



30 Sept 2024

PPR response to the NIHE consultation on its Community Safety Strategy 2025-2030

In the wake of the events beginning 3 August 2024, the inadequacy of this draft NIHE Community Safety 2025-2030 strategy – which opened for consultation in July - is glaring.

Clearly NIHE tenants from racial and ethnic minorities, among others, are all too frequently facing a higher level of threat than simple ASB, and on a daily, recurring basis. This cannot be swept under the carpet or simply wished away. The lack of clarity within the strategy over where ASB tips into serious crime, harassment and threatening behaviour motivated by hate at times has the effect of minimising the experiences of people who experience hate crime, particularly racially motivated crime.

The strategy's first stated aim, 'Building Community Confidence', will be unreachable without a more serious and dedicated approach to overt racism and hate crime.

The response to racist violence is not the purview of the NIHE alone – but the strategy's second aim, "Local Solutions for Local Issues", is not misguided. As a housing authority the NIHE needs to play a stronger role at a local level by, in conjunction with other authorities, providing more targeted **deterrence** and **prevention**, as well as greater **protection** for those tenants who are potentially at risk. Simply moving victims of hate crime on, without taking steps against the perpetrators will not resolve the broader issue. In recent weeks, [Black and Minority Ethnic communities have alerted MLAs to the referral of victims of race hate crime to restorative justice organisations with links to paramilitary and proscribed organisations](#). In this context, the continuing use of such programmes by public authorities must be called into question. People and communities who identify with Section 75 characteristics should not need to negotiate their ability to live in a certain community through mediation; they do not require permission. Instead, the stranglehold which certain paramilitary and proscribed groups hold over certain areas should be challenged across all public sector organisations with an interest in keeping communities safe.

The final stated aim, of tenants and wider communities 'Working Together', again is not wrong. But it takes far too much for granted. There is clearly serious groundwork that needs done

around building trust – and that requires, as a first step, accepting the seriousness of the threats faced.

A meaningful response to hate will also require greater transparency – both about the nature of the threat and the response to it. The [first](#) of our recent blog series on racist violence asks what kind of data sharing and analysis is being done by authorities including as the NIHE, and what patterns have been identified, particularly with regard to organised racist violence. We agree with the NIHE's assessment that 'It is important to build our understanding of hate crime through improved data' and we would add that such data should be shared publicly in order that agencies addressing these issues can best deploy their resources and people can hold them accountable for their actions or failures to act.

The second [post](#) in the recent blog series looks at public response, and in particular at failures of a Department of Justice scheme meant to compensate victims of criminal damage; the [third](#) asks a series of questions about the wider state response to racist violence and in particular to paramilitary violence against communities.

In the wake of the events of early August and the ongoing acts of intimidation and threat against ethnic minority residents around the north today, this current NIHE draft Community Safety Strategy is unacceptably weak. The timing of the consultation was not the NIHE's doing – but it needs to recognise that a more robust response is now required.