



Tower Hamlets Community Housing



Scrutiny Panel Report on Anti-Social
Behaviour

July 2019 – March 2020

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1	Operations Committee	
2	Philip Sullivan	Chief Executive
3	Pam Bhamra	Director of Operations
4	Rosemary Farrar	Director of Resources
5	Lily Tripathi	Head of Neighbourhoods
6	Geoff Mann	Neighbourhood Operations Manager
7	Diane Lander	Customer Services Manager

1 Summary

1.1 Scope of the Scrutiny

The Scrutiny Panel is carrying out the review of Anti-Social behaviour (ASB) following a discussion of the performance report with THCH. The panel decided to review this area as the policy was relaunched in 2018 and THCH sought the Panel's overview to see if it is working.

The review focused on:

1. What Anti-Social Behaviour is and the Anti-Social Behaviour policy
2. The Anti-Social Behaviour reporting and processes
3. What actions are taken and how effective the ASB toolkit is
4. How THCH evaluate and measure current open cases and closed cases
5. Exploring ideas on how to prevent ASB from reoccurring
6. Residents awareness of the ASB reporting processes
7. How residents felt ASB cases are being dealt with by THCH
8. Identifying areas where THCH can improve the way it deals with ASB
9. Effectiveness of partnership working

In all reviews the panel will look for, identify and present good practice.

1.2 Overview of how the scrutiny was carried out

The Scrutiny Panel is an independent group of residents who have volunteered their time to carry out reviews of an area of service with the aim of recommending improvements. This is a part of THCH's framework which allows residents to review and be a part of enriching and enhancing the service available to residents by providing a Value for Money saving to the organisation. THCH's Resident Engagement Officer was instrumental in the liaison and aided us in the report gathering, arranging shadowing, note taking. Her support proved invaluable throughout the review.

In order to carry out the review, the panel met with or reviewed the following:

- Lily Tripathi, Head of Neighbourhoods was interviewed to understand the current process and practices
- The Panel reviewed the ASB policy, the toolkit and other data provided by THCH
- An observation with Parkguard was arranged to see what they do
- Interviews and shadowing sessions with the Customer Services Advisor and a Neighbourhood Officer
- Mystery Shopping exercise via email was conducted with the Panel unable to carry out the exercise by phone as planned
- Resident Survey
- Research carried out with other local Housing Associations
- Meetings in the office with the Resident Engagement officer and contact via email

1.3 Acknowledgements

The Scrutiny Panel would like to thank all those who gave time to speak to the panel:

- Jacqui Airey (Performance and Policy Manager)
- Lily Tripathi (Head of Neighbourhoods)
- Parkguard (Neighbourhood Patrol)
- Abul Kashem (Neighbourhood officer)
- Sinead Smith (Customer Services Advisor)
- Halima Islam (Resident Engagement Officer, THCH liaison between the Scrutiny Panel and THCH)

Scrutiny Panel:

- David Donoghue
- Rayhan Uddin
- Hasanul Hoque

The Panel would especially like to highlight the professionalism, attitude, knowledge and assistance of Sinead Smith during the shadowing session who the Panel felt was a great asset to the organisation.

1.4 Overall Conclusion and Opinion

The survey carried out to all residents who logged an issue in the last 12 months showed there was an overwhelming belief that THCH was not keeping them informed, progress dealing with the case was slow and they had problems contacting THCH.

64% of responders stated they were unhappy with the overall service they received and 73% said they were unhappy with the follow-up actions carried out by THCH following their reporting of ASB. Just 36% of residents stated they were happy with how THCH initially dealt with their reporting of ASB.

In conclusion, the Panel felt there were several positives and strengths across THCH such as the skilled and knowledgeable staff the Panel met who had a great sense and understanding of ASB and the Parkguard pilot service which was staffed by professional, confident and experienced patrol officers. The Panel also felt the CAS system was of benefit and worked well – especially the automated facility and ASB workplan it generated. The Panel was also impressed with the ASB Champion in the Customer Services Team and felt the Neighbourhood Team would also benefit from such a role.

There were however discrepancies -with THCH communicating and responding to ASB cases. As highlighted in the survey and established through a mystery shopping exercise when the Panel's test case was not logged in accordance with THCH's policy.

By adopting the recommendations listed in this report, the Panel believes THCH will be able to offer an enriched service to residents and restore confidence. Residents will in return be able to access information quicker, be able to report issues easier and be kept well informed of what THCH is doing to tackle ASB on its estates.

