



**Title:** Action Being Taken to Tackle Racial Harassment

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**SCS topic headings:** Personal Safety, Partnership Working; Evaluation & Monitoring; Safety in Public Spaces; Offending Management; Community Engagement; Equalities & Diversity

[This document is a REVIEW of effective intervention approaches.](#)

### Summary of the intervention's aim

Researchers from Lemos & Crane investigated the type of action taken to tackle racial harassment in different UK local authorities. They interviewed 250 agencies tackling racial harassment in 67 local authority areas where the majority of black and minority ethnic people live in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

### Outcomes

The report suggests consideration of the following innovations in national approaches to dealing with racial harassment:

- A national reporting and helpline for victims of racial harassment
- A national network of specialist support services
- National standards of training and competence for front-line staff in the police, local authorities and social landlords;
- A national programme of positive work to change the offending behaviour of perpetrators.

A directory of contacts and action drawn from the survey, along with a discussion forum, legal guidance, learning materials and case studies of innovative practice, is available to practitioners dealing with racial harassment on a password-protected website (Available at: [www.RaceActionNet.co.uk](http://www.RaceActionNet.co.uk) Accessed June 2011).

### Summary of evaluation conclusions

A key theme from the interviews was the need to evaluate the effectiveness of action. In particular, there appears to be a case for:

- local crime surveys to establish the true level of racial harassment, as opposed to reported incidents, as well as action research to improve reporting and recording
- evaluation of third-party reporting centres
- research into the long-term impact of racial harassment for victims and guidance to agencies on the emotional and social impact of racial harassment on the lives of victims and the development of effective counseling services
- guidance to social landlords on the re-housing of victims and the provision of other places of safety for victims
- evaluation of the action taken against perpetrators.

Other conclusions include:

- Several respondents felt that **under-reporting** (or under-recording by the agencies themselves) of racial harassment was still a significant problem for some groups, such as refugees. The number of incidents reported varied widely between local authority areas.
- **Multi-agency groups or panels** have been set up in 53 (78 per cent) of the areas. In some areas the multi-agency forum's work was restricted to a strategic role. Interviewees frequently raised resources as a problem for the multi-agency forums. In addition, in some areas there were tensions between partner organisations. However, there were also examples where the partners co-operated efficiently.
- **Third-party reporting centres** collecting reports and passing them on to key agencies had been developed in 37 areas (55 per cent). They included advice centres, places of worship, community associations, and sometimes also doctors' surgeries and public buildings (such as libraries and schools). Staff in independent centres needed training, which required time and money.
- Council housing departments and social landlords were divided about their approach to **re-housing victims**. But in most of the areas the police or housing departments were willing to provide alarms for vulnerable tenants experiencing harassment or living in high-risk areas. Most housing departments had made security improvements to individual properties.
- Less than a third of areas had a twenty-four-hour helpline that could give **advice to victims** of racial harassment. However, respondents stated that **counseling** was available in a third of the areas. But few areas have in-depth counseling by trained staff familiar with racial harassment.

- In 50 areas (75 per cent) frontline staff in at least one of the organisations contacted had received **specific training on racial harassment**. Housing officers and police staff were most likely to receive some training, although this was often rather limited and some police officers expressed concern at the slow implementation of force-wide training schemes.
- Social landlords in the survey had made **action against perpetrators** taking possession proceedings in a total of 124 cases because of anti-social behaviour that had a racial element. Their main criticism of the procedure was that it was too slow, although there was a feeling that judges had become more prepared to grant possession in racial harassment cases than in the past. In general, housing managers felt that suspended orders or threats of eviction had the desired deterrent effect on racist tenants.
- Examples of **innovative practice** from four case study areas are presented.

#### [How the evaluation gathered information for findings and conclusions](#)

In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with more than 250 practitioners working with victims or perpetrators of racial harassment. Sixty-seven local authority areas were selected because they had the highest numbers of black and minority ethnic inhabitants at the 1991 Census. Because of this sample size, caution must be exercised to extrapolate the findings to other parts of Britain.

Interviewees were mainly drawn from the police, local authority community safety units, social landlords, specialist and voluntary organisations. Respondents were asked to describe the types of action being taken by their own organisation and by other agencies working in the area to tackle racial harassment. The questions concentrated on five main areas:

- multi-agency working
- reporting and recording
- support for victims
- action against perpetrators
- training.

More detailed case studies were made of four local authority areas where most of the existing recommended good practice was being followed - Ipswich, Leeds, Reading and Waltham Forest. A number of examples of innovative practice from elsewhere were also collected.

[Further details about the SCS evaluation of this report are available on request. Please contact \[info@scsn.org.uk\]\(mailto:info@scsn.org.uk\)](#)

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