



Issues around Racism, Hate Crime and Extremism with new and emerging communities in the Eastern Region

A report based on an informal needs & problem analysis amongst multi-agency forum members.

June 2008

Background & objectives

There has been an increasing concern amongst Multi Agency Forums (MAF) members that there is a lack of information about the extent of race hate crime and extremist activity towards new and emerging communities in the Eastern region, particularly for migrant workers (MW), refugees and asylum seekers (ASR). At the same time involvement with MAFs from Racial Equality Councils (REC) varies between forums. In some places RECs are active members and regularly attend while in other MAFs, they don't get involved at all.

At present when a race hate crime is reported, there is no differentiation made between these from new communities and the rest. This makes it hard to use existing data to inform us further. The project felt appropriate to communicate with members of the various MAFs, using a simple questionnaire, to gauge:

- the extent of hate crime towards new and emerging communities in our region
- the involvement of key partners (police & RECs) at MAFs and
- the level of awareness and understanding of reporting procedures and how effective these are according to MAF members.

The overall objectives of this report is:

- To have an indication of the level of awareness amongst MAF members of racism incidents in MAF areas
- To have an indication of third party racist incident reporting by MAF members
- Raise awareness about racist incidents towards ASR and MW
- To encourage third party reporting of racist incidents
- To encourage MAFs to develop a means of collecting reliable data on which to base coordinated responses

MENTER will perform the following:

- Share the report with network members
- Lead on discussions with the hope of developing a regional response strategy to reduce the occurrence of racist incidents
- Arrange for awareness raising presentations to be delivered by Police/RECs where needed
- Collate regional data of racist incidents directed towards ASR and MW reported by individual MAF as a means to improve informed decision making
- Identify good practice to share with MAFs
- Suggest a set of recommendations within the report

Methodology

The project developed a simple questionnaire (annex 1), with input from the CRE, local police and the Norwich & Norfolk Racial Equality Council. This consultation exercise highlighted a number of issues:

- The Police feel there is probably an issue of under-reporting either due to lack of awareness of UK race legislation or reporting procedures
- Reporting procedures vary considerably across the region – some schemes (e.g. Open Out) seem to be much more successful than others (e.g. True Vision)
- There is often a lack of trust in approaching the Police
- Many of the reporting procedures are complex or not accessible
- Police lack current information about the changing population and where different nationalities are located

The questionnaire was initially circulated to MAF chairs only, but this was later extended to the wider MAF memberships to enable us to gauge the level of awareness amongst all MAF members. The questionnaires were emailed to MAF members to include as an agenda item for members to complete during the meeting. The responses (Annex 2) formed the basis of this short report.

Findings

Awareness of racism

It appears that most of the respondents are aware of some form of racist incidents towards new and emerging communities, as this was reflected in the questionnaire responses collated. Most examples of incidents however involved discrimination and bullying in schools and negative comments directed towards Asylum Seekers, Refugees or migrant workers. Others were general comments regarding minor assaults, abuses and criminal damage.

Hate Crime Statistics

Very few of the MAFs had actually seen statistics in relation to race hate crime. However, even where these were being accessed, statistics do not discriminate between the different categories of immigrants. Thus there does not seem to be anything in place that can help identify what percentage of the figures represent individuals from particular groups such as refugees or migrant workers.

There are indications that some police forces in the region have plans to recruit Polish speakers as 999 call operators in anticipation of increase in calls for service from migrant communities. This however is not to suggest that there is an increase in crime or racist incidents from or towards these communities. Local MAF area REC and Police representatives may be able to help better inform MAF members answer certain questions such as: Are particular migrant community members, for example Polish, reporting more crime than other migrant worker communities? Could there be a mechanism for collecting crime data based on nationality?

Recommendation: Police & RECs to explore if it is possible to identify racist incidents towards specific groups and if this would be useful.

Attendance/communication with Police and Racial Equality Councils

This varies between the MAFs. However it does appear that there is less REC presence than the Police in general. From our discussions with RECs the challenge is that many of the MAF meetings do not touch on racism issues at all and therefore it has hard to justify their time. Police presence seems more prevalent in MAF areas where the migrant worker population is growing or in asylum seeker and refugee dispersal areas.

Recommendation: MAFs should ensure that at least once a year the local REC is proactively invited (more than an email) to a meeting which has on the agenda an item around racism.

Reporting

Nearly all respondents knew how to report race hate crime in their area although some seemed to suggest the only route was via the Police. Many respondents had no experience of actually reporting a crime and therefore did not know how accessible or effective they were. The views of those who did have experience of reporting varied greatly, from very effective to okay and not very okay. This may reflect the diverse range of reporting procedures in place across the region. The option to have an alternative reporting centre other than the Police seems to be effective. For instance, in Suffolk the Racial harassment initiative significantly received more reports than the Police.

Recommendation: MENTER's Partnership Development Project to identify those MAFs who appear to have less awareness and invite the local Police and RECs to make a presentation. MAFs to subsequently agree on actions to be taken to establish common procedures of reporting racist incidents and sharing information.

Extremism

More than half of the respondents were aware of BNP (British National Party) or other extremist activity or active presence in the region. There was acknowledgement of 'a few incidents' in Suffolk, Great Yarmouth and Norwich (recently) reported to the police or other MAF member organisations. It was noted that in Peterborough the BNP put forward a candidate in 2005 however the area was "not a particular focus for BNP activity". In West Norfolk the BNP have been on a recent recruitment drive. In their 2007 local election leaflet they specifically mentioned the work of the West Norfolk Diversity forum and MENTER and were very misleading about the real situation. In Luton it was noted that not only was there white right wing extremist but also Muslim extremist activity outside the main mosque.

Recommendation: MENTER's Partnership Development Project together with EERA-SMP (East of England Regional Assembly-Strategic Migration Partnership) and the Regional Multi-Agency Chairs' Forum (MACF) to discuss and recommend a regional media strategy for adoption in the local MAF areas. MAFs to use the media guide produced by EERA.

Community Cohesion

Racial strife more likely in country villages than big towns, says report

"Community and racial tensions are now more likely to overheat in the rural towns and villages of the east of England than in the previously riot-hit northern mill towns of Burnley or Oldham, a government report will warn today."

14th June 2007 – The Guardian

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/frontpage/story/0,,2102689,00.html>

The report above highlights the new area of concern resulting from the expansion of the European Union and how the migration of economic workers can impact significantly on community cohesion, putting pressure on housing and local services and increasing inter-ethnic rivalry and resentment over employment opportunities and services.

Recommendation: MAFs to encouraged community member participation in MAF activities. MAFs can utilise the Partnership Development Project Community Participation Guide, and the LAA Toolkit and Refugee Integration Guides produced in partnership with EERA. Available <http://www.partnershipdevelopmentproject.org.uk/html/resources.html>

Racism from new and emerging communities

There is also anecdotal evidence of racism coming from Eastern European arrivals towards British Black and Minority Ethnic communities:

Multiracial Britain confuses Poles

"It is a difficult social and cultural problem: what to do when tens of thousands of immigrants from an almost wholly white country arrive in a nation that has a fierce pride in its multicultural mix? It is an issue affecting the many Poles coming to Britain, who are being warned to be ready for a country where being black or Asian is not unusual and it is wrong to react 'negatively' to people of different races."

15th April 2007 – The Observer

http://observer.guardian.co.uk/uk_news/story/0,,2057514,00.html

In Kings Lynn recently there has been an increased amount of racist graffiti in the 2 main estates in the town where there are numerous Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) accommodating Migrant Workers.

"One incident interestingly enough when caught the perpetrators were Lithuanian children from the local comprehensive school. They had sprayed "WHITE POWER" and "NIGERS OUT" (obviously the spelling is incorrect). This school has been identified by the MELO [Police Minority Ethnic Liaison Officer] as having a high level of bullying in racist terms although the school boasts its success at integration and harmony."

Recommendation: MAFs may want to explore the possibilities for working with new and emerging communities to raise awareness of UK race law. Local Authorities should be encouraging schools to actively challenge racism in schools and promote cultural understanding.

