

Racial Harassment Forum: Memorandum of Understanding

1.0 Commitment:

1.1 This Memorandum of Understanding states Brighton & Hove's City Council's approach and commitment to the multi-agency partnership of the Racial Harassment Forum. The Forum is a fully independent, community led, non-incorporated association of statutory and non-statutory agencies and groups which participate on the basis of equality.

1.2 The Forum is within the structure of the Safe In the City Partnership and as such, accountable to the Local Strategic Partnership and Neighbourhood Communities and Equalities Committee.

1.3 The Forum was established (1999) in response to the recommendations of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry and adopted its definition of a racist incident (also adopted nationally) which is:

“A racist or religiously motivated incident is any incident which is perceived to be racist or religiously motivated by the victim or any other person”

1.4. The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry identified 'institutionalised racism' as a factor for police and other services (housing and education are specified) which is to be taken into account in dealing with racist and religiously motivated crimes and incidents. 'Institutionalised racism' is defined as:

'The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people' and..

'it persists because of the failure of an organisation openly and adequately to recognise and address its existence and causes by policy, example and leadership. Without recognition and action, racism can prevail as part of the ethos or culture of the organisation' and..

'there must be specific and co-ordinated action within agencies and by society at large, particularly through the educational system, from pre-primary school upwards and onwards'

2.0 The Aims of the Racial Harassment Forum are:

- To increase the trust and confidence of the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) individuals and communities in mainstream statutory, community and voluntary organisations

- To encourage and improve the reporting of all racist and religiously motivated incidents and crimes
- To provide continuously improved responses for victims of racist and religiously motivated crimes and their families, to increase crime detection and to appropriate criminal justice and civil remedies to be delivered to those victims
- To inform the development and mainstreaming of policy and best practice in tackling racist and religiously motivated crimes and incidents
- To effectively scrutinise the levels and trends of reported racist and religiously motivated incidents, performance and victim satisfaction with services by reviewing the statistical and evidence base for the City. The Forum will also scrutinise the range of relevant statutory work practices, hold statutory authorities to account and ensure that issues or barriers to achieving the aims and objectives of the Forum are addressed by the relevant authorities.

2.1 The Terms of Reference adopted in June/July 2015 (AGM) by the membership of the Racial Harassment Forum sets out the arrangements for conduct of the Forum's business.

2.2 The aims and objectives of the Forum are a priority within the statutory Community Safety, Crime Reduction and Drugs Strategy, 2014 to 2017. The Racial Harassment Forum participates in the annual refresh of the strategic assessment of the extent and nature of racially and religiously motivated crimes and incidents in the city and in reviewing the multi-agency work programme which is set out in the Strategy. Performance and crime and incident trends are reviewed regularly by the Forum.

2.3 The Strategy and work programme are subject to resources but seek to deliver (summarised):

Area of Work 1. Increase reporting and improve responses & services:

- through mainstreaming reporting arrangements throughout statutory services including within Safeguarding Adults at Risk arrangements, young people's settings and NHS services; integrate equality considerations within commissioning contracts
- targeted publicity and outreach, enhanced reporting centres and training for supportive volunteers; targeting informed by hot-spot analysis
- Sustain delivery of a high quality casework service, assess risk and vulnerability particularly for repeat victims and take enforcement action; develop capacity of Multi-agency and Risk Assessment and Tasking meetings including community involvement and communication on performance and accountability
- Evaluate standards of service provision, including through client satisfaction surveys

Area of Work 2. Effective monitoring and improved accountability:

- Maintain, map and analyse city wide monitoring of racist/religiously motivated incidents and produce regular reports for scrutiny; all statutory partners to participate

Area of Work 3. Deter perpetrators through good criminal justice processes and ways of dealing with offenders:

- Identify early and tag racist/religiously motivated crimes and incidents and monitor quality of first response, arrests, investigation, cautions, prosecutions, convictions, victim experience and use of special measures and court sentence uplift; increase the number of successful prosecutions, reduce the number of discontinued cases and ensure victims views and safety needs are taken into account in sentencing plans; manage risks of offenders and prevent repeat offending; feedback to communities on all matters
- Maintain effectiveness and community confidence in restorative justice interventions and engage with families of perpetrators to deal with prejudice and discrimination; develop an early intervention programme for young people

Area of Work 4. Targeted projects to reduce vulnerability and risk:

- Housing services to develop policies and practices to work with social landlords (inc' within private sector) and minimise risks to those vulnerable within implementation of allocations policies and decisions
- Housing services to put in place arrangements which are consistent to city wider service standards, to combat crimes and incidents
- Assess the gap between reporting and experiences of women and act to reduce the gap and improve quality; address under-reporting by young people

Area of Work 5: Promotion of anti-racist and anti-discriminatory attitudes within communities and promote community cohesion:

- Build capacity of Forum, (including involvement by young people) and key organisations (including schools, English Language schools) through training, media and publicity;
- Monitor community tensions, potential conflicts, risk assess and reduce escalation when necessary and respond to international and national incidents/events
- Engage with refugees and migrants and support community led partnerships which help deliver community safety and inclusion objectives
- Deliver publicity and communications which counter racism and discrimination and which promote diversity and inclusion

3.0 What does this Memorandum of Understanding mean in practice?

The Racial Harassment Forum can expect to be supported by:

- Brighton & Hove City Council fulfilling its responsibilities which are set out within the Crime & Disorder Act 1998 and the Equality Act 2010. The Crime and Disorder Act states that local authorities (and partner Responsible Authorities) have an 'equal duty' to reduce crime and disorder in their area and after consultation with communities, to select priorities for action. Tackling Hate crime is identified as a priority. The Equality Act is a consolidating Act and sets out the 'public sector equality duty' which includes requirements to:
 - 'eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act'
 - Advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations'
- A designated representative of each Directorate to actively participate in progressing the aims and objectives of the Racial Harassment Forum and its work programme and to be accountable for explaining service responses and outcomes and responding to feedback from members of the RHF
- An annual Strategic Assessment and quarterly updates of national and local, racially and religiously motivated crimes and incidents, including on recorded crime levels, prosecution and conviction rates and indicators of levels of victim and community satisfaction on outcomes
- In kind support for regular meetings of the full Racial Harassment Forum, its Executive Panel and Annual General Meeting
- Opportunities to problem solve jointly with the members of Safe In The City Partnership and/or the Neighbourhood, Communities and Equalities Committee and to report on progress against key measures and approved outcomes
- Proactive monitoring and identification of community tensions and information sharing about actions that are being taken to reduce those tensions and the potential for conflict in the city
- Information about matters relevant to the core objectives of the Forum, which help increase trust and confidence, such as the findings of Equality and Impact Assessments on key service initiatives and opportunities for joint working on such initiatives
- Actions which increase the resources and capacity of the RHF including consideration of in kind support for funding applications which could further progress the aims and objectives of the Forum and which may enable the Forum to achieve independent, grant aided status
- Pro-active and positive publicity about the work of the Forum which respond to and counter negative stereotyping, inequality or incite discrimination or racial hatred and which advance equality of the diverse population and communities in the city