

NETWORK STADIUM HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED
BOARD - THURSDAY 18 APRIL 2013

PILOT SCRUTINY – ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR CASE MANAGEMENT

PREPARED AND PRESENTED BY:

Prepared by:

Resident Pilot Scrutiny Panel

Presented by:

██████████ Community Engagement and Investment Officer

PURPOSE AND SCOPE:

This report is produced for the Association by resident members of the Scrutiny Panel Pilot. The report details the background to their work, methods used and conclusions from their scrutiny into Network Stadium's approach to Anti Social Behaviour Case Management. This report provides a series of service improvement recommendations for review and approval at Board.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Potential resource implications will be linked to Network Stadium's response to the recommendations for service improvement detailed in this report. This may include, but not exhaustive of:

- Staff time
- Financial investment to support training and resources

STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

NSHA Business Plan 2012-13:

Point 42: Contribute to Group development of co-regulation plans for customer scrutiny and co-regulation.

Other strategic implications will link to the operational practice of the Neighbourhood Management team in their response to recommendations to improve Anti Social Behaviour Case Management.

RISK: FINANCIAL, OPERATIONAL AND REPUTATIONAL

The risks of failure to effectively implement/address the recommendations put forward by the Pilot Scrutiny Panel are identified as follows:

- Diminished capacity to implement the service improvement recommendations proposed by the Panel members
- Diminished value for money of the Scrutiny process
- Increased disillusionment of involved residents
- Potential decrease in resident satisfaction.

SUMMARY OF RESIDENT AND DIVERSITY IMPACT

A key outcome of Resident Involvement review will be to ensure all involvement opportunities are representative of our wider customer base. This will impact on the future recruitment process for Scrutiny Panel.

RECOMMENDATIONS/NEXT STEPS

Board to review service improvement recommendations. It is then recommended that these be incorporated into a service improvement plan, produced and delivered by operational managers within the Neighbourhood Management team.

Please see item 7.1 - 7.9 (pg. 10-11) in the body of the report for details of the recommendations provided by the Pilot Scrutiny Panel.

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**Report of the Pilot Scrutiny Panel to Network Stadium Housing Association
Scrutiny of Anti Social Behaviour Case Management – January-February 2013**

1. Introduction

During January and February 2013, we undertook a Scrutiny of Anti Social Behaviour Case Management. This is considered to be a particularly important aspect of our Landlord's service because Anti Social Behaviour adversely affects residents' quality of life. The following drivers were identified in selecting this scrutiny area:

1. Resident Business Planning Group 2 October 2012 – feedback

Communities

- Building block communities
- Getting to know neighbours
- Engaging with young people
- Reducing ASB will increase the sense of security in local communities

Value for money

- For example, fly-tipping can be costly to NSHA and residents

Quality of service

- Cleanliness of estates
- Tackling subletting
- Effectively communicating our response and action to ASB reports

Communications

- Clear guidelines on what residents can expect from a service
- Published service standards
- Customer relationship management – residents do not have to explain a situation from the beginning each time they contact NSHA

2. Performance

- ASB is a key performance indicator for Network Stadium, which is monitored monthly and reported to the Board.

3. Satisfaction

- June 2012 Leadership Factor results for 'Handling problems and complaints': 50% of customers had a problem in the previous 12 months, typically related to ASB or repairs.

4. Understanding the service

- It is important to assess whether residents understand the service, which could lead to underreporting of ASB cases.

5. Resident feedback

- Residents have expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of action they can see when anti-social behaviour is reported. Whilst officers can explain that the process to take legal action against perpetrators takes a long time, there is no clear information (such as a process or policy leaflet) that can be given to residents.
- Residents feel that anti-social behaviour is not taken seriously.
- Perhaps a commitment to a clear information leaflet on anti-social behaviour and an improved tracking system (specifically designed software, for example) would be beneficial, to show residents that it is something we are proactively tackling.

The report sets out; the background to our work, the methods used, what we found, conclusions reached and recommendations we wish to make to the Performance Committee in respect of Anti Social Behaviour Case Management.

2. Background to Resident Scrutiny

Since the new Regulatory Framework was introduced under the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008, the role of an external Regulator of Housing Providers has diminished and it is expected that ensuring that all Standards are met and exceeded is achieved through *co-regulation* undertaken by the Provider and its residents. This has been greatly reinforced since the election of the Coalition Government, the abolition of the regulator, the Tenant Services Authority, and the passing of essentially a 'backstop' regulatory role for the national *consumer* Standards to the Homes and Communities Agency.

