

Chapter 6 EXPERIENCING & COPING WITH RACISM

Themes in this chapter

- Racism: extent and locations of vulnerability
- Racism within the general public
- Racist attitudes among neighbours
- Attitudes to racism among service providers
- Policing and reporting to the police
- Coping with racism: self reliance versus reporting
- Building confidence in reporting
- Impact or intent – where should appraisal begin?

Experiences of racism – an overview of extent and locations of vulnerability

65% of the sample described experiences of discrimination and prejudice stemming from other people’s negative and unwelcome reactions to their ethnicity.

Table 6.1

The number of people who....	...described experience of discrimination and prejudice	...had had no experience of racism	...didn’t comment on experience of racism.
	111	18	41
% (of total sample ‘n’ = 170)	65%	11%	24%

Most of the participants described experiences relating to unwelcome behaviour from the general public, or experiences of prejudice and discrimination centred on a single location. However, 29% of these participants, reported negative experiences in more than one location.

Table 6.2

Number of locations	4	3	2	1
Number of people	1	6	25	79

The sources of perceived racism were as follows:

Table 6.3

Encounters of prejudice and discrimination described by 111 participants, were experienced in the following locations:	
Location/ sector	Number of people
From members of the general public	55
Education	28 (of which 9 FE/HE)
At Work (as employees)	23
Neighbours	18 (of which 7 were social housing locations)
Local Council	7
Health	6
Leisure	4
Police	3
Social Services	3
Voluntary	3
Prisons	1

In the sections to come in this chapter, these experiences will be illustrated with many quotes and further discussion. Experiences of racism at work however, are described separately in detail within chapter 7, which looks at Black and Minority Ethnic working lives, and racism in education settings is discussed in chapter 8.

In addition to the participants' reports of their own experience, 17 people also described incidents that they believed other Black and Minority Ethnic people they knew to have experienced at work, and a further 28 described concerns about prejudice experienced by peers in other settings. In other words, in addition to the negative experience of 65% of the participants, at least 27% had their fears about racism confirmed and reinforced by awareness of similar experiences among peers.

This chapter also brings together an analysis of the way that people cope with their experiences, their attitudes to agency intervention and some of the factors that inhibit people from reporting incidents to third party agencies and employers.

Participants reporting no experience of racism

Firstly, we should also examine at the circumstances where participants did not report negative experience:

Participants who stated they had no experience of prejudice or racism.

Of the 18 who stated they did not have any experience of racism in Devon

- All but one spoke English as their 1st language or very well.
- 13 lived with white family members.
- All were professionals or students in the Education and Health sectors or their partners were, or were retired or business owners.
- None of these respondents practised a faith at a place of worship other than a Church.

...and 11 later qualified their experience with the following comments:

- ☞ *Local community quite broad minded. But need to get rid of prejudices of some of the older people.*
- ☞ *I find it hard to make English friends.*
- ☞ *I'm concerned how any kids we would have would fit in. We'll cross that bridge when we come to it. We'll see how nice people are.*
- ☞ *When I came to [the UK] there were no other Indians about so I had a kind of cultural detachment.... I chose to be here. So when in Rome do as the Roman do. It's very important to integrate in the host society. But personally I don't want to be assimilated so that I lose my identity. I consider myself as an English man as much as anyone else, but I am still an Indian*
- ☞ *The UK is more human and accepting of cultures and interested and friendly than in Denmark. I have been in Denmark for 18 years and can't get a job because I look different and my name is different.*
- ☞ *I don't get remarks because I don't look Arabic.*
- ☞ *I don't meet problems as much as when I was younger. You look and behave a certain way when you're older.*
- ☞ *Racism more of a problem in Hospitals than in the Practice.*
- ☞ *Being a nurse means that elderly people tend to rely on me and call on me for help.*
- ☞ *I'm German born and Jewish but I'm very anglicised - so it doesn't show. So I assume the rudeness is just general.... There are no reactions to my ethnic identity because I don't know anyone and so they don't know I'm Jewish.*
- ☞ *No reactions to ethnicity – I blend in perfectly...and don't mention the war!*


Whilst they had not had direct experience of racism, these participants made tangential references to racism regarding:

- the invisibility of their ethnicity,
- the evasive/adaptive action they had taken,
- the relativisation of current experience to previous worse experience,
- and worry about the future

These references indicate that concern about discrimination and prejudice was nevertheless present for them to some degree.

Their correlating personal circumstances as

- professionals
 - fluent speakers of English
 - attendants at a Christian place of worship or none
 - and as people who lived with White family members
- also appear to have combined to provide some buffer against encounters with racism. One couple's comments illustrate this buffer:

 *I think [my husband's] life is easy because people feel relaxed with him as soon as they see he speaks English. English is a huge advantage. Also being married to an English woman makes life easy because your partner will help provide a direct link into the community. Two foreign people would feel uncomfortable.*

The 40 who didn't comment on what experience they had had of racism comprise of:

- 12 who were recently arrived international students at an HE college
- 10 who were English as an Additional Language students whose tutors decided not to conduct the second session in which issues relating to personal experience of discrimination were covered.
- 5 were Black and Minority Ethnic participants who focussed on discussing their observations of other Black and Minority Ethnic people's experience, from their standpoint as community support activists
- 5 participants took part in unstructured discussions and focussed on other issues of interest to them.
- 2 Chinese restaurateurs who spoke none or very little English.
- 2 elderly members of an urban sheltered housing scheme who have moved from rural areas to the scheme

- 1 who does ‘*not yet participate in community life and fears other people’s reactions to ethnicity and hides this fear*’.
- Another who talked about dealing ‘*with reactions to ethnicity by explaining about own culture*’.
- Case-work records of a person for whom the police have sought support from DEREK because of fears about persecution from the complainant’s family.
- A Bangladeshi restaurant owner.

These comments indicate that among these participants were those who had had no concern about racism, but there were many with whom further discussion would have ascertained the extent of any negative experiences. With this in mind, we can expect that there is a strong possibility that more than the 111 participants who reported prejudice and discrimination, had experienced it.

Let’s examine the variety of settings in which racism was experienced:

1. Public Forum
2. Neighbourhood/ Community
3. Institutional / Organisational settings
4. Within the context of Leisure/ Tourism

1. Within the Public Forum

Unwelcome/negative experiences from members of the public were a common feature of life for over half of the people who described experiences of discrimination and prejudice. An insidious aspect of prejudice coming from among members of the public is that it’s impossible to protect oneself against it. Take for example the case of an Asian woman, newly arrived in North Devon, who came back to her car in the supermarket car-park, to find a vicious, racist note on her windscreen threatening ‘*we know who you are, we know where you live....*’. The case studies and quotes that follow in this Chapter illustrate how incidents like this one come out of the blue and without warning from all kinds of directions and in many forms. They undermine self-confidence and are typically impossible or difficult to respond to. Identifiable evidence of motive or even of the perpetrators is often absent. The ability to decisively counter prejudice and discrimination is often impeded by the subtle form in which it is made felt. Individuals on the receiving end of prejudice become insecure with feelings of self-doubt, and guardedness creeps into the way


that relationships with service providers, colleagues and acquaintances are encountered.

Chapter 7 also examines the difficulty of evidencing the roots of discrimination and prejudice as racist, with the undermining effect on the victim. It also examines the McPherson definition of a racist incident (emerging from the Stephen Lawrence murder case), institutional racism, and at the emphasis of the new law under the Race Relations Amendment Act (2000) on *impact* rather than intent.

Despite the exposure to poor behaviour and negative reactions amongst the public, many participants were at pains to emphasise that these adverse experiences did not negate their appreciation of the mostly good relationships they had with the people in their local communities. Several participants described how they felt that the only way to change public attitudes was through their own endeavours to make one to one relationships and gradually transform individual attitudes. However, others were keen for a wider-spread means of challenging and changing public attitudes to race and diversity, and making life feel safer. The issue of prejudice among the public and the effect it can have, sheds an interesting light on ‘community safety’ work done through District Race Priority Action Teams under Crime and Disorder Partnerships. In this light, there is a need for such Partnerships to tackle the conceptually big, but necessary task of public awareness raising and attitude change, as well as responses to reported incidents, in order to help Black and Minority Ethnic people to feel safe in the community.

