

Dr Carolyn Wilkins, Chief Executive
Oldham MBC
Level 3, Civic Centre
West Street
Oldham
OL1 1UG

29 January 2015

Dear Carolyn,

Re: Oldham Council Resolution – Disability Hate Crime

Thank you for your letter to the Director of Public Prosecutions of 9 January, which has been passed to me for reply.

I welcome your resolution, and can confirm that that the CPS has recently redoubled its efforts to prosecute disability hate crime. In October last year the CPS published a specific action plan aimed at improving the way we handle these types of cases. I attach a copy of this plan for your information.

You rightly recognise that despite the conviction rate for disability hate crime having improved in 2013/14, in comparison to the previous year, the number of cases and convictions is too low, which is why we are taking action to not only identify more cases, but also encourage more people to come forward and report more offences.

We are working with the police to address the low numbers of cases reported to the police and referred to the CPS. In addition, I have been in discussions with key groups working in this area, including the Disability Hate Crime Network, which I note the Council is also resolved to support. I am aware the Disability Hate Crime Network is exploring the potential of third party reporting centres to encourage individuals to report offences in a safe and familiar environment. The potential benefits of third-party reporting sound very positive, and I would encourage you to consider discussing this with the Disability Hate Crime Network.

The CPS also has set up a new approach to quality assuring the way we handle disability hate crime cases, including checking live cases as they progress and regular reporting to senior management. Specific work has been undertaken with CPS Direct, our national service that provides charging decisions to the police 24 hours a day. CPSD lawyers often see most disability hate crime cases first, and are best placed to identify these at an earlier stage.

All CPS Areas, including CPS North West, which covers Oldham, have a designated Hate Crime Coordinator, who work to agreed minimum standards. Martin Hill is the Hate Crime


Coordinator in the North West who works closely with Stacey Davis, the Equality, Diversity and Community Engagement Manager. Martin and Stacey have recently delivered a session to secondary school head teachers and PSHE teachers in Oldham on the Disability Hate Crime Schools Project referenced in your letter.

You refer in your letter to the extra sentencing powers available to judges in disability hate crime offences. We encourage prosecutors to draw the court's attention to its sentencing powers, particularly in cases of disability hate crime.

As part of our action plan the CPS held a national scrutiny panel in December, during which the nature of hostility in disability hate crime was discussed. We will be looking at clarifying the legal position in this area and have made the senior judiciary aware of our plans to encourage an increase in sentence uplift requests. We hope to work closely with the wider judiciary to promote their use going forward.

With regards to the work you are undertaking in your local area, I have passed your letter to Nazir Afzal, Chief Crown Prosecutor and Martin Hill, Hate Crime Coordinator, for the North West, and asked that they contact you regarding your work to establish a multi-agency approach to prevent disability hate crime.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Lewis". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

PETER LEWIS
CHIEF EXECUTIVE