

Safe in the city

Brighton & Hove Community Safety Partnership

Supporting the
victims and witnesses
of anti-social behaviour (ASB)
and hate incidents

A good practice guide

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Introduction

A key role of Brighton and Hove Police & Brighton & Hove City Council is to support local partners to deliver high quality services that reduce the harm and vulnerability caused by anti-social behaviour (ASB) and hate incidents.

Brighton & Hove Community Safety Partnership has developed a **12 top tips** guide to working with people harmed by ASB and hate incidents. This guidance complements the Brighton & Hove Victim and Witness service standards for those partners who are signatories to them, as well as your own organisational policies and procedures.

Peter Wileman

Community Safety Manager

Brighton and Hove City Council

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Top-tips

1. **The impression your client gets at their initial contact will inform the future relationship they have with your service** – Our feedback shows this is vital. Customers may have had negative experiences of services previously.
2. **“What does the harmed person want?” should be asked as part of any initial assessment** – This is regularly not asked. Asking this question makes the harmed person feel listened to and involved in the solution. It may also help to manage expectations.
3. **Always give consideration to whether those harmed would benefit from being offered a restorative intervention** – Restorative practice puts the victim at the centre of the solution.
4. **Each victim should have a named officer responsible for co-ordinating their support and action plan** – Feedback tells us this is one of the most important things for victims of ASB and Hate Incidents
5. **Your support and action plan should be regularly reviewed and updated** - A colleague may need this information to manage any risk and harm in your absence, and it helps if the harmed person doesn't have to retell their story.
6. **Good information sharing is crucial in multi-agency working** – Remember to be clear about what you are requesting or sharing and why you are requesting or sharing it.

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7. **Make sure Police history markers are reviewed and kept up to date**
– It is vital that officers attending a property have the latest case information.
8. **Ensure that you have a good and up-to-date knowledge of local statutory and third sector support agencies** – They are here to support you and your service users.
9. **Refer all high risk victims and complex cases to the monthly B&H Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Tasking (MARAT) meeting**–
The Community Safety Partnership is here to help you find solutions to your most challenging and complex ASB and Hate Incident cases.
10. **Don't assume that because you don't hear anything from the victim the harmful behaviour has stopped. There are various reasons why the harmed person may stop reporting to you. Agree a contact timetable and stick to it** – Though we're all very busy, a one minute phone call can prevent misunderstanding and unnecessary work at a later stage
11. **With repeat victims, learn from them. What worked for them last time & what didn't work?** – Involving them in the action plan helps to empower that person at a time when they likely to be feeling most vulnerable and lets them know you take their concerns seriously
12. **Always send a case closure letter and request feedback about your service** – This gives clarity to the person you've been working with and an opportunity for you to know what you've done well and how you may be able to improve your service.

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Case study A

Family X – abusive neighbours and stalking

Initial contact

In September 2015 the Community Safety Casework Team (CSCT) were contacted by Family X. The family consisted of two parents and their 21 year old son CX who is LGBT. They reported homophobic verbal abuse, loud parties, deliberate banging and noise and drug use by their downstairs neighbours. This had been going on for several months and was worsening; tensions were heightened between both families and family X were concerned that this could lead to physical conflict if not addressed.

Initial actions

The CSCT carried out a HARA (Hate and anti-social behaviour risk assessment) and Family X was assessed as being of medium vulnerability (21/36). They were allocated a caseworker to ensure that they had a single point of contact to whom they could report further incidents and discuss any concerns with. Their caseworker also ensured that we gave regular updates about the progression of the case.

The family downstairs were visited by the CSCT. They were informed of the reports that had been made and that we would seriously consider legal action if the reported behaviour didn't stop. A history marker was placed on Family X's address and regular contact was had both families. The anti-social behaviour and hate incidents ceased and we closed the case in December 2015.

Further contact

In February 2016 Family X contacted the CSCT and reported that their son CX, who has learning difficulties, was experiencing stalking and harassment by an older male MT. MT had initially appeared to be a friend but was now sending repeated abusive texts to CX and his parents. MT was regularly appearing outside the families' house & telling CX that he was watching him.

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At the same time CX was also experiencing homophobic verbal abuse within the neighbourhood from visitors to a neighbouring property. CX was receiving support from the Community Learning Disability Team (CLDT).

Actions

The CSCT visited Family X and agreed a support plan with them. Information requested from Police identified that MT was a violent offender with a history of sexual offences. CX informed the CSCT that he wanted to report MT to the Police and he was supported to make a statement cataloguing the incidents involving MT. As a result of this statement a PIN (Police Information Notice) was served on MT, warning him to stop his behaviour or risk arrest. Whilst occasionally CX would see MT in the street and be stared at, there were no further abusive text messages and MT stopped visiting the area where CX lived.

With regards to the homophobic abuse that CX had been subject to within the neighbourhood he asked that we didn't engage with the perpetrators and agreed that he would report any further incidents to the Police and the CSCT so that this could be monitored through our regular contact with him.

