



REDUCING REPEAT RACIAL VICTIMISATION ON AN EAST LONDON ESTATE

Police Research Group - Crime Detection and Prevention Series Paper 67
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Summary

The aim of this crime prevention project was to reduce the repeated racial victimisation of a small number of Bengali and Somali families on a local authority housing estate in East London. In an earlier paper in the series (CPU Paper 36) the authors describe the initial research phase of the project, which identified the Bengali and Somali victims as those most likely to experience repeated violent victimisation which was racially motivated.

A variety of crime prevention measures were recommended to reduce this repeat racial victimisation. These included measures to improve victims' feelings of safety, such as improving the physical security of homes, running 'Streetwise' classes for young victims, and targeting police patrols to unsafe areas of the estate. Measures to prevent further racial attacks included taking punitive action against perpetrators, and directing young people from racist offending with the support of a detached youth worker. In addition, a Bengali revictimisation prevention worker was employed to encourage victims to report racial incidents to the statutory agencies, and to help agencies to make changes to their working practices and procedures.

This report describes the evaluation of the initiative. Whilst the data on victimisation indicated that the victims suffered less repeat racial victimisation as a result of the initiative, a number of other factors were identified as pertinent to reducing this victimisation.

In particular:

- under-reporting of racial crimes can occur because of the shame of being repeatedly victimised, because of fear of reprisals, language difficulties or because of previous poor responses to incidents reported. Building up the trust of victims is an important prerequisite for increasing reporting to

statutory agencies, as is providing professional interpreting services in order that victims can communicate in the language they feel most comfortable. Sharing information on racial incidents with other agencies, including voluntary and community organisations can also be helpful;

- as perpetrators are typically close or immediate neighbours, it is necessary for agencies to have clear procedures for taking prompt action against them. Such action can include letters or visits to perpetrators' homes by police and/or housing officers. Equally important is support and advice from senior management in the police and local authority, as is regular and comprehensive training for front-line staff which takes account of the fact that victims are likely to have been repeatedly abused.

Points for action

The police and local authority need to:

- be prompt in responding to all reports of racial incidents and in taking preventive action;
- respond to victims by actively listening to what they are saying, by asking if they have a history of victimisation, and knowing that the reporting is likely to be a 'cry for help', that the victim is likely to want the next incident stopped, and that there is likely to be a history of racial abuse against the victim;
- record all racial incidents so that repeat victims and perpetrators can be immediately identified;
- record all racial incidents reported to them by all other groups and organisations;
- refer victims to other agencies for emotional support and practical assistance;
- use, whenever necessary, a Language Line service.

The police need to:

- prioritise their detection and prevention work to respond to those most heavily victimised;
- set up a Racial Incidents Index so that officers responding to a racial incident know the history of victimisation at that address;
- have Racial Incidents Units to include detectives and crime prevention officers working in tandem to improve responses to repeat racial victimisation and to monitor the effectiveness of the Unit by the number of repeat calls to the Unit;
- set up an ongoing training programme on responding to ethnic minority groups, to include training on the initial contact with the victim(s);
- have officers in post long enough to build up community contacts, and maintain some continuity within the community to develop trust. This may require postings to last a minimum of three years.

The local authority need to:

- have procedures which include plans for action to protect victims, time limits within which specified action must be taken, and clearly defined strategies for dealing with identified perpetrators;

- have an appeals procedure for victims to use if they are dissatisfied with the service they have received;
- monitor their effectiveness to stop racial harassment by the number of repeat calls;
- train all staff to put these procedures into practice;
- liaise on a regular basis with other statutory agencies and with voluntary and community groups, sharing information between the agencies and planning joint action to stop racial attacks and harassment.

The victim should:

- keep a clear diary of all incidents with dates, times, nature of attack and description of perpetrator(s);
- promptly report all incidents to whoever they feel most comfortable with.

Other agencies/community groups should:

- have the same response as the statutory agencies, and in addition;
- obtain the permission of the victim to report all the incidents to the statutory agencies;
- ensure that where a victim reported to them, the victim is satisfied with the response they received.

Other related PRG research papers

CPU Paper 36:	Multiple Victimisation: Racial Attacks on an East London Estate.
CPU Paper 46:	Once Bitten, Twice Bitten: Repeat Victimisation and its Implications for Crime Prevention.
CPU Paper 48	Preventing Domestic Violence to Women.
CPU Paper 49:	Preventing Repeated Domestic Violence: A Demonstration Project on Merseyside.
CDPS Paper 63:	Preventing School Bullying

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