

# Keeping Control



What you can do if you  
have experienced  
abuse or hate crime

A resource for mental health service  
users and survivors

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# About

This resource is for anyone who has experienced abuse, victimisation or hate crime directed at them because of their mental distress or psychiatric diagnosis. It is based on research carried out at Middlesex University. The aim of the resource is to share some of our research findings with you and to give you ideas and suggestions about what you can do if you have experienced this kind of abuse. We have organised the resource in four parts:

1. **What people told us**
2. **What people found helpful**
3. **What you can do if you have experienced abuse or believe you have been a victim of hate crime**
4. **Sources of help**

## Box A: What is abuse and hate crime?

Abuse comes in many forms, but can include: physical assault, sexual abuse, emotional or psychological abuse, abuse based on discrimination, organisational or institutional abuse, neglect, financial exploitation.

A hate crime is when someone commits a crime against you because of your disability, gender identity, race, age, sexual orientation, religion, or any other perceived difference. Disability includes psychiatric diagnosis or perceived mental illness.

You can read examples of hate crimes on the Amnesty International [website](#).

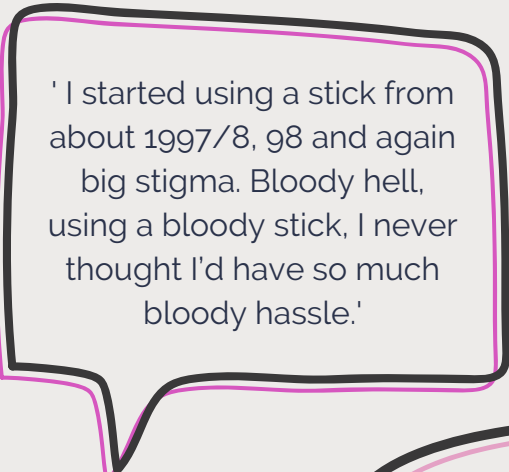
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This resource is based on research carried out at Middlesex University by Dr Sarah Carr, Dr Trish Hafford–Lechfield, Dr Alison Faulkner, Dorothy Gould, Christine Khisa, Claudia Megele, Rachel Cohen. Research papers published from this research can be found at: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/hex.12963> and <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/hsc.12806>


# What people told us

It is important to know that you are not alone. The people we talked to in our research told us of some difficult and distressing experiences. If you do not want to read about these because they could be upsetting, please go to section 2.


- People had experienced a catalogue of abuse over the course of their lifetime, not just because of their known mental health status but also due to race, gender, LGBT+ identity, disability and physical impairment;



'I started using a stick from about 1997/8, 98 and again big stigma. Bloody hell, using a bloody stick, I never thought I'd have so much bloody hassle.'



'Mental health issues and hate crime and LGBT issues tend to be combined because of the stigma involved with mental health and the stigma involved with LGBT issues. [...] I think those are three things which are all treated as separate issues, but they are actually one big issue.'



'I didn't think that black could be associated with such hate and so in my face'.

- For some people, this abuse occurred within and around their own home. Poor housing was a source of additional vulnerability, with housing associations often responding badly or not at all to people's experiences of hate crime and abuse.
- People often fall through the gaps between health and social care and criminal justice systems, all of which have some role or responsibility in relation to risk management and safety, adult safeguarding and disability hate crime.

- Some people had experienced serious abuse and victimisation within mental health and care services; people talked about physical and sexual assault and actively abusive or neglectful treatment. They also talked of abuse being embedded in the way in which services and systems operated, particularly in hospital.
- Most people we spoke to felt that they were not believed when reporting abuse, because of their perceived mental health status or psychiatric diagnosis.
- Many had not heard of Adult Safeguarding (see Box B) or didn't think it would apply to them. It was not always clear to people whether something they had experienced would be seen as a concern for adult safeguarding or as a hate crime or neither.
- Some people felt they had no control over the events that had happened to them and there was little help available for them. crime or neither.

'...you go behind closed doors and then it's a dreadful and terrifying place and you try and speak about it and you are blamed and told either it didn't happen or that it's your fault.'

'The police officer said 'if you were a 17 year old telling me about your teacher we would have no compunction about taking it further. But of course, you are a mental health service user'... It left me with the feeling that I wouldn't be believed.'

'I think that experience of all those incidents happening has made me feel as though I'm outside of society I suppose, in a way.'

## Box B: What is Adult Safeguarding?

- Adult safeguarding is the name given to the process of protecting adults who have care and support needs from abuse or neglect.
- Safeguarding is for people who, because of issues such as mental health problems or learning difficulties, have care and support needs that may put them at risk of abuse or neglect.

- The key responsibility for adult safeguarding lies with local authorities in partnership with the police and the NHS.
- If a local authority believes someone is at risk of abuse or neglect, it has to make an enquiry into the situation.
- Every local authority has a point of contact and a Safeguarding Adults Board to undertake these enquiries.
- For more information about adult safeguarding, see our resources list at the end.

## What people found helpful

Many of the people we spoke to had found sources of support that helped them find strategies for dealing with their experiences. These included:

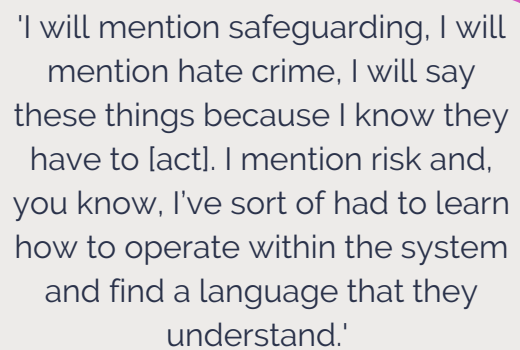
- **Talking to someone:** Being believed, getting support through finding the 'right' people to talk to, people who believe what you say and offer genuine support. This could be family and friends, but was often local service user groups, peer support or community groups.
- **Finding support before reporting an incident:** It was important to get support from someone before deciding whether or not to report an incident: friends, family, local mental health or disability organisations who are engaged in providing advocacy services or challenging hate crime. One person said 'my charities have been my life savers'.
- **Getting involved:** several people found it helped to get involved in active ways through campaigning to improve

'So the strength of what they do there [local community organisation] is that they try to find things you're good at. They don't ask what's wrong with you, they try to find things you're good at and I've tried all sorts of new stuff there.'

'My decision to put my experiences to good use... that's been a real survival thing for me, because if I can see that it's actually worth something to the system or to the people working in it, that's why I do the work that I do'

services, training professionals, getting involved in research or supporting others. Being active and making a difference for others helped people feel that they were more in control of their lives and doing something useful.

- **Finding out your rights:** People found some voluntary sector organisations and user groups, whether in person or online, useful in helping them get to know their rights. The British Institute of Human Rights has developed a series of accessible guides on knowing your human rights: [What Rights do I Have](#)
- **Keeping a record of incidents:** It helps to keep a record of what happens and when, in case you might want to report abuse at some point in the future. Having some evidence to show people helps as well: photographs or witness evidence will all help.
- **Using the right language:** some people found it useful to know the terms that might trigger a response from authorities. For example, terms such as 'hate crime', 'at risk of abuse or neglect', and 'safeguarding' can be useful terms to use.



'I will mention safeguarding, I will mention hate crime, I will say these things because I know they have to [act]. I mention risk and, you know, I've sort of had to learn how to operate within the system and find a language that they understand.'

## What you can do if you are experiencing abuse, victimisation or hate crime

- **Talk to someone.** First of all, if you can, talk to someone you trust about what has happened or what is happening. This is partly for your own support, but it is also important to ensure that someone else knows what is going on. They may be able to help or they may be able to witness the abuse or victimisation.
- **Find out your rights.** Local community organisations can help you to find out your rights. You can also find help online [here](#).

## Reporting the abuse or hate crime

Try contacting a source of help to find out what route you can take if you want to report what you are experiencing. Online sources of help include: [SCIE](#) (the Social Care Institute for Excellence or telephone 020 7766 7400), Stop Hate UK, and others listed in section 4 of this resource. A local charity or disabled people's organisation, or Citizen's Advice Bureau may be able to help you to work out if what you are experiencing falls into Adult Safeguarding or Hate Crime - and help you decide what to do. You might also approach a sympathetic local councillor or MP.



You can **report hate crime** in different ways: to the police in person or by calling 101 or online (local police stations usually have officers responsible for dealing with hate crime); or you can report it through a 'third party hate crime reporting centre'...



**Third party hate crime reporting centres** include local charities, schools, victim support organisations, Citizen's Advice Bureau or disabled people's organisations. Your local police station will have a list of these centres and will have them on their website. Third party reporting centres will support you if you do not feel you can approach the police, keep your details anonymous, and support you to report the crime if that is what you decide to do.

