

Refugee agencies help and advice



November 2008

English

Are you a victim of racial harassment?

If you have been attacked, intimidated, or insulted because of your colour, race, ethnicity or national origin, then you are a victim of racial harassment. Racial harassment is a serious criminal offence and can take many different forms, such as:

- Verbal:** Offensive remarks, comments, jokes or threats;
Name calling or swearing;
- Molestation:** Abusive or obscene telephone calls or letters;
Dumping of rubbish outside your home or through your letterbox;
Creating persistent noise;
- Physical violence:** Actual physical harm or threats of such;
Damaging your home or property by, for example smashing windows or doors;
- Racist graffiti:** Written or drawn abuse.

Racial harassment is illegal. People who do these sorts of things can be prosecuted in the courts. Everyone has the right to live without fear of attack against themselves or their home or property. Authorities such as the police, local councils and schools have a duty to protect you and your family from racial harassment and to take action against the attackers. People who attack others because of their colour, race, ethnicity or national origin can be evicted from their homes, fined or put in prison.

What can you do?

If you are attacked then you should contact the police immediately. You can go to the nearest police station or dial 999 – tell the police that the attack was racially motivated. If you do not want to report the incident directly to the police yourself then there are many organisations that can help you speak to the police. You can speak to them confidentially about the incident and they will not take any action without your consent. These organisations include your local One Stop Service, Racial Equality Council, Citizens Advice Bureau, law centre, community centre or refugee group. As it is a crime, you should also report the incident to your housing provider. Housing associations and other non-for-profit organisations that provide housing for people in need as well as local councils have a legal duty to protect you from harassment.

You should keep a diary of times, dates and exactly what happened. This will help you remember exactly what happened and when it happened and will show the person helping you how serious the problem is.

Other leaflets are available at <http://languages.refugeecouncil.org.uk>

Asylum Support Partnership is a partnership project hosted by the British Refugee Council
British Refugee Council, (commonly called the Refugee Council) is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales, [No 2727514] and a registered charity, [No 1014576].
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How can you be helped?

There are practical steps that both the local council and police should take to help challenge harassment and support victims of racial harassment. They can:

- Identify the alleged perpetrators of the harassment and take appropriate legal action;
- Recommend that additional security measures are fitted by landlords;
- Inform the education department or school if a child is being bullied;
- Refer you to other organisations that can offer additional support and counselling.

Contacting Victim Support

If you think you have been the victim of a racist crime or incident, you can also contact Victim Support, which is the national charity for victims of crime. Victim Support provides emotional support, information and practical help. If necessary, they can contact other organisations on your behalf, such as police and housing departments. You can contact Victim Support by calling 0845 3030 900. If you don't speak English, an interpreter can be arranged. You need to state your language and give your telephone number and an adviser with an interpreter will call you back.

Remember, any of the above mentioned organisations can offer advice. Your local library and the telephone directory will have their contact details.

Asylum Support Partnership consists of:

Migrant Helpline, charity number: 1088631 www.migranthepline.org.uk

Refugee Action, charity number: 283660 www.refugee-action.org.uk

Refugee Council, charity number: 1014576 www.refugeecouncil.org.uk

Scottish Refugee Council, charity number: SC008639 www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk

Welsh Refugee Council, charity number: 1102449 www.welshrefugeecouncil.org