



**AVON &
SOMERSET**
POLICE & CRIME
COMMISSIONER

AVON AND SOMERSET POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER

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An open Letter from Avon and Somerset Chief Constable Andy Marsh and PCC Sue Mountstevens

In the wake of the EU Referendum we want to take the unusual step of writing an open letter to reassure our communities that we will do everything we can to keep them safe. We have been dismayed at the stories of hate crime victimisation and racial or anti-immigrant abuse reported in the media. Whatever your thoughts on the result, we hope you find the injustice and devastating effects of this as abhorrent as we do. There can never be any excuse for hate crime in any shape or form and this criminality will not be tolerated.

Nationally there has been a rise in the number of hate crime incidents to the national online reporting site, and we have seen a troublesome increase across Avon and Somerset too. Since the Referendum our police officers and staff have been reviewing the crime reports coming in to us with even greater scrutiny than before, and we have seen the numbers increase to an average of ten incidents per day in the last week compared to four. Thank you to those who showed courage in reporting.

We value the rich, multi-cultural diversity of the cities, towns, villages and rural communities where we live and work and the people that make them, and we know this is true of many of you. We would like to think that people will intervene to challenge, condemn and report abusive behaviour. We want to reassure victims that those behind it are not representative of Britain. In Bristol, we have seen shopkeepers hand out flowers to welcome migrants living and working in the city. Elsewhere local school children have shown random acts of kindness. Let's not react to the current climate but continue instead to be inclusive, accepting, welcoming and celebrate the difference that makes our communities so rich rather than letting it divide us.

More than ever in these uncertain times we want those who are victims of hate crime to feel confident in the belief that we'll take your reports seriously, protect you and make sure you get all the support you need.

So, if you are a witness or a victim of hate crime or feel vulnerable please contact someone to report it. More people are reporting hate crime than ever before but it is still significantly underreported. Don't suffer in silence; there are people who can help you. Call the **police on 101**, **Crimestoppers** on **0800 555111** or via their website at www.crimestoppers-uk.org, or visit the **True Vision** website (www.report-it.org.uk) for information, advice and to report online. In an emergency, always dial 999.

We promise to continue to work together every day to make the communities of Avon and Somerset be safe and feel safe.

Yours sincerely

Sue Mountstevens
Police & Crime Commissioner

Andy Marsh
Chief Constable