

ASB Good Practice Sharing Report

RCVE Scrutiny Panel
October 2022



Executive summary



Executive summary 1



Good practice is shared by the Community Safety Team through 5 channels. A thorough communication plan is being put in place to support the process of disseminating information.

Good practice information often goes unread by Housing Officers. Many say they are too busy with competing priorities to keep up with what some have estimated to be 30-40 'must-read' internal emails per day, on a variety of subjects.

The Community Safety Team and in-house Legal Team value the sharing of good practice and act accordingly.

Training on ASB has taken place and a 6-module online course has been procured. The course is not mandatory; programmes are infrequent and new staff are not being prioritised. HO's say they need more training on low-level ASB and neighbour nuisance.

Executive summary 2



The defective case management system (The Hub) is preventing Riverside from seeing the true picture of how its current procedures should work. Riverside cannot know whether the staffing and structural changes introduced after the TOM review, work, with regards to ASB case management, when such a key component is not functioning properly, and the replacement case-management system (Salesforce) is yet to be introduced.

In our view, Riverside needs to: 1) Resolve the numerous process issues we have been advised of by staff (slide 20), 2) Get the Salesforce case-management system up and running, as a priority 3) Give the responsibility for ASB case-handling to CST, based on a triage system involving Social Housing and Customer Services Team, and one which leaves all parties in agreement about the course of action to be taken.

Executive summary 3



There is a difference of opinion between the Heads of Social Housing - who think the first 2 stages of the procedure should be handled by Housing Officer's - and the Head of Homes & Communities and the Community Safety Manager (*and 82% of HO's*) who think all stages should be handled by Community Safety Officers with support from Housing Officers.

The Heads of Social Housing do not think there should be another re-organisation, before the TOM changes and Salesforce have been fully implemented.

We take the view that the current hybrid model, in which HO's manage stages 1 & 2 and CSO's manage stages 3 & 4, is not sustainable. It needs to be replaced by a specialist model, in which all stages of an ASB case are managed by Community Safety team. The specialist model we envisage would still require a close working between CSO's and HO's, and would not undermine the working relationships HO's need to forge with tenants.

Executive summary 4



The absence of KPI's; a fully functioning performance management framework, and detailed customer insight, is both baffling and concerning. Riverside's board and leadership team appear to be steering the ship in fog when it comes to performance in the early stages of ASB. They do not appear to have a comprehensive picture of how Riverside is performing in the early stages, or a full picture of the current issues the organisation and its customers are facing.

We also discovered the lack of a coherent Community Safety Team communications plan. A plan was quickly drafted after we made the point and we think the plan is good. It will need to be backed by senior managers.

Executive summary 5



In our view, ASB has fallen down Riverside's priority list, at a time when pressures on society are growing due to the cost of living crisis, and the aftermath of Brexit and the pandemic. ASB must be re-prioritised for the safety of Riverside customers, communities, and the staff who serve them.

There is an opportunity for Riverside to use its customer journey mapping methodology to discover what its customers think about the ASB service, and how it can be developed to better meet their needs and expectations. The processes need to built around people, not vice versa.

We would encourage Riverside to use the results of our Housing Officer survey and the findings from staff focus groups to conduct a listening exercise. Whichever way the survey results are analysed, staff are clearly unhappy. We question whether the strategy behind the pay awards to HO's and CSO's has something to do with the job dissatisfaction.

Executive summary 6



Our external research, with housing associations of a similar size and national profile as Riverside, was illuminating.

Clarion Housing Group and Guinness Trust have both adopted specialist models and scaled-up the number of specialist staff.

In the course of this review, we were informed that One Housing has a specialist team that deals with ASB cases from start to finish.

Riverside's approach to managing ASB is out of step with the three housing associations we looked at. We would encourage readers to look at our findings and to compare the models.

Conclusion 1



Anti-Social Behaviour is a high priority for customers, but evidently not a high priority for Riverside, judging by the lack of Key Performance Indicators and reporting at stages 1 & 2, and a dearth of customer insight. A search on the Riverside website reveals almost nothing about the subject.

The findings of this report raise questions over Riverside's organisational culture: KPIs appear to have been quietly dropped by Riverside without a satisfactory explanation. The reaction of senior managers to the results of the Housing Officer survey was to question staff' motives. We take the view that the survey responses are genuine. The results pose some fundamental questions about Riverside's approach that require careful consideration and greater understanding.

Conclusion 2



There is a general discontent amongst the Housing Officers, many of whom feel they have not got time to do the core job. This is not just simply in relation to handling the early stages of anti-social behaviour cases. It is discontent about the job role, patch sizes and the workload .

RCVE is not convinced that the introduction of the Salesforce module will address the underlying issues outlined in the previous paragraph. The specialist model we have discussed in this report would better serve the needs of Riverside customers .

Key findings



Key findings 1



- Good practice is shared by the Community Safety Team through 5 channels.
- The Community Safety Team and in-house Legal Team value the sharing of good practice and act accordingly. A domestic abuse specialist has been appointed; a ASB good practice workshop has been run, and CST has worked at a local level with planning teams to improve service outcomes.
- Training on ASB has taken place and a 6-module course has been procured. It is not mandatory; programmes are infrequent and new staff are not prioritised.
- Good practice information is often goes unread by Housing Officers, because many say they are too busy with competing priorities.
- According to our research, some Housing Officers feel well supported in dealing with ASB, others much less so.

Key findings 2



- Riverside has no accreditation or awards for ASB management and prevention! The CSM would like to achieve accreditations and has applied for DAHA accreditation and group-wide accreditation is being explored.
- Riverside doesn't collect customer insight as a case closes: it does not know what tenants think about case-handling. There is just one question about ASB on the customer experience perception survey.
- There are currently no ASB KPIs. Therefore, Riverside cannot know how it is performing on ASB.
- There are known gaps in the processes, which need to be addressed.
- There is considerable support amongst HOs, CSO's and certain managers for a specialist service; triaged by Social Housing and the Customer Safety Team, and managed by the CST from start to finish.

