

Reducing Repeat Racial Victimisation on an East London Estate

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ON AN EAST LONDON ESTATE

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Police Research Group: Crime Detection and Prevention Series

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The Crime Detection and Prevention Series follows on from the Crime Prevention Unit papers, a series which has been published by the Home Office since 1983. The recognition that effective crime strategies will often involve both crime prevention and crime investigation, however, has led to the scope of this series being broadened. This new series will present research material on both crime prevention and crime detection in a way which informs policy and practice throughout the service.

A parallel series of papers on resource management and organisational issues is also published by PRG, as is a periodical on policing research called 'Focus'.

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Foreword

This report describes an evaluation of the project to reduce repeat racial victimisation described in Crime Prevention Unit Paper 36. The project was part of the Home Office Police Department initiative to prevent domestic violence, racial attacks and bullying in schools.

As this report shows, racial attacks and harassment are pernicious crimes and ones which can be difficult to stop. The devastating effects suffered by victims who are repeatedly abused make it all the more urgent to prevent these crimes. A positive commitment by statutory agencies and community organisations to prevent racial attacks and harassment is most important. So too are appropriate procedures and proactive actions to ensure a prompt and effective response to reported racial incidents.

In this project, those living on a local authority housing estate who were chronic repeat racial victims were prioritised for attention. This approach has, once again, proved to be an effective crime prevention strategy as it targets those most in need and sets criteria for allocating scarce financial and human resources. The struggles, and the commitment of the different agencies, to achieve a reduction in repeat racial victimisation are unambiguously documented. The agencies involved in this East End area of London have learned from participating in the project, and each of them, the police, the local authority and the community groups, deserves the support of us all in carrying forward their fresh initiatives. There are, too, wider lessons to be learned from the experiences recounted in this report, and I hope that the report will help to guide and support those contemplating projects elsewhere to reduce racial attacks and harassment. As the report shows, initiatives of this kind can have a very real impact on the lives of the victims.

S W BOYS SMITH

Deputy Under Secretary of State

Home Office

Police Department

July 1995

Acknowledgements

In order to preserve the anonymity of the estate, we are unable to name personally the individuals who assisted the research project. However, thanks are due to representatives from the police, local authority housing and central offices, law centre, homeless families campaign, tenants' and residents' association, Safer Cities project, racial equality council, and community education service for their efforts in initiating change in this crime prevention project. The two project workers deserve a special thank you.

We are most grateful to the repeat racial victims who, despite the often slow progress of the project, continually assisted the research and participated in the final evaluation. We hope that our strategy has had some impact on their lives and reduced at least some of their suffering even though repeat racial victimisation remained disappointingly high.

We are also indebted to several people who assisted us by providing data. These included workers at the police station command and control room and crime desk, the estate housing office, Language Line, and the law centre.

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Executive Summary

The purpose of this crime prevention project was to reduce repeat racial victimisation on a local authority housing estate in East London. A 12% reduction was achieved. The evaluation describes the factors which promoted improvements in practices and procedures and documents the obstacles encountered to reduce repeat racial victimisation. The attempts to overcome the difficulties are also described.

Chapter 1

Details of the initiative are described and the prevention measures put in place are listed. The data collected to evaluate the project are also discussed.

Chapter 2

Four key features of the project are described. These are: the East London location with its particular racist history and lack of resources allocated to new immigrant groups; the presence of community groups who kept racial attacks on the local political agenda; independent funding from the local Safer Cities initiative and the Home Office Police Research Group; and the responsibilities given to the researchers on the project, the authors of this report, by the head of the Home Office Police Research Group to ensure that the prevention measures were put in place and were effective.

Chapter 3

The chapter focuses on the attitudes and experiences of the repeat racial victims. It shows that on the whole, as result of the project initiative, they suffered less repeat victimisation, felt safer on the estate and were optimistic that in the future racial attacks and harassment would be less. A number of factors pertinent to providing a quality service to tackle repeat racial victimisation are identified. These are:

- Racial attacks and harassment take place in a variety of locations; in homes, in lifts, at bus stops, on the way to shops or school and at work. A variety of prevention and safety measures are therefore needed.
- The cumulative effects of all types of racial incidents, be they, robbery, graffiti or door banging, can be devastating and made worse by a history of poor services to repeat racial victims by statutory and voluntary organisations.
- Under-reporting can occur because of the shame of being repeatedly victimised, fear of reprisals or language difficulties. Incidents were reported usually because the victims 'could not take any more' and wanted the racial crimes to stop.

- Most perpetrators were either immediate neighbours or lived very close to their victims; it seems that those who were most heavily victimised lived closest to racist neighbours. Perpetrators and victims can therefore come into regular contact with each other.
- Many victims may not know where to go for advice and information nor are they part of any local networks of representation.

Chapter 4

A number of practices are identified in this section which enable statutory agencies to respond effectively to racial incidents. These are:

For the police:

- Support and advice from senior management, and provision for regular and comprehensive training.
- At all times officers communicate with victims or witnesses in the language they feel most comfortable. Professional telephone and face-to-face interpreting services can provide essential communication for the victim and police officer.
- Procedures which ensure that the initial police-victim contact is of high quality and allow officers to take immediate preventive action.
- Recording practices which enable information on repeat incidents to be retrieved and investigative and preventive expertise to be consolidated within a racial incidents unit.
- Sharing information about racial incidents with other agencies.

For the local authority:

- A commitment from elected councillors to prevent racial attacks and harassment and positive support from senior managers for all staff
- Encouragement of tenants' and residents' associations and white and black residents to assist in creating environments where racist behaviour is unacceptable.
- Prompt action to protect repeat victims and to take action against perpetrators, clear procedures to enable this to happen and the provision of comprehensive training for all staff
- Positive working relationships with community groups and the exchange of information with all agencies working in the area.

- Good communication and prompt decision-making between local authority departments.

Chapter 5

This section reviews how some of the difficulties in achieving a positive response to the aims of the project were tackled. Some of the aspects of the project which acted as catalysts for change are mentioned.

- The initial research and the continuous assessment of the implementation phase kept the issue of racial attacks and harassment on the agenda of the statutory, voluntary and community agencies.
- Independent funding motivated different groups to come together and work towards developing a crime prevention initiative.
- The focus of the work on repeat racial victims, with the emphasis on assisting the most heavily victimised first, enabled the revictimisation prevention worker to prioritise his work and not to get too 'bogged down' by all the other demands made on his time by agencies who were hard pressed to carry out their own duties.
- Working with 'innovators' and those sympathetic to the plight of the victims assisted the process of putting crime prevention measures in place.
- The trust established between most of the repeat racial victims and the revictimisation prevention worker, the prevention measures which demonstrated that racial attacks and harassment were a serious problem, and the action taken to deter the perpetrators from further racist offending by visits to their homes, warnings in writing that they were in breach of their tenancy agreement, and legal action, explain why a reduction in repeat racial victimisation was achieved.
- Agencies work together more effectively if they have procedures which enable them to respond to the problem and which the management ensure are properly used. When an agency has 'its own house in order' it is likely to work more effectively with other agencies. More effective working is also more likely if agencies work on specific problems, on case work, for example. Establishing agreed guidelines for confidentiality is most important in these joint agency settings.

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1. Introduction

This paper describes an evaluation of a crime prevention project which aimed to reduce repeat racial attacks and harassment.¹ It was an action research project: that is, the researchers (the authors of this paper) were responsible for identifying the patterns of repeated victimisation on a local authority housing estate, suggesting appropriate preventive measures, assisting agencies to put them in place, and, finally, evaluating the effect of the measures on repeated victimisation. The initial research phase took place between September 1990 and February 1991 on a local authority housing estate in the East End of London. This research found that those most likely to be repeatedly victimised were the small number of Asian and Somali tenants living and working on the estate. The crimes against these tenants and shopkeepers were usually racial.² The recommended 'package' of prevention measures which was the outcome of the initial research phase is detailed in Home Office Crime Prevention Unit paper 36 (Sampson & Phillips, 1992), and can be summarised into three types as those to:

- (i) improve victims' feelings of safety: by, for example, improved physical security to flats, personal attack alarms, immediate response alarms linked to police control rooms, targeted police patrols;
- (ii) prevent further attacks: by, for example, taking punitive action against perpetrators and directing young people away from racist offending with the support of a detached youth worker;
- (iii) ensure the implementation of the above measures: by, for example, creating a revictimisation prevention worker post, changing agencies' procedures and working practices and providing assistance to victims to encourage reporting, such as the use of interpreting services and the provision of English classes for Bengali and Somali women.

The implementation phase began in March 1991 with the setting up of an inter-agency group to discuss the research report and crime prevention recommendations. The meetings were chaired by the Safer Cities coordinator. By October 1991 the group agreed to implement the measures and Safer Cities funding was secured. The following prevention activities were undertaken:

1991

- Jul: The police installed an immediate response alarm (connected to the local police station command and control room) in the flat of a Bengali woman who was heavily victimised. This was in place for three months.
- Sep: English Language classes were run for the Bengali and Somali women on the estate. Creche facilities were provided for their children.

1 Throughout this paper, reference will be made to racial 'attacks', 'harassment' and 'crimes', and these terms are used somewhat interchangeably. We recognise the debate concerning terminology, but feel that these terms may be useful in the context of describing a whole range of antagonistic racially motivated events, and are useful for an understanding of the wide range of behaviours perpetrated against Bengalis and Somalis.

2 Incidents were classified as racial according to the Association of Chief Police Officers' definition which states that "any incident in which it appears to the reporting or investigating officer that the complaint involves an element of racial motivation; or any incident which includes an allegation of racial motivation made by any person." (ACPO, 1985)

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Dec: The Bengali revictimisation prevention worker was employed to work on the estate two and a half days a week (see Appendix A for the duties and responsibilities of this post). The detached youth worker was employed to work full-time on the estate with offenders (see Appendix B for the duties and responsibilities of this post).

A telephone interpreting service was made available to the police for an experimental six months. The police continued to use the service after this period.

1992

Apr: Safety Action Plans were put in place for those most frequently victimised.

Sep: 'Streetwise' classes were run for the young Bengalis and Somalis on the estate.

Nov: Security packs which included mortice locks, chains, fireproof letter boxes, smoke alarms, strengthened door hinge bolts and window locks were fitted to the flats of those who were most heavily victimised in their own homes

Nov: Personal alarms were given to those who were afraid of going out.

Dec: The detached youth worker resigned. He had worked for thirteen months.³

Throughout 1992 the Bengali revictimisation prevention worker continued his work.

1993 (up to October 1993)

Mar: 'Streetwise' classes for the young victims were discontinued. Classes ran for seven months.

Apr: The Safety Action Plan meetings were discontinued. These meetings had run for thirteen months.

May: The funding for the revictimisation prevention worker post ended. He was in post for a total of eighteen months.

Jul: The English Language classes for women were discontinued. They had run for eleven months.

Throughout 1993, the telephone interpreting service continued to be used by the police. Just as importantly the police, the local authority and community groups made changes in their responses to supporting and protecting racial victims. These changes are documented later in the report.

³ The youth worker resigned because he felt his position had become untenable. He felt he could not assist the young people he was working with and meet the demands of some of the management group to identify perpetrators of racist attacks. He also felt unsupported by the management group.

Project evaluation

In assessing the project some locational factors which facilitated or impeded the implementation of the preventive measures are described. The main evaluated prevention measures included the deterrent action taken against those identified by victims as the perpetrators of racist crimes, the improved security to the flats of repeat victims, personal alarms, English Language classes for the Bengalis and Somali women, and streetwise classes for the young Bengalis and Somalis, The preventive effect of other measures was too difficult to assess, in part because of the small numbers involved, for example, escorts for children to-and-from school, a warning letter from the local authority housing department about harassing neighbours to all tenants in a block of flats and the youth work.⁴ Some other implemented measures, for example, police training and the initial contacts between a worker and a victim, were not systematically evaluated due to time constraints. In these cases observations have been used to comment on their likely impact. The responses of the two statutory agencies, the local authority and the police, to the initial research findings have also been charted. Some of the implementation difficulties encountered and the strategies used to overcome these problems are discussed as part of the project evaluation.

The findings are not always easy to interpret as the number of Bengali and Somali families tended to be small and sometimes prevention measures were implemented inconsistently. There was, also, no clearly identifiable time when all the measures were in place and all the agreed changes in practices and procedures had been introduced; whilst most measures were in place by November 1992, not all the procedures were effectively used until a month or two later. Over the three and a half years monitoring period between September 1990 and February 1994, however, a great deal of information about racial attacks and harassment was collected. The statistical data are supplemented with qualitative data which are used to explain more clearly how or why a measure may have worked or not worked (see Pawson & Tilley, 1994). Only the key events are reviewed in this paper. Some of the detailed findings on the perpetrators and on joint agency working have, for example, been omitted. So too has a full description of the methodological issues associated with the evaluation of an action research project.

