

This information sheet describes what we can all do to tackle homophobic or transphobic graffiti or campaign literature and sources of help if you are being targeted. It does not cover offensive performances, press articles, online material or hate mail. If it doesn't answer your specific question or you want to talk about your situation, call Galop in confidence on 020 7704 2040.

Speaking up for our rights

We live in a society where freedom of speech lets us disagree with each other. It is this freedom which allows us to speak up for our right to be who we are and love who we want. Where people voice their criticism of lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans people in a legal way, we have the choice to debate with them and demonstrate why they are wrong. This information sheet deals with homophobic or transphobic graffiti or literature which crosses over that line and becomes abusive and/or illegal.

Out in public

If you see homophobic or transphobic graffiti, stickers, leaflets or posters in a public place like the street and want to do something about it, the best response is to take a photograph (camera phone is fine) or bring a copy with you, then let us know so we can record it, inform the police and get any graffiti removed.

Otherwise, you can call 101 to report it to the police yourself. You can do this anonymously but they are more likely to act if you give your personal details. Then you can call the local council about graffiti and ask them to clean it off. Depending on where it is, most council's will try to remove offensive graffiti in 24 hours.

Homophobic or transphobic campaigns

Homophobic or transphobic campaigns by people who feel they represent a political or religious view can be hurtful whether it takes the form of stickers, posters, graffiti slogans in the street or a leaflet through your letter box. Unless you've seen other examples of the same material it isn't always possible to tell its part of a wider campaign. That is why it's important to tell Galop so we help you, but also join the dots and address the wider problem.

What the law says

It is possible for graffiti, stickering or fly posting to be punished as anti-social behaviour with an 'on the spot fine'. The police can treat more serious or persistent problems as criminal damage which can be punished with a fine or imprisonment.

In some circumstances the police are able to investigate homophobic, transphobic or threatening words or images in leaflets, graffiti or stickers as a criminal public order offense or in a small number of circumstances as homophobic incitement. For more information, see our fact sheet 'laws that cover hate crime'.

DEALING WITH HOMOPHOBIC & TRANSPHOBIC GRAFFITI AND LITERATURE

**HOMOPHOBIA
TRANSPHOBIA
ABUSE**

TELL US ABOUT IT

**020 7704 2040
www.galop.org.uk**

**making life
safe, just and fair
for LGBT people**

At home

Homophobic, transphobic or generally abusive graffiti might appear on the front of your home or communal areas of buildings such as stairwells or lifts. Wherever it appears it can be unsettling, even if you're unsure if it's directed at you. If its part of a wider problem of harassment against you then its important to make sure the police or council are aware that the problem is more than just graffiti. Galop's caseworkers can give you support, advice and assistance if you are having problems where you live.

Telling the police

The police are not able to take action unless people report homophobia or transphobia. You can call our casework team for a confidential discussion about reporting options or read our fact sheet, "Why Report?".

Preserve & record

To be able to take action, the police need to find out who did it. Nearby CCTV recordings, forensic traces they left or showing you photos of potential offenders may be possible ways of identifying them. As the police deal with millions of crimes each year they are not able to fully investigate every one but there are some things you can do to give them the opportunity to identify who did it.

It's worth taking a photograph before it gets cleaned off, especially if its part of an ongoing problem. Try not to touch objects with your skin which they may have touched such as leaflets, dropped pens or spray cans. Either leave them where they are for the police or handle them by the edges and put them in a clean plastic bag.

Keeping a record of what happened with dates and times may give the council, police or a Galop caseworker the tools they need to help you. If you saw the person responsible, write down what you remember about how they looked. For more information, see our fact sheet "A Guide to Diary Sheets".

Telling the Council

You can report graffiti to your local council by calling their main telephone number and asking to speak to the department that deals with graffiti.

If the graffiti is on your home and can be seen from the street, you can usually expect the local council to send someone to clean it off. All councils have slightly different priorities they use to decide how to handle a report of graffiti. Their website will usually tell you what these are and how long removal usually takes. Most council's say they try to clean it off within a week or if it contains offensive words or images, the next day.

If the council tell you they are not able to clean it off and you want advice about whether that was the correct decision, you can call Galop for advice.

Cleaning it yourself

In some situations the local council will not send someone to clean it. That usually happens when it's on a home property but not visible from the street or on a business property. There are lots of specialist graffiti cleaning companies you can pay to remove it. Otherwise the council will usually be able to give you advice and sometimes they have graffiti cleaning kits they can give you. Things you can do yourself include:

- Use a graffiti removing product – There are various ones you can buy from under £10 at DIY shops. Make sure it is suitable for the surface you want to clean, follow the instructions and test it on a small patch first.
- Paint over it – Clean the wall to get rid of any dust first. Pick a paint which says it is for exteriors.

Remember that paint gets a bit lighter when it dries. It may need 2 or 3 coats of paint depending on the darkness of the graffiti.

- Small squares of clean paint are attractive to graffiti writers so it's worth considering painting the whole wall or from the ground up to a certain height.
- If the graffiti is on plain metal you can use paint thinner with wire wool or fine sandpaper and rinse with water.
- For glass or you can use a razor blade to scrape it off or use paint thinner.
- Graffiti on wood such as fencing can be sanded down with course sand paper.

Preventing graffiti in future

There are some things you can do to make your home or business less attractive to graffiti writers.

One option is to paint a protective anti-graffiti coating onto surfaces. The idea is that Graffiti sticks to the protective coat instead of the surface so it can be wiped or peeled off. If you are considering this it is worth getting advice about it first.

Planting a hedge, tall shrubs, trellis or spiky bushes against a wall can act as a deterrent. Installing lighting with motion sensors can also scare people off.

Installing functional or dummy cameras is another option, although it is best to make sure they only point into your property. Pointing cameras at areas your neighbours have a right to pass through is legally problematic but also risks making problems with neighbours worse.

The police have a small number of Crime Prevention Officers who advise people on how to make their home safer. If the police are investigating a crime you reported, you can ask to speak to one for advice.

Always dial 999 if it is an emergency and you think you are in immediate danger.