

Action Against Racist Abuse

Stakeholder Meeting Report

Venue: Exeter Historic Guildhall

Date & Time: Monday, 20 October 2025, 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM

Organised by: Inclusive Exeter **Chair:** Neomi Alam, Chair of Inclusive Exeter

1. Introduction

Inclusive Exeter hosted a stakeholder meeting titled “*Action Against Racist Abuse*” at Exeter Guildhall to bring together councillors, law enforcement representatives, community leaders, and residents to discuss experiences of racism and explore collaborative solutions for building a safer, more inclusive city.

The session began at 12:00 PM with an introduction by Kate Hannan, one of Inclusive Exeter’s Directors, who welcomed attendees and provided an overview of the purpose of the meeting. She also explained key terminology related to migration and identity (migrant, immigrant, refugee, asylum seeker, undocumented migrant, etc.), emphasising the importance of using accurate and respectful language when addressing these topics.

2. Attendance

The meeting was well attended by:

- Councillors from Exeter City Council
- Representatives from Devon & Cornwall Police
- Representatives from Devon County Council
- Leaders and members from multiple community organisations across Exeter
- Migrant workers, business owners, and residents representing diverse backgrounds

Special thanks were extended to Past Lord Mayor Trish Oliver, Exeter City Council Communities Team, and the National Lottery Community Fund for their continued support.

3. Testimonies and Speaker Highlights

Student Experience

Ms A shared her perspective as an international student, highlighting the social and emotional challenges faced by foreign students, including cultural isolation and experiences of bias.

Migrant Worker's Experience

Ms B spoke about her personal experience of working 60–70 hours per week and the vulnerability of those tied to restrictive sponsorship systems. She emphasised how migrant workers often fear speaking up about discrimination due to visa-related insecurity.

Far-Right Protests and Community Safety

Ms C discussed recent far-right protests targeting asylum seekers in Exeter. She described the anxiety and racism experienced by asylum seekers seeking safety, noting that even the terminology surrounding “asylum seekers” carries stigma.

She urged authorities to take practical action and called for stronger collaboration between departments, stressing that “we all have the capability to do something good.”

Workplace Racism

Ms D described her experience of racism at work and fainting during an incident on the street that was linked to racial stress. She spoke about verbal abuse from colleagues that went unchecked and highlighted the need for union membership as a safeguard for employees.

Racism in Business Settings

Ms E a registered NHS nurse, shared distressing incidents relayed to her by Chinese people who run local shops. They had experienced repeated vandalism and racial abuse in their workplaces but felt their reports to police were not taken seriously. Ms E urged the authorities to take stronger and more proactive action to protect minority business owners and to build greater trust with victims of racist incidents.

Sidwell Street Business Owner

Mr F described racist abuse and anti-social behaviour affecting Sidwell Street businesses. He noted that his business, established in 2010, has faced repeated vandalism and racial slurs from both customers and passersby. He called for better coordination between police and council departments to protect minority-owned businesses and ensure the wellbeing of Sidwell Street traders.

Community Builder's Perspective

Ms G shared experiences of hostility faced by refugees and asylum seekers, including “go back” taunts and verbal attacks. She also referred to a case where a child was verbally abused by a fellow pupil at school while the teacher remained silent. Ms G stressed the need for diversity education and anti-racism training in schools.

She advocated for stronger police presence in vulnerable areas to reassure communities.

Refugee Experience (*spontaneous speaker*)

Mr H shared a deeply personal account of inadequate police response to his own experience of racial abuse. He explained that equality must be practised, not just promised, and called for fair and timely justice for victims. He noted that his case from August 26 remained unresolved, underscoring the slow processes victims face.

Jewish Perspective (*spontaneous speaker*)

Mr I reflected on rising antisemitism following recent international conflicts and the recent attack on a Manchester synagogue. He drew parallels between discrimination faced by Jewish and Muslim communities and warned against divisive narratives on social media. He called for solidarity across faiths and communities, saying, “*Safety cannot be achieved through fear; it comes through shared humanity.*”

Nathan Johnson – Devon & Cornwall Police Representative

Inspector Nathan Johnson from Devon & Cornwall Police offered an open apology to those who felt unsupported and assured attendees that hate crimes are taken seriously. He explained that all reported hate crimes are reviewed by inspectors each morning at briefing, and that measures are being strengthened to improve response and communication with affected communities.

4. Discussion Themes and Q&A Summary

The moderated Q&A and discussion session (1:15–2:00 PM) covered several key issues:

- **Representation in leadership:** It was noted that only three councillors of colour serve across DCC and ECC, raising concerns about underrepresentation of minority communities in decision-making roles.
 - **Modern slavery and care sector:** Questions were raised about how DCC and ECC will address reported mistreatment of care workers.
 - **Community engagement:** Participants agreed that creating spaces for dialogue and regular collaboration between communities, councillors, and police is vital.
 - **Business concerns:** Representatives from the Nigerian community highlighted the need for more affordable shop spaces for minority-owned businesses. Many are currently forced to buy supplies from other cities like Birmingham, increasing costs.
 - **Cllr Laura Wright** responded to this point, clarifying that most city-centre shops are privately owned, but the Council is reviewing properties under its control to identify opportunities to support local minority businesses. She also reaffirmed the Council's ongoing work to improve diversity and representation within the authority.
 - **Police–community trust:** Speakers reiterated the importance of visible, positive policing and transparent follow-up after incidents.
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5. Key Recommendations and Action Points

- Establish a **Task & Finish Working Group** to oversee anti-racist initiatives and community safety.
- Recognise **Inclusive Exeter as a Third-Party Reporting Centre** for hate crimes and discrimination.
- Strengthen **police presence** in areas affected by racial tension, especially around asylum accommodation and Sidwell Street.
- Provide **mandatory anti-racism and cultural awareness training** for staff across public services and schools.
- Increase **representation of minority communities** in leadership positions within local authorities.

- Investigate **working conditions in care homes** for potential exploitation or modern slavery concerns.
 - Encourage **intercultural events and public education campaigns** to promote unity and understanding.
 - Continue community-building activities such as the **2026 Badminton Tournament (Feb 14–15)** and **Cultural Arts Festival 2026**, celebrating Exeter's diversity.
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6. Closing Remarks

Neomi Alam concluded the session by thanking all speakers and participants, encouraging everyone to continue sharing stories, collaborating, and holding institutions accountable.

The meeting ended at 2:00 PM with appreciation to all attendees for their openness and contributions.

7. Conclusion

The *Action Against Racist Abuse* meeting served as a crucial platform for sharing real experiences, raising institutional awareness, and strengthening collaboration between communities, the Council, and law enforcement. The testimonies highlighted both systemic challenges and the collective determination to make Exeter a truly inclusive city where every individual is respected and protected.

Inclusive Exeter extends sincere thanks to all attendees, speakers, and partners who contributed to this impactful event.