Throughout the project the researchers were alert to the possibility that factors, other than those measured, may have accounted for reductions in repeat racial victimisation. It is fairly certain this was not the case. Prior to the initiative the local authority organised a Racial Incidents Panel to encourage the Bengalis and Somalis to voice their grievances and problems, but this Panel did not appear to have any impact on preventing racial incidents (Sampson & Phillips, 1992). At the time of the initiative, to the knowledge of the researchers, there were no other prevention

4 Although a youth worker was in post for a year and he had contact with some of the identified perpetrators it was not possible to interview these people about any changes in their racist offending behaviour. After the detached youth worker resigned it was difficult to contact the young people. Efforts were made to contact them through a local youth club but the club workers were under a lot of stress and were reluctant to allow the young people to be interviewed. The youth club was closed at the time of the final evaluation. Access to the young people was therefore never gained.

initiatives in the immediate locality of the estate which may have had an impact on reducing racial victimisation on the research estate, Sonic practices of the agencies may have had an impact on racial crimes. For example, some of the young people on the estate attended youth clubs where racist behaviour was discussed from time to time. This may have encouraged some of the young people to stop racist offending but other research evidence suggests that the link between youth work and this behaviour is complex and is not usually a particularly strong one (Webster, 1993). As far as possible these types of activities have been considered in evaluating the initiative.

To assist in assessing the progress of the implementation phase and for the final evaluation of the project, statistical data on the number, location, and type of racial attacks and harassment were collected until the end of October 1993. These were collated from police, local authority housing, and community group information (for a fuller description, see Sampson & Phillips, 1992). The final evaluation interviews with the Bengali and Somali families (n=30), local authority staff (n=6), police officers (n=9), community group workers and representatives (n=6), and the two project workers took place between November 1993 and February 1994, six months after the revictimisation prevention worker had left, so that the longer term effects of the initiative could be assessed. It was hoped all the Bengali and Somali families living on the estate or who lived on the estate within the past year would be interviewed. However five families who had moved off the estate could not be traced and one family declined to be interviewed.⁵ Representatives from the agencies and community groups were selected for the final interviews if they had assisted the repeat victims or were on the project management group. All except three local authority housing officers were interviewed.⁶

In addition systematic observations were made by the researchers at numerous meetings over three and a half years. From the notes taken at these meetings it was possible to identify patterns of behaviour and to analyse the relationships between the 'main players' and their attitudes towards the Bengalis and Somalis. The qualitative data was rigorously analysed using recognised techniques to ensure that the data interpretations reflected the reality of the situation and not the whims of the researchers (Lofland, 1971; Patton, 1987).

The report is organised as follows: the following chapter describes the main characteristics of the initiative, chapters three and four discuss the main evaluation and the fifth chapter summarises, on the basis of what was learned from the initiative, what types of action can effectively reduce repeat racial victimisation.

5 Nearly three-quarters of the Bengalis and Somalis who were originally interviewed in June 1991 were interviewed again in November/December 1993.

6 One housing officer declined to be interviewed and a senior manager would not allow two estate-based officers to be interviewed.

2. Key features of the initiative

Understanding the context of the project explains, in part, what happened and did not happen and taking the context into account has implications for the replication of this project in different types of location. There were four key features which influenced the project outcome.

East London location

The history of the East End with its sometimes violent resistances to successive minority groups moving into the area and the increasing conflict over scarce public resources, in particular housing and education, and periodic organised fascist activity, has been well-documented (Phillips, 1988). One consequence of this was to heighten the sensitivities of the police, local authority and some white community leaders to the possibility of a white backlash against the Bengalis and Somalis.⁷ These agencies were always concerned to serve the whole community and, to be seen to be serving, the whole community. They were therefore cautious about supporting any initiative focused on assisting one ethnic group. In addition it was assumed that a certain level of 'East End' violence and harassment was to be expected in the area. This assumption held by those working in the community, undermined efforts to stop all types of racist offending (see Downes, 1991).

These perceptions, and the realities of life in the East End of London, tended to complicate the response of the agencies to everyday racial incidents suffered by the Bengalis and Somalis living on an estate in the east of the borough where they made up only 0.05% of the estate's population. The estate is isolated geographically as it is bounded by a busy main road, a canal and a railway line and it is further isolated by the lack of public transport, a post office and other essential amenities. It was built in the 1950s and has 1,041 dwellings which includes six tower blocks and low rise maisonettes and flats. A recent local authority document described the estate as 'hard to let' with a high turnover of residents, where nearly a third of the male residents are out of work, and nearly two thirds of the primary school children receive free school meals.

The estate was chosen for the research due to its high levels of police recorded violent crimes and high numbers of violent incidents recorded on police incident logs. It is situated in an area which has the highest number of police recorded racial incidents in the sub-divisions, and the area is part of a borough which has the highest number of police recorded racial incidents in the country. Preventing racial attacks on the estate was not, however, a 'burning issue' for residents. Tenants seemed more inclined to say it was not a problem at all or to have little sympathy with a group of people who they felt got preferential treatment when it came to housing allocations and who refused to try and fit in with the local community.⁸ The clear message from the tenants' representatives⁹ was that the problems on the estate were a lack of youth facilities, drugs, traffic with the estate being used as a 'rat run', parking, and all

7 Indeed this occurred with the election of the British National Party (BNP) candidate in May 1993 to a ward near to the project area. Although interestingly in the final evaluation interviews when the Bengali and Somali repeat victims were asked 'Has there been any event in the local area or in the local community which has affected people's feelings of fear and security on [the estate]? only two respondents mentioned the BNP.

8 In October 1990 we leafleted the estate and called a public meeting to discuss any objections to the project. Twelve residents attended. Problems discussed at the meeting included break-ins, drugs, all types of harassment, traffic problems, lack of play facilities and community collectiveness. This finding was also borne out in 100 semi-structured random interviews of tenants and residents in February 1991.

9 There were two tenants' and residents' associations on the estate. The representatives referred to in this report were from the larger of the associations. The members of its committee were white and were typically older tenants and residents.

forms of harassment. It was believed that young children, usually below the age of criminal responsibility were the perpetrators of racial and other harassment and therefore a youth worker was the answer to the problem. They also thought that the community groups 'talked up the problem' of racial harassment which angered them because they were keen that the notorious reputation of the estate was not perpetuated by their activities. The tenants' and residents' association worked closely with the council, and the representative's view was that the local authority and the police were working well together and had the problem 'in-hand'. There was therefore no reason for outsiders like community groups and researchers to interfere.

The active cooperation of white residents and tenants to stop racial attacks and harassment could have assisted in reducing the racial problems (see for example, Carstens and Long Litt Woon, 1993). Established residents and tenants can demonstrate that racist behaviour is unacceptable by, for example, reporting racist perpetrators who, as this research demonstrates, are likely to live on the same estate. One of the weaknesses of this project was the lack of success in mobilising white and black residents to actively take a stand against racist behaviour. Other locations with histories of less animosity towards new minority ethnic groups may find cooperation from the established community more forthcoming.

Community groups

There were a number of community groups in the west of the borough who argued that there was an unacceptably high level of racial incidents, a poor police and local authority response to protect victims, and a lack of action taken against the perpetrators. They were also critical of the council's one-offer-only allocation policy for homeless families¹⁰ which placed vulnerable ethnic minorities in areas with high racial incidents.

Due to funding cuts and internal crises there were only two active groups at the time of the research; a campaign group whose support for victims of racial attacks was an off-shoot of their main work of advising and taking up complaints on behalf of homeless families, and a law centre which represented racial victims who wanted to move off the estate and/or those who had outstanding housing repairs. Both groups had campaigned in the borough for years with the same paid white workers as their high-profile activists. Their main successes seemed to have been to help certain individual families be transferred from the estate, rather than to bring about changes in local authority or police procedures or working practices. The two organisations formed a support group in September 1990 to visit Bengali and Somali families on the estate once a week. The group was made up of local community workers and residents, some of whom lived on the estate. The group visited families to record details of racial incidents which the families had suffered and offered advice and support in taking their problems and complaints forward.

10 People were offered one place to live and if they refused to move in then they were not offered any other accommodation by the local authority.

The community groups mostly took issue with the council. Complaints against police practice were often around how they had responded - or not responded - to particular incidents. They put pressure on the statutory agencies to improve their practices in three ways. Firstly, they attended key council meetings where councillors were present, and also the public meetings of the monthly local authority Racial Incidents Panel with as many families as possible. Secondly they regularly used the media - the local and national press and television - to publicise police and council inaction and the plight of the families. Thirdly, they mounted legal challenges to council practices. These activities continued throughout the project's lifetime.

The community groups felt angry that the local authority and the tenants' and residents' association were constantly attempting to shift the focus away from *racial* harassment to one of *general* harassment on the estate, suffered by all vulnerable groups.¹¹ Thus, they felt justified in their use of the media which sought to embarrass the council and police into action. Initially their use of the research data in the media had a regressive impact, in terms of prevention, although it did help some victims by strengthening their case for a transfer off the estate. This resulted in the antagonisms between the community groups and the council and the tenants' association intensifying. It was as if the adverse publicity hardened the council's resolve not to make any changes to their policies or practices and it hardened the police's negative attitudes towards the community groups.¹² These were played out in the press, for example:

'RACE HATE SOARS...'... "according to the figures compiled by ... Law Centre the number of incidents in March has more than doubled since January... According to the council a neighbourhood answerphone had helped the problem and two bobbies patrolling the estate had influenced a drop in crime...a spokesman for the Bangladeshi tenants said ... things are getting worse"... (local newspaper, 1992).

Other articles followed the same pattern with claims and disclaimers about the problem of racial attacks on the estate. Headlines in the local newspapers included:

'SHOT YOUTH TELLS OF RACE HATE TORMENT'

'VICTORY NEAR IN ESTATE'S RACE WAR'

'COPS DECLARE WAR ON RACE VIOLENCE'

'TERROR ESTATE CLAIMS ANOTHER VICTIM'

The proactive stance of the community groups in trying to stop racial attacks and their support for the victims contrasted with the other agencies' response (for a fuller description of shortcomings in the response of the statutory agencies to repeat racial victims, see Sampson & Phillips, 1992). In fact, the community groups saw one of their roles as 'filling a hole not met by other agencies' (community group

11 It will be recalled, however, that an analysis of police recorded crime and police incident logs identified Bengali and Somali tenants as those most heavily victimised.

12 A typical view expressed by a police officer was, for example, "[they] went round and wanted to prove [the estate] was an appalling place for racial attacks... I think it was destructive and in the end didn't help anybody". A tenants' representative said of the community groups [they] broke all the rules that were laid down about publicity ...at the end of the day I just got fed up with that... I think they used vulnerable people and I won't forgive them for that".

representative). Through their work with victims of racial attacks and harassment, the community workers and volunteers were the most knowledgeable about racial incidents, when and where they happened and the effects of repeated attacks on victims. For these reasons, and despite the protests of the local authority staff and the tenants representative, they were included as 'partners' in the management support group for the project workers. Their inclusion was made a condition of Safer Cities funding by the coordinator.

The community groups were the most enthusiastic about having a revictimisation prevention post and actively supported the worker. However, they had some deep seated reservations about preventing racial harassment by employing a detached youth worker. For these reasons, and because they kept racial attacks high on the political agenda, the community group representatives continued to clash with the local authority and the tenants' and residents' association representatives throughout the lifetime of the project.

Independent funding

Some funds were made available by the Home Office Police Research Group and this enabled the English Language classes to take place, The detached youth worker to be employed and the Language Line to be funded for a six month experimental period. The Safer Cities funding was also secured which ensured the part-time employment of the revictimisation prevention worker for eighteen months, a budget for the workers, security for homes (including locks, spyholes, fire proof letter boxes) and personal alarms.

This funding was conditional on the statutory and voluntary agencies agreeing on the appropriate prevention measures. In the 1980s the local authority had moved Bengali families off the estate due to the high levels of attacks on the estate. When Bengali and Somali families were subsequently moved on to the estate the agencies had not worked together to try to prevent the same situation arising again. Indeed their relationships were marked more by conflict than cooperation. The Safer Cities coordinator played a key role in bringing together the agencies and community groups and in mediating their differences.

It is, however, unlikely that the prevention initiative would have taken place without this independent funding and even more unlikely that it would have been focused on protecting and assisting the racial victims. Had there been any efforts to tackle racial crime it would have been focused entirely on youth work.

Action research

Originally, it was assumed that the research data collected from all the relevant agencies and from the victims themselves would act as a sufficient catalyst to

motivate the agencies to change their practices and procedures to reduce repeat racial victimisation. As such, the researchers would have a peripheral role in keeping the implementation phase on course. However, as the above sections clearly demonstrate, for many reasons, this was an unwanted crime prevention project even though a crime problem had been clearly identified (Sampson & Phillips, 1992).