To embrace the opportunities that this presents, volunteer residents were sought in the latter part of 2012 to *pilot* a Scrutiny of an aspect of the Association's service. Anti Social Behaviour Case Management was chosen for the reasons indicated above.

3. Scrutiny Process for ASB Case Management

We undertook Capacity Building sessions in December 2012 covering Introduction and Briefing, Team Building, Approaches to Resident Scrutiny, Anti Social Behaviour and its Case Management and the Planned Scrutiny Programme.

The following methods were used in our Scrutiny programme:

- Briefing from Senior Managers on Policy and Practice at Network Stadium
- Staff Interviews
 - Neighbourhood Officers
 - Performance and Business Analyst
 - Senior Neighbourhood Officers
 - Neighbourhood Manager
- Good Practice Research
- Review of Policy, Practice, other relevant documents and papers
- Review of Customer Satisfaction Surveys

- Telephone interviews with residents who have experienced anti social behaviour
- Meeting with External Agencies
- Meeting with Senior Advisor, Anti Social Behaviour, Chartered Institute of Housing
- Policy and Practice Briefing from the Director of Customer Services
- Consideration of Mystery Shoppers' returns.

Our work was undertaken without support from Network Stadium staff, apart from the Community Engagement and Investment Team as appropriate and on a confidential basis. This was to ensure the independence and objectivity of our work. We were supported by an independent external adviser.

4. Findings

Pre Scrutiny

As is normal practice in a Resident Scrutiny we submitted in advance of our programme, a list of requested documents to study as a part of the process. The documents were provided as requested, within timescales required and we were generally responded to in an efficient manner.

Scrutiny Panel 'care'

A key feature of Scrutiny should be to ensure that those undertaking it are well looked after and respected for their roles. We considered that the quality of Scrutiny Panel 'care' was excellent. We were concerned that rooms used for Scrutiny work were not always suitable for the purpose. For example the sixth floor café area used more than once is not confidential and quiet enough. Stationery was well provided for. Access to PCs was limited, restricting the amount of onsite good practice research undertaken. We were well catered for in terms of refreshments. Thought was given to the need for transport, meeting individual's needs. Staff we met were positive, open and helpful. Our key Community Engagement and Investment Officer communicated well with us, ensuring we knew what we doing and when.

Programme

Briefing from Senior Managers on Policy and Practice at Network Stadium

The two Neighbourhood Managers and a Senior Neighbourhood Officer gave us a briefing on Anti Social Behaviour Management policy and operational practice. This included what constitutes ASB, the importance of partnership working with other agencies and the introduction of the Customer Relationship Management system, replacing the current use of Excel spread sheets. They also briefed us on how cases are managed, particularly the distinction between 'low level' and 'high level' cases.

Methods of Performance Monitoring were mentioned. The Managers acknowledged that the effectiveness of ASB Case Management does not always meet expectations. This has been, at least in part, due to the use inefficient methods of case recording

and monitoring that are not fit for purpose. The new CRM system being introduced is intended to overcome this.

The Managers expressed concern regarding the turnover and numbers of staff dealing with ASB Case Management in the organisation. Lack of a fit for purpose case recording and monitoring system is said to make it difficult for new staff to continue case management with ease.

We appreciated the openness of the managers and recognised why there will be concerns about ASB Case Management. We felt that there was a lack of evidence based practice regarding the resolution of cases within a reasonable timescale. Our study of the CIH Good Practice Hub, ASB Case Management Good Practice Principles, highlighted this. We discuss this in more detail later in our report in the section concerning the meeting with the CIH Senior Advisor and our own research into good practice.

Staff Interviews

Neighbourhood Officers

We interviewed two Neighbourhood Officers. The main areas of ASB were discussed which were noise nuisance, neighbour disputes and pets. They explained that in their role they deal with 'low level' ASB as a part of a wider 'generic' housing officer role. They acknowledged that success rates in resolving ASB cases are 'not good'. It was said that resident's expectations can be unrealistic. Good features of ASB Case Management were said to be Partnership Working, an improved approach under the new ASB Policy. The new CRM system is eagerly anticipated. Areas for improvement they mentioned were improved recording and monitoring and better co ordination.

