
NATIONAL INDEPENDENT ADVISORY GROUP ON HATE CRIME FOR POLICING AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

MINUTES

Wednesday 15 April 2026 | Online meeting

Attendance

Members attending	Apologies	Also in attendance
Mike Ainsworth (Chair)	Dave Rich	Paul Giannasi (Secretariat)
Dr Shamila Ahmed	Ivy Manning	Ben Clarke (MHCLG)
Sue Sanders	Jemma Tyson	
Mark Brookes MBE	Iqbal Bhana	
Director Tell MAMA	Robina Shah	
Alex Raikes	Rev'd Canon Hilary Barber	
John Grieve		
Becca Rosenthal		
Rose Simkins		
Julie Miller		
John Azah		
Mike Whine		
Mark Healey		
Pek San Tan		
Maya Flax		
Bill Howe		
Alison Vincent		

1. Welcome and Introductions

Mike Ainsworth welcomed members to the meeting and thanked all attendees for joining online. The Chair noted the agenda for the evening, which covered a range of significant developments in hate crime policy, and welcomed Ben Clarke from MHCLG as a guest contributor.

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2. Definition of Anti-Muslim Hatred

Ben Clarke presented the Government's recently developed definition of anti-Muslim hatred, explaining that the working group sought to protect legitimate criticism of religion while clearly differentiating it from targeting individuals for their faith. He noted that almost half of all religiously aggravated hate crime is directed at Muslims, which provided the rationale for a specific definition.

The IAG raised a number of issues and concerns:

- **Hierarchy of hate:** 'Such definitions can create a tiered system in which particular communities receive attention while others – most notably trans people, refugees, migrants, and disabled people – are left without equivalent recognition. John Azah reminded the group that 80% of hate crime data relates to race, yet race hate is receiving diminishing policy attention.
- **Risk of increased harm:** **-Speaker Redacted-** argued the definition is 'convoluted' and 'badly articulated', warning it could increase hostility towards Muslims by creating perceptions of differential treatment and provoking resentment from other groups.
- **Academic freedom:** The definition's ambiguity around 'prejudicial stereotyping' creates uncertainty for educators about which religious traditions or states can be critically examined, risking a chilling effect on efforts to challenge extremist attitudes in the classroom.
- **Evidence base:** **-Speaker Redacted-** noted there is no strong evidence that adopting the IHRA antisemitism definition has materially reduced or increased antisemitism, and raised questions about what practical outcomes the new definition is expected to deliver.
- **Community divisions:** **-Speaker Redacted-** reported significant unease within Muslim communities about the definition, with many organisations preferring the existing legal framework around religiously aggravated hatred.

-Speaker Redacted- acknowledged the definition is 'significantly better' than the All-Party Parliamentary Group definition, and accepted that given the IHRA antisemitism definition it is 'right and proper' that an equivalent definition was developed, notwithstanding the concerns raised.

-Speaker Redacted- raised the broader issue of language that locates identity in the victim rather than naming the perpetrator's conduct. Members agreed this framing problem runs across all current definitions and frameworks.

Members agreed to review the definition document and accompanying text on freedom of speech safeguards that Ben Clarke would post to the group.

3. Non-Crime Hate Incidents: College of Policing Guidance

The group discussed the Home Secretary's decision to reject what they considered to be the NPCC's comprehensive, evidence-based report on non-crime hate incidents in favour of the College of Policing report.

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Paul Giannasi provided background and context in his capacity as lead author of the NPCC report.

The NPCC report

Mike Ainsworth described the NPCC report as 'exceptional' in quality and 'monumentally superior' to the College of Policing's alternative. He expressed considerable pride in the work, which was evidence-based, drew on a meticulous audit of hate incidents over time, and had been developed in consultation with frontline hate crime officers.

The College of Policing report

The College of Policing report was characterised by IAG members as 'poorly evidenced', 'unworkable', and 'a mess'. Its evidential starting point was described as 'a chat with members of the House of Lords'. It was said to seek to 'downgrade hate incidents in every aspect' and is potentially incompatible with police obligations under the Equality Act 2010.

Practical examples from audit

Paul offered two contrasting cases to illustrate the real-world consequences of poor triage:

- A case reviewed in the audit research in which a woman reporting racist ostracism at work was found, on investigation, to be contemplating suicide – leading to a multi-agency safeguarding response. What may on first viewing have appeared trivial was far from it and fundamental to the police's duty to protecting life.
- The Bob Vylan allegations in Glastonbury, involving over 600 complaints and six months of work to determine it was a non-crime hate incident – illustrating the complexity and institutional jeopardy that can arise from incidents that appear straightforward.

