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Crackdown on hate crimes

Perpetrators of hate crime have an extra reason to be on their guard as a new force hits the streets to protect Coventry's residents.

Whitefriars Housing Group has appointed Joanna Henderson to its new position of tenancy enforcement officer. The new role will see her specialise in dealing with hate crime and domestic abuse cases.

Joanna, 36, joined Whitefriars' specialist asb4 team in July 2003. After training and working as a mediator for the past two years Joanna's finely tuned communication and empathy skills made her the ideal candidate for this position.

Joanna's main role will be to actively encourage victims to report incidents of both hate crime and domestic abuse. She will work closely with partner agencies to take appropriate action where possible against identified perpetrators.

As part of the role she will be supporting victims of hate crime and domestic abuse, and also compiling information about the number of incidents reported to Whitefriars.

Hate crime is any incident motivated by prejudice against someone's sex, racial heritage, religion, disability or sexual orientation. It can include graffiti, offensive mail, assault, verbal abuse or offensive literature.

Mum-of-two Joanna, who moved to Coventry from South Africa in 1996, will work closely with other local support agencies to ensure those facing problems related to hate crime and domestic abuse know where to turn.

She said: "This new role was created because hate crime is taken very seriously by Whitefriars and we recognise that it is very much under-reported. The aim of the new role is to give a better service to our customers in these situations by offering victim support and by taking appropriate action against perpetrators.

"We want to send out a clear message that hate crime and domestic abuse will not be tolerated by Whitefriars. We strongly believe in offering and providing support to those suffering from hate crime or domestic abuse and whenever possible we will support victims so that they feel able to remain in their own home."

There are around 22 non-police hate crime reporting centres in Coventry, including four Whitefriars offices. Any reader experiencing problems with hate crime or domestic abuse can call 024 7649 6739.

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