



An investigation in to the individual customer journey and effective management of low level neighbour nuisance

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ASB	Anti-Social Behaviour
AVATAH	A victim approach to antisocial behaviour hub
Engage Associates	The Independent Support for SIFT
HASBET	Housing Anti-Social Behaviour Enforcement Team
HCA	Homes and Communities Agency (the Regulator)
KLE	Key Lines of Enquiry (the route the investigation followed)
NCC	Newcastle City Council
ReACT	ASB Case Management Software
SIFT	Scrutiny, Involvement for Tenants (the Tenant Scrutiny Panel)
UNITE	A mediation service for neighbours in dispute
YHN	Your Homes Newcastle

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Summary

Members of Scrutiny, Involvement For Tenants (SIFT) carried out a scrutiny exercise to assess “Is the individual customer journey and YHN’s management of low level neighbour nuisance effective?”

SIFT used a number of scrutiny tools to gather evidence for the scrutiny exercise, for example surveys and mystery shopping, and followed key lines of enquiry.

The main findings include:

- The Briefing Session and two staff focus groups demonstrated clearly that Your Homes Newcastle (YHN) comply with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) Regulatory Standard
- The number of formal complaints received highlighted that customers do not frequently complain about the ASB service provided by both Newcastle City Council (NCC) and YHN
- Two area hubs are failing to meet the service delivery target
- Case action plans are not always developed; Victim Risk Assessments are not commonly undertaken and case closures are not always agreed by the tenant
- There is no evidence of bias of any kind by staff delivering the service
- The face-to-face service is perceived to be more effective by customers than when it is delivered using other methods.

SIFT’s main recommendations are:

- The Victim Risk Assessment should be amended to remove the word ‘complainant’ from it and replace it with customer
- YHN should review all of its documents that advise tenants about tackling and resolving ASB and bring them up to date
- At the earliest opportunity staff should agree with the tenant their preferred method of communicating updates on their case
- ReACT should be updated after every contact with the tenant and notes of the conversation made in the case file
- YHN staff should always seek agreement on the closure of a case and log the conversation on ReACT
- Every effort should be made to create an action plan with the tenant
- YHN should explain to customers when staff are handing the case over to Housing Anti-social Behaviour Enforcement Team (HASBET) and new contact details should be provided
- A satisfaction survey should be carried out with the tenant after a case is closed
- YHN should ensure that all options to resolve a case are supplied to tenants
- Tenancy and Estate Management Teams engage in a training programme to update their knowledge on case handling.

1. Introduction

This second scrutiny report of the Financial Year 2017-18 was produced by the Tenant-led Scrutiny Pool supported by an Independent Tenant Advisor Service, Engage Associates. Engage Associates' role is to help deliver effective, practical support to tenants and leaseholders who are involved in scrutinising the performance of Council housing services in Newcastle.

The Scrutiny Pool's name is SIFT – Scrutiny, Involvement For Tenants – which accurately describes what they do, that is, sifting through information to look for evidence from which to analyse service provision and highlight good practice and recommend change.

2. Scope of the Scrutiny Exercise

The scope of this scrutiny exercise was to investigate **if the individual customer journey and YHN's management of low level neighbour nuisance is effective**. The customer experience of the service is somewhat dependent on YHN's management of the service so the two parts of the scrutiny question are inter-related.

Both Newcastle City Council (NCC) and Your Homes Newcastle (YHN) have a role to play in tackling neighbour nuisance; however it is largely YHN which deals with tenants' and leaseholders' requests for service in resolving nuisance cases. To enable SIFT members to understand the differing roles of the organisations some exploration of the service delivery provided by NCC was investigated, however the scrutiny exercise is largely focused on the work of YHN.

The purpose of this scrutiny exercise is to:

- Identify which areas of nuisance are the responsibility of each organisation: Newcastle City Council or Your Homes Newcastle
- Explore how this service is provided
- Examine what support is provided to tenants to enable them to resolve their own issues in relation to neighbour nuisance
- Explore how tenants' expectations are managed in relation to resolving neighbour nuisance.
- Recommend, where appropriate, changes to service provision.

