

VULCAN

Asians and the police

COMMUNITY relations in Sheffield have suffered another serious blow with the decision by the Asian Welfare Association to suspend all working links with the city police.

Last year, West Indians broke with the police after a clash in Haymarket and that breach has still not been healed.

In August this year, younger members of the Asian community formed the Asian Youth Council because of what they called "police insensitivity."

Asians now form a sizeable proportion of the city's residents, numbering around 15,000, and it is essential that they should feel an accepted part of the community.

Senior members of Sheffield police are well aware of this and genuine efforts have been made to establish good relations with minority groups. Some Asians and others feel, however, that the determination to understand their very real difficulties and provide adequate protection has not been effective at levels where day-to-day contacts are made.

Sheffield police must make their own assessment of how true this is. Ultimately, progress in understanding depends very much on the attitudes of individuals and this is something that cannot be changed easily by official directives.

Asians and others, however, must recognise that they need the police and their aim should be to heal the present breach as soon as possible.

Bridge-builder

Meanwhile, Sheffield's Bangladeshi community have extra reason for sorrow with the department threat hanging over social worker Ranjit Kamus Chakravorty.

Though the Home Office say he is here

Boycott threatens race liaison panel

POLICE procedures for consulting ethnic communities in Sheffield could be in danger of collapsing after the withdrawal of the Asian Welfare Association from the police-community relations liaison panel.

The recent boycott by the AWA, one of the most important Asian groups in the city, comes on top of a long-standing boycott by representatives of the West Indian community.

There are now fears that poor representation could leave the panel in danger of collapse with little significant discussion taking place, especially if other organisations withdraw.

Mr Choudry Walayat, chairman of the panel and president of the Pakistani Welfare Association, said he gave full moral support to the AWA. He said there were well-founded cases where the police had not provided sufficient protection for families under threat and several times the police's attention had been drawn to the matter.

But he said any decision to withdraw from the panel could only be made after consulting members of particular organisations. The panel would be discussing the issue at its meeting next week, he said.

Supt Terry Swann, head of South Yorkshire police community liaison department, said he was dis-

By SIMON GALLIMORE

appointed at the AWA decision to withdraw over complaints of lack of police protection for Asian families who face attacks.

"It is true to say that the panel will be less effective in that the representation on it will be less broadly based as when they were involved, but it will continue to function," he said.

"All I can do is reassure any member of the community that we take seriously all complaints received and we are sensitive to the needs of different sections of the community."

The police responded as quickly

as possible to any incidents, but sometimes purely practical reasons made it impossible to get someone on the scene as fast as they would hope, he added. "You cannot have a constable on the corner of every street."

Supt Swann said relations with the AWA were suspended rather than broken off and they were still hoping for closer relations. Talks were still continuing on a personal basis, he said.

But an AWA spokesman said there would be no contact, either formal or informal, until the association was satisfied the police were taking their complaints seriously.

The Asian Youth Council, repre-

sented younger members of the Asian community, has already staged demonstrations protesting at what they see as a lack of police protection against racist attacks.

Members of the West Indian community broke off contact with the police after allegations of police brutality during disturbances on the Haymarket in the city centre last year, in which at least 12 West Indian youths were arrested.

Mr Mike Atkins, ethnic minorities adviser to Sheffield City Council, said: "I don't know what they discuss on the panel but as far as relations with the police the West Indian community has said they will build their own contacts on their own terms."

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