



Media Release
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SIXTEEN YEARS AFTER SOPHIE LANCASTER'S DEATH – WHAT HAS CHANGED? Hate crime a daily fact of life for many alternative people

The Sophie Lancaster Foundation launches the results of the largest survey ever undertaken to find out how people from alternative subcultures are being affected by hate crime. Sixteen years after Sophie Lancaster was brutally murdered for no more than being herself, the findings make shocking reading.

The survey shows:

- 80% of respondents experience hate crime on a regular or occasional basis;
- 73% of respondents have never reported their hate crime;
- 27% of respondents said the hate they received made them feel suicidal.

The survey reveals clear and painful testimony from alternative people about the damage that hate crime has had on their life and mental health and how the lack of support from people supposedly in a position to help, has increased their victimisation.

- ***“I had my jaw broken in three places when I was pushed to the ground & repeatedly kicked in the face. The incident started with verbal harassment then escalated. I was attacked by five people because of the way I look.”***
- ***“I have been verbally and physically attacked by strangers since I was 13 years old because I look like a goth. I’m literally just trying to exist how I feel most like myself and have groups of grown men throw drinks over my face for it.”***
- ***“I have suffered abuse for being a member of the alternative subculture on and off for 22 years. As a result, I have crippling anxiety and I avoid large crowds of people I suspect would direct abuse towards me.”***
- ***“There is a culture of victim blaming starting in schools. Expressing yourself is seen as provocative of the offender and this attitude, though unspoken, stretches to reporting to authorities.”***
- ***“The most memorable incident I experienced was at senior school. I was attacked by a group of “popular” girls in the toilets, my friend reported it to the headmaster who called me into his office and told me to expect this kind of treatment due to the way I looked. I still feel angry about his narrowmindedness and reluctance to tackle the problem, even after 25 years I wish I had reported him.”***

THE SOPHIE LANCASTER FOUNDATION

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To gather the necessary evidence of the nature and extent of hate crime affecting the alternative community, the Sophie Lancaster Foundation brought together top hate crime professionals to develop the survey and the findings are stark.

Alison Vincent, Sophie Lancaster Foundation Chief Executive, commented:

“Sophie had previously been spat on in the street and assaulted before that fatal night. This survey clearly shows the level of hate crime targeted at alternative people and explains their reluctance to report it. When they do, the lack of support from those that could help, frequently brings another layer of victimisation. We need to find ways for the alternative community to report hate crime and be confident that when they do, they will find support and be heard. Going forward, we need to forge stronger partnerships with the police and justice system to bring better outcomes for alternative people. Sylvia Lancaster, Sophie’s Mum, set up the Foundation to educate young people about difference and try to turn them away from hateful behaviours. The Foundation will continue Sophie and Sylvia’s legacy through our work with young people and schools.”

Professor Jon Garland, from the University of Surrey, who co-authored the survey report with colleague Moslem Boushehrian, added:

“This report reveals the shocking levels of harassment, abuse and violence that those from alternative subcultures face due to hostility towards their subcultural background. It details the frequency, forms and impact of such hate, and shows that for many victims the effects of being targeted can last for many years. The case for legally recognising alternative subcultural groups as hate crime victims grows ever stronger.”

Mike Ainsworth, Sophie Lancaster Foundation Trustee and Chair of the National Police Chiefs’ Council (NPCC) Independent Advisory Group on Hate Crime, commented:

“An effective and successful criminal justice system is one that serves and has the confidence of all communities. Clearly there is work to do to ensure that alternative people in our communities feel safe. I’m proud to be a Trustee of the Foundation who can and will play an important role in enabling that work to take place.”

Professor Neil Chakraborti, Director of the Centre for Hate Studies and Director of the Institute of Policy, University of Leicester, said:

“This evidence highlights the disturbing volume of hate incidents directed towards members of alternative subcultures, and their damaging impacts. We welcome this report and its recommendations which should be endorsed by policy makers as a matter of urgency.”

Dr Steve Minton, Associate Professor in Applied and Clinical Psychology, University of Plymouth, commented:

“I welcome the publication of this report, highlighting as it does the appalling treatment experienced by members of alternative subcultures – something I know, from both research and personal experience, to have been with us for decades past. I believe that the publication of this report serves to honour Sophie’s and Sylvia’s legacies, through the continued hard work of the Sophie Lancaster Foundation, which I feel privileged to have been associated with. I would urge that all of those in positions of influence – policy makers, and educational, youth, social and legal practitioners everywhere - to read this report, and to do whatever they can to act upon it.”

Rose Simkins, Chief Executive, Stop Hate UK, said:

“Stop Hate UK have always supported the alternative subculture community and stood side by side with the Sophie Lancaster Foundation with their quest to get Hate Crime against alternatives recognised nationally. We will continue to support them in this fight



and therefore welcome this report as it highlights the harm being done to people. No one should have to suffer this abuse and we hope that the report will bring this to the attention of those that can bring about this change and make it a reality that alternatives get proper recognition in our society.”

Kari Berg, Project Manager, RTSI, (Right to Subcultural Identity), commented:

“People all over the world are continuously subjected to hate incidents that are motivated by bias against alternative subcultures, and yet the phenomenon known as alterophobia remains a rarely researched topic, in academia and popular culture alike. We cannot stress enough the importance of this report and its evidential value regarding how common this often-overlooked issue is. Our experience, based on our work against alterophobia in Sweden, echoes the general results of the report. We hope that the concluding recommendations of the report will be welcomed and endorsed by legislators and applicable agencies.”

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PRESS NOTE

The Sophie Lancaster Foundation was set up in 2007, following the brutal murder of Sophie Lancaster. Sophie was creative with a distinctive gothic style and she and her boyfriend Robert Maltby, suffered a brutal and sustained attack in Stubblee Park, Bacup, Lancashire, on 11 August 2007. A gang of youths were involved in the assaults, with Sophie and Robert both left in comas after sustained and ferocious violence. Robert thankfully survived the attack. The judge at Sophie's murder trial recognised the vicious and violent assault as a hate crime - equal to all other strands of hate. There was no reason for the attack other than Sophie and Robert's physical appearance. Dr Sylvia Lancaster OBE, Sophie's Mum, set up the Foundation to challenge prejudice and hate in all its forms and increase tolerance and respect for others. The Foundation educates about difference, advocates for the alternative community and campaigns to get alternative subculture hate crime added to the monitored strands.