This report details the findings and recommendations of this scrutiny exercise, which took place during September, October and November 2017.

3. Methodology

There are a variety of tools which can be used to scrutinise services, performance and governance. The tools selected on this second scrutiny exercise included:

- An introductory briefing by YHN staff (Trevor Healy and Libby Dodd)
- Desk top review of performance information
- Assessment of relevant complaints
- Assessment of five case studies
- Mystery Shopping exercise of YHN
- Staff Focus group for YHN Tenant and Estate Officers and NCC Anti Social Behaviour and Enforcement staff
- On-line Tenant Survey.

The Key Lines of Enquiry (KLE) SIFT members pursued included:

- Assessing the Neighbourhood and Community Regulatory Standard of the HCA
- Reviewing YHN's published policies and areas of responsibility
- Reviewing NCC's Policy and areas of responsibility
- Exploring how requests for service provision to tackle neighbour nuisance are logged
- Exploring how neighbour nuisance cases are investigated
- Assessing the satisfaction levels reached where resolution has been achieved
- Assessing the levels of formal complaints about service provision
- Exploring how staff are trained to investigate neighbour nuisance
- Identifying how tenants who experience neighbour nuisance are supported
- Identifying services which are used to resolve cases, for example mediation.

It is important to the scrutiny exercise to understand what is meant by ASB. The legal definition is "Behaviour that causes or is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to one or more people who are not in the same household as the perpetrator." This is contained in Section 1 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. Examples of ASB include:

- Nuisance, rowdy or inconsiderate neighbours
- Vandalism, graffiti and fly-posting
- Street drinking
- Environmental damage including littering, dumping of rubbish and abandonment of cars
- Prostitution related activity
- Begging and vagrancy
- Fireworks misuse
- Inconsiderate or inappropriate use of vehicles
- Drug usage or dealing.

In 2003 a subjective definition of ASB was offered by Christine Whitehead, Professor of Housing Economics from the Local School of Economics.

‘It is important to recognise that virtually any activity can be anti-social depending on a range of background factors, such as the context in which it occurs, the location, people’s tolerance levels and expectations about the quality of life in the area.’

The Homes and Communities Agency Regulatory Standard on the Neighbourhood and Community states in relation to ASB:

‘Registered providers shall publish a policy on how they work with relevant partners to prevent and tackle anti-social behaviour (ASB) in areas where they own properties.

In their work to prevent and address ASB, registered providers shall demonstrate:

- a) that tenants are made aware of their responsibilities and rights in relation to ASB
- b) strong leadership, commitment and accountability on preventing and tackling ASB that reflects a shared understanding of responsibilities with other local agencies
- c) a strong focus exists on preventative measures tailored towards the needs of tenants and their families
- d) prompt, appropriate and decisive action is taken to deal with ASB before it escalates, which focuses on resolving the problem having regard to the full range of tools and legal powers available
- e) all tenants and residents can easily report ASB, are kept informed about the status of their case where responsibility rests with the organisation and are appropriately signposted where it does not
- f) provision of support to victims and witnesses.’

A briefing by YHN was organised in order to assess how the organisation complied with the Standard and to ensure that SIFT members fully understood YHN’s policy and procedures.

3.1 The Service Briefing on low level neighbour nuisance

The briefing on how YHN and NCC deal with low level neighbour nuisance was provided by Trevor Healy, YHN’s Area Tenancy and Estate Manager and Libby Dodd, one of YHN’s Customer Involvement Officers.

An initial discussion took place to identify what was meant by nuisance and ASB, particularly focusing on the issues of tolerance and the ability to resolve issues to a person’s satisfaction, dependent upon their expectations.

During the briefing low level neighbour nuisance was defined by YHN as being the result of noise, pets, vehicles, youth disorder, shared access, communal access, neighbour disputes, untidy gardens, vandalism, litter, rubbish, fly tipping and hoarding.

The target for requests for service to resolve nuisance caused by noise, pets, vehicles, youth disorder, shared access, communal access and neighbour disputes is a three-day staff response. Requests for service about untidy gardens, vandalism, litter, rubbish, fly tipping and hoarding is a five-day staff response.

The briefing covered the Noise Service provided by the Council: requests to resolve issues caused by noise can be made 24 hours a day.

The Council provides a response to requests to resolve issues about noise five days a week (Monday – Friday) from 8.30am to 4.30pm. Calls received after this time are dealt with by the YHN Enquiry Centre, which then send details to the team for investigation over the following working days. If the call relates to serious ASB the caller may be signposted to Northumbria Police's 101 number, and, if a tenant or leaseholder, to YHN for action.

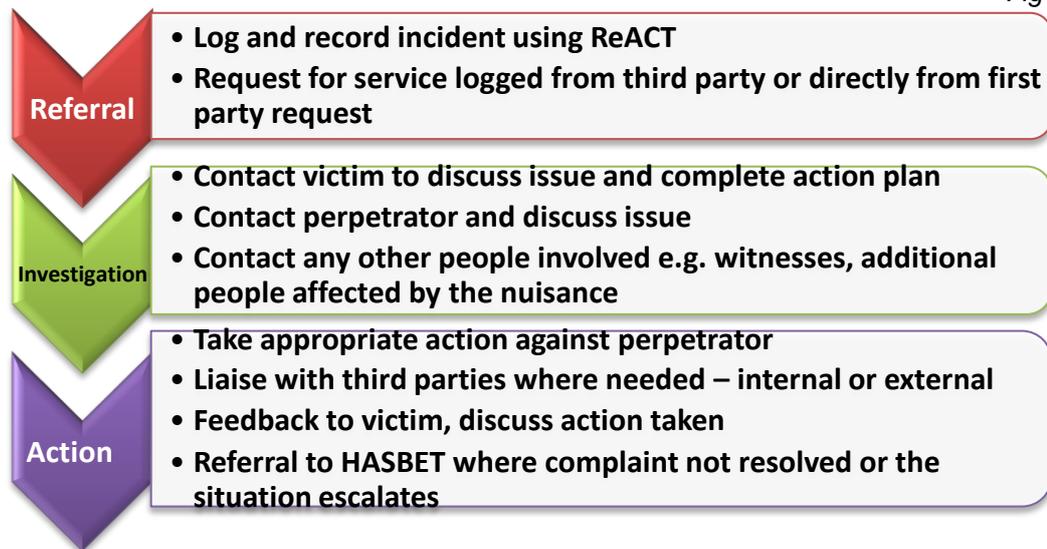
From YHN's perspective low level neighbour nuisance was classed as mainly one-off or first time incidents: the locally based Tenancy and Estates team deal with these cases. More serious allegations, such as personal harm or threats of violence are passed straight to HASBET.

Tenants are able to report nuisance issues in a variety of ways, including using an on-line reporting form, via the NCC Noise Team, reporting at a local housing hub, through social media, by email or through the new ASB Portal, which is on YHN's website. Tenants can log cases on on-line and get real time updates from YHN's ASB Team as they work through a tenant's report. Once the report has been made tenants may be requested to complete an on-line diary or use the Noise App. Paper-based diaries are also available from the housing hubs.

Tenants' requests for service to tackle low level nuisance are logged by the area teams on the ReACT IT program, which automatically generates a report which staff follow in various stages throughout the case. ReACT can be viewed by accessing the company's website: <http://www.react-asb.co.uk/>

Figure one describes the process staff work through in an attempt to resolve the issues reported by tenants.

Fig 1.



The various ways staff may attempt to resolve the nuisance include the use of:

- Informal mediation by a Tenancy and Estate Officer
- Formal mediation by trained staff
- Formal interview with perpetrator
- Referral to HASBET
- Third party intervention and support, for example by the police or Victim Support.

All cases should have an action plan where there is a victim – even an untidy garden reported by a neighbour as causing a nuisance should have an action plan so that the tenant affected by the nuisance knows exactly what action the Tenancy and Estate Officer plans to take.

