

Online anti-LGBT+ hate crime

a guide for organisations



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This information sheet provides advice for organisations providing services and support to LGBT+ people experiencing online hate speech and hate crime. If you are an individual experiencing online abuse, please see *What is Online anti-LGBT+ Hate Speech and Hate Crime? And A Practical Guide to Tackling Online anti-LGBT+ Hate Crime.*

Contains information about:

 **Hate Crime**

Impact of online hate crime

Hate-motivated abuse tends to have more profound and enduring effects than other types of crime, because it attacks a person's core identity. The divide between our online and offline lives is increasingly blurred, and incidents that happen online are just as much a part of 'real life' as any other hate crime, and can have very significant effects.

Emotional Fear, anger, self-blame, hypervigilance in online and physical spaces

Social Damaged confidence, social isolation, withdrawal from sources of support

Health Depression, anxiety, eating disorders, insomnia, stress-induced physical illness

Economic Missing work, damaged educational or work prospects

Self-expression Self-censorship, fear of speaking out, fear of being open about identity online

Community Harm and feeling of vulnerability for friends, family and LGBT+ community

'The online incident made me feel the same as when I was attacked on the street. It's scary to think that someone can also get to you psychologically, on-line, in addition to physically attacking you on the street.'
(A gay man in his 40s)

The majority of LGBT+ people who experience online hate crime do not report it.

Why is online hate crime underreported?

- Worry that not serious enough to report, or nothing can be done, because it happened online
- Worry that won't be taken seriously because it happened online
- Normalised as a part of everyday life for LGBT+ people
- Minimisation of event as a coping mechanism
- Unaware or unsure it is a crime
- Afraid of escalation
- Don't want to out themselves by reporting
- Poor previous experience of reporting
- Worry about prejudicial response: historic and current problems
- Embarrassment/ fear of being outed/ judged for the context, e.g. in dating and hookup sites.
- Frustration that social media companies don't do anything, automated generic responses

"If I reported everything cruel and insulting that is said to me online, then I'd never be out of the police station" (Trans woman in her 50s)

Barriers in addressing online hate crime

- The identity of the perpetrator can be hard to prove if they use aliases and/or hide their IP address
- May come from another country with different laws
- May be several (anonymous) perpetrators
- Risk of escalating abuse
- Risk of being outed to friends, family and wider community
- Risk of doxxing (publishing private or identifying information about a particular individual without their consent)
- Can be used to control the victim's real life behaviour.

How to provide a good service to LGBT+ people experiencing online hate speech and hate crime

Initial advice:

- Keep screenshots of abuse/harassment and URLs of abuser(s)' user profile(s)
- Advise not to retaliate with abuse and insults
- Review privacy settings on social media
- Report abusive content to the website/application provider

Make sure hate crime and non-criminal hate incidents are recorded:

- If someone believes a crime or non-criminal

incident was motivated by anti-LGBT prejudice, they have a right to have it recorded as such by the police. If you support someone to report to the police or make a report on their behalf, make sure it is recorded correctly, even if you, or the police, do not agree about the motivation, or don't believe an immediate response is feasible.

- An incident can have multiple types of hate motivation, and can be recorded under several hate crime categories. Ask open questions about motivation and support service users in determining their own account of events.

Consider a range of options:

- Ask the person what solutions they want, help them to explore their options and make informed choices
- Remember that reporting to the police is not the right choice for everyone and prosecution is not always a realistic option
- For those who do want to report, give them information about the process and what to expect, and offer continuing support with this process if possible
- If the website or application has not taken down the content, find out if they have a second review process and/or email explaining why it breaks their content guidelines
- Consider if an injunction could be possible, such as a non-molestation order or harassment order
- Explore ways to take back space and agency online, and/or become involved in positive online campaigns and activism, if this is right for them.



Take it seriously: Be sympathetic about the damage caused by the abuse and take it as seriously as you would take any other hate crime.

Be respectful and non-judgemental about websites and apps the victim has used and any pictures or videos they have sent.

Use correct pronouns and titles: don't assume someone's gender. Ask 'what name would you like me to use?' or 'how would you like me to record your gender?'

Maintain Confidentiality: Privacy can be a big concern for people seeking help, especially where they have experienced a loss of control of their personal information. Show them that you will safeguard confidentiality. Be clear about your confidentiality policy, store information securely and seek consent if you want to share information with another service or make a referral. For details about legal trans privacy protections visit:

www.galop.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Trans-Privacy-A4.pdf

Keep in mind that the online and offline world do not feel separate and often aren't. Online hate speech can be a part of wider pattern of harassment and abuse that is happening in other areas of life, for example a neighbour that is targeting someone in their home and also online. Online communication can also lead to face-to-face violence and abuse, for example through dating apps.

Intersectionality: ask open questions about motivation and listen to how the person defines what has happened to them. They will have a nuanced understanding of meanings between the abusive content, and how it relates to their sexual orientation, gender identity, race, ethnicity, faith or disability.

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