

# **CSP Review of the Customer Experience of Accessing the Anti-Social Behaviour Service for Low Level Cases**

## **1. Why we chose low level Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) for review**

Having initially examined the ASB service the CSP felt confident that customers with high level ASB cases were receiving a good service. However, it was not clear how customers with low level complaints<sup>1</sup> received the service and how well this was being delivered.

## **2. Scope of the review**

The CSP wanted to focus on the customer journey for those who were experiencing low level ASB, as often these cases are the hardest to resolve. The CSP set a clear scope for the scrutiny review and considered the following:

- a) How customers report low level ASB issues and how their case is managed
- b) How customer expectations of the service are managed
- c) What steps Stockport Homes take to proactively deal with low level ASB issues in neighbourhoods.

## **3. How we scrutinised the low level ASB service**

The CSP used a variety of methods to gather a range of information and evidence in relation to the service.

The following activities were undertaken:

- Briefing from staff on the customer journey of an ASB complainant
- Review of the ASB policy, procedure and strategy
- Review of the Stockport Homes website and other landlords' websites
- Review of published customer information on ASB
- Consideration of case studies and formal complaints
- Review of leaflets from other landlords and organisations
- Review of Your Neighbourhood magazines
- Review of ASB-related aspects of Neighbourhood Action Plans
- Visit to City West Housing Trust
- Interviews with Quality Panel members and Hub attendees who have reported low level cases.

Each member of the CSP assigned themselves to specific scrutiny tasks and reported their evidence to the panel. This evidence underpins the CSP's judgements and recommendations.

## **4. Overview of CSP findings**

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<sup>1</sup> Low level cases are defined as category C or D i.e. non-urgent. For example, rubbish dumping / fly tipping, car parking issues, animal fouling.

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We have found that it is easy to report low level ASB complaints and a clear process is in place to communicate with customers once cases have been recorded on to REACT. However we have found that not all initial complaints are recorded on to REACT.

There is evidence that proactive work is being undertaken to tackle ASB in communities and publicised via 'Your Neighbourhood'. However, links between low level ASB issues and NAPs could be strengthened further.

## **5. Reporting ASB and case management**

With staff the CSP mapped out the customer journey of reporting a low-level ASB issue. In addition, they reviewed the ASB policy, procedure and strategy and assessed complaints that had been made about the service.

### **5.1.1 Strengths**

Customers can report cases in a range of ways; visiting the office, email, website, by phone and directly to staff working in neighbourhoods. It is easy and convenient for customers to discuss and report ASB issues to Stockport Homes.

Stockport Homes has in place a vulnerability matrix, which it uses to assess all complainants and perpetrators to determine what level of support is required from Stockport Homes. This ensures customers receive an appropriate level of support in relation to their case.

When a case is recorded on REACT staff identify vulnerable customers who are causing low level anti-social behaviour and provide a good range of support to address their issues. This can involve support to clean up properties and untidy gardens, tackling hoarding and working with customers to help them manage their tenancies responsibly. This enables customers to stay in their homes and prevent ASB cases escalating further.

### **Observation**

When we started our review customers we found that customers who reported low level ASB issues were not asked for their views on how they felt their case was handled. We are pleased to note that from April 2016 customers are now asked to complete a satisfaction survey.

### **5.1.2 Areas for improvement**

There is no formal and consistent approach to recording the 'triage' process in low level cases. Not every case perceived by the customer to constitute ASB is recorded on REACT, for example, at the point of reporting, the case might be recorded in a

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number of ways, depending on staff perceptions of the issue. This means customers cannot always access a record of these complaints and do not always get a notification of the outcome of any initial investigation; Stockport Homes cannot reliably monitor customer perception levels about the extent of ASB; and there are risks that vulnerability assessments could be completed too late in cases where staff members subsequently concur that ASB is taking place.

## **5.1.3 Recommendations**

1. Utilise the introduction of the Customer Relationship Management system to centrally record all initial complaints of low level ASB issues to ensure consistent communication with customers and identification of vulnerable customers.