## Making a complaint about abuse within services

It is not easy to make a complaint about services, and it always helps to have support do this. There may be an advocacy service in your area, which can be a valuable source of support.

- All services should have a complaints policy and procedure; you might want to request a copy of these so that you can see what is in them.
- You are entitled to make a complaint using the formal complaints mechanism. This should enable the organisation to open an investigation into the alleged bad practice or abuse.
- You can complain to the service provider, the commissioner, local authority, CQC\* (England), Health Inspectorate Wales, or the police depending upon what the complaint is about. \*Please note: you can only complain to the CQC as an individual if detained under the Mental Health Act.
- It's appropriate to report abuse to the police where you think a crime has been committed.
- Do prepare for meetings and take someone with you if you can; meetings can be stressful and it can be difficult to remember what has been said if you feel anxious.

- **If you don't want to report it:** There may be other things that you can do. Finding out your local sources of help can again be helpful here. See the list of resources and sources of help in section 4.
- **Use the 'right' language:** if you say that you have a 'safeguarding' concern, that you are at 'risk' or have been victim of a 'hate crime', there is a greater chance that professionals will listen to what you are saying. They are obliged to respond if someone is experiencing these forms of abuse or victimisation.
- **Contact your local authority to initiate an Adult Safeguarding enquiry.** If you are experiencing abuse or neglect, this may be the right route to take. All local authorities have staff responsible for Adult Safeguarding (see Box B What is Adult Safeguarding? and Box C What local authorities have to do about safeguarding you).

## Box C: What Local Authorities have to do about safeguarding you

The Care Act 2014 (more information [here](#)) sets out a clear legal framework for how local authorities and other parts of the system should protect adults at risk of abuse or neglect. Local authorities are obliged to:

- lead a multi-agency local adult safeguarding system that seeks to prevent abuse and neglect and stop it quickly when it happens
- make enquiries, or request others to make them, when they think an adult with care and support needs may be at risk of abuse or neglect and they need to find out what action may be needed
- establish Safeguarding Adults Boards, including the local authority, NHS and police, which will develop, share and implement a joint safeguarding strategy
- carry out Safeguarding Adults Reviews when someone with care and support needs dies as a result of neglect or abuse and there is a concern that the local authority or its partners could have done more to protect them
- arrange for an independent advocate to represent and support a person who is the subject of a safeguarding enquiry or review, if required.



# Resources and sources of help

This resource is being published in the Autumn/Winter of 2020; it is important to be aware that making a complaint is likely to be more difficult at this time, due to the impact and implications of COVID-19 on all key services. It is all the more important to get extra support to help you through the process.

## General support and advocacy

- **Advocacy:** In some areas, you will find a local advocacy service; an advocate can provide support to help you understand and exercise your rights. You can search for advocacy in your area on your internet search engine, or contact your local authority for local advocacy services. Other sources of this information can include libraries, GP surgeries and community notice boards.
- **Victim support:** provide support to people affected by crime; their services are free, confidential and available to anyone in England and Wales, regardless of whether the crime has been reported or how long ago it happened. Free support line: 08 08 16 89 111. There are details of local Victim Support services on their website and online support form: [www.victimsupport.org.uk/](http://www.victimsupport.org.uk/)
- Try approaching your **local service user group:** NSUN (the National Survivor User Network – [info@nsun.org.uk](mailto:info@nsun.org.uk)/02078208982) keeps a directory of local member groups: [Group directory](#). Similarly, Shaping Our Lives (a national organisation and network of user-led groups, service users and disabled people, 08452410383) holds a directory of their member groups at: [www.shapingourlives.org.uk/list-of-members](http://www.shapingourlives.org.uk/list-of-members)
- Your local **Healthwatch** can help you understand the system and find an advocate. They can also take up your concern themselves. Find your local Healthwatch online here: [www.healthwatch.co.uk/your-local-healthwatch/list](http://www.healthwatch.co.uk/your-local-healthwatch/list) or by ringing 03000 683 000, or email: [enquiries@healthwatch.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@healthwatch.co.uk)
- **Citizen's Advice Bureau:** CABs offer advice and information on a range of topics, including advising on your rights, what to do about abuse and discrimination, and how to make complaints about health and social care services. You can find your local CAB by going online <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/> or by ringing: Adviceline (England): 03444 111 444; Advicelink (Wales): 03444 77 20 20 or Textphone: 18001 03444 111 445.