Key findings 3



- The results of the HO survey were remarkable and concerning, and showed a wide gap between how managers and Housing Officers perceive the effectiveness of ASB case-handling; the effectiveness of good practice sharing; ASB training etc.
- Our research suggests that some HO's have unmanageable workloads and do not seem to be getting the support they need to alleviate the pressure. ASB caseloads are inevitably uneven and unpredictable.
- The current case management software (The Hub) is hindering the delivery of effective case work, which in turn is affecting morale and performance. Its replacement (Salesforce) is due to be operational by March 2023. The 5 KPI's on the The Hub have been turned off.

Key findings 4



- There was no Community Safety Team communications plan in place when we met with Joe Robinson (Communications Manager) in July.
- We commend Joe for the swift action he has taken to address this gap after we pointed it out to him. The plan he has produced with Raj Vine (Customer Safety Manager) is good and should make a significant difference, if Joe and Raj are given full backing by their seniors.

Recommendations



Recommendations 1



1. The formation of a specialist service to deal with ASB (as defined by Riverside). We note the views of the Heads of Social Housing, who want time see how Salesforce works. We are unconvinced by that approach. Salesforce will offer improvements, but it is not a panacea. Decisive action is required to improve the service, backed by firm rebuttals to tenants who attempt to report low-level nuisance as ASB.
2. Re-instate a set of ASB KPIs and start to report to the Board, immediately.
3. Introduce mandatory ASB training for HO's & CSO's. Ensure new starters are booked, immediately, and existing staff are scheduled for refresher training on a programmed basis.

Recommendations 2



4. Address the appalling results of the Housing Officer survey, which highlighted issues with morale, process problems and potentially fractured working relationships between some Social Housing and Community Safety Team staff. Send a communication to all Housing Officers acknowledging the results of the survey and setting out the course of action that the leadership team will be taking to address the issues. Run another survey in 12 month's time to test if perceptions have changed.

Detailed findings



Findings: policy and process issues



The following policy and process issues staff have been identified by staff and managers as in need of improvement:

1. Effective differentiation between ASB and Neighbour Nuisance
2. Effective triaging of cases between CST, Social Housing and Customer Services
3. Scripts for CSC staff to refer cases to the correct team
4. Inadequate case-management software (The Hub), which, in turn, hinders case handling
5. Standard letters for stages 1 & 2

Summary: findings from the Community Safety Manager & In-house solicitor



- Riverside has what appears to be a well-staffed Community Safety function and an in-house legal team. There is also a Legal Panel of external lawyers the Community Safety Manager can call on.
- Riverside has to manage relations with 150 local partnerships.
- Riverside is a member of RESOLVE – professional practise and training.
- The CSM holds monthly meetings with the Heads of Social Housing.
- The CSM and in-house solicitor value the sharing of good practice and training.
- The management of ASB is split between two departments. Ruth and Ria prefer the specialist model.

Summary: findings from the HO focus group 1



Themes:

- Recurring low-level cases that won't go away.
- The pressure to 'find solutions that don't exist'.
- HSM's also have heavy workloads and aren't always supportive.
- Only high-level cases tend to get publicised and low-level cases are ignored.
- An underwhelming response to the Panel's survey question about sharing good practice. A general view that practical, low-level advice is what's needed.
- Workload, patch sizes and time spent traveling impact ASB work.

Summary: findings from the HO focus group 2



Themes:

- Underwhelming comments about support from CSO's.
- ASB cases being put on the backburner, because low-level cases are time-intensive and HO's don't have the time. Example of a typical low-level case taking 2 weeks to deal with, and trying to manage other demands at the same time.
- The Hub not fit for purpose and a new system is badly needed.
- Support for a specialist model – an ASB specialist would be more independent and impartial. Specialists could further specialise in *types* of ASB and develop expertise in a subject.

Summary: findings from the HO focus group 3



Themes:

- Little ASB training among the 6 HO's interviewed and they mostly rely coaching, teamwork and previous experience.
- No personal ASB measures or targets in place – only briefly discussed in supervision.
- 'Bombarded' with information from internal sources and no time to read it. Typically 30 such emails a day.
- General feeling of being overworked and overwhelmed.

Summary: findings from the CSO focus group 1



Themes:

- Managers are focused on embedding good practice and constantly looking for ways to improve the service.
- Communication between CSO's and HO's varies depending on area and case levels. CSO's do not think ASB is a high priority for HO's.
- The case-handover process from HO's to CSO's is improving, because HSM's are generally checking that Stages 1 & 2 have been completed correctly before handover. In some cases the HO's have done the bare minimum, and the evidence is porous.
- Having a national Community Safety Team has improved team working and CSO's are better able to support and cover each other.

Summary: findings from the CSO focus group 2



Themes:

- A concern that not all HSM's monitor cases during Stages 1 & 2 when HO's are on leave - The Hub doesn't prompt actions.
- CSO's think their team is still too small to cover the whole country and more staff are needed.
- During lockdown, Riverside experimented with CSO's handling all ASB cases and it proved impossible, due to the volume of work.
- The pay cut for CSO's and the pay rise for HO's was highlighted as a source of some friction between the two groups of workers.

Summary: findings from the CSO focus group 3



Themes:

- A view that new Housing Officers are 'thrown in at the deep end' and are not shown how to handle reports of ASB.
- An awareness that HO's do not have KPI's and that cases can easily be ignored, forgotten or prematurely closed, due to the lack of effective case-management software and HSM oversight.
- CSO's think that the procedures are fit for purpose and are followed carefully by the Community Safety Team.
- A view that Riverside doesn't do enough to publicise how it deals with ASB, or promote its service standards.

Summary: findings from the CSO focus group 4



Themes:

- Negative views were expressed about training: CSO's noted that training is not mandatory; there was no training provided when CSO's started in their roles – they were expected to rely on previous experience or shadowing colleagues; the training courses they were sent on were not related to ASB. One CSO referred to the lack of training when they started in post as 'abysmal'.
- Support was expressed for ending the hybrid model of handling ASB cases and moving to a specialist model. One experienced CSO said they had never worked in such a 'disjointed organisation'.