The procedure also includes a ‘Victim Risk Assessment.’ The document advises staff when to use it. It includes the statement: ‘This scorecard can be used every time you encounter a complainant, particularly with respect to ASB, so that you may tailor your actions and support appropriately.’

Describing the victim as a ‘complainant’ can be confusing – the victim is requesting service, not complaining about service. This can be very confusing for tenants when they want to make a formal complaint, and may discourage many people from pursuing the formal complaints system as they do not understand the difference between a request for service and a formal complaint. It is recommended that the Victim Risk Assessment be amended and the word complainant be replaced with ‘customer.’

The briefing by YHN enabled SIFT members to fully comprehend the complexity of some of the low level ASB cases, for example when trying to resolve issues where the perpetrator has mental health disorders, or where the victim has unreasonable expectations for resolution. It also enabled SIFT to assess how YHN complies with the HCA Regulatory Standard.

3.2 Desktop Review of Performance Information

YHN have 23 Tenancy and Estate Officers (TEOs) dealing with ASB from five local hubs. Between 1st January and 30th June 2017 they dealt with 939 cases, an average of 40 cases per TEO in this reporting period. They dealt with 521 cases of low level ASB and 418 untidy gardens or environmental issues.

Figure two illustrates the number of cases per area between January and June 2017.

Fig 2.

Area	Number of properties	No. of cases - community	No. of cases - environmental	Total	Percentage of cases per no. of properties
East End	3718	61	74	135	3.6%
Kenton	5547	159	75	234	4.2%
Outer West	5595	87	70	157	2.8%
Walker	4384	118	91	209	4.8%
West End	5692	96	108	204	3.6%
Totals	24936 (plus 807 Sheltered located across the City)	521	418	939	

Although there are approximately 25 percent more community cases than environmental cases, it is impossible to determine whether or not there are simply more community incidents in the areas or that people are more willing to report them.

The proportion of community cases compared with environmental cases is fairly consistent across the areas, apart from Kenton, which has the highest proportion of community cases.

The highest number of cases combined is from Walker at 4.8 percent of the total number of properties; Walker has the highest number of high-rise blocks in the City which may account for a higher number of reports.

Figure three below shows the teams' performance from 1st January until 30th June 2017.

Fig 3.

Area	Case responded to within 3-5 day timescale Target: 95%	Case close as resolved Target: 96%	Case closed within timescale Target: 28 days
East End	99.3%	97.1%	25.6 days
Kenton	96.9%	99.1%	33.3 days
Outer West	100%	100%	36.3 days
Walker	100%	99%	23.9 days
West End	100%	99%	23.9 days

The target for resolution of the cases is 28 days, which was set by benchmarking other, similar organisations. Two areas are currently failing to close a case within target; these are Kenton and Outer West. It only takes a few tenants who have requested service to state that their case has not been resolved to their satisfaction to skew the case closed target. Kenton has the highest number of cases in the reporting period, whereas Outer West has one of the lowest, but the highest number of days to close a case.

Outer West is a more rural, less deprived area than most of the others, and therefore staff may experience difficulty in finding someone at home during the day to try and resolve the issue.

3.3 Desk Top Review of YHN's published Policies available for Tenants

SIFT members were provided with three documents to review. The first was YHN's policy document 'Summary of Your Homes Newcastle's Policy Guidance for Anti-Social Behaviour' published in November 2015. Members found it to be comprehensive in its approach to tackling and resolving ASB. It details the types of behaviour it would not consider to be ASB, for example children playing, and is clear about behaviour it does consider to be serious ASB, for example physical violence or Hate Crime.

The Policy describes the services YHN will provide to tackle ASB, including providing a Victim Support worker, who is seconded to and located with the HASBET Team, and access to a free mediation service called UNITE.

Members then reviewed YHN's document 'Neighbour complaints – a guide to approaching your neighbour', published in August 2011. The first point members raised was that the document used the term 'complaint', rather than 'a request for service.' This is a common issue across YHN; that is, staff and literature use the term 'complaint' when they mean a tenant has asked for service.

