally positive although, inevitably, some activities were more popular than others. However, taken as a whole, there was a clear consensus that the venue, organisation and content of the day had worked well.

Conclusions

This was an innovative and exciting event but one that involved taking a risk in terms of schools and colleges engaging with it due to the subject matter. There were also inherent risks in employing a different model to that which had been developed and worked successfully for two previous events.

Regardless of the model that is used, providing that the underlying principles regarding young people's participation are adhered to, the outcomes will always be worthwhile.

This was the first time that young people in Leicester have been consulted on this scale about their knowledge, understanding and experience of hate crime. The feedback from the conference will provide valuable information for all of those who work with and provide relevant services for young people.

Many young people are unaware of the LSCB and what its role is. Those who attended the conference now have a better understanding of its relevance and will be a useful resource in supporting any potential engagement with schools and be a useful resource in supporting any potential engagement with schools and colleges.

This was also the first time that the LSCB has consulted with young people about how it communicates and engages with them. The outcomes will enable it to reflect on its practices and improve its channels of communication.

The costs of running the event were kept to a minimum, with overheads being covered by the LSCB and three participation groups. It was primarily organised by the SDSA, supported by officers and young people from these participation groups. This demonstrates that it is possible to organise and deliver a relevant, high-profile, city-wide event for young people in both a professional and a cost-effective way.

The event has once again proved that the Participation Federation is a valuable resource which is able to facilitate meaningful opportunities to consult with children and young people from across the city.

Recommendations

Hate crime

- The report should be circulated to everyone who has an interest in the content.
- Young people's representatives should meet with key stakeholders to discuss the content of the report and share their ideas about how the issues raised in the findings can be addressed.
- A dialogue should be established with the Federation to explore how it can assist key stakeholders in tackling the issues raised in the findings.
- All city schools and colleges should be invited to take part in an audit of their practices regarding how they tackle hate crime.
- Teachers and other adult professionals who work with children and young people should receive training to equip them to deal with hate crime related incidents.
- Information regarding hate crime, how to report it and what support is available for victims should be readily available in schools, colleges and other settings where young people gather.

Engagement and Communication

- The report should be circulated to everyone who has an interest in the contents.
- The LSCB needs to be pro-active in engaging with children and young people. In order to do this it will have to review its present practice and develop new ways of working, taking into account and incorporating the findings into its planning and delivery where appropriate.
- Young people's representatives should meet with members of the LSCB to discuss and share their ideas about how the issues raised in the findings can be addressed.
- The positive working relationship that has developed between the Federation and the LSCB should be maintained; there should be a dialogue to explore how the Federation can assist the LSCB in addressing the issues raised in the findings.

Appendices

Appendix A: Participation Federation

The Children's Council

The Children's Council was formed in 2009 to give 7 – 13 year olds in Leicester a voice and the opportunity to make a difference in their communities. Council members come from all over the city and all bring different strengths to the group. The group meets on the last Thursday of every month and the agenda concentrates on issues that affect children and young people. Guests are invited to the meetings who have a link to the work the council is doing. They are consulted for their advice and guidance. The work of the council is supported by four mentors who support the group in developing its' targets and strategies.

Young People's Council

Leicester City Young People's Council are an elected group of young people aged 13 - 19 years who represent young people at a neighbourhood level. They engage with elected members, decision makers and champion the issues of the needs of young people. Their work is varied and has included involvement in budget meetings as well as engaging in scrutiny meetings considering issues as diverse as children, young people and schools to economic development, transport and tourism.

Big Mouth Forum

The forum has two sessions a month. The older members meet on the third Thursday and the 5 – 12 year olds meet on the fourth Wednesday. The purpose of the forum is to let disabled children and young people speak out for themselves without being judged and to make recommendations on how services can be improved. The forum has been asked to be involved in many different types of projects, programmes, initiatives and activities, including auditing the accessibility of Leicester City Council's leisure centres.

Children in Care Council

The Children in Care Council (known as "450+ voices") is a group of young people ranging from 13 to 21 year olds who have had experience of the care system. The council offers them a chance to have their voices heard to raise issues and give recommendations to decision makers within the City Council.

Appendix B: Conference Programme

9.00—9.30am: Welcome and Registration with a graffiti wall and map activity, Toby Champion and a young people's poet

9.30—10.00am: Keynote Speech by Stevie-Jade Hardy the Lead Researcher for the Leicester Hate Crime Project, Britain's biggest study of hate crime victimisation

10.30—10.45: Q&A for Stevie-Jade Hardy based on the previous key note speech

10.45—11.15am: Young People's Panel who have volunteered to share their experiences of hate crime

11.15—11.30am: Comfort break with refreshments

11.30—12.00pm: Round Table Discussion to respond to issues raised during the young people's panel, share personal experiences and consider questions young people might wish to ask the adult panel

12.00—12.30pm: Adult 'Hot Seat' Session for young people to ask questions regarding hate crime issues in Leicester

12.30—12.55pm: Lunch with refreshments

1.00—1.15pm: LSCB Introduction

1.20—1.40pm: Auction an exercise in exploring value sets and placing participants at the centre of their own learning

1.40—2.15pm: LSCB Participation Strategy what's it for and what should be in it

2.15—2.30pm: Plenary feedback on what delegates feel will be helpful to take back to school and implement

2.30pm: Departure