

Press release: Record prosecutions for hate crime in Wessex

Solicitor General Robert Buckland QC MP will be in Salisbury today to see what is being done to tackle hate crime.

Hate crime is when someone is targeted because of their actual or perceived race, religion, sexual orientation, transgender identity or disability, it is a criminal offence and the law provides additional penalties for such crimes.

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) Area of Wessex has the highest conviction rates in the country for hate crime prosecutions, with 90.1% of hate crimes prosecuted in Dorset, Hampshire and Isle of Wight, and Wiltshire during 2016-2017 resulting in a conviction.

The Area's conviction rates have improved in all strands of hate crime, demonstrating how seriously prosecutors take cases where there is hostility based on a person's race, religion, sexual orientation, disability or transgender identity.

The Solicitor will visit the CPS Wessex at Salisbury Law Courts to discuss its efforts to prosecute hate crime offences.

While in the region, the Solicitor will attend the Area's Hate Crime Scrutiny and Involvement Panel. Panel members include volunteers from community groups and key colleagues from the CPS Criminal Justice partner agencies, who support prosecutors in CPS Wessex to identify and adopt best practices reviewing hate crime cases where victims have suffered prejudice or hostility.

Solicitor General Robert Buckland QC MP said:

One incident of hate crime is one too many and those responsible need to be brought to justice. I'd like to thank CPS Wessex for the fantastic job it's doing to tackle hate crime in the region.

Victims need to report these crimes and feel that they will be taken seriously if we are to stamp this out, so it's encouraging to see the work happening to train prosecutors in case handling. This has no doubt contributed to improving the conviction rate and the CPS' service to victims.

The CPS rolled out a training programme in 2016 to all prosecutors on Disability Hate Crime that saw the conviction rate increased by 5.7%, to 86.4% for Disability Hate Crime cases prosecuted in Wessex. The Area has plans to deliver new training packages in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity.