

Racist harassment support projects

Racist harassment support projects

Their role, impact and potential

Kusminder Chahal

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Contents

Acknowledgements	vii
Abbreviations used	viii
Executive summary	ix
1 Introduction	1
Background	1
Impact of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry	1
Development of Race Action Net	2
The current study	3
Structure of the report	3
2 Racist harassment support projects	4
Introduction	4
Racial Awareness (RA) Helpline, Victim Support Powys, Wales	4
INSAAF (Justice for Victims of Racist Harassment Project), Newcastle	5
Racial Harassment Support Group (West) (RHSGW), Newcastle	6
Leeds Racial Harassment Project (LRHP)	7
Birmingham Racial Attacks Monitoring Unit (BRAMU)	8
Birmingham Partnership against Racial Harassment (BPARH)	9
Support against Racist Incidents (SARI), Bristol	9
Newham Monitoring Project (NMP), London	10
Summary	11
3 Role of racist harassment support projects	12
Introduction	12
General	12
Assistance and support	14
Other activities	15
Summary	18
4 Responding to racist harassment through casework	19
Introduction	19
Casework in practice	19
Impact of casework	24
Summary	26
5 Impact of racist harassment support projects	27
Introduction	27
Finding the support project	27
Empowerment	28
Improving the service	32
Summary	34

6	Potential of racist harassment support projects	35
	Introduction	35
	Key features of support projects	35
	Strengthening the sector	36
	Building local coalitions of support	38
	References	40

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Abbreviations used

BNP	British National Party
BPARH	Birmingham Partnership against Racial Harassment
BRAMU	Birmingham Racial Attacks Monitoring Unit
DETR	Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions
INSAAF	Justice for Victims of Racial Harassment, Newcastle
JRF	Joseph Rowntree Foundation
LRHP	Leeds Racial Harassment Project
NASS	National Asylum Support Service
NLCP	National Lotteries Charities Board
NMP	Newham Monitoring Project, London
RA	Racial Awareness, Powys
RHSGW	Racial Harassment Support Group (West), Newcastle
SARI	Support against Racist Incidents, Bristol
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
SRB	Single Regeneration Budget

Executive summary

Background

The JRF (Joseph Rowntree Foundation) funded report *'We Can't all be White!': Racist Victimisation in the UK* (Chahal and Julienne, 1999) broke new ground in reflecting the experiences of victims and the wide-ranging consequences of racist campaigns aimed at ordinary families. In listening to the narratives of those who suffer racist victimisation, it was very clear that, by and large, people felt alone, vulnerable and cut off from familiar networks. People felt they had been given little or no practical or psychological support and so looked to their own resources to manage and respond to the racist victimisation they were experiencing.

The current research aimed to investigate the role, impact and potential of racist harassment support projects. It sought to identify how effective localised racist harassment support initiatives are in providing a support mechanism for victims of racist harassment and to highlight the potential for the development of such organisations.

The research process

Eight case study sites emerged through the period of the research. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with personnel from each case study site and at every level of the organisation, and in-depth interviews with 29 clients and ex-clients of the service. Most case study sites also agreed for the researcher to have access to case files and other documentation relevant to the research. A one-day workshop was held with most caseworkers involved in the research to discuss the effectiveness of racist harassment casework and possible ways forward. The findings from this workshop are incorporated in the main report.

The role of support projects

The role of all the projects is to provide assistance and support to victims of racist harassment.

Support against Racist Incidents (SARI) states very clearly that it aims to 'empower' victims of racist harassment and attacks to 'survive the emotional, mental and physical trauma they experience' (SARI, 1996). Although not all the projects are so explicit about 'empowerment', their goal through casework is to ensure clients have full knowledge of their rights and how they can progress a complaint against an alleged perpetrator(s).

Most of the projects challenge racist harassment through undertaking casework and representing clients, multi-agency liaison and preventative work through schools. Some projects concentrate more of their resources on casework while others concentrate on prevention and monitoring; others offer training to local agencies and develop resources to be used by young people to raise awareness on racism. The projects vary in the type and range of work they get involved in. Birmingham Racial Attacks Monitoring Unit (BRAMU) and Newham Monitoring Project (NMP) would clearly identify themselves as political agencies because of their historical development and campaigning against injustice and, for example, deaths in custody. Single-officer projects combine undertaking casework with a variety of other roles.

Racist harassment casework

Racist harassment caseworkers viewed the primary function of casework as 'to deliver an agreed action plan with the client(s)'. This involved 'alleviating the distress and despair' that clients felt through developing an advocacy-type relationship.

Casework was viewed as a multi-tasked and multi-skilled intervention involving working with and supporting victims, undertaking administrative duties in connection with processing a case and actively engaging with relevant agencies to achieve a successful resolution of the reported problem. Four key tasks were identified as crucial to effective casework: offering help, creating an

intervention, reducing the immediate impact of the harassment and aiming to resolve the complaint.

Casework presented a number of demands for the workers. First, all caseworkers were working to full capacity, with cases sometimes coming from beyond their geographical remit; they were working on short-term contracts with regular funding crises, often with very little or no support, usually in unsuitable offices, with a variety of clients who presented a range of complaints. A by-product of successful casework was the recognition that an increase in caseloads had direct implications on funding and staffing.

Casework undertaken by an independent support group was seen as having the impact of 'adding more weight to a complaint from a victim' and this had resulted in 'other organisations responding to our service user needs more effectively.'

Impact of the project on victims

Clients and ex-clients expressed a number of ways that a casework intervention impacted on them. The projects offered a non-judgemental approach to the client that enabled them to tell their story and decide on what they wanted to do with their complaint. The project provided a dedicated service and continuity of support to clients that was lacking from agencies. Agencies, by virtue of their position, often responded in a fragmented way to the needs of victims. Support projects, however, have caseworkers whose primary role is to work with victims of racist harassment – they represent exclusively the client.

Support projects have learnt that they cannot always solve the problem that clients may be experiencing. But they can make their clients better aware of their rights. Caseworkers help rebuild confidence often shattered by the experience of racist harassment and poor understanding by agencies about the impact of such negative experiences through offering emotional support,

listening and validating the client's experience and after-care.

Impact of the project in communities

Support projects through casework, school-based activities, local policy formation or providing training to agencies have had an impact in local communities beyond working with clients. However, they also recognised their role was to help facilitate local people and their clients to vent anger about racist harassment, and work with local communities to diffuse tensions and prevent an escalation of violence.

Some projects have seen more positive engagement from the minority ethnic community as a result of the work that both the projects and caseworkers undertake. BRAMU, for example, mentioned that local people are more likely to refer clients and participate in public meetings that result in a genuine partnership between the community and the project as a result of casework.

Potential of the projects

Clients and ex-clients felt that limited funding and not enough caseworkers hampered the potential of projects to do more work. Caseworkers, project leaders and management committee members agreed that funding was the most important concern and influenced how they worked and developed their service. But they recognised other potential areas of improvement.

Racist harassment cases often come from outside of their geographical remit and this area of work could be expanded. However, there was an awareness of having to limit how far projects could stretch casework to be able to manage the cases they were receiving within existing resources. Projects felt that day-to-day working could be substantially improved if partner agencies fully recognised the existence and impact of racist harassment on the lives of victims. Sharing of good

practice and better co-ordination of cases through multi-agency working were also viewed as key factors in improving casework and offering a better service to people experiencing racist harassment.

Caseworkers want an accredited qualification that would acknowledge the skills inherent to their work and offer recognition within the social care field. They also felt that more structured support for them was vital, both within a project and external to it, through accessing counselling or networking with other caseworkers. The emotional impact on caseworkers involved in undertaking casework was often not recognised by managers and other colleagues within the project. Further, caseworkers wanted more opportunity to network with other caseworkers to be able to share and develop skills within the sector.

The projects are well positioned in their localities to expand their work, for example, into conflict resolution. Given that most racist harassment occurs in and around the home and is largely perpetrated by young people, there is a need to undertake sustained work with local people to reduce prejudice and develop methods of conflict resolution and familiar coalitions of support for the clients of projects. Support projects are well positioned to be involved and develop these functions in partnership with other agencies, local communities and their clients.

Conclusion

Racist harassment support projects provide a range of services to agencies, communities and victims of racist harassment. Growth within their localities and their multi-tasked role has enabled projects to become indispensable in challenging racist oppression. The commitment of staff, volunteers and management committees to effect change

within their local area has to be set against regular funding crises, particularly in funding caseworkers, poor office accommodation, minimum administrative support, agency inertia and casework overload.

The projects have grown out of a gap in both service provision for victims of racist harassment and challenging the response and practice of agencies. They have made a positive difference to the quality of life of their clients, often being the only agency that will listen to, respond to the needs of, and represent the client in processing a complaint.

Given the importance and relevance of support projects to local community safety issues and community cohesion, the provision of support to the victims of racist harassment and the multi-agency work, it is vital to ensure adequate funding for the projects. This is particularly crucial to enable them to maintain a core staff that are able to undertake casework. Often, it is the casework element that is lost when funding is reduced or cut completely.

The caseworkers in the research said they would benefit from a national network of caseworkers. The network would, for example, act as a co-ordinating body that responded to the effective development and setting of national standards of casework, act as a peer support for caseworkers, develop and offer new methods of working, disseminate national information on victims' rights, develop accredited training and courses for caseworkers, and lobby for better funding.

Effective local partnerships, long-term funding, the recognition of the needs of caseworkers and the potential to develop community-based approaches to conflict resolution and victim support are key areas of lobbying and development for racist harassment support projects.

1 Introduction

Background

Racist victimisation is well documented in terms of its history (e.g. Fryer, 1984), its incidence and prevalence (Virdee, 1995), and the policy and practice response across a variety of agencies (Home Office, 1989; Lemos, 2000). However, until recently, the level of knowledge about the impact and consequences of racist victimisation was at best poorly documented and at worst ignored.

Although references were made to the consequence of racist harassment on victims' decision making in a variety of localised studies (Community Consultants, 1987; Chahal, 1992), there had been no extensive qualitative research undertaken to establish the impact on people's lives beyond the actual incident. The JRF funded report '*We Can't all be White!*': Racist Victimisation in the UK (Chahal and Julienne, 1999) broke new ground in reflecting the experiences of victims and the wide-ranging consequences of racist campaigns aimed at ordinary families across the country.

In listening to the narratives of those who suffer racist victimisation, it was very clear that, by and large, people felt alone, vulnerable and cut off from familiar networks. They felt they had been given little or no practical or psychological support. Against this backdrop, people looked to their own resources to manage and respond to the racist victimisation they were experiencing. The research further noted that reporting an incident or series of incidents resulted in victims being neither supplied with relevant information about what they could do nor signposted to relevant organisations. It seemed that they were left alone to develop their own routes to help and assistance.

Impact of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry

'*We Can't all be White!*' (Chahal and Julienne, 1999) was published four months after the Macpherson Inquiry into the murder of Stephen Lawrence (Macpherson, 1999). The Inquiry was an important

document with key recommendations for public agencies to adopt. It found, among other things, that, while there were some examples of developing good practice, housing departments were too often seen to be slow and bureaucratic in their response to racist behaviour (Macpherson, 1999). In a policy response paper aimed at registered social landlords, Williams (1999) asked whether housing organisations' (and indeed other relevant agencies') performance within the services they provided could be improved to ensure that they were more sensitive to the needs of victims and their families. Williams further argued that the Lawrence Inquiry showed that the response of staff to, and their understanding of, the impact of racism was crucial to the type of service offered.

Response from the Home Office

As a direct consequence of recommendation 15 of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry, the Home Office issued a *Code of Practice on Reporting and Recording Racist Incidents* (Home Office, 2000). The Code aimed to provide guidelines for local agencies to establish effective procedures for the reporting and recording of racist incidents (Home Office, 2000, p. 3).

The Code highlighted that victims of racist attacks should be treated in a sensitive and understanding manner. Among the good-practice guidelines given for dealing with victims were the following:

- The agency that has the first contact with the victim or witness reporting a racist incident should respond in a sensitive way that shows an understanding of how victims of racist crime may feel. Training should be provided for those people who will make that first contact with victims.
- If the victim wants the case to be referred to the police or another agency, this must be done as soon as practical.

- A locally agreed protocol should ensure that someone is responsible for keeping the victim informed of progress, whether that is the police, the agency that took the initial report or another agency (Home Office, 2000, pp. 10–11).

Response from Victim Support

In its immediate response to the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry, Victim Support established a Working Party to examine how, as an established service provider, its service delivery could be made more effective. The review identified the following initiatives:

- develop a specialist service model for victims of racist crimes
- an extension of the training programme to volunteers to include diversity issues, recognising and providing a first response to racist crime
- a national recruitment campaign aimed at attracting volunteers from minority ethnic backgrounds
- production of a new leaflet *Supporting Victims of Racist Crimes: Good Practice* (Victim Support, 2001), which has been translated into the most used minority languages.

However, both the Home Office and Victim Support responses to racist crimes/victimisation fail to mention the role played by, and the partnerships that could be formed with, community-based racist harassment support projects. This is despite the content of recommendation 30 of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry which says:

That police services and Victim Support services should ensure that their systems provide for the proactive use of local contacts within minority ethnic communities to assist with victim-support and with the handling and interviewing of sensitive witnesses. (Macpherson, 1999, p. 330)

Development of Race Action Net

Racial Harassment: Action on the Ground (Lemos, 2000) highlighted that support for victims is more likely to be available in areas where there is a specialist agency working on racist harassment. Support included the provision of advice, counselling, personal alarms and mobile telephones, and home security improvements for social housing tenants.

Based on interviews with 250 agencies tackling racial harassment in the 67 local authority areas where the majority of the UK's minority ethnic people live, the study found that less than one-third of areas had a 24-hour helpline that could give advice to victims of racial harassment. In many other districts, the reporting lines were answered only during office hours, with an answerphone taking messages at other times. Respondents stated that counselling was available in a third of the areas. But few areas offered in-depth counselling by trained staff familiar with racial harassment. In most other areas, agencies were 'providing advice' rather than offering 'counselling'.

The survey undertaken by Lemos & Crane (Lemos, 2000) highlighted innovative practice and did describe the work of some independent, community-based racist harassment support projects. A website (www.raceactionnet.co.uk) was created as a means for sharing good practice in challenging racist harassment.

Also, as a direct response to this work, DETR (now ODPM) produced a Code of Practice that set out action that all social landlords should take to prevent racial harassment (DETR, 2001) under the following headings: working with other agencies; prevention and publicity; encouraging reporting; supporting victims and witnesses; and action against perpetrators.

However, the Code failed to mention the potential of working with independent racist harassment support groups where they existed.

The current study

This study attempts to build on what has been learned from previous research about the impact, consequences and management of racist experiences by victims. 'We Can't all be White!' (Chahal and Julienne, 1999) clearly showed that support from a variety of statutory and voluntary agencies was at best ad hoc and unstructured, and at worst non-existent.

A study in Scotland (Clarke and Moody, 2002, p. 59) confirms the broad findings from Chahal and Julienne (1999) about lack of support for victims. It comments that minority ethnic organisations were concerned about gaps in support services for victims of racist crime, such as a lack of feedback and support from statutory agencies, and barriers to accessing support services. A London-wide report on responses to racist harassment by the City's boroughs recognised that independent community organisations have an important and legitimate role to act as advocates for victims and to campaign for local service improvements (Argent *et al.*, 2000, p. 60).

It is evident from the information that exists on racist victimisation that there is a lack of knowledge about independent, community-based organisations and their work with victims and wider agencies. The current research aimed to investigate the role, impact and potential of racist harassment support projects. It sought to identify how effective localised racist harassment support initiatives are in providing a support mechanism for victims of racist harassment and to highlight the potential development of such organisations.

Eight case study sites emerged (Chapter 2) through the period of the research. The projects accessed reflected a mix of community and local authority-based initiatives, and were chosen on the basis of geographical spread, their own willingness to participate and the following definitions:

- *community-based project*: project that has been developed within a geographical community or community of interest and involves local people (including clients and ex-clients of the service) in the running and management of the service
- *local authority project*: a project that has been established by a local authority and is accountable to the structures of that authority.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with personnel from each case study site and at every level of the organisation. This included all staff, volunteers (where appropriate), management committee members and in-depth interviews with 29 clients and ex-clients of the service. In most cases, the researcher was able to shadow caseworkers and observe direct interventions with clients. Most case study sites also agreed for the researcher to have access to case files and other documentation relevant to the research.

A one-day workshop with most caseworkers involved in the research was held to discuss the effectiveness of racist harassment casework and possible ways forward. The findings from this workshop are incorporated in the main report.

Structure of the report

Chapter 2 provides detailed information about each of the eight projects covered in the research. This information is gathered from various documents and interviews held with project managers, caseworkers and observations. Chapter 3 offers an insight into the work of the projects and Chapter 4 concentrates specifically on the role of 'casework' within them. Chapter 5 considers the impact of the support projects' work. Finally, Chapter 6 reflects on the potential of the projects and offers a series of policy and practice implications and insight into possible new directions for the projects themselves.

2 Racist harassment support projects

Introduction

Racist harassment support projects have emerged over the previous 25 years across the country. The earlier projects were born out of a community-based struggle against police harassment and intimidation but also against attacks from certain sections of the white community against minority ethnic communities. Racist murders in both Southall and Newham prompted the development of youth organisations and defence committees.

After the racist murder of Akhtar Ali Baig, who was stabbed to death in broad daylight in Newham in 1980, many local people demonstrated against racist attacks and, from these protests, NMP was formed (Newham Monitoring Project, 1991). NMP was the first monitoring group of its kind to be set up. Others followed in London, notably Southall and later outside of the capital.

The Southall Monitoring Group's history dates back to April 1979, when a protest by the local community against the National Front led to over 700 arrests, hundreds of injuries and the murder of Blair Peach. The murder and the campaign that followed led local people to examine racial attacks on local estates, for example the Golf Links Estate in the London Borough of Ealing. This led to the formation of the Golf Links Racial Attacks Group and later the Southall Monitoring Group, which became the leading agency in the West London area providing a range of services to victims of racial harassment and domestic violence. In 1996, the management committee decided to change the name of the group to the Monitoring Group to reflect the changing nature of the work (www.monitoring-group.co.uk).

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, anti-racist harassment projects were set up in various areas across the country. Many have developed since 1989 at a time when the government began to advocate a multi-agency approach to tackling racist harassment. However, the development of such projects has not been without problems. A study by

Argent *et al.* (2000) found that five of the 15 London boroughs mentioned 'historic' and 'existing' tensions between the council and proactive local community organisations. These tensions arose partly as a result of what was expected of council services and the criticism that flowed from community organisations when these were not met.

The current research reflects on the work of eight organisations challenging racist harassment, and this chapter outlines the broad features of how each developed and operates.

Racial Awareness (RA) Helpline, Victim Support Powys, Wales

This project was selected as a case study because it aimed to challenge racism in a rural area and was being developed within an existing voluntary organisation.

Background

Powys is a large rural area in Wales. Its population is spread across the county and primarily located in small towns and villages. There are five Victim Support offices across Powys of which Ystradgynlais Victim Support is one.

The Ystradgynlais Victim Support co-ordinator questioned why they were not getting any minority ethnic clients referred to them. The local police commented that there had been no racist incidents reported for six years. The general view from agencies was that there was no problem and there were no minority ethnic people in the area. In 1999, as a direct result of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry, Ystradgynlais Victim Support established the Racial Awareness Project (RA).

Aims of the project

The project aimed to establish a countywide telephone helpline for those suffering racism and to formulate a long-term research strategy to collect more accurate information on the lived experiences of minority ethnic communities in Powys.

The development of the project was often hampered by agencies not recognising the need for such an initiative and being accused of 'creating problems that do not exist'.

However, many groups and organisations were very supportive and funding was received initially from two local sources. Once this seed-corn funding had been put in place, the Home Office provided a grant to contribute to the development of the project.

The work of the project

The project itself had funding to run for six months. The funding enabled a project worker and administrator to be employed for eight hours each per week. A telephone helpline was established for one afternoon per week (four hours). The remaining four hours of the project worker's time were taken up with undertaking case visits and working with other agencies.

Over a period of six months, the helpline received calls from over 100 people. The project was able to provide direct help to 65 people. It was anticipated that the Racial Awareness Helpline would deal with issues primarily relating to criminal justice cases involving racism. However, the calls that were received by the project were not all to do with addressing issues of racist harassment and discrimination. The helpline found that the callers were asking for help and assistance with a variety of issues.

Advertising and referrals

Victim Support schemes across Powys referred cases to the Racial Awareness Project. There were very few referrals from the police because a lot of incidents of harassment were occurring in schools. Posters and leaflets were designed and distributed to a range of statutory and voluntary agencies across Powys.

Benefits of the helpline

Although funding for the Racial Awareness Project ceased after six months, calls continued to be made to the project. Among the benefits and outcomes of the project were: being able to identify and respond to the needs of callers, establishing better working methods with statutory agencies, offering training on racism to staff from Victim Support, offering a support network to minority ethnic people and organising an annual conference on diversity, which brings together agencies and local people.

INSAAF (Justice for Victims of Racial Harassment Project), Newcastle

This project was selected because it was a community-based initiative working alongside an already established racist harassment support project (see following case study). The project was funded through an SRB programme in one specific area of Newcastle.

Background

INSAAF was established in October 1997 through an SRB initiative called 'Reviving the Heart of the West End' based in the North Benwell area, which has a significant minority ethnic population. The project was initially funded for two years and, thereafter, its funding was reduced to 50 per cent from the SRB initiative, with Newcastle City Council contributing the shortfall. The project employed a full-time worker and a part-time administrative assistant. Funding was withdrawn in March 2001, after which the project closed.

Aims of the project

The project aims were: to provide intensive one-to-one support for victims of racial harassment living within the SRB target area; to raise awareness of racial harassment issues through training based on casework; and to develop a multi-agency approach to tackling incidents.

Support for victims

The project offered one-to-one support for victims of racist harassment. The support covered the following activities: listening, creating reports, contacting organisations and visiting homes. Between March and September 2000, the project dealt with 25 cases of racist harassment. It offered surveillance equipment to clients. This depended on the severity of the case and was offered for a period of three months at a time.

Other work

INSAAF offered training to other organisations and local residents. It dealt not only with cases of racist harassment but also wider client needs such as immigration issues, official paperwork for applications for passports and general complaints. The co-ordinator felt that this additional work had to be undertaken because the project was community based and that, therefore, its credibility depended on how well it was able to respond to need.

Advertising and referrals

The project had produced a range of leaflets in a variety of local languages as well as developing a 'Rights card' (again, in different languages), which was widely distributed in the local area. As a consequence, it was estimated that about 70 per cent of all contacts made with the project were self-referrals.

Racial Harassment Support Group (West) (RHSGW), Newcastle

This project was chosen because it was a single-officer project based within a local authority and had grown out of a community-based initiative.

Background

The Racial Harassment Support Group West (RHSGW) developed from the Elswick Support Group which was set up in response to an increase

in incidents of harassment, especially racist harassment, in the west of the City of Newcastle. Several council departments seconded staff for a temporary period to assist in addressing the issues arising and in monitoring the level of harassment in the area. However, it became clear that full-time staffing was required and four posts (two community case workers and two part-time administrative assistants) were established for an initial period of two years. At the end of the two years, funding was continued through the Inner City Partnership and the City Council.

In 1994, after a review of community services, the project was also split to serve the east and west ends of the city and the staff were divided between the two sites. The relocation of the project recognised the growing concern about racist incidents in both parts of the city.

Aims of the project

The aims of the project are: to provide advice and support to people experiencing racial harassment; to identify and address issues of common concern arising from the casework; and to advise and assist relevant agencies to improve their service provision in relation to racial harassment. The main objective of RHSGW is to co-ordinate strategic responses to both the immediate and longer-term needs of those experiencing racist victimisation.

RHSGW workload

The RHSGW provides a casework service to clients living in the six inner west wards of Newcastle, although cases do come from other areas of Newcastle. The average monthly caseload is about 12 referrals, most of which are reported after prolonged harassment. Between 1 January and 31 December 2001, RHSGW independently recorded 300 racist incidents, one-third of which became ongoing cases. Many of these cases involved asylum seekers or international students. The project has estimated that, on average, it takes six incidents to precipitate a referral to the project.

Policy development

A significant aspect of RHSGW's work is policy development. The caseworker sits on a variety of strategic and working groups. Since the publication of the Lawrence Inquiry, the project has received a large increase in requests from local, regional and national organisations for the project to provide training, for information about racial harassment and for opportunities to engage with minority ethnic communities.

Service development

RHSGW has been instrumental in developing new services that respond to the needs of victims of racist harassment. In July 1999, the Black Mental Health User Group was established to enable minority ethnic people to seek peer support in relation to their experiences of racist harassment.

In 2000, the Shena Project was established, as a sports development scheme involving the Iranian community. By promoting access to leisure facilities, Shena offers the opportunity to address social exclusion by providing a safe, supportive environment for families to interact and establish a socially supportive infrastructure.

The Racial Harassment Strategy Group arose from the need to enhance strategic responses to counter racist harassment in the inner west wards. Established under the umbrella of RHSGW, the group aims to design and deliver a race equality training programme based on local need and national standards, establish an anti-racist network in the west of the city and develop community-based reporting centres as recommended by the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry.

Need for RHSGW

A City Council review (Newcastle City Council, 2000) stated that often the racial harassment support groups were the only organisations that the victims felt able to approach in order to receive a sympathetic response. In many instances, the service was the victim's only lifeline. The review

said that such expectations from victims placed pressure on caseworkers. This pressure was compounded by the fact that caseworkers often had to negotiate with unsympathetic and sometimes hostile officers or agencies.

Leeds Racial Harassment Project (LRHP)

This project was selected because it was a local authority initiative that became an independent company limited by guarantee.

Background

In 1994, Leeds Racial Equality Council and the Equal Opportunities Unit at Leeds City Council applied to Leeds Safer Cities for a grant to purchase cameras and recording equipment for installation at the homes of people experiencing racist harassment. The project would be city-wide but the concentration of minority ethnic residents in certain wards meant that these would be a particular focus of attention. The project aimed to provide surveillance cover for 25 buildings (15 homes and ten community buildings) per year. Funding was applied for and granted to purchase two sets of cameras and recorders, and to produce 15,000 leaflets in five languages.

The Leeds Racial Harassment Project (LRHP) was established in April 1995 for a period of two years through a joint initiative of the Equal Opportunities Unit of Leeds City Council and the Leeds Multi-agency Racial Harassment Forum on the basis of an identified need for an agency to specifically offer advice and support to the victims of racial harassment. The project was described as focusing on the immediate information and support needs of victims of racial harassment within the community, and working in conjunction with various agencies to ensure that racial harassment victims were provided with an effective and efficient service, and were encouraged to report.

Locating the work of the project

The project initially identified the Beeston area of the city as a particular target for attention. The City Council's Community Needs Analysis of the area, undertaken in 1994, had found that one-third of minority ethnic residents in the area had experienced racial harassment during the time they had been living there.

A second application to Leeds Safer Cities in 1995 enabled the LRHP to purchase a further two sets of cameras and recording equipment to provide surveillance cover in 12 homes during the year. A second target area – Burley – was identified for the project to undertake work in. However, requests for surveillance equipment came from all parts of Leeds and not just the two areas identified.

Increase in caseload

The numbers of cases dealt with by the project have increased significantly since 1995. In 1995, the number of cases dealt with was 44. Four years later, this figure had increased to 136 cases.

Resource development

The LRHP has also developed a range of video and CD-ROM resources to challenge racist harassment and to be used as training aids in schools.

Birmingham Racial Attacks Monitoring Unit (BRAMU)

This project was selected as a case study because it was established within a community and described itself as an independent support group.

Background

BRAMU was formed in 1987 and became fully operational in December 1989. At that time, it was the only organisation in Birmingham working as an independent support group. BRAMU's often critical stance of Birmingham City Council's response to racist harassment and racial injustice

led to the withdrawal of funding from the local authority in 1992. This nearly resulted in the closure of the unit but, through voluntary work and some funding, it survived. BRAMU received local authority funding again in 1994 to employ a monitoring officer. It was not until 1998 that it had a full complement of staff, including a caseworker.

Aims of the project

BRAMU aims to bring the issue of racial harassment to the attention of policy makers and the public at large through supporting victims of racial attacks via casework and campaign work; the publication of reports, posters and leaflets; and the promotion, development and implementation of anti-racist strategy through work in schools and estates.

Caseload

In 1989, BRAMU dealt with 62 cases of racist harassment. By 1994, this had increased to between 70 and 80 cases per year. Between 1998 and 1999, the total number of new cases was 87.

Wider campaigns

BRAMU actively involves itself in a range of local and national campaigns against injustice. Its 1998–99 Annual Report was dedicated to Alton Manning, a young man who died in police custody. The Alton Manning Campaign has been widely publicised by BRAMU and, in 1998, the project handed a 5,000-signature petition to the Home Office. In 1998, as a result of its work on this campaign, BRAMU was nominated for the Human Rights Award.

Working at grassroots

BRAMU vociferously defends its claim that 'it is the only independent community based organisation to be participating actively at grassroots level in Birmingham' (BRAMU, 1999). In 1994, a report about multi-agency working commented that:

The Unit [BRAMU] is highly successful in providing a service for the City; this service has received the acclaim and support of the community at large ... and has dealt with a large number of cases ... Knowledge of Birmingham's resources and skilful handling of individual situations have formed the basis of a highly successful strategy. Evidence of this is provided in the number of local community groups that have lent their support to BRAMU and in the number of victims that feel sufficient confidence in the Unit to come forward. (Back and Bains, 1994)

The defence of its grassroots status is in direct challenge to the establishment of Birmingham Partnership against Racial Harassment (see following case study), which BRAMU sees as an agency set up by the local authority to undermine the work of an 'independent' community-based support project.

Birmingham Partnership against Racial Harassment (BPARH)

This project was chosen as a case study because it was a local authority initiative that was in the process of becoming a limited company.

Background

BPARH was launched on 22 April 1996 as a multi-agency network for monitoring, responding to and highlighting the issue of racist harassment in Birmingham. It was established in response to concerns about the growing incidence of racist harassment within the city and the negative impact it was having on the cultural, business, community safety and educational experiences of the minority ethnic communities within Birmingham.

Aims of the project

The aim of BPARH is to combat racial harassment and to provide support to victims. Such support may involve enabling black, Asian and minority ethnic citizens to access community support in

tackling racial harassment or to benefit from educational provision in a harassment-free environment. BPARH also states that it aims to help promote business development and improve the quality of life of black, Asian and minority ethnic citizens across the city.

Funding

BPARH was originally funded from a variety of sources that included three directorates of Birmingham City Council, West Midlands Police and SRB, as well as a secondment from the housing department. All of these agencies offered funding over a period of three years.

The work of BPARH

BPARH has a wide remit. It not only collects and analyses reported incidents across Birmingham but also involves itself in victim support and community and school-based training, as well as co-ordinating reporting centres and local casework forums.

Resource development

To aid some of its training work, BPARH has developed a video resource pack for schools called *In the Mix*, which is used in the training days.

Support against Racist Incidents (SARI), Bristol

This case study was selected because it is an independent, community-based support group and covers both urban and rural areas.

Background

Victims of racist harassment who realised that others facing such problems had nowhere to turn for help or support founded SARI in 1988. It was not until 1991 that SARI became fully operational and, since that time, the project has dealt with over 1,700 cases. Most staff and management committee

members of SARI have direct experience of racist attacks and many of the ex-clients continue to stay involved in the project.

Aims of the project

SARI describes its mission as to contribute towards the growth of multi-cultural attitudes in the West of England, so that anyone – regardless of race, religion or ethnic background – can live in, work in or visit the area without fear of racial harassment.

Among its aims are: supporting and empowering victims of racial harassment and assisting in taking action against perpetrators; ensuring that racial attacks receive a co-ordinated response from statutory and voluntary bodies; and raising awareness of issues around racial harassment through education and training.

Geographical expansion

From the original geographical remit of Bristol, SARI's area of operation has widened. The casework and multi-agency work has expanded to cover Bath, north-east Somerset, north Somerset and south Gloucestershire. Many of these are rural areas where there are small and dispersed minority ethnic populations.

Casework

Undertaking client-based casework is the primary function of SARI. Although it is involved in a number of multi-agency initiatives as well and training with schools, it continues its emphasis on 'strong client support'. In 1999–2000, SARI opened 198 new cases and carried over 85 cases from the previous year. Although the total number of new cases was a drop from the previous year's figure of 280, more telephone support and advice was offered in 1999–2000. The total number of new cases was 192 in 2000–01 and 263 in 2001–02.

Newham Monitoring Project (NMP), London

This project was selected as a case study because it was the first community-based organisation in the UK to challenge racist harassment and has remained independent.

Background

NMP is based in the East End of London in a borough which has a diverse minority ethnic population. It was established in 1980 after a racist murder and came to represent the culmination of community anger and frustration at the growth in racist attacks and the inability of local agencies to respond. Police harassment was a major issue in the locality and NMP established itself as an independent community-based group to challenge harassment perpetrated by these and other parties.

For a number of years, the local authority financially supported NMP. However, this funding ceased in March 1997. As a direct result of this, the capacity to provide support and assistance to individuals and families was limited. The project had to reduce its staff from five to only one part-time worker and had to rent a smaller office. The project continued in the face of such adversity through the commitment and dedication of volunteers and its management committee, some of whom are ex-NMP caseworkers.

Aims of the project

NMP was set up to provide advice and support to individuals and families suffering racist and/or police harassment. It is a political and campaigning organisation that utilises casework to challenge oppression. NMP does not allow the police on its premises and it does not sit on forums or panels with the police because a substantial part of its casework involves police harassment.

New funding

In 1999, NMP was successful in securing three-year funding from National Lotteries Charities Board (NLCB), which enabled them to employ two workers to provide a casework and emergency service. The primary aim is to develop NMP's advice and support services, which will include the following:

- comprehensive 24-hour emergency service to provide immediate and specialist help to victims of racial and civil injustice
- casework support and assistance for the above through outreach work
- monitoring, research and documentation of incidents of racial harassment.

The funds have also enabled NMP to relocate to a larger office space that provides a small meeting space and interview rooms.

Casework

Since 1981, NMP has dealt with an average of over 400 cases a year. As a result of the withdrawal of funding in 1997, casework was reduced to a minimum for the following three years and NMP is still in the process of rebuilding itself. Between 2000 and 2001, it dealt with 150 cases. Of these, 33 per cent were defined as racial harassment and 30 per cent as police harassment. Nearly 50 per cent of all cases that NMP dealt with last year came through the 24-hour emergency service. A number of these calls were from friends and relatives of people detained in police custody.

Campaigning work

The cornerstone of NMP's work is the campaigns they get involved in. These are both local and national campaigns to highlight injustice:

In some instances campaigns are necessary to highlight the injustices and bring them to the public eye. These campaigns are also a direct way of developing community involvement and collective organisation to tackle racial violence. (NMP, 2000)

NMP also provides a direct challenge in the East End of London to the British National Party (BNP) and the far right. At election times, the NMP will mobilise local communities to vote against far right candidates through posting leaflets door-to-door and encouraging people to vote against the BNP:

During the campaign, NMP ferried elderly and isolated black voters to polling stations, and patrolled polling stations ensuring voters were not intimidated by BNP activists. (NMP, 2000)

NMP's long history has enabled the organisation to survive – often in the face of a very adverse political and economic climate – and gives the project credibility within the communities it represents.

Summary

The sections above have offered a brief pen picture of the projects and their development and history. The following chapter goes on to look more specifically at their role.

3 Role of racist harassment support projects

Introduction

As the previous chapter demonstrates, the role of racist harassment support projects is not fixed but has developed over time. All of the case study projects provide a range of services, as illustrated in Table 1. The staffing profile of the projects is shown in Table 2.

General

The primary purpose of most of the projects is to challenge racist harassment through undertaking casework and representing clients, multi-agency liaison and preventative work through schools. Some projects concentrate more of their resources on casework while others concentrate on prevention and monitoring. BRAMU and NMP would clearly identify themselves as political agencies because of their historical development and campaigning stance.

Aims and objectives

The key aim of all the projects is to provide assistance and support to victims of racist harassment. This aim is explicitly stated by all projects. SARI states very clearly that it aims to 'empower' victims of racist harassment and attacks to 'survive the emotional, mental and physical trauma they experience' (SARI, 1996). Although not all the projects state explicitly that they aim to 'empower', their goal through casework is to ensure clients have full knowledge of their rights and how they can progress a complaint against alleged perpetrator(s).

Some support projects felt they had a role in aiming to reduce local tensions that arise from racist harassment and the lack of action from agencies. Support projects also felt that a key function was to take action against the perpetrators of racist harassment through the support and guidance they offer to their clients.

Referrals

The support projects vary in terms of how their clients are referred to the service. Although referrals are received by the projects from the police and local authorities, self-referral also forms a large part of the overall number of cases. Both SARI and LRHP have a substantial number of self-referrals. In 1994–95, self-referral to SARI accounted for about one-third of all cases. By 2000–01, this had increased to 61 per cent of all cases. LRHP has a self-referral rate of about 30 per cent. Such high levels of self-referral indicate a willingness on the part of victims to make a complaint when they have knowledge of the existence of a specialist service. Both projects also attribute such high levels of self-referral to the location of the projects – in areas where minority ethnic people live.

The levels of referrals from the police indicate good working relationships with those projects that have actively sought to work with them and see a strategic value of having the police involved in their work:

SARI firmly believes that the responsibility of tackling racial violence does not belong to any one agency or individual, but can only be achieved by us all working together. Hence a fundamental philosophy within SARI's working ethic is the multi-agency approach. (SARI, 1996)

As project co-ordinator I have always been keen to develop closer co-operation between agencies such as the police ... to ensure that all information regarding racist incidents is shared and every victim receives a co-ordinated quality service. (LRHP, 1999)

Referrals from Victim Support or other voluntary agencies are very small, indicating that the ethos of partnership work and the message of challenging racist harassment may be less well developed among other agencies.

Table 1 Range of services offered by support projects

Project	Multi-agency partnership working										Use volunteers and/or placements committee
	Casework incidents	Monitoring of racist incidents	External training	Campaigning development	Policy development	School-based work	Community development	Developed training materials	Offer security equipment	Finance manager	
BPARH	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
BRAMU	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
INSAAF	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
LRHP	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
NMP	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
RA	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
RHSGW	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
SARI	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 2 Staffing in the support projects (January 2003)

Project	Caseworkers/ support workers					Training and marketing officer				Total staff numbers (&FTEs)
	Director/ co-ordinator	Team manager	Education officer	Youth worker	Volunteer co-ordinator	Development officer	Fundraising officer	Finance manager	Office administrator	
BPARH	1 FT		1 FT			1 FT			2 FT	5
BRAMU	1 FT								1 FT	3
INSAAF	1 FT								0.5 FTE	2 (1.5)
LRHP	1 FT			2.5 FTE	0.5 FTE		1 FT		2 FTE	12 (10)
NMP	0.5 FTE									2 (1)
RA						0.20 FTE			0.20 FTE	2 (0.4)
RHSGW	1 FT								0.5 FTE	2 (1.5)
SARI	1 FT	1 FT	1 FT			0.25 FTE		1 FT	2 FTE	12 (11.5)

Notes:

FT = full-time; FTE = full-time equivalent

INSAAF's funding ended in March 2001 and the project was closed.

RA funding ended and the work was mainstreamed into Victim Support Powys.

Location and geographical spread

All projects have cases referred to them and direct enquiries from outside their geographical remit. In Newcastle, cases have been referred from all areas across the North East. Similarly, in Birmingham, BRAMU undertakes case visits outside of the City and SARI has expanded its service to include towns and cities outside of Bristol.

However, it is not always possible for a project to accept cases from outside of its catchment area, particularly if it is a single-person project. In such cases, the project can offer a referral to another appropriate agency. The Racial Awareness Project (RA), which set up a one-afternoon-a-week telephone helpline, has had calls from across Powys. However, it can take up to four hours to drive from where the project is based to the northern reaches of the county, thus limiting how much casework can be taken on.

Volunteering and placements

Most of the projects encourage volunteering but, while some are actively engaged in recruiting volunteers, others – especially those dependent on a single officer – have found the additional workload that such an activity creates difficult to accommodate.

LRHP has a co-ordinator who has successfully recruited a number of volunteers and both SARI and BRAMU have the use of a small number of volunteers. NMP has a bank of up to 25 volunteers who are the key workers on the 24-hour emergency helpline and are managed by a worker. For these projects, volunteers are seen as an integral part of them functioning. Although, overall, the actual number of volunteers is quite small, their involvement enhances the work and the reach of the projects.

Volunteers are trained by the projects. BRAMU has developed a comprehensive handbook for its volunteers. Similarly, NMP has an emergency service handbook, which provides information on police procedure and guidelines, and practical

steps that the volunteers should follow depending on the type of incident they face.

NMP has two aspects to its training: knowledge of the law, legal rights and police procedure, and the practical application of these through case studies. Volunteers are expected to undergo a minimum of two training sessions and attend regular briefings to keep them up to date on new developments.

A number of the projects have regular placements from local colleges and universities. Individuals are on placement for periods of up to six months and, like volunteers, are involved in all aspects of the work of the projects. These local links with educational institutions ensure that the work of the projects is made public to young people who otherwise may not take an interest in the challenges that racism can pose.

Assistance and support

The 'assistance and support' that is at the heart of projects' role involves a number of elements:

- taking a complaint (self-referral or agency)
- deciding on how and where to meet the client
- logging the complaint and creating a file
- providing relevant information (for example, leaflets, agency referral, incident diary)
- offering basic security tips or tools
- obtaining information (regarding the complaint)
- developing an action plan with the client
- undertaking the investigation of the complaint
- keeping the client informed
- taking action with agencies

- attending court with the client
- resolving and closing the case with the client's permission.

All of the above are instruments of the casework process and are the key attributes to 'providing support and assistance'. The specific role of casework is returned to in the next chapter.

Other activities

It was noted in the introduction that support projects' role extends beyond this casework role. Many projects have staff involved in preventative work, training and education. In many of the support projects, there is no more than one caseworker (unlike SARI, which has defined its core work as casework with victims). Indeed, in single-officer projects, the co-ordinator undertakes all aspects of casework, training and multi-agency liaison. Among the range of services offered were the following.

Training

As support projects have developed and established themselves in the voluntary and the statutory sector, the services they offer have grown. Thus, most of the projects offer training to other agencies on racist harassment and related concerns. Some projects have designated training officer posts, while the majority undertake training as part of their overall duties.

LRHP describes its training as aiming to give participants:

... an understanding and confidence in how to deal effectively and professionally with reported racial incidents. (LRHP, 1999)

Similarly, Birmingham Partnership against Racial Harassment (BPARH), in October 1999, put in place a rolling programme of training and workshops looking at how to raise awareness and deliver best practice on the issue of racial

harassment. A number of the projects mentioned an increase in requests for training/workshops from both the statutory and voluntary sector.

The focus of training is on frontline staff – those most likely to come into direct contact with the victims of racist harassment. The main beneficiaries of the training and information talks are the police, housing providers, education and youth services, and victim support schemes.

BPARH offers practical courses like 'Working as a reporting centre', which directly fit into its day-to-day work as a reporting centre for racist incidents. However, it organises and undertakes a series of workshops and discussions aiming 'to look at the intricate and often difficult subject of racism, subjects that are often seen as taboo or never to be discussed' (BPARH, 2000). Such talk shops as 'Whites suffering racism', 'Islamophobia' or 'Black self-determination' are designed to highlight wider issues that the project is implicitly involved in, but also to raise awareness of the historical processes of oppression and their current impacts on minority ethnic communities in Britain.

Projects that have dedicated training officers also commonly have a budget for developing publicity material and associated costs. Thus, BPARH was able to distribute 700 brochures widely to statutory, voluntary and community contacts. From this publicity, 125 delegates responded and have been trained at its offices (BPARH, 2000).

Training is a time-consuming feature of the work of the projects but one that is demanded more and more by agencies working in the post-Macpherson era. Single-officer projects and other smaller projects are unlikely to be able to offer extensive training programmes as part of their overall work schedule. For example, the training that is offered by SARI and Racial Harassment Support Group (West) (RHSGW) is often undertaken by the caseworker as a dual function. Training is offered not as an income-generating activity but as a response to an identified gap in the knowledge base and response of local services.

Developing resources

The expansion of some of the projects beyond casework has involved the development of training and resource materials to use primarily with young people in an educational setting. Both BPARH and LRHP have developed extensive resources to be used by their education officers in schools and youth centres.

In Birmingham, BPARH has developed 'a video resource which aims to tackle the issues of racial harassment' (BPARH, 2000). *In the Mix* is aimed at high schools across the city and its launch in 1999 was used as a platform to promote the work of the Training and Education Development Officer to schools. Forty-one of the 81 high schools attended the launch, after which follow up contacts were made with 27 schools. Eight of these used the video in their classes.

As part of the European Year against Racism in 1997, LRHP also produced a video resource and training manual called *Face to Face* to 'help address the problem of racial harassment in schools' (LRHP, 1999). The video was produced through a series of sessions with a racially representative mix of young people and the resource book produced to complement the video provides a range of ideas and formats for activities to discuss and challenge the issue of racist harassment. All of the high schools in Leeds were given a copy of the video and resource book, and the project offered to run workshops in schools, 28 per cent of which requested a workshop session.

A second video and booklet – *A World of Difference* – has also been developed, through part funding from National Lotteries Charities Board. This film explores issues relevant to racist harassment, is aimed at upper primary and high school students, and is intended to act as a catalyst for discussion. LRHP has also liaised with a theatre-in-education company to develop a compact disc arising from a play based on a real-life racist assault. In 1999, the theatre company visited four high schools in Leeds and a further

eight schools in the following year. The compact disc *Just Words ... innit?* encourages young people to explore racism through radio drama and to report incidents of racist harassment.

The development of resources to challenge racist harassment is not an approach that has been adopted by all projects. However, such resources are a means of raising awareness of young people to racism and aiding in the prevention of racist harassment through direct work with them. Although the response from high schools is limited, where racist harassment projects have had access to work with students, the response has always been very positive. Indeed, LRHP and BPARH have each made contact with over 1,000 students through their education and youth work.

Education and youth work

As noted above, the development of training and resources is part of challenging racist harassment through education and youth work. LRHP has also developed a youth forum called 'Stand together against Racism' (STAR), which is co-ordinated by a part-time youth worker. The worker has developed a 'Young persons' survival pack', which offers information and advice to young people suffering from racist harassment. The pack, funded by National Lotteries Charities Board and Comic Relief, is made available through schools, youth clubs and other venues. LRHP has three youth workers working at both school-based and youth-work levels.

SARI, LRHP and BRAMU undertake direct casework with young people and all have designated officers. National Lotteries Charities Board funded SARI's education officer until March 2000. The role continues and is now divided between general casework, training and school-based work and casework. The school-based work is funded by most of the local education authorities covered by the organisation.

In 1999–2000, LRHP had 41 cases referred to it. Of these, 27 cases had direct input from one of

three LRHP youth workers. In the same year, SARI supported, advised and provided counselling to 138 children, young people and their parents. However, the actual number of referrals directly from schools is very low: no referrals were made from schools to the LRHP in 1999–2000 and only one in 1998–99.

Complaints about racist harassment from young people in school often entail an education/youth worker not only being involved with the victim and victim's family, but also negotiating access into the school to help develop anti-racist policies and conduct training and awareness raising with both students and staff.

In 2000–01, the majority of SARI's education cases were in primary schools:

This seems a clear indication that a lot of anti-racist work needs to be carried out with young children, and that perhaps schools need to take the issue more seriously than they have in the past. (SARI, 2001)

One of the three youth workers based at the LRHP has a remit to work with the 230-plus primary schools in Leeds. The response from schools for awareness raising with children has not been very forthcoming. The vast majority did not respond to mailshots regarding potential work in schools:

Getting access through the heads is usually impossible. I try to get access through the PSE [personal and social education] co-ordinator or education welfare service. (Youth worker)

It was also highlighted that training resources for this age group are very scarce. LRHP reports that, when its youth workers' project was set up, it was not envisaged that it would be dealing with case referrals for young people. Casework with young people came about as it became obvious that young people experiencing racist harassment had no support or practical guidance.

Campaigning against injustice

Some racist harassment support projects are actively involved in national, high-profile political campaigning. However, not all projects get involved in such campaigns although they will provide moral support to such initiatives:

We will offer our support but how far we get involved is determined by our own workload. Campaigning work takes a lot of time and energy. (Caseworker)

BRAMU and the NMP are often actively involved in campaign work. They are usually the primary organisers of campaigns, particularly where incidents have occurred in their geographical area, or when an individual or family has asked for their help. Campaigns largely focus on:

- deaths in custody
- challenging court sentences and miscarriages of justice
- racist murders
- campaigning for inquiries arising out of injustice.

For example:

Alton Manning was a client of BRAMU's at the time of his death. He had reported to the Unit that he had suffered police harassment for a number of years, and that the police seemed determined to send him to prison. Alton was arrested not long after coming to see us, on charges that were always suspect, and which have been refuted by the person who was pressured into bringing them. After being sent to prison, Alton complained of being beaten and racially abused. On the night of his death, he telephoned his mother, warning her that he believed he would soon be killed. (BRAMU, 1999)

Having begun in December 1995, the campaign to find out what happened to Alton while in 'the duty of care' of the Prison Service continues to the

present day. BRAMU has organised candlelit vigils, petitions to the Home Office and has continued to support the family through a very painful process highlighting what it considers to be a series of miscarriages of justice.

In a similar vein, NMP has been involved in a number of campaigns arising out of black people dying in police custody. In its written submission to the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry, NMP stated that the following principles should underpin a death in custody:

- immediate suspension of all officers involved in a death in custody until investigations are completed
- full disclosure of all information to families and their legal representatives
- investigation of deaths in custody to be absolutely independent of institutions under examination (NMP, 2000).

Such high-profile campaigning can bring projects into conflict both with agencies that they would otherwise work with on routine racist harassment casework and with potential funders. Political campaigning does not always rest easily with funding bodies. However, campaigning activities are viewed by the projects as a public good, aiming to influence change through raising awareness of injustice.

Policy development

Finally, all projects are involved at some level in policy development and influence. The expertise that the projects have gathered over the years of operation has meant that, at a local level, projects are often asked for advice and information by a range of agencies, for example, schools and local education authorities. Furthermore, the central role that many of the projects play in training frontline staff of local authorities and other bodies alongside their positions on various forums usually means that racist harassment is kept on the local political and policy agenda.

Summary

This chapter highlights that projects have, over a period of time, established a range of services that they offer to victims of racist harassment, local communities and external agencies and that their stated primary focus is to offer advice, assistance and support to victims of racist harassment. However, this does not mean that individual projects have a large number of caseworkers within their staff profile or indeed that there is more than one caseworker in many of the projects. Victim support through casework can sometimes be secondary to the development of other initiatives and posts, and often this is dictated to by priorities that funding bodies may set or relations between the projects and the local authority. The following chapter explores in detail how casework is used as a tool to support victims and respond to racist harassment.

4 Responding to racist harassment through casework

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the routine of casework, services that are offered directly to victims of racist harassment and any developments that have occurred within these projects as a result of this approach. In addition to outlining key aspects of casework practice, the chapter includes a number of recommendations for those involved.

In consultation with caseworkers, the following definition of racist harassment casework was developed:

Casework is an interaction which makes clients aware of their rights enabling them to take back control of their lives and offering realistic expectations of the outcome of their complaint.

Racist harassment caseworkers viewed the primary function of casework as 'to deliver an agreed action plan with the client(s)'. This involved 'alleviating the distress and despair' that clients felt and,

... reducing the stresses and problems faced by victims of racial harassment through the caseworker doing some of the legwork for the client.

(Caseworker)

Casework was viewed as a multi-tasked and multi-skilled intervention involving working with victims, undertaking administrative duties in connection with a case and actively engaging with relevant agencies to a successful resolution of the reported problem. Four key tasks were identified as crucial to effective casework: offering help, creating an intervention, reducing the immediate impact of the harassment and aiming to resolve the complaint.

Box 1 Role of casework

- Offering support and advice to clients.
- Co-ordinating multi-agency casework.
- Training and offering advice to agencies.
- Resolving the complaint – 'fair and swift solution'.
- Reducing the impact of racist harassment on victims and their families.

Casework is a high-profile activity within the support projects and takes up a large amount of time and energy of those involved. The typical sequence of events that occurs when a case is referred to a support project is discussed below.

Casework in practice

Referral and contact

A case enters a project through two sources – self-referral or through an agency. The nature of the referral dictates the type of initial response from the caseworker. The project will usually arrange a visit with the client: some by writing a letter to the client asking them to get in touch, others – if they have telephone details – by ringing to arrange an appointment and decide whether a home visit or contact at the project office is preferred. Standard practice is that caseworkers aim to meet their clients within seven to 14 days of receiving the complaint, although immediate contact can be arranged depending on the nature and severity of the case. More often than not the letter that is sent out to the victim is in English with some explanatory information about the project.

RHSGW describes its initial response as follows:

Casework referrals are given immediate priority. Each time a referral is received from an agency or an individual, RHSG (West) writes to the victim within 24

hours, to establish direct contact. This introductory letter invites victims to respond. A leaflet translated into community languages is also enclosed, providing information about our work, and indicating how we will be able to help. This is then followed by a telephone call within 72 hours to confirm the date and time of meeting. At the initial meeting, I provide relevant advice and information (e.g. instructional sheets on Reporting and Recording Racial Harassment). I independently document the extent of the harassment and generate an action plan of responses agreed by the client. Independent documentation is then corroborated against police records and used as a basis to further the action plan. Client confidentiality is always assured, and clients' wishes respected, with information shared with external agencies only on a 'need to know' basis.
(Caseworker)

Some referrals do not respond to letters from caseworkers. In these instances, cases are closed after a defined time lag. Whether a case visit can be arranged within seven to 14 days depends on the workload of the caseworkers. In a number of cases, a visit may not actually occur until four weeks after the referral has been made because of their large workload. However, this largely depends on the severity of the case. Again, some projects will define from the outset whether the case has a high, medium or low priority.

Whether a client is met in the office or at home, the procedure for collecting information is very similar. Caseworkers tend to allocate in the region of one hour per visit, which can include listening to the accounts of the victim, completing the necessary forms and advising on appropriate action and what the caseworker can do for the client.

A home visit often, but not always, starts with the caseworker producing appropriate identification to verify who they are. Identification is crucial, especially if the client feels under attack or threatened from their harasser. However, from making case visits with some projects, it was

observed that identification cards were not carried as a matter of routine.

The caseworker's aim in the interaction with the client is to do at least the following:

- take details of the complaint
- complete any monitoring and consent forms
- offer advice and reassurance
- where appropriate offer security equipment
- decide with the client what they want to do next.

Recommendation

- All projects should have photographic identification and show it to all clients as a matter of routine.

Each caseworker differs in their approach but all aim to elicit from the client their version of events. In a scenario where listening to the client is of utmost importance, it is often very difficult to write substantial notes. A method adopted by some caseworkers is to repeat to the client what they know about the complaint from their own notes made at the point of the referral. They then ask the client to amend any inaccuracies or elaborate on their story.

In all of the interactions observed by the researcher, it was apparent that the client clearly wanted to tell their story. Often the clients' need to tell their version of events gets in the way of the routine of form filling. It can also take a substantial amount of time to get the clients to the point of articulating for themselves what action they want the caseworker and other agencies to take.

Confidentiality

It is often explained verbally by the caseworker that the information they share with the client is confidential. The clients are told that, with their

consent, information will be shared with other agencies to progress the complaint. SARI asks all clients to read and sign a consent form, which, among other things, highlights that the project will not take any action without the consent of the client.

Recommendations

- Projects that are storing data on a database, either as part of a monitoring function or as part of a multi-agency co-ordination of all cases, should explain this clearly to all clients and explain why and for what length of time their details will be stored.
- Projects should also review how secure their computers are for storing confidential information.

Security equipment

Caseworkers are sometimes able to offer immediate solutions to reduce a client's fear and the likelihood of further racist harassment. Personal alarms are offered to clients as a matter of routine by those projects that keep them. Some projects are also able to offer surveillance equipment for short periods of time to households if their property is under attack. This is installed by the project usually with the assistance of the police and can remain installed for up to three months. LRHP has 14 sets of surveillance equipment, eight of which have audio facilities, which enable the capture of verbal abuse. 'Pay as you go' mobile telephones can also be offered in some cases.

The caseworker, acting on behalf of clients, can sometimes get others (e.g. housing departments) to take appropriate action in installing security equipment, even when the client has tried and failed to get an agency response:

It took five months for a safety lock to be put on my door yet the police said it was needed. It was only when SARI got involved that this happened.

Data collection

Some projects have developed elaborate forms that take a range of details from the clients while others take very basic information. The type and extent of information taken depends on the nature and function of the project. Support projects that monitor racist incidents beyond casework ask for a range of details that feed into a network of other agencies. Other projects, which primarily undertake casework, collect minimum information from the client for monitoring and statistical purposes within the project.

The minimum information collected is:

- victim's details (name, address, telephone number)
- gender
- date of birth and age (of main victim)
- ethnic origin of the victim
- English language proficiency
- type of incident
- details of incident.

Others will also ask for information on the following:

- location of incident
- action taken by the victim and the response
- impact on security and safety
- profile of the perpetrator
- previous incidents
- consent from the victim to refer the case to other agencies.

As more extensive data has been collected, some of the projects have developed databases to record detailed information about cases for monitoring purposes. BPARH has developed a database called 'VICTIM', in which the monitoring officer will regularly input all cases referred to them by participating reporting centres. Between April 1999 and February 2001, a total number of 1,626 cases were entered. The database allows the caseworker to view what action has been taken by various agencies and it can generate a range of aggregate

information that feeds directly into the casework forums.

The information the database can provide is:

- profile of victim
- profile of perpetrator
- referral agency
- agencies involved
- nature and location of incidents
- police action
- court action
- victim satisfaction
- number of cases opened and closed.

'VICTIM' is an elaborate database that enables BPARH to serve the function of a monitoring centre and also offers detailed information about the nature of, and responses to, cases. It is a management tool to process a large amount of information that is generated by multi-agency partnership working through the reporting centres scheme. SARI also maintains a central database for Bristol, Bath and north-east Somerset, which the police and council feed information into.

Support packs

All caseworkers offer some type of support pack to the client. These vary in content and quality, but the basic information includes contact details of the caseworker, an emergency contact number, a leaflet explaining what racist harassment is and a complainant incident recording sheet (diary), which the client can complete as incidents occur. Such incident logging sheets are also given to clients by housing departments. Clients appear to have mixed views about the utility of this process:

If people respond to what you write in log sheets then that is a type of support because you feel like you have been listened to.

All my reports said the same thing – what do they [housing department] do with these sheets of paper?

It is like they [housing department] put them in a file and forget about it. Who reads them?

Some projects have developed information specifically for young people and others have developed 'Rights cards', which detail what a person should do if they are arrested. All of these sources of information offer the number of the project as a source of advice and assistance.

The support packs provide the client with useful information in the event they are attacked again. However, support packs also make sure that a range of contact details are given to the client, thus ensuring they have a number of options in deciding on a course of action. The process of providing support packs is part of the project's role of empowering clients through knowledge about their rights and who they can contact.

Recommendation

- Projects need to consider translating some of the information they provide. This is particularly important for meeting the needs of new communities.

Counselling

A number of caseworkers mentioned the need to have some basic counselling skills to help their clients. Most caseworkers are not trained counsellors, although many have picked up relevant skills through directly working with clients and some have developed links with local counselling services. RHSGW will, as a matter of routine, offer a referral to a counsellor that some clients have accessed. RA have utilised all their skills as Victim Support volunteers and staff to offer counselling support to their clients. Many caseworkers felt that counselling skills need to be developed within the projects, but a lack of formal qualifications, together with time and resource restrictions, have meant that this is not always possible.

Recommendation

- Projects should review the skills of their caseworkers in relation to the needs of their clients and explore means by which the identified skills needs could be met.

Closing a case

A case is closed by a project almost always in consultation with the client. A case is closed usually when:

- the client has been moved and has settled into the new accommodation
- the harassment has ceased in the location it was reported
- the case has been dealt with via prosecution or other intervention
- the client has not made contact with the caseworker over a defined period of time.

In almost all of these cases, the caseworker will ask the permission of the client to close the file. Once a file is closed, it can be reopened if problems reoccur or new complaints are made. However, because of the heavy workload of most caseworkers, they tend to want to see cases resolved more quickly. This is not always possible because of the different needs of each client. Some of the projects will send a satisfaction questionnaire to find out how the service that clients received could be improved.

Recommendation

- Projects should consider evaluating all their case contacts. This will enable them to at least identify how casework could be improved, the benefits of their intervention and how clients feel about the service they have received.

Casework forums

Caseworkers generally attend casework forums in their area. The overall function of the forums is to meet regularly to discuss cases that happen in their local geographical area, to exchange information, agree action plans utilising joint working approaches, and to support and facilitate a resolution for the victim. The casework forum is the arena for developing and recommending good practice through a multi-agency approach. Often, the sheer volume of cases discussed can make the process unwieldy. At one such forum in Leeds, it was agreed that, in order to make the process manageable, a maximum of 25 cases would be discussed at any one time.

Supporting local businesses

Caseworkers are often involved in supporting local minority ethnic business people, particularly shopkeepers and restaurant owners. In Newcastle, the local project undertook a research project on the extent of racist harassment experienced by local South Asian traders in the east of the city (Newcastle City Council, 1998). The survey found that 87 per cent of all traders said they were being racially harassed. The vast majority of these traders wanted access to closed-circuit television (CCTV) with less than 17 per cent wanting direct victim support.

BPARH also undertook a research project with local minority ethnic businesses and found that one-third of all restaurant owners or staff had been assaulted and one-fifth had had their property damaged. The survey resulted in BPARH developing an innovative project called 'the Ethnic Minority Business Security Scheme'. This is a five-year project funded through the Single Regeneration Budget. The aim of the scheme is to provide financial support to minority ethnic businesses in the inner-city areas of Birmingham, to enable them to upgrade security in order to combat racist harassment.

The scheme provides a grant to a maximum of £1,200 for security equipment and installation costs, and aims to assist 30 businesses over three years. Businesses can choose from the following security measure options: CCTV, burglar alarm and CCTV option, a shutter and alarm option, a shutter and or grilles or personal alarm option.

LRHP has written a guide for shopkeepers and small businesses providing relevant contact details and some tips on personal safety. Casework support with local businesses can continue for a number of years because moving, in the event of sustained racist harassment, is not always an option that owners consider practical. Thus, much of the intervention with local businesses is framed in terms of improving security at the premises and supporting business owners through the process of court appearances against local perpetrators. Security equipment provides results but can often only be available for a short period of time:

The project put up a camera and that was excellent because we caught a lot of people through that. But it had to be taken down because they had a shortage of cameras. They have to prioritise and give the camera to certain people.

Expanding casework

It is more likely that people of African Caribbean and South Asian descent will access the services of a project than other ethnic groups – for example, Chinese and Vietnamese communities or refugees and asylum seekers. This has been recognised by some of the projects and they are attempting to engage with these communities to highlight the service they offer. In Newcastle, much of the growth in casework has been with asylum seekers who have been attacked by local white youths. Similarly, in Newham, the support project has developed an initiative to work with local asylum and refugee organisations to challenge racist harassment and to support victims. BRAMU holds surgeries as required at the Refugee Council in Birmingham.

Work with asylum seekers and refugees can be very intensive and time-consuming. Often there is a language barrier, there are needs that the client expresses beyond the racist attack and many, through the Home Office dispersal programme, feel isolated and vulnerable. As a consequence, the caseworker at RHSGW, for example, dedicates a large amount of time liaising with the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) to try and get families moved to places where they have some familiar connections. The caseworker has also found it difficult to develop a consistent approach with clients who cannot communicate in English because, at each case meeting, a different interpreter is sent to help facilitate the meeting. A number of projects commented that they do not have an identified budget to pay for interpreters.

Recommendations

- Projects should identify the cost of using interpreters as a part of their overall budget.
- Projects should ensure that the interpreters they use meet local or national standards of good practice.

Impact of casework

Casework undertaken by an independent support group was seen as having the impact of ‘adding more weight to a complaint from a victim’ and this had resulted in ‘other organisations responding to our service user needs more effectively’ (caseworker).

Often, part of the consequence of casework and the resolution of the complaint includes perpetrators being charged with racially aggravated offence. This has the effect of highlighting that ‘agencies are taking the problem seriously’ (caseworker). Projects will offer their clients support through the complaint process and attend court with witnesses.

Box 2 Impact of casework

- Empowerment of the client.
- Resolution of the complaint/ problem.
- Refinement of a client-centred service.
- Improved working relations with other agencies.
- Development of support networks for victims.
- Raising awareness of the problem.
- Funding issues as casework increases.

A by-product of successful casework was the recognition that an increase in caseloads had direct implications on funding and staffing. Further, some projects have seen more positive engagement from the minority ethnic community as a result of the work both the projects and caseworkers undertake. BRAMU, for example, mentioned that a strength of casework is that local people are more likely to refer clients and participate in public meetings that result in a genuine partnership between the community and the project.

Strengths and weaknesses

At a workshop with caseworkers, there was unanimous agreement that casework was not

always effective. In explaining why they thought casework was not always effective, both the weaknesses and strengths were highlighted (see Table 3).

In identifying the *weaknesses* of casework, the overwhelming response was that caseworkers had too many cases to deal with and that there were not enough caseworkers to cope with the demands that cases presented. The consequence of this was that caseworkers were unable to provide adequate support to clients or could offer help only in a crisis situation. A number of caseworkers highlighted that they were managing in excess of 80 cases at any one time.

The limited nature of funding often meant that it was not possible to fully develop a casework service. Further, the continued denial of the problem of racism by some organisations impacted on the effectiveness of racist harassment casework and the relative merits of a multi-agency approach were seen as crucial to effective one-to-one client-driven casework, but this was sometimes seen as lacking:

... it's [casework] only as effective as the knowledge of others who have an input into a case. (Caseworker)

Table 3 Strengths and weaknesses of casework

Strengths	Weaknesses
Offer an empowering support service to clients	Caseworkers overwhelmed by too many cases and too few caseworkers.
Multi-agency working on behalf of clients	Limited resources and funding – caseworkers are employed on fixed-term contracts.
Commitment of caseworkers	Racist harassment is denied by external agencies as a problem and its impact is poorly understood.
Skills caseworkers have developed to enable a complaint to be actioned and support clients	Lack of co-ordination between agencies when dealing with complaints of racist harassment.
Training other agencies to respond to racist harassment	Caseworkers' inability to meet the expectations of the client.
Input into local policy formation on crime and disorder	No national standard for racist harassment casework.

The *strengths* of casework were seen very clearly in terms of the direct support given to clients and the impact of a client-centred approach:

... caseworkers get results. (Caseworker)

... service users receive a more effective response.
(Caseworker)

Multi-agency working and effective networking with other organisations were also seen as strengths of the support projects:

... contact with other agencies progresses racial awareness and equality issues. (Caseworker)

... multi-agency working is the best way forward to dealing with casework. (Caseworker)

The commitment that caseworkers have to their work in the face of regular funding crises and large

workloads was viewed as a strength, as were the skills and expertise they have developed through direct working with clients and agencies.

Summary

This chapter has described how caseworkers work with their clients from the initial complaint through to closing the case. It has highlighted that the caseworker has numerous roles within the relationship with their client – from advocate, to active listener, to enabling the client to resolve the complaint. The chapter also indicates the perceived strengths and limitations of casework. The following chapter explores the impact of the projects and the difference they can make to the lives of their clients.

5 Impact of racist harassment support projects

Introduction

The experience of racist victimisation can leave people feeling isolated and often unsure about where to go to progress a complaint. Chahal and Julienne (1999) highlighted that, although most victims will report to the police at some point, they often want to disclose to, and be represented by, an agency that can offer an empathetic service. In the present research, interviews were undertaken with existing and ex-clients, management committee members of the projects and caseworkers to identify the impact of the support projects.

Finding the support project

How people experiencing racist harassment found the support project varied. There was no single method of discovering that an organisation existed and could help the complainant with their problem. Although projects advertise their services quite widely, this does not always mean that those needing to access them know about the services. In some cases, the victim comes in contact with a support project because the complaint has been referred directly from a reporting agency that the victim first approached:

The police were brilliant, absolutely excellent, there is no way I could fault them for what they did and how much support they gave me. They actually put me on to SARI right from the beginning.

Whether a direct referral is made by an agency to a support project can often depend on the type of relations between the agency and the project. Those support projects that have fostered good working relations with the police and housing tend to receive regular referrals. But such good relations are sometimes very specific to an area housing office, or police divisional area, or with certain officers and are not a guarantee that the client will

be given appropriate information from the agency they first approach:

After two years of incidents we reported it to the police, they said they couldn't do anything because it wasn't racial. We went to see a solicitor and he said you will need to get the Racial Board [Leeds Racial Harassment Project] to help. I found their number in the telephone book and when they got involved the police started to get involved.

In some situations, the client got in touch with a support project after exhausting their options with the agency they first complained to. Some interviewees suggested they knew a support project existed in their area but chose to access it only after realising that their complaint was not being taken seriously by the statutory agencies first reported to:

A friend of mine told me about them but I did not go to see them until I had a support pack from the council and there was a card in the pack. I rang them [the support project] because the man in the council was not listening to me.

In many cases, knowing that the local project was involved often compelled local agencies to take action where before they had ignored the clients' complaint.

Information that a racist harassment support project exists can come from a variety of sources and situations:

It was my mum that gave me the number of the support group.

I was suspended from my work and so I started going on courses to pass the time and at a course ice-breaker I mentioned the problems I was having as a reason for being on the training. Someone said I should go to an organisation called BRAMU.

I saw a sign of SARI and I went in and told them what was happening.

Sometimes, people find out about the existence of a support project through publicity relating to its activities in a local area:

In 1996 I had heard about a demonstration the NMP were organising in the paper. I got in touch with them and since 1996 they have been involved and responded to the police's lack of action.

Most support projects get involved in local events to advertise their project to local people. This can include health fairs, summer events in local parks, campaigns against injustice and public demonstrations that often attract media attention. All of these are used as vehicles to raise awareness of the existence of a project in its local area and the services it offers.

People who may be in need of support projects do not always know they exist. Such projects, unlike services like the police, a housing office or a chemist, are sometimes revealed to people in need only when they are needed – they do not form part of the mental mapping of services and resources that are available to people experiencing a problem:

I have lived in this area, near BRAMU, all my life, yet I have never heard of them.

The police asked me if I had contacted them [the support project], I said no. Do you realise they existed?, I said no.

In the process of help seeking, there is no standard route of entry to the projects. Access varies depending on the types of knowledge and information available at a formal and informal level. The formal routes to projects are direct referral from an agency to a project or relevant contact information given to the potential client. The informal route can range from recommendations by friends, family and strangers or the victim finding the support project 'by accident'.

Empowerment

A central aim of the projects is to empower the client of support projects. A management committee member of a project commented:

We are here to basically empower the victim because being a victim of any kind of violence is going to knock someone's confidence. We can make a positive change. We can help to stop the feeling of helplessness. (Management committee worker)

Empowerment is a key theme that emerges from the interviews with people who have used support services. It is about partnership working between the caseworker and the client, and it exhibits itself in a variety of ways as the following suggests.

Non-judgemental approach

The support projects work with a range of clients who come from diverse ethnic backgrounds and who have a range of experience of racist harassment and discrimination. Clients entering the service and seeking help require an environment where they can be assured of an empathetic and non-judgemental hearing of their experiences and how they want to proceed with a complaint:

SARI understood what I was saying. Me being white, I thought SARI was for blacks and Asians and I thought, 'they are not going to listen to me' but they did. They don't judge you like the guy at the council did because I was white.

They were very non-judgemental about the fact that I was complaining about black colleagues. They took my view and accepted it.

I could tell they understood what I was saying, they were very human.

Focus of a dedicated agency

The expectation from victims is that they are believed, that they can validate their experience

and be listened to, and that they can receive a response. This does not always happen when victims of racist harassment complain to agencies like police, housing or even a school:

In 1996 my husband's nose was broken in an attack by one of the perpetrators. Children have smashed our windows and the police say they cannot do anything because they are under age.

... she was only my housing officer for a matter of about six weeks after I first notified them before she moved on and they didn't replace her straightaway, so every time I went to the council to say 'this is what's happened since, this is what has happened now', I would have to speak to a different housing officer, so there was no continuity whatsoever. That was a big frustration that, every time I went in there to complain or tell them about something, I'd have to start right from the beginning and it was draining. I can't say that housing were brilliant because there was lack of continuity and that's the most that you need at that time is continuous understanding and support from beginning to end.

Continuity was offered by support projects:

I had a caseworker but even if she was not available they [the project] knew about my case.

Agencies by virtue of their position often respond in a fragmented way to victims. Support projects, however, have caseworkers whose primary role is to work with victims of racist harassment and offer them 'continuous understanding and support'. It is this level of intense intervention and casework experience that sets support projects apart from other agencies where complaints can be made to:

She [caseworker] gave me the impression she knew what she was talking about. She knew how I felt, you know, what prejudice is like, you know, how much it pains. It was the first time I felt somebody was listening, somebody that was taking it in.

They were different to the police, there was just a different understanding in that they were dealing with cases like this every single day and so the understanding that was there took on a different level because there was the compassion. The police probably come across racial harassment in dribs and drabs.

Dealing with cases of racist harassment on a daily basis and supporting clients gives support projects the ability to become experts at managing the complaints they receive in a sensitive and empathetic manner. This is a primary function of the caseworker. They exclusively represent the client of their service and not another agency or individuals. The function of agencies such as the police and housing is different because they have other general duties and organisational constraints. For example, a housing agency will always have to consider the needs and accounts of perpetrators who are tenants.

Promoting rights

Support projects and their caseworkers have learnt that they cannot always solve the problem that clients may be experiencing. However, they can better equip them with information about what to do and what questions to ask when dealing with other agencies or furthering a complaint. This was illustrated through frequent references to the rights of those who had experienced racist harassment:

But you know, not once, I've been thinking about it since, not once has anybody sat down and said to me, well these are your rights. But BRAMU told me. I've taken notice of everything they told me.

Once the NMP got involved we have learned about our rights – the police would say we cannot do this or that – NMP said they were wrong. The NMP gave us the right information for us.

The focus on rights is a response from support projects who have seen or been told by their clients how their rights have been abused. This is a key

reason why some projects have published cards that offer information on people's rights if they are arrested or experience racist harassment.

Signposting

Support projects will signpost their clients to relevant agencies:

They were very helpful. The first time I spoke to her [caseworker] she immediately put me in touch with a solicitor and suggested other contacts.

Providing appropriate information to clients about who else could help them empowers those people to make informed decisions about what they want to do and raises their awareness about what is expected from other agencies.

Emotional support

Support projects and caseworkers aim to empower their clients to be able to advocate for themselves. However, at the first point of contact with a client, caseworkers often have to deal with the emotional consequences of racist harassment and in many cases the lack of action/understanding from other agencies:

I knew that I was just very unhappy, very concerned for my kids, very stressed out and not at all well so I couldn't have done all of that fighting on my own. They did all the fighting for me to get what I needed at that time and to have someone, you know, the police couldn't have done it, housing couldn't have done it. So, you know, they are an organisation that is extremely valued just for that.

The worker saw how depressed my mum was and how her health deteriorated because of the harassment but they picked her up and talked to her on a one-to-one basis and in Punjabi as well. The project is really friendly and understanding.

I feel there is someone who takes care of me in this particular case, the police can't do everything, they can't rebuild your confidence.

She just rang because the last time I had spoken to her I was very upset down the phone. They really helped because it was support, you know, I have got friends but it was like she was there, looking out for me.

The emotional and casework support offered to clients has a consequence on caseworkers. They highlighted the frustrations and emotions they felt in undertaking casework. For caseworkers, offering an effective service to their clients meant the separation between work and personal space was confused. A large number of caseworkers worked beyond the standard hours and many worked weekends. The intensity of client support and casework was emotionally draining and caseworkers commented that their needs were often overlooked within the projects.

Caseworkers said that they had no access to counselling for themselves, there was limited management support to deal with the range of emotions they experienced and felt, often their own safety in the field was not assessed, and they had no or very limited contact with other caseworkers from across the country. It seems, in providing an emotional buffer to clients, the emotional buffer that caseworkers need is lacking. NMP aims to deal with caseworker burnout by recruiting caseworkers on a two-year cycle and the caseworkers leaving the project are invited to join the management committee, to maintain continuity and offer expertise to new caseworkers. This regular 'regeneration' of NMP offers a limited solution to some of the needs of caseworkers.

Advocacy

Caseworkers often have to act as advocates for the client. Again, because of the nature of the work the projects undertake, they are in a unique position to offer knowledge and information, and respond to the needs of the client:

They knew the organisations to contact, they knew what kind of support I needed. I didn't know at that stage what kind of support was even on offer let alone what I needed.

He [the caseworker] did everything for me. He communicated with the Asylum Seeker Support Unit, with Victim Support and a counsellor. He tried to communicate with so many people and helped to rehouse me.

Clients entering a support project usually get the time and space to tell their story, are listened to and are asked what *they* want to see happen and what *they* would like from the project. In this sense, the caseworker begins to share the burden of their experience and can begin to develop a plan of action that is clearly communicated and agreed with the client they are representing.

Accessibility

Many of the people interviewed talked about how they felt confident that they could ring the support project and get a response or some action relating to their complaint:

They said I could ring them when I wanted to. I can remember her [the caseworker] ringing me on a Sunday.

We have the confidence to know that we can ring 24 hours and we have never been let down.

The level of reassurance and support that projects provide enables clients to feel confident in pursuing their complaint and challenging the behaviour of the perpetrators:

Anytime we wanted her [the caseworker] to come she would, even the day before court she came and I said 'just go through the notes with me' and she did that.

What they actually did was good, I think they actually built more confidence in us. And they actually told us like, you know, these people can't get away with it.

We basically had to make a stand and I think they helped us do that.

After-care

Projects will not close a case without either the permission of the client or, if after a time lapse there has been no contact made with the project, by the client. Some of the projects (where appropriate) will also keep both clients and ex-clients informed of annual general meetings:

Somebody rang from the project and asked if I was okay after I moved into the new house. He said I could ring anytime there was a problem and asked if it was okay to close my file – they asked my permission to close my file.

As a consequence of such close contact with clients and ex-clients, it has been known for clients to offer their services as volunteers or join the management committee of a project. Thus, the expertise gathered as a client is put back into the project to help others.

Validation

Projects provide a range of services, one of which is defined as 'offering support'. In the interviews with clients and ex-clients of the projects, support was mentioned on numerous occasions. Support is often less about receiving information or advice than about being listened to and heard, and about having an experience validated:

It was nice to have that support if you like. It was nice to have somebody to listen and not butt in and tell me 'No, no that's not right', you know, and actually giving me an unbiased view if you like. They listened to me whether I was the one that was telling the truth or not. It wasn't an issue at that point. They were just listening to me and seeing what I had to say.

Validation of an experience is crucial to the relationship that develops between a client(s) and the project. Although the projects cannot always help to resolve the problem of racist victimisation

that the individual or family may be experiencing, the relationship that develops between the two parties is often based on the client knowing that they are believed and understood – that they have a valid claim or grievance.

Reducing and preventing racist harassment

Even though, in many of the interviews, it was clear that the racist harassment was continuing and caseworkers felt that they only ‘apply sticking plasters after the event’, the projects still had an important role to play with their clients and the local communities:

We get our strength from the NMP, but we want to see this harassment end. We have done nothing wrong, why should we close our business.

Caseworkers and management committee members recognise their role is often managing and reducing the problem of racist harassment even though they may not be able to stop it:

I think we prevent escalation of problems because people can come here and sound off and as their representatives we can go out to represent them. We can go out to the police and try to diffuse tensions and explain how local people are feeling.

(Caseworker)

Support projects facilitate local people and their clients to vent anger. They also work with communities to develop strategies to reduce or prevent racist harassment and make agencies accountable for their actions:

In terms of the community we have brought a different level of understanding and a way in which communities can organise themselves and take responsibility in their own right for how they will deal with racism and racial harassment. I think the core thing is to say to communities we can work, we can co-operate as partners, we can develop strategies around how the communities address these problems. (Management committee member)

Improving the service

Clients and ex-clients felt that the support projects offered a valuable service both to them and to the community the projects are based in. The areas of improvement most cited were a reduction in caseload, more caseworkers, more funding and better offices for the projects. Management committee members and caseworkers corroborated all of these areas of improvement; however, they also felt that better partnership working with agencies was a crucial aspect to the support project improving its service to clients.

Reducing caseload and increasing caseworkers

In all of the interviews, there was no negative criticism of the representation the caseworkers offered, although it was often mentioned that it seemed that the caseworkers were very busy and managing a large number of cases – a cause for concern for managers, caseworkers and management committees:

They have been a big help but they have too many cases and are overloaded with work so they don't function as well as they could.

Their caseload should be about 25 but you have got them managing 50–80 cases a month. We try to encourage caseworkers to close cases or seek a referral. (Management committee member)

However, seeking a referral usually depends on the referred agency being able to deal sensitively and empower the client. Many clients access a support project after a lack of action from agencies and want the project to advocate on their behalf. A referral back to these agencies is likely to be resisted by the clients accessing support projects.

The number of cases a caseworker can take on can depend on the complexity of cases. Often, it is not only about the number but also about the intensity and severity of the cases:

There have been some very messy cases that take up a huge amount of time and we have to acknowledge, with a small project, if we get tied up with two or three difficult cases, your whole capacity to do casework is drastically reduced.

(Management committee member)

Partnership with agencies

Clients and ex-clients felt that a large and increasing caseload could be resolved through recruiting more caseworkers. Although projects said they needed more caseworkers, they offered an alternative view:

We could say we'd like more caseworkers but you know that might not happen so you have got to look for alternatives and one of them is proper partnership work with agencies.

(Management committee member)

Many of the support projects have excellent links with a range of agencies:

We have good relations with the police and other agencies and because of that we can represent our users. So, rather than an us and them, people can work with us at an inter-agency level. This makes a huge difference because you really get to know the people involved, you know the ones who are going to be involved in cases.

(Management committee member)

These good relations do help in the day-to-day management of cases and the type of response an agency will make. However, such relations do not reduce the workload of the caseworkers because the agencies are not developed to support victims of racist harassment in the same manner as support projects are.

Support projects would benefit, it seems, from a more concrete working relationship with agencies, particularly at the multi-agency level when different agencies are brought together to co-ordinate an effective response with and for the client:

... a multi-agency response aims to combine the efforts of different agencies to assist the victims of racial harassment. (Caseworker)

But it would seem that all of this is predicated on agencies and the support projects recognising and being clear about when their involvement in a case starts and finishes, and what responsibility they have:

We have to look for proper partnership work and establish who owns which case. I think there can be a tendency for a support project to work through the whole of the case when probably the involvement of other agencies to take ownership is absolutely key.

(Management committee member)

There is a tension evident between what the client wants from a service intervention and how some caseworkers feel agencies should respond to racist harassment:

Agencies should develop so they don't have to refer victims to us. (Caseworker)

It is because clients receive a dedicated service aimed at attempting to resolve their complaint that they view the projects and the casework intervention positively. Mainstreaming casework may not be what the clients and potential clients of the support projects want.

Funding and facilities

They need more funding. They did more for me in the two meetings I had with the caseworker than anybody else. They were extremely helpful.

Clients and ex-clients could see the value of the projects in relation to the problems they had experienced but were often aware that the resources of the projects were stretched. In a number of interviews, clients of the projects mentioned not taking up too much time of the caseworker and often volunteering to go to the project office for a meeting rather than the

caseworker coming to them to save the project time and money.

Management committee members and caseworkers felt that the short-term nature of funding and sometimes the absence of funding, the stress of too much casework, inadequate office space and poor state of the buildings where projects were based, did not reduce the service or commitment of the projects:

I have shadowed the caseworkers and saw the work they did in terms of keep going out to visit clients, liaising with the family, trying to set up meetings with the different agencies and trying to secure a response from them. The average person is not going to know the avenues to pursue but with an organisation like this they are going to try to help and make a change for that client. (Management committee member)

My guess is that individual clients would say that they get an excellent service and could not have coped without it. (Management committee member)

The project has raised the issue of racial awareness and race issues in our area, especially with key agencies. (Caseworker)

Summary

Clients and ex-clients were extremely positive about the level of service they received from the projects and caseworkers, regardless of whether the actual problems had been resolved or were ongoing. The response from both the projects and caseworkers enabled the client to address the problem they were experiencing from an informed position, within which they were given a range of options. However, some caseworkers felt that the work they undertook could often be overlooked because of the diverse activities many of the projects were involved in. It was felt that projects and agencies needed to remember that casework is a crucial aspect of the work of the support projects:

... without casework there would be no projects.