Summary: Embedding Good Practice survey



The areas the survey explored with HSM's & HSH's:

1. *Managers are focused on embedding ASB good practice*
2. *Managers are accountable for embedding ASB good practice*
3. *New skills, mindsets, and behaviours to tackle ASB, are practiced and demonstrated by managers and staff*
4. *The adoption of ASB good practice is tracked*
5. *Momentum for change and trust in ASB good practice is encouraged*
6. *There is a focus on continuous improvement*

Summary: findings from the Embedding Good Practice survey 1



Themes:

- Consistency and variations between patches – ‘caseloads do not land evenly’ (example of HO currently deal with 16 live cases).
- Housing officers have varying attitudes towards ASB work.
- ASB work must compete with other priorities – there are capacity issues.
- The level of CSO support was questioned.
- HSM’s feel they provide considerable support and network with others to provide additional advice to HO’s.
- The Hub is not fit for purpose.

Summary: findings from the Embedding Good Practice survey 2



Themes:

- Team targets aren't monitored effectively – KPIs are on the Hub, but no overall ASB KPIs
- Mixed views on whether good practice is shared effectively.
- HSM's place emphasis on 1-to-1 supervision and guidance.
- LCR appears to be leading on introducing plans and monitoring systems.
- Formal training arrangements could be improved: staff generally rely on managers for coaching, plus advice from CST and external agencies.
- ASB training is not compulsory.

Summary: findings from the Embedding Good Practice survey 3



Themes:

- The answers to the questions about whether the embedding of good practice is tracked, were unconvincing – many pinned hope on the switch from the Hub to Salesforce.
- Various comments to the effect HO's must carry out a lot of work at stages 1 & 2 which is time-consuming.
- The high-level cases get highlighted and promoted, but managers would like to see low-level work acknowledged.
- Reporting systems and data are inadequate.

Summary: findings of the Housing Officer survey



- 73% said they do not have time to deal with ASB cases, effectively
- 78% said they do not receive useful info on ASB good practice
- 87% do not think the ASB procedures and systems are fit for purpose
- 76% do not believe the service is consistent
- 52% have not had training to deal with ASB
- 82% think cases should be assigned to a specialist team
- (101 respondents from a cohort of 110)

Summary: findings from HoSH interview 1



Themes:

- Cases do not land fairly amongst housing officers, because ASB is linked to stock profile areas, areas of deprivation etc. Geography also has an impact.
- One of the big issues with ASB is identifying what is ASB and what is neighbourhood dispute. It is always going to be a challenge and early intervention is the answer.
- There are challenges due to changing new technologies and social media which is giving customers methods of collecting own evidence.
- The low-level, nasty, finger-pointing cases take up a considerable amount of time. Riverside is not able to sort out an entire neighbourhood- there is a limit to what Riverside can do. Certain Housing Officers build up more cases than others, because they do not take a forceful approach to dealing with low-level nuisance reports.

Summary: findings from HoSH interview 2



Themes:

- The need to smarten up on early intervention and add some strong letters to convey what is a neighbourhood issue and not ASB.
- Good practice, is being able to absorb that knowledge; that expertise, that skill set and relationship management. Housing officers are best placed because they're the ones that have regular contact with customers. It's relationships, and relationships are being broken down by competing priorities.
- There's more admin and transactional work for Housing Officers now and they are pulled in all directions. Therein lies the challenge – what to prioritise.
- Riverside needs to remove the barriers for HO's to fully absorb, and have the capacity, to be able to really embed the good practice.

Summary: findings from HoSH interview 3



Themes:

- There is some work happening to refocus the efforts on relationships and face to face contact rather than paperwork in the office.
- Salesforce will give much better visibility and avoids duplication. There will be some form of triage by CSC. Also able move cases between queues and see history in one place.
- There can sometimes be 'roadblocks' in referring cases as Community Safety say they are full and are not taking new cases. Housing officers do not have that option and demand on the patch should be reflected in housing officers patch size.
- LCR have the benefit of density and not being spread too wide, but it can take around 40 mins by car to reach some places. LCR have been tweaking patches based on this and the complexities of a workflow. It doesn't happen very often, but it does happen.

Summary: findings from HoSH interview 4



Themes:

- There are old KPI's that were monitored closely when there were business support teams or various admins teams across the regions. But when the TOM restructure happened in 2017, the ASB KPI's were dropped from the Top Ten. The process is still there but Social Housing doesn't report.
- Riverside needs to be careful when setting targets around compliance. It can drive behaviour, but it also can drive the wrong behaviour.
- There are no transactional surveys carried out. Do you survey both the perpetrator and victim?
- When TOM landed with the new structure in 2017. Income collection landed, but not in the place HoSH's wanted it to. Housing officers took on more work over a number of years then the original model intended and have only recently been able to hand things back.

Summary: findings from HoSH interview 5



Themes:

- Riverside hasn't given the model, as intended, an opportunity to run it's course. There are more barriers that have presented themselves – agile working, methodology – all the key planks weren't in place, they are now. This has been accelerated by COVID and the urgency around IT.
- Riverside is getting there. We need Salesforce; we need Apps, and we need more sophistication on phones rather than logging on to a computer. We need to give it an opportunity.
- The HoSH's are strong advocates for the Community Safety Team when cases get to a serious stage i.e. 3 or 4. There is a need for that level of independence and expertise, and that deep dive . Riverside has to stop it from getting to that point (sometimes that's not going to happen) but you've got to have the opportunity for Housing Officers to intervene at early stages.

Summary: findings from Communications Manager interview 1



Themes that emerged from a conversation with Joe Robinson:

- From time-to-time Riverside will do website news stories or even press stuff around a good outcome for customers.
- Riverside is comfortable in being open about what to publicise and feels customers should draw their own conclusion on things.
- Joe does not have a communications plan for promoting or tackling ASB now, but agreed to speak with Raj Vine, Community Safety Manager. He agreed to work on a plan and to share it with the Scrutiny Panel by September, which he did.