SIFT members identified that the listed telephone numbers in the document are out of date and the addresses of the housing hubs were also out of date, as several of them had been permanently closed. The advice contained in the document is useful and relevant; therefore the document should be updated and re-issued.

The YHN document 'Keeping gardens tidy guidance' was reviewed. Members found that the guidance was useful but it makes a statement on page 3 which would confuse tenants, that is, 'Untidy gardens that are not YHN properties.' It infers that YHN own tenants' homes, which clearly they do not. On page 4 of the document it states that YHN manages the properties of Byker Trust, which is now out of date.

SIFT members visited three area housing hubs and found another document which advises tenants about resolving ASB on display there, the document "Are you affected by anti-social behaviour?" proved to be more up to date than the ones that had been provided by YHN to SIFT and contained very useful information.

Conversely, neither the East nor West End offices had any booklets or leaflets about ASB on display. A staff member in the Benwell office stated that they were 'sadly out of date so have been removed until the new information is produced and made available.'

It is recommended that YHN review all of its documents that advise tenants about tackling and resolving ASB and bring them up to date. YHN needs to publicise more widely how customers can gain access to report ASB, particularly introducing the new ASB Portal and its use, and appropriate documents need to be on display in the hubs.

3.4 Assessment of Relevant Formal Complaints

The Council's Corporate Complaints Team advised that three formal complaints were received from April 2016 onwards. Only one corporate complaint was in relation to the standard of services received when dealing with noise nuisance, the other two were rightly categorised as complaints about staff.

The complaint about the standard of service was received in November 2016: the customer was questioning whether the council had followed the relevant processes when dealing with their concerns about noise, anti-social behaviour and parking issues from a nearby property. The complaint was not upheld and did not progress any further in the complaints process.

YHN had received one formal complaint from a tenant who was dissatisfied with the way the Tenancy and Estate Officer was dealing with their case. The complaint was upheld as 'partly justified' as lack of contact between the member of staff and the complainant was found to be the issue, and the tenant was left wondering what action was being taken to resolve their ASB problem.

It is recommended that staff always agree how the customer wants to communicate with YHN, which will ensure that the tenant receives information about their case in their preferred way. This might be a weekly phone call, email, text or visit, depending on the situation and also whenever there is an update between the regular contacts.

It is recommended that ReACT should be updated at every contact with the tenant and notes of the conversation made in the case file. Whenever contact is made the offer of support should be reiterated and the officer should ensure that any new actions are logged and followed up.

3.5 Assessment of five Case Studies

SIFT members randomly selected five ASB case files to review. The tenants' personal details were redacted so that they could not be identified. The case files varied hugely in the amount and type of information they contained.

Case 1, Noise – from the case file there was insufficient paperwork to know if the case was resolved or if the tenant just moved away.

Case 2, Pets – nuisance from two dogs. There was quite a lot of activity to resolve the case from both YHN and NCC detailed within the case file. YHN were already involved before the tenant's request for action came through as staff were aware of the issue. This case had an action plan but not all cases had an action plan.

Following on from this case a question was raised by SIFT members about why this case had an action plan and others did not, Trevor Healy explained that some tenants do not want action plans, and action plans are not always relevant, for example in garden nuisance cases, however he went on to state that he thought all garden cases should now have an action plan where there was a report from a tenant as opposed to untidy gardens picked up by staff on estate inspections.

Case 3, Unkempt Garden – it was unclear in the case notes if the tenant did accept a proposed charge for works to tidy the garden. Libby Dodd advised that the threat of the charge encouraged the tenant to clean up the garden to an acceptable standard so enforcement action was not required. This case had no notes on the system.

Case 4, Fly tipping – this case did not hold much information on file. The actions taken against the tenant were not logged and information on when/how the rubbish had been removed was also not logged.

