



**#ImWithSam**  
Police training report





## Executive Summary

Dimensions led a seven month training programme with Surrey Police APT officers. The training focused on learning disability and autism hate crime and examined the origins of stigma and prejudice against people with these disabilities.

The training has been evaluated against four criteria:

1. Improved confidence in recognising or establishing that someone has a learning disability or autism.
2. Improved confidence in supporting and taking a crime report from someone with a learning disability or autism.
3. Improved confidence in knowing when to apply a hate crime flag on a crime report.
4. Increased recording of disability hate crime within Surrey.

The training has shown positive results, with:

- a **22%** increase in officers feeling confident or very confident in recognising that someone might have a learning disability or autism
- **90%** of officers feeling confident in taking a report from someone with autism and **93%** feeling confident in engaging with someone with a learning disability
- a **20%** increase in officers feeling either confident or very confident in applying a hate crime flag

Alongside this, there has been a month on month increase in the number of recorded disability hate crimes in Surrey and a higher overall average for recorded disability hate crime compared to equivalent months in 2017.



# Background to #ImWithSam police training

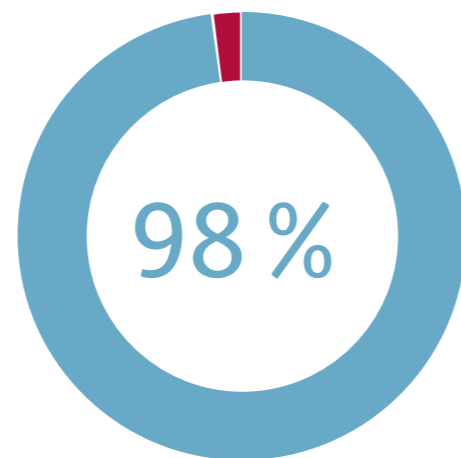
In 2016, Dimensions led research into learning disability and autism hate crime, to identify prevalence and set out a blueprint for change.

A key area identified in the research was policing and the need to improve police understanding and response to victims. **98%** of respondents to the research said it was important or very important to have improved training for police officers.

Police training on hate crime, equality and diversity and disability will vary across forces. Research suggests that, while e-learning is one of the most common formats for such training, there are limitations on what police officers take away from this.

The #ImWithSam campaign embarked on a seven month training programme with Surrey Police, delivering training to some 1000 APT officers. APT officers are on the frontline of police response and, after call handlers, will often be the first contact a victim has with the force. It is crucial that these officers have the skills, knowledge and confidence to support victims, who may be in a state of distress and confusion following a hate related incident.

Respondents who said it is important or very important to have improved training for police officers



The #ImWithSam training had three key areas to improve officer confidence, so that officers could provide better support to victims of learning disability and autism hate crime:

1. Improved confidence in recognising or establishing that someone has a learning disability or autism.
2. Improved confidence in supporting and taking a crime report from someone with a learning disability or autism.
3. Improved confidence in knowing when to apply a hate crime flag on a crime report.

#ImWithSam training uses the social history of learning disability and autism to explore themes and motivations in hate targeting. Starting in 1845, the sessions work through key developments in government policy to think about how attitudes to people with learning disabilities and autism have changed.

The session is co-led by a self-advocate and victim of hate crime, who shares their experience with officers. The session is interactive, with group exercises and opportunities to ask questions.

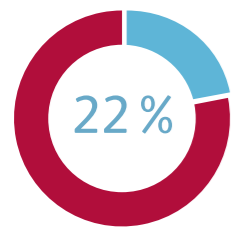
The training encourages officers to think in line with the social model of disability and challenges the labelling of people with learning disabilities and autism as 'vulnerable adults' instead of being victims of hostility-based crime. The training also touches on police responses to high profile murders of learning disabled victims, to think about the relationship that exists between vulnerability and hostility in crimes perpetrated against people with learning disabilities and autism.

For Surrey Police, the training was delivered alongside a complementary session by Waymarks, which offered clinical insights into learning disability and autism in criminal justice.

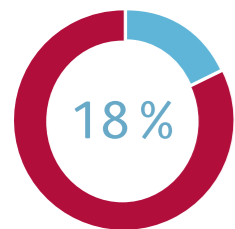
# The impact of the #ImWithSam training

## Recognising learning disability and autism hate crime

After the #ImWithSam training there was a **22%** increase in officers feeling confident or very confident in recognising that someone might have a learning disability or autism. Encouragingly, there was also an **18%** increase in officers feeling confident or very confident to ask someone if they had support needs and a **15%** decrease in officers saying that establishing whether or not someone has a learning disability or autism is a top concern when dealing with hate crime.



