

# #BetterThanThat campaign aims to stop hate crime from increasing in Britain

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*In the month following the contentious vote to leave the European Union, Britain experienced an alarming rise in hate crime. Home Office statistics showed a [41% rise](#) compared with the same period last year. Many of these attacks and other forms of hate crime have been focused on EU migrants, especially Britain's large Polish community. **Graham Ackerman** writes about the [#BetterThanThat campaign](#) that was launched yesterday and which aims to reverse the worrying increase in hate crime attacks in the UK.*



Spearheaded by the [Polish Cultural Institute](#) (PCI), the campaign has brought together over 20 NGOs, cross-party political backing and even supportive statements from Prime Minister Theresa May and Communities Minister Sajid Javid. It began with the realisation that the emotive issue of immigration and migrants themselves has captivated the UK public and media and entering into this debate can be very toxic. Various interest groups, celebrities and politicians and campaigns on both sides were well entrenched and had deployed landmines and foot soldiers across the battlefield in this regard. Both sides were also failing to engage with the other – speaking only to themselves while pointing fingers at the other. Remainers talking to Remainers, and Leavers talking to Leavers. Neither of them using conciliatory language, effective communication channels or the media to engage in a meaningful dialogue with the other side.

Research on hate crime perpetrators against immigrant communities, including Poles, in the UK found a consistent profile – white, British, male, between 15-25 years of age, from lower socio-economic backgrounds, often under the influence of alcohol. To stop the rise in hate crime, these individuals had to be reached – through the media and social media they consume and the influences they have.

However, it is widely held – and backed up by research conducted with focus groups for the campaign – that hate crimes against immigrants (or anyone else living in this country) are unacceptable. This view was expressed by those with anti-immigrant as well as pro-immigrant perspectives. As a result, #BetterThanThat is focused on linking hate crime with British values – to speak directly to the British public, especially those from communities or backgrounds most likely to be perpetrators of these offences.

With a sense of the messages which would speak to this audience, social media trends were analysed to identify their online influencers: which football players and clubs they liked, which media they read or watched, which other celebrities they liked. These would be our ideal messengers and a focal point for our campaign.



Research indicated that for the campaign to be successful, it would be important to separate out the emotive issues of immigration from hate crime. No matter someone's views on immigration or how they voted in the EU Referendum, hate crime remains just that – a crime. Trying to convince ardent Leavers of the benefits of immigration is a different (and arguably much more difficult) challenge, and **#BetterThanThat** consciously chose to not engage in this debate.

The choice of media was also important as it was clear. It wouldn't make any real impact in tackling hate crime through a campaign targeting the echo chambers of the liberal centre-left mainstream media. We would have to do this through the media that our target demographic, often the most hostile towards migrants. This again meant appealing to a sense of British values and reclaiming the narrative around national pride and identity. Fair play, tolerance and the rule of law are undeniably enshrined in the concept of British values. Hate crime is not.

We do not yet know whether a public campaign such as this can stop hate crime from increasing in Britain. However we are optimistic that even if one crime is prevented as a result of one person's change in perceptions, it will have been a worthwhile effort.

To learn more about **#BetterThanThat** please go to [www.betterthanthatuk.org](http://www.betterthanthatuk.org) and follow us on [Twitter](#) or [Facebook](#).

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