

# Sheffield City Council's approach to ASB/ Tenancy Enforcement



# Introduction of Housing +

- Sheffield City Council introduced Housing+ in 2016 as part of a restructure of its Housing and Neighbourhoods service, this was to introduce a more proactive approach to housing management, with support to help people sustain their tenancy and enjoy their home.
- Sheffield's Housing+ approach has a focus on increasing preventative intervention with tenants and their families, dealing with or signposting people to support for everything from ASB to health and wellbeing, social isolation, mental health, employment, training and volunteering.

# Neighbourhood Model

- In Sheffield, our 38,000 Council properties are divided up into distinct Neighbourhoods, and there are 7 Neighbourhood Teams across the city. Each household has a dedicated neighbourhood officer, who is responsible for approximately 200-300 properties. There are approx. 150 neighbourhood officers including those who work in our older persons schemes.
- The officers are a single point of contact and deliver a range of functions including dealing with ASB, tenancy management, rehousing advice/assessment and community engagement.
- As part of the Housing+ model, all tenants are offered an annual visit, which provides a useful opportunity for the neighbourhood officer to pick up on any issues of concern

# Early Intervention

- The Neighbourhood Officers have increased contact with tenants, right from the start of a tenancy, this begins with the accompanied viewing, and sign-up, so therefore can make clear the expectations of managing and conducting a tenancy right from the outset and identify any support needs.
- The additional offer of an annual visit provides tenants with a chance to discuss tenancy concerns and access support to enjoy and sustain their home, and resolve any potential issues at an earlier stage. In 2019/20, 89 per cent of tenants took this opportunity.
- The annual visit is voluntary and does not form part of our tenancy conditions

# Specialist Support

- As the role of the Neighbourhood officer is so broad, there is a specialist team to help and guide Neighbourhood Officers with more difficult ASB cases where there is a clear breach of tenancy conditions.
- The Tenancy Enforcement and Sustainment Team offer a dedicated support officer to each Neighbourhood Team. These support officers offer training, advice, and quality assurance of cases.
- If a case cannot be resolved via early intervention then this team will take a case, at the point where it is agreed that more formal enforcement action is required.

# Reduction in number of cases

- The number of ASB cases for council housing tenants in Sheffield has decreased year-on-year from approximately 5,000 in 2016/17 (the year that Housing+ was implemented) to under 3,000 in 2019/20.
- A contributing factor for this is the early intervention. Staff work together across council services, and with partner agencies and the voluntary sector, to support tenants and their families. This is driving more streamlined, better integrated tailored support.

# Neighbourhood Officers

- Through managing a 'small' patch and carrying out a range of housing management functions the Neighbourhood Officers get to know our tenants and their households and have continuing relationships, outside the lifespan of a process e.g. a priority rehousing request
- Neighbourhood Officers have complex and challenging workloads but are able to spend time building relationships with tenants, which supports managing conflict
- The officers have developed into skilled conflict managers/informal mediators

# Case study – repeat complaint

- Noise/intimidation complaint
- Victim reported this 4 times previously and 10 complaints about other neighbours
- As sector specialists we recognise repeat complaints can be indicative of underlying/unmet needs
- There were mental health and physical health issues with both parties, this contributed to perception of/reaction to ASB
- NO able to ‘deep dive’ to understand drivers and put measures in place. Carried out shuttle mediation over period of time and a compromise situation was reached and resolution achieved.
- **“This has been going on for a few years and it was not being dealt with until .. took over”**
- **“... has been the one who made a difference in this case. I am really happy with her and all she did”**
- **“Great improvement”**



## Case durations

Not always a quick fix but aim is for a lasting fix

Year	Average duration	Numbers closed
2015/16 (pre Hsg+)	82 days	4086
2020/21	108 days	2798

Some reductions by type: Noise case duration has reduced from 87 to 79 days

Still work to do with partners where roots of the ASB are in mental health/substance misuse

# Reflections

- Reducing ASB reports – repeat complaints/recidivism
- Improved relationships and trust internally within the service and with customers
- Further improvements needed: Customer satisfaction, call durations
- Importance of training/support/professionalism