Increase in officers feeling confident or very confident in recognising someone might have a learning disability or autism.



Increase in officers feeling confident or very confident to ask someone if they had support needs.

Learning disability and autism hate crime is underreported. Just **48%** of the victims who engaged in our research had reported what happened to them to the police. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) estimates that there are 70,000 disability hate crimes every year, but recorded figures stand at just 5,558 in 2016/17.

**70,000**

disability hate crimes that occur every year (Office for National Statistics)

**5,558**

recorded figures for hate crimes 2016/17

As disability hate crime recording is not disaggregated, #ImWithSam worked with the ONS to examine how many of those victims would be likely to have learning disabilities or autism. We found that victims with learning disabilities and autism were four times more likely to be victims of disability hate crime than those with disabilities impacting stamina, mobility or vision.

Learning disability and autism hate crime is also under-recorded. Where people have 'invisible' disabilities, it is more likely that their disability will not be recognised when they report a crime, particularly as some victims might need to be prompted to disclose that they have a disability and to consider whether their disability played a part in why they were targeted.

It's important that police officers feel confident in establishing whether or not someone has a learning disability or autism, so they can support the victim in the way that suits them and so they can make an assessment, or support the victim to make an assessment of whether they have been the victim of hate crime.

This requires officers to be able to recognise where someone might have a learning disability or autism and, more importantly, to be comfortable asking someone if they have a disability and additional support needs.

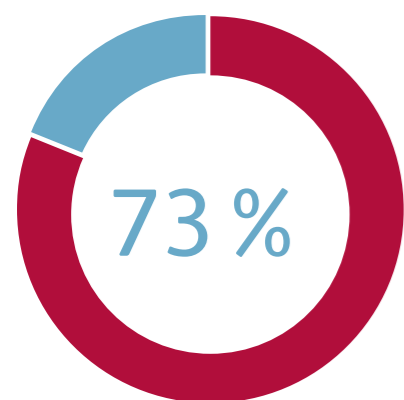






## Responding to and supporting victims

#ImWithSam research found that **73%** of people with a learning disability, autism or both had been the victim of hate related targeting. Low reporting rates underline the barriers that people confront when it comes to pursuing resolution through the criminal justice system.



Respondents with a learning disability, autism or both who had been the victim of hate related targeting.

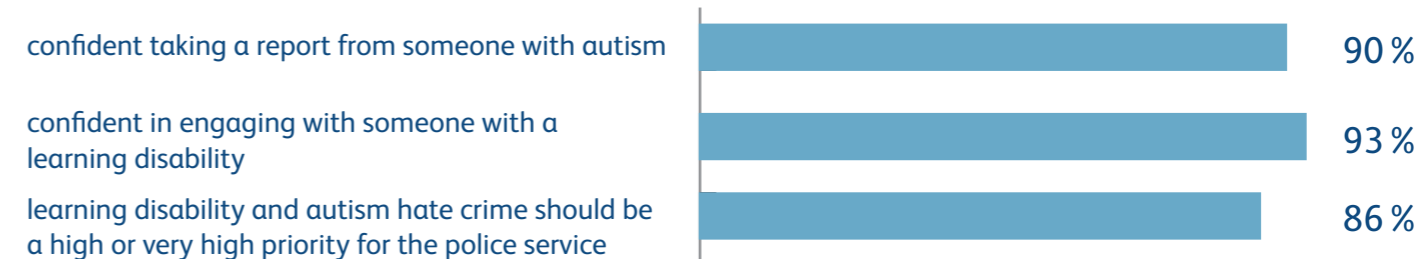
Victims expressed concern that they would not be believed when they reported it, or seen as credible or reliable witnesses. Some expressed anxiety about talking to the police and the police's ability to understand and support them. It was also clear from testimony #ImWithSam received that people felt hate crime against them would not be taken seriously by police.

Overall after the training, **90%** of officers felt confident in taking a report from someone with autism and **93%** felt confident in engaging with someone with a learning disability.

Encouragingly, there was also a **10%** reduction in officers saying they were concerned about how to support a victim to express themselves fully and an **8%** reduction in officers saying the credibility of the victim was their top concern, so that just **7%** of officers identified this as an issue. This suggests that victims will be more likely to get good support from officers at the point of reporting a crime.

Officers also made it clear that learning disability and autism hate crime is something that they take seriously. Following the training, **86%** of officers felt that learning disability and autism hate crime should be either a high or very high priority for the police service, which includes an **11%** increase in officers feeling it should be a very high priority.

