

EDEN HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED

RACIAL HARASSMENT POLICY

Approved by the Board of Management

16 March 2004



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Eden Housing Association recognises the need and considers it good practice to operate an effective Racial Harassment Policy, and that such harassment is distinct from neighbour disputes, and other forms of harassment and anti-social behaviour. We will take steps to identify and monitor incidents of racial harassment and take effective action against perpetrators in order to provide a safe environment for all tenants and residents and to prevent further acts of racism and violence.

Eden Housing Association are committed to implementing the recommendations of the document "Tackling racial harassment: code of practice for social landlords" (ODPM 2001). The definition of racial harassment we use is that recommended by in the Stephen Lawrence enquiry.

Eden Housing Association operates in a mainly rural area where 0.4 percent of the population are black or minority ethnic people (*Source: 2001 census figures. The figure is 0.7% for the whole of Cumbria*). We recognise that in contrast to inner cities, racist attacks can also occur in areas where few black or minority ethnic people live. Those that are present are therefore more isolated, and in that sense, more vulnerable. Supports services, in short supply almost everywhere, are likely to be even more thin on the ground in areas where few black and minority ethnic people live. Informal support networks of extended families and communities within a neighbourhood are also likely to be lacking.

We also recognise that not all racist attacks are directed at people not 'white', but people of colour, visibly different from the mainstream are many times more likely to be racially attacked than white people. Not all of those who are visibly different however, regard themselves as 'black' or from a minority ethnic group. These constructs become more out of date and less relevant as British society becomes more culturally diverse. In an attempt to include those who are visibly different who do not regard themselves as black, the term black and minority ethnic is generally used throughout the Association's policy and procedure. (*From 'Racial Harassment: Action on the ground, Gerald Lemos*)

There are a number of civil and criminal law remedies available to landlords for tackling racial harassment. For example possession proceedings; injunctions to

enforce the terms of the tenancy agreement; injunctions to require a perpetrator(s) to stay away from the victim or the landlord's property and criminal prosecutions under the Protection from Harassment Act (1997). Eden Housing Association will consider all of these remedies when handling complaints about racial harassment.

Racial Harassment can occur in a number of forms. Several laws have identified the behaviour that could be regarded as racial harassment. In summary those are verbal or written abuse, other behaviour designed to intimidate, physical attacks on the person and attacks on their property. The distinguishing characteristics that turn abuse, vandalism or assault into racial harassment are the motives of the perpetrator - racial hatred – and the impact on the victims – fear, distress and isolation.

We consider that the complainant's perception of racism is crucial and the organisational approach to dealing with racial incidents will therefore be 'victim-centred'. The Association has set target response times for handling complaints about racial harassment which are one working day for incidents involving violence and three working days for non-violent incidents. We are also committed to multi-agency working. We will liaise with the police, the local authority and other relevant statutory, community and voluntary agencies, both for enforcement measures and for victim support.