The reality was that the effect of the research data varied. When agencies were open to suggestions, the researchers were able to have some influence in bringing about changes by substantiating arguments with data. Examples included the police use of Language Line, targeted foot patrols, and the placement of 'security packs' in the homes of those most heavily victimised. At other times, the researchers found that discussions based on research information had little impact. This was most apparent during the implementation phase of the project at a time when few preventive measures had been introduced. The data, instead of being used to inform and pressure the agencies to take action, were typically contested or ignored. Notwithstanding this, data collected by the community groups, but analysed by the research team, were effectively used by the local law centre to put pressure on the local authority to change their racial harassment procedure.

The reluctance of agencies to tackle racial attacks and harassment was not unique to the research area. Evidence suggests it is widespread (Blagg *et al.*, 1988; Liddle & Gelsthorpe, 1994). The discriminatory practices of local authority housing departments have also been identified (Commission for Racial Equality 1987; Bowes *et al.*, 1990). For councils how to respond to 'race' and 'racism' can be a contested issue making it additionally problematic for the implementation of 'race' projects. Responding to the racism of tenants and residents has been, on the whole, inadequate (Centre for Multicultural Education, 1992; Hartcliffe and Withywood Black Support Group, 1993). For the police this has also been troubled terrain, with the problem of 'over-policing' black people in certain neighbourhoods or symbolic locations, whilst 'under-policing' blacks and Asians in other neighbourhoods where they are inadequately protected from racist attacks and harassment (London Borough of Newham, 1987; Hesse *et al.*, 1990). Concerns have also been expressed about how the police police their own racism (Smith & Gray, 1983; Lea, 1986) and how in improving community relations in multi-racial areas the police "contend with the subtle, but nevertheless significant elements of racism within local systems of representation" (Pearson *et al.*, 1989; see also Dame Colet House, 1984/5). Thus in addition to the usual crime prevention implementation problems there was a particular set of difficulties associated with 'race'.

It was in this context that the researchers were given the responsibility by the Safer Cities joint agency group of managing the day-to-day work of the Bengali revictimisation prevention worker, since agreement could not be reached as to who

should manage the worker.¹³ The researchers also spent a considerable amount of time trying to negotiate the implementation of the prevention measures outlined in the introduction of this report. Therefore, because we had a vested interest in making the project 'work',¹⁴ and because of reasons discussed above, it is not possible for us, the researchers, to assess our own effectiveness during the implementation phase. We acknowledge that the project methodology meant that we did not conduct the research in a role of 'objective observer'. For this reason, the statistical findings remain the 'acid test' of both our success or failure, and the success of the crime prevention initiative.

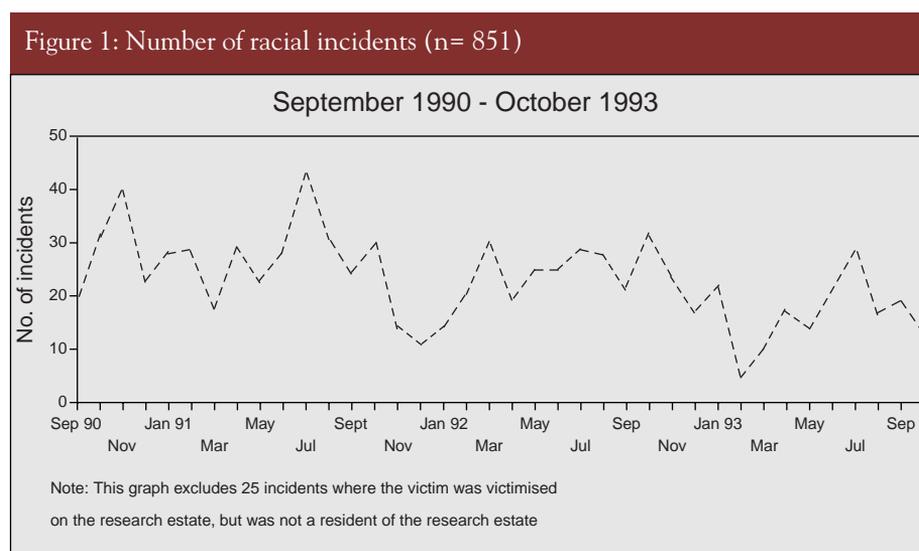
13 The police and the community groups supported the revictimisation prevention worker post. The tenants' and residents' association and the local authority supported the youth worker post and their representatives argued against the creation of the revictimisation prevention worker post arguing that it was "the wrong way" to tackle the problem. The police said managing the worker did not fall within their responsibilities and the tenants' association representative and local authority representatives would not allow the community groups to supervise the worker.

14 From the viewpoint of the Home Office Police Research Group, the researchers were responsible for reducing repeat racial victimisation on the estate. At a Home Office meeting in November 1992 the researchers had to account for the slow progress of the project and explain why repeat racial victimisation had not fallen.

3. Preventive work with the repeat victims

The experiences and views of the repeat victims

Figure 1 shows the number of racial incidents reported by victims between September 1990 and October 1993.¹⁵



Figures 2 and 3 give details of the location and type of incidents. The graphs summarise what the Bengali and Somali families¹⁶ suffered for three years; a catalogue of abusive and violent behaviour usually at or near to their homes. The level of incidents is high by any standards, and according to victim reports, the nature of the incidents was not merely minor, as suggested by some agency workers.

15 The figures have been collated to take account of victim reporting to any agency, so that there is no double-counting. Incidents were reported to the revictimisation prevention worker, the support group, the local housing office and the police. Some incidents had more than one victim. Thus in the 851 incidents there were 957 victims.

16 During the project period, to the best knowledge of the researchers, fifteen families moved off the estate and eighteen moved on. Between thirty and thirty-eight Bengali and Somali families lived on the estate at any one time. The term families is used as shorthand to describe the Bengali and Somali families. All the agencies used this term to describe them.

Figure 2: Location of racial incidents (n= 743)

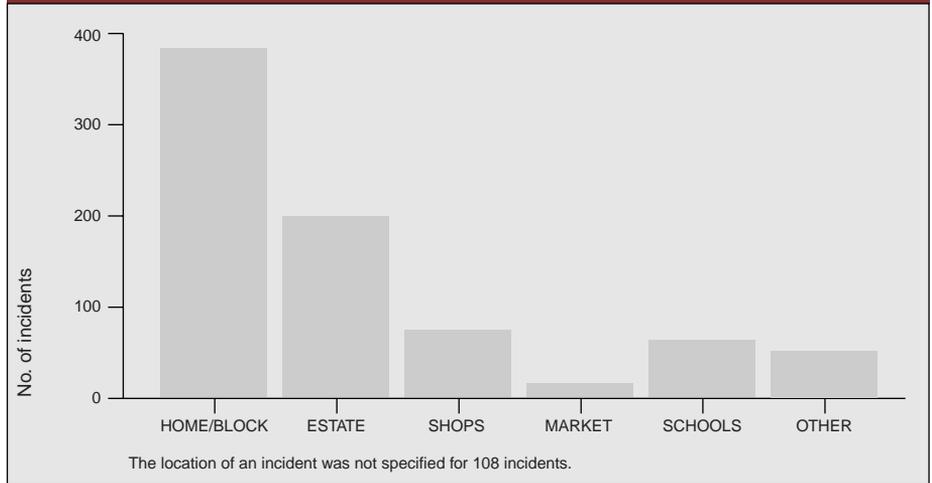


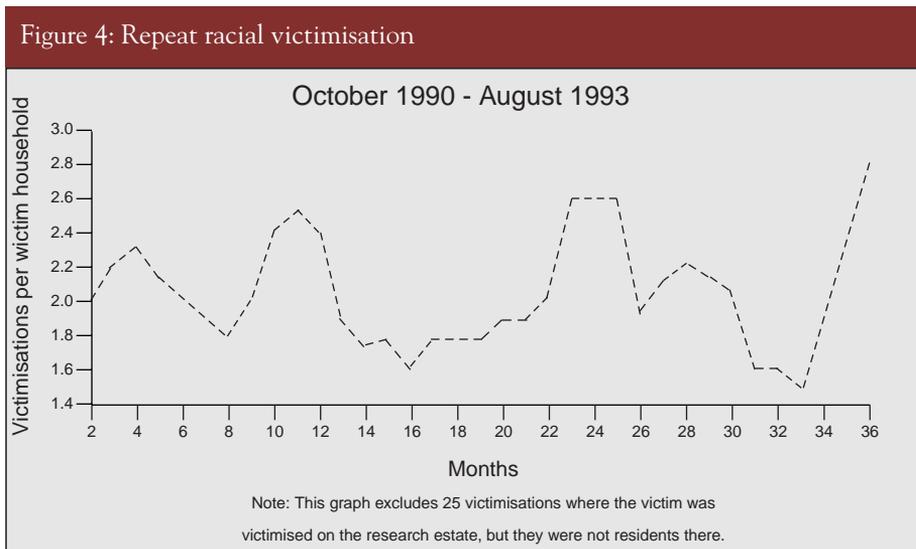
Figure 3: Type of racial incidents (n = 851)



Note:

- Abuse/Harassment:* includes verbal abuse, door banging, spitting.
- Property damage:* includes criminal damage, arson.
- Assaults:* includes stone throwing, kicking threats with weapons, robbery, pushing.
- Street crime:* includes robbery, theft of belongings.

The effect of the initiative on repeat racial victimisation is summarised in Figure 4, The data presented in Figure 4 are based on the proportion of Bengali and Somali households who were repeatedly victimised in each month. They take account of when heavily victimised families were transferred from the estate. Because no reliable dates were available on when families left and arrived on the estate, it was necessary to analyse repeat victimisation for all the families within each month. In addition, moving averages have been used in this graph, in order to smooth out any fluctuations in the data from period to period (see Berry & Carter, 1992 for a more detailed explanation of this technique). Consequently, the first moving three-month total takes account of the victimisations in September, but the first three-month moving average begins in October. Thus, according to these calculations, repeat racial victimisation fell by 12%, when the racial incidents in the initial research phase October 1990 to February 1991 were compared with the October 1992 to February 1993 incidents.



The possible impact of the interventions on repeat racial victimisation can be noted in Figure 4. The pre-initiative period was October 1990 to February 1991 (months two to six in Figure 4) and from March 1991 to August 1991 the crime prevention measures were agreed with the local authority, police and community groups and funding was sought from Safer Cities. From September 1991 (month 13 on Figure 4) the English Language classes started and in December 1991 the project workers began their work (month 16 on Figure 4). In September 1992 (month 25) there were regular Safety Action Plans, 'Streetwise' classes and the English Language classes

reconvened after the summer break. In November 1992 (month 27 on Figure 4) the first personal alarms were issued and the first security packs for flats were installed. In month 33 of Figure 4, when the rate of repeat racial victimisation rose sharply, the funding ended for the revictimisation prevention worker, safety action plans were discontinued, no more security packs for flats were installed or personal attack alarms issued and shortly afterwards the English Language classes and streetwise classes were stopped. The sharp rise in repeat racial victimisation after the project had finished confirms a project effect. Although not shown on the graph, repeat victimisation declined again and this is probably due to some action taken by the estate-based housing officers against perpetrators named in July 1993.¹⁷

Comparing the same time period, that is October 1990 to February 1991 with October 1992 to February 1993, the prevalence (the proportion of families victimised) fell by 8%. These reductions occurred despite improved recording procedures and a possible increase in reporting. Importantly, the Bengalis and Somalis perceived a difference. In the final evaluation interviews, 70% (n=30) thought racial attacks had fallen, 47% said they felt safe on the estate compared to under 9% during the initial research phase, and 66% let their children play outside compared to 45% before the project started.

Whilst the initial research recognised the significance that repeated victimisation had on racial victims, its impact on the lives of repeat victims was not fully appreciated. The words of the multiple victims more accurately describe the cumulative effects:

Racial incidents have been happening for the last four years. I don't call it my shop I call it my torture chamber. Two or three times a week I get trouble...I lose a lot of business...the only way to change this problem is to change my colour...there is a limit to how much abuse anyone can take...[I] want to get out - to get on an aeroplane and leave this country (Bengali shopkeeper in late 50s).

When [my wife] is on her own in the flat with the children she is often harassed. People bang on the door and windows. They put their hands up so she cannot see...and say "we know your husband is not in". Typically it happens three or four times a week and then nothing for two weeks and then it starts again...recently when [my wife] and children got out of the lift a white man started to racially abuse them... [we] are afraid to go out... [I] worry about what might happen to my family when I am out and they worry about what might be happening to me...I am young and should feel free to come and go as I feel, I am afraid for my children as I am always having to control them and keep them in the flat...a prison is better than this. (Bengali man in his 30s).

