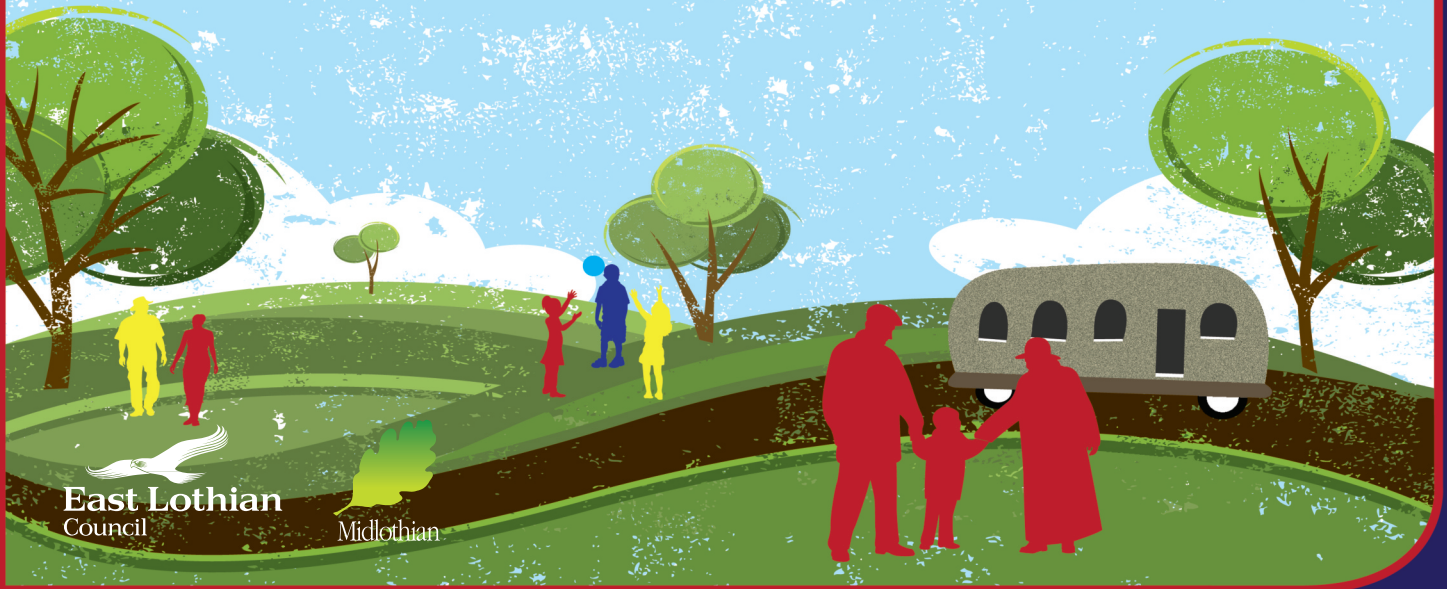


Racial Harassment Information and advice

for Gypsies and Travellers



Challenging racial harassment

Everyone has a right to live in peace but unfortunately some Gypsies / Travellers living on sites and elsewhere experience racial harassment.

East Lothian and Midlothian Councils, working in partnership with Lothian and Borders Police, are committed to:

- Taking firm action against the perpetrators of racism and racial harassment.
- The thorough investigation of all reported racist incidents.

What's racial harassment?

Racial harassment is a criminal offence, as defined by the Equality Act 2010, and takes place when a person from one racial or ethnic group offends, upsets or threatens someone from another racial or ethnic group. You may experience racial harassment from

your neighbours or other people in the community.

Any behaviour that makes you feel distressed, alarmed or afraid, which violates your dignity or which creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment can be classed as harassment.

Racial harassment can present itself in many forms. Examples of possible racist incidents could include:

- verbal abuse, such as name-calling, insults or racist jokes
- damage to property, for example, vandalism, racist graffiti, breaking windows or starting fires
- nuisance telephone calls, texts or emails
- bullying, intimidation and threats
- physical abuse or violence
- publishing and distributing leaflets or newspapers likely to cause racial hatred.

What can I do if I'm being harassed and how can I get help?

Many Gypsies / Travellers are not willing to take action against people who harass them because they fear it may make the situation worse.

Talking through what's happening to you with family, friends and neighbours may make a difference and help you sort things out.

It is important to keep a record of all incidents as they happen, e.g. times, dates, what happened, where, witnesses, etc. Keep any offensive material as it forms evidence in legal action, e.g. graffiti on a wall or a leaflet or note through your door. Do not erase abusive text-messages or messages on your telephone answer machine as they too are evidence and may help to identify the perpetrator.

Make sure that everyone living in and visiting your household knows what racial harassment is and that it is unacceptable.