Police force responses

Three officers from a southern police force told **-Speaker Redacted-** they viewed the new guidance as 'political nonsense' and intended to ignore it. Police Scotland and the Police Service of Northern Ireland have made similar positions public. Paul highlighted that obligations police and partners face under Equality Act Section 149 and the Human Rights Act remain unaffected by the College of Policing guidance.

Replacement posts

The advertisement for CC Hobrough's replacement as NPCC hate crime lead closed with zero applicants. CC Swann's DEI lead position also attracted no expressions of interest, leaving a significant void in NPCC hate crime leadership.

IAG position

The IAG agreed to engage with the College of Policing on implementation, but was clear it would not lend credibility to an approach it considers poorly evidenced. **-Speaker Redacted-** stated the IAG's role is to 'make you feel uncomfortable' while offering the best available advice. The group's independence and critical voice must be maintained throughout.

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4. Strategic Coordination and Neglected Communities

It was observed that within hours of MHCLG publishing a 'fairly good blueprint on community cohesion', the Home Secretary announced the non-crime hate incident changes – effectively undoing the work of another government department. It was felt that this was an illustration of an absence of joined-up government thinking on hate crime.

Members discussed the absence of any overarching government hate crime strategy. The previous strategy expired in 2020 and was never replaced. The cohesion strategy contains 'solid and profound' wording but 'broken and piecemeal' delivery. **-Speaker Redacted-** raised whether coordination should remain with the Home Secretary, or whether the Community Secretary or another department would be better placed.

Several communities currently outside the policy focus were highlighted:

- **Disability hate crime:** **-Speaker Redacted-** noted that people with learning disabilities and autism have no meaningful statistics, and that reporting is expected to deteriorate further under the new guidance. He described disability hate crime as 'the biggest gap we have' and 'the most misunderstood and nuanced of areas'.
- **Trans people:** **-Speaker Redacted-** noted that one in two trans people have been subject to physical attack – a problem that is growing – yet there is no working definition and the community appears 'completely ignored or indeed encouraged by government'.
- **Alternative subcultures:** **-Speaker Redacted-** noted her community 'isn't even recognised as a protected characteristic' and that victims are routinely told attacks are 'their own fault for wearing the clothes they wear'.
- **Misogyny:** **-Speaker Redacted-** acknowledged failing to raise misogyny when challenging Ben on disproportionality, recognising it as a growing area without adequate definition or protection.

5. The Stephen Lawrence Legacy

-Speaker Redacted- noted that the meeting took place days before the 33rd anniversary of Stephen Lawrence's murder on the following Wednesday, and observed that the group was still debating hierarchies and definitions rather than working within settled frameworks. **-Speaker Redacted-** added that senior officers continue to deny institutional racism in the face of the Charing Cross inquiry, the Secret Policemen documentary, the Casey, Daniels, and Williams reports.

-Speaker Redacted- described it as 'unfathomable' that the same political party responsible for the Lawrence inquiry's key recommendations is now dismantling them, stating that 'history will not forgive this government'. The rejection of the NPCC non-crime hate incidents report was identified as the most visible current instance of that dismantling.

-Speaker Redacted- predicted the quality of the rejected NPCC report will only become apparent 'when we get to either an inquest or an investigation into civil disobedience' arising from the course the Home Secretary has chosen.

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6. Higher Education Conference

The group confirmed arrangements for a higher education hate crime conference to be held on Wednesday 2 July 2026 at the University of Westminster. The venue has capacity for 240 in-person attendees with online streaming also available. The IAG will chair the organisation of the event, with Mike Ainsworth leading.

The conference will address every form of hate crime without reproducing the hierarchies criticised by members. Topics will include what constitutes hate crime, the distinction between hate crime and lawful-but-hateful conduct, and how universities can better safeguard their communities.

MHCLG has been proactive in wanting multiple government departments to attend. The Office for Students has also agreed to participate after several months of discussions, recognising the shared agenda of protecting universities as spaces for open inquiry.

Mike noted that extremists are actively targeting schools and further education institutions. **-Speaker Redacted-** offered the example of students expressing that 'Palestinians deserve to die because they voted for Hamas' to illustrate the challenge: if lecturers feel constrained by definitional uncertainty, they lose the capacity to challenge such views and engage students who may be on a path to radicalisation.

A hybrid planning session will be held on 19 May at the University of Westminster to shape the programme. Members wishing to participate remotely will be able to do so.