(Caseworker)

The following chapter develops on the sentiment above and identifies the potential of the support projects. The potential of the projects is as much about strengthening casework and meeting the needs of caseworkers as it is about ensuring adequate funding and developing new ways of supporting and responding to victims of racist harassment.

6 Potential of racist harassment support projects

Introduction

In highlighting national good practice to challenge racist harassment, Lemos (2000, p. 48) noted that support services for victims were in short supply. Their conclusion was that a support service for victims is more likely to be in areas where there is a specialist agency working on racist harassment. This current research offers an insight into what such 'specialist agencies' do, how they work with their clients and the impact of this work. This chapter aims to bring together the findings from the research and identify what the national and local policy implications of the research are.

Key features of support projects

The support projects provide a range of services to agencies, communities and victims of racist harassment in local areas. They offer a unique and dedicated service that aims to ensure their clients have appropriate information to progress a complaint. Casework intervention is process orientated in that projects do not promise that they can end the racist harassment their client may be experiencing but can guide and support people through a complaint procedure which often involves challenging agencies. Box 3 identifies key feature of the support projects.

Box 3 Key features of the support projects

- Offer a dedicated, unique and continuous service to the victims of racist harassment in their localities and beyond – empower clients through casework.
- Work with a range of agencies to achieve a solution for the client.
- Offer their services to all communities and respond to a range of cases covering employment, housing, police harassment

(continued)

and education, and the broad range of what constitutes a racist incident.

- Respond to changing priorities, communities and need in their areas. For example, outreach work with people seeking asylum and refuge.
- Offer their expertise and influence in the community to a range of agencies.
- Act as a voice for community frustration that can avert disorder in local communities.
- Act as a pressure group within their localities to press for change in local policy and practice in dealing with racist harassment, campaigns against miscarriages of justice and promoting community cohesion.
- Undertake community development and educational work with young people to raise awareness of and prevent racist behaviour.
- Be involved in third-party reporting centres.
- Encourage volunteering.
- Encourage reporting of racist incidents.

Responding to and validating racist experiences

Chahal and Julienne (1999) found that the experience of racist harassment was questioned, often disputed and generally misunderstood by agencies, and that the 'victim's perspective' was the first perspective to be lost in the complaint procedure of an agency. This current research offers evidence to suggest that caseworkers within projects are able to provide a service to clients that takes into account the experience and perspective of those people experiencing racist harassment. The projects are able to validate experiences of people and offer a route to some resolution. Projects do not say they can end the racist harassment that

individuals and families experience but can offer assistance, knowledge, guidance, reassurance and representation through process-focused casework.

Chahal and Julienne (1999) found that people experiencing racist harassment had to resort to their own resources for support, often because they felt isolated and overwhelmed by the task of processing a complaint through a variety of agencies. However, the current research shows that, where victims have received an intervention from a support project, the sense of isolation was reduced and many of the needs of the victim were met. Caseworkers and the projects have made a difference to the quality of life of their clients, as one ex-client observed:

People would be lost without the support group. They would have to perhaps rely on themselves and go inwards, which isn't such a good thing.

Support projects are distinguished from agency-led interventions in that they can offer a co-ordinated and dedicated service to their client. The response from agencies can often be fragmented because their primary role is not to support or advise the victim.

Caseworkers challenge racist oppression through a process of empowerment rather than challenging racism *per se*. However, the commitment of staff, volunteers and management committees to effect change within their local area has to be set against regular funding crises, particularly in funding caseworkers, poor office accommodation, minimum administrative support, agency inertia and casework overload.

The projects often challenge emotive and uncomfortable issues, for example, police harassment and deaths in custody. They have grown out of a gap in both service provision for victims of racist harassment and challenging the response and practice of agencies. In this sense, projects are a public good because they are working towards community cohesion and developing community safety strategies. Their place in the

wider public policy agenda of challenging crime and disorder makes them central players in local policy formation and practice-based work.

Strengthening the sector

The support projects are part of a sector that offers a service to victims of crime and the communities and agencies where these victims live. The discussion below aims to identify how the sector as a whole can be strengthened.

Funding

Clients, staff of the projects and management committee members were concerned by the funding crises that projects experience and their need for sustained funding. The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry identified that there was work to be done to enable an adequate response to the victims of racist harassment and questioned why funding for community projects challenging racist harassment was short term and often withdrawn when such projects seemed to be acting in a confrontational manner (Macpherson, 1999, p. 314). Often this 'confrontation' is because of how a local authority is seen to be responding to racist harassment.

The issue of funding and influence of support projects is sensitive. Support projects, by the nature of their work, are 'political' regardless of the funding source. The bureaucracy of monitoring racist harassment cases, training and raising awareness of agencies and limited school-based work can sometimes detract from casework as an activity which has political relevance in local communities. A number of projects commented that it is through casework that campaigns and the challenge to agencies about their practice stem. Further, it is through casework that individuals are empowered and offered knowledge about their rights. Casework also has the potential to effect change in local communities through mediation and conflict-resolution work with perpetrators and potential perpetrators and their families.

Withdrawal of funding to projects that are critical of how agencies are operating is essentially a strategy to close the project. The consequence of limiting or stopping funding means that casework, empowerment of local people and challenging oppression decreases or stops altogether. However, as has been seen in the cases where this has happened, projects have survived because their commitment is to a greater public good. Even where funding has ended and not been withdrawn, the projects survive. SARI staff, for example, agreed collectively to forgo the annual salary increment rather than be forced to let staff go. This strategy enabled the project to both retain valued and experienced staff and allow time to seek new funding. The resolve, resilience and commitment of the workers in these projects cannot be understated.

Given the importance and relevance of support projects to local community safety issues and community cohesion, the provision of support to the victims of racist harassment and multi-agency work, it is vital to ensure adequate funding for the projects. It is important to enable projects to maintain a core staff that are able to undertake casework. Often, it is the casework element that is lost when funding is reduced or cut completely.

Projects access funding through a variety of local and national sources, for example Comic Relief, regeneration initiatives, Community Fund and charitable trusts. However, a direct central government commitment to funding local community-based initiatives, particularly caseworkers, should be explored. Such a fund could be developed and administered through government offices in the regions, and could have attached to it a process and outcome evaluation of how victims and communities have benefited as a direct consequence of the project and its casework.

National network of caseworkers

The research found the support needs of caseworkers are often overlooked. They have multiple roles acting as advocates, advisers, offering emotional and practical support as well as working with external agencies to develop a multi-agency response to a complaint. The caseworkers in the research said they would benefit from a national network of caseworkers. The network would, for example, act as a co-ordinating body that responds to the effective development and undertaking of casework, and as a peer support for caseworkers. It would also develop and offer new methods of working, disseminate national information on victims' rights and develop training and courses for caseworkers.

National guidelines on racist harassment casework

National guidelines on casework should be developed. The role and methods of casework, the role of volunteers, befriending, and other areas of support, models and theories of casework should be identified. The guidelines would identify good practice in casework and be applicable across a range of organisations.

National accredited qualification for caseworkers

An accredited qualification for racist harassment caseworkers or those interested in working with victims of racist harassment should be developed and was recognised as a need by the support projects. The qualification should tie learning into the above guidelines but also provide caseworkers with skills development in, for example, legal remedies, mediation and negotiation, basic counselling, listening and note taking, and developing action plans with their clients. It should aim to improve the quality of responses to casework by being measurable across a set of learned standards.

Counselling support for caseworkers

An essential part of supporting caseworkers is to ensure that they have access to appropriate counselling support if required. All caseworkers said that having access to a counsellor would help them resolve and manage many feelings that came up for them. However, such support is not offered, nor is it part of current costing in the budgets of projects. This needs to change. Caseworkers should have access to counsellors in the area where they work and funding for this should be part of the overall cost of the project.

Improving casework practice

A number of recommendations relating to casework practice were outlined in Chapter 4. Two aspects in particular, though, are worthy of more strategic consideration. The first relates to counselling, the second to working with children and young people.

As with caseworkers themselves, there appears to be little consideration of the role that counselling could play in supporting victims. Not all clients are offered access or even information about the service of a counsellor. This needs to become part of the information giving by caseworkers to clients. Recent research (Netto *et al.*, 2001) has found that awareness of counselling among South Asian people who had not used the service was low, although all were experiencing stress, anxiety and depression. The research further found that, when they were informed about the nature of the service, many felt it would be useful since informal support available to them was limited. In cases of racist harassment, people often talk about the isolation and lack of support that is available to them. Counselling could offer some extra support and validation, and enable people to manage a negative life experience. Projects need to develop links with local counselling services and could offer training on racist harassment to counsellors.

Second, Chahal and Julienne (1999) found that children who experience racist harassment

exhibited physical and emotional symptoms, for example, bed wetting, feeling afraid, loss of self-esteem, which may require an intervention (for example, counselling, sustained casework support). There was little evidence that projects are equipped to deal with supporting and working with children and young people who are the victims of racist harassment. Although some projects do offer a service to young people through a youth or education worker, casework intervention was primarily adult based. This area of work needs to be expanded and standards explored and set in how the projects work with children and young people.

Building local coalitions of support

Finally, this research found that support projects do not on the whole involve themselves in working directly with perpetrators because their primary focus is to support victims. Projects would, however, say they work with perpetrators or potential perpetrators indirectly through schools-based and youth projects. However, given the general difficulties involved in gaining access to schools and the limited time that projects can spend working with young people, it is difficult to assess the success of such a strategy. Although these initiatives raise the issue of racism, they do not necessarily prevent it.

Given that most racist harassment occurs in and around the home and is largely perpetrated by young people, there is a need to undertake sustained work with local people to reduce prejudice and develop meaningful methods of conflict resolution. A report by NACRO (1999) suggests that mediation works and is valued by victims. Support projects are well positioned to be involved and even to develop these functions in partnership with other agencies, local communities and their clients.

Chahal and Julienne (1999) showed that people suffering racist harassment readily disclosed to

their relatives and friends. However, although some of the people disclosed to offered help and assistance, many did not, which increased the sense of isolation experienced by victims. In the current research, it is evident that caseworkers were on occasion able to fill the sense of isolation via a telephone call or a visit. However, the emotional support they provide is difficult to offer on a daily basis because of the competing demands of their work and caseload.

Projects could usefully engage those familiar people to whom victims disclose as a network of support. This would, first, have the effect of mobilising friends and family in the local area (or further afield), and would, second, offer those suffering racist harassment much needed regular contact, which cannot always be provided by a support project and which goes beyond the type of short-term contact a befriending scheme could offer. Building local support networks has the advantage of offering a community-based approach to victim support, where the victim is supported by local people who are known to them.

NMP launched a pilot befriending scheme to tackle isolation caused by continuous racist harassment. The scheme uses volunteers who are trained with counselling skills to give specific support in times of intense stress such as court visits. The aim of the scheme is to offer support over a two to six month period. Although this

initiative is to be commended, the current research suggests that, alongside this type of befriending scheme, support could be developed from within the victim's familiar networks and projects could capacity build ex-clients or existing clients to offer an outreach support service.

At present, the role of projects is fundamentally tied into supporting victims of racist harassment. This offers a much needed and highly valued 'sticking plaster' but, if projects are to adopt a stronger role in tackling racist harassment as a form of community violence, casework is unlikely to achieve this on its own. The victim, the perpetrator(s) and the community are interlinked and require an effective intervention that recognises this context.

Projects should therefore consider working with victims and agencies to identify who the allies might be within a neighbourhood and within familiar networks to create a coalition of support, develop conflict-resolution strategies, instigate awareness-raising campaigns and identify long-term prevention strategies in local communities. A community-based approach to violence prevention has the ability to impact the entire social environment (McElhaney and Effley, 1999), for as one client observed:

The ones that live around us are not all racist, there's only a small group that are racist. It's not like the whole community is racist, they are not all against us.

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