- **The Patients Association** [www.patients-association.org.uk](http://www.patients-association.org.uk) This charity highlights patients' concerns and needs. It provides advice aimed at helping people to get the best out of their health care and tells you where you can get more information and advice. Contact the Patients Association's National Helpline on 0800 345 7115

## Hate Crime

- **Stop Hate UK** produce a number of resources to support the reporting of hate crime. [www.stophateuk.org/resources/](http://www.stophateuk.org/resources/) 24 hour helpline 08001381625.
- **Government Hate Crime website:** <https://hatecrime.campaign.gov.uk/> this provides help and advice on reporting a hate crime.

## Rights

- **British Institute of Human Rights** [www.bihhr.org.uk](http://www.bihhr.org.uk) or 02078825850 BIHR publishes a series of accessible guides to knowing your human rights on the following website: <https://knowyourhumanrights.co.uk/human-rights/what-rights-do-i-have/>

## Help and advice for different communities experiencing abuse and hate crime

- **Galop** [www.galop.org.uk](http://www.galop.org.uk) provides Hate Crime, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence support services to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans + victims/survivors by telephone, email, text and WhatsApp. You can contact them using the online form, email or telephone. Phone: 0800 999 5428 (Monday to Friday 10am-5pm; Wednesday to Thursday 10am-8pm) Email: [advice@galop.org.uk](mailto:advice@galop.org.uk)
- **The Monitoring Group** is an anti-racist charity that promotes civil rights and offers a support helpline run by volunteers for people who are victims of racial violence. You can report racism online at [www.tmg-uk.org/do-you-need-help/do-you-need-help/](http://www.tmg-uk.org/do-you-need-help/do-you-need-help/) or contact them on [office@tmg-uk.org](mailto:office@tmg-uk.org) Phone: 020 7582 7438; Mon-Thurs 11am-6pm.
- **Respond** is a national charity providing therapeutic and support services to people with learning disabilities, autism or both who have experienced abuse, violence or trauma. Respond provides therapeutic support as well as practical advice and information. Its helpline is for people with learning disabilities themselves as well as

- family, carers and professionals supporting them. Phone: 0808 808 0700 E-mail: [admin@respond.org.uk](mailto:admin@respond.org.uk). Find out more at: [www.respond.org.uk](http://www.respond.org.uk).
- **National Centre for Domestic Violence** (NCDV) provides a free, fast emergency injunction service to survivors of domestic violence regardless of their financial circumstances, race, gender or sexual orientation. Phone: 0800 970 2070 For deaf people NCDV offers a minicom service - dial: 0800 970 2070 [www.ncdv.org.uk](http://www.ncdv.org.uk)
- **Action on Elder Abuse** is a charitable organisation giving help and information about the abuse of older people. Phone: 0808 808 8141 Website: [elderabuse.org.uk/](http://elderabuse.org.uk/)
- **National Association for People Abused in Childhood** <http://napac.org.uk> offers support to adult survivors of all types of childhood abuse, including physical, sexual, emotional abuse or neglect. Support line 0808 801 0331 (10am – 4pm on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays and from 2pm – 9pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays).

## Mental health and legal advice

- National mental health charity **Mind** has a Legal help Line providing general legal advice that may be of help. Legal line: 0300 466 6463 Email: [legal@mind.org.uk](mailto:legal@mind.org.uk). Post: Mind Legal line, PO Box 75225, London, E15 9FS.

## Safeguarding

- **SCIE** (Social Care Institute for Excellence) provides information and guidance on safeguarding adults [www.scie.org.uk/care-act-2014/safeguarding-adults/](http://www.scie.org.uk/care-act-2014/safeguarding-adults/) Tel. 020 7766 7400.
- **Contact your local authority social services department.** All local authorities have responsibility for acting on safeguarding concerns and will have someone identified as the first point of contact for dealing with adult safeguarding.
- Another possible route to access help is to **contact your local MP or councillors.** You can find your MP through this [website](#) or this [website](#). Alternatively, you can telephone their office at the House of Commons, by calling 020 7219 3000 and asking to be put through to their office giving your MP's name. To phone your MP at their local constituency office, you will find the contact details at your local town hall or library, or it may be in the Directory of MPs. To find your local councillors: [www.gov.uk/find-your-local-councillors](http://www.gov.uk/find-your-local-councillors)