Case 5, Abandoned vehicle – the case notes made it clear that positive action had been taken, but it took a long time to resolve, from February until September, although it was a complicated case as information was gathered both from the DVLA and the police. There was a lot of time when no action was taken. Trevor explained that a lot of investigation took place to determine who owned the land, etc. The case closed letter was sent in March; however work was still ongoing until September. It is believed that the case was closed as the matter was resolved; however additional work was carried out to prevent a reoccurrence, and protect the land from future dumping.

This case has excellent notes which were very useful for the case background. It was acknowledged that not every case would need notes as detailed as this, but it would be expected that cases requiring more detailed evidence, for example noise cases would have this much detail. In some cases photographic evidence would be more appropriate than detailed descriptive case notes, but no photographs were enclosed in the five case study files.

Summary

None of the random case studies included a Victim Risk Assessment. It may be a coincidence, or it may be that risk assessments are not frequently carried out, or only in cases which are referred to HASBET. One case had been referred to HASBET but it was not clear when or why.

It was acknowledged that a lot of hard work goes into resolving a case, and this was demonstrated by the evidence in some of the files. When checking cases, however it was noted that there was more information in some case files than others, and some of the information was incoherent, for example a staff member's personal version of shorthand was used that other members of staff could not interpret. Staff should also avoid using jargon, as others need to access the information. Some of the information may be needed for legal purposes to pursue a case through the courts so what is recorded in the case file should be an exact record of events.

One case that was scrutinised had been closed without any contact with the customer. On all occasions a conversation with the customer by staff should be held to explain that the case is going to be closed and the reasons for the closure.

It is recommended that YHN staff should always seek agreement on the closure and log the conversation on ReACT. This can then be described in the closure letter. YHN staff should not send closure letters without this conversation. It is recommended that a satisfaction survey should then be carried out.

It is also recommended that every effort be made to create an action plan with the tenant and the only time there would not be one is if a tenant steadfastly refused to complete one (and this should be agreed with customer and noted on ReACT) or if it was an environmental case that had been identified on an estate inspection.

It was also noted that YHN need to log all contact with customers and keep all information on ReACT and not have information stored in other electronic or paper files.

It is recommended that YHN explain to customers about when staff are handing the case over to HASBET and why they are doing so. Staff need to have a handover meeting which is logged on ReACT and the action plan should be amended accordingly. The HASBET officer taking over the case should be introduced to the customer so that the customer does not have repeat their experiences and go through everything again.

3.6 Mystery Shopping Exercise

Face-to-Face Reporting

A SIFT member reported an incident of ASB involving an unknown party, attempting to look into her flat via her letterbox.

On this occasion staff at YHN took every measure possible to ensure her request for service was a positive experience, was tailored to suit her needs and to close the case within a reasonable timeframe to her satisfaction.

This was achieved by the customer completing an incident log book, using the Noise App, and keeping staff informed of any future incidents.

Carrying out these activities provides staff with evidence to be able to resolve the request for service by dealing with the cause of the ASB, leading to successful resolution for the victim.

Telephone Reporting

A SIFT member rang an area hub Customer Service Centre and the call was answered in less than one minute. They asked about ways of reporting neighbour noise. The officer did not offer information about how to report it and had to be prompted by the tenant asking additional questions.

Face-to-Face Reporting

A member visited another Customer Service Centre to ask about ways of reporting an untidy garden in a street and was only waiting for two minutes before being served. The officer was very knowledgeable as he discussed all of the ways in which a tenant is able to report ASB to YHN. He then gave the member an ASB diary booklet.

YHN Chit Chat Reporting

A member put a post on the YHN Chit Chat page of Facebook with a view that the staff at YHN would pass this on to the Housing Hub who deal with the specific area of the City. The expectation was this contact with YHN would be dealt with as a request for service. The member had a response from Chit Chat within 30 minutes and was advised that he would need to contact the Kenton Hub to log this request for service.

On-line Portal Reporting

A member reported an incident by using the on-line portal. A car was blocking the entrance to the cul-de-sac in which he lives, which is in the Outer West area. Firstly he had to register for the portal, which was easy to do and then fill out a report. He got an automated response within minutes and then received a more detailed reply within 24 hours. The person replying to the report stated that they could not do anything without a name and address (reported anonymously) but time scales were met.