The revictimisation prevention worker

The Bengali worker in reviewing his work on the estate, commented on the adverse effect of racial attacks and harassment on the health of some of the families and how

17 The increases in repeat racial victimisation during the summer months are interesting to note. The Safety Action Plans, the English and Streetwise classes did not take place over these months and the 'high profile' presence of the workers ceased when they, and the researchers, took their holidays. The suggestion from the findings is that additional efforts and securing additional resources for the summer months may have been a more appropriate course of action.

it created tensions and conflicts within the families. This was consistent with the findings of a research project on health which took place in another part of the borough at the same time and which identified racial harassment as a health concern because victims:

“i) thought the fear of racial harassment alone, led directly to a number of ailments such as asthma, heart problems and gastric problems ii) they believed it was improvements in dealing with racial harassment - not in health service provision - that would do most to improve their health” (Tower Hamlets Health Strategy Group, 1994).

The distrust and disillusionment with the police and local authority housing also ran much deeper than the original research suggested. After two months the worker wrote a report and in the section on the views of the families (n = 25) wrote:

...even when the victims show police the perpetrators, the police take no action. There is no report, no follow-up, no visit to them...Police approach is unsympathetic. Also language and communication is a problem... About the local authority housing response they said “Housing just record incidents when [the] victim comes into the office”. The Bengali and Somali families also felt isolated; some families say the TA [tenants' association] always play down the problems and say *** is not a bad place. The families feel the TA does not support or represent them.

To attempt to overcome these difficulties the worker's three key tasks were to: encourage reporting; improve the immediate protection of repeat victims; and ensure their longer term support and safety. These tasks were, in many instances, interdependent; for example, improved safety and better agencies' practices were a most effective way of sustaining an improved level of reporting. Each, however, is discussed in turn. At the end of the section one particular approach, taking action against perpetrators, is discussed in more detail. This is because as the project progressed it was increasingly prioritised due to its apparent effectiveness as a preventive approach.

Reporting

Under-reporting was raised as a problem by statutory agency workers, and they frequently commented that they could only respond to racial incidents if they were reported immediately that they occurred. The revictimisation prevention worker found, however, that a number of obstacles needed to be overcome before reporting to the statutory agencies increased.

In the beginning of the project, several victims felt it was not worth reporting because when they had reported, neither the police nor the local authority housing officers had responded, or they had been told only to report 'serious incidents'. One Bengali

man expressed the views of the majority of the families: “[I] have lost confidence in the police and housing. It will take a very serious incident for them to respond and to help”. The anticipation of communication problems due to language difficulties also added to the reluctance to report (Sampson & Phillips, 1992). Later in the project, through the work of the revictimisation prevention worker; it was evident that virtually all the most heavily victimised families explicitly or implicitly talked about the shame they felt about being repeatedly victimised and having to ask for assistance. In the words of one Bengali man - “[I] feel ashamed and degraded repeatedly reporting incidents. That is why I sometimes do not report”. A fear of reprisals prevented just under 8% of the households from naming the perpetrators or insisting no action be taken against those who they had named.¹⁸ Full disclosure of information about an incident is therefore another aspect of under-reporting. Confidence that the police and local authority will take action when a racial incident is reported was vital because the overwhelming reason for reporting was to get the police or local authority to stop the next offence (77%). Thus, the families often reported a racial incident as a last resort because they could not suffer any longer.

Based on these findings, it was recognised that it was necessary for the revictimisation prevention worker to build up the trust and confidence of the victims before they would report incidents. He did this by assisting them with any difficulties they had, by, for example, translating bills, dealing with housing problems, finding doctors and so on. Once a rapport had been established, the revictimisation prevention worker encouraged victims to report any incidents to him by showing them that they would be believed and taken seriously, and that something would be done to prevent the next attack.¹⁹ This approach enabled him to learn about each family’s history of victimisation, the effects of the repeated victimisation, and, most importantly, allowed a discussion about what action victims wanted taken, whilst reassuring them that all information would be treated confidentially. This gave the victim some control of the situation by giving them the opportunity to make decisions about what action might follow. This practice was followed by the revictimisation prevention worker with some apparent success (see below).

18 This is similar to the findings of a recent study on witness intimidation where 6% of crimes not reported by victims living on high crime housing estates were due to fear of reprisals (Maynard, 1994).

19 Other research on reporting violent crimes, such as domestic violence verifies this. (see Dobash et al, 1985).

20 Compared to the start of the project, 70% of Bengali and Somali families said they were more likely to report racial incidents to the statutory agencies.

The worker also spent time explaining the procedures of the police and local authority housing, their roles and the limitations of their roles. The families were encouraged to keep a diary of incidents, recording the date, time, type of incident and a description of the perpetrator(s) if they saw them.

Whilst the research findings appeared to suggest an increase in reporting intentions,²⁰ changes in reporting behaviour were more difficult to measure. For the whole of the period when data was collected most of the families were visited by either the support group, the support group and the revictimisation prevention worker (from September 1990 to May 1993), or a Bengali housing officer (from April

1993). Therefore the 'true' level of reporting based on victims either telephoning or visiting an agency cannot be measured as some families waited until they were visited to report incidents. Notwithstanding this caveat, there was some evidence that reporting to the local housing office increased during the project.²¹ Reporting patterns to the police remained about the same. The victims only reported incidents to the police which they thought the police would treat as 'serious' and/or where a suspect could be identified. Very little under-reporting was identified in the final evaluation interviews. Only two incidents were reported to the researchers which had not been reported to any agency although there may have been other incidents not reported at all.

Apart from the revictimisation prevention worker's role as victim advocate in reporting racial incidents to the police and housing office, he was present at interviews with the police, and he reported insecure flats and outstanding housing repair problems to the estate-based housing officers. His advocacy role also had the effect of sensitising the statutory agencies to the problems of inadequately protecting repeat victims and gave them the opportunity of improving their practices. It was difficult to quantify exactly how many times the worker was successful or unsuccessful in this advocacy role but twenty-one families found his work on their behalf useful or very useful. Numerous reasons for this were cited, including, getting housing repairs done, getting the police to come and see the graffiti or damage to their flats, getting their children into a school, arranging homework classes and so on. Most of all, two thirds said, unprompted, that he enabled them to overcome their language difficulties. Four families did not find his work useful because he had been unable to get their housing repairs done or to get them transferred off the estate

The victim advocacy role of the revictimisation prevention worker also appeared to assist the police in their work. In the final evaluation interviews the detectives (n=3) thought they got better information because of the Bengali worker's assistance. One of the detectives summed up the benefits by saying "He made our work more effective. He would help with the reporting [and] interpreting and [by] getting information from people".

Various efforts were also made to overcome the language barrier to encourage reporting, including the use of a telephone language line service. Despite research evidence that language difficulties were a reason for under-reporting, the local housing officers rarely used the telephone language line service. The victims tended to wait for the revictimisation prevention worker to help them report rather than going to the housing office immediately an incident had occurred. The effect of the English language classes can, however, be assessed. In the final evaluation interviews over half the women said they had attended the English language classes (n= 16), although most attended them irregularly. Nevertheless, 69% said that their English

21 Reporting increased from 7% of all the project recorded incidents (this includes those reported to the police, estate office, the revictimisation prevention worker and support group) to 26% when the first three months of 1991 are compared with the first three months of 1993. However, the increased reporting occurred at the same time that the support group reduced their weekly visits to families on the estate.

had improved and these women felt confident enough to ring the police or housing to report a racial incident although some said they would be unable to give full details of what had happened. They also felt able to do the shopping, and to talk to school teachers and health visitors. At the start of the project none of these women were able to do these things and at the end of the project their pleasure in having acquired these new skills was evident.

22 Immediate management transfers for victims who had been repeatedly harassed and were living, as a consequence, under great stress, were a fiercely contested issue between the different agencies. However, the purpose of the action safety plans was to consider, above all else, the experiences and needs of the repeat victims. The long history of poor services to repeat victims meant that some could not take any more abuse, their lives were literally "shattered" and it was felt beyond the capabilities of the agencies to help especially if no perpetrator(s) could be identified. Where agencies felt unable to protect a repeat victim from further attack recommending a management transfer was the only possible response. This does not create a 'no-go' area because not all the families were suffering severely from chronic repeat victimisation. Nor is it a 'victory' for perpetrators because other more 'resilient ethnic minority families' could be moved onto the estate. Rather such a strategy respects and values the feelings and experiences of the repeat victims.

Some changes in the Bengalis' and Somalis' views of the statutory agencies were identified and this may have had some effect on the improvements in reporting. Fifty-three per cent thought the police response had improved whilst 13% thought it had not improved (33% did not know) and 33% thought the response of housing officers had improved although the same number felt it had not improved and the remaining 33% had no opinion. The families were not asked to specify when the improvements took place so it is difficult to say if their views affected their reporting behaviour.

Immediate protection

To sustain the confidence of the victim and stop the next attack required prompt action due to the 'heightened risk' period identified in the initial research phase (Sampson & Phillips, 1992; Farrell & Pease, 1993). Safety action plans therefore became central to the work of the revictimisation prevention worker. Their purpose was to make decisions on what support could be provided to the family or person to prevent the further attacks, and on what action would be taken against any known or suspected perpetrator(s). The plans were developed at inter-agency meetings between a victim (or family of victims), a housing officer; a police officer and any other person the victim wished to invite, for example, friends, relatives, community group representatives, or school teachers. The victim(s) were central to the meeting. They were asked by the chair (the revictimisation prevention worker) to recall their history of victimisation, and to explain the effect being repeatedly victimised was having on their everyday lives.

An action strategy was then proposed and each action allocated to the representative of the appropriate agency and a date agreed to complete the action by. It is worth noting, however; that a researcher attended each safety plan meeting, and where ideas were lacking, often made suggestions about appropriate actions to take. Typical action plans involved physical security improvements, the issuing of personal alarms and taking action against perpetrators. This included the housing office sending warning letters to tenants, or visits by the police and/or housing officers. On two occasions a recommendation for an immediate management transfer was agreed and the head of local authority housing was notified of this decision.²² The revictimisation prevention worker monitored the action taken and wrote to agencies

if they had not kept to the agreed timetable. Follow-up meetings were held immediately prior to a safety action plan meeting to discuss progress on previous action plans, and to prompt any inaction.

Ten perpetrators were identified as a result of the twenty safety plans. For seven families racial incidents decreased after all the safety plan measures had been put in place. It is not clear why this happened for two households because no perpetrators were identified and the measures taken were to improve their safety rather than to prevent further attacks. Five families were transferred off the estate before the impact of their safety action plans could be reliably measured. In three cases the safety plan had the effect of dramatically increasing reporting to the estate-based housing office and the naming of perpetrator(s).²³

The perceptions of the repeat victims were also extremely important. To assess the initial effectiveness of the safety plans fifteen families were interviewed in detail in March 1993. As a result of these safety plan meetings, 69% said they were more inclined to identify perpetrators, 67% more likely to report to housing and 60% more likely to report to the police. Thirty-three per cent thought the attacks against them had declined as a result of their safety plan. Dissatisfaction was felt where they had identified perpetrators but, to the knowledge of the victims, no action had been taken against them. As a result of these findings the safety action plans were continued and more encouragement given to the local authority to take prompt action against perpetrators. It seems that, on the whole, safety action plans were important to repeat victims because their situation was being taken seriously. The action plans were likely to be most effective where a perpetrator was identified and action taken against them.

The impact of home security improvements and personal attack alarms, which were usually part of the safety action plans, was assessed. Safer Cities funding paid for improved security to twenty-five flats which included fire-proof letter boxes, safety chains and spyholes. Eighteen of these households were interviewed and they said they felt safer as a result of these improvements, but there was an awareness that such improvements did not necessarily stop the harassment. Twelve personal attack alarms were also paid for out of Safer Cities funds and at the time of the final interviews when eleven households with the alarms were interviewed, someone in all the households still used them (although in four households only the men carried them). Of the seventeen users, all except one woman felt safer when they carried the alarm. The alarms were used four times by three different Bengalis (two women and one man) and each time the harassers fled. On one occasion the sound of the alarm had the additional benefit of alerting the woman's children who ran back to protect her. On the basis of this limited sample, it does seem that alarms can have a preventive function.

23 For a fuller discussion on perpetrators and action taken against them see the following section.

Another immediate protection prevention measure put in place was the 'streetwise' classes. These were for young people at risk of being racially victimised. These took place in the secondary school on the estate, and were paid for by the local authority community education service.²⁴ The revictimisation prevention worker found that the young Bengalis were often afraid, upset and angry after a racial incident and took precautions against further attacks by walking around the estate in groups, avoiding certain areas and staying at home. He also found that the young Bengalis were not reporting incidents for fear that their parents would not let them go out anymore. This finding has been observed amongst other young victims of crime (Aye Maung, 1995). The classes were designed to teach the young people how to 'be safe' on streets and, if necessary, to defend themselves. The revictimisation prevention worker or another Bengali adult escorted the students to and from the classes. They were attacked on three separate occasions.

