

**Westminster Briefing**  
**Ensuring Protection for All:**  
**Implementing Measures to Tackle Disability Hate Crime**

**Westminster Briefing**, in partnership with the **House Magazine**, presents a series of events aimed at providing a forum for practitioners, local policymakers and civil servants to debate key issues with leading figures from within Westminster, Whitehall and Local Government.

**Date:** Wednesday, 10<sup>th</sup> December 2008

**Time:** 10.40am – 2.00pm

**Venue:** Westminster, London

**"At the lower end of the scale there is a vast amount not being picked up. The more serious offences are not always being prosecuted as they should be. This is a scar on the conscience of criminal justice. All institutions involved in criminal justice, including my own, share the responsibility....Some exceptionally grave cases have showed disabled people treated like animals. People have been subjected to sustained, violent and viciously degrading treatment".**

**- Sir Ken Macdonald QC, Director of Public Prosecutions, CPS, 6<sup>th</sup> October 2008**

**"Disability hate crime remains largely invisible – its existence is frequently denied and disabled people who report it are, all too often, ignored or dismissed as unreliable witnesses".**

**- Alice Maynard, Chair, Scope, 6<sup>th</sup> October 2008**

**"We urge the Government to investigate the scale of hate crime against disabled people and take real action to tackle the problem".**

**- Dame Jo Williams, Chief Executive, Mencap, 6<sup>th</sup> October 2008**

There are 11 million people in the UK registered as disabled and within this group there is a significant number suffering from harassment, bullying and violence. Section 146 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 allows courts to punish offenders more severely if a crime was motivated by the victim's disability or sexual orientation. However, the evidence suggests that the criminal justice system is not always making best use of this legislation. A report recently published by Scope, [Getting Away With Murder](#), shows the disparity between sentences for those convicted of racially motivated or homophobic homicides and those of disabled people. Not only were the sentences lower but most incidents were not treated as hate crimes. It is crucial not only for disabled people but a fundamental foundation of any civilised society that its most vulnerable members are offered the full protection and support of the law.

Delegates at this *Westminster Briefing* will have the opportunity to examine the impact of hate crime perpetrated against disabled people and consider the impact this has on local communities. Participants will discuss what more can be done locally to stop disabled people being targeted, and in particular, consider the barriers in securing adequate legal protections as set out in section 146 of the Criminal Justice Act. Other important issues to be discussed include:

- What more can be done to raise the profile of disability hate crime?
- Is Section 146 adequate or does it need strengthening? How can the criminal justice system better see disabled people as targets of hostility rather than 'easy targets'? What needs to change to ensure that evidence from disabled people, including those with mental health problems, is not dismissed as unreliable? Will the new Equalities Bill help combat disability hate crimes?
- How can local authorities form proactive partnerships with the police and user-led disabled organisations to better protect disabled people and tackle the perpetrators of disability hate crimes? Are local authorities offering adequate support and advice services for the victims of such crimes? Are they easily accessible by disabled people?
- How can police officers better engage with the disabled community? How can they better understand what constitutes a disability hate crime and is further specialist training needed?
- Are particular groups, like those from BME communities, suffering higher instances of disability hate crimes?
- How can negative attitudes and values towards disabled people be changed locally? What more needs to be done to foster a culture of mutual respect to eradicate hate crimes in the first place?

Delegates will be drawn from a wide range of stakeholders. These will include representatives from national, regional, and local police and criminal justice services; councillors and officers from local authorities; members from relevant central government departments & bodies; NGOs, charities, community groups and associations representing disabled people; academics; and any stakeholder with an interest in ending disability hate crime.

All *Westminster Briefings* take place within close proximity of the Palace of Westminster; morning refreshments will be served upon arrival with a networking lunch to follow proceedings. **Places on our briefings are strictly limited; I advise you, therefore, to book as early as possible to secure your delegate place(s).**