Introduction

Anti Social behaviour for a number of tenants is a key issue.

An internal audit of the service had been completed by Mazars in October 2016. This has resulted in an amber adequate assurance for the service. An action plan is in place to work on improvements in the service.

Our review was undertaken to explore some of the areas highlighted in the audit report from a tenant perspective. It was not intended to repeat the review of the service already completed by the internal audit team. We have also suggested some improvement in relation to the policy and the web site which we reviewed. We felt these were relevant to the overall report.

Objectives

To examine the procedures and processes used to receive, record and effectively resolve ASB complaints (where possible).

To consider views from tenants who have used the ASB complaints procedure within the past year to compare their expectations at the beginning of the process with the outcome.

To examine the method of measuring tenant satisfaction with the process. This will not necessarily include satisfaction with the eventual outcome.
To survey tenants to discover what information they would like to receive with regard to ASB in general; the usefulness of the same and how best to provide this to all tenants.

To consider staff views in regard to customer relations during the investigation of an ASB complaint.

To review existing KPI’s.

For the scrutiny team to draft a final board report and produce an action plan in partnership with the Manager of Neighbourhood Services.

For learning outcomes from the review to be fed back to the relevant areas of the organisation.

For any action plan to be monitored by the relevant Selwood team and the scrutiny team.

**Support**

We received support in completing this review from the housing service manager and several of the housing managers. We also received support of the involvement team in setting up the customer discussions and of course from the tenants we spoke to. We would like to thank them all for their help. Information was made available on request.

**Context**

The service is delivered in the neighbourhoods team by seven neighbourhood managers as part of a range of other housing management duties. At the time of our review two of the seven team members were temporary members of staff. The team is supported by two neighbourhood assistants.

**Definition**

Selwood Housing uses the definition of anti-social behaviour used by the Home Office, and is taken from the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.
'Acting in a manner that caused or was likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to one or more persons not of the same household

Review Process

The scrutiny team undertook the following actions:-

1. The scrutiny team received an update on the Anti Social Behaviour Service and current priorities from the head of the service Marc Robins. APPENDIX 1
2. The scrutiny team reviewed and examined the ASB Policy APPENDIX 2 and guidance items APPENDIX 3
3. The scrutiny team reviewed and examined the report from the auditors APPENDIX 4
4. The scrutiny team reviewed and examined the ASB improvement plan APPENDIX 5
5. A telephone survey was made of customers who had had reported ASB.
6. The scrutiny team reviewed and examined the ASB Respect Charter.
7. The scrutiny team reviewed and examined the closing of case letter with questionnaire
8. The scrutiny team reviewed and examined the questions used by CSN for the STAR survey APPENDIX 6
9. A benchmarking exercise was undertaken to identify positives and negatives in comparison with other housing providers, local and national.
10. The scrutiny team reviewed the Selwood Web site APPENDIX 7
11. Members of the scrutiny team met with three Neighbourhood Housing Managers who are responsible for the day to day implementation of the ASB procedure.
Extent of the issue

The number of cases reporting of ASB has been reducing

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014-2015</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015-2016</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017-2017 (to date)</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We could find no evidence to support a clear reason for the reduction in cases. We suggest further work is completed on this to account for the reduction. We suggest that these figures and reason for them are published in the working together magazine and on-line on an ongoing basis.

Findings

1. The scrutiny team reviewed and examined the ASB policy and guidance

A definition of ASB is covered in the policy. There were no examples of ASB in the policy. In contrast several examples of what was not ASB were given. We felt that this would be useful to have examples of ASB in the policy.

We questioned some of the examples of what is not ASB as it will depend of the context of the issue being reported. For example we felt that to stare at a neighbour in some situation might be anti social if it was a form of harassment.

The policy explained that other ASB definitions existed according to circumstance. We felt this was confusing.

Selwoods approach is described as “harm based”. We felt it would be beneficial if it was clear what this meant in practice. We hoped that this meant that the most serious case would be prioritized. We felt that all reported case that were Selwoods responsibility should be dealt with though this might be in a reduced timescale for less serious cases. We hoped that this did not mean some case were not dealt with.

