Kingston Race and Equalities Council

Kingston Race and Equalities Council (KREC) is one of a very few organisations set up between the 1960s and 1980s in the wake of the enactment of the Race Relations Act to tackle racial inequalities and discrimination.

Our aims and objectives are:

- To work towards the elimination of discrimination and its associated inequalities
- To promote equality of opportunity and good relations between people of different racial and cultural groups
- To address the Human Rights and needs of all communities

We carry out these objectives by doing:

- Casework
  - helping victims of Hate Crimes through advice, support, counselling and advocacy
  - advising and supporting people who suffer employment discrimination
- Policy Development
- Public Awareness
- Community Development
- Consultancy
- Training

Hate Crimes

Support for Hate Crime victims is Core business for KREC and makes up around 40% of the work we do. Due to the disappearance of a lot of agencies who previously helped victims, our area of responsibility has widened to cover South London and we are developing plans to cover Greater London and to be the voice of Race Equality in London.

Statistical data collected over the years indicates that 80% plus of annual Hate Crimes is made up of Race Hate crimes. There is however no visible or tangible work being carried out to ensure that this sector is funded adequately or serviced. There is a huge absence of funding at any level to do Race Hate work with victims. Race Hate and Race Equality has also been relegated by institutions and no work is being done. There is a visible silence nationally on Race.

Funding and Support for Race and Equalities Councils

The Ministry of Justice used to hold the funds for Hate Crimes Victims and supported projects across the country on Race Hate. Since the funding moved to the Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime in London and Police and Crime Commissioners for the rest of the country there has been no funding directed for work on Race Hate Crime and organisations have struggled to provide adequate services to victims.

Referrals of Hate Crime

Police Services have also stopped referrals of victims of Hate Crimes and Race Hate crimes in particular to existing RECs. The Metropolitan Police Service in London has claimed that victims are reluctant to be referred. The Met Police has also drastically reduced the staffing
of their Community Safety Units (CSU) which had responsibility for dealing with Hate Crimes set up as a result of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Recommendations. Other agencies have followed the Police lead and stopped referrals of any kind.

**Third Party Reporting**

KREC was one of the lead agencies who set up Third Party Reporting sites in partnership with statutory agencies around Kingston. These meant that Hate Crimes could be reported to agencies identified as Third Party Reporting sites to be passed on to the Police. These sites set up mechanisms and structures such as Hate Crime Forums which monitored victim’s cases and sought feedback from victims. These stopped when agencies stopped their referrals.

**Referendum and Brexit**

Since the Referendum and Brexit vote we have seen a huge increase of all types of Hate Crimes with a strong view by victims that campaigners including Politicians and Ministers picked on particular communities and immigration and legitimised Hate Crimes and racism. This was manifested in verbal as well as physical abuse. People who would have not expressed racist views in the past felt they had now been given a license to be racist and abuse people and not take responsibility for their actions.

Posters and publicity material were allowed to proclaim and blame migrants and refugees without authorities and the Government seeking to restrain the extremes which people went to and made their case.

**Equality and Human Rights Commission**

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has been absent from the scene and not taken responsibility or played a Leadership role to guide organisations in what was acceptable. It has withdrawn into offices carrying out the odd research to justify its existence. It has no contact with Race and Equalities Councils (RECs) or the grassroots to assess and form opinion on the ground.

**Way Forward**

1. Urgent attention should be given to resourcing and funding organisations which deal with victims of Hate Crime; similarly high priority should be given to Race Hate Crimes without adopting a hierarchy for Hate Crimes where some Hate Crimes seem to attract more resourcing, funding and priority attention.

2. Rigorous effort must be put into reversing the attitudinal negative change which has resulted as a result of the rhetoric from Politician during the Referendum debates. It is incumbent on Government to ensure that people’s behaviour is within the law and not allow people who express racist and other unacceptable behaviour to feel they have been given a license to do what they like as a result of the Brexit vote.

3. Training should become mandatory for organisations who do not recognise the need to deal appropriately with Hate Crimes and its victims. The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Recommendations should be re-visited for guidance around such training.
4. Public Awareness programmes channelled through communities affected by Hate Crimes should be promoted and facilitated by RECs and allied organisations.

5. Police and Statutory organisations should be required to refer victims of Hate Crimes to organisations mandated to deal with victims.

6. The EHRC should be required to work with grass root organisations and to develop structures which understand Hate Crimes and its impact on communities.

7. Third Party Reporting sites should be developed and supported to enable victims who are not content to report Hate Crimes to the Police and the Statutory agencies to use those centres to report crimes.

8. There should be Governmental accountability for what Politicians do during election campaigns and there should be guidelines and thresholds which campaigners should not cross or face sanctions.

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