To assess if the classes were assisting the young people, and to help the education department to decide if the classes should continue, nine Bengali boys and three Bengali girls between the ages of ten and seventeen years were interviewed (twenty-nine young people attended the classes at least once). Seven of those interviewed said the classes made no difference (two only attended one class), five said the skills they had learnt were useful, that they felt they could use them, and they felt safer. One girl had successfully used her new skills at school. Two people said they would not be able to use the skills, and three thought they would be difficult to use if they had to defend themselves against a group of assailants. It seems likely that although the streetwise classes did not assist many of the young people, such activities can have the potential for improving the feelings of safety of some young people. This is important because all these young people had suffered some form of racial harassment or abuse and most (75%) were frightened by their experiences. Even more poignant was that eleven out of the twelve interviewees knew who the perpetrators were, and that they lived on the estate or went to the same school. This explains their fears, and the concern amongst youth and community workers that this victim-perpetrator relationship could lead to retaliatory actions or counter-attacks by young Bengalis. Occasional clashes between Bengali and white youths did occur outside the secondary school and local college, confirming this possibility.

*Longer term safety and support*²⁵

Some of the repeat victims seemed more optimistic about their longer term safety. Thirty seven per cent thought racial attacks would fall in the future, 23% thought they would remain the same and 23% thought they would rise again (the other 17% had no views). One indication of this optimism was in the spring of 1993 when the community group representatives asked the families what action they wanted to take next to stop racial

24 The community education service also paid for a part-time Bengali youth worker who was based at the local youth centre. At the beginning of the project, this worker collected some of the Bengali young people from the estate and escorted them to sessions at the youth centre on a Saturday.

25 Some changes in the procedures of the police and local authority would have a longer term safety effect for the repeat victims, and these are discussed in the following section. For the importance of appropriate procedures see Love & Kirby (1994), and Inter-Departmental Racial Attacks Group Second Report (1991).

attacks and harassment, and what they wanted the support group to do, on their behalf, to improve their situation. The general response from the families was that there had been an improvement and they did not wish to take any further action. The support group stopped visiting the Bengali and Somali families on the estate and paid a volunteer to visit the estate once a fortnight until September 1993 when all regular visits to the Bengali and Somali families ceased.

Whilst there were some grounds for optimism about the future, efforts to secure the longer term safety of repeat victims were not generally successful. The revictimisation prevention worker encouraged the victims to have their own 'voice' and for a while this appeared to be successful with the formation of a Muslim association, but its activities were short-lived and by the time of the final evaluation interviews, it had folded. The isolation of the majority of Bengalis and Somalis from any established forms of representation was also apparent: two thirds had not heard of the tenants and residents' association, and 60% had not heard of councillors. Serious racial incidents also had the effect of increasing peoples' fears and feelings of insecurity. In the summer of 1993 a woman was knocked unconscious by a piece of wood thrown off a balcony. At the time of the final evaluation interviews, 43% of the respondents said that this incident had increased their fear of racial attacks.

Some longer term work was undertaken in the primary and secondary schools on the estate by John Pitts and his colleagues (Linklater; Pitts & Smith, 1993). Whilst the focus was on all forms of school bullying, which was reflected in the adoption of an anti-bullying strategy, it was acknowledged that racism in the school and local community needed to be tackled particularly at the secondary school. A meeting of the staff/student working party was held to clarify what pupils expected from the police when racial tensions were running high. The inclusion of racism and other bullying-related issues in the curriculum was also advocated by students. The results of this intervention seem to have had an effect on reducing overt racial tension in the school, according to a report by Her Majesty's Inspectors (Pitts & Smith, 1995).

The researchers also spent time developing a racial harassment procedure appropriate for use by local authorities. This involved collating information from existing racial harassment procedures in the Isle of Dogs Neighbourhood, London Borough of Tower Hamlets, and the London Boroughs of Newham and Lewisham. This was perceived to be important as it set the framework for good practices, thereby ensuring the longer term safety of victims (see Department of Environment, 1989). The procedure outlined a victim-orientated response and included information on collecting witness statements, interviewing perpetrators and model letters to perpetrators from the estate-based housing officers.²⁶ Equally important was the setting of time limits for action and continual liaison with victims.

26 It was interesting to find that procedures in the different areas contacted (n = 6) were often quite different. It is likely that the exchange of procedures between local authorities and non-metropolitan local authority areas might be beneficial to repeat racial victims. Variations in procedures and practices have also been noted by Love & Kirby (1994).

In addition, the research budget paid for two computers for a police Racial Incidents Index to be set up.²⁷ The idea was to create a racial incidents database containing the history of racial victimisation at each address, so that when an operational officer responded to a racial incident call at an address s/he would know the details of any previous incidents. According to the experience of Merseyside police in relation to domestic violence incidents, this information could have improved police responses to repeat victims (Lloyd, Farrell & Pease, 1994).

Action against perpetrators²⁸

In the initial stages of the project it was not clear which measures should be prioritised. The community groups and a research report on mobilising victim-orientated policing strategies (Stanko, 1992) emphasised that taking action to stop the perpetrators should be a priority. As it became apparent that racial attacks and harassment occurred in most places and at most times, and just focusing on improving the safety of the repeat victims afforded them inadequate protection, taking action against perpetrators became the focus of the implementation efforts in the project. Research on other East London estates by Cooper and Qureshi (1993), and the current authors (Sampson, 1993; Phillips & Sampson, forthcoming) found that a high proportion of perpetrators lived in close proximity or went to the same school as their victims. For example, Cooper and Qureshi found that 77% of identified perpetrators were neighbours or friends of neighbours. Similarly, Sampson (1993) found that 84% of the identified perpetrators on three East London estates were neighbours, lived on the same estate or went to the same school as the people they victimised.

27 This was developed by Graham Farrell who worked on a similar system for repeated domestic violence incidents at a Merseyside police station. There the system was used operationally and the police funded an administrator to update the information system.

28 The data in this section has been collated with a great deal of difficulty and some doubt must remain about its accuracy. The researchers did not have access to the tenancy files by the end of the project and when they did have access to them, some were incomplete. The estate-based housing office had no system of collecting information on perpetrators of racial harassment in one place, which would have been useful for housing officers responding to multiple victims harassed by the same perpetrator.

The feasibility of this approach obviously relies on identifying perpetrators and action being taken against them which stops their racist offending. The approach is particularly attractive because stopping perpetrators who repeatedly victimised the Bengalis and Somalis would have a significant impact on reducing racial attacks. Through the work of the revictimisation prevention worker more information was obtained about perpetrators.

On the research estate thirty-four perpetrators (either individual people or households) were clearly identified by victims. Ninety-one per cent were repeat offenders and were identified in 111 racial incidents. Since the data strongly suggests that most were repeat offenders and in a further 109 incidents a perpetrator was recognised, but not clearly identified by the victim, it is likely that more incidents could be attributed to them.

As the researchers did not have access to the tenancy records during the whole of the research period, information on the characteristics of the offenders is incomplete. The perpetrators were children, young people and adults; boys and girls and men and

women; and were white and black.²⁹ According to information on thirty-three of the thirty-four clearly identified perpetrators, they either lived on the estate (n=31) or used to live on the estate (n=2). Fifty nine per cent were immediate neighbours or lived in the same block of flats.³⁰ The data suggest that victims may be more able to identify perpetrators who live close to them, which intuitively makes sense, and indicates that those who are most heavily victimised live in close proximity to racist offenders. Those victimised households who did not identify any perpetrators during the project (n=10) suffered an average of thirteen incidents whilst those who clearly identified more than one perpetrator suffered an average of forty-four incidents.

Evidence on the effectiveness³¹ of the action taken against clearly identified perpetrators suggests that some types of action can have a deterrent effect. Letters or visits to other perpetrators stating that their behaviour was in breach of their tenancy agreement were effective (that is, to the knowledge of the researchers, no further incidents were recorded) five times and ineffective once. Visits by police officers to the homes of other perpetrators seemed to be effective on four occasions, ineffective once (this was also a neighbour dispute) and once had the effect of an immediate reprisal, then no further incidents. Three perpetrators were arrested by the police. Two households and six young people were particularly active perpetrators and warning letters from the local authority failed to have a longer term effect, This may, however, be due at least in part, to the fact that they had been involved in a catalogue of incidents, over a number of years, before the local authority served a notice of seeking possession, or took legal action against the young people. The local authority was resistant to taking out injunctions with the power of arrest to try and stop, albeit temporarily, particular people from continuing their harassment. There is some indication that this measure can be effective (Sampson, 1993).

29 This can be contrasted with the limited information available on perpetrators at the research stage of the project (Sampson & Phillips, 1992).

30 There were four neighbour disputes; that is, complaints had been made to the estate base office by both parties. In any ongoing neighbour dispute, any incident identified by either party as racist was recorded as a racial incident. Thus not all neighbour dispute incidents were classified as racial. It is also possible that, unknown to those who recorded a racial incident, it may have been part of a neighbour disagreement.

31 The effectiveness of action taken against perpetrators was measured until the end of September 1993. Some perpetrators may have reoffended since then. Action had only been taken against three of the perpetrators in August 1993.

4- Preventive work with the statutory agencies

The police response

Awareness of the problem

The superintendent at the local police station was the key player in supporting the project and ensuring that changes recommended by the initial research were put into practice. The police gave “racial attacks a high priority as a result of the research” and “changed the way we investigated incidents” (senior police officer). The research findings acted as a catalyst for change for a number of reasons. First, they provided the police with new information and insights into the extent and nature of racial attacks and harassment, and in doing so, highlighted some of the inadequacies of their practices in a way that made intuitive sense to many of the officers. As the superintendent said “...by targeting police action [on repeat victims] we could actually be more effective”. Secondly, the proposals which came from the research findings suggested solutions to some of the difficulties the police were experiencing, for example, a telephone Language Line service. And thirdly, the continuing involvement of the researchers kept up the momentum for the changes, and the regular feedback of data was an ongoing measure of the effectiveness of these changes.

Increasing police officers’ understanding of racial attacks was also achieved through yearly training sessions by the revictimisation prevention worker. The worker discussed the Bengali culture, the Muslim religion, the lives of Bengalis in England, and their experiences of racial victimisation. It was hoped that this training at the local police station would improve its response to victims of racial harassment and attacks. The training for all personnel was thought to be important, otherwise the improved police response would have been marginalised to those officers in the Racial Incidents Unit (the Home Affairs Committee, Third Report, 1994 supports this view). The informal feedback on the training was very positive.³² Several officers and staff said they felt better able to understand the Bengalis and more confident about responding to them. The training sessions had the additional benefits of the police creating firm links with the revictimisation prevention worker who, in turn, had a better understanding of police powers which he found useful in his own work.

The findings from the final interviews suggested that, despite the training, the changes bought about within the police were not fully integrated into the service. Unfortunately the implementation of new procedures and improved practices relied on a few ‘innovators’ and ‘exceptional’ police officers. After the innovative superintendent left less effort was made to routinise the changes into everyday police practices. It also suggests that to achieve a consistent high level response to repeat racial victims, by all police officers, requires more than the occasional day’s training.

32 Unfortunately the researchers did not have the time to fully evaluate the effects of the training.

Victim-police communication

The difficulties of communication found between the police officers and the Bengalis and Somalis were a problem for them both, and were identified in the initial research as a possible reason for the low detection rate (Sampson & Phillips, 1992). Project funds were able to pay for a six month trial of a telephone language line service. This service was confidential and available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, and had access to over 140 languages from accredited interpreters. Conference technology also enabled a three-way telephone conversation with each person at a different location, thus enabling police officers to ring a victim/witness/suspect at home or work. To implement Language Line, the operational police officers and civilian staff were trained by Language Line staff to use the service. Whilst the interpreters visited the police station, they were also briefed on police procedures and were familiarised with some police jargon. The Language Line telephone number was placed on police telephones, in police note books and a poster designed as reminders to the police to use the service (see Appendix C). The police use of the service was also advertised in the local newspapers through feature articles. In addition, a mobile telephone was made available for homes and places where there were no telephones, and two telephones at the front desk of each police station were installed, to enable a three-way conversation. All officers received laminated cards explaining to victims requiring assistance that the officer had access to an interpreting service.