Summary: findings from Communications Manager interview 2



- Any public Riverside ASB performance data would be primarily be published in the Annual Report.
- Every time Riverside post on social media it creates a cascade of customer queries and having the capacity to deal with all those is a challenge.
- The digital team is down to four officers so Joe needs to be careful to manage demand and Riverside doesn't have a position of a social media manager like in other companies.

Summary: findings from Communications Manager interview 3



- There are two models: either a business partner who serves executive directors, like Joe, and works according to what the heads of services are asking for; or a completely different model with a comms team aligned to Riverside's channels. In this way there would be a social media manager in charge of the function with a possible team consisting of a couple of press officers, internal comms etc. which tends to lead to an audience driven content.
- There are many channels customers can walk through: CSC, housing officer, social media, live chat and emails, to reach out to Riverside, but customers are never advised on the optimal way to get a resolution and what would work best for them.

Summary: findings from Communications Manager interview 4



- Riverside does not promote many examples of ASB success stories on the website, only a form to report. Examples could be added there. There's a piece of work to be carried out on Riverside's website in terms of optimisation.
- Yammer is an internal social media platform, which is open to anyone in the business to use. It's up to staff as to whether they use it and usage is generally low. Riverside is analysing its own Facebook Workplace, which is like Yammer. Riverside's primary internal comms platforms now are emails and newsletters, which do get decent engagement rates – around 50%/60%, which is quite high.

Summary: findings from Head of Communities interview



Themes that emerged from conversations with Sarah Wall:

- H&C is a new department that has been set up in Riverside following a huge restructure in the company.
- There are three functions that sit within H&C -Community Safety, Community Planning & Resilience and Community Involvement & Engagement.
- Within Community Planning team there also sits Employment & Training; this is a national team and links in with local organisations to offer the best support and assistance to customers.

Summary: findings from Head of Communities interview



Themes that emerged from conversations with Sarah Wall:

- The department is still quite new - launched in September 21. Functional plans are being developed across the functions which will then feed into a strategic plan.
- Riverside was restructured last year, which resulted in the Customer Safety Team within Homes and Communities team. With the One Housing Group merger coming forward, Sarah would say that any restructure and change with this service area would happen when the merger is finalised. The timing isn't right for making changes to the current hybrid model.

Summary: findings from Head of Communities interview



Themes that emerged from conversations with Sarah Wall:

- There are five Intensive Intervention Officer posts across the country and Riverside Foundation has agreed funding for nine additional posts, meaning there will be a team of 14 permanent positions. This team will be managed by Social Housing and will provide one on one support to customers who are at risk of losing their home.
- There are no key performance indicators or performance reports on ASB. In the past there used to be but following the 2017 restructure this was stopped.

Summary: findings from Head of Communities interview



Themes that emerged from conversations with Sarah Wall:

- The switch from The Hub to Salesforce will provide an opportunity to put an anti-social-behaviour triage system in place for front-line staff, which would be of great assistance to Riverside.
- Sarah has brought in new objectives in terms of collaboration with housing services teams and now CSO attend housing team meetings. The Customer Safety Team now has champions that excel in certain areas, e.g. domestic violence.
- HO's need to follow procedure and policies. ASB cases need to be dealt with within the policy time targets, because it's about safety. This may need profile raising within Riverside.

Summary: findings from Head of Communities interview



Themes that emerged from conversations with Sarah Wall:

- There's so much information staff need and it's a discussion on how we get that information out there in a way that people can absorb. There are days when staff are bombarded with emails.
- There have also been online training sessions, with next one being around Domestic Violence. A lot of the training is learned on the job and staff have to hurl themselves into it and learn.
- With CST attending Social Housing team meetings, it gives an opportunity to embed some good practice and debrief sessions as a whole team.
- Recently a kind of triage system was put in place as cases get triaged by the two team leaders and it shows that some cases could have possibly been closed at an earlier stage, which SW is looking into. There needs to be some profile raising around regulation and possibly a broader education piece to be done across housing regulation.

Summary: findings from the Business Architect interview



Themes that emerged from a conversation with Rachel Wynne:

- Salesforce is the integral system used by Riverside, and when Rachel was first tasked with an ASB solution to replace “The Hub” her team brought in external suppliers to look at other options, the main one being a standalone system called React.
- While looking at React, it became clear that Salesforce could act in a similar way, and produce the reporting & KPI mechanism that any stand-alone service might. With the added advantage that it was included in Riverside’s Salesforce software.
- It is envisioned that this will be incorporated in the same way as the complaints system, using flags etc. to show milestone points and a dashboard for managers to monitor on a patch/area/region basis where required. Reports available for senior managers and The Board.
- Once implemented, Salesforce will give a customer the ability to track their report through the My Riverside App.

Summary: findings from the Senior Business Insight Manager's evidence 1



Themes that emerged evidence submitted by Tim Quinlan:

- The Customer Experience Survey is a perception survey (formerly known as STAR) that will be the survey used to measure the survey-related Regulator of Social Housing Tenant Satisfaction Measures.
- The survey takes place every month with a representative sample of customers from across the Group. Around 400 surveys are completed each month, giving an annual total of 4,800 and allowing Riverside to achieve high levels of confidence in the data. In April 2022 One Housing Group joined the survey and Riverside speaks to around 2,600 customers per year.
- Riverside uses a mixed collection method, with 70% of surveys completed by telephone and 30% completed online. A version of the survey has been running for several years, with the current customer experience survey being run through Riverside's research partner BMG since August 2018.

Summary: findings from the Senior Business Insight Manager's evidence 2



Themes that emerged evidence submitted by Tim Quinlan:

- Results from the survey are reported across Riverside and questions feature in key corporate KPIs that are shared internally with colleagues and externally with customers in the annual report and the 'how we're doing' page of the Riverside website.
- ASB handling satisfaction was added to the customer experience survey in November 2021. R3M data available from January 2022.

Summary: Clarion findings 1



- Clarion operates a specialist ASB service - regional structure (5 regions).
- One regional director is responsible for overseeing the whole ASB service.
- Below the regional director is an ASB service lead with a brief to focus on performance, consistency, training and continuous improvement.
- All ASB reports go through a triage process run by specialist teams.
- The triage teams make initial contact with the victims; carry out the interview and complete action plans.

