**ESTATE SERVICES QUALITY GROUP**

**REPORT**

**March 2015**

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1. Introduction

The Estate Services Quality Group was established in 2014 as part of Irvine Housing Association’s scrutiny structure. The remit of the Estate Services Quality Group includes:

* Ensuring Irvine Housing Association has well maintained neighbourhoods where residents feel safe
* Ensuring enforcement of tenancy conditions
* All aspects of estate management
* Neighbour disputes and anti-social behaviour
* Tenancy support
* Partnership working with other agencies

Using this framework and information contained within the Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) 2013-14 and STAR Survey 2014, the group identified the following issues:

* Levels of customer satisfaction relating to anti-social behaviour were noted as being 44% based on the findings of the STAR survey in 2013.
* In 2014, satisfaction levels dropped to 35% across all three operating areas. This was despite consultation on services which led to a new policy, supported by new procedures and IT system.
* The satisfaction levels are in contrast to our reported target compliance which is recorded as 86% of cases resolved within target, compared to the Scottish average of 75.9%.
* Irvine Housing Association operate across three Local Authority areas, working in partnership with local agencies in different ways in each area.

2. The Scrutiny Process

 2.1 Policy and Procedure review

A review of Irvine Housing Association’s Policy, Procedure and Risk Assessment paperwork used for anti-social behaviour case management was undertaken. These are attached as Appendix 1 and 2. We also looked at ‘The Hub’ case management system to gain a greater understanding of what goes on behind the scenes.

The risk assessment is a form which is used by officers to determine a victim’s vulnerability. Points are awarded where certain criteria are met but the points can also be overwritten if the officer feels it is necessary to do so – this could be for reasons such as vulnerability issues if the person reporting the antisocial behaviour is deemed to be more at risk than the paperwork would suggest.

The risk assessment is seen as a useful tool with points awarded according to the nature of the situation, the vulnerability of the victim and support already in place for the victim. It is noted that staff can override the scoring using their own judgement if they feel that the scorecard should have returned a higher (or indeed lower) score. The result is that each case will be recorded as low, medium or high on the scale. Whilst this is seen as an excellent tool, it was noted that the current procedure means that the risk assessment is carried out via a call back from the housing officer normally within one working day. In practice, this could mean that over a long weekend period, it could be 5 days before an antisocial behaviour case is risk assessed. Whilst this is not unreasonable for low level cases such as dog fouling, for more serious cases, this is not acceptable and it is the view of the Estate Services Quality Group that the risk assessment should be carried out the same day either at the point of initial report or shortly thereafter. It is also felt that regular reviews or random ‘spot checks’ should be carried out by managers to ensure a consistency of approach to scoring the risk assessments and where the scores are overwritten, to ensure that a clear explanation exists for this.

2.2 Analysis of STAR survey

The STAR survey results were reviewed to determine if any patterns were evident i.e. were customers in one area more satisfied than another. Due to the low number cases and the low number of surveys returned, it has not been possible to provide a definitive answer to this.

2.3 Internal Audit

The group selected 12 cases to go to internal audit. Identifying details such as name and addresses were removed by staff and we then selected cases to give as broad a spectrum as possible including location and type of antisocial behaviour.

No high risk issues were identified but some recommendations have been made by Internal Audit. From these recommendations, some are procedural and are for the benefit of IHA but we have noted below the recommendations most likely to impact upon customer satisfaction – these are:

* Throughout the sample there was a lack of detailed notes regarding actions taken and behavioural plans being agreed.
* It is assumed that if no further complaints are made within 20 days that the problem has been resolved - a follow up call would confirm this.
* Home visits should be carried out in all instances. Where this is not possible for whatever reason, this should be recorded.

The full report from Internal Audit, including Director’s Comments and Action Plan is attached at Appendix 3.

2.4 Customer Survey

We considered holding a focus group of those customers who have used our anti-social behaviour service to better understand their views. At the present time, we have not been able to pursue this avenue as people have generally been reluctant to participate. Postal surveys were issued on 19 March to 53 people who have used our antisocial behaviour service. 6 surveys were returned but despite the low return rate, these surveys have revealed the following:

* 4 respondents said that IHA had failed to keep in regular contact. The remaining 2 who said IHA had kept in regular contact said the amount of contact was “about right”.
* 2 respondents said that after IHA’s intervention, the anti social behaviour “got worse” but the other four said it either reduced or stopped altogether.
* IHA telephoned 2 of the 6 respondents to make sure everything was resolved and to confirm if the tenant was happy with the way IHA had dealt with it. However, one of these tenants noted in the survey that there were still ongoing issues. This is despite the fact that the case has been closed by IHA.