It is difficult to evaluate the success of this measure for at least three principal reasons. Firstly, there was no reliable information on how many times there was a language barrier and a police officer did not use either Language Line or an interpreter. Therefore it was unclear how many times a police officer should have used the service. During the first three months of the police use of Language Line, an analysis of the police data found that in 12% of the incidents where victims spoke poor English, a child, an adult or no interpreter was used. This was compared to 92% of the incidents during the original research phase.³³ Secondly, the information on calls received by Language Line, collected on a monthly basis, did not appear to equate with the police officers' comments on their use of language line, as they all claimed to be regular users. The Language Line figures suggested a low usage of the service by officers, especially after the initial training by Language Line staff when the service was used twenty-five times a month. This fell to a typical usage of three to six times a month. Thirdly, police officers used the revictimisation prevention worker to communicate with the Bengalis, and a colleague of his to communicate with the Somalis, so Language Line was rarely used by the victims living on the research estate.

To make some assessment of the service, some police officers were interviewed on two different occasions; in March 1992 five detectives and five uniformed police

33 This analysis was undertaken only for these three months due to its time-consuming nature, It is also likely that these figures are not particularly accurate as recording practices may have varied between officers.

were interviewed, three months after the service was operational, and nine officers were interviewed in January and February 1994 as part of the final evaluation of the project. Officers felt Language Line assisted them to give a better service to victims and improved investigations by; making the job easier, providing a faster service, improving the quality of the information they recorded, enabling the “communications barrier” to come down and giving officers more confidence in their work. As one officer put it, “I feel more professional in what I am doing”. In fact police officers used Language Line for many different aspects of their work, including, traffic accidents, tracing missing persons; racial and domestic violence, and to question suspects. The importance of using a Language Line service for both police officers and victims was not doubted by anyone, but whether the service was fully used (and was therefore a fully implemented measure) remains unanswered.

Investigations

A Racial Incidents Investigations Unit was set up in July 1991. This was not a research recommendation, but the research findings prompted the police to reorganise their response to racial attacks and setting up the Unit was one of outcome of this reorganisation. The Unit consisted of an officer responsible for follow-up visits to the victims, and liaison with the community and other agencies, and two detectives. These were typically junior detectives who were on a three month secondment.

Despite repeated efforts by the researchers, the Racial Incidents Index described earlier was never used operationally in the Unit. There were resistances to its use, in part because it was felt that using the Index operationally would be difficult during busy shifts, and it was also felt that racial attacks were already being prioritised. This meant that police officers did not respond to calls knowing the history of victimisation at the address. The liaison officer in the Unit, however used the Index for management purposes and found it “very useful”.³⁴

34 When the researchers browsed through the index with the liaison officer it was clear that the pattern of repeat racial victimisation throughout the division mirrored that on the estate. Some addresses appeared frequently and had the police targeted these addresses it is likely more racial incidents throughout the police division could have been prevented.

The effectiveness of the Unit was not directly monitored. A number of observations can be made, however, on the basis of regular visits to the police station and contact with the with the staff. The full potential of the Unit did not appear to be realised. It undoubtedly provided a very useful contact point for the Bengali worker and for other workers from different agencies. Even though the officers themselves recognised the need to “build community trust by more thoroughly investigating incidents” (detective constable), their short secondments prevented this from happening. The absence of a crime prevention officer seconded to the Unit also limited its usefulness. One of the advantages of targeting resources on repeat victims to stop the next crime, is that preventive and investigative work fuse together; enabling each function to be more effective. This has been recognised by Greater

Manchester police, who have reorganised their detection units to include crime prevention officers (personal communication with Chief Inspector David Forrester) But there was a discernable shift towards more proactive work by the detectives³⁵ which, as the research findings indicate, is an essential part of providing effective prevention services. This was reflected in the arrest rates, which increased from twenty-nine arrests for the whole of 1992 to eighty-four arrests for the first six months of 1994.³⁶

Another change made by the police independently of the project, but which had implications for it, was the introduction of sector policing in October 1992. The sector inspector had the authority to organise foot patrols, and a remit to police the area according to the needs of the community. The researchers fed back to the sector inspector information on incidents, including the time of the day when there were most problems, using data from the police incident logs, racial incidents data and the Bengali worker. As a consequence the police gave special attention to two areas on the estate where some shopkeepers and residents were repeatedly harassed by a group of young people. The effect was to reduce the number of youth disturbances and youth fights reported to the police for two months by 6% (to twenty-two incidents for November and twenty-five for December 1992). As soon as this intensive police activity decreased, the level of incidents increased again (to thirty-three, thirty and forty-nine incidents respectively for January, February and March 1993). Although some unmeasured factors may have accounted for these changes, it seems as if the focused police foot patrols could have had some impact.

Although there were a number of positive changes, there remained practices which undermined the effectiveness of investigations. The most significant ones were, firstly, some of the internal decision-making procedures could be problematic for local officers especially when they had to defer decisions to senior police officers outside the immediate area. Obtaining technological equipment for detection purposes was, for example, extremely difficult. Obviously with the 'heightened risk period' of repeat victimisation, measures should be put in place very quickly otherwise there will be a subsequent offence. Surveillance equipment was either slow in coming or never arrived. It was as frustrating for the officers in the area as it was for the victims, and undermined the good community links which the local officers were working to achieve.

Secondly there was the problem of poor responses to some incidents. These poor responses were rarely forgotten and undoubtedly set back confidence in the police, as they served as reminders to victims and community groups that the police did not take the plight of minority groups seriously. A number of such incidents occurred throughout the project. To give one example; a single Bengali woman who was experiencing repeated harassment in her home was fitted with an immediate

35 However it is still difficult to interpret how much more proactive the police had become. The local political situation with the election of the BNP candidate certainly made the police aware of the need to be proactive as a way of reducing tensions within the community.

36 Clear up rates could not be used because changes in the way in which they were calculated meant that any figures would not be comparable.

response alarm which was connected to the police command and control room. The alarm was installed without proper consultation with the woman and was removed again without consultation, for what came to be known as the ‘sweet wrapper incident’. The woman alleged that she pressed the alarm when she heard banging on her door and feared the return of some children who were continually harassing her. When the police arrived they found some sweet wrappers had been pushed through her letterbox. The alarm was subsequently removed as the police felt that it had been abused. Unfortunately, this had the effect of reinforcing poor police/Bengali relations.

The reactions of the local authority

Responses to the racial harassment problem

Local authority managers and estate-based housing officers often expressed their commitment to preventing racial attacks and harassment and their willingness to participate in the project. Informal discussions with the local authority about the initial research findings and a series of inter-agency meetings chaired by the Safer Cities coordinator did not, however; bring about any tangible changes in their responses to protecting repeat racial victims from further attacks.³⁷ As discussions progressed senior housing officers appeared to want to suppress the issue, because they did not perceive the incidents to be racially motivated. In the words of one, “a lot of incidents are minor; some not so much racial as being daft”, because racial incidents were a political tinderbox and well left alone”. They also tended to dismiss racial attacks as young children fighting amongst themselves, or harassment by young people which was also experienced by other vulnerable groups, for example, single parents and elderly people. Thus there appeared to be little understanding of the particularly pernicious nature of racial harassment and violence. This was particularly significant as the council was the most powerful agency - the one upon which the success or failure of the project rested. They were the landlords of the repeat victims, and usually, the landlords of the perpetrators. Also, as some of the racial incidents involved children below the age of criminal responsibility, local authority housing were sometimes in a better position to take action than the police.

37 In July 1991 an answerphone with a message in a number of different community languages was provided at the central council offices. Tenants complained however that it was difficult to get through. The facility was used more by other agencies than as an emergency line for victims. The local authority also re-structured the Racial Incidents Panel meetings (see Sampson & Phillips, 1992) so that families could report racial incidents before a panel of representatives from the local authority housing, the police, and the tenants’ and residents’ association. The Bengali project worker also attended. This was disbanded after four meetings.

Responses to the project

The revictimisation prevention worker experienced several obstacles and delays in his work with repeat racial victims. Only when more proactive action was taken by the revictimisation prevention worker and the researchers, a year after the project started, did some changes take place. Even so, some of the measures were never implemented, for example, advice cards for victims were never issued, training for estate-based housing officers did not take place, nor did prompt action against most

of the perpetrators. The promised use of a telehelp service whereby a household was equipped with an alarm which, if activated, received an immediate response from social services staff, also never happened. Many of the changes which did take place were often due to external pressures, for example, court decisions. This section discusses some of the reasons for this.

The difficulties in initiating change ran deep. A number of interrelated factors contributed to the lack of action. First, the local authority was an elected councillor-led council. Most decision-making was therefore made by senior housing managers after consultation with the councillors. This included matters relating to the day-to-day running of the project. Some of the resistances can, therefore, be understood by examining the position and views of the councillors.

The councillors did not support a project which targeted one estate and one community; they said it would aggravate a situation which had been 'blown up' by the wild exaggerations and lies of the community groups. They were particularly bitter about the community groups' use of the media to make their arguments against the council. As a consequence of these views, both the councillors and housing officers were 'locked' into an often bitter conflict with the community groups. The councillors clearly stated their opposition to the local authority officers working with members of the community groups on the workers' inter-agency management group. They argued that the community groups were trying to create a 'no-go' estate by demanding the transfer of Bengali and Somali families. In an interview with the councillors representing the estate and its surrounding area it was also apparent that they thought tackling race issues would threaten the political status quo because, necessarily, it would mean advocating preferential treatment for minority groups.

This councillor resistance remained throughout the project's lifetime and it was decided, in April 1993, on the basis of a report by senior housing management, to end the council's involvement with the project and terminate the revictimisation prevention worker's contract two months early.

Attempts were made by the Safer Cities coordinator and the researchers to persuade the councillors of the validity of a crime prevention project but they remained unconvinced. Had there been a group of councillors sympathetic to the aims of the project, or some that could have been persuaded of the value of reducing racial victimisation, it is likely that repeat racial victimisation would have been further reduced.

Secondly, local authority managers were often ambivalent about the project, in part because preventing crime was not on the local authority's agenda, even though many housing officers regularly responded to tenants who had been victims of crime. Since estate-based housing officers were often hard pressed to meet their existing priorities,

it was difficult to establish crime prevention as a priority task. Thus work with racial victims tended to be squeezed out and frontline housing officers were often not equipped to respond to the stress and problems experienced by the victims. In the words of one housing officer.

“you were trying to deal with something that was very difficult and at times quite distressing. I think people don’t realise that, that when you have seen somebody three or four times who has suffered this abuse and they are distraught and you are trying to deal with it...I often felt we didn’t get enough support, we didn’t have adequate training.”

Thirdly, slow decision-making procedures made it difficult to get prevention measures, which had been agreed at joint-agency meetings, put in place. One or two sympathetic council officers tried to hasten the decision-making process and overcome inefficiencies, but they too were thwarted by the system. For example, the workers’ budget for prevention measures was always disorganised despite the complaints of the workers, and the housing officers failed to carry out any of the changes they had agreed at safety plan meetings for eight months.

Fourthly, certain socialisation processes into the local authority’s ‘culture’ mitigated against the success of the project. New recruits were quickly socialised into which ‘side’ of the conflict they were on, so for example, new housing officers soon picked up the hostility towards the community groups. This distrust was extended to other outsiders who had a racial attacks and harassment remit and, of course, included the researchers and the revictimisation prevention worker. Although the revictimisation prevention worker was offered a local authority flat as an office, he was threatened with the termination of his contract three times because, for example, he explained at management support meetings how local authority procedures did not protect racial victims. The situation was made more difficult because the research findings often highlighted some inadequate practices, for example, not taking action against clearly identified perpetrators or the lack of use of interpreters. Senior management would not allow final evaluation interviews with frontline housing officers working on the estate to take place. The problem was that the presence of the revictimisation prevention worker and the researchers kept racial attacks and harassment on the local authority’s agenda, and the research findings made it difficult for them to ‘plop down’ the problem.

Initiating changes

Since neither informal discussions with local authority officers nor inter-agency meetings acted as a catalyst for change, additional strategies were tried which necessarily required adopting a more interventionist approach than was originally planned. This was likely to increase resistances further; and there is some indication that this happened. The only other option would have been to abandon the project,

which was not a feasible option from the viewpoint of the researchers or the revictimisation prevention worker; who were committed to improving the lives of the repeat racial victims.³⁸

A number of strategies to improve the situation were therefore tried. Outstanding decision-making on agreed preventive actions was raised by either the revictimisation prevention worker or the researchers at each inter-agency management meeting. The local authority was often challenged by the community groups and sometimes by the police, but this had no discernable effect. At subsequent meetings either no decisions had been made by local authority officers or items were referred back to the inter-agency group to clarify often minor points. It took seventeen months before the terms of reference (see Appendix D) were agreed by the group and approved by the council, whilst the safety action plans procedure was never ratified (see Appendix E). Thus this was not an effective method of getting new procedures integrated into local authority practices.

