

# Research Findings

November 2007

## The Racism Reduction Agenda

---

**There is a planetary crisis in strategies to tackle racist violence as legislation, techniques and approaches increasingly proliferate in the face of highly durable and resurgent patterns of attack and murder. Ian Law from the Centre for Ethnicity and Racism Studies at the University of Leeds examines global, European and UK interventions and good practice in tackling racist violence, and uses this evidence to identify gaps in policy and practice at a local level in the city of Leeds. This study was funded by Safer Leeds.**

---

- This report argues strongly for a 'Racism Reduction' agenda, which involves a wider range of interventions than those purely concerned with crime. It argues for the necessity of placing this mission and its agenda at the core of agency and community practice.
- Generating institutional and wider community commitment to tackling racist violence is as essential a component of strategy here as dealing with offenders, given that increasing levels of enforcement have failed to bring violent racism under control.
- Global approaches by the UN and UNESCO have set out key principles and identified the necessity of pursuing ethical, intellectual, political, legal and intelligence gathering strategies both internationally and within nation states.
- EU approaches to tackling racist violence highlight improvements in data collection, enhanced penalties, youth projects, restorative justice initiatives, antiracist campaigns and community building initiatives and the need to empower victims of racist violence.
- Building a 'racism reduction' agenda involves developing community-based campaigning and preventative initiatives, improving reporting, intelligence gathering and surveillance, pursuing crime and conflict initiatives, improving agency practice, improving cross-sector learning/working, improving work with perpetrators and offenders and developing performance standards.

## Racism Reduction

This report argues strongly for the development of a 'racism reduction' agenda which involves both preventative and punitive actions. The bulk of work and intervention across the UK dealing with racist violence is not concerned with prevention. As Isal (2006) confirms policy and practice are primarily concerned with 'punitive and repressive' action. Clearly such enforcement action is vital, but the dangers of antiracist activity being drawn into the crime reduction agenda is that 'diversionary' work, keeping young people away from involvement in criminal activity, may lose sight of the broader objectives of a 'racism reduction' agenda amongst wider peer or community networks. As Isal suggests, this means replacing diversionary goals with wider aspirational goals, for example in youth work, such as challenging attitudes and misinformation which underlie racial hostility. The key lesson drawn from the review of the Bede Anti-Racist Detached Youth Work project (Isal 2006: 18) is placing antiracism as a core project objective. This work involved gaining the trust of young people and engaging with their racist attitudes in the context of various activities in an area of South London that had seen a number of racist murders and increasing racist violence. The Home Office Racist Incidents Crime Reduction Toolkit (2006) addresses the need for holistic approaches which should include three components, including social prevention (addressing offender behaviour and victim support), situational prevention (addressing the management and design of environments) and rule of law enforcement. These do not address the wider set of causes and contexts of racist violence and illustrate the limitations of a 'crime' centred rather than a 'racism' centred approach. Generating institutional and wider community commitment to tackling racist violence is as essential a component of strategy here as dealing with offenders, given that increasing levels of enforcement have failed to bring violent racism under control (Bowling and Phillips 2002). Over the last twenty years since local government approval of racial harassment policy in 1986, Leeds has been the site for substantial policy and practice development and innovation in tackling racist violence, yet there is little sign that levels of racist violence are reducing

## Global approaches

This report has sought to take an overview of global, cross-national and local approaches and interventions to address racist violence. Global approaches by the UN and UNESCO have set out key principles and identified the necessity of pursuing ethical, intellectual, political, legal and intelligence gathering strategies both internationally and within nation states. The lack of political will was identified as a key barrier in moving forward and here the key role played by NGOs in pressing for action was confirmed (WCAR 2001). The participation by over 4,000 NGOs and over 250 nation states in the World Conference Against Racism indicates both the significance of the international politics of antiracism and the potential scope for cross-national and cross-organisation learning. The WCAR programme of action is also pursued by the UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, currently Doudou Diène. Reports on different countries across the globe arising from visits are also available on the OHCHR website. His assessment of strategic aims draws on the WCAR programme of action and identifies four key priorities:

- *Monitoring and analysis* of old and new forms of racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia
- *Political strategy*: the expression of a firm political will to combat racism by governments
- *Legal strategy*: the adoption and implementation of national legislation against racism, discrimination and xenophobia
- *Intellectual and ethical strategy*: seeking to promote better understanding of the deep cultural roots of racism, and its ideological, cultural and psychological foundations, processes and mechanisms.

Recently, UNESCO adopted a new Integrated Strategy to Combat Racism, Discrimination, Xenophobia and Intolerance (2003) drawing on studies on different aspects and forms of racism, xenophobia and discrimination around the world and consultations in different regions to discuss specific concerns and priorities. The revised strategy confirmed action priorities in the following areas:

- Development of scientific research and reflection on the phenomena of racism, discrimination and xenophobia;
- Revision and/or revitalization of UNESCO's instruments dealing with racism and discrimination;

- Development of new educational approaches, elaboration of teaching materials and establishment of indicators;
- Mobilization of opinion leaders and political decision-makers against racism and discrimination;
- Preservation of diversity in multi-ethnic and multicultural societies;
- Combating racist propaganda in media especially in cyberspace.