7. Lord MacDonald Review

The IAG discussed Lord MacDonald's ongoing review of public order and hate crime. The group agreed to seek a meeting before he submits his review, with a view to presenting the full range of concerns raised during the meeting. Mike Ainsworth and Paul Giannasi will draft a letter offering either a direct meeting or engagement with the wider group, and will include an invitation to attend the 19 May session.

8. Race Action Plan Workshops

John Azah reported that he and Paul Giannasi are working with Dr Neville Lawrence under the Race Action Plan to deliver six to eight workshops around the country – including London and Bristol – focused on the Black community's relationship with policing and race hate crime. Paul has edited an interview with Dr Lawrence to serve as an introduction to the workshops, and will share it with IAG members for review. John Grieve emphasised the importance of including Wales, and Becca Rosenthal offered to support that.

9. Refugee and Migrant Hate Crime – Conference Update

-Speaker Redacted- reported that Monday's Westminster conference had attracted approximately 120 attendees from across the UK, with a grassroots focus. Speakers from the

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Mirror and the Guardian offered guidance on encouraging positive stories, and attendees received a toolkit on countering negative media narratives. Manchester's presentation of its hate crime plan at the London Hate Crime Stakeholder Reference Group meeting was noted as an example of strong local practice worth sharing more widely.

10. IAG Organisation and Infrastructure

-Speaker Redacted- raised the importance of ensuring the IAG is not dependent on the NPCC or the College of Policing to function during the current period of institutional instability. The establishment of a WhatsApp group provides one communication channel outside those structures.

-Speaker Redacted- described work underway to submit Freedom of Information requests to every police service and local council in the UK, asking nine questions covering hate crime strategy, dedicated teams, budgets, referral systems, and community safety plans. The aim is to produce two reports and regional service directories documenting the postcode lottery that currently characterises hate crime provision.

Members noted the absence of any comprehensive list of hate crime forums across the country and the lack of a communication system linking the IAG to those forums – a gap that would matter greatly if rapid community tension escalation required a coordinated response. Concern was also expressed about the knowledge and experience that will be lost if police restructuring reduces the number of forces from 43 to significantly fewer.

11. Paul Giannasi: Future Involvement

Paul Giannasi assured the group he will remain supportive of the IAG after his departure from post. **-Speaker Redacted-** acknowledged the difficulty of Paul's departure, noting he now fully understands why both Paul and Mark Hobrough felt unable to continue after the NPCC report was set aside by their own organisation.

-Speaker Redacted- proposed inviting Paul to join as an ordinary member of the IAG. There was general agreement, and Mike confirmed he would organise a meal following an upcoming in-person meeting.

Action Items

- **Mike Ainsworth:** Draft a letter to the College of Policing setting out the IAG's concerns about the non-crime hate incidents report being poorly evidenced and potentially incompatible with Equality Act commitments, while confirming willingness to engage in good faith and urging that the NPCC report serve as the guiding evidential framework. To be sent before the next College of Policing meeting.
- **Mike Ainsworth & Paul Giannasi:** Write to Lord MacDonald offering a meeting with the IAG and extending an invitation to the 19 May conference, highlighting concerns about communities excluded from current policy attention.

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- **Paul Giannasi:** Share the triage document (annex to the NPCC report) with all IAG members.
- **Paul Giannasi:** Chase the outstanding payment for **-Speaker Redacted-** within the next day or two.
- **Paul Giannasi:** Circulate the Dr Neville Lawrence interview video to IAG members for review.
- **-Speaker Redacted-:** Co-ordinate logistics for the 2 July higher education conference, including finalising a programme covering all forms of hate crime, securing speakers, and managing government department attendance.
- **-Speaker Redacted-:** Continue the UK hate crime research project: analyse FOI responses, produce regional service directories, and document the substance of community safety plans across forces and councils.
- **-Speaker Redacted-:** Bring disability hate crime training materials from Nottingham Trent University to the 2 July conference, including definitional material on learning disability and autism.
- **Ben Clarke (MHCLG):** Post the anti-Muslim hatred definition document and freedom of speech safeguards text to the group.
- **IAG members:** Review the anti-Muslim hatred definition document once circulated by Ben Clarke and provide comments.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be a hybrid session on Tuesday 19 May 2026 at the University of Westminster. The agenda will focus on planning for the 2 July higher education conference and strengthening links with the London Hate Crime Stakeholder Reference Group. Members wishing to attend remotely will be able to do so.

A further in-person meeting (date previously circulated) will follow, with a meal arranged for afterwards.

DRAFT – Circulated for comment by attendees.