If you are currently experiencing or witnessing racial harassment and / or believe that there is an immediate risk of harm to you or someone else, please call the police immediately on 999.

In addition, you may wish to advise one of the following about your situation:

East Lothian's Travelling Peoples Manager
(0131) 654 2095, or

East Lothian Council's Antisocial Behaviour Team
(01620) 829919, or

Midlothian Council's Community Safety Team
(0131) 271 6677, or

Shelter Scotland's Independent Advice and Support Service
0344 515 2526

What can East Lothian and Midlothian Councils and Lothian and Borders Police do?

If neighbours or other people in the community are harassing you, both Councils and the Police have procedures in place for dealing with racist incidents. They will aim to:

- Treat your report as a high priority case.
- Deal with all reports sensitively and with understanding.
- Maintain regular contact with you and keep you informed, including the result of the investigation.
- Take firm action against perpetrators (including evictions, Anti Social Behaviour Orders and / or interdicts).
- Refer you to relevant specialist support or advocacy agencies for advice and support.

- In some cases, they may arrange for security measures such as extra locks and fireproof letterboxes, or even move you to a more secure location.

The Councils and Police will not make you do anything you do not want to do.

How can I report information without talking to the police directly?

For different reasons, some people are reluctant to go to the Police to report a crime. There are a number of organisations throughout East Lothian and Midlothian where victims, witnesses, carers or others can speak privately to a member of staff and they will pass your information onto the Police.

As such you can report a crime (as an alternative) through a third party organisation to help lessen some of the concerns you may have when reporting incidents. All participating organisations have staff trained

in how to take the details of an incident and can also offer further support or advice to the person reporting the incident.

How remote reporting works

The victim of racial harassment is given the option of reporting an incident or providing information formally, informally or anonymously. The third party agency notes basic details of the incident and passes this to a relevant local Police Inspector, who allocates the incident for enquiry.

It is the responsibility of the investigating officer to make contact with the third party agency to maintain communication between the victim, agency and police officer and ensure that all parties are aware of the stages of the investigation.

For more information regarding participating remote reporting agencies in East Lothian and Midlothian please contact:

Dusty Miller, Travelling Peoples Site Manager on (0131) 654 2095, or

Rebecca Spillane, East Lothian Council Equalities Policy Officer on (01620) 827134, or

Midlothian Council's Community Safety Team on (0131) 271 6677, or

Mhairi Craig, Shelter Advice and Support Service on 0344 5152526.



I have been discriminated against while I have been in contact with East Lothian or Midlothian Council. Who can I report it to?

Both Councils are committed to eliminating any form of harassment and discrimination in all aspects of work. If you have experienced or witnessed an incident of discrimination that has occurred:

- Whilst visiting a Council building;
- When receiving a Council service; and
- By a member of staff whilst working for the Council;

The Councils want to hear about it.

You can do so by speaking to East Lothian Council's Customer Feedback Manager on (01620) 827497, an appropriate member of staff or by completing the form, *'How to make a compliment, complaint or comment about a Council service'* which is available on request from staff members, local offices and from the Council's website.

To complain or give comments to Midlothian Council visit www.midlothian.gov.uk, email feedback@midlothian.gov.uk or phone 0131 561 5444.



Useful contacts

Inspector, Safer
Communities Department,
Lothian and Borders Gypsy /
Traveller Police Liaison
Officer (East Lothian &
Midlothian)
(0131) 654 5513

Crimestoppers
0800 555 111

East Lothian Council
(during office hours)
(01620) 827 827
*(emergency outside office
hours)*
(01875) 612 818

East Lothian Council
Antisocial Behaviour hotline
0845 601 8518

East Lothian Community
Mediation, The Brunton Hall,
Ladywell Way, Musselburgh
info@eastlothian.sacro.org.uk
*(this service is independent,
free & confidential)*
0131 653 5295

Dusty Miller, Travelling
Peoples Site Manager
(0131) 654 2095

Mhairi Craig, Shelter Advice
and Support Service
0344 515 2526

East Lothian Council
Customer Feedback
Manager *(complaints,
compliments and
suggestions)*
(01620) 827 497

Midlothian Council Antisocial
Behaviour hotline
(0131) 271 6677

Midlothian Council Housing
(office hours)
(0131) 271 3569

Midlothian Council
Emergency Homelessness
assistance *(out of office
hours)*
(0131) 663 7211

The Equality and Human
Rights Commission helpline
(information and guidance on
discrimination and human
rights issues)
0845 604 5510



RH leaflet/SB/June11/v1.01

Versions
of this booklet can be
supplied in Braille, large
print, on audiotape or in your
own language. Phone the
Public Information Officer
on 01620 827199