### After the training, police officers felt...







“ A hate crime is a crime that is perceived by the victim, or anyone else, to have been motivated by hostility. ”

## Recording hate crime

Once officers have the skills and confidence to establish whether or not someone has a learning disability or autism, they then need to have the confidence and understanding to record the crime. In some sessions, we encountered uncertainty about whether an officer can use their own discretion to apply a hate crime flag to reports of crimes against people with learning disabilities or autism. Following the training, officers expressed a **20%** increase in feeling either confident or very confident in applying a hate crime flag.

Encouragingly, the most recent data for recorded disability hate crime in Surrey has shown a month on month increase since the training began and a higher average number of recorded disability hate crimes compared to 2017. This suggests a possible increase in officer awareness and improved recording.

The common definition of hate crime used by the Home Office, Crown Prosecution Service and police forces states that a hate crime is a crime that is ‘perceived by the victim, or anyone else, to have been motivated by hostility’.

The perception element of hate crime is crucial in making sure that all forms of hate targeting are investigated properly, giving the best possible chance of a prosecution that recognises the seriousness of the crime.

Awareness and understanding of hate crime can be low among people with learning disabilities and autism. While some may realise they have been the victim of a crime, very few people identify themselves as victims of hate-related targeting. This means the perception and understanding of those supporting victims, and of the police dealing with the crime, can be a crucial part in making sure crimes are reported and recorded as hate-motivated crimes.



# Key learning from the training sessions

Through in depth interviews with participants in the police training, several pieces of learning can be identified:

- 1) It is important to involve a person with lived experience in training
- 2) Classroom-based training from external experts is engaging and impactful.

## The role of victims and experts by experience

A significant number of officers taking part in the training sessions said that hearing from a victim and expert by experience was the most valuable part of the session.

In the officer interviews, it was evident that the insight offered by the person with lived experience helped officers to understand the impact of the crime and develop greater confidence in supporting victims with learning disabilities and autism.

“[The co-trainer] made it very clear what we can do better... I now have the confidence to say things. You almost don't say things because you're worried about making a mistake or offending people.” - Surrey Police Constable

“The best thing [about the training] was showing where officers trip-up – here's what you do to be better” – Surrey Police Constable

“Making people understand the reason why people with disabilities don't come forward, from his point of view, that stays in people's minds” – Surrey Police Sergeant



## Structure of the training

Existing research has suggested that e-learning, while a less resource-intensive option for forces, can be a less impactful form of training.

In the police interviews, officers felt strongly that the classroom-based training had been valuable, particularly as it was led by external speakers with an expertise around learning disability and autism hate crime.

“It's more interesting having people who do the job every day and campaign on the issues” – Surrey Police Constable



“I think it was better to come from someone not from a police background, it's fresh learning, it's not something that we get on a day to day basis” – Surrey Police Sergeant

This contrasted with feedback on e-learning modules, which were seen as less effective ways of training officers, particularly around issues relating to victim experience and more vulnerable victims.

“You come away with 1000 questions with no one to answer it” – Surrey Police Constable

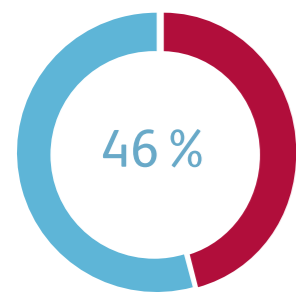
“This was much better than e-learning, people don't take it on board and joke about how fast you can complete it” – Surrey Police Constable



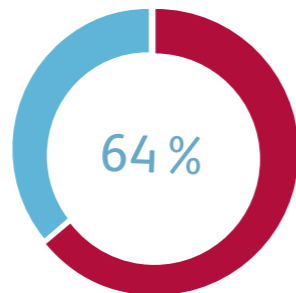


# Recommendations

Before receiving #ImWithSam training, **46%** of officers had never received training on learning disability and autism and almost two thirds (**64%**) had not received training in the last three years. Only **8%** of officers felt the training they had received in relation to learning disability and autism hate crime was very good.



Percentage of officers on #ImWithSam training who had never received training on learning disability and autism.



Percentage of officers on #ImWithSam training who had not received training in the last three years.

In 2016, Dimensions launched the #ImWithSam campaign and highlighted the need for training and resources for police forces that would help support victims with learning disabilities and autism.