Summary

SIFT members were happy with face to face contact with staff but felt YHN's electronic responses were not as good.

It is recommended that YHN ensure that all supporting information is supplied to tenants whatever method of communication is taking place, and staff must make sure that they give the same thorough information whichever method of contact is used and not just when it is done 'face to face.'

3.7 Staff Focus Groups

SIFT members conducted two staff focus groups, one talking to NCC staff and the other to YHN staff.

Both focus group sessions concentrated on developing SIFT members' understanding of which organisation dealt with which issues and the procedures they followed.

The discussions were tailored around the following objectives and key lines of enquiry:

- Policy and areas of responsibility
- How neighbour nuisance cases are investigated
- How staff are trained to investigate neighbour nuisance and how tenants are supported
- Which services are used to resolve cases.

NCC investigate neighbour nuisance across all tenures within the City, for example owner-occupied properties, homes within the private rented sector and the social rented sector. Cases where the victim or perpetrator of ASB is an NCC tenant are mostly investigated by YHN. If a case involves a NCC tenant the NCC ASB Team automatically notifies YHN via a central email address, which is currently managed by HASBET.

All City residents are able to report ASB to NCC. This contributes to the 6,000 to 8,000 cases reported to the City Council every year from the City's population.

Evidence is collected via a number of sources including noise diaries which are sent out for completion by everyone requesting assistance or accessed through the on-line Portal.

Staff from both organisations felt that what can appear to be ASB can often be a sign of something more complex, for example, drug dealing, prostitution, etc and stated that Staff training is needed to highlight the links.

It is recommended that Tenancy and Estate Management Teams engage in a training programme to update their knowledge on case recording and management, and to be aware of the reasons why ASB may occur in neighbourhoods.

3.8 Tenant Satisfaction Survey

The purpose of the survey was to assess how satisfied people were with the service they received when reporting a low level ASB incident. It was also conducted to identify any areas of performance that could influence the outcomes.

The survey comprised a total of 20 questions set by SIFT, which identified how tenants reported ASB, the area of concern, how the report was handled by staff and how satisfied they were with the process.

Only tenants who had reported cases between 1st January and 30th June were invited to take part in the survey.

The survey was emailed to 240 tenants who have indicated that they are happy to receive information from YHN and who had requested service to resolve ASB in the reporting period. After a period of 14 days a total of 10 responses were received.

Of the ten people that responded, seven were female and three were male, no transgender people were identified. All respondents were aged between 25 and 74, with six people aged between 45 and 64.

Seven respondents described themselves as Christian whilst three had no religious affiliations. All respondents stated that they were heterosexual.

Five respondents had some sort of health issue and all respondents described themselves as White British.

Eight out of ten incidents reported by the respondents concerned noise or disputes with neighbours, and these were reported either by a telephone call or face-to-face at their local housing hub.

Although half of the respondents were happy with how quickly they were contacted after making the report, the other half had issues with this. From the comments received it would appear that people may have been looking for YHN to resolve their issues quickly, possibly on the same day as they reported, and any delay may have been unacceptable to them.

Part of the procedure in handling requests for service is the completion of an action plan detailing the course of action to be taken to resolve the issue. Only four of the respondents claim that an action plan was completed and one respondent was not sure. The survey gave seven choices of information that the action plan should cover. It would appear from the respondents that most action plans that were produced were incomplete in at least some of the areas, and only three respondents thought that their action plan was followed and adhered to. In reporting further incidents, the ten responses were spread across a range of options, for example keeping a diary and the highest being to report to a third party. This may suggest that although the action plan process did not work for at least half of our respondents, they did have access to information as to how to deal with further incidents.

Half of the respondents claim that they were not spoken to about closing their case and did not come to any agreement that the case would be closed.