In the box below, there are a number of quotes from participants, illustrating the types of reactions they have experienced from the public. The issue of addressing public attitude change is discussed further in chapter 12 where it is put forward by the participants as a key recommendation for further action.

Reactions from the public – examples of experience

 *Here because there are fewer Black and Minority Ethnic people, people stare at you like an alien and don't accept you because you don't speak English. Here people are so unused to dealing with foreigners they don't get used to dealing with other languages - it's not necessary because they are racist. But in Brazil we always try to help foreigners - it's not so much like this in the UK. Lots of people think you just come to England because it's very poor in your own country and you come here to beg.*

- ☞ *Racism is shoved under the carpet in this area.... One of the bad things about living in Devon is the lack of knowledge about diversity and the 'backward' ways! I feel it took many years to be accepted into the community as one of the few brown faces around here! I had to work hard to be accepted and felt a lack of confidence about myself. Some people in the shops have been unfriendly, I've felt very uncomfortable picking up my children from school and some pubs here don't welcome outsiders. Racism in rural towns is usually very subtle.*
- ☞ *I was invited to lunch with a retired head-teacher neighbour who had another friend there too who said ' why are you married to a Pakistani? Aren't English men good enough for you?'*
- ☞ *There are lots of posh old people [here]. They didn't want to mix with me – they didn't sit near me or respond to 'hello'. I can see the dislike on their faces.*
- ☞ *Going out with my [adoptive family] was worst because people would look and Mum didn't understand how I felt. Mum said 'well at least you're not disabled'. I was the only Black person in [the town] until I was 17 years old so I'm very paranoid and insecure. My daughter experienced her first incident in [...] where she was told by a boy that she wasn't allowed to play outside.*
- ☞ *I haven't had any racial experience, but some people peep through the windows and look. My sister met another little girl who came to the house and was frightened to see me and wouldn't come back to the house because I was Black.*
- ☞ *Sometimes I'd rather not talk because the truth is not good. It's a problem that could not stop overnight because there are particular people (not all) who have no mercy for us because we are Black. It is quite a shock for me because when I was little I was caned by my guardians not because I was Black but because I had done something wrong. Some people cause me grief because I am Black. I am shocked and worried by this and ask myself what have I done. Some people it is the way they are - you can't change them. Even those who are OK now you can't guarantee they'll be the same for ever. Some people are using the police to suppress me when they have done me wrong. They do bad things to me then call the police and tell on me even when they are in the wrong. Some people make offensive comments when I busk.*

- ☞ *Before I thought remarks were just because they didn't like me. I didn't think of myself as Asian - I now do.*
- ☞ *Get questioned all the time about where you are from and asked 'why's your hair like that'. Perception that I'm a Black expert is annoying. The frustration of living here is that people just don't get it that we should respect each other and are all living together... The instant anonymity you get when shopping in larger areas like Exeter Bristol and London is a relief.*
- ☞ *I have great difficulties in dealing with the innate xenophobia of Devon people - without realising they're doing it. Their manners and so on. They see me as a 'spy' when I reveal I'm foreign. Devonians have very little contact with the outside world except through tourists so they're very unfamiliar - they can't cope. We were ordering a sofa and the person saw our name and said 'oh, you deal in olive oil'. My wife was called by a gas company saying 'we're entering you in a competition for the most interesting name' - we found out there was no such competition.*
- ☞ *I'm not getting on with people because I'm always in the house because people don't welcome me nicely. I'm worried about having the same experiences as my husband. We stick to ourselves. But when people come to Africa we welcome them nicely. But when we come here they treat us as though we were not human. I feel it's better to go back to Africa because of the way people treat Blacks here. It's difficult for a Black man to move on in a white man's country. The worst thing about Devon is the reason why Black people are not welcomed in houses in Devon and not treated as brothers and sisters when we haven't done anything wrong.*
- ☞ *When we first arrived here there were no other Asians. Everyone drew breath when they saw us, and stopped and gathered and stared. I realised I was something unusual like the lion had come into the town. People went white when they saw me they said 'he's coming' with fingers in their mouths. You could see all the women coming out to watch and gossip and decide what to do.*
- ☞ *The village is dispersed - not many people live in the centre. I didn't meet anyone for a month and then went to a coffee morning. The silence and staring when I walked in was un-nerving. If you take part in things and join in you get to know people, but I don't feel close to*

people. 20 years ago people weren't used to incomers - people were all related. Now it's changed. 20 years later I haven't got much closer to the villagers - most of my friends are incomers. It's a shame.

- *People don't look at me and think I'm Jewish. People make racist comments not realising that I am a minority. Some customers came into the office and made comments about poor hospitals in Oxford going down hill because all the cleaners can't speak English. There's lots of low level stuff. People here make racist jokes as part of their culture of humour - it's not necessarily meant with malice, but I wish they wouldn't say it. At a wedding a friend said 'what are all these bloody Jews doing here?'*
- *People in the street call me a gold digger and baboon - this is very common. Consequently I don't allow the children to go shopping without an adult because they get depressed and it's dangerous.*
- *People did look at us with suspicion, perhaps because of my headscarf.*
- *I was verbally abused by old ladies in the street - 'oh my God not another monkey' they said.*
- *My daughter was blue-white when she was born and I wouldn't take her out because people thought I'd stolen my daughter - it was awful.*
- *During the Iran Iraq war people were very supportive. But sometimes people were rude saying our surname in a funny way. It makes me annoyed.*
- *Everyone always asks "Why are you here?" Some do understand. People here get to know you are a refugee because they always ask you. Some people are nice. Other people smile at you but inside they don't like you. People say "your country is good - why are you here?" They think we left home because of poverty. People don't know what war is like. In a big city at least you could meet people from your own country. People here don't know that the war in Congo was caused by France and their business interests in the country. People say "go home, our government will give you food"!! Do they think we are here for lack of food, for the fish and chips?? My country has food! I didn't need for food there!*
- *I'm uncomfortable about exploring Devon because of looks and*

glances and comments – it doesn't feel safe because of the lack of welcome.

- 🗨️ *In London I didn't have to explain myself. Devon is more subtly racist but I've managed to become OK here about being British.*
- 🗨️ *When out in town people are negative towards me. People move away from me. It makes me feel uncomfortable. People suspect me. People ignore me if I ask for something.*
- 🗨️ *Youth shouting at me in town is one of the bad things about living here.*
- 🗨️ *We were shouted at whilst waiting for a bus and forced to speak English*
- 🗨️ *Bad things about life here include being verbally abused sometimes in my own street and being called Osama Bin Laden and the generally ignorant attitude of some people. I feel like a stranger in my own street. Hassle from lads on way to sports centre. Other kids have also been harassing me in the High Street. A girl told a lad off for being a racist thug - it was really good to hear her pull the lad up. There's lots of verbal abuse since September 11th.I had an allotment but one of the holders objected to one of the wardens about a Black person (i.e. me) having an allotment. The warden pulled him up and said 'Indians have fought for us'. I was really glad he stood up for me. My father was in the British army in World War II. Lots of people make rude comments about my turban, ignore me in the shops and are rude when I'm getting on a train - a chap blocked my way onto the train.*
- 🗨️ *Last week I was waiting at 11.30pm for the London bus, and a drunk man with a bulldog confronted me, wanting to know "are you local". He kept asking me this. He wanted a fight. There were no police around to help. He used the F word every other word. I just kept quiet. Fortunately the bus arrived. But if he had fought me, I couldn't have defended myself – the police would give me problems because of my refugee status. It makes me suffer to feel I can't stand up for myself.*
- 🗨️ *I got stared at by White people here at first - I had blonde hair then, a London fashion. I also used to wear combat clothing and bright*

clothes. That's probably why people stared at me. Devon is quite ignorant of other cultures, especially out in the sticks. A neighbour said 'I'm so fascinated by you, you're so pretty'. She was worried too that her kids would be rude but they weren't. Older Indian women started at me in New Look - possibly because I was with my White English husband and my mixed race kids. Sometimes I do feel that I have to explain how come I have such a broad London accent and where my folks are from/what nationality. I don't like people making assumptions that I'm from Pakistan etc. I get very annoyed with this. I would rather people asked me what my background is. In London, especially after September 11th, people of colour assumed I was the same and wanted to know why I was married to a white guy and disapproved of it. I used to hang around with people of all ethnicities but this met with disapproval. Colour stays with colour – whether you're Asian or not, according to them. Prejudiced attitudes are not so much in your face in London though. BME people don't state the case in your face, nor English people. People here didn't cast any judgement on us - maybe because they think 'she seems a normal kind of girl and speaks and looks normal'. But I could see people wondering if I spoke English and that they were so relieved to find I could.