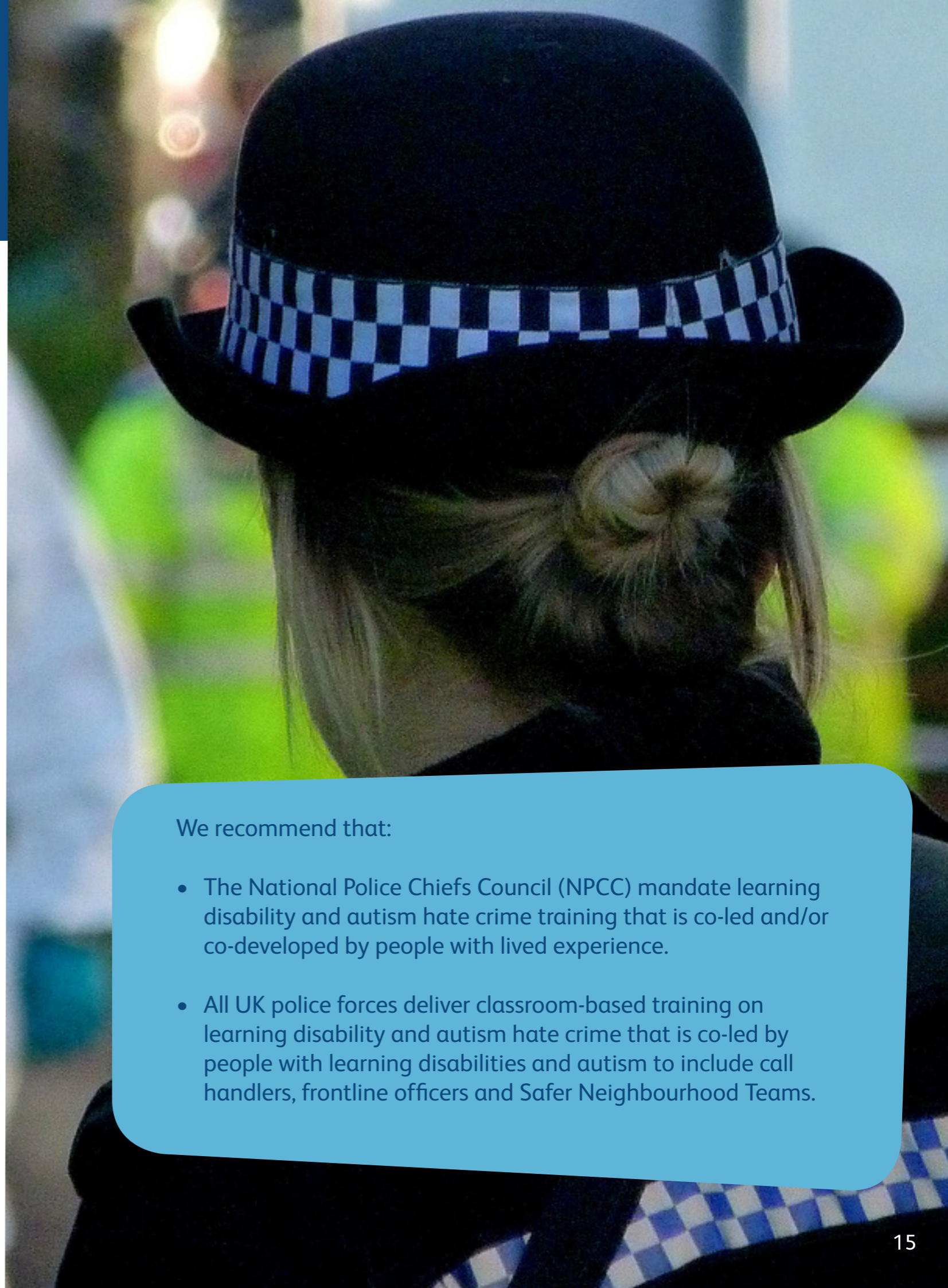
More recently, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services published *Understanding Difference: the police's initial response to hate crime*, which highlighted police training as an area for improvement across forces.

While reporting rates remain so low among victims with learning disabilities and autism, there is a clear need for training across forces. Training that involves victims of hate crime and raises awareness of key issues, including accurate recording, victim support, and risk assessment will improve victims' satisfaction with police services. This makes it more likely that repeat victims will report again and that confidence in the wider community will increase.

It will also support early recognition of hate crime and accurate recording, thus increasing the likelihood that a hate crime is taken forward to a successful prosecution and hate crime conviction.

We recommend that:

- The National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) mandate learning disability and autism hate crime training that is co-led and/or co-developed by people with lived experience.
- All UK police forces deliver classroom-based training on learning disability and autism hate crime that is co-led by people with learning disabilities and autism to include call handlers, frontline officers and Safer Neighbourhood Teams.







# Proving life can get better

Dimensions provides evidence-based, outcomes-focused support including sector leading positive behaviour support for people with learning disabilities, autism and complex needs. We help the people we support to be actively involved in their communities.



Contact us to find out more:

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#ImWithSam



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