

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

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 local Multi Agency Risk Assessment and Tasking (MARAT) 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. 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.