The CSCT liaised with CLDT to ensure that they were fully aware of the situation and could work with us to ensure that CX was fully supported. We worked with CX to improve his self-esteem and reduce the risk of future exploitation. The CSCT referred CX to a local group for young LGBT people to provide him with extra support and opportunities to meet peers. We informed staff at the project of our work with CX so they could recognise any potential risks and report them to the Police and the CSCT. CX loved going to this group and made many new friends. Although the possibility for future unwelcome attention from MT still existed, CX felt a lot safer and he and his family are aware of how to raise any concerns with services. CX told the CSCT that the problems in the local neighbourhood had ceased.

Outcome

The family were very appreciative of the support and interventions that the CSCT provided & at the time of writing in July 2016 there has been no hate incidents or crimes for four months.

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Case study B

Family Y – Racial harassment & anti-social behaviour

Initial Contact

In August 2015 Police were called by the female single parent of Family Y following the family's return from a week away. They'd returned home to find their back fence vandalised and a padlock broken off the gate leaving the garden insecure. Family Y are Council tenants and also reported these concerns to the Housing dept. As the house backs onto an alleyway where young people often congregate the family felt particularly vulnerable.

The mother was extremely upset by the vandalism and felt her family were being targeted due to their ethnicity. She said that there had previously been issues with neighbours including rubbish and dog faeces thrown into their garden and racially abusive comments made to her and her two sons (ages 6 & 7), but following actions taken by Police and Housing the situation improved. Finding themselves once again targeted caused considerable distress to the family.

Mum told us that she was also experiencing racial abuse from children at the local school where she worked and which her sons also attended. One of her sons had been assaulted, a pupil had spat at her and her sons and other children at the school had racially abused them. Mum Y felt that the school had not taken the racial abuse seriously and that they were not managing the situation appropriately despite her having spoken to various teachers.

Family Y have no other family living locally and Mum spoke of feeling very low, anxious and stressed and told us that she had been prescribed anti-depressants by her GP. Mum was also undertaking further education and said that recent incidents had led to her having to take time off from her studies.

Initial actions

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The Duty Housing Officer (DHO) carried out a Risk Assessment and the family were assessed as being medium to high risk. A police history marker was placed against their phone number and address and additional locks and spyholes were installed on their doors. The DHO provided Mum with their name and contact details and explained that a case officer, their Specific Point of Contact (SPOC), would be allocated within 48 hours. The SPOC made contact with the family to establish further facts of the case and what outcomes the family wanted. It was agreed that the SPOC would contact Mum on a weekly basis to provide updates and reassurance, and that Mum could contact her if she needed to inform about any further incidents or discuss any aspect of her case.

Further casework

The SPOC referred the case to the MARAT – a Multi Agency risk assessment and tasking meeting. At this meeting, Police agreed to install an overt camera at the family's home which would also overlook the garden. The MARAT also tasked local Police to increase patrols in the area where the family lived. The family were also referred to a local agency that provides support to Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) families.

The SPOC visited the family with a Police Schools Liaison Officer (PSLO). Mum wanted parents of the children who had been targeting her family to be spoken to and the children spoken to and educated around their use of racist language. The SPOC and PSLO then visited these households and they were warned about the potential risk to their tenancies should their children's behaviour continue. The children were spoken to with their parents present and they agreed to write letters of apology to Family Y. Family Y really appreciated these letters as they had come from their suggestion that the children be directly spoken to and meant that they had been involved in resolving some of the issues affecting them.

The issue regarding the school was discussed with the Community Safety Team (CST) who then supported Mum Y to identify what she wanted from the school and what she wanted to happen in future should any of her family be subjected to racially motivated incidents.

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An officer from CST supported mum to speak to the school and agree an action plan that:

- Developed Acceptable Behaviour Agreements for all of the young people involved
- Ensured a clear reporting and feedback process was put in place
- Reviewed the school policies regarding responding to hate incidents
- Supported Mum to make a formal complaint to the school using their complaints process

Outcome

Although the Housing and CST work was effective in addressing the immediate issues for Family Y, Mum reported that her family no longer felt safe living in their home. She explained that she felt permanently “on edge” and that one of her boys had begun bed wetting and sleep walking. Mum was signed off sick from work and only left the house to collect her sons from school.

It was agreed that the family should be supported to move and a Priority Transfer was agreed. Having moved, Mum soon reported that her family had settled into their new home and had made friends with their neighbours. Mum returned to work and also resumed her studies.

Mum was asked for feedback on how the agencies involved had managed the case. She reported being hugely grateful for the support given to her family and commented that she was always kept informed of what was happening and felt able to contact professionals if necessary. She also said that she would not have been able to continue her studies if it wasn't for the support she received. She is now qualified in her chosen field.

Special thanks to Kenna Kendall and Jonathan Ridley for providing these case studies.

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Local contact details

For further advice and guidance regarding ASB and Hate Incidents in Brighton & Hove

- Brighton & Hove City Council Community Safety Team
CommunitySafety.Casework@brighton-hove.gcsx.gov.uk
01273 292735
- Brighton & Hove Police Safe In The City Team
ASB&HateBrighton@sussex.pnn.police.uk
- For advice regarding restorative practice and interventions contact Tim Read
Tim.Read@brighton-hove.gcsx.gov.uk
01273 294628

B&H Safeguarding

- For any child protection concern please contact
MASH@brighton-hove.gcsx.gov.uk
- For any adult safeguarding concern please contact
AccessPoint@brighton-hove.gov.uk

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Thank you to everyone from
the Brighton & Hove
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Partnership who contributed
to this guidance

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