

Racial Harassment Support Pack

This pack has been produced by Neighbourhood and Housing Services to help people who are being racially harassed.

Racial harassment can take many forms; it may be verbal or physical. People are harassed because of their colour, race, ethnic origin or religion. Constant harassment can disrupt daily living and cause great distress to families.

The sooner racial harassment is reported, the quicker Neighbourhood and Housing Services can respond. We can also advise you about the services of other agencies such as S.A.R.I. (Support Against Racist Incidents) and the Police. This pack contains useful contact numbers for emergency repairs and for arranging for the removal of racist graffiti.

Neighbourhood and Housing Services is committed to dealing effectively with those responsible for racial harassment and supporting people who suffer as a result of harassment. Please remember that we need you to report racial harassment if we are to combat this form of racism.

This pack contains the following information:

1. A booklet called "Dealing with Racial Harassment – We'll tackle it together"
2. Information on:
 - Fact Sheet 1 – How to Report Racial Harassment
 - Fact Sheet 2 – Emergency Repairs
 - Fact Sheet 3 – What we can do against the people responsible for Racial Harassment
 - Fact Sheet 4 – What to do if you need Emergency Rehousing
 - Fact Sheet 5 – Emergency Transfers
3. Leaflets on:
 - S.A.R.I. (Support Against Racist incidents)
 - Malicious Calls (British Telecom)
 - What Can I Do If My Child Is Racially Harassed At School?
 - Fair Comment! (Guide to the council's complaints, comments and compliments system)
4. Diary sheet:
 - use this form to record details of incidents, for example date and time of incident, descriptions of those responsible, what they say or what happened, and details of any witnesses.

How to Report Racial Harassment

Contacting your local Area Housing Office

You can make an appointment to go to the office and tell a housing officer about the racial harassment, or if you prefer you can arrange an appointment at home or in another location. See the "Dealing with Racial Harassment" leaflet for telephone numbers of your local Area Housing Office.

If you would prefer to speak to a Black, Minority Ethnic or female member of staff, we can arrange this.

If you need an interpreter Neighbourhood & Housing Services can arrange this.

What happens during an interview?

1. A housing officer will ask you about the racial harassment and complete a form with the details of what has happened.
2. The housing officer will explain what action we can take and discuss with you how to deal with the racial harassment. We will not contact anyone, or take any other action, without your permission.
3. If you give permission, we will take action against those responsible for racial harassment or encourage the Police to prosecute them.
4. We will carry out necessary repairs to any damage caused by racist attack and provide security improvements, if you ask for them. These are free to council tenants (please see Factsheet 2 "Emergency Repairs").
5. If you need to move house because of racial harassment please read Factsheet 4 titled "What to do if you need Emergency Rehousing and Emergency Transfers".
6. You will be given a diary sheet to record any further incidents. Use this form to make a note of dates and times of incidents, descriptions and names of the people responsible for harassment (if you know them), names and addresses of any witnesses and a description of what happened. This information may provide vital evidence if legal action is taken against these people.
7. We can advise you about other agencies that you can contact for support and assistance.
8. At the end of your interview, your housing officer will agree how s/he will keep in contact with you. Please check with the officer if you are unsure about what will happen next.

Emergency Repairs

We will remove any racist graffiti on any property (whether owned by the Council, private resident or commercial business) as soon as possible and definitely within two working days. There is no charge for this service.

Security measures such as extra locks, safe letterboxes and alarms can be supplied

If you are a council tenant, the repair of any racially motivated damage (e.g. broken window) or the removal of any offensive substance will be carried out as a priority and will not cost you anything

If you require **extra security measures** and/or **emergency repairs**, contact Neighbourhood & Housing Services:

- Office hours – call your local area office (see leaflet entitled “Racial Harassment – We’ll Tackle It Together”, for telephone number).
- Out of office hours – telephone 0117 922 2050

If you have **racist graffiti** on your property or see it anywhere in the city, you can arrange for it to be removed by telephoning:

- Office hours – 0117 922 3838
- Out of office hours – 0117 922 2050

Complaints procedure

If you are unhappy with the response from Neighbourhood & Housing Services you can make a formal complaint. A leaflet is enclosed called “Fair Comment” which explains how to do this.

