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SENTENCING OF MAN FOLLOWING HATE CRIME INCIDENTS

50-year-old Andrew Littlefair, of Trefoil Court in Norton, was today sentenced to 20 months in prison for five counts of sending malicious communications on social media in the wake of the Manchester Arena bombing and the London Bridge terror attack.

The case was one of the first for Cleveland Police's new hate crime investigators, funded by the Police and Crime Commissioner as part of his investment into neighbourhood policing.

Inspector Phil Morris said: "The sentence handed to Andrew Littlefair today shows the serious nature of the offences and shows how seriously hate crime is taken by the police and criminal justice system partners.

"Hate crime will not be tolerated and anyone found to be committing such offences, wherever possible, will be put before the courts. These crimes are committed by a small minority of people and are not representative of the public.

"Anyone who wishes to report hate crime can call us on the non-emergency number 101, or 999 in an emergency situation, or contact us through third party reporting such as True Vision or Tell Mama."

Police and Crime Commissioner for Cleveland, Barry Coppinger, said: "This conviction shows we take hate crime – whether in person or online - very seriously and I'm working closely with the Force and partner agencies to protect communities in Cleveland.

"I have invested in a number of additional roles within Cleveland Police - including two hate crime investigators, a refugee and asylum seeker co-ordinator and a community cohesion officer, to ensure hate crime is thoroughly investigated and victims receive the specialist support they need.

"I also chair the Cleveland Strategic Hate Crime Group, which brings together partner agencies to develop strategies for tackling hate crime against people in our communities. This is a priority for all of us and I urge anyone who has been a victim or witnessed hate crime to report it."

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