The policy explained that "incidents do not necessarily have to be criminal in themselves, nor do they have to be recorded by the police to be classed as
anti-social behaviour” We thought this was very useful and reassuring information for tenants. See later comments regarding customer feedback on tenancy breaches.

The policy had a good section on prevention. We felt the policy could also include reference to

- the importance of promoting what was and wasn’t acceptable behaviour on a regular basis and
- a reference to sharing performance information with tenants.

This would help build confidence in the work that was being done by Selwood.

As an example, we found this as part of WD Homes ASB Policy and thought it would be useful to consider:

1. We will set targets and measuring the level of satisfaction with our service;
2. Publishing details of our performance in our annual report and other media;
3. Review our policies and procedures on an annual basis and update them in line with changes in legislation or developments in good practice; and
4. Measuring the standard of our service against that of other housing organisations.

And this from Genesis Homes

1. We record and monitor all incidents of ASB and use this data to benchmark, internally and externally.
2. We set targets and use performance indicators to monitor our performance on tackling ASB.
3. We monitor cases of ASB by diversity strands – both of complainants of ASB and alleged perpetrators, and analyse this data. This is in order to: Increase our understanding of who perpetrators and victims of ASB and to determine whether some groups might not be reporting ASB, or whether certain groups are disproportionally represented amongst alleged perpetrators or victims and tailor our services accordingly.
The Selwood Policy is due for review in 2018 having last been reviewed in 2015. Many organisations review their policy each year and we felt this might be useful to consider this.

Reference was made in the policy to the ASB guidance. The ASB guidance notes are in place for staff and offer both guidance and suggested actions and links to a number of templates.

There was a useful section on mediation which explains Selwood would meet the cost of this service offered through an external agency. We thought this was very positive.

There was no reference to preventative actions in the guidance though early intervention was covered. We would like to see this in place. For example it may confirm that tenant’s behaviour are discussed at sign up.

We could not find the written ASB procedure. We were advised that the procedure for ASB is built into the QL process. We would like to have seen a written procedure.

We did not check cases against QL as this has been completed by the internal audit and was outside of the scope of this project.

We could not find a leaflet which explained to tenants the key steps or timescales that would be completed as part of any inquiry of ASB though the recent internal audit referred to it. We felt that such a document would be of value to tenants and Selwood. We thought this could draw on key points from the guidance.

2. We reviewed the Selwood web site for ASB information

The ASB policy is available on the web site. It is not easy to find. A search for “ASB” did not return any results on ASB.

We found the policy under Where you live/your neighbourhoods/ASB.

There were several locations on the web site to report ASB, this was helpful. There was an on-line reporting form for new cases and a dedicated email
address to send information. Incident reporting forms for ongoing complaints could also be downloaded. We felt this was all very useful.

Again we could not find a leaflet which explained the key steps or timescales that would be completed by Selwood as part of any report of ASB.

One of the review team brought a copy of an old version from home for us to review.

It would be useful to have some basic guidance (an online leaflet) at this point for tenants to reflect and see if they;

1. Can resolve things themselves
2. If the issue is part of Selwood responsibility
3. Explain what to expect

We found a useful ASB guidance introduction written in plain language on the Poole DC web site


There was very little performance information on the Selwood website. There was one reference to ASB in the 2017 annual report section. This was an expected finding as it was part of the review purpose to make suggestion about this.

Sovereign Housing’s website offers some examples of satisfaction on their ASB service over a number of years. They also quote feedback from customers. Whilst we like the idea of sharing feedback that was anonymised all the examples are positive which we thought was a little surprising.

https://residents.sovereign.org.uk/anti-social-behaviour/how-our-asb-service-is-improving/

Sovereign also offered some clear case studies of enforcement action that had been taken which was again useful as it showed commitment to tackling ASB. We would like to see some similar performance information on the Selwood web site but thought that this could also be promoted on Facebook
We were told that the website is due for an update in December 2017 and would like to see the website updated in line with the suggestions above.

