



Tenant Inspectors

Tenant Inspectors' Report No 7 Anti-Social Behaviour January 2010



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ASB Inspection Recommendations

Preface

Soha's Tenant Inspectors project started because of an idea from the Audit Commission that they may go lighter on inspections if an RSL had tenant inspectors in place. The Chair of the Tenants' Forum was concerned that they must be able to show an ability to do the work properly as she was sure they would want proof that the inspectors were capable of doing a good job.

This led to a bid to Soha's *Excellence Fund* (the re-investment of efficiency savings) which was successful. The first Tenant Inspectors' training took place in October 2006.

There are currently 17 inspectors who decide the area they will inspect and how they will go about this.

The Tenant Inspector project aims to increase accountability to tenants, to improve services through the experience and recommendations of the inspectors and to start to build the skills and knowledge of tenants to be involved at a high level.

ASB Inspection Recommendations

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ASB Inspection Recommendations

Acknowledgements

The inspection team would like to express their thanks to everyone involved with this inspection:

Partners: Community Safety & Anti-social Behaviour Officer at SODC
PCSO and PO of TVP based in Didcot
Chair of WNAG
TVP Liaison Officer based at SODC

Berinsfield Community Business: Community Business Officer
Director of BCB

Soha's staff: Director of Customer Services
Head of Housing
Project Manager for Great Western Drive
Service Manager
Housing Officer
Housing Officer
Resident Involvement Officer
Neighbourhood Team Housing Officer

Residents: **All residents that responded to our invitation to discuss**
Soha's ASB Policy with us
All our Mystery Shoppers

Benchmarking RI Officer from Sovereign Vale Housing Association
A Sovereign Vale Housing Association tenant

Jargon Buster

ASB	Anti-social Behaviour
ASBO	Anti-social Behaviour Order
ASBC	Anti-social Behaviour Contract
ASBI	Anti-social Behaviour Injunction
BCB	Berinsfield Community Business
CAB	Citizens Advice Bureau
JSJD	JusticeSeenJusticeDone – Community Crime Stoppers
KLOE	Key Line of Enquiry: KLOEs are detailed questions that the Audit Commission use when inspecting a housing association.
PCSO	Police Community Support Officer
RSL	Registered Social Landlord
SODC	South Oxfordshire District Council
WNAG	Wallingford Neighbourhood Action Group

March

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Introduction

The tenant inspectors chose to make an inspection of Soha's Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.

The areas identified for inspection were as follows:

Review of computer based information. (This was carried out during staff interviews)

The working relationship with Partners

Is the Berinsfield Community Business/Soha interaction working well?

Soha staff's knowledge of the ASB policy and their comments

Residents' views on the policy, its effectiveness and their comments

Benchmarking with another housing association on ASB

ASB Inspection Recommendations

Methodology

The inspection team undertook investigations in the following areas:

Desktop Review to include:

- Policies and procedures and literature available to tenants.

Partner interviews - Telephone and face to face interviews:

- What they do and their involvement with Soha
- How well does Soha communicate with partners?
- How is the information they have used to inform their work?
- What are their views on the policy and procedures?
- Any suggestions to improve them?
- What do they feel about the level of communication with victims?
- Is the partner relationship working?

Berinsfield Community Business:

- How closely do they follow Soha's policy?
- Is it working?
- Are partnership arrangements working?
- Can these be improved?
- How do victims feel about reporting complaints?

Staff interviews carried out at Royal Scot House

- Have they read the policy?
- How closely is the policy followed?
- How effective are the procedures and how close to the ideals are the implementation levels achieved?
- Have they any suggestions to improve them?

Resident interviews via telephone, face to face, and mystery shoppers

- Were they aware of Soha's policy and had they read it?
- Was it easy to understand?
- Were they satisfied with the response from Soha?
- Were they kept informed of progress at all times?
- Were they satisfied with the outcome?
- How easy is it to make a complaint?

Benchmarking

- Comparing policies, procedures, training, resident involvement and attitudes with another housing association

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Desktop Review

The reviewers were provided with the following paperwork:

ASB policy
ASB procedures
Template for ASB case file
Results of ASB survey
Draft of new ASB leaflet

and made aware that information was also available electronically.

Inspection Conclusions

1. Is Soha doing “*what it says on the tin*”? In one area it is definitely not – prevention. But how could it possibly do this?

