

Police Scotland launch #DontTolerateHate campaign

What would you do if you were a victim of hate crime, and were being targeted because you had a disability? Would you report it to the police? Or what would you do if you saw someone else being victimised in this way? Would you take any action?



Police Scotland. Photo: Martin P. McAdam www.martinmcadam.com
These are the questions Police Scotland is asking people across the country as its #DontTolerateHate campaign launched today (Wednesday, 4 March, 2020) at Buchanan Bus Station in Glasgow.

One in five people in Scotland are registered as having a disability, yet this category of hate crime accounts for only four per cent of reports to Police Scotland, and there is strong evidence to suggest this type of offence is significantly under reported. This campaign has been designed to encourage people to come forward, to speak up and refuse to tolerate this kind of behaviour.

The campaign is being supported by charity I Am Me Scotland as well as people with lived experience of disability hate crime who have spoken out about their experiences, and feature in the

campaign posters.

Police Scotland knows there are many reasons hate crime isn't always reported: this can include victims not knowing who to talk to, how to report it, thinking abuse is just a part of life, or not fully understanding what constitutes hate crime.

A range of reporting options are available to support victims or bystanders to feel able to report an incident, including: in person at a police station or by speaking to an officer in the street; by telephone via 101, or 999 in the event of an emergency; using Police Scotland's online reporting form; or through a third party reporting centre. The organisation will also make any reasonable adjustments you need to support you to make a report.

This type of abuse can have a significant impact on victims, their families and friends, as well as on wider communities and can leave people with a disability feeling isolated and marginalised as it erodes their confidence.

Assistant Chief Constable Gary Ritchie, Police Scotland strategic lead for Partnerships, Prevention and Community Wellbeing, said:
"Disability hate crime is never acceptable. It is deplorable for anyone to be targeted because of any kind of disability. Sadly it's happening day in and day out across the country, but people should never just accept it as a part of

life.

“Our message to everyone – whether they’ve been a victim of hate crime, or witnessed it – is this: don’t tolerate hate. Please report this kind of behaviour. It is crucial everyone plays their part in stamping out this kind of insidious victimisation, and help us bring offenders to justice.

“We understand it can be difficult for people to speak to the police about an emotional issue like this, but we will help and support you in any way we can throughout the entire process. Anyone reporting disability hate crime will be treated sympathetically, taken seriously, and their experience will be thoroughly investigated.”

Eileen MacLean, chair of anti-disability hate crime charity, I Am Me Scotland, said: “We are pleased to support Police Scotland’s new disability hate crime campaign. This is recognised, nationally, as one of the most under-reported crimes in the UK. It is vital people report incidents to police, and to tackle this, there are a lot of options for people to report hate crime, including through our free Keep Safe Scotland app.

“Keep Safe is a partnership with Police Scotland which creates a network of Safe Places for anyone who may feel lost, scared or vulnerable when they’re out and about. The Keep Safe initiative helps disabled people feel safe in their communities and to enjoy their daily life free from the fear of harassment and abuse.”

The campaign will run 4-30 March 2020 across a range of platforms. More information is available via www.scotland.police.uk/hate including links to a downloadable reporting form and a portal to report a hate crime incident.