2.5 Review of closing conversations

We carried out a review of the closing conversations which generally take place approximately one month after the antisocial behaviour case has been closed. The report which the group were presented with failed to give any meaningful information. We also looked at the questions asked in the closing conversation and would suggest that a review of these questions be undertaken with particular emphasis on open-ended questions which would provide more meaningful insight. It was explained to the group that the tenant is not asked if they are satisfied at this point – it is staff’s perception of the situation and tone of the conversation that informs this point. It may be beneficial to include a question specifically asking about satisfaction. At the present time, where cases are noted as being unsatisfied, there is no follow-up action. Bearing in mind that this is not an anonymous survey but staff perception, we recommend that these cases be reviewed to see if anything further can be done to assist our customers.

2.6 Review of Irvine Housing Association website

The Estate Services Quality Group reviewed the information provided on Irvine Housing Association’s website in relation to anti-social behaviour. The group acknowledge that the entire website is under review at present but significant failings exist which could be remedied immediately. These include out-of-date information and broken links to other areas of the site and to external sites. The group would suggest that nominated staff require to take control of reviewing specific areas of the site on regular and ongoing basis. The group also note that immediate improvements were made such as fixing broken links as soon as these were brought to the attention of Irvine Housing Association.

2.7 North Ayrshire Council – Anti Social Behaviour Investigation Team (ASBIT)

We interviewed Ann Ferguson from North Ayrshire Council’s Anti Social Behaviour Investigation Team (ASBIT). This gave us a much greater insight into the partnership working between IHA and NAC. Although the majority of cases are handled by IHA, for cases that require further investigation, perhaps through surveillance or noise monitoring, these would be passed to ASBIT. This session highlighted the work that goes on behind the scenes with regards to anti social behaviour.

3. Summary of findings

The focus of this scrutiny exercise has been to determine the reasons why our customers are not satisfied with the antisocial behaviour service. Within the course of our investigations, we found evidence of good practice such as the excellent working relationships between IHA and NAC but we also found some areas which may be having a negative impact on satisfaction levels. It is unrealistic to expect that every customer who experiences our antisocial behaviour service will be satisfied but what we need to ensure is that we do everything in our power to help our customers, including, where appropriate, signposting to other agencies who can help. We recognise that the majority of antisocial behaviour which is reported every year is low level such as dog fouling. What we need to ensure however is that we handle the more serious cases appropriately and there is certainly no ‘one size fits all’ approach to this.

4. Recommendations

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Recommendation** | **Why we are recommending this** | **Timescale** |
| **Closing conversation – review of questions asked**  | **To ensure that we are asking the appropriate questions****Include specific question about how satisfied the customer is with how the case was handled** | **July 2015** |
| **Closing conversation – unsatisfied responses to be reviewed and followed up where appropriate** | **To ensure that cases are not closed when outstanding issues exist** | **Ongoing** |
| **Closing conversation – Senior Housing Officer to review on a regular basis** | **To ensure consistency and high standards are being maintained and that any ‘unsatisfied’ customers are followed up** | **Every six months** |
| **Website – update information** | **To provide better information to customers on ASB**  | **Ongoing – as and when required** |
| **Risk assessment – carry out same day for serious cases** | **To ensure that customers identified as vulnerable are picked up immediately** | **May 2015** |
| **Risk assessment – manager to review 10% of cases**  | **To ensure consistency of approach in completing paperwork and ensure that where the scoring mechanism is overwritten, clear reasons are provided for this** | **On a quarterly basis** |
| **Improve procedures/staff training for ASB** | **To ensure that detailed notes are recorded for every case, not just the high profile cases** | **Ongoing** |
| **Follow up call to every customer** | **To ensure (rather than assume) that the ASB has been resolved** | **Ongoing** |
| **Carry out home visits for each report of ASB or record the reason(s) for not doing so** | **Good customer service** | **Ongoing** |

5. Group members

The members of the Estate Services Quality Group who have contributed to this report are:

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