Much more effective was writing letters to senior management listing outstanding action to which they had committed themselves, for example, with respect to the safety action plans and named perpetrators. After each letter some prevention measures were put in place; for example, security to eleven flats was improved, housing officers visited some named perpetrators and some outstanding housing repairs were attended to. The difficulty was that this strategy strained relations between the project worker and the housing officers.

Another way to bring about changes was to demonstrate to the estate-based housing officers which practices could reduce repeat racial victimisation. This was done in two ways. The first was for the revictimisation prevention worker to visit victims with housing officers and to discuss his work with them. This did not appear to have any longer term benefits as the officers he worked with were not in a position to influence policy and practices.

The second way good practice was demonstrated, was through some research undertaken on three nearby estates in a different neighbourhood, where the policy and practices of estate-based housing staff were quite different.³⁹ This research found that perpetrators of racial attacks and harassment (n=42) usually lived next door to their victims, in the same block of flats or attended the same school (84%), and where housing officers had taken prompt action, sometimes in conjunction with police officers, twenty-three perpetrators desisted from further racist offending, thirteen desisted after further action, and six continued their harassment.⁴⁰ The type of action taken by housing included written and verbal warnings about the perpetrator's breach of their tenancy agreement. Two thirds of the victims said they felt safer and 84% were satisfied with the performance of the estate-based local

38 The commitment of the revictimisation prevention worker to achieving the aims of the project was fairly remarkable given the difficulties he encountered. On more than one occasion he said "If I think of just myself I want to resign but when I think of the families and all that they are suffering I know I must stay and do all I can for them."

39 In particular we would like to thank Bob Brett, Jim Ripley and Carol Tubbs for their assistance and for allowing us access to tenancy records. The findings from this research have been published (Sampson, 1993) and a further paper is currently in draft.

40 There was a possibility that these offenders chose victims living in other areas, but their existing pattern of offending would suggest that they would have chosen other 'neighbours'. There was also the possibility that 'new' victims were unable to identify the perpetrators.

authority housing department. The proactive approach taken by the housing staff and police officers on these estates contrasted with the response to the problem on the research estate. These findings were rigorously debated at the inter-agency meetings and had the effect of putting action against perpetrators firmly on the local authority's agenda.

One of the most effective ways which brought about changes in local authority practices was the work of the community groups. Independently of the project, the law centre initiated proceedings in the High Court where they argued that Bengalis had a right to appeal not to move onto the estate, because of its high number of racial attacks. In addition, they initiated a Local Government Ombudsman Inquiry where they argued there was maladministration by the council, because they did not respond to the Bengali's complaints of racial harassment. The submissions of the law centre relied heavily on the more systematic and detailed information on racial incidents collated and regularly analysed by the researchers (Sampson & Phillips, 1992; Phillips & Sampson, 1992). The Ombudsman found the offers of accommodation to the Bengalis were not suitable "by reason of the prevalence of racial harassment". As a result of these cases the housing department pledged to review their racial harassment procedure, to improve their racial harassment monitoring system, to improve the security of several blocks of flats, and to take action against perpetrators. Indeed, more action was taken against perpetrators, a local authority working party was convened to revise the harassment procedures and a Bengali housing officer was recruited.⁴¹

An analysis of the final evaluation interviews and the data (see figure 3) suggests that those who were being most heavily victimised, were not being protected as effectively as they were during the project period. Initially at least, the Bengali housing worker's primary role was to monitor racial incidents, which was in sharp contrast to the revictimisation prevention worker's responsibilities to reduce and prevent repeat racial attacks.

Since the final evaluation interviews, local elections have taken place, and this has changed the political power in the borough. There now appears to be a positive commitment to tackling the problem of racial attacks and harassment. If these intentions bring about improved procedures and better practices of local authority management and frontline housing workers, the repeat racial victims should receive a better service. This project demonstrated that repeat racial attacks and harassment can be reduced and that the local authority has a key role in achieving these improvements.

41 Despite the work of the Safer Cities coordinator, the researchers and the revictimisation prevention worker with local authority housing staff, the importance of including a priority response to repeat victims was not taken into account when the procedure was revised.

5. Effective preventive action: a summary

Two features in particular characterised this crime prevention project. Firstly there was a reluctance to acknowledge the extent and nature of racial victimisation on the estate, and the impact on the lives of the repeat racial victims. Secondly the crime and harassment to be prevented was particularly pernicious because it was racial, committed frequently against a small number of people, and often involved crimes against the person. These characteristics set the agenda for the implementation process and appropriate prevention measures.

By way of concluding, some of the main elements of the strategy that appeared to have an effect either in preventing racial crimes or in improving the safety of the repeat victims are highlighted.

An ‘unwanted’ project

In these circumstances the project would not have happened without external funding from Safer Cities or a management and practical input from outsiders. The initial research played a vital role in identifying a crime problem which was largely denied or played down, and the action research component ensured that the problem was kept on the agenda of the agencies. The focus of the work on preventing crime and harassment by targeting repeat victims proved to be beneficial. It enabled the revictimisation prevention worker to focus his efforts and energies on those most affected by their victimisation experiences, and this clear priority helped him filter out some of the demands and requests for assistance made to him by other agencies and members of the community.

The outcome of this project shows that whilst outsiders can bring about changes, their effect is likely to be limited. The most effective strategies for change were found to be working with ‘innovators’ and those sympathetic to the problem, keeping accurate records about what had happened and when, and what measures were not put in place, and then writing to the appropriate agency to notify them of their lack of action. Identifying good practice in other areas, particularly neighbouring ones, also had an impact on promoting change. Feeding back the statistical data and qualitative research findings had a mixed effect. Sometimes it prompted action, but at other times it fuelled conflict between the agencies and made them more resistant to addressing their shortcomings.

Preventing repeat racial attacks and harassment

A better understanding of the problem evolved as more information became available from the work of the revictimisation prevention worker. Reporting and the lack of reporting were important issues for victims and agency workers. In fact, the confidence to report was primarily connected with the belief that the police and/or

local authority would take their experiences seriously and take preventive action. Proactive action by the agencies depended on them believing the victim and taking immediate protective action, particularly where a perpetrator(s) was clearly identified.

Confidence in reporting was increased by building up trust between the victim(s) and the project worker; and this was achieved by the worker responding to a range of problems typically experienced by the victims. Communicating in the language the victim felt most comfortable with was also important. Making contacts with ethnic minority groups can improve the confidence of racial victims that reporting incidents is worthwhile and can assist in the prevention and detection of crimes, especially where there is a fear of reprisals. A group response to their plight may also enable the victims to gain better protection. The successful advocacy role of the Bengali worker only provided a 'voice' for the victims in the short term. Making it easier to report is also an important consideration which has been more widely recognised. For example, the Coventry Council for Racial Equality has set up a number of reporting stations at different locations including mosques, community centres and police stations, to encourage reporting (Coventry CRE, 1992,1993).

From the standpoint of the agencies' procedures and practices, those which enable an immediate response before the next attack are vital. Having time limits for action specified in procedures is an important first step especially as the next attack is likely to happen soon (see, for example, Sampson & Phillips, 1992; Bridgenian & Sampson, 1994). Training on putting the procedures into practice is also essential, for as Cooper and Qureshi (1993) found in their study of racial attacks on another East London estate, policies were not adhered to.

Taking effective action against perpetrators can reduce attacks. Sometimes a warning letter from the local authority housing department or a joint visit by a police officer and a housing officer is sufficient. When this is not the case, the experience of this project shows that some immediate measures need to be taken in conjunction with legal proceedings to evict a tenant(s). An injunction with the power of arrest can be obtained very quickly and experiences in other areas suggest it can be effective (Sampson, 1993).⁴² Another type of action untested in this project is the hiring of people as 'professional' witnesses to ensure more perpetrators are taken to court, without depending on evidence given by victims who may be too fearful to testify in court (Maynard, 1994).

Multi-agency working

The advantages of joint working have been well-documented, but so too have the practical difficulties (see for example, Sampson et al., 1988, Saulsbury & Bowling, 1991; Liddle & Gelsthorpe, 1994). This project was no exception except perhaps in

42 There has to be the knowledge of the researchers been no systematic research work done on the effectiveness of injunctions, although they are becoming an increasingly popular form of action against perpetrators, for example, in the London Borough of Hackney.

the intensity and unproductiveness of the conflicts between the statutory agencies and the community groups, which were greater than might be expected. Some other areas have recorded greater cooperation (for example, Coventry CRE, 1993). As the findings of this project illustrate, joint agency work to prevent racial attacks and harassment requires proactive action by agencies, and this demands a much more sophisticated amount of cooperation than, say, a joint agency monitoring group.

On this project the joint agency management group achieved very little. It was used as a platform for the different agencies to make 'political' speeches and to defend their existing practices. The difficulties encountered by the workers were often marginalised and the workers regularly complained about the lack of guidance and support they received from the group. There was a strong sense in which the agencies were not ready to work in a joint agency setting. Many of the players were embedded in historical battles which were sometimes bitter and marked by distrust. The failure to recognise the extent and nature of the problem, and therefore to appreciate the inadequacies of procedures and practices, prevented them from leaving behind their historical 'baggage', and from contemplating urgent and necessary changes. Defensive and often intransigent reactions to prevention proposals were therefore common. Having an outsider to chair these meetings would probably have been beneficial. But until the agencies had their 'own house' in better order, and had a positive commitment to reducing racial attacks and harassment, this type of joint agency work was more detrimental than beneficial.

Other ways of joint agency working were found to be more successful. The Safety Action Plans enabled the agencies to focus their energies on assisting a victim(s) who was present at the meeting. This seemed to reduce the counter-productive conflict. Those agencies who the victim(s) felt were unable to contribute to improving their safety were not invited, and this reduced the number of participating agencies to four or five, which also helped. In addition, where the victim poignantly described in detail the abuse and harassment they had suffered, it was more difficult for agencies to disregard the problem. The researchers and Bengali worker also arranged meetings between agencies to address very specific problems that were raised by the victims, for example, harassment while travelling to and from English Language classes. These were chaired by one of the researchers, and the outcomes of these types of meetings were more satisfactory for the victims, and more helpful to the Bengali worker.

In summary then, successful action against repeat racial attacks and harassment requires:

The police to:

☞ be proactive and prompt in response to all reports of racial incidents;

- ☞ respond to victims by actively listening to what they are saying, by asking if they have a history of victimisation, and knowing that the reporting is likely to be a 'cry for help', that the victim is likely to want the next incident stopped and that there is likely to be a history of racial abuse against the victim;
- ☞ record all racial incidents so that repeat victims can be immediately identified;
- ☞ record all racial incidents reported to them by all other groups and organisations;
- ☞ prioritise their detection/prevention work to respond to those most heavily victimised;
- ☞ set up a Racial Incidents Index so that officers responding to a racial incident know the history of victimisation at that address;
- ☞ have Racial Incidents Units to include detectives and crime prevention officers working in tandem, to improve responses to repeat racial victimisation, and to monitor the effectiveness of the Unit by the number of repeat calls to the Unit;
- ☞ refer victims to other agencies for emotional support and practical assistance;
- ☞ use, whenever necessary, a Language Line service;
- ☞ set up an ongoing training programme on responding to ethnic minority groups, to include training on the initial contact with the victim(s);
- ☞ have officers in post long enough to build up community contacts and maintain some continuity within the community to develop trust. This may require postings to last a minimum of three years.

The local authority to:

- ☞ respond to victims by actively listening to what they are saying, by asking if they have a history of victimisation, and knowing that the reporting is likely to be a 'cry for help', that the victim is likely to want the next incident stopped and that there is likely to be a history of racial abuse against the victim;
- ☞ record all racial incidents so that repeat victims and perpetrators can be immediately identified;
- ☞ record all racial incidents reported to them by all other groups and organisations;
- ☞ have procedures which include plans for action to protect victims, time limits within which specified action must be taken and clearly defined strategies for dealing with identified perpetrators;
- ☞ have an appeals procedure for victims to use if they are dissatisfied with the service they have received;

- ☞ monitor their effectiveness to stop racial harassment by the number of repeat calls;
- ☞ refer victims to other agencies for emotional support;
- ☞ use, whenever necessary, a Language Line service;
- ☞ train all staff to put these procedures into practice;
- ☞ liaise on a regular basis with other statutory agencies and with voluntary and community groups, sharing information between the agencies and planning joint action to stop racial attacks and harassment,

The victim to:

- ☞ keep a clear diary of all incidents with dates, times, nature of attack and description of perpetrator(s);
- ☞ promptly report all incidents to whoever they feel most comfortable with.

Other agencies/community groups to:

- ☞ have the same response as the statutory agencies, and in addition to
- ☞ obtain the permission of the victim to report all the incidents to the statutory agencies;
- ☞ ensure that where a victim reported to them, the victim is satisfied with the response they received.