Summary: Clarion findings 2



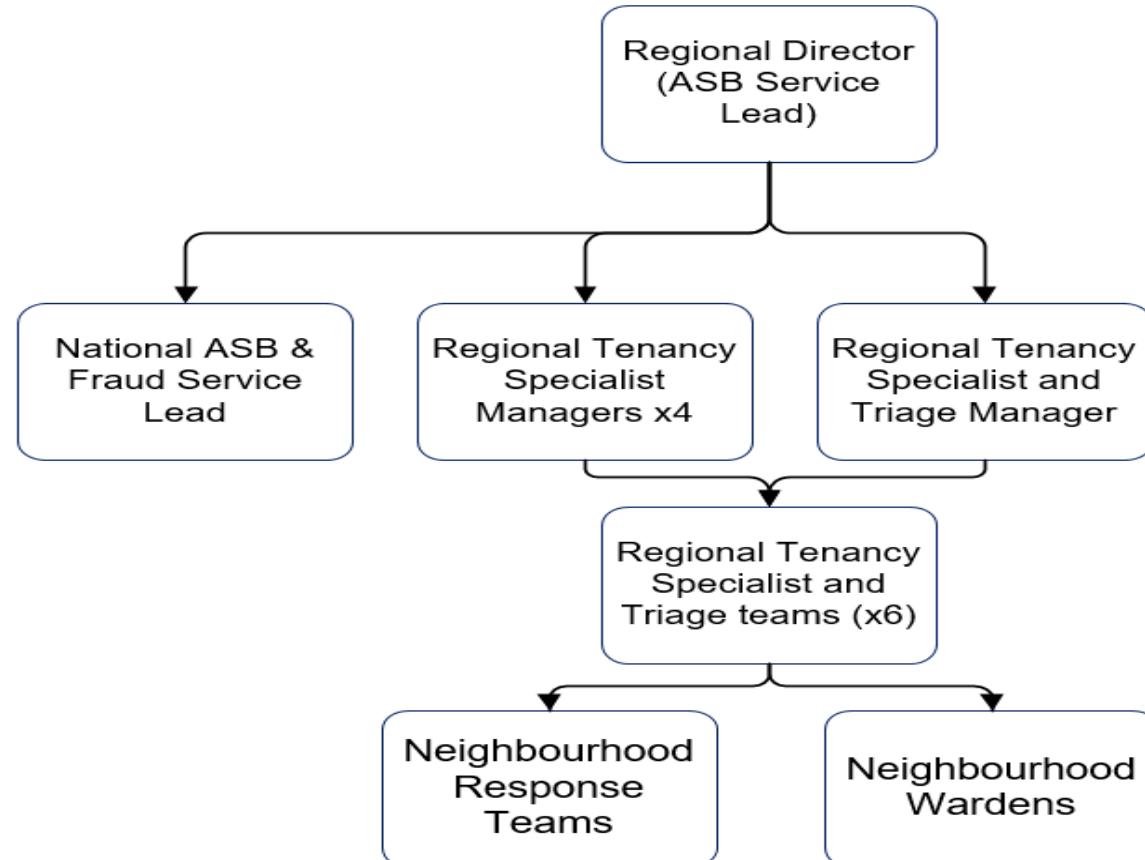
- There is a 5-day SLA to carry out the initial triage process but is usually completed much quicker.
- A minimum of 100 cases are audited each month – 20 per region.
- 25 in-depth audits are carried out per month on closed cases.
- A monthly report is produced on the in-depth audits to highlight the learning. It is shared at a national level with senior managers.
- The specialist teams are independently reviewed every 2 years.
- There is a peer-review system for seemingly intractable cases.
- Clarion has a contract with ASB Action to provide expert advice.

Summary: Clarion findings 3



- On sharing of good practice: the National Action group meets 6-weekly; Tenancy Specialist Managers have monthly working groups; Ombudsman determinations are studied monthly
- The business case for the specialist model: the level of housing officer knowledge and experience was inconsistent (a ‘post code lottery’); removes the potential for cases to be brushed under the rug; a specialist team can be trained to a high standard; easier to share good practice and keep specialist staff updated; the main selling points are consistency and high-level of expertise.
- Note: Housing Officers are still expected to do some of the evidence gathering – some of the leg work.

Summary: Clarion findings 4: regional model



Summary: Guinness Trust findings 1



- Guinness has a national footprint and 66,000 homes. Six national Regional Heads are responsible for around 9000 homes each.
- Guinness operate a desk-based approach to anti-social behaviour and has four desk-based teams that consist of cases workers and assistants. Within this set-up there is a separate team for domestic abuse and safeguarding, one for legal and fraud and then two tenancy enforcement caseworkers' teams.
- As ASB cannot be done entirely behind a desk, they are supported by field-based Customer Liaison officers. Field-based teams are tasked with going out to take a statement.

Summary: Guinness Trust findings 2



- Guinness has a central customer service centre, which is the first point of contact. It's here that Guinness uses a risk-based approach (*this is soon to be changed, see below*). The score determines where the case goes - low score = field-based/high score = desk-based. Once tasked to that team, it then gets a more detailed assessment or harm assessment done. This assessment can change where the case is being managed.
- Up to the 1st July, cases were managed on two different systems: The field-based teams using one and the desk-based another. This resulted in the two teams not seeing the information needed, which sometimes resulting in a field officer going out knowing nothing about the case. From 1st July onwards, all domestic abuse and safeguarding information has moved onto one system, so now both teams have full visibility of that. Guinness plan to migrate all the other types of cases onto one system by the end of the year.

Summary: Guinness Trust findings 3



- Currently the desk-based officers are using a specialist case management system that has a workflow, outlining what happens at each stage of the case and issuing prompts. The field-based officers are reliant on using outlook calendars/notifications instead.
- The first assessment in the customer service centre is being stopped, and in the new model the customer service centre will give the right advice and able to resolve at point of first contact, or the case type will determine where the case goes. Environmental/antisocial behaviour (fly tipping etc.) will sit with field-based teams, and personal anti-social behaviour will sit with the desk-based teams. If the desk-based team needed someone to visit a customer, the field-based team would pick this up still.
- Harm assessments will still be done, but now as part of the case management, rather than determining who manages the case. Going forward the new procedures will be a lot more person centred.