With the satisfaction statements approximately 54 percent gave a negative assessment of their case handling whilst 46 percent gave a positive assessment. The most positive aspects were the way in which the staff handled the cases, showing understanding, sensitivity, and fairness and being particularly friendly and polite. However most respondents thought the handling to be ineffective and inefficient and did not meet their specific needs. In most cases they felt that the officer did not have the appropriate skills and knowledge to resolve the case and did not encourage them to take their request for service forward.

Overall seven out of ten of the respondents were either unsatisfied or very unsatisfied with their customer experience, with only three respondents satisfied with the service they received.

Although there were only ten responses, they do reveal something of the service the tenants received. There is no evidence of any bias of any kind in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, etc in the ways people were treated, although it is recognised that the sample returned was not representative of the whole community. There does not appear to be any issue in contacting YHN with requests for service or in the way in which their requests are received by staff.

Although only 50 percent of our respondents were happy with how quickly they were contacted after submitting their report, this is largely subjective and what may be an unacceptable delay to one person may be a reasonable response time given the individual circumstances.

Where the system appears to falter is with the process of action planning, with most of the respondents claiming that they did not agree an action plan or if they did, it was not complete. This suggests that the approach of staff toward agreeing an action plan is inconsistent and sometimes ad-hoc.

The 70 percent dissatisfaction with the service is extremely high, even though this was from a very small sample. Although it is inevitable that people will judge the service they receive by its ability to resolve their issue to their satisfaction, it does indicate that there may also be issues with the effectiveness of the process and this could be around the way in which action plans are produced and agreed with the person requesting service.

4. Findings

From the information gathered from the Briefing Session and the two staff focus groups it is clear that YHN comply with the HCA Regulatory Standard. The evidence for this is that staff work in partnership with third parties, provide access to the service in a number of ways, including through the new on-line portal, and log cases using ReACT.

The desktop review of the performance information showed that the proportion of community cases compared with environmental cases is fairly consistent across the areas, apart from Kenton, which has the highest proportion of community cases. Kenton has the highest number of cases in the reporting period, whereas Outer West has one of the lowest, but the highest number of days to close a case, exceeding the target, as does Kenton.

The assessment of relevant formal complaints demonstrates that, in the main customers do not complain about the service. This, however may be because customers are unaware that they can make a formal complaint.

The review of the five case studies highlighted that action plans are not always developed; Victim Risk Assessments are not commonly undertaken and case closures are not always agreed by the tenant. Staff do not always update the ReACT files accurately, or in some cases they use words or terms which are not commonly understood. This view was borne out by information gathered by conducting the survey.

The literature and language in use by YHN quite often uses the term 'complaint' when staff mean a tenant has asked for service. This could be confusing for tenants if they are aware of the formal complaints process. Conversely, if tenants are unaware of the formal complaints system, they may think that by using the term they are themselves making a complaint. It would be unreasonable for staff to correct the language used by tenants, that is, if they want to make, for example a complaint about their neighbour, but in reporting and using the ReACT system the word 'complaint' should be avoided.

Recommendations – Action Plan

Recommendation	Management Response	Proposed Actions	Timescale	Responsibility
The Victim Risk Assessment should be amended and the word complainant be replaced with 'customer.'				
YHN should review all of its documents that advise tenants about tackling and resolving ASB and bring them up to date.				
YHN should agree with the tenant the tenant's preferred method of communicating updates on their case.				
ReACT should be updated after every contact with the tenant and notes of the conversation made in the case file.				
YHN staff should always seek agreement on the closure of a case and log the conversation on ReACT.				

Recommendation	Management Response	Proposed Actions	Timescale	Responsibility
A satisfaction survey should be carried out after a case is closed.				
Every effort should be made to create an action plan with the tenant, but in any case action plans should be completed.				
YHN should explain to customers about when staff are handing the case over to HASBET and why it is doing this.				
YHN should ensure that all supporting information is supplied to tenants requesting service to resolve ASB.				
Tenancy and Estate Management Teams engage in a training programme to update their knowledge on case recording and management, and to be aware of the reasons why ASB may occur in neighbourhoods.				

