

VOICES OF COLOUR PROJECT

BACKGROUND

Rights and Equality Sandwell (RES) is a charity established since 2003. RES exists, to bring about respect, equality diversity and inclusion. Our core business is campaigning and advocating for equality of opportunity and non-discrimination practice across all areas of life. We connect communities and special interest groups to promote their voice, participation rights, and the inclusion of marginalized and disadvantaged communities. RES lost its main stream funding during 2020 with Sandwell Council. Since then RES has been responding to matters on Race and Equality issues faced by local people; some of this work is covered by a project funded through Awards for All from June 2022 to May 2023 but mainly through goodwill and RES volunteers. RES is well known as **a trusted and independent voice for individuals and communities.**

RES MISSION: IMPROVING EQUALITY FOR ALL, PROMOTING DIVERSITY AND CHALLENGES DISCRIMINATION

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Voices of Colour Project, funded by Awards for All England during 2022 and 2023. This project was developed as a direct result of the changing political and environmental situations, which have led to many families and individuals experiencing injustice and discrimination in Sandwell. Cases of injustice and discrimination have risen in BAME populations, who were already experiencing many inequalities and had limited access to opportunities. This project worked in partnership and collaboration with the networks RES established in Sandwell, such as statutory,

private and voluntary sectors. There is currently no independent, non-statutory service within the Borough of Sandwell, for victims of racial harassment and discrimination where individuals feel discriminated against.

Through our casework support, RES aims to achieve the highest impact by involving local people, particularly those who experience barriers and day-to-day challenges in accessing vital services. These people have low levels of neighbourhood interactions and trust in mainstream services often fall through gaps because of system and process failures. RES employed a part time Case Worker to take on a unique and necessary role to ensure that individuals have an opportunity to be supported, advised and be represented when they feel discriminated against and need an independent organisation to support them through their concerns.

OUTCOMES

During this period, RES received 16 inquiries in total:

- 8 of these cases were complex and required correspondence with other organisations. RES supported the individuals during their case and worked with other organisations for a speedy resolution
- 13 cases have been resolved with satisfactory outcome.
- 1 case the client stopped communication as she ran out of time to take her case further.
- 1 case, emotional support was given as the case was already in court proceedings.
- 1 case is still open

Some Examples of Cases supported by RES:

• Discrimination by neighbours hate crime case:

The client made contact with RES and told us that Sandwell Council officer told him that he would need to take his matter to an independent service provider for further support regarding his matter. The client lived in a council property in Princes End Tipton. Soon after moving, the client quickly experienced racial abuse from the community. When the client went to the Housing Team and when he spoke with his housing manager, the manager said, "I would never live in that area with my family". It became clear to the client that the council were aware of the racial behaviour of the community and this should have been taken into consideration when offering this property to the client. The client requested to move after providing evidence of threats to his family. The client experienced 3 years of hate crime resulting to several police incidents recorded yet not considered as racial or hate crime by the police, which delayed the client from being moved up through the housing points system. RES started to highlight key areas of failures in supporting this client by both the council and the police. The client feared for his

family's safety and no one would stay in the house alone. The client would sleep by the front door to protect his family every day. The client would come to his appointments at RES with his whole family in the car. His wife was a wheelchair user and often sat in the car all day waiting for her husband because she was too scared to stay home alone. Within a few months of RES, responding to the issues the client was re-housed to another location in Sandwell.

This case illustrates missed opportunities in identifying issues, which could put a family's health and safety at risk. Moving the family into another area has not dealt with the racial issues in Princes End, however it has masked the issue. It has removed the victim from his home and gave the abusers what they wanted. There are clear racial issues within the community that need to be addressed and dealt with rather than masked by short term fixes.

RES will use this case as an example to share knowledge through training and workshops with other organisations, about racial profiling within the community, and how it transpires into schools and the workplaces.

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION (EDI) IS EVERY PERSON'S RIGHT. DIFFERENCES MATTER!

If you require advice, support or more information on what RES does then contact RES on enquiries@rightsandequalitysandwell.co.uk

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