Summary: Guinness Trust findings 4



- If customer service centre can resolve at first point of contact, it will. If it goes to a field-based officer, they have a 48-hour call-back target on all CRM cases. If it goes to desk-based, at the moment, it's based on high harm score and they're working on a 24-hour call-back.
- Currently the customer service centre asks three questions, and the outcome determines which team it goes to. Guinness are changing the process so that the case is allocated by type. The harm score determines the support needed for the customer.
- Training is compulsory. The customer service staff are not ASB specialists and do use scripts. They have had more training and understand the implications of the questions they're asking and why they need the answers in a specific way that could be important for the case. There's mandatory training – two-day ASB Essentials course which is put together by one of the solicitors Guinness works with which covers law and how to apply the law. There's inhouse training going over policies and how to apply them.

Summary: Guinness Trust findings 5



- Anti-social Behaviour Casework Team – Two case managers, 16 caseworkers and two assistants.
- Legal and Fraud team – five caseworkers, four investigation officers and an assistant.
- Domestic Abuse team – seven domestic abuse and safeguarding officers.

Summary: One Housing findings



In the course of our review, we came into contact with Yasin Ahmed, Resident Engagement Manager, One Housing, and discovered the following about the current OH model:

- The Community Safety Team (CST) manages all ASB reports for all residents and Safeguarding investigations for general needs residents.
- A Community Safety Manager oversees the case management of ASB, and a Safeguarding Team Leader oversees Safeguarding and Tenancy Intervention case management.
- At officer level there are 6 Community Safety Officers and 2 Tenancy Intervention Officers (not yet recruited).
- The CST manage cases from start to finish, apart from cases that are ready for legal action, such as an injunction or possession order. CST completes the legal bundle then the case is then referred to the One Housing internal legal team or external solicitors.

Appendices



Appendix 1

Background to the project



Project background 1



- The RCVE Committee carried out its usual selection process, and ASB good practice sharing scored highly.
- Riverside works with 150 local partnerships and has multiple business streams. Therefore, the Scrutiny Panel had to decide on a manageable project within a 6-month timeframe.
- After careful consideration - and consultation with the RCVE Committee and the Customer Safety Manager - the Scrutiny Panel narrowed the scope to the General Needs and Retirement Living business streams. The tenants in these business streams all have Assured tenancies and Riverside's policies and procedures should therefore be consistent across both.

Project background 2



- Supported Housing, Managed Agents and Home Ownership residents have different tenures and the ASB policies have been adapted, accordingly. These two factors would have further complicated the review to a point where it would have become impractical.
- The Scrutiny Panel also took the view that Hate Crime and Domestic Abuse are both large and complex subjects which would require separate scrutiny exercises.
- As the project unfolded and more information about General Needs became available, the Scrutiny Panel decided it would not have enough time and capacity to include the Retired Living business stream and dropped it.

Project background 3



- The exercise was conducted as the world began to emerge from a pandemic. We recognise the strain it placed on people and the disruption it caused to Riverside. None of us had ever been through anything like it before, and government statistics showed the pandemic caused an increase in ASB and mental health issues.
- We appreciate the procedures, processes and systems we were examining, were not running at their **full** potential. Firstly, because it has been argued that the TOM changes have not had time to bed in. Secondly, because Salesforce, the new case management system, will not be up and running until the end of March 2023.