We were later advised that a ASB leaflet had been in place and has been withdrawn and is subject to review. We think this is an important document that should be made available quickly.

3. How does the service perform?

From April 2017 to the end of September 90% of cases were resolved.

Initial contact with customer was as listed below

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Target</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complainants interviewed within 10 working days</td>
<td>100% 83/104 = 79.81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perpetrator interviewed within 10 working days</td>
<td>100% 73/107 = 68.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complaints needing a 24 hour response DOMV/HATECRIME</td>
<td>100% 4/5 = 80.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complainant interviewed within 48 hours of them being contacted -</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOMV/HATECRIME</td>
<td>100% 3/5 = 60.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. A telephone survey was made to customers who had reported ASB.

We spoke to 8 tenants who had reported ASB. Tenants were contacted by Selwood staff to gain permission for us to speak to them. We were given phone numbers but no names or addresses. Calls were made in private from Selwood’s office. We were happy with this approach.

We focused our discussion on the way the issues had been managed by Selwood. As we expected customers also told us about the cases they had reported. We made it clear we were not reviewing their case but how it had been managed and the information they were given. We did refer one case back to the head of service as new information came to light.
Tenants made the following observations.

They were less interested in the overall performance of the service. They were very interested in how quickly their reported incidents where resolved.

Most felt that improvements could be made by keeping in touch at agreed times even if there was little progress. Some felt they were "chasing" Selwood for updates.

Most felt that Selwood was too tolerant (soft) in dealing with the issues of ASB and that lower level but bothersome tenancy breaches were not always dealt with.

We felt that there was a grey area between what tenants saw as ASB and tenancy breach. The tenants we spoke to made it clear that they preferred a tough no nonsense approach both on ASB and tenancy breaches.

5. Feed back on tenant satisfaction

ASB satisfaction is measured using the CSN reporting process as part of the wider STAR survey. STAR’s focus is on general perceptions and is based on quite a small sample. Whilst it is necessary for Selwood do the STAR surveys for a variety of reasons we thought the staff decision to do an additional survey was a good idea.

Since May 2017 the team have moved to a transactional survey asking one question - how the tenant rates the way a case was dealt with. This is asked when the case has been closed.

We reviewed the report which showed the following results
On a scale of 1-10 how do you rate the way this was dealt with.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Banding</th>
<th>Number of cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - Unhappy</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10 - Happy</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 - 5 Band</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 - 7 Band</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 - 10 Band</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We looked at the accompanying free text notes.

There were some strong positive scores from tenants. Many tenants were very pleased with the response from Selwood stating things were dealt with quickly and how they appreciated the intervention. One tenant described the intervention as “amazing”.

There were some tenants including some of the high scoring ones who felt that Selwood was slow to respond. Others felt that they were chasing Selwood at several points in their case. In one high scoring case the ASB had been going on for 6 years. We did wonder if this high score might be more related to the end of the case rather than satisfaction.

We felt that the length of time a case was open was an issue. This was in line with the direct feedback we had from tenants.

It would be useful to continue with this survey, but we think having an average time that the case is open would be a useful additional performance measure. It will not tell the whole picture but along with this feedback will give a more robust overview.

We would also suggest that internal monitoring of cases based on time open is also consider and recorded.

We would also recommend an additional question asking tenants what one thing could be improved on. This would give some more information to help improve the service.
6. What information about ASB is important to customers

We felt that the reporting process could be improved by offering details of what Selwood could and could not do and what tenants can expect to happen.

We felt that there should be a greater focus on tenancy breaches that might not fall within the ASB category but might still be seen in a wider way as anti-social.

We felt that Selwoods focus has been on how the process was managed. In the main the tenants focus is on the alleviation of the ASB. It is possible that the process is managed well but the ASB remains. We think a focus on both of these areas in reporting is important.

We reviewed the last three Working Together magazines. There was evidence of an ASB article in the latest magazine. This focused on CCTV and ASB and there was also a section on being a good neighbour. We were pleased to see a focus on the majority of customers who behave well.