## EU approaches

This is also evident from assessment of EU approaches to tackling racist violence where improvements in data collection, enhanced penalties, youth projects and restorative justice initiatives, antiracist campaigns and community building initiatives were highlighted in a review of recent developments. The EU/NGO campaign on hate crime Coalition Europe stressed the need for information and awareness raising, political and legal action and efforts to support and empower victims of racist violence. Goodey (2005) gives particular consideration to the success that criminal justice initiatives are having on victims of racist violence. On restorative justice, which aims to resolve conflicts in informal settings with meetings between victim and offender, and sometimes involving wider meetings with families and communities, despite significant criticism it is possible that this may be successful in some contexts. It is 'increasingly popular' in many criminal justice jurisdictions notably in Austria, Belgium, Germany and the UK, but has been criticised for demoting racist violence to a form of 'secondary' justice, or 'soft option', leading to intimidation of the victim and failing to recognise the repeat history of violence. Goodey also identifies that,

'traditional criminal justice has made little headway towards successfully addressing racist crime and violence' (2005: 202).

Current practice may increase victims' feelings that racist violence is not being dealt with adequately and also very few reports result in sentencing of offenders, although in the UK this has been an increasing number of prosecutions for racially aggravated offences

## UK approaches

In the UK, there is both extensive development of policy, practice and various forms of intervention to tackle racist violence as well as extensive evidence of highly durable and pervasive acts of racist violence. It has been argued that building a 'racism reduction' agenda involves developing community-based campaigning and preventative initiatives, improving reporting, intelligence gathering and surveillance, pursuing crime and conflict initiatives, improving agency practice, improving cross-sector learning/working, improving work with perpetrators and offenders and developing performance standards.

A number of criminal justice tools exist that serve to bolster legislative provisions against racism. Many of these focus on targeting young offenders, and are linked with provisions under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 such as 'anti-social behaviour orders' and 'parenting orders'. Some of the most innovative and controversial developments are related to attempts to use 'restorative justice' or 'mediation' practices with young offenders who have committed racist crime. The most recent (2005) UK NFP report on racist violence highlights good practice in three areas.

*Targeted police initiatives on hate crimes*, such as those of the London Metropolitan Police Service and the Greater Manchester Police, which have been adopted more widely across the country. For example, a South West England targeted policing initiative has had an impact on racist crime there. *National Probation Service*, Merseyside programme Against Human Dignity and other NPS intervention programmes such as Newcastle and Greenwich which specifically target racially motivated offenders. *Multicultural educational programmes*, such as Kent County Council's Minority Communities Achievement Service that enables children to explore values such as sharing and equal respect and examines issues such as, fear, justice, being new, and ethnic diversity.

# Fit between Racism Reduction Agenda and Leeds Hate Crime Strategy

In reviewing the various documents that comprise Leeds Hate Crime Strategy and its associated action plans in relation to the Racism Reduction report the following points emerge for consideration:

## *Impact on race hate environments*

No attention given to hostility promoting virtual/ internet environments, political and media messages, family and socialisation processes and ideologically driven groups and consideration as to how interventions can be made.

## *Fit with World Conference Against Racism (2001) Strategy*

The four point strategy promoted at a global level is reflected very unevenly by local strategy; considerable attention is given to legal intervention and to monitoring levels of race hate, very little attention is given to developing political strategy or intellectual and ethical strategy. So, developing political will and leadership to combat racism locally and promoting better understanding of the deep roots of racism could be developed.

## *Fit with UNESCO (2003) Strategy*

Significant gaps in local strategy in relation to this strategy include mobilisation of opinion leaders and political decision makers against racism, combating racist propaganda in cyberspace, developing new educational approaches and indicators and a local programme of research on the operation of racist hostility and associated violence.

## *Cross-national learning from the EU*

Good practice examples from other EU countries not pursued locally include;

- University based seminar programmes on racism for young offenders who commit racist offences (Austria)
- Targeted initiatives aimed at preventing and reducing racist violence amongst extreme right groups (Finland, Germany)
- Funding wide ranging anti-race hate/anti extreme right preventative projects (Germany)
- Agency for community building and neighbourhood conflict mediation, and intercultural housing projects actively facilitating interaction (Netherlands)
- Support self-help initiatives for victims of hate crimes and fund local community organisations to address problems locally (Coalition Europe)

- Develop cross-national local links to share such practice on tackling racist violence with cities from Austria, Germany and the Netherlands and organisations including EUMC/FRA and Coalition Europe.

## *Fit with UK evidence on good practice*

In relation to the substantial evidence in the UK areas for development at a local level may include;

- Building anti-racist alliances and cross-party opposition to the extreme right
- Funding local innovations
- Using music to celebrate opposition to race hate
- Thorough review and development of youth initiatives and elderly initiatives to reduce racist hostility
- Facilitating community-based inter-communal dialogue and community mediation
- Leeds wide programme of community events to promote belonging and understanding
- Leadership training for good neighbours and community capacity building
- Programme of educational interventions
- Joint local media/criminal justice/education initiatives to promote understanding of tackling racism and violence
- Campaigning work to improve local media coverage
- Using conflict resolution and peace building
- Trauma/therapy/counselling for race hate victims and children
- Highlighting and supporting group of public interest race hate cases
- Information and communication strategy
- Cross-local area learning both within Leeds and across local authorities
- Working with racially motivated perpetrators and offenders to reduce racist hostility
- Improving wider range of performance standards

## About the study

The full report, *The Racism Reduction Agenda: building the framework, signposting good practice and learning the lessons* by Ian Law (2007) is available at [www.leeds.ac.uk/cers](http://www.leeds.ac.uk/cers). As is the parallel report, *Situating Racist Hostility and Understanding the Impact of Racist Victimisation in Leeds* by Lou Hemmerman, Ian Law, Jenny Simms, and Ala Sirriyeh (2007) which explores the perceptions and experiences of victims, residents and agencies. For further information on this study contact: Ian Law, School of Sociology and Social Policy, University of Leeds, Leeds, LS2 9JT. E-mail: [i.g.law@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:i.g.law@leeds.ac.uk); Tel: 0113-343-4410