2 Detailed Findings

2.1 Positive Areas of Practice

Finding

During the shadowing session the Scrutiny Panel were shown template letters which are available for staff to use which we understand is standard practice and a good tool.

The CAS system for logging cases appeared to be fit for purpose and relatively straight-forward to operate and the creation of a workplan and self-generated letters was impressive and commended.

The Panel were also provided with various Policies which appeared to work hand-in-hand with the ASB toolkit to enable staff to follow the procedure. The Panel was given other documents such as a managing expectations checklist, ASB toolkit, ASB risk matrix which were reviewed and proved to be cohesive with the overall system.

The ASB toolkit available to staff was informative and commended.

The Panel carried out a benchmarking exercise and contacted 4 local Housing Associations local to THCH and asked the following:

- Could you please share your ASB policy documents?
- How do you mitigate and reduce ASB in your HA?
- If and how you conduct partnership working to deal with ASB?

Two Housing associations came back with a response. Upon reviewing their policies, it seems that THCH are in line with other Housing Associations locally which was positive.

There is an ASB Champion for the Customer Services Team who we met and think it is very useful to have within the team who other staff can turn to when complex issues arise, or help is needed.

Parkguard Patrol – Having spent half a shift with one of the units there is a clear limitation of our observation. However, based on the minimum time spent, the service does not seem to have any flaws and on the contrary, it can become an asset of THCH. It is an excellent idea and worthwhile having this service and seems to be very good value for money.

Other possible limitations that may null the value for money would be only identified after the current scrutiny is carried out. Hypothetically if THCH ASB tool kit is not effective and information is not passed onto the Park guard it may not be worthwhile. In order to get the best out of the service THCH must have a robust system in identifying ASB and a feedback mechanism that filters through reception and the housing team through the appropriate channel to the Park Guards for immediate response, that THCH may not be able to action due to time and resources. This will be identified upon the conclusion of the ASB scrutiny and the final report.

Finally, the Panel would like to see an increase in membership to a minimum of 5 members in order to have a better impact as low numbers can lead to some difficulties and over utilize THCH's resources.

3 Recommendations

3.1 Recommendation 1

Finding

Security

The Parkguard service trial was thought to be a success with the Panel impressed with the knowledge, skills, temperament and attitude of the Parkguard officers. The service was felt not to have any flaws and to be an asset to THCH and residents. The Panel thought this service was excellent and should be implemented as a permanent measure to prevent and to tackle ASB.

Recommended Action

The Panel recommend this is permanently rolled out across THCH estates. The Panel also felt if Parkguard was rolled out, the areas in which they patrol/focus on should be reviewed regularly with THCH officers and adequate monitoring put in place to measure Value for Money and how successful the increased patrols were (i.e. monitoring an estate before/during and after Parkguard had visited).

Agreed Management Action

Agreed

The 4-month pilot has ended but we have consulted with all residents and from April 2020 we will have a 5-day patrol service in partnership with the other 2 housing providers.

We have reviewed the impact of the patrol and the rollout from April will be intelligence based, i.e. patrols will take place where reports of ASB have been received. This has proven to have the best impact on addressing the ASB issue.

Responsibility	Geoff Mann - Neighbourhood Operations Manager
Due By	April 2020

3.2 Recommendation 2

Finding

Communicate timescales better

The Panel felt THCH should better communicate to residents the timescales for dealing with cases once they had reported a case of ASB compared to how it is at present, there appeared to be no publicised data (or poorly published data) and the survey appeared to highlight poor communication as a negative.

Recommended Action

Amend the THCH auto email response to include "Any report of ASB will be responded to within 24 hours".

Management Action

Unable to Agree

Email responses are 72 hours. At present we are unable to respond to emails within 24 hours. We will actively promote residents to report high risk ASB via phone or in person as we do with emergency repairs. Response is 24 hours for phone calls and in person reports. We will also promote residents to report ASB via My Corner which will be picked up within 24 hours.

Without monitoring and regular case review, this has not been tracked. We have recently started case review meetings with the Neighbourhood Officer and Neighbourhood Operations Manager, which will help address the above issue.

Responsibility	Geoff Mann Neighbourhood Operations Manager
Due By	June 2020

3.3 Recommendation 3

Finding

Communication / Resident Awareness of ASB

The Panel felt this could improve and the following recommendations on the theme of improving communication and raising awareness will help improve this element of the service.