Conclusion

As noted earlier, the purpose of this report is to assess the responses received from MAF members about their level of awareness of racist incidents towards asylum seekers, refugees and migrant workers, it is therefore hoped that the recommendations of the report will be adopted by MAFs.

MENTER and other regional stakeholders such as EEDA and EERA are keen to support any initiatives taken by the MAFs to reduce racist incidents and improve community cohesion. MENTER will continue to work with its network members to promote the adoption of the report recommendations. We welcome suggestions to improve race relations and community cohesion and look forward to ideas of good practice initiatives adopted in other areas to share with our regional network members.

Annex 1: Questionnaire

Needs & Problem Analysis of Racism and Extremism towards new and emerging communities in the Eastern Region – with specific reference to Refugees, Asylum seekers and Migrant Workers

Dear colleague please can you help us by answering the following questions – even if you don't know the answer please let us know as that is equally useful for us

AWARENESS

1. Are you aware of any problems racism and extremism towards new and emerging communities in your area – if so what are they?
2. Are you as forum member aware of what the definition of a racist crime or incident is?
3. Have you seen statistics relating to racism in your area? DO they record incidents towards refugees and migrant worker separately

REPORTING

4. Does the local Racial Equality Council (REC) (a) attend and/or (b) communicate with the MAF
5. Does the local Minority Ethnic Liaison Officer (MELO) or Hate Crime Officer from the local Police Constabulary (a) attend and/or (b) communicate with the MAF?
6. Are you aware of how race hate crime is reported in your area?
7. How effective do you find these systems?
8. Are these reporting systems easily accessible?

EXTREMISM

9. Are you aware of any far right activity (e.g. BNP) of other similar groups activity in your area?

Annex 2: Questionnaire analysis:

MENTER was able to collect twenty completed questionnaires six of which were from the individual MAF Chairs. The findings can be summarised as follows:

- (Question 1) 60% of respondents (50% of the MAF Chairs) were aware of racism and extremism related problems towards new and emerging communities in their area, while 40% were not aware of such problems
- (Question 2) 90% of respondents (83% of the MAF Chairs) were aware of the definition of what a racist crime or incident is, 5% were not sure of the definition and 5% responded they were not aware.
- (Question 3) 25% of respondents (83% of the MAF Chairs) have seen statistics relating to racism in their area, while 65% had not. 10% of respondents did not comment on this.
- (Question 4) 30% of respondents (67% of the MAF Chairs) reported that the local Racial Equality Council attend their Multi-Agency Forum, 40% (33% chairs) of respondents reported they did not, 25% were not sure and 5% did not know whether the REC attend or not. Furthermore, 45% of respondents (50% chairs) reported that the local Racial Equality Council communicate with their Multi-Agency Forum, while 25% of respondents thought they did not, 25% were not sure and 5% did not know whether the REC communicate or not with the MAF.

- (Question 5) 55% of respondents (83% of MAF Chairs) stated that the local MELO or Hate Crime Officer from the local Police Constabulary attend their MAF while 20% thought they did not, 20% did not know and 5% were not sure. Furthermore, 55% of respondents reported that the local MELO or Hate Crime Officer from the local Police Constabulary communicate with their MAF while 15% thought they did not, 20% did not know, 5% were not sure and 5% of respondents did not comment.
- (Questions 6, 7 & 8) 60% of respondents (67% of the Chairs) were aware of how race hate crime is reported in their area, while 40% were not. 30% of respondents find these reporting systems effective, while 15% do not find them good, 35% of respondents did not know whether these reporting systems were effective and 25% of respondents did not answer the question. With regards to the issue of accessing these reporting systems, 35% of respondents find them easily accessible while 20% of respondents thought they were not. Other respondents said they do not know how accessible these systems are (30%) or did not comment on this aspect (15%).
- (Question 9) 50% of respondents (33% of the MAF chairs) were aware of far right activity (eg. BNP or other similar groups activity) in their area while 45% were not aware of such activity. The remaining respondents (5%) did not comment on this question.