☞ *People wouldn't come near my partner because of the Black baby. So we don't go out now. We get stared at when we go out.*

Participant concern for the experiences of Black and Minority Ethnic peers:

☞ *Some local Black and Minority Ethnic people have said that they don't feel comfortable at local post office.*

☞ *Over the recent years there's suddenly more Black people around - the Indian restaurant, my Black brother-in-law, mixed race kids. The changes in community makeup have been accompanied by an increase in racism.*

☞ *I know less than 5 other local Black and Minority Ethnic people but their situation is easy as they were born here. But I heard people making racist comments though.*

2. Neighbourhood/ Community

After public, education and employment settings, a person's home neighbourhood was the fourth most likely environment in which our


participants would experience racist attitudes. Experiences ranged from name calling, campaigns of intimidation including petitions for eviction to fire bombing. A feature of the impact in this setting, is that the home, (a place that most people take for granted as a daily retreat from the pressures of the outside world and a key source of a personal sense of security,) becomes a place of threat and anxiety. Victims often feel left with the only recourse being to move from the setting of abuse - the ultimate 'achievement' for perpetrators of abuse. However, we also heard of situations in which the abuse featured a double bind in which victims were rendered unable to move, either because of the failure of social housing agencies to respond to the problem adequately, or because the abuse had made a person's home unsaleable.

Some examples give some insight into the problems faced by families:

Neighbours - examples of experience

Case notes:

Family racially abused - things through letter box, father abused in street, things thrown at him by White people..... Family has also been fire-bombed.

 *Neighbour's 5 dogs roaming over and fouling property. He parked on our property, treating our private land as his own. ...Pieces of meat, a deer leg and other bones strewn in our pond area....We decided to talk to [the neighbour] about mis-uses of our property and to request that he kept to the letter of both of our deeds. He became abusive. He subjected my wife to racial abuse saying 'you haven't been here five minutes and you are trying to tell me what to do. Go back to where you came from you Black bitch. Get off my land. F off you black bitch.....If you want trouble I'll give you trouble you Black cow.' He kicked a bucket at us hitting my husband on the leg. On advice from the previous owner we phoned the police. After the police involvement [they warned him of charge if further trouble] he has been careful not to racially abuse us but has threatened us by saying that he will make us wish we had not come here and he will make our property worthless. He has carried out acts to do this by continuing to do the above 3 things and littering our drive with one burnt out butcher's van, a derelict caravan, 3 large metal butcher's trolleys, plastic and other rubbish strewn everywhere, pallets left all over the place, meat trays just inside his yard visible to us. He and his brother come here late at night, after midnight, make lots of noise, driving fast, radio blaring and other noises, to keep us awake.....He has tried*

to cause damage to our buildings by towing galvanised cattle feeders at speed through the right of way so that they fly about. He has demolished part of our wall by our gateway.... He is attracting rats and flies into our ground by leaving dog meat and bones at the boundary with our property and not tidying up after feeding his dogs...Rats have now taken up residence about our boundary walls..... He washes the dog mess, hoses the dog sheds out straight into our pond. [Saw neighbour trespassing one night and called the police. Neighbour phoned complainants twice threatening them. ' Why don't you F off you nigger'. Police came to take a statement].

- ☛ In Devon in the past my kids have had lots of racial abuse from local people - name calling and threats of physical violence. The kids were both born in Devon so I'm very angry they're getting this racist abuse. It mostly happens from neighbours to the extent that my son was afraid to go outside. My son used to sleep with a hammer next to his bed. Fortunately they moved, but we'd had no help in the situation from anyone. The worst was 11 years ago. But my son still sleeps with the light on - he's 18. They had an extended family who all got involved in the abuse. We bought the house with double glazing already in. These neighbours complained to the council that we'd put it in illegally in a conservation area. Then their kids starting throwing stones. Then we put up a fence to stop the neighbours throwing rubbish into our garden, then the council said it was 1½ inches too high....*

Participant concern for the experiences of Black and Minority Ethnic peers:

- ☛ We had a Nigerian neighbour who has moved to another estate. Her son had racism - the kids at school wouldn't play with him because he was Black. The neighbours wanted her to leave the estate. Her husband is a professor at the University.*
- ☛ I'm aware of some Black and Minority Ethnic people through our work and have heard some stories of racial abuse against 3 families - for example crap through people's letter boxes, graffiti and cars driven at people.*
- ☛ I heard that some people have been attacked and rubbish put in front of their doors.....*

We also noted that in many instances of neighbour abuse, where victim families had children the abuse was sometimes aimed specifically at children or used as a means of undermining the whole family through

targeting the children. We also noted that perpetrators often involved their children in their campaigns of harassment. In the light of this and line with the findings described in chapters 8 and 10 it seems wise to advocate that all cases should involve distinct impact assessments of the likely effects of abuse on children, including those children who are being used as vehicles of abuse. Whilst the result of this impact assessment should lead to the involvement of those parties who can support children, such as schools or social services, the ability to conduct impact assessment should exist within the services who are first called upon to respond to abuse. Furthermore, if child vulnerability is flagged up in a case, additional priority should be given to case resolution.

3. Institutional / Organisational settings

Several cases reported in the research demonstrated the poor ability of agency staff to understand the nature of racist abuse and to conduct an impact assessment and engage in effective support. An aspect of concern that runs as a theme throughout this research, is both participants' and agencies' preoccupations with the evidence of racist motivation in their response to a case, rather than on victim support that addresses the impact upon a victim. We have already clearly seen in the case of neighbour abuse above that antagonists can perpetrate their racist abuse through subtle but forceful means and without the use of racist language. These are issues with which agencies, in particular those acting as social landlords, need to contend.

Local Council - examples of experience

Case notes:

Neighbour abuse case, involving stalking, staring through windows, verbal abuse and threats of violence: Victim has asked to be moved to other accommodation, even though she feels that she should not be the one to be chased out. However, the council has said that because of the nature of her tenancy, she cannot move for several months. An enforcement order has failed to stop the abuse. Housing officer came back from leave (during which victim had been keeping diary sheets as instructed) and won't act or correspond with victim unless the victim reports to the police first. Victim feels: *'do I have to wait for him to bash me up before I can get the police involved? She has spoken to a policeman who said 'I can't see it ending - where do you want to move?'* The PC said he would speak to the Council again about relocation. Victim feels the housing officer *'has led me up the garden path asking me to keep in contact and writing diary sheets. Is she*

jeering at me?’ Victim cannot prove racist intent, and knows previous tenants have also been driven out by the aggressor, but feels that the perpetrator is working on her sense of vulnerability as a Minority and her ease of identification (- perpetrator has picked her out for abuse in other towns). Victim feels that the council has not understood the impact of the harassment.

☞ *I'm not sure if it's because [of my Minority Ethnic identity] - but I can't prove it. It's underground – not in your face. If you talk to politicians and the police they say it [racism] doesn't exist. I'm the only Minority Ethnic person in this work in this area - this is why it makes me feel that racism is the reason why we're the only [provider to be excluded from local planning]. My name stands out. A Councillor has had a vendetta against me for the last 4 years. It started when we were in another building. He tried to close the building down so it could be used by a housing association for development land. We had been there for 4 years. ...[complainant put proposals for accommodating their service to the council which were rejected]..... The Council wrote to us saying sorry we can't re-house you. We moved to a property owned by a private landlord. 4 years later the landlord wants to sell to [an organisation] on which the same Councillor sits. He's been using his position in [these organisations] to see our confidential files and use them in his [other capacities] - possibly illegal. I think he was trying to find things against us in the files, but there isn't any anyway. He's never met me. I've seen him in council meetings. He's never personally responded to any of our letters to him. He won't respond to our requests for direct communication.The problems with the neighbours [previous case of overt racial harassment] make me think the problems with the Council are racially motivated but I can't prove it. It's such a feeling of powerlessness especially because I'm not dealing with just an individual but with institutions who have political might. I know they'll say it's all my fault and that they've tried to help. The Councillor has effectively denied that we exist whilst covertly undermining us. I'm afraid to involve other people for fear they'll get the same treatment*

Case notes:

Campaign of intimidation by leading members of village establishment against a settled traveller family trying to establish a home on their privately owned secluded land. Planning officer has been helpful but

placed in a difficult position because of local animosity. Planning Committee member believed to be influenced by the antagonists – one was seen embracing him after a committee session in which the member opposed the application and in which a delegation of villagers attended to heckle and lobby the committee to reject the application. Midwife also involved in harassment, and complainant believes midwife was using her professional status to provide information for the harassment campaign at its worst period during complainant’s pregnancy. When the couple first bought the site a member of the Parish Council tried to get an enforcement order served to prohibit them from settling. Complainant went to see the woman to try and reconcile the situation but the woman rejected this. Anonymous signatories used the tactic of signing evidence forms to claim that a footpath ran along the complainant’s land. This was judged unfounded and dismissed by the investigating officer as “a stick to beat your neighbour’s back”. Most letters of complaint to the planning office are written carefully making it difficult to describe any one in isolation as hate mail. In addition to letter writing campaign, harassment has also included verbal abuse, local incitement and defamation of character, and provocation attempts with the intent of capturing an angry response from the complainant on concealed tape recorders. Harassment has also taken place at son’s school.

Health – examples of experience

A Muslim participant described repeated instances of prejudicial comments from surgery staff:

☞ *An incident (twice) in my local GP surgery insisting that my son should have a CHRISTIAN NAME - what sort of a Father am I not giving a child a CHRISTIAN NAME. Then went on to look via surname, which naturally indicated FIRST NAME then the penny dropped. Upon complaining, the GP & staff were reassuring that it will be brought up at the next meeting. But it happened again by another staff. PCT need to be informed to set up some means of training for race relations*

Case notes:

Case of European patient in hospital. In neighbouring bed, patient had a visitor who realised she was German and verbally abused her while she was own her own. She couldn't do anything about it, but told her husband who immediately reported it to the nurses who said they'd keep the visitor away from her but they failed to do this and visitor has abused her again.

Case notes:

Case about Black elderly patient's treatment whilst in hospital. Wife went into ward to visit him and curtain was around him - he was asleep with two string beans pushed up his nostrils - the staff said he did it himself. Case investigation unable to establish for sure what happened. The wife felt her husband generally wasn't being looked after, because she'd complained.

4. Within the context of Leisure/ Tourism


In chapter 5 we examine the participants' sense of inclusion and belonging in the local community. Most people who described their sense of belonging talked about it in terms of their participation in local activities and leisure pursuits. However, the number of people with leisure time interests outstripped the number of people taking part in organised or group activities. The chapter examines some of the factors that prevent people getting involved. Chapter 7 also looks at the importance of attracting the Black and Minority Ethnic customers to Devon's leisure and tourism economy. One of the factors that can exclude people from these facilities is the experience of racism in leisure settings, and the examples below illustrate that experience.

A number of cases were reported of Black and Minority Ethnic women and men suffering racial attack in night-clubs, with abuse sometimes coming from staff as well as customers. One Minority Ethnic participant, once a bouncer himself, described the usual context:

Leisure

☞ *Foreign males get picked on by locals more than foreign girls, and usually when the local men are drunk. I also saw a mixed race man who is the manager of the local sports shop getting attacked and beaten up one night a year ago at the night-club. The man tried to stand up for himself and it got worse.*

☞ *My partner played semi-pro standard football in Turkey. He wanted to play for the local club but the manager wasn't interested and said he should play for another town first. So he did that but they put him in the reserve team. He offered to play in the local training group and the manager said he wasn't interested and his experience didn't count for anything.*

 *I saw a Black family being sent to other accommodation because they were Black in one village. I could see it from the facial expressions.*

Policing and reporting to the police

Most of the instances in which we heard about police involvement were in cases handled by the Racial Equality Council. On the whole, police intervention was positive, and we'll look at successful measures to follow.

In some instances, however, police incident appraisals and attitudes were described as unhelpful. In some cases, complainants felt that incidents that had been reported as racist were not treated as such. We also heard from some police officers themselves, about their dissatisfaction with the level of training they had had on race equality matters, in spite of a wide training program in place as standard now within the Devon & Cornwall Constabulary. One Black participant described a key problem being the different ways in which different police districts within the constabulary appoint officers to deal specifically with racist incidents. In some areas, he felt that there was too high a turnover of the officers who were appointed to race related designations, with the effect that Black and Minority Ethnic people had no time in which to build up relationships of trust, and officers had no time in which to gain experience and develop understanding. It was also pointed out by a police officer that officers with no specialist interest or training in race equality were being given a specialist role for a short time, without being the right person for the job. The benefits of trying to mainstream police ability to deal with racist incidents by giving as many officers as possible experience of race issues can be argued, but for the participants who raised the issue, the outcome did not provide the effects they required. The way in which specialist designations are organised and appointed varies between districts, and new measures have also been introduced to appoint civilian equality officers to deal with all the themes of diversity. The benefits of the various new arrangements have yet to be seen, and a factor that all of them will have to address is the willingness of victims of incidents to report them.

Reluctance to report is a key problem faced by the police and support agencies. The research indicates that the problem hinges around the way that incidents are seen and appraised by both the victims and police.

Three cases illustrate the way in which incident assessments involved a focus on the perpetrators' interests or a victim's response to provocation, at

the expense of dealing with the victim's original experience of racism or the impact on family.

Case notes

One case involved a complainant who had a criminal record, but whose family was experiencing racial harassment. The complainant's partner's diary describes a police focus on the aggressive behaviour of the complainant in response to local hostilities and in response to his dissatisfaction with the police response to the impact of the community harassment on his family. As described in education cases in chapter 8, this case demonstrates how behaviour in response to racial harassment - often more easily identified than the harassment itself - can lead to the issue of racism and its impact being obscured in the analysis of the prima facie scene of the victim's response. In this case, the analysis led to a heavy handed police reaction to the complainant, an increase in frustrations, which in turn led to compounded impact upon the child of the family who was suffering intense mental distress as a result of the community harassment. A better informed and enlightened impact analysis would have placed the child's interests at the centre of the case with agency responses wrapped around concern for the child and resolution of the community harassment case.

Case notes

In another case, reliance on evidential facts resulted in the prosecution of a victim of a night's worth of racial harassment. The victim had complained to bouncers in the nightclub who did nothing about the harassment. In the final provocation, the victim responded with a punch that was recorded on CCTV. The CCTV had not recorded the night's verbal harassment.

Case notes

A focus on the perpetrator rather than the victim's interests in one case involved a police officer who knew the perpetrators and, in discussions with them, breached confidentiality with the victim. The officer, whom the victim felt was biased towards the perpetrators, was later removed from the case and action was taken against the neighbours for breach of the peace.

Whilst police have to deal with any incidents of aggression displayed by victims, failure to assess racist incidents in terms of impact upon the victim can lead to an increase in frustration and provocation of inadvisable responses by the victim. Lack of resolution for victims can lead to negative effects even into the future. We heard of one young adult who was known by a case-worker to have experienced a history of racial abuse in his

childhood. As a young adult, his frustration was provoked again in an incident in which he was arrested for 'reverse racism'. The case-worker account indicates that the provocation and his history were not explored in the police case.

Failure to address the impact of racist incidents on victims, or ignoring the identification of an incident as racist result in lack of trust in the police to deal with racism, preventing future reporting and lack of confidence among peers of the victim. One participant described how he saw an incident experienced by an elderly Black lady but, based on his past experience of police having failed to take a case of his own seriously, he did not report the incident to police because he judged they would not act upon it.

By contrast we heard of some successful police interventions that built victim confidence in the service and provided case resolution. But given that intervention is often successful, why is reporting still so low?

Building confidence in reporting

One of the factors which participants described as inhibiting reporting is the fear that intervention might in fact exacerbate and attract unwelcome attention to a problem. For example, the victims of the neighbour fire-bombing case did not want the police involved. In another case, the involvement of a Minority Ethnic case worker was valued by the complainants in overcoming language barriers, but her presence in itself was felt to run the risk of adding to their sense of exposure in a hostile neighbourhood. They also felt that the harassment might have a negative impact on their business and wanted any intervention to be as low key as possible. A participant who described harassment at work explained that he hadn't involved a Union because he wasn't a Union member any longer. He had let his membership lapse because he hadn't perceived his Union to be doing anything of supportive value. Perhaps a lesson from these observations is that to raise public confidence in the reporting process, the public has to be informed about successful intervention and thereby convinced of benefits that it can bring (without compromising confidentiality).

Let's look at examples of successful interventions by the police and other agencies, shared by the participants:

Responses to racism– successful third party interventions

☞ *The police have to deal with me because the staff don't speak English. The Police did then bring in an interpreter. The staff felt much more comfortable and could say everything which gave clarity - a good thing. We had lots of support from local people. [In another incident] everyone was loaded into the van and the police sorted out the perpetrators from the victims in the station. That's OK if there are weapons and violence. If it's verbal abuse it's best to sort it out on the spot.*

☞ *I sought help from the local police who would warn or remove the offenders – the police were very helpful - I wouldn't still be here if it wasn't for the police.*

☞ *The supervisor supported me by telling staff that she could understand me and could 'interpret' for people. She also always said things to boost my confidence and was always on my side.*

Case notes: Neighbour abuse case. Police put pressure on council to take action and police installed CCTV. The abuse stopped and harassers moved out.

Case notes: Neighbour harassment case. Racial Equality Council Complainant-aid process pursued neighbour's breach of tenancy agreement to 'allow neighbours quiet enjoyment of their property'. Consequently, offensive neighbour was evicted as breach of tenancy agreement.

Case notes: Neighbour abuse case. Complainant had lost faith in agency intervention because of poor handling of the case by police and the local council. When complainant approached the council, officers said they only had other worse estates and that this was the best place for them, although they agreed to put the complainant on housing priority list, and subsequently offered relocation for the family to a flat. Complainants were also told that action could not be taken without witness evidence with which to take harassers to court. Complainant contacted the Racial Equality Council who lobbied for priority action and got things moving. Complainant review of the REC help stated: *'I found the support and advice received from the REC invaluable. It was extremely beneficial for me to be able to speak openly with someone who fully understands the ordeal my family and especially my daughter was being put through. And to have someone voice our complaints and be heard. The knowledge and expertise of the REC advisors are needed here in Devon and Exeter as racial intolerance is widespread and the need to have confidence in*

representation is of the utmost importance when dealing with racism. Too many times I felt that my complaints were being brushed under the carpet. Now that I have the REC representing my family, results are being achieved and my daughter is aware that there are people out there other than her family who have her well-being at heart.'

The following case study illustrates how a victim's confidence in seeking external support was gradually built with positive action from the police:

Case notes:

Victim was harassed repeatedly by young people in his village.

☛ *I didn't report it because I wasn't hurt. The police want people to report but what can they do? I need to know how reporting will help before I do it.....*

My wife said I shouldn't complain about the abuse as I'd get thumped. She doesn't want to deal with it but has to especially now we have a daughter. Even my daughter's name will attract attention. We will need to think how to deal with this. I hope things will improve in the future.....

At first I tried to reason with the lads but they hurled verbal abuse of a racist nature at me. A group of 10 kids did the same thing again. I told my wife and said I was worried because my father (70 years old) was coming to visit. On the 5th incident it got worse and I went to the police.....

They were very good and recorded it as a racist incident and asked for descriptions of the ring leader. They offered to drive with me to Karate to find the lad on the way. We went to the disco place and I identified him from the police car. The officers took me to the karate club and went to speak to the lad. They said he had an attitude problem. They tried to talk to his parents and the lad denied everything. After the second visit from the police he admitted the abuse. Police asked me if I wanted an apology from the boy but I said there was no point. I wanted the lad to change his attitude.....

But the incident with the kids in the street worries me - is that kid scarred for life because I took him to the police? I did that to nip it in the bud before he got violent in the future.

Coping with racism: self reliance versus reporting

In this last case study we can see that, despite having been under attack in his own street, the victim worried about the impact that a police record

might have on the young ring leader and questioned whether he should have resorted to police help after the 5th incident.

It seems that a common feature of victims' and agencies' analysis of how incidents should be handled, is a focus on the source of the racism to the exclusion of its impact. The natural consequence of this is that support for the victim is relegated to the bottom of the procedural list for appraisal of an incident – often by victims as well as agencies. In the case we've just heard, the victim even put the perpetrator's interests before his own.

As mentioned already in this chapter, problems usually begin with the appraisal of incidents in the light of intent (i.e. whether the incident was specifically racist or not) rather than impact on the Minority Ethnic victim. The Stephen Lawrence inquiry resulted in some points of clarification about what constitutes a racist incident and the factors that cause a racist impact, including unwitting factors within institutions (see chapter 7). However, these messages do not seem to have been heard or grasped by victims themselves or by agency staff, including some police officers.

Typically, participants have described experiences in which they cannot evidence racist intent because of the absence of racist language or because, whilst the total picture of an experience adds up for the victim to exclusion, discrimination and harassment, its component parts are judged insufficient to make a case. We also found that for many participants, previous experiences of racism set the background against which participants made their own evaluations of future experiences. However, participants are aware that this sensitization to patterns of discriminatory behaviour informs them, but not external onlookers, who often only have sight of part of the picture and typically focus on hard, easily verified facts as opposed to process and experience. In turn, participants are reluctant to pursue their case for fear that they will be judged as over-sensitive or neurotic, and for fear that agencies will be unable to respond to their situation. In the face of the prospect of having one's vulnerability exposed and picked apart, dismissed or mishandled, participants often opt to cope on their own, absorb the impact, and put incidents down to experience.

In fact when we asked where participants would go for support, or had gone for support when they needed it, we found that 59% either didn't know, had found no help, or would depend entirely on family or friends. 41% described recourse to a number of third party sources, and several of these people had turned to the Racial Equality Council or had had police involvement. But many of the people whose cases had experienced third

party intervention from non-race equality specialists were unhappy with the outcome of the intervention, or had had their cases referred onto the Racial Equality Council (REC). Specialist workers in the REC and the National Association of CABx 's Rural Race Equality Project, also described how complaints found third party intervention problematic, either because of the lack of local race equality specialists, or because agencies whose action was needed to resolve a case took too long to respond to the advice of case-workers.

Table 6.4 Participants' information and support sources.

	Family or friends	Source other than family or friends	Participant didn't know/ state	None when needed
Women	13	28	39	9
Men	3	41	25	8
Sex unknown	1		2	1

Impact on individuals and their coping strategies

When we analysed participants' ways of coping with incidents, a number of other factors also emerged as having an impact on low reporting rates or the way that intervention is perceived:

- The health impact of incidents inhibit pursuance of cases because of victims' worry about effect of further stress
- The belief that the case will not be heard because it will be seen as 'not just a problem for Black people'.
- The problems experienced having reported an incident: failure of agency/employer to take action or to respond to case-work intervention.
- Legal loopholes making racism difficult to prosecute.
- Unawareness that incidents can be reported to someone or that specialist support is available.

Some comments and case notes below illustrate the issues. Further examples of the factors inhibiting reporting are also covered in chapters 7 and 8 which look at racism in Workplace and Education settings: These relate to participants' worries that the people who have responsibility for dealing with racism in their organisation will be resistant /unable to make

an appropriate response to reported concerns, or that reporting will lead to increased vulnerability in the setting.

Unaware of sources of specialist support:
<p>☞ <i>I feel it is their problem but it can be upsetting. People are very subtle. I tell people then I forget it. I was not aware, until very recently, that you can report racist incidents. If I need help I'll turn to Dorset / [Devon] REC - before I wouldn't have had a clue who to turn to.</i></p> <p>☞ <i>I wish had known about the Racial Equality Council at the time of the [incident] – then I wouldn't have had to resolve the situation without support.</i></p> <p>☞ <i>I went to the CAB to get advice after I got dismissed. They asked if it was racially motivated but I couldn't provide any evidence. They set out my rights and gave good advice. But they didn't tell me about the Racial Equality Council. This interview is the first time I heard about it. I'm surprised to hear it existed.</i></p>
Fear of health impact of reporting:
<p>☞ <i>I wasn't well - I'd had a heart attack, so I didn't push it....My wife is also seriously ill.....I would fight if there were less personal pressures to cope with and if I was younger..... I cope with all these problems by just getting my head down at work</i></p>
'It could have happened to anybody else':
<p>Case notes neighbour abuse case: Involved estate with lots of general neighbour problems. Perpetrator had mental illness and was problem for other neighbours too. Complainant didn't want to take further action on that case, but just wanted reassurance, due to isolation and feeling that she could be a target for racism, that the police would attend if further problems arose.</p>
Problematic experience of response to reported incidents:
<p>☞ <i>I talked to my Line manager at [the factory] about the racism, but the manager didn't care and didn't take the matter further.</i></p> <p>☞ <i>I tried taking it to various senior staff and no-one would help. People think 'oh well it's your problem' and won't challenge offensive behaviour</i></p> <p>☞ <i>I talked to the REC once but the person I spoke to didn't feel the REC was a vehicle to deal with the harassment I was suffering. I regret that now. (White Jewish participant. Note: REC is now addressing</i></p>

issue of assuring support to victims of persecution linked to religious identity.)

Case notes:

University refused to communicate with complainant in response to her complaint. She contacted DEREK and we have contacted hospitals and university asking for a meeting, but they have dragged their heels/ 'playing games' and are procrastinating.

Case notes:

Police have interviewed other people on estate who have confirmed that the abuse is going on. Police are visiting regularly to show support. Meanwhile Housing Association has now offered another property but near the housing estate where the abuse is taking place- so no good. Housing Association haven't paid family a visit and have ignored Case-worker phone calls and letter and told her it is not a priority case. Family want to move but without getting high profile because of their business.

Racism 'within the law'

Case notes (unfair dismissal – language ability cited as grounds):

Firm won't communicate. Firm has acted within the law: There is no way to resolve this because of the probationary period. He is clearly very skilled, and discrimination definitely appears to be at work.

Because of participants' fear that their experience will be challenged or dismissed by onlookers who are insensitive to a victim's perspective, many participants also adopted self-reliant coping strategies:

- Coping strategies of absorbing incidents and ignoring perpetrators
- Coping strategy of keeping 'low key' to avoid escalation
- Coping strategy of integration into the community to evade negative reactions

These last three strategies also, by their evasive nature, also preclude reporting. With the options boiling down to fight or flight, most victims are unconvinced that fight will provide protection. Moreover the figures above indicate that many people have no idea that support is available for their case.

Some case notes and participants' answers to the question *what is the way in which you deal with people's negative reactions to your ethnicity?* illustrate the extent to which self-reliant strategies are dominant in people's response to experience of racism:

Absorbing and ignoring incidents:

- *Still to be who I am.*
- *But you can't change people. You just have to change yourself.*
- *Cope with racism by ignoring it.*
- *We ignored them.*
- *Deal with it by ignoring reactions to ethnicity.*
- *I'm not bothered now. I ignore it as much as possible, if there is a reaction.*
- *Try to ignore it but talk about it if they are interested.*
- *But if someone is rude I will ignore them*
- *Accept it - I just left it to experience. An information access office would help to make life better.*
- *There was no way to counteract the lunch date attack because it was so vicious.*
- *I let it pass.*
- *You learn to accept things as part of everyday life. To ignore it.*
- *I cope with rudeness by thinking to myself that one day they'll realise that I'm the same as anyone and I can do the job.*

- *When problems happened and people picked fights, I had to cope by shutting my ears to it. But as a student I would hit back. My advice to other kids is just ignore it - if you talk about it, it creates more of a problem. People can only shout so much for example 20 times, but they have to cool down eventually.*

- *I have suffered a few racist incidents but have trained myself to ignore them. Having lived here for many years, I have learnt to ignore prejudice.*

- *When I get depressed and worried about people's reactions I cope by thinking how it would be for a white person in Zimbabwe, which makes me think that's how it's supposed to be - that's part of life.*

- *I look at them and ignore them - I don't get too concerned. Even in Hong Kong people get abuse - for example English people in Hong Kong get it. I don't say anything back because if I do it gets worse.*

- *My sons cope with prejudice by ignoring it. The boys handle it well and usually never get into fights. You can't control people but you can ignore them. The boys are also very popular and are the leaders in their team of friends. We cope by avoiding abusive people. On the*

whole it's good here, otherwise we wouldn't have stayed for 28 years. We believe its better to make friends with everyone.

☞ *Meeting nice people is what makes life bearable. So you have to put incidents in context of all the good things that happen, to cope. But then I'm a secure middle class person with no language problems. I'm not someone getting abused daily in a factory.*

☞ *We tried to talk to the parents but they were aggressive and said it was my son's fault which led to shouting matches. None of the abuse was directly made to me - my younger son suffered most. I'm very resilient so I brush minor incidents off. I ignore it when the neighbours say “go back to your own country” and “everyone used to talk to each other before you came here” because they're only one family.*

☞ *I'm a positive person so despite the bad feeling I don't let it affect my performance. My faith helps me very much to keep positive.*

☞ *I rely on my Christian faith not to allow people to upset me*

Keeping a low key:

☞ *I won't do anything about it now because if I do I'll be identified as a rebel.*

☞ *I think people have to be fairly low key and be seen to be respectable.*

Neighbour abuse case notes:

Didn't want to get police involved. Don't want to stick their heads up, esp. since daughter is local teacher and aggressors who are young people still at large. Last year went away in the summer to avoid hot spot trouble with young people in summer holidays. Daughter wanted to play everything down too. She felt that she and her brother can look after father and told him not to go out too much. Suspect that someone in their street is also a perpetrator.

Neighbour abuse case notes:

Complainant won't allow DEREK to report to Police. Caseworker has been to visit. Caused lots of local comment because caseworker is Black – caseworker offered to speak to neighbours but the family didn't want this. They said they would consider mediation. Caseworker got mediation service involved. They set up meetings. Case resolved now according to complainant.

Integration:

- 🗣️ *I know 2 other women from Hong Kong. But they're both professional and integrated - which means they have the different ability to cope.*
- 🗣️ *Because of this I became self-conscious and more aware of the contrast with the way people in town look. Now my clothing has changed - 1 month later I dyed my hair brown so they didn't think I was insane and wanted to lock me up. I wanted to blend in and not look so different. Young kids at the college wear grungy clothes, but here there's an age group for everything - you can't show what you feel like inside in the way you look all through your life.*
- 🗣️ *I don't wear Islamic clothing. If you present yourself as different you will definitely meet discrimination.*
- 🗣️ *I think there's less racism in the countryside because people are less stereotyped and because people get to know each other in rural areas and integrate because the numbers are fewer and because people are literally in the minority people don't feel threatened by the minorities.*
- 🗣️ *Integrating is the important thing – you have to integrate at least 50% to fit in, in any country. This wasn't difficult for me because of my Indian -British heritage.*
- 🗣️ *Acceptance takes some time.*
- 🗣️ *I know less than 5 other BME people in the community, and for whom life has not been easy although much depends on their willingness to integrate.*
- 🗣️ *Racism depends on how individuals integrate into the local community. People have to be resourceful and cope and integrate into the local community to cope in a mixed race marriage. You have to have curiosity to find out what's available and overcome shyness. I can see how people could take offence and become a 'secret sufferer', but I don't so I cope better. If you do suffer you have to take responsibility to make people aware they're hurting you.*
- 🗣️ *You need to blend into the community. You shouldn't stick out.*
- 🗣️ *All minorities here have to fit in. Pushing for improvements puts peoples' backs up. When in Rome live as the Romans – you can't get mad if people don't understand your culture.*

☞ *I chose to be here. So when in Rome do as the Roman do. It's very important to integrate in the host society. But personally I don't want to be assimilated so that I lose my identity. I consider myself as an English man as much as anyone else, but I am still an Indian. At the end of the day you're an individual.*

☞ *When I first started work for the organisation prejudice came from colleagues and so I didn't talk much because I was frightened. People thought I didn't talk English I was so quiet. But I gradually joined in things and got accepted to the point where people said 'you're just like us'!*

In addition to the strategies of playing an incident down or taking measures to avoid the line of fire or attracting prejudicial attention, participants also described a number of other self-reliant strategies as their response to racism. Most of the responses can be typified under the following headings:

1. Defusion (often with humour)
2. Confrontation
3. Encouraging explanation and discussion about the offensive incident
4. Education
5. Building a positive personal profile in the community
6. Helping people to be honest but sensitive in their inquisitiveness

Participants' self reliant strategies and advice:

☞ *I'm still called the N word and black bastard - it makes me feel bad and angry and violent, but now my [Black] friend stops me being violent. And now I just ignore it or say "I'm proud of it mate". It diffuses the situation because they can't say nothing back. I picked this up from my[Black] friend when he said this to a boy who was picking a fight at a disco. These fights are usually because their girlfriends fancy me.*

☞ *My sister wouldn't live in Devon because she feels she'd stick out like a sore thumb. My attitude is if they're looking let them look. The way you feel depends very much on your attitude. My father walked across [the local] bridge saying good morning to everyone - he was very popular.you learn to respond with humour or make them feel uncomfortable. Your reaction depends on how it comes over. For example someone last week said 'you've got to come over to a do we're having' - it was for the elections.....they said 'You add a bit of*

colour to the place' - I didn't know if they were being sarcastic or whether they mean my personality, you know. It depends on you as to how you receive that. You have to weigh up who it's coming from and see what they're meaning and decide whether to shrug it off. So sometimes you find same person who made the comment, maybe in a meeting, will make another later. Let the first one pass and be ready for the next. You get an instinct for how to deal with it. In a meeting then you can kind of glean from what's on the next meeting agenda if something is likely to come up. You know their weak points by then and you can get back at them through these. You can make the comment right back across the table. 9 times out of 10 it works. Sometimes you get backlash. Or you could bring up a complete discussion - you can say 'Chair why are you allowing this to happen'. What doesn't work is if you make a big issue out of something if you haven't yet got the facts about. Think things through and establish the facts first. Then get the Chair to deal with the person - 'this was said' - especially if you're not confident Sometimes I say 'I feel this way about what you've said...' or sometimes I make them feel uncomfortable - it depends on the situation.

☞ My way of reacting to the 'baboon' incident was to smile and laugh and say hi. This enables me to set up a relationship. Ultimately it leads to friendship. Body language can help. I deflated one situation by walking sturdily through a group of youths who were behaving aggressively.

☞ I stood in the Karate position and the kids ran away.

☞ I had a meeting with the staff to talk about ways of not escalating the problem. We take each day by day. I am aware it could happen to me myself but I'm not aggressive and would deflate a situation with nice words. It's a small community so we see the perpetrators next day and if nothing more is said we know it has stopped. My advice is try to deal with people in a soft way. It's the best way to deal with people with hot tempers.

☞ I tell parents to tell their kids that my daughter looks like people where Jesus comes from. I also told school to 'do something about it or else'. To kids at school where I teach I explain that I have been here for 26 years and am British in all but name and don't approve of Bin Laden despite being Arab. My response to discrimination is "tell me why you've just said that" and pursue the dialogue and explain why they're

wrong.people who have the most entrenched point of view are people from very disadvantaged backgrounds and want to blame it on someone – the Sun readers and people vulnerable to Sun propaganda. Also middle class people who don't want asylum seekers and refugees to lower the tone of their street.

- ☞ *I used to say 'I'm from my mother's womb' in reply to people asking 'where are you from?'. Due to my involvement with the REC I have woken up to what racism is about. Before people assumed I was educated about race relations but I wasn't. Asian people don't know about race relations and rights. I am more aware of racism. Before I thought remarks were just because they didn't like me.*
- ☞ *To a man who verbally abused me at the station..... I said 'what have I done to you'.*
- ☞ *I follow my solicitor's advice: I always try to be polite either in person or in the letters in response to the correspondence sent to me, despite provocation from the locals.*
- ☞ *I don't mind being called a WOG – this means Westernised Oriental Gentleman and I am happy to tell this to people who call me WOG – it shuts them up. An old TV series also helped me to develop coping mechanisms – 'Love thy neighbour' was a series about a Black and a White family that would now be un-PC, but which taught me loads of useful civilised, disarming retorts*
- ☞ *I sometimes respond, depending on who I'm with. If people say something about Jewish people - it's usually to do with money and tightness – for example a person at work commented on the Tesco's car parking charges saying 'oh well they're Jews'. I let it pass but I could have said 'I'm Jewish and my family isn't mean'. At a party I heard people making racist remarks. I said 'I'm finding this conversation really offensive. Am I the only person who feels like that?' It took courage to say it though. I feel strongly about prejudice and sweeping statements and assumptions. People like having someone to blame. People don't stop and think. You can't say something everywhere because it becomes too much of an issue - my friends think I'm a left wing odd ball. I don't want to get on a crusade. People down here are quite conservative. There's lots of prejudice down here. Not many people feel like me down here.*

- ☞ *I deal with reactions to my ethnicity by explaining about my own culture.*
- ☞ *By making well relationship*
- ☞ *By explaining where I come from and introduce them to the background of my ethnicity.*
- ☞ *You have to indulge their ignorance by educating them. (Ref: racism in older people)*
- ☞ *It made me feel I have to be very careful what I do and say - even now. I coped with reactions in the community by helping to post letters and change light bulbs during my community visits - I always kept one step ahead to the point where people were in tears when I left that job.*
- ☞ *I can't reply with anger back on the phone to bolshy clients because of my accent - people will pick me out. Other staff can give gyp back. But I have to be more careful than the other staff about what I say and do and about where I go. It makes you feel on edge. Other staff can fight back. I can't. Each word I say has to be to the point and carefully placed. But this is also what leads to success in delivering a good service.*
- ☞ *The family group conferencing modus operandi would be a good method for working with BME cultures. The professionals are invited to the conferences to offer info on support services. But the families and friends are the decision makers.*
- ☞ *I think it's best if people are just blunt and come out with it when they want to know about ethnicity. They could say 'I'm really curious, I just wanted to know/ am fascinated to know where you're from'. It's the way they put it across that's important. And it may be easier for people to ask where your family is from.*

Most of these response strategies involve the participants in weighing up whether to engage someone who has been offensive in conversation. In many cases, participants will judge the situation as a lost cause. Some participants also described how the ferocity or blatant prejudice of the attack left them speechless and unable to respond. This was also a feature of the experience of many White service-providing staff who told us that they were so confounded by racist comments when they heard them, either

because of their ferocity or because of their subtly couched terms, that they felt unable to take a stand. Hence one participant's recommendations to: wait to make a response; think the issues through and prepare what to say; and then be ready for any future repetition of the incident, or purposefully raise it as an issue when ready; and get the support of someone else to help with airing the incident.

To report or not to report, that is the question?

What are the connotations of complaint (which is after all, what reporting an incident involves)? The dictionary and thesaurus give a handy reference:

To complain

Dictionary: To express feelings of pain, dissatisfaction or resentment;
To make a formal accusation or make a formal charge.

Thesaurus: Murmur, whine, grumble, grouch.

The connotations are not positive in nature. They involve exposing vulnerability, pain and discomfort. In addition they indicate that complaint runs the risk of upping the ante and being seen yourself as a pain, an inconvenience, a problem, having revealed your own pain to others.

To see reporting in a positive light involves a focus on a successful outcome, on the quality of life being improved post reporting and on reporting itself being a positive experience. However, this research indicates that five key points act against the positive image of reporting, or even preclude reporting as a question to be considered at all:

1. Victims and agencies tend to focus their analysis of prejudice and discrimination, and the decision whether to report, on the incident itself and on appraising how hard the evidence of intent is, rather than the impact on the victim. The image of a successful reporting process does not enter the picture in this analysis.
2. Many people do not know that the opportunity to report and get support exists.
3. Often support is unavailable to people where they need it
4. People often experience the reporting process as a negative or even get knocked back, which reinforces the impact of the primary incident.
5. People don't know about the things that *do* make reporting a successful experience.

In the absence of positive marketing of successful experiences of reporting and case resolution, and without race equality support specialists being readily available to victims, it is not surprising that Black and Minority Ethnic people are so reliant on their own coping strategies - in particular on keeping low key and taking the impact. The consequence is that racism goes unchecked in society, and layers of unresolved experience compound themselves in Black and Minority Ethnic experience. Chapter 5 looks at the multiple layers of isolation experienced by rural Black and Minority Ethnic people. If experience of racism is one of those layers and it has not been satisfactorily redressed, the potency of that experience can heighten the sense of isolation overall.

