

LGBTQ+ Hate Crime Online Toolkit

Introduction

With lockdown placing restrictions on face-to-face gatherings, many of us have had to adapt our lives by engaging in 'virtual' social interactions. As a result, there has been a corresponding increase in online abuse and hate crime over the past twelve months.

The LGBTQ+ community have borne the brunt of this unpleasant consequence, facing significant harassment and discrimination when using online platforms and social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, amongst others.

This toolkit has been designed to help, if you or someone you know, experiences any negativity whilst online. Use it to understand the support networks available following an incident and the ways in which you can report any crimes to the police.



Hate Crime

A hate crime has been committed when abuse has taken place that is a direct result of prejudice based on someone's perceived or actual sexual orientation, or gender identity.

Online, this can take the form of comments on posts, websites, and forums. Trolling - where an individual posts offensive content in order to provoke a response, can result in perpetrators 'taking over' a thread by posting responses which seek to incite others to follow the abusive stance.

Everyone has a right to live their own life and be who they are without fear of abuse. If you do experience online abuse because of who you are, remember:

- **Stay calm** – do not retaliate.
- **Tell someone** – reach out to a friend, support service or network.
- **Gather evidence** – take screenshots of the abusive content
- **Keep a diary** – write down what is being said, when it is being said and on which sites.
- **Use online reporting procedures** – most websites and applications have a reporting abuse procedure you can use to tell them that someone is misusing their platform.
- **Update privacy** – make sure you have the most up to date privacy settings on your accounts.

Support & Reporting

We recognise that reporting an incident can be difficult. It can be painful to have to 're-live' what happened. There may also be a fear of not being taken seriously and a feeling that 'what's the point' – nothing will come of it.

However, it is really important to report all incidents as they can form part of a bigger picture and, ultimately, the information can be used to ensure that the same does not happen to others in the future. If approaching the police directly is too daunting, then there are other ways to log what has happened. These 'Third Party Reporting Centres (TPRC)' have trained personnel on hand to guide victims through the reporting process – even dealing with the police themselves, where appropriate. Victims can choose to remain anonymous and just have the incident recorded, but not file a full crime report.

There is also the facility to record things online, if you do not want to talk to someone in person. Or can leave your telephone number, and someone will call you back to discuss your options and ensure you have onward support.

Even if you are not sure whether a crime has been committed, you can still log the incident and get support. You can do this here:

- In an emergency always call 999, or 101 for non-emergencies
- Your local police station
- Citizens Advice Bureau by calling 0800 144 88 48 or emailing enquiries@iwcab.org.uk
- Respecting Diversity (Hate Crime) at Safe4Me.co.uk
- Galop.org.uk

Support is available not just immediately after the incident, and its reporting, but also beyond this period, as it is recognised that these events cause stress and upset for a long time after the incident has occurred. Hate crimes can have a lasting impact because they are a direct attack on a person's core identity. With our lives increasingly being played out over the internet, the lines between our real lives offline and our perceived online virtual reality, have become blurred. Therefore, we recognise that even when online, to have someone questioning and threatening your whole way of life, can be just as devastating as if they had carried out that abuse in person

Supporting Someone

It can be really hard to admit that you have been a victim of hate crime. You might feel lots of different emotions that leave you feeling drained, ashamed and isolated. If someone you know has told you about an abusive incident online, they have made a huge effort to open up to you. It is important that you:

- Show them the respect they deserve but did not receive from the abusive perpetrator
- Show understanding by believing them and keeping their confidence with any of the details of the incident
- Give them reassurance, tell them it is NOT their fault, that they are much more than the sum of the abuse
- Offer to support them with recording and reporting the incident
- REMEMBER – although they might be comfortable talking to you about being 'out', they may not be so confident in the wider community or might not be known to others in the same way.

