



To: Chairman of Housing, Finance and Regeneration Policy and Scrutiny Committee

From: Cabinet Member for Housing Services

Date: 9 March 2020

Subject: Response to recommendations of the Anti-Social on Estates Task Group

Recommendation 1

Review the definition of Anti-Social Behaviour to ensure it includes all relevant issues and that it captures issues reported through all channels.

Cabinet Member comments:

The definition of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) is very wide and is stated within the Council's 'Statement of policies and procedures' which can be found on the Westminster website.

Consideration towards the recommendation will be made where it is clear there may be gaps within departments on "grey area" cases and what team should handle which enquiry.

On 7 November 2019, a workshop was held between Housing Operations, ASB and the Contact Centre. During this workshop all colleagues discussed every common report/category on the national ASB categories and jointly created a process list to show which team should lead on each category.

This list will provide clarity for contact centre staff, internal frontline teams and partners. It is anticipated that it will also prevent delays and increase customer confidence in the service.

This list is being rolled out in February 2020 along with five briefing sessions for staff and an e-learning training package. Posters are also being developed with the communications team to be placed within the contact centre to improve knowledge for contact centre staff.

The list will also be built into processes and procedures, so that the enquiries are sent to a single specific department to handle in the first instance, although all teams will still be expected to take an 'early intervention' and holistic approach to more complex enquiries.

Recommendation is **AGREED**

Recommendation 2

Review the way that ASB issues are recorded so that all issues and complaints related to a particular property or individual are recorded.

Cabinet Member comments:

Customers can report ASB to Westminster Housing through the online portal, an online reporting form, by telephone or in person.



The report is recorded by the contact centre or by an ASB support officer if directly reported to the Orchard housing database where there is a specific 'ASB incident management system' solely to manage ASB cases.

Each case produces a unique ASB case reference number, and cases are logged against a relevant category on Orchard. The case can also be linked to the tenancy / property account database.

There are 15 Categories and a comprehensive list of sub-categories related to the ASB incident management portal. These categories relate to the national benchmarking categories.

There is potential scope for other teams such as Housing Operations to log reports that would not be managed by the ASB Services team. This is being reviewed as part of the current digital programme.

Staff will be reminded of the importance of passing on new or follow-up ASB reports or logging these directly so that all reports are captured.

Recommendation is **AGREED**

Recommendation 3

Ensure residents who raise concerns or complaints about ASB issues are kept up to date on the status and outcome of their complaint. Residents who raise concerns should be confident that their case will be dealt with confidentially.

Cabinet Member comments:

Cases are assessed against a matrix to determine if they are High, Medium or Low risk. Once a case has been assigned to the ASB team from the contact centre, the following service standards apply:

2 working days response for Low / Medium risk cases
Same working day / 24 hours - High risk cases

The initial contact involves the ASB support officer making a courtesy call to the customer to advise that their case has been received and who it has been assigned to. They will also provide contact details and initial advice.

ASB case managers have an internal team target to make weekly contact with each complainant unless otherwise agreed. This is monitored by a "*no contact in 8 days report*" which is automated weekly and reviewed by managers. This is addressed in 121s where required. There is an option for residents to select "anonymous" when making a report of ASB.

All staff have been trained in relation to GDPR and sharing personal/sensitive data. There is a statement on the website when a resident makes a report of ASB, which confirms that their report will be treated in confidence. There may be occasions when someone may second guess where a complaint has come from, and we always explain this possibility to customers when we agree an action plan.

Recommendation is **AGREED**



Recommendation 4

Ensure all of the council's call centres are integrated in a way that allows all housing related ASB issues to be captured and recorded.

Cabinet Member comments:

We will review how customers are directed when making contact regarding ASB on Estates regardless of which route they have made contact. The provision of call centres is currently under review which may impact further on this recommendation in the longer term.

Recommendation is **AGREED**

Recommendation 5

Where necessary acquire and install appropriate case management systems that will enable the council to record all the reported issues.

Cabinet Member comments:

ASB cases are currently managed through Orchard. As stated at Recommendation 2 above, the capacity of other teams such as Housing Operations to log reports that would not be managed by the ASB services team is being reviewed as part of the current digital programme.

Recommendation is **AGREED**

Recommendation 6

Produce appropriate leaflets and update the council's website to be clear on how issues can be reported, what constitutes unacceptable behaviour and potential penalties. Literature should also include contact details of relevant services both within the council and the council's partners.

Cabinet Member comments:

'Good neighbour' packs produced for the 'Westminster on Wheels' event by the ASB and the communications team are available to be reproduced. These packs include information on how to report ASB, Noise, and how to contact the police etc. They also contain an FAQ sheet about CCTV, and more details on 'What is ASB'. The packs also include a 'dear neighbour' card, to encourage residents to speak to their neighbours as a first option if appropriate.

