

RACIAL HARASSMENT

7



Exeter City Council

HOUSING
Management

INTRODUCTION

This leaflet gives you some important information if you are suffering from racial harassment. It tells you what help and support is available to victims and what actions Exeter City Council can take against people who carry out racial harassment.

We define racial harassment as:

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

This was the definition used by the Macpherson Report following the Stephen Lawrence Enquiry.

The term ‘racist incident’ includes criminal and non-criminal activities and can refer to a wide range of behaviour. It includes:

- Graffiti
- Damage to property
- Dumping of offensive materials in or near the home
- Arson or attempted arson
- Personal abuse
- Written/verbal threats or insults
- Physical attacks

See also the Leaflets ***Anti-Social Behaviour*** and ***Harassment***

This leaflet was produced with Exeter City Council tenants

EXETER CITY COUNCIL POLICY

Exeter City Council does not tolerate racial harassment of any kind in any of our neighbourhoods and will act quickly to take whatever action is necessary to deal with anyone causing racial harassment and to support the victims.

We concentrate on dealing with racial harassment where a council tenant is involved, either suffering or causing the problem. For other people we will offer advice and will refer cases to the appropriate agency and work with them to sort out the problem.

We work closely with the police, Devon County Social Services and any other statutory and voluntary agency to prevent and to tackle racial harassment wherever it may occur. However, we will not involve any other organisation without the consent of the victim.

HOW WE DEAL WITH COMPLAINTS OF RACIAL HARASSMENT

We have a tenancy services team which, among other responsibilities, deals with cases of racial harassment. The team includes estate officers each of whom covers a geographical area and who will normally be your first point of contact should you be experiencing any problems.

Our Anti-Social Behaviour Case Manager works with the estate officers and will become involved with any racial harassment case.

You can report incidents of racial harassment to us by letter, telephone, email or in person. When you do, a member of staff will start to work on your case. This person will usually be your estate officer.

If you do not wish to speak to your estate officer please contact the Tenant Services Manager.

Please contact:

*Exeter City Council
Estate Management Team
Civic Centre
Paris Street
Exeter EX1 1RQ*

estate.management@exeter.gov.uk

Tel: 01392 265032

All reports are made in confidence. We will interview someone reporting racial harassment within **one working day** of the report being received.

During the first interview, at which any friend or advocate of the victim is welcome to attend, we will:

- Explain what the Council's policy is towards racial harassment
- Give positive and realistic advice on what can be achieved
- Discuss the range of options – including legal remedies - available
- Discuss and agree an action plan for the immediate future and agree timescales
- Advise on the importance of keeping us and the police informed of any further incidents
- Involve an interpreter if required

We will take a victim-centred approach to dealing with reports of racial harassment. This means we will only take action to resolve the problem with the victim's permission, particularly where any action would result in the identity of the victim being revealed.

We will give support and encouragement to the victim to inform the police.

There are things that we will do straight away. These include:

- Giving out an emergency contact number
- Photographing any evidence before removal or repair
- Organising removal of graffiti and rubbish

- Raising a priority repairs order if there is damage to property
- Setting up emergency security measures
- Discussing the situation with the Housing Advice Section of the Council if the victim is unable to return home

Where consent is given, the estate officer and the Anti-Social Case Manager will interview the alleged offender(s) in order to gather full information about the incident and, if necessary, warn these people of the consequences of their actions.

This interview will take place within **two working days** of the interview with the victim. In certain circumstances, a faster response will be made – for example where violence or threats of violence have been reported. In such cases immediate legal action may be sought before approaching the alleged offender.

Following these interviews the estate officer and Anti-Social Case Manager will decide, with the victim, the appropriate course of action. Any successful course of action for the future will almost certainly involve working closely with other agencies (such as the police, social services, environmental health and so on,) with whom we have excellent working relationships.

We will keep all parties informed of the progress of the agreed course of action. Each case will be monitored and reviewed regularly until a satisfactory outcome is achieved.

Incidents of racial harassment will be recorded and reported as such, so that the Council can monitor these cases, ensure adequate follow-up action, and effectively track these events.

REMEDIES FOR RACIAL HARASSMENT

Remedies for racial harassment are similar to those for any kind of anti-social behaviour (for further information see our **Anti-Social Behaviour leaflet** and our **Harassment leaflet**).

