



# **PRESS RELEASE: 500 Disabled People a Year in Merton Experiencing Hate Crime**

**12th Dec 16**

A new report by Merton Centre for Independent Living and Stay Safe East has identified a potential 500 disabled people a year experiencing hate crime in Merton alone, with only 2% of people making a report to the police.

A hate crime is defined as any criminal offence which is perceived, by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by hostility or prejudice based on a personal characteristic such as disability, gender identity, race, religion or faith and sexual orientation.

The report found that some potential hate crimes were being missed because they were recorded as anti-social behavior or as a safeguarding issue. It also found that it was difficult for survivors to report hate crime because they felt they wouldn't be believed, they felt nothing would be done, or they didn't recognise it as a hate crime themselves. In addition, there were some practical barriers to reporting, like a lack of information online and problems accessing police stations. However, 3 out of 4 disabled people talked to for the research, said they would make a report if they had support to do so.

Lyla Adwan-Kamara, CEO of Merton CIL said "local disabled people have been telling us for a number of years that they are regularly experiencing hate crime, but there was no evidence of this in crime

reports. It was a completely hidden problem. We commissioned Stay Safe East to establish what the scale of disability hate crime is in Merton, and why it isn't being reported. We are shocked by the number of people affected, and will be working closely with the Council, Police, and housing providers, to try to address this."

Merton Council's chair of the overview and scrutiny commission Councillor Peter Southgate said: "It is deplorable that anyone should face any type of hate crime. Merton is one of London's safest boroughs, but we cannot be complacent. With Merton CIL, we will be looking at the recommendations made in this very important report and will be working closely with them on developing ways in which we can help support and protect victims of hate crime and take action against the perpetrators."

### **Notes for the Editor:**

Merton Centre for Independent Living is a user-led Disabled people's organisation run by Disabled people, for Disabled people, across the full spectrum of disability. We deliver a range of services to disabled people in London Borough of Merton.

A comprehensive piece of research on hate crime against disabled people in Merton was carried out in 2016 by Stay Safe East on behalf of Merton Centre for Independent Living.

The research is about the impact of hate crime and harassment on disabled people from all communities and backgrounds, and what can be done to prevent these crimes and to support victims.

The report looks at the definition of hate crime, and the legal, national and London picture. The report then looks at the current situation in Merton, including levels of reported hate crime, where disabled people can report hate crime or harassment, how the Council, police and housing agencies deal with reports. The results of a survey of disabled people in Merton are set out in detail.

The report makes a series of recommendations for the police, Merton Council, housing providers, the voluntary sector and Merton centre for Independent Living.

**The full report can be found**  
at <http://www.mertoncil.org.uk/services/hate-crime/>

**Infographics download here - [Hate Crime Infographics](#)**

**For more information contact:**

Lyla Adwan-Kamara

Email: [lyla@mertoncil.org](mailto:lyla@mertoncil.org)

Telephone: 0203 397 3119

[www.mertoncil.org.uk](http://www.mertoncil.org.uk)