We think more promotion of the good work the team do should take place. We have listed some example in section 2.

7. A benchmarking exercise was undertaken to identify positives and negatives in comparison with other housing providers, local and national.

We have made recommendations based on this in the report.

8. Discussion with three neighbourhood managers

They explained that all calls are logged and customers contacted in 24 hours. This can be difficult if they are out of the office. All cases are risk assessed. Cases of domestic abuse and hate crime are dealt with quickly. See section 3.

Four of the seven managers have completed BTEC on-line training. It covered a range of issues including injunctions and court work. We thought this was a very useful to keep the team up to speed. We are not clear on plans for the remaining 3 team members.
There was a recognition that handling the initial call from tenants was important so that what a customer could expect was clear from the first contact. There was an acknowledgement that this was sometimes difficult to do and that the customer support team might benefit from additional training to help manage this.

During our benchmarking process we were aware of a housing association who had ASB as a telephone option. This helped ensure that the receiver of the call was very well trained to deal with this type of call. We felt this also helped show the important priority that the company gave this type of enquiry. We accept the option lists when making a call does not need to be too long but we felt this should be strongly considered.

Calls to the Selwood offices are only recorded if they are made to the customer service team. We felt that all calls to Selwood should be recorded. This may require a change to the current system but we would like this to be considered as soon as possible.

Some of the housing managers felt ASB was taking much more of their time dealing with more complex cases in terms of tenants’ needs and the number of tenants that might be involved in “one case”. We felt it might be useful to record the number of people involved in “one case” to better reflect the extent of the ASB problem.

They felt they would benefit from an updated leaflet and standard letters. They currently use some leaflets from Wiltshire Council. They felt greater use of the website would be helpful if it was improved. A further idea was to use Facebook chat to speak to customer in some situations to keep them up to date. We felt that with the customer agreement this might be useful in some situations.

It was clear to us that the work the team do was very challenging and complex and the team were committed to that challenge.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Management response</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 We suggest that annual number of reported cases and comments on the trend up or down is published in the working together magazine and on-line on an ongoing basis.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Examples of what might be ASB are given in the policy.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 That some of the examples of what is not ASB explained in the policy is re-examined and removed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 The reference to “other definitions” of ASB in the Policy is reviewed and removed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 That clarification of what a “harm based approach” means is explained in the policy</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 That the policy confirms that all cases that are Selwood Housing responsibility are investigated including low level tenancy breaches</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 That two additions are made to the policy a) to commit Selwood to promote what was and wasn’t acceptable behaviour on a regular basis. b) to commit to-sharing performance information with tenants</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 That the policy is reviewed annually rather than every three years</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 We were advised that the procedure for ASB is built into the QL process. We would like to see a written procedure.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 That a section the ASB guidance explains what preventive action takes place and that this is monitored.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 That a leaflet is available on-line to set out what tenants can expect from the service and who else can help, along with the tenants own responsibilities.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>This should be made available quickly</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>That the website search is reviewed to ensure ASB can be better found</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>That performance information regarding ASB is made available online and in working together – see report for examples</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>That case studies of actions taken are made available online – see report for examples</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>That “feedback quotes” from customers about how cases are managed (good and bad) are made available – see report for examples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>That some of the good work that is being done on some areas is more consistently applied to all cases.</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>That all tenancy breaches as well as what is described as ASB issues are dealt with quickly and that Selwood nips things in the bud and is less “soft”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>That none ASB tenancy breaches are reported on by number and type.</td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>That a new measure of average length of time a case is open is put in place.</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>That tenants are asked how thing could be improved on the survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>We felt it might be useful to recorded the number of people involved in “one case” to better reflect the extent of the ASB problem.</td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>That a ASB telephone option is strongly considered and that the receiver of the call is fully trained in ASB call taking.</td>
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<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>That all calls to Selwood Housing are recorded. If this is not possible on the existing system that this is done as part of an upgrade.</td>
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<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>That face book chat is considered for some cases</td>
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