



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Health and Environmental Services Committee
Subject:	Update on Hate Crime Initiatives
Date:	12 th April 2010
Reporting Officer:	Suzanne Wylie, Head of Environmental Health ext 3281
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Relevant Background Information

Belfast Community Safety Partnership's 'Safer Belfast Plan (2009-11)' identified hate crime as a key priority for the city. In response, the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) has supported the development of a series of initiatives to tackle hate crime and help people feel safer. This work has been co-ordinated on behalf of the CSP by a multi-agency group, chaired by the Council's Good Relations Officer Anne Deighan, with representatives from the statutory, voluntary and private sectors. The initiative has been funded from a range of sources including Peace III and NIO programme funding allocated to the Community Safety Partnership.

Key Issues

The CSP is undertaking a range of initiatives aimed at tackling hate crime which is defined as incidents/crimes believed to be motivated by race/ethnicity, disability, faith, sectarianism or sexual orientation. The initiatives are co-ordinated by a Hate Crime Officer (Laura Hamill) who is part of the Community Safety Team. This post is fixed term and is fully funded by the CSP until March 2011.

The initiatives currently being undertaken include:

Tension Monitoring - the Tension Monitoring Process aims to identify incidents or events that have or could create tensions within communities; this is most likely to include local issues but can also be influenced by national or international events or activities. It is based on a model which has been used successfully in other cities, the objective being to deliver interventions before the tensions reach a level where the consequences are unmanageable.

An inter-agency group was established in November 2009 to regularly and proactively consider quantitative evidence of hate crime as well as anecdotal information from communities and professionals working within neighbourhoods. Using this information the inter-agency group can then agree coordinated action to help lessen tensions and these actions are monitored on an ongoing basis. The group can also meet on an ad-hoc basis around a particular neighbourhood or issue. Since November 2009 the

group has considered over 75 incidents from across the city; the majority of which have been racially motivated.

Work to embed and build on the Tension Monitoring Process is still ongoing with the number of community and voluntary organisations feeding into the process growing steadily. The role of local councillors in this process is also vital and needs built upon as the process moves forward.

Hate Crime Annual Conference – The CSP’s Hate Crime Group hosts an annual conference whereby various stakeholders have an opportunity to discuss their specific concerns about hate crime with service providers. This event is hosted in September or October each year with the aims of influencing the plans and activities of the agencies involved and raising awareness of the issue across sectors.

Hate Crime Awareness – in order to raise awareness of hate crime, the interagency Hate Crime Group also supports training in local communities and sponsors neighbourhood events which seek to tackle prejudice and provide information on matters relating to hate crime. CSP funding for events is provided to community groups through a small grants programme which is advertised through City Matters.

Advocacy Projects – the CSP, in conjunction with other funders, currently support Chinese, Polish and LGBT workers to support individuals from these communities to report crime or where they have been victims of crime.

Emergency support – it should also be noted that in addition to the above services, the Community Safety team have assisted with several emergency situations including the tensions arising in the summer of 2008 in relation to the Roma community and following a high profile football match at Windsor Park. In conjunction with other agencies, the Community Safety team assisted in putting in place emergency support for victims of crime and vulnerable individuals. While the team will continue to assist where it is required it is also hoped that the Tension Monitoring process outlined will provide an opportunity for improved planning in advance of such events.

Resource Implications

Financial

Funding to support the above services has been secured from a range of sources including the CSP (£138,000 – 09/11) and other funders such as Peace III, Good Relations, NIO and NIHE (£134,500 – 09/11).

Human Resources

The Hate Crime Officer has been appointed up to March, 2011.

Asset and Other Implications

None

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Committee notes the report.

Decision Tracking

The Head of Environmental Health will submit further reports to Committee as the initiatives progress.

Key to Abbreviations

PSNI – Police Service of Northern Ireland
CSP – Community Safety Partnership
NIO – Northern Ireland Office
LGBT – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender