

Working with victims of racist violence: a rural perspective

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Outline

- Understanding the rural context
- Understanding the nature of racist victimisation
- Developing effective responses to victims

Understanding the rural context

Popular images of the rural:

- Idyllic
- Characterised by friendly, close-knit communities: *Gemeinschaft/Gesellschaft* distinction

According to research:

- Widespread unfamiliarity with difference and 'otherness'
- Prevalence of racist attitudes and stereotypes

Understanding the nature of victimisation

- 'Low-level' racist harassment frequent
 - verbal abuse; persistent staring; racist graffiti; criminal damage
 - emotionally damaging for the victim but rarely taken seriously by agencies
- Violent incidents not uncommon
 - physical attacks; arson; petrol bombing
 - commonly not reported to agencies
- 'Acceptable' racism evident
 - asylum seekers, Gypsy Travellers and Eastern Europeans seen as 'legitimate' targets
- Complex nature of Islamophobia
 - Problem for all 'Asian-looking' groups

Uncovering the nature of victimisation

We were getting dogs' mess thrown at the door, stones at the window, and then you [the husband] stood at the door one night and they threw an egg at you. I chased after them and they called me a 'Paki loving bitch' who needed shooting.

Pubs are no-go zones. In one village nearby there is this really nice pub that does good food, and I remember me and my dad walked in once and it was, 'Oh there are Asian people in our pub, we don't serve curry here, surely they don't want to eat white food here?'

Things have got much worse since the terror attacks ... I went to the fish and chip shop and there was a guy behind me. The news was on and he was pointing at me, I could see him in the reflection, he was saying, 'Kill 'em all, the bastards'.

Responding to racist victimisation

- 'No racism here' mentality commonplace among agencies and service providers
- Victims of racism highly critical of agency responses
 - E.g. slow response rates; insensitive comments; no understanding of cultural differences; inability to produce meaningful action
- Lack of minority ethnic representation within organisations
- Practical problems with multi-agency working
 - E.g. lack of information sharing; over-reliance on some agencies; personal and professional rivalries hampering the effectiveness of anti-racist initiatives
- Too much complacency, defensiveness and tokenism

Conclusions

Developing effective responses to racist victimisation:
three key lessons

- Needs not numbers: focus on the needs of minority ethnic communities, not the numbers of reported racist incidents
- Facts not fiction: understand the realities of the rural (as experienced by the marginalised minority) not the popular stereotypes
- Partnerships in practice, not just partnerships on paper: recognise the complexities of multi-agency working