They include:

- Mediation
- Acceptable Behaviour Contracts
- Anti Social Behaviour Orders
- Injunctions
- Demoting a tenancy
- Notices of Seeking Possession
- Ending an Introductory Tenancy
- Security improvements

We offer as much support as we can to victims of racial harassment. Such support will include:

- Increased number of visits
- Surveillance
- Giving evidence in court
- Involving support agencies, such as Victim Support and the Devon Race Equality Council
- Using qualified interpreters
- Supporting the victim if they seek to take their own legal action against the offender

As a point of principle we would always wish to resolve racial harassment issues without moving the person who is suffering the racial harassment (if anyone is to be inconvenienced by having to move home as a result of racial harassment it ought to be the offender and not the victim).

However, in the most serious of cases, we will try to arrange a temporary move or a management transfer to any victim whose health and safety is at risk. This could either be within our own housing or to that of another social landlord.

YOUR OBLIGATIONS

Your obligations are explained in your tenancy agreement which is the legal contract between yourself and the Council. When you sign it, you commit yourself not to carry out any acts of harassment.

If you are a tenant, you are responsible for the behaviour of every person (including children) living in, or visiting, your home. You are responsible for their behaviour both inside your home and in the surrounding area.

VULNERABLE TENANTS

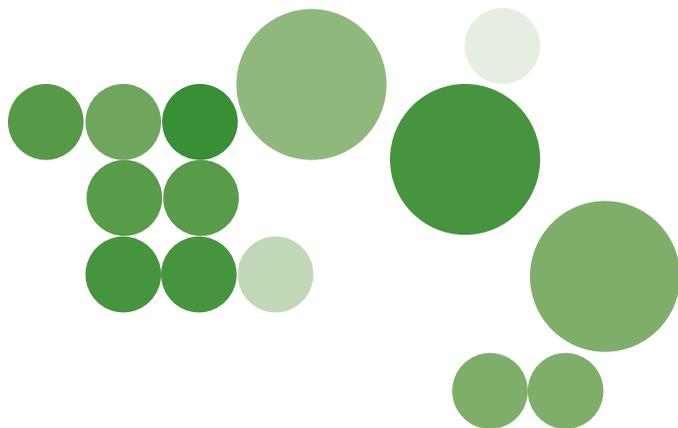
We will take all practical steps to safeguard and protect tenants who are vulnerable as a result of old age, physical or mental illness, learning disabilities or other special reasons, whether they are the victims or alleged perpetrators of harassment.

SUPPORT FOR WITNESSES

Support for witnesses includes an undertaking to keep in touch throughout the process; police liaison and help; extra security; temporary or permanent transfers and legal action as necessary. We may also use professional witnesses if residents believe they will be in danger if they give evidence against an alleged offender.

CLOSING CASES

A case will be closed when the matter is resolved or when we have explored all reasonable courses of action. A case may also be closed where there is insufficient evidence, or the complainants are unwilling to assist further. In these instances we will inform the person who complained and offer advice for the future should further incidents happen.



Community Patrol

0845 351 1060

www.exeter.gov.uk

Crimestoppers

0800 555 111

www.crimestoppers.co.uk

Devon Mediation Service

01363 777734

www.devon-mediation.org.uk

Exeter Citizens' Advice Bureau

0844 499 4101

www.exetercab.org.uk

Exeter City Council Environmental Health Team

01392 265528

environmental.health@exeter.gov.uk

Exeter City Council Estate Management Team

01392 265032

estate.management@exeter.gov.uk

Exeter Community Safety Partnership

01392 265330

www.exeter.gov.uk/commsaf

Exeter Women's Aid

01392 667144

www.exeterwomensaid.org.uk

Police

08452 777444

www.devon-cornwall.police.uk

Police Emergency

999

Police Diversity Support Officer

08452 777444

www.devon-cornwall.police.uk

Race Equality Council

01392 422566

www.devonrec.org.uk

Samaritans

08457 909090

www.samaritans.org.uk

Victim Support Devon

0845 676 1020

www.victimsupport.org

COMPLAINTS – If you have any complaints about the way your case has been handled please ask for a copy of our Complaints leaflet which will tell you what to do.



Exeter City Council

HOUSING
Management

Leaflets available in the Housing Management series are:

- 1 Pets
- 2 Noise
- 3 Anti-Social Behaviour
- 4 Vehicles
- 5 Domestic Violence
- 6 Harassment
- 7 Racial Harassment
- 8 Neighbourhood Management
- 9 Mutual Exchange
- 10 Paying Your Rent
- 11 Sheltered Housing Service
- 12 Under Occupation

AVAILABILITY IN DIFFERENT FORMATS

This leaflet is available in large print,
on tape and in other languages.

Please contact: *Estate Management*
on 01392 265032 or Fax 01392 265181

or write to:

Estate Management, Exeter City Council,
Civic Centre, Paris St, Exeter, EX1 1RQ.

www.exeter.gov.uk

this leaflet is printed on recycled paper



EXETER CITY COUNCIL