By way of an end note, the numbers of racial attacks and harassment suffered by the Bengali and Somali tenants on the research estate cannot be dismissed as unusual. Unfortunately there is growing evidence from similar projects that the levels of repeat attacks against minority groups are high. In Lewisham fifteen households suffered 114 racial incidents in nine months (Backes, 1994). The important contribution that community groups can make in supporting victims and in assisting with the investigation of incidents should not be overlooked. It is interesting to note that positive proposals to continue work to prevent racial attacks and harassment have been made by the community groups working in the area where the project was located (CAPA *et al.*, 1994) and that the local authority has applied for funding for five posts which are similar to the revictimisation prevention post.

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Appendix A

Duties and responsibilities of the repeat victimisation prevention post

The worker will be supported by a management group consisting of a representative of the police service, local authority housing, Law Centre, Homeless Families Campaign, Tenants' and Residents' Associations, Bengali tenants, Racial Equality Unit, Manchester University research group, and Community Education.

The aim of the project is to prevent the further victimisation of those who have already been victims of crime or harassment (repeat victimisation). A worker will initially be responsible for assisting in the reduction of repeat victimisation on the *** estate and *** estate to:

1. Improve the protection of multi-victims.
2. Work with statutory and voluntary agencies to improve services to multi-victims.

Duties and responsibilities

1. To visit and assess the needs of multi-victims on the *** estate and *** estate who may be referred by the police, local authority housing, Homeless Families Campaign, Law Centre, Social Services, Health Visitors, by victims themselves (or any other voluntary or statutory agency).
2. To meet the needs of multi-victims and:
 - (i) where necessary to organise for improved physical security to their flats/houses,
 - (ii) to facilitate a coordinated delivery of services by statutory or voluntary agencies,
 - (iii) take any other appropriate action to increase their protection. This would include giving advice and assistance on pursuing cases through the criminal justice system, to inform victims of the range of advice agencies and local informal support networks.
3. To encourage multi-victims and any other residents to report criminal incidents to the police and to local authority housing and any other organisation where appropriate.
4. To work within the local authority equal opportunities policy, especially those concerned to promote anti-sexist and anti-racist attitudes.
5. To liaise with the local authority housing department and homeless persons unit about potential tenants on the estate, and advise them of the risks of repeat victimisation.

6. Where victims lack confidence in speaking English to inform them of local English Language classes on their estate.
7. With the management support group monitor the effectiveness of all statutory and voluntary agencies' procedures and policies in practice, and to discuss any shortcomings at management meetings in order to ensure a coordinated service to victims of crime and harassment.
8. To organise activities for those at risk of victimisation and to encourage their involvement in, or take-up of, local community activities and facilities where this would be felt to reduce the risk of further victimisation.
9. Keep records of all referrals and action taken to reduce multi-victimisation and to write occasional reports.
10. To identify any requirements for funds and to discuss these with the management support group at the earliest opportunity.
- 11 Report to regular meetings with the management support group, training programmes and other events and meetings as required.
12. To work closely with the Manchester researchers to monitor and evaluate the community crime reduction project.

Qualities/Experiences

This post will require.

- (i) ability to speak Sylheti is essential
- (ii) experience in working with Asian communities is essential
- (iii) experience of working with people from all sectors of the community (black people, women etc)
- (iv) an ability to initiate new projects
- (v) an ability to work on own initiative and to liaise/network with a wide range of agencies.

Appendix B

Duties and responsibilities of the detached youth worker post

The worker will be supported by a management group consisting of a representative of the police service, local authority housing, Law Centre, Homeless Families Campaign, Tenants' and Residents' Association, Bengali tenants, Racial Equality Unit, Manchester University research group and Community Education.

The post is part of a community crime reduction project to prevent further victimisation of those who have already been victims of crime and harassment (multi-victims). The worker will be expected to work closely with the Revictimisation Prevention Worker who will also be employed as part of the project — and work towards reducing crime and anti-social behaviour on the estate.

Duties and responsibilities

1. To manage and be responsible for the provision of an effective work programme with those involved in or like to be involved in criminal activities to reduce these activities.
2. To establish contact with any known perpetrator or person likely to be 'at risk' through detached work, home visiting, liaison with appropriate statutory and voluntary agencies (for example, probation service, social services) etc.
3. To liaise regularly, and where appropriate, work in conjunction with the revictimisation prevention worker.
4. To work within the *** equal opportunities policy, especially those concerned to promote anti-sexist anti anti-racist attitudes.
5. To keep records of all contacts made and action taken to reduce offending and to write occasional reports.
6. To identify any needs for funds and to discuss these with the management support group at the earliest opportunity.
7. Regularly attend meetings with the management support group and provide reports, statistics, and training programmes. Attend other events and meetings as required.
8. To work closely with the Manchester researchers to monitor and evaluate the community crime reduction project.

Qualities/Experiences

The post will require:

- (i) experience in detached/outreach work is essential
- (ii) experience in working with offenders and potential offenders preferable
- (iii) an ability to initiate new projects
- (iv) an ability to work on own initiative and to liaise/network with a wide range of agencies.

Appendix C

Poster in police stations advertising language line

LANGUAGE BARRIER??

METROPOLITAN POLICE
AND
LANGUAGE LINE

are working together to give you

IMMEDIATE INTERPRETATION
OVER THE TELEPHONE

CALL LANGUAGE LINE FROM MONDAY TO
FRIDAY BETWEEN 9:30 AM & 5:00 PM ON :

081 981 9911

FOR SERVICE ON WEEKDAYS FROM 5:00 PM TO 11:00 PM
AND ALL DAY SATURDAY & SUNDAY:

081 983 4403

WE INTERPRET IN OVER 140 DIFFERENT LANGUAGES

LANGUAGE LINE

THE VITAL LINK
BETWEEN YOU AND YOUR INFORMANT
OR VICTIM

Appendix D

Principles and Terms of Reference for the Prevention of Multiple Victimization Management Support Group⁴³

1. Principles

1.1 The people and agencies involved in the “Management Support Group” (hereinafter called “the Group”) are agreed that the principles underpinning their involvement are:

- (a) the repeated suffering of women, men and children from multiple victimisation of all types of crime and harassment - and in particular from racial attacks and harassment - is unacceptable within the Neighbourhood.
- (b) the services available to multiple victims should be offered in a non-judgemental way and should aim to maximise the choices to victims
- (c) mutual respect, trust, professionalism, and a desire for sensitive and appropriate service delivery are essential to our collaboration
- (d) respect for the accountability of each agency’s representative to their own management/group

2. Equal Opportunities

2.1 The Group, its work and services delivery, will ensure that equal opportunities are incorporated at all stages and will not discriminate on the basis of colour, race, gender, nationality, sexual preference, marital status, age, class, disability, religious or political beliefs.

3. Terms of Reference

3.1 Aims

To develop and implement a joint-agency strategy to prevent multiple victimisation which seeks to:

- (a) advise the two post-holders, the revictimisation prevention worker and the detached offender worker; on the protection, safety and support of multiple victims.
- (b) support the two above named post-holders in their task of preventing and reducing multiple victimisation, at management support meetings

43 Our thanks to Robyn Holder for her assistance and for generously allowing us to adapt the terms of reference of the Hammersmith and Fulham Domestic Violence Inter-Agency Group.

- (c) support the two above named post-holders by facilitating access to information and resources within their own agency/organisation
- (d) raise public and professional awareness of the initiative through publicity and statements endorsed by all the management group on the joint work being undertaken by themselves and the two post-holders
- (e) to take positive action against perpetrators

3.7 Objectives

In pursuit of these aims the agencies and people in the Group resolve to:

Policy

- (a) consider the development of joint policy between agencies
- (b) examine and make recommendations for agencies on service delivery and referral practice
- (c) identify and make recommendations on gaps in service delivery
- (d) identify and make recommendations on how the two post-holders can most effectively reduce multiple victimisation
- (e) examine resources available for multiple victimisation work and ways in which to increase these

Practice

- (f) ensure that the day-to-day management of the post-holders is in accordance with the principles and objectives of the group, as outlined above
- (g) ensure that the budget available to the management support group is used in ways that are most likely to effectively prevent and reduce multiple victimisation
- (h) encourage better practice from professional service providers
- (i) receive and discuss regular progress reports on agencies' service delivery
- (k) collate and disseminate to service providers accurate information on each agencies' policies, practices and contacts
- (k) assist with the ongoing research and monitoring of the project which is required to report to Tower Hamlets Safer Cities on a three monthly basis

(1) develop and implement a range of activities and support networks to offer maximum protection for multiple victims, especially those of racial attacks and harassment

(m) develop and implement a range of programmes which seek to deal with offenders

Training

(n) develop and implement joint-agency training for members of the Group and for their agencies/organisations

4. Method of working

4.1 The Group will meet initially monthly and not less than 9 times a year.

4.2 The chair of the group will be the head of the local authority housing. He/She will be nominated from the members, by the members and shall serve on a yearly basis. The vice chair will be nominated from the members, by the members and shall serve on a yearly basis.

4.3 Membership of the Group

Representative of:

Tenants' and Residents' Association

Bengali/Somali tenants representative

Law Centre

Homeless Families Campaign

Association for Racial Equality

Manchester University research project representative

Police

Local Authority Housing, a local estate officer representative and senior manager

Local Authority Community Education

4.4 Each representative will name another person in their own organisation to be their deputy.

4.5 Note-taking of meetings will be by rotation and sent to the secretary of the head of housing for distribution who will keep a complete set of the minutes.

4.6 The agenda will be agreed at the end of the previous meeting and any matters arising can be included by contacting the secretary of the head of housing five days before the meeting.

4.7 Every member of the Group has an equal right to place items on each meeting's agenda. Each item must be received by the secretary of head of housing, no later than one working week before the date of the next meeting.

4.8 A quorum will constitute five members of the support group or their deputies.

4.9 £200 can be spent by the workers, in consultation with their day-to-day managers, without the permission of the Group, between management support group meetings.

5. Advisors may be appointed to the Group with the consent of the majority of the group attending the meeting.

5.1 Sub-Groups may be set up to solve specific problems and to tackle certain issues with the consent of the majority of the groups attending the meeting.

5.2 The operation of the Terms of Reference and conduct of the Group shall be reviewed within six months of the date of the first acceptance and thereafter on a twelve monthly basis.

Appendix E

Safety Action Plan Panels⁴⁴

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of Safety Action Panels is to make decisions on individual cases of repeat victimisation in relation to:-

- (a) What support can be provided to the family or person to prevent incidents from happening again.
- (b) What action will be taken against any known or suspected perpetrators.

2. Membership

2.1 Members will include representatives from statutory and voluntary agencies considered necessary by the family or person whose case is being discussed and by the Revictimisation Prevention Worker in consultation with the family/person.

2.2 All Panel members will have equal status and their views be given equal weight, in recognition of the value of every member's role.

3. The rights of the family/person

3.1 The family/person concerned would have the following rights:

- (a) to be present throughout the discussion of their case
- (b) to present their own case
- (c) to have a right to reply to any Panel members' observations
- (d) to have a friend or advocate to present their case on their behalf
- (e) to have an interpreter at the meeting
- (f) to appeal against a decision of the Panel

Appeals can be considered on the following grounds:

- (h) the Panel has failed to give proper consideration to an important element of the situation
- (i) the Panel has acted unreasonably in any other way. The appellant will be required to clearly state what has been unreasonable.

Appeals will be heard by... (senior management as appropriate for particular area).

44 Our thanks to Maura Farrelly for her assistance. The Racial Harassment Panel for the Isle of Dogs, the London Borough of Tower Hamlets provided the inspiration for the Safety Action Plans procedure.

4. Method of working

- 4.1 The Panel shall meet regularly and be serviced by the Revictimisation Prevention Worker; this will include arranging meetings, circulating relevant papers, and ensuring agreed action has been taken within the time limits specified at the meeting
- 4.2 Families/persons can be referred to the Panel by any agency/organisation. All referrals should be made to the Revictimisation Prevention Worker
- 4.3 The family/person invited to the meeting will be given as much time as they wish to recall their history of victimisation, the effects of repeat victimisation on their lives and any other problems or difficulties they wish to raise
- 4.4 The Panel will specify who is responsible for taking action on the decision(s)
- 4.5 All members must treat any papers and information exchanged and/or discussed in the strictest confidence
- 4.6 Should any new information become available the case can be put forward before the Panel again
- 4.7 The Panel will review the safety action plan of the family/person three months after it has been put in place. This is to ensure the family/person is no longer repeatedly harassed and that they feel safer. If the situation has not improved a second Safety Action Plan Panel will be convened
- 4.8 For a Panel meeting to go ahead the family/person themselves must be present
- 4.9 The Chair of the Panel will be rotated every three months between members.
- 5.0 The operation of the Panel will be reviewed within three months of the date of the first meeting and thereafter twelve monthly.

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