Once again we thank the officers for their openness in answering our questions. We concluded that, whilst no lack of effort was being applied to tackling ASB, there was no real evidence of knowing and applying acknowledged good practice. It was felt there was something of a lack of empathy with cases being managed, particularly expressed by lack of communication that would be valued by residents.

Performance and Business Analyst

The Analyst's role in relation to ASB Case Management is to identify performance, including types and trends, benchmarking against other Providers to guide decision making. This is done through the production of graphs. This enables work that needs to be done to improve performance to be highlighted. We were impressed by his passion for the role he undertakes. This includes his understanding of complex social issues facing the Association and people living in communities.

We discussed with him the lack of data largely arising from poor operational recording. This includes no geographical comparison available within the Network Stadium operating area or on case resolution rates.

Areas for service improvement suggested were being more proactive and tackling instances earlier. That is, being more effective at implementing the first two prongs of the Association's policy.

Neighbourhood Managers

We met with the two Neighbourhood Managers, who confirmed the main types of ASB experienced. They explained that they were not directly involved in cases, but that they discussed these matters with Neighbourhood Officers and Seniors at monthly 1:1 sessions, including supervisory input required.

The Managers highlighted that not many 'closure' forms are returned. Also there are no targets or pressure to close a case. Another key issue raised was the need to manage residents' expectations well. Tools available for tackling ASB were discussed. They questioned the use of sound monitoring equipment. Use is made of Professional Witnesses. Information and knowledge is shared with Boroughs. Partnership working, including Local Joint Section Group (LJAG) meetings, was well regarded.

We considered that Managers should discuss ASB Case Management with their Neighbourhood and Officers and Seniors more regularly than at monthly 1:1 sessions to make available the Manager's greater experience and perspective and to ensure more focussed management.

Good Practice Research

We researched the Home Office Good Principles for ASB Case Management, Local Government Association Emerging Practice, Chartered Institute of Housing Practice Hub, The Housing Unit preventing and Combating Anti Social Behaviour, NFHiB Coping with Neighbours from Hell, the Local Government Ombudsman Complaints about Neighbour Nuisance and ASB, Joseph Rowntree Trust Anti Social Behaviour Strategies - Finding a Balance, Tenant Scrutiny: Now and in the Future from TPAS and Human Rights at Home – Guidance for Social Housing Providers from the Equality and Human Rights Commission. We also looked at the websites of other Housing Providers to consider their policy and practice.

We are struck by the range and quality of good practice advice available nationally. This is an invaluable resource. However, it was not evident in influencing operational practice at Network Stadium.

Review of Policy, Practice, other relevant documents and papers

We considered the new ASB Policy. At a policy level this seems to reflect contemporary principles for tackling ASB. However we repeat our concern regarding the implementation of this into day to day practice.

A particular area where the policy reflects contemporary principles is its relative balance on how perpetrators and victims of ASB are treated. It may be considered that the Policy could go further in favour of the victim.

In addition to studying the Network Stadium Policy, we also considered the Annual Report 2011-2012: Better Together.

Review of Customer Satisfaction Questionnaires

We considered a number of such questionnaires completed by former complainants with closed cases. We found no evidence that these are used as a part of performance monitoring and we thought they should be. We understand that it is difficult to have these returned back to the organisation. We found that this is due to lack of engagement with the tenants concerned. They would provide a useful feedback to the organisation about how residents feel their case had been managed.

Telephone interviews with residents who have experienced anti social behaviour

A sample of residents from those who had returned a questionnaire was telephoned to explore further what they had said in their return. Responses ranged from one that was very positive to the majority that were very critical. Again our distinct impression was one of lack of consistency how cases are managed. A lesson learned from the one positive resident was personalised communication that was early and regular.

Meeting with External Agencies

We met with representatives of the Met. Police's Safer Neighbourhood Team and an ASB specialist from Brent Council. We learned that the Association has been working in partnership with these agencies. The relationship appeared to be very good. There was positive feedback about a key individual Neighbourhood Manager. A concern however is a lack of engagement by other agencies. Linked to this, although the importance of working with other agencies is well reflected in the policy, staff working particularly with lower level ASB do seem not have time to establish effective partner relationships that would allow for more *joined up* working.

