# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE** | **Hate Crime Awareness Week 2019** |
| **DATE** | **15 October 2019** |
| **BY** | **Jane Hutt AM, Deputy Minister and Chief Whip** |

Today we mark Hate Crime Awareness Week, an annual campaign to raise awareness, encourage hate crime reporting, and inspire people to work together to combat this affront to victims of hate crime. The Welsh Government’s vision is an inclusive Wales in which people from all backgrounds can thrive, and where there is no room for xenophobia, racism or bigotry. We are determined to drive out hate crime and ensure victims do not suffer in silence.

The theme for Hate Crime Awareness Week 2019 is ‘Spread Love, Not Hate’. This is a pertinent message to reflect upon in the context of imminent EU withdrawal and the increasingly divisive political and media discourse which surrounds it. The racist abuse at last night’s European qualifying match in Bulgaria is another example of the rise of hateful attitudes and we utterly condemn it.

Since the EU Referendum, there has been a marked increase in reports relating to hate crimes and incidents. This increase has been both quantitative in terms of hate crime reports to Police forces and the Welsh Government-funded National Hate Crime Report and Support Centre and anecdotal reports where individuals claim that they did not report incidents due to a lack of faith that a prosecution would follow.

The 2018/2019 Hate Crime Statistics for England and Wales were published by the Home Office on 15 October. The statistics show a 17% increase in recorded hate crimes across Wales compared to 2017/2018. This compares to an overall 10% increase across the whole of England and Wales. There were 3,932 recorded hate crimes across the four Welsh Police Force Areas of which:

* 2,676 (68%) were race hate crimes;
* 751 (19%) were sexual orientation hate crimes;
* 206 (5%) were religion hate crimes;
* 443 (11%) were disability hate crimes; and
* 120 (3%) were transgender hate crimes.

The statistics reflect the hard work being done across Wales by Police Forces, the Third Sector and the National Hate Crime Report and Support Centre (run by Victim Support Cymru) to increase the confidence of victims and encourage them to report these incidents. However, the statistics also illustrate the need for concerted effort on the part of public authorities, including the Welsh Government, to counter negative perceptions of minority communities, tackle hate crime where it occurs, and support victims.

We recognise the risk the uncertainty of a ‘no deal’ Brexit may bring which could further exacerbate tensions in our communities. We have acted to mitigate these risks as far as possible through utilising the Welsh Government’s European Transition Fund and mobilising our existing networks to tackle hate crime and promote community cohesion in the following ways:

The National Hate Crime Report and Support Centre provides independent advocacy and support for victims of hate crime in Wales. This service was expanded in April 2019 by an additional £360,000 to ensure the Centre has increased capacity to support victims of hate crime until March 2021.

In March, I also announced the ‘Hate Crime Minority Communities Grant’ – a one-off grant fund to support community organisations who are working closely with ethnic minority and faith communities who are at risk of experiencing hate crime. The Grant was developed following engagement with the Wales Race Forum. I have recently approved £330,000 of funding to the North Wales Regional Equality Network (NWREN), Show Racism the Red Card, Bawso, EYST Wales, Race Council Cymru, Race Equality First, and Women Connect First. These organisations will implement a range of projects over the next 18 months, including increasing understanding of hate crime and confidence in how to report, work to challenge negative attitudes in schools and colleges, explore restorative justice approaches with perpetrators, and undertake community engagement initiatives.

We are currently developing a national campaign to try to reduce the incidence of hate crimes and incidents in Wales, to be launched in 2020. We are currently gathering the views of stakeholders, members of the public, and victims of hate crimes to inform the development of the campaign and its aims. This campaign will help us to promote positive messaging throughout the year.

We are expanding our Community Cohesion Programme with an additional £1.5million of European Transition Funding until March 2021. This funding is supporting small teams in each region of Wales to enable increased engagement with local communities and public services, and to respond to whatever tensions may

arise as the UK leaves the EU. In recent years our funding of the Programme has ensured the Welsh Government is working alongside key partners to foster cohesion, and help tackle hate crime and counter the threat of extremism. It has been essential that the capacity of this well-established programme has been bolstered during this uncertain period for Wales.

Alongside these projects, the Welsh Government will continue to convene the Hate Crime Criminal Justice Board Cymru to ensure an effective forum for key stakeholders working to address hate crime across Wales.

Since last year’s hate crime awareness week, there have been a number of high profile terrorist incidents around the world clearly motivated by hatred for ethnic, faith or LGBT+ communities. We want to reassure anyone from diverse backgrounds, living in Wales, that we are united with them in opposing such vile and hateful acts. After the Christchurch attacks in March, I wrote to Imams to express this sentiment and I have written to Rabbis after the attack on a Synagogue in Germany just last week. Such acts are fundamentally opposed to Welsh values and we will be steadfast in condemning them when they occur.

Wales has a long history of welcoming diverse and vibrant communities, much of it harmonious, but this cannot be taken for granted. This year we commemorated the 100th anniversary of the 1919 race riots. This is a timely reminder of how intolerance and prejudice still resides in our communities and we must address this over the coming months.