What we can do against the people responsible for Racial Harassment

Bristol City Council is determined to take action against the people who are harassing you.

Our aim is to stop the harassment so that you feel safe in your own home. We can take a range of actions against the perpetrators including:

- **Warning letters:** People who are harassing their neighbours will usually stop if they get a formal warning. However, some cases are so serious that we will take stronger action straight away.
- **Eviction:** Council and housing association tenants are not allowed to harass people in their local community and if they do, their landlords can ask permission from the courts to evict them.
- **Legal Action:** We can ask the courts to issue Injunctions or Anti Social Behaviour Orders against those harassing you. These are formal orders banning the people from acting in a certain way. If they continue to harass you they could be arrested and put in prison.
- **Police:** All types of harassment are crimes and we can work with the Police to stop it.

We will not do anything without your permission, including contacting the people who are harassing you. If you do give permission we can send out warning letters without mentioning your name. However, we cannot take any court action against people carrying out racial harassment unless we tell them who reported them.

We will support you all the way if you allow us to take action against those harassing you. We can put security measures in your house. We can also arrange for the courts to immediately order them not to threaten or harm you.

You may not want us to take any action until after you have moved to a new home. We will respect your views and will not do anything apart from arrange for you to give a formal written statement. We will then start formal action after you have settled into your new home.

What to do if you need Emergency Rehousing

Immediate emergency rehousing

You may feel unable to remain in your home due to:

- Fear for your safety, or
- Damage to your home as a result of harassment

In these cases you may take the following actions:

During office hours

- If you have children, contact your local area office (see leaflet entitled "Dealing with Racial Harassment – We'll Tackle It Together", for the telephone number). If you do not have dependants, then contact the Hub, telephone number 0117 914 1188.
- In this situation you will be offered emergency accommodation that is likely to be in a bed and breakfast hotel. You may have to spend some time in temporary accommodation before a permanent home can be found.

Out of office hours

- Contact the Police. They will get in touch with Social Services who will arrange bed and breakfast accommodation, as an emergency measure.
- To contact the Police, telephone 01275 818181 and ask to be put through to your local Police station or in an emergency dial 999.

Emergency Transfers

(This only applies to existing tenants of the city council)

If you feel that you are **not** at immediate risk due to racial harassment, but feel that the best way you can deal with the racial harassment is to transfer to another part of the city, contact your local area office. You can then make an appointment to see your housing officer to ask for an emergency transfer because of racial harassment.

A Brief Guide to the Emergency Transfer Procedure

1. The housing officer will complete an application form with you and explain how the procedure works.
2. When your application form is filled in you must tell us about any areas of the city which would be unacceptable for you to live in and say why this is the case. It would be reasonable to exclude areas for reasons such as strong social needs or justifiable fear of further racial harassment.

Please note that if the areas you indicate are too restricted it may not be possible for you to be rehoused as quickly as you would wish.

3. Once your application form is completed the Area Services Manager will consider your application. If the Area Services Manager agrees to your case receiving 'priority housing status' you will then be considered for an emergency transfer.
4. After priority status has been agreed, you will be considered for one offer of any suitable vacancy in either the localities you have requested or any other localities within the same division or divisions of the city (with right of appeal) as soon as possible. You will not be made an offer in an area that you have indicated is unacceptable and which the area office has accepted as being unreasonable.

Appeals

If you have refused an offer that is considered reasonable and your priority status is withdrawn, you may appeal against this decision. Your appeal will be considered by an Area Services Manager.

- If your appeal is denied, your priority status will not be reinstated.
- If your appeal is granted, your priority status will be reinstated and you will be considered for another offer of accommodation.