## **5.2 How customer expectations of the service are managed**

The CSP examined a range of Stockport Homes' customer publications on ASB and compared these with other landlords. We also reviewed the information on the website. The panel interviewed staff to assess how they make it clear to customers what action Stockport Homes can take to resolve ASB issues.

### **5.2.1 Strengths**

Stockport Homes produces hard copies of leaflets and ensures these are produced at a low cost to the organisation. Using an in-house team provides value for money for customers.

Having 'A guide to approaching your neighbour' is a useful resource for customers which demonstrates what approaches customers can take to try resolve issues themselves. However, it is a limited strength as the leaflet would benefit from some improvements which are detailed below.

### **5.2.2 Areas for improvement**

Stockport Homes' publications and the website do not take a proactive approach in encouraging customers to take responsibility for trying to solve low level nuisance issues themselves. Aside from the 'Guide to approaching your neighbours' there is no mention in the booklets or on the website on what customers can do to appropriately discuss issues with their neighbour.

The 'Guide to approaching your neighbours' lacks clarity. On the first page it states you should 'start by speaking to your Area Housing Office about your concerns' which is contradictory and could cause confusion for customers.

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Leaflets that Stockport Homes produce on ASB are too long and have not been proof read. There is so much information presented that it can be difficult to find guidance and advice on the area that is of concern. In addition, the information has grammatical errors, spelling mistakes and malapropisms. For some customers these documents will look unprofessional and confusing.

## **5.2.3 Recommendations**

2. Place greater emphasis in publications and on the website on what customers can do to try and resolve low level ASB issues themselves.
3. Review, re-write and condense the ASB leaflets and ensure they are accessible to all customers. We will submit a range of documents for you to consider in your review. We would like to see this review done in-conjunction with customers.

## **5.3 How Stockport Homes works proactively in neighbourhoods to tackle low level ASB**

The CSP interviewed staff on the proactive work they undertake in neighbourhoods, reviewed Your Neighbourhood and examined how ASB is linked to Neighbourhood Action Plans (NAPs).

### **5.3.1 Strengths**

Stockport Homes takes a proactive approach to tackling ASB in some communities. We found a range of projects have been delivered over the last year such as litter picks, skip days, supporting community groups to apply for funding for projects and targeted campaigns to tackle irresponsible dog ownership. Where these projects take place customers can see the positive impact they have at that time.

Stockport Homes through 'Your Neighbourhood' publicises to all customers the proactive work it has been doing in communities to tackle low level ASB. These publications clearly demonstrate the work that has been undertaken and who customers can contact if they have any issues that need addressing.

### **5.3.2 Areas for improvement**

Some NAPs are tailored more to local needs than others in tackling low level ASB. We found some NAPs contained generic sentences about 'working in partnership' and lacked detail on specific initiatives in neighbourhoods. For example, we note that that have been low level ASB issues in Offerton relating to young people in the last six months, but these issues are not addressed in the NAP for 2016/17. We note

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that the Werneth Area Committee have raised concerns that low level ASB issues from the Mill Lane estate have been omitted from the NAP.

## **5.3.3 Recommendations**

4. To ensure there is a consistent approach across all Neighbourhood Action Plans (NAPs) in reference to persistent low level ASB if it is identified as an issue within that neighbourhood. There should be a consistent level of detail within the NAPs on how these identified issues will be tackled.

## **6. Support provided for the scrutiny**

The CSP wishes to express its thanks to all those staff who have supported and assisted with the scrutiny. These include Liz Smith, Maria Lindars, Rebecca Cullen, Graham Heslin, Peter Hornsby, Rebecca Sweeton and Jeremy Beatty.

We would like to thank City West for hosting a visit where we could share information and discuss issues relating to this scrutiny.

The CSP have been assisted by Jayne Boote from Engage Associates who has acted as the independent mentor for the group. Jayne has provided advice and guidance on scrutiny activities and facilitated the production of this report. This has been to ensure that the CSP has retained its independence during the scrutiny process.