We will review the wording to be added on digital platforms such as the ASB online reporting form - testing is currently taking place

We will look to establish resident working groups for ASB as part of the new engagement structure.

The section on ASB in both the Tenants and Leaseholder's Handbook have recently been updated and will be updated further dependent on the outputs from these recommendations.

Recommendation is **AGREED**



Recommendation 7

Produce guidance about who to contact about different types of complaint and emergencies.

Cabinet Member comments:

The above 'Good neighbour' pack will also be used for residents to know who to report issues to. Within these packs, the police are also producing a leaflet that will let residents know how to report to them online, and by calling, and when to report.
Working on the revision of text on the website.

The contact centre will also be briefed on contact details of departments and partner agencies and this will be added to a knowledge base.

This information will also be incorporated into the knowledge base currently being developed for the Contact Centre.

Recommendation is **AGREED**

Recommendation 8

Ensure that, when recording ASB issues, a differentiation is made between a case being closed and a case being resolved to the satisfaction of the original complainant.

Cabinet Member comments:

A 'Our promise to you' letter is being launched and incorporated into the procedures. This means that when every new case is opened, following the first contact with the case manager, the resident will receive an action plan based on what was agreed. This will state the actions that the resident will complete and the actions the case manager will complete. It will be agreed with the resident that the case will be reviewed after these actions are completed, and it will be decided if the case is closed/continued, and fully explained to the resident why this is.

When a case manager closes a case, a closure letter will be sent to the resident explaining the reasons for closing the case.

Recommendation is **AGREED**

Recommendation 9

Ensure that all lessons learnt from ASB cases are captured and produce a guide for officers.

Cabinet Member comments:

Feedback from customer surveys on ASB case handling is provided to ASB managers on a weekly basis. The feedback is reviewed by management and shared with case managers fortnightly during 121 sessions to create personal development plans through coaching.

The team are also having a "response session" early February to look at cases that have received negative feedback and to review the case from end to end as a team to understand what can be improved from lessons learned.



The Housing Complaints team will also introduce a review process to ensure that the learning from complaints is built back into the relevant procedures.

Recommendation is **AGREED**

Recommendation 10

Recruit residents as ASB champions on each estate to help promote ways that residents can raise ASB issues, flag any issues with council officers and other partners and help identify ways of addressing ASB.

Cabinet Member comments:

We want to involve residents in processes for ASB and this is currently being discussed with our resident engagement team. We have considered consulting with residents from the “Westminster Connected” online consultation group.

We will also discuss other community based opportunities such as ‘Neighbourhood Watch’ with the new Resident Engagement structure.

We will explore a programme of nominating residents as ASB champions on estates.

Recommendation is **AGREED**

Recommendation 11

Review the security in housing blocks and look at the feasibility of limiting access to the blocks that residents live in as opposed to having access to all areas of an estate.

Cabinet Member comments:

KMS fob systems which are implemented across the stock where access control is possible can be configured to limit access between areas, but this is a complex and time-consuming process. The feasibility of implementing this recommendation will be reviewed.

Joint walkabouts have also been arranged between the ASB, Housing teams, CCTV engineers and city inspectors to look at ASB hotspots and identify other practical options to tackle issues.

The London Fire Brigade have been given fob key access to all blocks with KMS systems, meaning that the drop-key plates which can be compromised by purchasing can now be blocked off or removed.

Any works required will need to be agreed as part of capital works.

Recommendation is **PARTIALLY AGREED**

Recommendation 12

Investigate increasing the use of closure orders with a view to increasing their frequency in more cases where possible.



Cabinet Member comments:

Closure powers are a police power and a useful short-term remedy to ASB and crime within a property that is impacting the community. The ASB team have used closures in conjunction with the police during this financial year.

Further training has been arranged for the ASB team in March with specialist ASB lawyers Capsticks, on 'ASB Tools and powers'.

For current closure order cases, case managers are joining up for paired working, to ensure those who may not have used a closure order before have the knowledge to be able to use it within their own patch.

Recommendation is **AGREED**

Recommendation 13

Use more legal letters (from legal services, not the housing team) to enforce and warn of enforcement against ASB issues as this sends a stronger message.

Cabinet Member comments:

ASB case managers attended the 'drop-in' sessions run by the legal team between October and December. They are now sending all 'Letters Before Action' to the legal team as opposed to writing their own, and we have already seen an increase in the last few weeks.

Recommendation is **AGREED**

Recommendation 14

Set up workshops between the ASB team, legal team and other partners enabling all agencies to learn more about what tools they have at their disposal. These workshops should be used to develop a resource for officers.

Cabinet Member comments:

A workshop will be arranged with a senior practitioner in the community safety team and a senior solicitor from our legal team to look at this.

A workshop was held with the noise service on 15 January 2020 to look at better ways of working together to tackle noise nuisance and so teams could learn more from each other. Recurring meetings have now been arranged on a monthly basis between the Noise service and the ASB team.

