

Racial Harassment

This document is a summary of the Racial Harassment policy adopted by the Board of Amber Valley Housing Limited on 1 February 2007. The full policy is available on request.

Introduction

The way in which Amber Valley Housing, together with its partners, deals with racial harassment is based on the ethos in the Respect Agenda¹ and the promotion of a modern culture of respect. It also draws on the lessons from the Stephen Lawrence enquiry², seeking to change awareness and understanding of the nature and effects of racial harassment.

The Statutory Code of Practice on Racial Equality in Housing 2006 promotes racial equality in building sustainable communities. It recognises the changing nature of social housing including new transfer housing associations and the increase in migrants and refugees in England. It also reports that people from ethnic minorities are still more likely to live in inferior housing, to be dissatisfied with their accommodation and to be more anxious to move than other residents.

Amber Valley Housing recognises that racial harassment can significantly affect the quality of life of residents, and is of concern to a significant number of Amber Valley Housing tenants and to the wider neighbourhood. We are committed to take action and also to benchmarking and testing satisfaction with our services to ensure that they are effective.

There are a wide range of tools which are available to Registered Social Landlords (RSL's) which comprise both non-legal and legal remedies to deal with racial harassment. Amber Valley Housing will always try to resolve issues using non-legal methods where this is appropriate. However where the harassment is so severe or where non-legal remedies have failed, we will have no hesitation to use the legal remedies available.

Amber Valley Housing is committed to fully supporting the complainant and witnesses. Where it becomes apparent during investigations that the perpetrator also has support needs we will assist in engaging or signpost appropriate support. This need may be as a direct or indirect consequence of substance abuse, alcohol abuse, mental health or disability.

We publish service standards, and outcome targets, agreed with residents and other stakeholders that relate to this policy. These will be available on the website and in leaflet format.

Anti social behaviour will be dealt with under Amber Valley's appropriate Policy. Reports of domestic violence will be dealt with under the relevant and separate policy.

¹ Respect Standards for Housing Management, A Guide for Landlords, Department for Communities and Local Government, August 2006

² McPherson report

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Policy statement

The aim of the policy is to prevent racial harassment by working in neighbourhoods to promote good community relations and to implement preventative strategies. This will be achieved by working within the ethos of the Code of Practice for Racial Equality in Housing and the Respect Agenda.

The definition of a racist incident recommended by the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report is that '*A racist incident is any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person.*' This would include individuals or groups or their property attacked because of their race, culture, ethnic origin or relationship with a person of different ethnicity.

Racism is a cause of racial harassment. Racist incidents can include violence between ethnic minority groups but studies have estimated that 93% of racist attacks are committed by white perpetrators.

The impact of racial harassment is far reaching, and affects more than the individual. Racially motivated crime is often seen as an attack on the community as a whole, creating fear. The Home Office estimates that the number of incidents to be at least double the reported number, with many communities not reporting racial harassment to the police.

Incidents can range from verbal abuse to assault, and perpetrators can be adults or children.

The aims of the policy are to:

1. Achieve a "Positive Impact on Communities"³ by promoting positive relationships in neighbourhoods, achieving neighbourhood good neighbour agreements, and reducing racial harassment
2. Reducing racial harassment and the fear it can cause by proactively tackling reports, and to adopt a zero tolerance approach to abuse of tenants and staff alike
3. Use timely and effective methods in preventing and tackling racial harassment, taking legal action as a last resort, and to ensure that appropriate resources are available to deal with this issue to proactively, and with sensitivity, support witnesses in their own homes and to foster a culture where residents feel able to report racial harassment to Amber Valley Housing
4. To proactively work with ethnic minority residents and groups to provide appropriate support and to improve services provided
5. To monitor performance standards, providing appropriate training to staff to assist in dealing effectively with racial harassment, and to ensure that our approach provides value for money
6. To act fairly in matters relating to racial harassment, not treating anyone unfairly because of their race, colour, ethnic and national origin, nationality, gender, disability, religion, sexual orientation, marital status, HIV/Aids status, responsibility for dependants or age

³Amber Valley Housing Limited Corporate Aim