

## BELGRAVE NEIGHBOURHOOD CO-OPERATIVE HOUSING ASSOCIATION RACIAL HARASSMENT POLICY

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### *Aims of the racial harassment policy*

The following are aims of the racial harassment policy:

- To ensure that no member, resident or staff member lives in fear of racial harassment or violence
- To make a strong statement that the co-op will not tolerate racial harassment or violence and will take steps to eradicate it

### Delegated Authority

- 1 The co-op's Management Committee has delegated management of the racial harassment policy to its service provider who is authorised to:
  - respond to complainants
  - initiate actions as set out in this complaints policy
- 2 The service provider will bring all incidents and allegations of racial harassment to the attention of the co-op's chair or, in their absence or where the chair has a conflict of interest in relation to the issues raised, another Management Committee member, and will agree with them actions to take.
- 3 Racial harassment cases that require significant actions to be taken will usually require Management Committee approval. Urgent action should usually be approved by the chair and the service provider.

### Identifying racial harassment

- 4 The report on the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry (1999) defines a racist incident as "any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person". Racial harassment and abuse can occur in a variety of forms. Whilst this list is not exhaustive it indicates the range of unacceptable behaviour:

- racial abuse - verbal and written
- racially abusive behaviour such as spitting, threats, theft, offensive items left on doors and posted through letterbox
- physical assaults on victims, their dependants and relatives
- incitement - stirring up racial hatred by a variety of means such as petitions, leaflets and stickers
- damage to property - such as racist graffiti and slogans, bricks through windows and doors, damage to cars, other possessions and arson
- threats to wellbeing or life - such as lighted matches or rags being put through a letterbox
- behaviour such as wearing racist badges or insignia. Circulating racist material or material from groups known to be racist via social media.
- racist graffiti.

## Racial harassment statement

- 5 The co-op will not tolerate any level of racial harassment or violence affecting its members, residents or staff. All co-op members, committee members, residents, staff, contractors and others should be encouraged to establish a climate where harassment is unacceptable to help deter perpetrators.
- 6 No one should live in fear of racial harassment or violence. The co-op commits itself to ensuring the safety and security of all people involved with the organisation. It recognises that some, particularly those from black and minority ethnic communities, are more likely to experience racial harassment. To this end, the co-op will take firm action to eradicate any form of racial harassment.

## Victim centred approach

- 7 Racial harassment should be defined by reference to the victim's perceptions of the cause of their harassment. The co-op will take every effort to ensure that victims of racial harassment are aware of their rights and what remedies are available to protect them. The support and advice of

community groups and agencies should be sought to enable an effective response.

### Tenancy or contractual breach

- 8 Racial harassment will be considered a serious breach of tenancy agreements which can lead to their termination.
- 9 The co-op will also consider racial harassment to be a serious matter in relation to staff working for contractors employed by the co-op.
- 10 The co-op will deal vigorously with racial attacks and harassment and use every available legal action against perpetrators, including prosecution and eviction. It should also provide practical support for victims of racial harassment to protect them from further harassment and work in partnership with other agencies to create an environment which encourages racial harmony.

### Criminal proceedings

- 11 If a crime has been committed and the person wishes to pursue the matter, the Police should be contacted immediately since delay may prejudice the outcome of criminal procedures.

### Learning from experience

- 12 The co-op's Management Committee will carefully monitor any incidents of racial harassment and, having sought feedback from victims, learn from any experiences. The co-op will ensure that it publicises its commitment to combating all harassment.

### **Potential risks to be avoided**

- Members, residents, staff or others may become victims of racial harassment
- The co-op is not perceived to take a firm enough stand against racial harassment and therefore may be perceived to potentially condone it
- The co-op does not establish a culture of being against racial harassment