

Police accused of harassment

Blacks to set up watchdog unit

A UNIT to collect evidence of racist attacks would bring private prosecutions against individual police officers for abuse and harassment of blacks, it was revealed last night. Without such a body to control police activities, Sheffield could soon see outbreaks of violence like those common in Brixton, a spokesman for the Asian Youth Movement told a meeting.

Sheffield's Asian Welfare Association last week broke all links with South Yorkshire police and the police-community liaison panel.

By SHEENA HASTINGS

The AWA claimed there had been a great deterioration in police treatment of young Asian people in the past year, and alleged increasing incidents of police harassment.

Alleged incidents included use of police dogs to break up street groups of Asian youths, who say they were making no trouble.

Parents complained their teenage children had been arrested and taken to police stations without families or community workers being consulted.

Last night's meeting of leaders of many of the black groups in the city, the MP for Heeley Bill Michie, and county council deputy leader John Cornwell, called unanimously for the monitoring unit to replace the liaison panel, which was condemned as "a sham."

The unit is to be run by the black community under a committee including members of every group. It will provide a 24-hour emergency service for alleged attack victims, people who allege they were wrongfully taken into police custody, or those who said they were abused while in custody.

It hopes to make police act more promptly on racist attacks, and to compile dossiers of evidence of alleged police mistreatment to bring complaints against officers who could then be taken to court.

The Asian Youth Movement spokesman said: "Getting around a table, drinking coffee, and talking to the top policeman does not solve anything. It's all pretence, and just makes the police feel good."

"What we need is a serious challenge to the inherent racist attitudes of the police. The bossmen in the force are laughing at us behind their masks of concern."

John Cornwell said the black community should not give up hope and should continue to talk to the Chief Constable, Peter Wright, who said he was very sympathetic to black problems.

Proposals for the structure and working of the new unit will be put to the county council, which the black community hopes will help fund the project. A mass meeting of blacks in Sheffield will be held to publicise its launch.

A police spokesman said: "The police-community panel has worked well for four years and will continue as long as there is a need. Its critics are welcome to come along and air their

Morning tele.

Times Aug 16th - 83.