

News story: Baroness Williams speech to National Black Police Association

It is an absolute pleasure to be here today.

The National Black Police Association is a key Home Office partner and I would like to begin by thanking you for all of the work that you do.

My colleagues and I value the advice you provide as we develop policy – on workforce strategy, race relations, community ties and tensions, on hate crime and diversity in the police.

In fact, it was this organisation that provided the platform for the Prime Minister – when she was Home Secretary – to lay down a major challenge to police leaders to do better on diversity.

She spoke at this conference in 2015 and since then police leaders have taken concerted action on workforce diversity and police forces are making great progress.

Now, police forces are more diverse than ever before. But there is still some way to go until forces fully represent their communities. For instance, when it comes to having BME representation in senior ranks, this picture is less promising.

As a government we have implemented measures to expand the pool and diversity of senior police officers by introducing direct entry and by opening up appointments to those with equivalent experience from overseas. And the College of Policing has also been doing important work in this area.

Because we know that diversity is not a nice to have. It is an operational necessity. Because people from all communities want the police to fight crime while having confidence that their individual needs will be understood and respected.

A year ago the Prime Minister pledged to carry out an audit of the data held by government in order to shine a light on how our public services treat people from different backgrounds. The goal was to help the public assess how their race affects how they are treated on key issues such as health, education, criminal justice and employment, broken down by geographic location, income and gender.

The audit exposes a number of uncomfortable truths: there are significant disparities in the way public services are experienced based on a person's ethnicity and between police force areas. And while progress has been made in many areas, through police reform and the good work underway in forces, the data clearly shows that there is more to be done.

As the Prime Minister said herself:

the message is very simple: if these disparities cannot be explained then they must be changed.

The Race Disparity Audit makes it alarmingly clear that while we have made significant progress across a range of measures relating to crime and policing, for many people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds, their experiences and expectations fall well short of what is acceptable.

The Home Secretary, along with ministers at the Home Office, is drawing together national work to consider these findings. There will also be an important role for national partners such as the College of Policing, and locally for police and Crime Commissioners and Chief Constables to ensure that those communities where people are more likely to be a victim of crime, and live in greater fear of crime, receive the support that they need.

This government believes that how far you go in life should be based on the talent you have and the hard work the you put in – and nothing else.

We want to build a country that works for everyone – and that means tackling the injustices that hold people back in life, both within policing and indeed in the wider community.

The theme of today's conference is 'exploring the dynamics of hate' and as the Home Office minister responsible for countering extremism – I want to tell you what we are doing to tackle hate crime in all our communities.

I am particularly glad to be addressing you during the sixth annual Hate Crime Awareness Week. Hate Crime Awareness Week is being marked up and down the country, with charity and voluntary sector organisations, public services, and others leading the way. There are so many ideas, from attending local events to showing your support on social media which aim to encourage local authorities and services to work with communities affected by hate crime to raise awareness of the issue.

And I want to make it absolutely clear that hate crime of any kind, directed against any community, race or religion, has absolutely no place in our society, and it remains a serious concern. For my part I will always continue to push for robust action to address the causes of hate crime and improve our response to it.

We need to do this effectively because these crimes have a deep impact on victims because they are targeted against some intrinsic part of their identity. The effect of these crimes is often felt not only by the victim, but of course their family, friends, neighbours and others in their community. Hate crimes also go against the fundamental values of tolerance and respect for others that underpin our diverse society. Through fear, abuse and violence, hate crime can limit people's equality of opportunity and infringe their basic human rights.

The latest statistics show that there continue to be too many cases of hate crime. In 2016/2017 there were 80,393 offences recorded by the police and this is a 29% increase compared with the year before. The increase over the

last year is thought to reflect both a genuine rise in hate crime around the time of the EU referendum and following the Westminster Bridge attack as well as ongoing improvements in crime reporting by police and of course the terrorist attack in Manchester. We certainly cannot be complacent when we read these statistics.

We already have a strong legislative framework to tackle hate crime and a hate crime action plan launched by the Home Secretary in July 2016 and due to be updated next year.

Where the police can really help is by encouraging an increase in reporting – which I know many forces have been doing. Because no one should suffer hate crime in silence. This involves increasing awareness of what hate crime is and engaging with communities to make sure that victims have greater confidence to come forward and that they actually know how to report it.

But more needs to be done.

A key part of this will be tackling online hate. As a government we have already provided over £450,000 towards the development of an online hate crime hub in the Metropolitan police area. Following the success of London's online hub, we are now pleased to announce the development of a national online hate crime hub which – when up and running in the coming months – will help the police to respond more efficiently and effectively to reports from across the country. Following referral to the national hub via True Vision, the police website to report hate crime, individual complaints will be assessed, and relevant cases will be assigned to the appropriate local force for investigation. As such the hub will streamline and simplify current processes, avoiding duplication, make full use of expertise and improving the efficiency of local forces to respond. Victims will be kept updated throughout, as police forces seek to bring perpetrators to justice.

We have committed funding for communities to protect against hate crime, with £2.4 million to protect places of worship and £900,000 to support community projects. We are engaging with groups to ensure that we understand the public's experience of hate crime, and make it easier for victims to come forward. As part of this, the Home Office has – just this week – announced a funding package of over £750,000 to tackle hate crime covering all 5 strands of the monitored hate crime strands across England and Wales. This will fund 7 innovative community projects, for example a project that works with schools to improve education on hate crime and a project working with young disabled people to raise awareness of hate crime and how to report it.

We are also committed to refreshing the Hate Crime Action Plan in 2018, working with the police and our wide network of stakeholders to make sure it is fit for purpose as well as asking Her Majesty's Inspectorate of the Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services to carry out inspection work on hate crime to build a national picture of how police forces deal with hate crime.

So I don't think I could be clearer, this government believes that it is utterly unacceptable that people should suffer abuse or attacks because of who they are – we must stand together against hate crime and ensure that it

is stamped out. The police service is a key partner in this and I look forward to continuing to work with you.

As I have said, this government believes that how far you go in life should be based on talent and hard work – and nothing else. Hate must never impact how people live their lives, how comfortable they feel or where they end up.

We want to build a country that does work for everyone – and that means tackling the injustices that hold people back as well as taking a stand against intolerance.

That is why the work of this association is so important. We need your wise counsel not only on making sure that police officers and staff can progress in their careers and serve their communities but also on issues across all our communities.

Thank you.