

# TENANT PANEL REPORT



## **ABOUT THE PANEL**

In April 2012 members of existing tenant involvement groups were invited to form a scrutiny panel which evolved to the tenant panel. The current members of the panel are:

Shirley Green     Chair

Lyn Gadsby       Vice Chair

Win Buchan

Heather White

Linda Wray

## **Review of the Anti-social Behaviour Service within Derby Homes**

### **Purpose of the review**

The purpose of this review is to investigate how Derby Homes Anti-social Behaviour Team handles Anti-social Behaviour (ASB) complaints from start to finish and in conjunction with other internal teams. Anti-social behaviour covers a range of nuisances, disorder and crimes which affect people's lives from noise nuisance, vandalism and graffiti, to drunk or rowdy behaviour, intimidation and harassment. This list is not exhaustive. If left unchallenged anti-social behaviour can have huge impacts on the lives of our tenants. Prior to the Tenant Panel reviewing the ASB Service a House Mark review had recently taken place; the Tenant Panel felt it was important to scrutinise the ASB service from a tenant's perspective. The Tenant Panel took a person focused approach by meeting with staff and tenants to get their perceptions of the service; we took this approach because the other reviews had extensively focused on policy and procedure.

### **What we did**

The review was carried out over a four month period to allow us adequate time to speak with the ASB Manager, ASB Officers, complainants of closed ASB cases, and a representative from the Customer Services Team.

### **Observations**

#### **ASB Manager**

Our first meeting was with the Anti-social Behaviour Manager. He joined Derby Homes in November 2014 having had previous experience in the Anti-social Behaviour field with three other Housing Providers. His priority was to improve and expand service delivery and to attain accreditation from House mark (which lasts for three years) which was achieved.

The Manager explained the team is made up of 8 ASB Officers and an Administration assistant. There is at least one ASB Officer for each Local Area Housing Office (5 Local Housing Offices), each having their own area of responsibility; but when required they all cover each other's area and offer support. The Manager has monthly one to one's with each member of his team and they have regular Team Meetings. At these Team Meetings he encourages Officers to discuss any concerns or put forward any suggestions for improvements.

One business improvement that has been discussed at team meetings is that Derby Homes would like to introduce Community Protection Notices (CPN). Derby Homes requires authorisation from Derby City Council via a delegation of powers to introduce the issuing of CPNs. CPNs prevent unreasonable behaviour which is having a negative impact on the local communities' quality of life. A criminal offence is committed if a CPN is not complied with. Derby Homes are working with the City Council to look at how this can be delivered.

A large percentage of complaints are noise related, therefore the Manager became aware of noise recording software called the Noise App. The Manager took Noise App from the initial trial to full scale implementation and the purchasing of the licence agreement. This App can be downloaded to a complainant's smartphone and records noise, documenting the time and date it occurs removing any element of doubt. The noise app has been very successful and has removed the necessity to complete written evidence logs in the majority of cases. If a complainant does not have a smartphone the previously used monitoring equipment and written evidence logs are still used. The Manager gave us a copy of the Derby Homes Anti-social Behaviour Policy and the documentation used for recording and resolving ASB complaints.

Communication strategies for ASB were discussed; the manager advised that a considerable amount of work has recently gone into updating the ASB section of the Derby Homes website. We felt that although communication is being improved for web users there needs to be the same information available for those tenants who are unable to use the website.

### **ASB Officers**

ASB Officers work flexi hours, generally available between 8am-5pm. They explained how they don't just provide a service for Derby Homes' tenants; they also work with owner occupiers, private rented sector tenants and other registered social landlords in cases where the alleged perpetrator is a Derby Homes tenant.

To be an ASB Officer at Derby Homes you need to have a background in Housing Management, Policing or another relevant area. As a condition of employment ASB Officers either need to have, or agree to study for a BTEC level 5 qualification in ASB.

The ASB Officers are very supportive of each other, for example, if one ASB Officer has a heavy case load another ASB Officer may take over one of their cases, or if an ASB Officer feels they have done everything they can with a case they can ask a

colleague to review it for them. They frequently work in partnership with Housing Officers and all other Support services with Derby Homes, drawing on their knowledge of the local area and also the Police where there are indications of a criminal matter.