Recommendation is **AGREED**

Recommendation 15

Investigate the number of cases that are unresolved and establish a review mechanism that increases the use of legal proceedings in more cases.



Cabinet Member comments:

The Housing team are currently working up an independent review process for long standing cases to ensure that all options have been explored and all possible actions taken.

Recommendation is **AGREED**

Recommendation 16

Housing and Adult services should be more joined up on cases involving vulnerable residents (particularly after allocation). There also needs to be increased co-operation between all agencies including the police.

Cabinet Member comments:

This will be a workstream of the current 'Vulnerable Residents' project

We are working closely with our partners across various services to ensure that there are improved processes around identifying vulnerable people – to ensure that they are signposted to appropriate commissioned or other services.

Various options are being looked at including an “enhanced vulnerability forum” with partners in the mental health services to assist with escalating cases which may have a mental health element.

We are also working closely with Adult Social Care around safeguarding.

Recommendation is **AGREED**

Recommendation 17

Review and where possible improve the support provided when moving vulnerable applicants from temporary housing to permanent housing.

Cabinet Member comments:

As above.

We have long established processes for new tenants moving in to “introductory tenancies” - and will be reviewing these to ensure that they are rigorous in the current climate.

This will include:

- all nominations, including move-on from temporary accommodation and other reasonable preference groups as defined within the Allocation Scheme.
- A review of the process and information sharing between the Housing Solutions Service and Housing Services at the point someone is nominated to their tenancy
- considering further opportunities to develop the updating and sharing of information with Partners and colleagues, especially those who work with vulnerable groups.



As the response to recommendation 16, We will also explore options around tenancy support as part of the transition into their new tenancy.

We will explore further opportunities to develop this with colleagues in Social Care

Recommendation is **AGREED**

Recommendation 18

Review the use of the delayed priority list to see if capacity could be increased.

Cabinet Member comments:

This recommendation will be considered as part of the wider review of our Allocations Scheme review 2020/21.

The Delayed Priority List relates to applicants who are unable to manage a tenancy in line with our current policy.

We will consider the use and purpose of the Delayed Priority List, and how it can effectively assist in the allocation of properties to those who are ready and able to manage independently or with appropriate support.

No additional funding is currently available for this.

Recommendation is **PARTIALLY AGREED**

Recommendation 19

Review the use of single persons pathway to see if capacity could be increased.

Cabinet Member comments:

Since the introduction of the Homeless Reduction Act, we have seen increased numbers of single applicants accessing our Housing Solutions Service for advice and subsequently accommodation.

Housing Solutions Service have recently reviewed their delivery model to meet this demand.

Phase one of the review has implemented an earlier assessment for single adults which means that the most suitable solutions and pathways can be identified earlier. Phase two of the review will focus on the solutions offered which includes the single persons pathway, its capacity and effectiveness in 2020/21.

No additional funding is currently available for this.

Recommendation is **PARTIALLY AGREED**

Recommendation 20

Ensure that the thresholds for allocating vulnerable people to independent living accommodation are fit for purpose; learn lessons from any placements that have resulted in ASB.

Cabinet Member comments:



We will undertake a review of 'lessons learned' between HSS and ASB Teams in relation to cases that have resulted in serious ASB.

This will include:

- Understanding and mapping their journey from initial assessment to final stage accommodation.
- A review of interventions and referrals to other services made
- Identification of where alternative decisions or options could have been implemented or considered.

This work will inform processes and changes within the Allocation Scheme review 2020/21.

Recommendation is **AGREED**

Recommendation 21

Review and where possible improve the use of specialist recovery housing for those undergoing substance misuse treatment.

Cabinet Member comments:

We are currently recommissioning a new 60-unit service provision in 2020/21 to be used in conjunction with our single person pathway to give options and flexibility in supporting those who have a range of needs and to give stability so appropriate referrals to specialist services can be made and sustained.

It seeks to:

- deliver innovative and proactive accommodation-based support and housing management
- through the 60 units, provide an option of short stay services and longer-term housing
- focus on clients who are homeless, vulnerable and have a range of support needs
- utilise the providers strength-based support models to provide stability for clients and help them develop their independence in client-led way.

Delivery of this recommendation will be dependent on available funding

Recommendation is **PARTIALLY AGREED**

Recommendation 22

Review whether we have an ongoing review in relation to individuals that have complex needs and have caused issues for their neighbours.

Cabinet Member comments:

Case conferences are periodically arranged between Housing and partner agencies where complex needs are involved.



We will review the possibility of a joint review process with complex needs building on the pre-existing 'Hoarding Protocol' involving Housing and Social and Mental Health Care Agencies

We will explore the possibility of a 'Mental Health MARAC' replicating the roles and processes of the DV MARAC already in operation.

Recommendation is **AGREED**