Recommended Action

1. Resident Comms Strategy - Add a button or link on the website home page to make it easier to report ASB
2. Resident Comms Strategy - Produce and promote an ASB Factsheet / List of Guidelines, aimed at residents so they are aware of what THCH can do, or not do, in terms of when someone suffers from anti-social behaviour in their home or on their estate.
3. Resident Comms Strategy - Increase promotion regarding tenant's responsibility in relation to the security of their home in order to reduce ASB inside blocks (i.e. don't leave doors open notices).
4. Resident Comms Strategy - Improve and extend the amount of information about ASB available on the website in order to reduce calls to the office
5. Enable the current form on the website to be modelled on the CAS form to speed up logging by the Customer Services Team, or if possible, have the CAS form available on the website so ASB can be logged directly into the system
6. Promote on social media successful dealings and actions from Parkguard and / or THCH officers relating to ASB actions in order to communicate to residents what THCH is doing
7. Raise staff awareness via regular intranet postings about ASB, what it is, what THCH have done and what methods are available to residents to deal with ASB
8. Have an anonymous reporting hotline to enable those residents who do not wish to speak to anyone to be able to report ASB anonymously.
9. Put up posters in THCH noticeboards informing residents what ASB is, and how it can be reported

Management Action

Partially Agreed

There is more work that is needed to promote ASB services and make it easier to report ASB on line. Items 1 to 7 and 9 above will be implemented over the next 6 months. We have already started to develop My Corner for reporting ASB, and this should be available within the next few months.

We do not agree with anonymous reporting of ASB. Residents should feel secure, safe and free from intimidation to report ASB to THCH. Residents can ask for their details to be withheld from alleged perpetrators, and we will honour their request. However, it will reduce our ability to address the ASB effectively, particularly in neighbour nuisance cases.

We understand that many witnesses are worried about giving evidence, regardless of whether they were the victims of ASB. We will continue to develop our approach so that witnesses feel supported and encouraged through what can be a very intimidating process, including giving evidence in court.

Responsibility	Geoff Mann Neighbourhood Operations Manager & Lily Tripathi Head of Neighbourhoods
Due By	September 2020

3.4	Recommendation 4
Finding	
<p>ASB Champion</p> <p>The Panel was very impressed with the skillset and knowledge of the ASB Champion within the Customer Services Team and feel that this role should be extended to other areas of the organisation.</p>	

Recommended Action
<p>The Panel felt a dedicated Champion within the Neighbourhood's Team would be of a great benefit and would improve the service offered to residents. This Champion would lead on ASB from the Neighbourhood Team's perspective and represent the organisation at resident meetings and external meetings.</p>

Management Action
<p>Agreed</p> <p>We will identify a Neighbourhood Officer to help develop the team's response to ASB reports.</p>

Responsibility	Geoff Mann – Neighbourhood Operations Manager
Due By	April 2020

3.5 Recommendation 5

Finding

Monitoring

The Panel understand through the mystery shopping exercise that there is no system in place that regularly monitors ASB cases and ensures THCH is dealing with caseloads on time that currently meets on a regular basis. The creation of a Review Team would ensure workloads are not missed, urgent cases not overlooked and THCH deals with cases in a sympathetic manner whilst keeping communication with the resident at the forefront of the Neighbourhood Officer's attention.

Recommended Action

Set up an internal ASB Review Team who would meet regularly (suggested monthly) to ensure all cases are monitored, reviewed, correct actions are being taken, residents are kept informed and relevant targets are being met. The Panel would also feed into future areas for Parkguard to target.

Management Action

Partially Agreed

We agree there is a need for regular monitoring of ASB cases, but we do not think a Review Team is the best way forward, given the size of the organisation and the volume of cases.

We introduced the new reconfigured CAS system in March 2019 and our focus has been on recognising and recording the ASB. We have not been actively monitoring cases.

However, since February 2020 the NOM has begun case review meetings with the Neighbourhood Officers, and these take place on a fortnightly basis. There is also the weekly performance catch up where the number of open cases is discussed.

We will also work with the Performance Management team to develop regular reports from CAS that will benefit both the NOs and the NOM.

A more detailed commentary of ASB cases, and performance information will be reported to the Management Team on a quarterly basis as part of the KPI reporting framework. The Management Team is made up of the Executive Directors and Heads of Service.

Responsibility	Geoff Mann – Neighbourhood Operations Manager
Due By	June 2020

3.6 Recommendation 6

Finding

Monitoring

The Panel feel that confidence with THCH in that ASB cases were being logged, dealt with, areas that attracted ASB were known and were being given due focus and that the work of Parkguard (if this service was rolled out) was available through a briefing overview provided to the Resident Forum. This report could also include what mitigating actions THCH was taking/planning (i.e. New lighting/bollards/increased patrols etc).