Where tenants are vulnerable the ASB Officer will ensure that these vulnerabilities are dealt with accordingly. The ASB Team ensures that all appropriate referrals are made. The ASB Team assesses the risk element and support needs of both the victim and the alleged perpetrator/s.

If there are indications of, and or problems with children and young people the ASB Officer involved will make referrals to partner youth work organisations such as Enthusiasm and Mash Up Derby Ltd to help prevent or resolve the problem. Enthusiasm are a Charity who support and mentor young people who are most at risk of offending and social exclusion, Mash Up Derby Ltd are a theatre group who work creatively with all young people, disengaged youth and high achievers, to educate them on social issues.

ASB active cases are recorded and updated on Derby Homes housing database Academy, after the case is closed complainants' details are logged on the customer engagement suite, Clearview, in order for closed case surveys to be completed.

### **Focus Group**

The ASB Manager set up a Focus Group with tenants in relation to their experience of Derby Homes ASB Service as recommended by House mark. We felt that it would be useful to speak to the complainants of closed cases informally and independent of Derby Homes.

In order to recruit the tenants for the Focus Group, the ASB Manager ran a report for Quarter 1 April - June 2016 of the ASB cases opened and closed during this period, they invited 138 complainants to an ASB Focus Group Meeting. Tenants were given two options for a meeting date and time, one in the morning and one in the evening in order to accommodate working people. Nine complainants responded to say that they would attend the Focus Group all of whom chose the morning meeting. On the day of the Focus Group three tenants attended two of whom were husband and wife.

We observed while the ASB Team had their discussions with the tenants and we used the observations we had made to formulate questions which we asked in our later closed session with the tenants.

In spite of the explanations given by the ASB Team we were aware of the great dissatisfaction with the service from the tenants who attended. We realise that no assumptions can be made; however due to small number of tenants who attended the Focus Group, they cannot be seen as a representative sample of complainants as a whole. The main criticism that the focus group tenants had was being unable to get through on the telephone to the Customer Service Team following the first point of contact procedure in order to initially report their ASB complaint.

## **Customer Services Advisor**

We met with a Customer Services Advisor due to the dissatisfaction expressed by the tenants regarding the difficulties of reporting ASB by telephone. We discussed the process of the Customer Services Team (CST) being the first point of contact for reporting ASB complaints, it was advised that the CST team fill in the ASB first point of contact form and submit the form to the ASB email address where the case is opened by the designated ASB Officer for the area.

The Customer Service Advisor was happy with training given to the staff on ASB first point of contact procedure and with their ability to deal with the call; however we raised our concerns with the waiting times to get through to raise an ASB complaint initially. The Customer Service Advisor agreed with us and was aware of the difficulties some callers are experiencing to get through to the Customer Service Team to join the queue, and then the waiting time taken before a member of the team answers, followed by the time taken to complete the ASB first point of contact form ( three steps). Various ways of improving the telephone system for reporting ASB were discussed.

## **Conclusion**

Derby Homes ASB Service has recently achieved a House Mark accreditation. This is an excellent achievement for the team and Derby Homes. The ASB Team are now implementing the recommendations put forward by House Mark. We found that the ASB Team works very well together and our review only validated what House Mark had found in awarding such a high achievement. We also established through our review that the team are well supported by their Manager and that they have an excellent team spirit.

## **Recommendations**

### **Recommendation:**

To discuss with Derby City Council options for implementing Community Protection Notices (CPNs) at Derby Homes, allowing the ASB Team to deliver a better service.

### **Recommendation:**

We recommend that the information that is available on the Derby Homes website is also available to tenants who are unable to use the internet. Our findings were that ASB information is not as available to those who do not use the internet. For example, a Derby Homes news campaign to include information on: the ASB email address, options for reporting ASB, how cases are managed, what Derby Homes and partner agencies can do to help and what their limitations are.

### **Recommendation:**

To discuss with the Customer Services Team potential options for improving Derby Homes' telephone system.

**Manager's comments:**

**CPN Delegated Powers**

Derby Homes ASB Manager and SMT are continually raising this through various channels at DCC – Legal Services and Neighbourhoods Directorate.

**ASB Information**

Derby Homes have adopted a number of House Mark recommendations around the website and general ASB information and are working to a timetable with Customer Engagement to achieve this. We are putting a lot of ASB related information out through as much social media and other channels as possible and this is ongoing.

**Enquiry Centre**

This will be looked at as part of the review of the Customer Service's strategy.