

1 Introduction

The effects of hate crimes/incidents can be severe for individuals, families and the community. Blackpool Coastal Housing, as an employer and service provider, has an important part to play in:

- Providing services that support victims of hate crimes/incidents;
- Challenging alleged perpetrators;
- Taking action as an individual organisation and, where appropriate, in partnership with other agencies to eliminate hate crimes/incidents in Blackpool.

2 Scope

Blackpool Coastal Housing's Policy on the reporting and recording of hate crimes and hate incidents provides guidance to help employees implement a reporting scheme. This policy applies to customers, members of the public, and those who are contracted to work for Blackpool Coastal Housing.

This policy is intended for everyone who wishes to report hate crimes/incidents, which occurred on Blackpool Coastal Housing premises or during the delivery of a service, as well as any hate crimes or incidents within the community that a member of the public wishes to report.

3 Definitions

Hate crime is any criminal offence committed against a person or property that is motivated by an offender's hatred of someone because of their:

- Race, colour, ethnic origin, nationality or national origins
- Religion
- Gender or gender identity
- Sexual orientation
- Disability

Hate crime can take many forms including:

- Physical attacks
- Threat of attack
- Verbal abuse or insults -

4 Policy Statements

- Blackpool Coastal Housing is committed to tackling all hate crimes/incidents based on people's race, gender, disability, sexuality, religion, faith and belief by creating a culture whereby discrimination real or perceived, is challenged and eradicated.
- Blackpool Coastal Housing expects all employees to take action to report, challenge and prevent hate crimes/incidents whatever their origins, when carrying out their duties and this policy is intended to complement existing policies such as Harassment & Bullying.
- Blackpool Coastal Housing will encourage the reporting of hate crimes/incidents whether they be from employees, service users or members of the public.

5 Responsibilities of All Employees

Employees who work for (or who are contracted to work for) Blackpool Coastal Housing have a responsibility under this policy when carrying out their duties to record and report and/or challenge hate crimes/incidents if they:

- Witness them (this includes seeing, hearing or reading them)

- Have incidents reported to them by victims or witnesses.
- Have strong suspicion or evidence of hate crimes/incidents.

6 Reporting and Recording Hate Crime

The first point of contact for any incident of hate crime may vary. Reports may be verbal, written or by phone call, it is therefore important that all staff members are aware of how to record these incidents whatever the source of the complaint. Anyone who wishes to report an incident may do so in person or by telephone to the designated Housing Officer.

Incidents reported by telephone will be recorded on the incident reporting form and will be forwarded to the relevant Housing Officer, who will assume responsibility for ensuring that incidents are recorded and responded to immediately or as soon as possible.

On completion of the form, a copy will be given to the victim/complainant, a copy sent to the Housing Officer for further action and a copy kept for monitoring purposes and sharing with the Council.

In the event of hate crimes/incidents being reported which are not about Blackpool Coastal Housing services, the initial reporting form should still be completed and sent to a senior manager, who will decide on what action is to be taken.

If there has been violence or threats of violence a visit should be made within 24 hours wherever possible.

If the complaint is identified as being criminal in nature it should immediately be reported to the Police for them to follow up and investigate. In these circumstances, any collection of evidence should only be carried out by the officer in charge of the investigation.

Contact with the victim/complainant will be maintained whilst action is pursued and/or crimes/incidents stop.

After or during the visit the Investigating Officer(s) will make comprehensive notes on the proceedings. At the same time arrangements will also be made to interview the alleged perpetrator(s) and any witnesses as appropriate.

7 Collection of Evidence

As soon as a complaint is made, evidence (if any) will be collected. Everyone who is involved in interviewing a person experiencing a hate crime/incident will consider the following points:

- Details taken should be full and accurate. A case could be made stronger by evidence from a number of witnesses about one alleged perpetrator. Therefore, details of minor incidents should be fully recorded.
- Taking a clear statement from a distressed person is by no means an easy task and adequate time should be allowed.
- Consideration should be given to the need for a private and accessible place to conduct the interview.
- Attention should be paid to any special, individual requirements, such as the need for an interpreter.
- Support from a relative or friend should be encouraged.
- If the victim has suffered injuries they should be encouraged to visit a GP or hospital for medical reports to be made.
- The victim should be encouraged to pursue photographic evidence of any visible injuries.

8 Supporting the Complainant

Appropriate support is dependent upon circumstances. The victim has a right, but not an obligation to pursue a complaint against the alleged perpetrator.

If the complainant makes a complaint in person, explain who you are and what you can do to help and ask the victim what they would like you to do. If the complainant is a child under 17, try to make contact with parents or guardians as soon as possible.

If the complainant reports the incident by phone, or in writing, or if there is not the opportunity to discuss the matter properly, make an appointment for the complainant to discuss the incident with The Equality Co-ordinator either at their home or in one of Blackpool Coastal Housing Office premises as soon as possible and within 5 working days (unless the complainant requests a later date).

The following actions may be appropriate immediately or at the follow-up meeting:-

- Encourage the complainant to inform the police, doctors, hospital, relatives, children's school or any other agencies as appropriate.
- Provide immediate quiet and confidential space to discuss the incident with the complainant if possible. Clarify whether an interpreter is required.
- Ensure that the initial recording form is completed, a copy given to the complainant and the other two copies forwarded onto the relevant department for further action and monitoring purposes.
- Suggest they inform the Police of the incident, if this has not already been done, even if this is done anonymously through Lancashire Constabulary's self-reporting scheme.
- Make available the list of community and voluntary organisations that can assist with help advice, counselling and practical help for the complainant.

9 Action Related To Any Alleged Perpetrator(s)

Immediate Action

- Do not collude with hate crime and harassment by doing nothing about it.
- Ensure that the alleged perpetrator is treated fairly and appropriately in all situations.
- Take or assist in legal action against the alleged perpetrator(s).
- In certain cases Blackpool Coastal Housing may be a witness to, or initiator of, legal action against the alleged perpetrator.
- If relevant (and the complainant agrees) report the incident to the police and be prepared to use your own records of the incident and to act as a witness.

Withdrawing services

If you are in the process of delivering a service to the alleged perpetrator it may be possible to withdraw that service either immediately or by issuing a warning for future withdrawal.

Employees have a right to work in an environment, which is free from harassment and is safe. Hate crimes/incidents from service users can create an intimidating working environment for all employees and other users. All employees have a right to report episodes of hate crimes/incidents, whether from a user or another employee, immediately to their supervisor or service manager and to remove themselves from a situation in which they feel threatened or in danger.

It is management's responsibility to make decisions on future provision of service to the alleged perpetrator. If the manager or supervisor is the alleged perpetrator or suspected perpetrator an employee should seek advice from the Equality Co-ordinator.