Recommended Action

The Resident Forum is provided with a one-page overview of Key Performance Indicators for ASB cases, types of ASB logged, that the report should also include identified hot-spot areas and a brief overview from Parkguard including the mitigating actions THCH was taking/planning to tackle ASB.

Management Action

Agreed

We will add to the current performance information and commentary supplied to the Resident Forum, once we have developed the reports as highlighted in recommendation no.5.

Responsibility	Lily Tripathi- Head of Neighbourhoods
Due By	June 2020

3.7 Recommendation 7

Finding

Training

The Panel was unable to interview many staff but based on the Mystery shopping exercise in reporting an ASB dealing the Panel was concerned that there may be gaps in knowledge in relation to dealing with ASB.

Recommended Action

Regular (suggested annual) refresher ASB training for all front-line staff and a more in-depth training session available to new front-line staff. This also needs to be rolled out on neighbourhood teams as well to ensure consistency throughout. THCH should also take advantage of any benchmarking group or focus / working group of fellow RP staff who manage ASB in order to benchmark and learn from each other.

Management Action

Agreed

We will develop inhouse training as an annual refresher of ASB policies and toolkits for staff.

The Neighbourhood team attend legal briefings on ASB subjects throughout the year, and ASB training was delivered with the rollout of CAS in March 2019. This is due for refresher.

We are members of the Tower Hamlets Housing Forum ASB Sub-group. The Neighbourhood Operations Manager attends the subgroup which is made up of all key RP landlords in Tower Hamlets. One of the outcomes from attending this forum has been the joined-up pilot of the neighbourhood patrol with Swan Housing and East End Homes.

Responsibility	Geoff Mann Neighbourhood Operations Manager
Due By	September 2020

3.8 Recommendation 8

Finding

Anonymous Reporting

It was noted through conversations with the Customer Services Champion that there can be problems with anonymous reporting and logging (i.e. The Panel were advised the CAS system is unable to record an ASB case if it was logged anonymously).

Recommended Action

The CAS system should include/incorporate/generate an anonymous profile as a template that can be used for anonymous inputs. (i.e. a method to allow for reports of ASB to be logged anonymously).

Management Action

Unable to Agree

The CAS system does allow staff to create an anonymous report, this is not a system failure. Training will be provided as part of the refresher training.

However, we do not encourage anonymous reporting, and this will be discouraged. Residents should feel secure, safe and free from intimidation to report ASB to THCH. Residents can ask for their details to be withheld from alleged perpetrators, and we will honour their request. However, it will reduce our ability to address the ASB effectively, particularly in neighbour nuisance cases.

We understand that many witnesses are worried about giving evidence, regardless of whether they were the victims of ASB. We will continue to develop our approach so that witnesses feel supported and encouraged through what can be a very intimidating process, including giving evidence in court.

Responsibility	
Due By	

3.9 Recommendation 9

Finding

Keeping to deadlines / Not missing out on cases

The Panel was advised ASB cases could be lost amongst the high workloads of a Neighbourhood Officer's daily tasks.

Recommended Action

Notwithstanding an ASB Review Panel, create an ASB pop-up on dashboard for Neighbourhood Officers to ensure prompt responses and actions are taken and cases/workloads are not allowed to slip.

Management Action

Agreed

Tasks in the CAS system are displayed on the front page of the Neighbourhoods Officers Orchard worklist along with other housing management activity.

As part of developing the CAS system, we will introduce target timescales for different events this will lead to a traffic light system. The neighbourhood team will clearly see tasks moving from green to amber to red. This will be monitored through the fortnightly case review meetings.

Responsibility	Neighbourhood Operations & Policy Performance Managers
Due By	September 2020

3.10 Recommendation 10

Finding

Housing Management System

The Panel was informed during shadowing that the current housing management system can be time consuming and repetitive to use when logging cases or reviewing workloads and searching for documents. The Panel was advised the current system can be time-consuming to log / review cases / find casework (The SP was advised closing 1 case requires 3 actions in different places).

Recommended Action

Carry out a partial review and make small changes on the CAS backend with negligible cost to optimise and take CAS to a more effective level, to see if there are options to improve the functionality or to identify shortcuts on the system.

Agreed Management Action

Unable to Agree

The Orchard CAS system does not have much scope to be modified. It is well used by other RPs to manage ASB. Through the staff training, we will look at smarter ways of using the system.