The descriptions of experience we have heard in this research, indicate that tackling racism requires a preventative approach but also effective support which Black and Minority Ethnic people know they can access with confidence. Confidence building requires good experiences and good marketing underpinned by the existence of good, accessible support.

Creating an environment for safe and accessible reporting

The foundation stone for building a people's confidence in the process is to provide them with place of safety through which to engage with it. A person who has reached a point of crisis sufficient to provoke them into seeking out a relationship with a source of support is a person who already feels unsafe and will feel less confident about exposing their vulnerability to an unknown. By contrast, if a person already has a good relationship with a support- source for purposes other than complainant aid, the opportunity to open up and raise concerns is made easier and safer. This is reflected in some of the participants' feedback, in which they said they would like some means of getting together with other rural Black and Minority Ethnic people to share experience, celebrate culture freely, get information and find support. The idea of rural networks emerged as a key recommendation in this research, and is discussed in detail in chapter 12. The facilitation of networks, and provision of access to specialist support through them, is a suggestion that could make a real difference to the promotion and uptake of reporting and support services.

 *I would be interested in a DEREK network - sharing experiences could help to restore my confidence.*

At the same time, if reporting is to increase, the system has to be ready to provide effective support. This means that:

- all service providers need better training in responding to complaints from Black and Minority Ethnic people
- service providers and support workers need training in appraising the impact of incidents and the vulnerability of victims and co-victims (especially children)
- Police need to deal effectively with racist crime and make sure that incidents reported as racist, but which can't be prosecuted as crimes are also referred to specialist support agencies.
- Resources need to be put into making sure that specialist case workers, with good understanding of the law and of impact assessment, are readily and easily accessible to complainants.

We'll end this chapter with a reminder of the effects of racism, with extracts of some of participants' cases from the subtle, drip-drip and unwitting end of the spectrum through to in-your-face, unabashed bigotry.

Table 6.5 Impact	Effect of case on quality of life – case notes and quotes
Distress	Complainant was distressed. She was well integrated in the community - well heeled middle class family. This incident really shook her.
Isolation Anxiety	She was feeling isolated and anxious anyway - husband often away from the house because of work, she was left with small children and felt very vulnerable esp. with the aggressor around.
Family problems Loss of faith in services Sleep problems Eating disorder	Has knocked confidence in terms of new start and career change. Has lost all faith in health authority because of no support. Has created difficulties at home because family unsure how to deal with the frustration caused. Symptoms of difficulty eating and sleeping.
Unemployment	Very angry and out of a job.
Isolation Distress Fear of crime	Very upset and distressed. Fearful of repeated attack. Won't go out now.
Isolation	Fell very isolated. Family feel barricaded indoors except for running the business.
Isolation	Not letting daughters out. So don't make friends except for at school.
Health impact Income impact	Fear of raising issues in the organisation. Added pressure to pressure of health problems. Salary is lower than it should be.
Impact on work relations Withdrawal from community work	<i>A sense of wariness among my colleagues at work, and I'm stepping back from prominent community work.</i>
Frustration	<i>I've been given the message 'you've made your point, it will be dealt with'. 14 months later and there's no action. That sort of thing gets you. I feel like I've been banging my head against a ceiling because I'm raising the issues..</i>

<p>Income impact Loss of opportunity to pursue profession</p>	<p><i>I coped with it by leaving my professional promotion behind. My wife's career in her profession went down the pan - she's very highly qualified with a degree from Oxford..... I've had to go through all sorts of unpleasant things to get where I got now and I wish I didn't have to go through that.I don't want my grandchildren to face the same problems. My own children can laugh now but it was not funny being bullied, it was not funny being discriminated against in jobs and it was not funny being ostracized.</i></p>
<p>Anxiety</p>	<p><i>When the kids were getting the racist trouble at school you thought it was going to last for ever. It was hell. Now it seems like a lifetime ago and we don't really think about it.</i></p>
<p>Reduced employment opportunities Income impact</p>	<p>Her experience of troubles with applying for jobs she knows she's qualified for and her concerns around ethnicity monitoring means that she now doesn't apply for a job if she suspects the employer doesn't want a Black person. She's also worried about applying for management jobs because she is worried about how employers will feel about having a Black person in a position of authority.</p>
<p>Loss of job Income impact</p>	<p>Seeing other people get attacked such as the mixed-race manager of the sports shop makes the couple worry for the children when they grow up. The husband's experience of hearing racism at work means that he feels he has to tell prospective employers that his wife is Black in order to prevent having to hear racist jokes. He ended up leaving his factory job because of the constant racist comments from other employees about himself and his wife.</p>
<p>Anxiety Desire to move away</p>	<p>Had bad effect on her - she was anxious and wanted husband to give up job and move. He was determined to stick it out.</p>

<p>Depression Fear of using local schools Health risks</p>	<p>Son does not go to the local school because of antagonism coming from one of the local school assistants. A recent incident with one of the antagonists at the school her son does attend has made her afraid for her son. She is distressed and angry at the lengths that local people will go to, to oust the family, whilst remaining shrouded in anonymity. Case caused extreme stress, especially during time of pregnancy.</p>
<p>Loss of confidence Health impact Anxiety Isolation Child impact</p>	<p>Loss of confidence. <i>Normally I don't think of myself as Chinese, but now I'm much more self-conscious. I've begun to worry and have doubts and think 'is this because of my race? These threats and intimidation mean that I'm not sure of my own mind - normally I wouldn't have such insecure thoughts about being Chinese..... But now the way that I look at people looking at me is changing...I don't feel confident anymore.</i> Harassment has taken place over a number of months. Toward the end of the case, complainant felt she couldn't bear it any longer. <i>This is very painful. It's bad for my health. I'm afraid to answer the door. I don't feel safe anywhere. I had no idea I could feel like this.</i> Daughter has been very affected by the case.</p>
<p>Impact on career progression Income impact Desire to move away</p>	<p><i>I'm not applying for promotion because I feel I won't get support from the boss even though I'm at the top of my grade. The [organisation] pays lip service to discrimination. It bugs me that in the UK some people, especially those in authority are so two-faced. They say one thing but don't act on it. There is one member of staff I really can trust, but it's not the boss. I might ultimately go back overseas.</i></p>
<p>Anxiety Inability to trust</p>	<p><i>Now I'm very cautious about people and who I trust. Now I won't tell anyone anything personal. I'm scared about meeting any of the staff in the street for fear of abuse. I shouldn't have to feel like that. I won't now trust anyone I work with. It's taught me how to handle people and approach people you don't click with, differently - i.e. you make sure not to show if you disagree with them on anything because it will have repercussions for the work. People broke trust and confidence two times at that job. I have learnt to be more discretionary about people.</i></p>

Child impact Isolation	Depression for children, and limitations on their freedom - parents don't allow children out on their own and children have stopped going swimming because of intimidation.
Fear of provocation	He was more worried about his own response that the harassment might provoke.
Child impact Anti-social behaviour Insecurity	Child's problems started with trans-racial adoption into white adoption family with alcoholic father and with rare, intermittent access to birth parents tantalisingly allowed. Now as a teenager, child has history of disruptive anti-social behaviour and insecurity.
Child impact Anti-social behaviour	Behavioural problems since experience of racism as a child [of white adoptive parents].
Depression Loss of value of property	<i>All this harassment continues and nobody seems able to do anything to help us. We seem to be trapped here. Even the best efforts of the police have had no effect. We would like to move but it is unlikely that we will be able to sell the property under these circumstances. We have laws regarding racial harassment, he is racially harassing us, but the police and laws don't seem able to protect us, especially when it's done this way: when it's not overt. If we were tenants, council or private, we would be better protected than we are just because we own our property. The only thing we did wrong was to buy the wrong property and we are being punished for it. We have tried reasoning with him but it is useless. He refuses to see our side of anything. The bottom line is he is enjoying harassing us and knows there is little anyone can do about it. We feel trapped and in despair.... Since [the 12 month conditional discharge sentence for racially aggravated public order offence] he does not seem to appreciate the gravity of the order on him, treats it as a 'let off' and has begun to act as though he can begin to bully us again.... He is still carrying on in exactly the way he did before the court appearance and the guilty plea.</i>

This handbook and supporting tools ✂ can be accessed at www.DevonREC.org