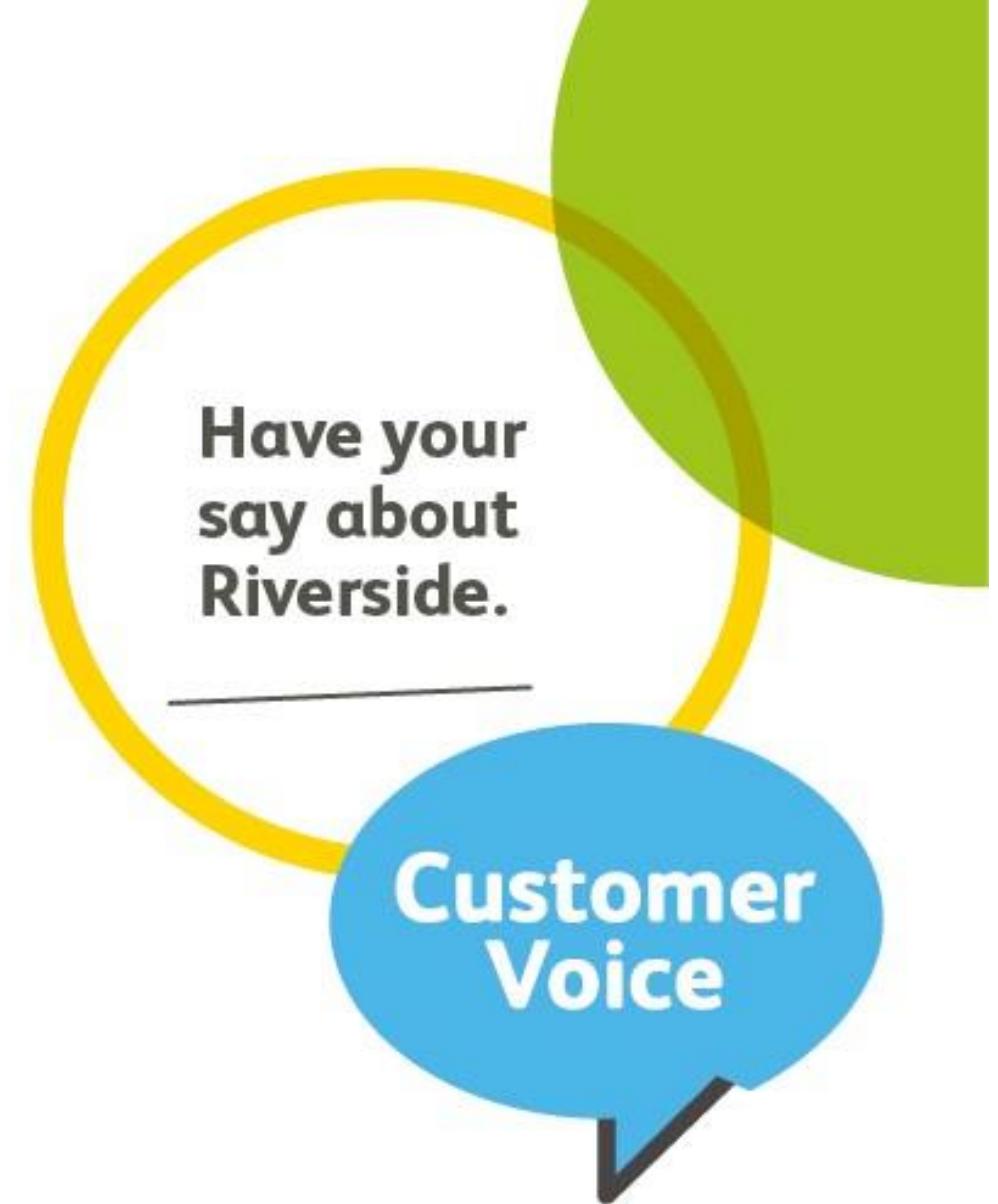
Project background 4



- We listened to the views of over 100 staff members during the scrutiny exercise. We interviewed many of the staff under the condition of **anonymity**. Therefore, we could not necessarily pinpoint regions or locations where particular issues have arisen.

Appendix 2

Scope of the Review



Scope of the review 1



- The scope of this review was agreed in advance between the Chair of the Scrutiny Panel, the Riverside Customer Voice Executive, and Sarah Wall, Head of Homes and Communities. This scoping process was designed to ensure that the review would provide useful insight about the ASB service and is fully understood by all involved.
- The review focused on the establishing how good practice in handling of Anti-Social Behaviour cases is shared throughout Riverside.
- In all reviews the Scrutiny Panel look for, identifies, and present good practice.

Scope of the review 2



- The following areas were in scope for this review:
 - ✓ The General Needs and Retirement Living and business streams
 - ✓ Resolve membership
 - ✓ The role of the in-house legal team
 - ✓ The role of the Legal Panel
 - ✓ Local partnership working in relation to ASB
 - ✓ Internal and external communications in relation to ASB
 - ✓ Customer Safety RIC pages (in line with GDPR and Confidentiality procedures)
 - ✓ Monthly reporting between the Customer Safety Manager and Heads of Social Housing
 - ✓ The split function between generalist and specialist models of dealing with ASB

Scope of the review 3



- The following areas are out of scope for this review, although the Panel may touch on them if there is any overlap:
 - ✓ Supported Housing and Home Ownership business streams
 - ✓ Detailed scrutiny of the Domestic Abuse and Hate Crime policies
 - ✓ The case management system
 - ✓ One Housing*

*Note: Shortly after this scrutiny exercise began, Riverside announced a new partnership with One Housing which will eventually lead to a merger of the two organisations. The possibility of involving the One Housing scrutiny panel in this exercise was discussed by RCVE. However, RCVE took the view that it was too early in the merger process for the two scrutiny panels to work together in a purposeful way, and there were numerous details to be worked through before that would be possible.

Appendix 3

Housing Officer Survey Results



Housing Officers Survey - June 2022

1. Do you feel you have enough time to deal with ASB cases effectively?

Yes	7%	7 people
No	73%	74 people
Mostly, Not always	20%	20 people



RCVE ASB
Scrutiny Panel



2. Do you receive useful information on ASB good practice that you can use in your daily work?

Yes	22%	22 people
No	78%	79 people



Housing Officers Survey - June 2022

3. Do you think Riverside ASB procedures and systems are generally fit for purpose?

Yes	13%	13 people
No	87%	88 people



RCVE ASB
Scrutiny Panel



4. Do you think that Riverside delivers a consistent ASB service?

Yes	24%	24 people
No	76%	77 people



Housing Officers Survey - June 2022

5. Do you have the training to help deal with ASB cases?

Yes	48%	48 people
No	52%	53 people



RCVE ASB
Scrutiny Panel



6. Do you think all ASB reports should be assigned to a specialist team?

Yes	82%	83 people
No	18%	18 people



Housing Officer survey: selected quotes 1



- *'There should be training for housing officers on how to approach situations such as neighbour disputes, managing tenant expectations etc. There are guides on how to use the system and our ASB procedure, but no training on how to effectively manage a complaint of ASB. If there was enough training, some ASB cases may not need to be referred over to the community safety team.'*
- *'I feel that ASB should sit with a specialist team from start to finish which would provide consistency of the case. ASB can be very time consuming even at low level for HO's.'*
- *'There is a ridiculous timescale expected on dealing with the cases, which is not realistic. ASB is not black and white. I also feel that it is very time consuming and should be dealt with by a specialist team to provide more intricate good customer service.'*
- *'It is difficult to pass cases on to the Community Safety Team to deal with. Our procedures need to be updated including managing expectations.'*
- *'A specialist team is needed to deal with all ASB, HOs just do not have time to deal with these cases so they are often dealt with later than they should be and when most evidence is then unavailable or immediate opportunities for remedies have passed.'*

Housing Officer survey: selected quotes 2



- *'Housing Officers are over worked and stretched, there is a team of Community Safety officers that could be giving our customers the best possible service with regards to dealing with ASB complaints, which would probably also help reoccurring ASB's as they can be dealt with properly, this should sit with them and Housing Officer assist as and when needed. These are potentially legal cases that need to be completed correctly and efficiently giving our customers the best possible service, which Housing's Officers just do not have the time to do.'*
- *'I don't think ASB cases should be assigned to a specialist team, because as the Housing Officer. I want to be aware of what is happening on my patch and if we were not aware, it may put us in a dangerous situation when out on visits etc.'*
- *'It is becoming increasingly difficult to evict and the costs to do so are spiralling all of which detract from the investment in what should be residents homes.'*
- *'Housing Officers are wearing so many hats: how can we also act as good cop and bad cop? '*