Prevention predominately features in all of Soha's paperwork regarding ASB. It is impossible to prevent such behaviour as the answers given confirm – all work starts after the event. The planning of housing projects that reduce the areas which would be conducive to such behaviour, good lighting, etc may help but prevention is impossible without draconian messages. Diversionary tactics and the prevention of escalation are all targets that could be reached. The use of Soha's starter tenancies is a good precautionary tactic to weed out any nuisance tenants. [Ref Director of Customer Services, RI Officer and Project Manager]

2. The paperwork (and web pages) is contradictory, and in one part appears to encourage ASB. It needs updating in line with the Customer Charter [Ref Desktop Review, Director of Customer Services, and Project Manager].
3. Revision date of the policy document was months past due date. [Ref Desktop Review]
4. The Neighbourhood Team needs strengthening. Further training of staff regarding promotion of confidentiality for victims coming in to report ought to be emphasized. [Ref Project Manager, Head of Housing and Neighbourhood Team Housing Officer]
5. Some staff need training in assessing what ASB problems should be dealt with by Soha and what by BCB. [Ref Community Business Officer, BCB]
6. Management of BCB needs enlightenment in how ASB problems are being dealt with by his officers. A cohesive management style is recommended and more RI encouraged. [Ref Director of BCB and Community Business Officer, BCB]

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7. The work with Partners is outstanding. Soha does not always benefit from the more up-to-date knowhow in these partners. [Ref All Partners' interviews]
8. Promises to improve the policy appear to be just that seeing no specifics were given to the inspection team.
9. Some categories of ASB are omitted in the policy as discovered in some interviews.
10. It appears some answers received from Soha were less than satisfactory. This was further compounded by responses from some of the interviewed residents.
11. There does not appear to be enough support to new residents moving into properties cited in previous ASB cases.

Tenant Inspection Team Members

- **Andy Dunsmore**
- **Sian Fraser**
- **Elvina Goddard**
- **Helene McHale**
- **Richard Mandunya**
- **Lorna Morrison**
- **Janice Trevillion**

ASB Inspection Recommendations

Rec. No.	Recommendation	Soha's response	Time-scale	Action by	Progress update
ASB1	Remove the goal of prevention from all work. The word prevention should not be used when discussing or writing about anti-social behaviour without a qualifier, such as prevention of escalation.				
ASB2	Produce literature that is up to date, has been reviewed regularly by Soha and its partners, and contains no anomalies, contradictions and is in good plain English. Include contact details of the ombudsman.				
ASB3	Copies of the new literature should be sent to the interviewed tenants who had not seen previous documents and asked for their feedback. Copies of ASB literature should go to all CABs in Soha's areas.				
ASB4	Produce literature that encourages the majority of people to believe that something can be done about ASB. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List the various options available and explain how they differ one from another. • Tell folks what the burden of proof is for each one. • Inform tenants of successes in each and 				

ASB Inspection Recommendations

Rec. No.	Recommendation	Soha's response	Time-scale	Action by	Progress update
	<p>every category.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicise criminal convictions of ASB – see Publicising Sentencing Outcomes at www.frontline.cjonline.gov.uk • Download Neighbourhood Crime & Justice report Publicising Criminal Convictions: The importance of Telling the Public from www.frontline.cjonline.gov.uk 				
ASB5	<p>Promote JSJD Community Crime Fighters – their paperwork is extremely informative and directs readers to visit various websites which provide even more information. It encourages and promotes the ideal way of tackling ASB criminal activity, etc in the community in a positive way. Are there groups in Soha's areas?</p>				
ASB6	<p>Make Community Payback scheme a priority as it is already implemented in other areas. Inform people of this scheme, what it involves and how we can nominate areas to be cleaned up and other community projects that</p>				

ASB Inspection Recommendations

Rec. No.	Recommendation	Soha's response	Time-scale	Action by	Progress update
	offenders can undertake. Would encourage more resident involvement?				
ASB7	The staff interviewed all felt that the Neighbourhood team was understaffed. This needs to be evaluated.				
ASB8	Interviews with partners were very encouraging with all stating that Soha are in the vanguard regarding partnerships and working relationships. Continue with the regular reviews and the agreement of protocols that are developed between the partners.				
ASB9	Is the new pilot phone service between Soha and BCB proving useful with regard to the lack of communication? This should be followed through until it is working to the satisfaction of both parties. Communication is the key to avoiding problems.				
ASB10	Soha staff to have training updated in order to avoid the problem of what is Soha's and what is the BCB's area of responsibility.				
ASB11	The Community Business Officer at BCB mentioned that finance was a major problem regarding partnership relationship: it was not clear whether this is a problem when tackling ASB. Investigation of this should take place. Another problem when comparing the two statements from the BCB				

ASB Inspection Recommendations

Rec. No.	Recommendation	Soha's response	Time-scale	Action by	Progress update
	<p>personnel is the anomalies between them regarding resident involvement. It is therefore recommended that a review of this partnership be made.</p>				
ASB12	<p>It is recommended that Soha use a telephone line similar to CrimeStoppers to allow for information to be passed anonymously been investigated? It may help pinpoint potential ASB which may be the result of the perpetrator having mental health problems, an awkward, and very public, way of saying 'I need help', etc. Could a mediator or trained professional, including plain-clothes police officers, approach, in a non-confrontational way, the person to see why they are not the ideal neighbour?</p>				
ASB13	<p>Is it also recommended that Soha possibly Cherwell & West Oxfordshire's Nominated Neighbour Scheme to help protect and safeguard vulnerable people from distraction burglary?</p>				
ASB14	<p>We recommend that Soha provide fridge magnets with contact numbers for residents subject to ASB? It may help them to feel more secure and that there is always advice and help just a phone call away.</p>				