

Government response to non-crime hate incidents final report

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Non-crime hate incidents to be scrapped to end policing of petty squabbles and free up officers' time to fight crime in communities.

Police will be told to stop recording everyday rows and online spats, as non-crime hate incidents (NCHIs) are to be scrapped by the government.

Over recent years, unclear guidance has led to officers being called out to people's homes over insults and routine arguments.

A lack of clarity around when and how NCHIs should be recorded, the rise of the digital age and social media, and inconsistent approaches between police forces have led to them no longer being fit for purpose.

In new measures announced today, NCHIs will be replaced with a system that lets police get on with their jobs – preventing and fighting real criminals to make communities safer.

After commissioning the College of Policing and National Police Chiefs' Council for an urgent review of NCHI guidance, the government is now accepting all their recommendations. The final recommendations, published today, set out a series of common-sense reforms to give police a clear, consistent process for handling these types of incidents.

The new system will prevent police from recording lawful free speech, whilst ensuring that reports from the public, which may lead to genuine harm, get the right response. Police will still be able to keep tabs on serious community tensions and protect those who need it.

The Home Office will immediately begin working with policing partners to put these recommendations into action. The process of moving away from the old NCHI system has already started by removing the code of practice.

Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood said:

Under these reforms, forces will no longer be policing perfectly legal tweets. Instead, they will be doing what they do best: patrolling our streets, catching criminals and keeping communities safe.

A key recommendation for the Home Office is to adopt a new national standard for information recording and assessment – the rules that govern how police record and count incidents. The national standard was last updated in 2011 and is too broad. This has led police to record reports that go beyond their core duties, such as minor personal disagreements where offensive language is used.

The Home Office will update the national standard with a narrower definition setting out when police involvement is required. The new threshold will be more closely tied to core police work: preventing and detecting crime, protecting life and property, and maintaining public order.

This means fewer reports will automatically trigger a police record. Incidents that meet the new threshold will not be given crime reference numbers and will not use criminal terminology such as “suspect” and “victim”.

The government has already taken the first steps toward these reforms with a recent amendment to the Crime and Policing Bill to revoke the statutory code of practice addressing the recording of NCHIs. This will allow us to move quickly to bring in a better system for both police and citizens.

More broadly, the government’s social cohesion action plan, Protecting What Matters, sets out how we will go further to tackle rising levels of unacceptable hatred and discrimination against minority groups in Britain.

Working with the Crown Prosecution Service and the police, the government is ensuring robust use of existing hate crime and public order legislation, wherever conduct meets the appropriate threshold. Lord Macdonald is also reviewing existing public order and hate crime legislation to test whether it is effective and proportionate, particularly in response to protests and the ‘stirring up’ of hatred.

In the immediate term, funding to protect faith communities has been increased to record levels, and the government will continue to work with the police and security partners to ensure protections for all faith communities remain effective.

This announcement follows the Home Office unveiling in January the largest reforms to policing since the police service was founded 2 centuries ago, outlining a radical blueprint so local forces protect their community, catch criminals and cut crime.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-response-to-non-crime-hate-incidents-final-report>