Meeting with Senior Advisor, Anti Social Behaviour, Chartered Institute of Housing

We met with CIH's Senior Adviser on ASB. He told us of the range of 'tools' legal and other available to Housing Providers and other agencies to tackle ASB. Again these were little mentioned by operational staff that we met as a part of the Scrutiny. He also advised us of support available via the CIH for case review, which can be a cost saver in terms of actions that might be taken. We also discussed training opportunities staff and residents.

In terms of national experience, we asked the adviser whether a more specialist approach to ASB case management was more effective than a generic function model. He was clear that a specialised approach provides better results.

The planned changes in ASB legislation were discussed. We were particularly interested in the shift of emphasis toward victims. The Network Stadium policy is consistent with this although further emphasis towards victims could be developed.

The appropriateness of some lettings could be considered by the Association and more sensitive decisions taken. Coupled with pre-tenancy meetings reinforcing the importance of this part of a tenant's responsibilities and signing of good neighbour protocols, further progress may be made.

Policy and Practice Briefing from the Director of Customer Services

The Director of Customer Services briefed on the Association's ASB policy and procedure. We were pleased with her strategic awareness and its link with day to

day practice, empathy with residents and the need to address residents' concerns. The introduction of tools such as the CRM system is acknowledged as a helpful.

For further improvement the Director agreed that a more specialised staffing system would be more effective in tackling ASB Case Management.

Consideration of the Mystery Shoppers' Exercise

We read and considered the returns of the Mystery Shoppers experience of telephoning Network Stadium on ASB matters. Of those returns received so far, key findings were that there is lack of guidance for residents generally and on the website on what to do if experiencing ASB.

Mystery Shoppers had ASB 'scenarios' to present to test out responses. Outcomes were that Mystery Shoppers felt 'fobbed off', those using email had better responses, a request for the policy was not responded to and the members of staff responding to the Shoppers were inconsistent.

5. Conclusions and Themes – Scrutiny of Anti Social Behaviour Case Management

General

We thank the staff involved in managing Anti Social Behaviour cases for their work. It is recognised that this is a particularly difficult and challenging aspect of the Association's operations.

Our overall analysis at the conclusion of the Scrutiny is that Network Stadium has a good policy on tackling Anti Social Behaviour that generally reflects contemporary thinking on this aspect of a Housing Provider's services. Our key concern however is that this is not necessarily followed through in operational practice. We consider that a major consideration with this is organisational arrangements that require the relevant staff to be concerned with too wide a range of matters. Anti Social Behaviour Case Management may not, as a result, get the attention it requires. An apparent lack of training and embracing of the range of tools available may result from this too.

Set out below are the themes that emerged from our Scrutiny and conclusions that we drew from them.

Conclusions and themes arising are:

There seems to be no **managing of residents' expectations** when they complain of Anti Social Behaviour. As we have commented, this is a particularly challenging aspect of the Association's operations and it is not always possible to resolve complaints to everyone's satisfaction. There does not seem to be a consistency in adequate explanation of this given to complaints or general publicity to residents in general. There is scope for resident self help groups to be encouraged. This arose in particular from the Manager's briefing, our interviews of staff and Neighbourhood Managers, the Mystery Shoppers' returns and review of good practice.

We were struck by a **mismatch in nationally recognised good practice in Anti Social Behaviour case management and that practiced at Network Stadium**, which seems to be rather limited. It includes more of a focus on victims and the potential use of mediation and Conflict Resolution Training. A zero tolerance approach could be considered. We think that more sensitive lettings, pre-tenancy reinforcement and signing of good neighbour protocols should be pursued. This arose from the Manager's briefing, our interviews of staff, meeting with the Chartered Institute of Housing senior advisor on ASB and research into good practice.

The **importance of partnership working** is clear. This seems to be a major factor to effectively tackling Anti Social Behaviour. Other agencies have tools, powers and/or resources that support and complement those of Network Stadium. This arose from our research into good practice, meeting with the Chartered Institute of Housing senior advisor on ASB, staff interviews and research into good practice.

It is important to **communicate with complaints**, those complained of and others involved regularly throughout the management of a case. This gives a degree of reassurance to complainants and demonstrates to those complained of that the case is being taken seriously. This arose from our staff interviews, research into good practice and telephone surveys with complainants with now closed cases.