Responsibility	
Due By	

3.11 Recommendation 11

Finding

Monitoring

The Panel feel more in-depth performance data should be captured to ensure all targets are met / monitored. The Panel feel the current KPIs may lack depth and should be strengthened.

Recommended Action

Ensure there is a relevant and meaningful set of KPI's to measure all key areas of the ASB process, which should then be reviewed at management level (or at the suggested ASB Review Panel).

Agreed Management Action

Agreed

We have previously stated that the performance reporting needs to be improved in recommendation no. 5.

Responsibility	Geoff Mann Neighbourhood Operations Manager
Due By	September 2020

3.12 Recommendation 12

Finding

Staff Time

ASB cases can be lengthy and take up a lot of Officer's time, but the Panel were unable to gauge the actual time as this was unavailable, and this data did not appear to be monitored or recorded.

Recommended Action

A measure should be put in place to accurately record the amount of time an Officer deals with individual cases and this should be considered periodically to review whether the current structure is adequate to meet ASB needs.

Agreed Management Action

Unable to Agree

At present we have no scientific means by which to measure staff time. Our focus is on measuring overall time to resolve the ASB case, the outcome and the resident satisfaction.

Any time delays or inefficiencies in the system will be identified through the case monitoring and quarterly review to management team.

Responsibility	
Due By	

3.13 Recommendation 13

Finding

Security: Deterring People from gaining access and rough-sleepers

The Panel, as residents living on a THCH estate, are aware of regular ASB taking place and feel THCH should have a planned programme to improve security and deter ASB.

Recommended Action

Explore the options of fitting self-closing hinges to all communal main front door entrances.

Commit to look at and implement in a reasonable timescale preventative measures such as: improved lighting on estates, removal of any bulk-rubbish / graffiti as soon as its seen, increase CCTV coverage in hot spots, increase patrols etc.

Agreed Management Action

Partially Agreed

We have a range of tools to help manage rough sleeping and we are further developing our approach.

An audit of CCTV is underway which will identify where investment is required. We have previously stated that the neighbourhood patrol will become a 5-day service from April. Bulk rubbish is removed within 48 hours and offensive graffiti is removed within 24 hours. This is in line with our polices and service standard. We work jointly with the borough's rough sleepers' team and drug intervention team to tackle rough sleeping hotspots. The Neighbourhood Patrol team will also work with St Mungo's to address concerns about rough sleepers and refer them on.

Most of our communal main doors have self-closers, but this is not a fail proof approach to rough sleepers.

We also need to promote Resident responsibility in this area such as not allowing tailgating; and this will be picked up as part of the overall communications activity.

Responsibility	Lily Tripathi Head of Neighbourhoods
Due By	September 2020

3.14 Recommendation 14

Finding

Reporting / Prominence

The Panel feel residents need to be confident THCH welcomes reports of ASB – To this end, the website homepage needs updating to include an option of reporting ASB as recommended above and there should be an appropriate method to report ASB via telephone (the current auto-message does not make it clear reports can be made in this method).

Recommended Action

In the recommendations for an anonymous reporting line is not adopted (see 3.3.8) then the THCH auto phone message that currently offers two options (1 for rent and 2 to speak to the Customer Services Team) should be amended to offer a 3rd option (i.e. Press 3 to report Anti-Social Behaviour).

Agreed Management Action

Partially Agreed

As previously advised, we will develop the website page to ensure online reporting of ASB. However, the current volume of ASB reports via phone does not justify creating a separate route for ASB to be reported.

Responsibility	Lily Tripathi Head of Neighbourhoods
Due By	September 2020

3.15 Recommendation 15

Finding

Consistency of method

The office use the ASB toolkit but for the majority of the time (5pm to 8.30am, at weekends and on Bank Holidays), THCH's office is closed and residents would need to report ASB to the Out of Hours service. The Panel was unable to determine whether the OOH service operate the THCH toolkit.

Recommended Action

Ensure the OOH service are aware of THCH's stance towards recording ASB and use the agreed THCH ASB Toolkit.

Agreed Management Action

Unable to Agree

We are unable to offer an ASB service outside of our office opening hours. The OOH service advises callers to report high risk ASB directly to the Police and there is also the councils Environmental Health team who operate an OOH service for noise reports. We believe this offers better value for money service for residents.

Responsibility	
Due By	

4 Appendices available on request

4.1 Appendices

- Scoping Document
- Performance Data
- ASB Toolkit
- ASB Policy
- Parkguard Tour Observations
- Staff Shadowing Observations
- Mystery Shopping Observations
- ASB Survey Results