Housing Officer survey: selected quotes 3



- *'Currently, I have 16 cases and fail every KPI which is very distressing for me and the customers. One case currently is low level noise nuisance. This investigation on its own has taken month's. I just do not have time to fully read all the evidence and gather the evidence. This particular estate is 90 minutes away from my base location. I have a patch that covers two borough's and a 50-minute drive between a few of the estates. The admin alone is huge which is often not completed.'*
- *'I believe that most of the current issues will be rectified once cases are in Salesforce, which allows you to more easily consult with other if needed, has the ability to offer tips/advice with the information also being readily available for the CSC/other departments to see it if needed.'*
- *'There are legal newsletters that are very useful, but in terms of the nuts and bolts of cases there isn't much good practice sharing across the Group.'*
- *'I believe we would be helping the customer by having a specialist team dedicated to ASB from start to finish as they have the expertise. Currently in my role I do not feel I can give the customer the best service as I do not have the tools and skill in this specialist field.'*

Housing Officer survey: selected quotes 4



- *'As a HO, it is really difficult to get assistance from them (CST) and they are very resistant to taking cases that should be with them. If we had a robust, professional CS team, tenants would understand we take ASB seriously and understand the consequences. Most of the time I do my own work, which should go to that team as it is easier and I get information quicker. You don't get updates from the officers, nor do they keep us as HO's updated unless we chase things.'*
- *'I never have enough time to deal with ASB complaints effectively but when I have got them to a point of handing them over to the ASB team, they normally take them on and then we work together well.'*
- *'There is currently a severe lack in communication between Community Safety and the Housing Officers, making it very difficult for Housing Officers to provide a good service to our customers.'*
- *'Any cases with or that have escalated to violence/threats/police involvement should be assigned to a specialist team, low level cases should only be sent to HO's.'*

Housing Officer survey: selected quotes 5



- *'I also feel the process is very confusing for customers, when they report the issues and Housing officers deal with it at the first two stages, and then someone else is dealing with it after that. Any further incidents are usually reported to the Housing Officer rather than community safety.'*
- *'I think HOs should deal with initial complaints about ASB, and many of course can be resolved and closed-down without recourse to a specialist team. Most cases are 'low-level', often without the 'perp' being aware that their behaviour is causing alarm, annoyance or distress and the frontline HO is best placed to advise and educate.'*
- *'Our policy needs to be reviewed to manage expectations and we should not be afraid to close less serious cases more promptly. A high proportion of complainants overestimate our powers to remedy disputes, even in serious cases. I take dealing with ASB very seriously, but the matter does attract a number of vexatious and malicious complaints.'*
- *'ASB training is bare minimum online and is very poor.'*
- *'Other housing associations work this way and have all ASB's going to the specialist team and this appears to work so much better. Housing officers do not have the time to give the customers what they need or deserve.'*

Housing Officer survey: selected quotes 6



- *'I am dealing with the police in some instances and arranging for cctv to be installed. For the amount of cases that escalate to stage 3 I feel it is pointless having an Community Safety Team and I am at a loss as to what they actually do.'*
- *'It only takes a couple of serous cases and there is little time left in the day to deal with other issues. I think the HO should deal with the initial case, but when it becomes difficult to resolve it should be passed to another team.'*
- *'Our current Community Safety should also accept cases if the perpetrator is already known. This does not happen. Instead, we are told that if it is a new victim, we need to start over on stages 1 and 2 (despite the perp being known already for previous/ persistent ASB issues.)'*
- *'ASB can take up the majority of one's day as a lot of ASB is not resolved quickly or easily. As a Housing Officer, customers come to us with all kinds of issues a lot of which are not ASB, but also not breaches of tenancy; usually just two neighbours that don't get on. Because we as Housing Officers build up a rapport with our tenants, they expect a lot more from us and can sometimes expect us to take sides, which obviously we can not do but they feel they are able to complain to us much more freely.'*

Housing Officer survey: selected quotes 7



- *'As a Housing Officer it is extremely difficult to follow our procedures and meet deadlines to provide excellent customer service to our tenants due to work load. Cases can be rushed through and exact details and deadlines are not met which means if a case was to be taken to court might be scrutinised by any other legal teams and cases may then be thrown out.'*
- *'The City Council and Police both make it clear on their websites and recorded messages (and) on call queues the things they will not deal with and signpost successfully, we should do the same. We are making work for ourselves in many ways. Wasting CSC time and HO time.'*
- *'The ASB is a nightmare of a database. The HO's role has that many different databases, log-ins and passwords for that many different systems they are using, and it lots of cases duplicating updates on these. There are ASB reports coming through to HO's on Salesforce rather than the HUB or sometimes both, which is just silly!'*
- *'I have specialised in ASB in previous roles and believe a risk assessment should be done at first contact or at least with 24 - 48 hours - Housing Officers do not have the capacity to spend the time required with victims, complete the essential admin work and monitor the cases effectively.'*

Appendix 4

Reality-checking activities



List of reality-checking activities



- Presentations: Ruth Richards (Community Safety Manager), Raj Vine (Interim Community Safety Manager)& Ria Stevens (Housing Litigation Solicitor)
- Focus groups: Housing Officer & Community Safety Officers
- Survey: Housing Officers
- Questionnaire: 'Embedding Good Practice' completed by Housing Service Managers & Heads of Social Housing
- Interviews with Sarah Wall (Head of Homes & Communities), Joe Robinson (Communications Manager) and Gillian Hunt (Community Safety Team Leader), Richard Penderleith and Peter Yoh (Heads of Social Housing), Rachel Wynne, Business Architect, Tim Quinlan, Snr Insight Mgr
- External presentation and Q&A's: Clarion Housing Group and Guinness Trust

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Michelle Davis, Regional Head of Customer Service (NW) Guinness Trust

Margi Kelly and Vic Andrews, RCVE Committee

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