Gang harassment: Joe and Cynthia’s story

“I’m 39 and my partner Joe is 46. I’m happy and caring. So is Joe but sometimes he can be sad, and nasty though he says he doesn’t mean to be. We have home-based support every Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday and advocacy support as and when we need it. People who know us well say we are happy people but people who don’t know us call us names and laugh and swear at us. We’ve got a daughter, Samantha, who is 10. She’s got ADHD [attention deficit hyperactivity disorder]. We’ve got a niece and nephew who we see every week. We get on well with the niece and nephew but it’s harder to get on with other family.

I don’t work but Joe has a voluntary job 2 days a week. He loves it and has got lots of friends there. I don’t have any really but I had a friend Linda I’m not allowed to see her anymore.

On a normal day I take my daughter to school then I go home. I do my housework and ironing for my daughter. I collect her from school then I cook the dinner. I help her with her homework then we play games before she has her bath and goes to bed. Then I watch TV before I go to bed. I go to bingo on a Thursday. Joe loves taking Sam to the park at the weekend. Sometimes we go to Christine’s for dinner.

Where we live now we were hounded by about 7 people male and female, not sure how old. They used to stand outside the shop by the school where we collect our daughter from. They would call us and our daughter names. They followed us home so they know where we lived. They started to put bricks and rubbish through our letterbox. They called us names like ‘fat tramp’ and swore at us. They put wheelie bins in front of our front door and traffic cones in front of the house. It also came from a woman at the school pretending to be a friend and being unkind behind our backs sharing our business with other people. They would knock our door at night with masks on and swear and shout at us. They were trying to get Joe to chase them but he wouldn’t. It reached a real high point when it was daily they even stole all the balloons and birthday banners we put up for our daughter’s birthday. It lasted for 6 weeks I’d say at its peak. We kept the door shut and locked. It was horrible. We wanted to move out and keep our daughter safe.

We phoned the police over 5 times and my brother phoned them as well we also phoned our family because we didn’t know what to do and talked to our advocate. We stayed in more, phoned family and police. Our advocate supported us to meet with our housing association. Our family phoned police on our behalf they were worried and angry and stressed. Police didn’t come out straight away they came the next day and asked us questions then the community safety team came out to tell us how to stay safe but we already had everything they suggested.

We were really upset, scared, not fair we felt safe when the police were around but they weren’t around enough. They didn’t take it seriously. They tried to help but there was nothing they could
do. They were understanding but nothing came of it. No one was ever prosecuted. After the police presence and PSOs [Police Support Officers] were around they came to the door less and less. We have a community police office near our house and we have got to know the PSOs and they know us. This has really helped. It became less and less. Now it doesn’t happen at all. The PSOs got to know us well and we trust them. We were happy with the PSOs but still think the gang are still being horrible to other people. If the police did more, and were around more. They need to come to the estate undercover because when they come in police cars everyone scarpers.

We don’t mix with anyone anymore on the estate we only talk to our next door neighbours now. We just want for it to stop. Remove the Yobbos from the estate and to be taken seriously.”