Some useful data is collected on ASB Case Management and is interestingly analysed. However, there does not seem to be any real **strategic use of the data made**. We consider that this could improve understanding and planning. Returned Customer Satisfaction Questionnaires do not seem to be made use of. This arose from our meeting with the Performance and Business Analyst and Customer Services Manager.

Regarding **supervision of staff dealing with ASB Case Management**, we found that this mainly happens via scheduled 1:1 sessions and could benefit from more regular professional supervision meetings. This arose from our meeting with the Neighbourhood Managers.

We recognise that ASB Case Management is a highly challenging area of work for those staff involved and have a concern regarding the **welfare of such staff**. Policy and Practice should reflect this. This arose from the range of work that we undertook in our programme.

A **lack of consistency in the way that cases are managed** was apparent. This arose from our telephone interviews with complaints with now closed cases and the Mystery Shoppers' returns.

The demands on staff dealing with ASB from many other directions was a concern to us. Their ability to focus consistently on ASB Case Management we feel is limited. We are attracted to the benefits of having **specialist ASB Case Management staff**. This arose from our study of good practice, discussion with the Chartered Institute of Housing Senior ASB Advisor and the Director of Customer Services.

We were unable to determine whether the Association and its residents are receiving good Value for Money in its work on ASB Case Management. The Association should consider this.

6. Reflection on the arrangements for and conduct of the Pilot Scrutiny

General

Overall, we concluded that the plan and arrangements for this as a Pilot Scrutiny worked well and that we have been able to produce an evidenced-based, thoughtful report that will be of good use to Network Stadium. There are a number of specific features of the pilot's experience that we would like to highlight as lessons to be learned for the permanent arrangements however. These are set out below.

Conclusions

We used a range of **rooms for our Scrutiny work**, some not always suitable for the purpose. It is important that such rooms are suited to the nature of the work the Panel is undertaking. For example, secure and confidential.

There was a **lack of access to computer use**, limiting our good practice research.

Basic **logistics with transport of Panel members sometimes was confused**. Panel members need to be confident about this.

The **timescale of the Pilot, over many weeks, was too long**. This resulted in it being difficult at times to link aspects of our work together, to consider themes merging and to build the Panel as a team.

The lead-in to the Scrutiny was not long enough to allow for greater certainty of booking of contributors (internal and external) and Panel members' time.

The **sequencing of contributors was not always logical and helpful** and there were times when recall of a contributor would have useful. Combined with a longer lead-in time, greater thought needs to be given to this.

The **Pilot Panel was small** and it would have been beneficial to have had a larger pool of residents to draw from.

7. Recommendations

Anti Social Behaviour Case Management

We recommend that the Association

- 7.1 Develop and implement arrangements for better managing the expectations of residents involved in ASB Case Management. This should include directly to individuals and generally via publicity
- 7.2 Be more proactive in considering and utilising recognised good practice, including by way of developing the Association's practice, procedure, training and supervision and to also address staff welfare. Training should include in Mediation and Conflict Resolution
- 7.3 Ensure that the value of partnership working is properly included in 7.2
- 7.4 Ensure that regular communication with those involved in ASB cases is included in 7.2
- 7.5 Make better strategic use of data collected about ASB cases for planning and service improvements
- 7.6 Ensure a better consistency of approach from staff dealing with ASB Case Management
- 7.7 Develop proposals for organisational specialisation of ASB Case Management
- 7.8 Develop arrangements for undertaking more sensitive lettings to help with avoiding ASB, reinforce the importance of this aspect of the tenancy agreement and the signing of a good neighbour protocol at pre-tenancy meetings
- 7.9 The extent to which Value for Money is being achieved in the Association's work on ASB Case Management should be studied.

For the Scrutiny permanent arrangements April 2013 onwards

- 7.10 Dedicated secure room(s) be made available for the duration of the Scrutiny
- 7.11 Ensure that adequate numbers of computers with internet access are made available
- 7.12 Ensure that logistics for the transport of Panel members is efficient
- 7.13 Conduct Scrutiny over a more limited period, around two weeks followed immediately by concluding and report writing

- 7.14 Have a lead-in time that provides reasonably reliable agreement of arrangements
- 7.15 Ensure that the sequencing of contributors to Scrutiny is helpful to the Panel, with provision for the recall of contributors
- 7.16 Ensure that there is a larger pool of residents to join the Panel.