

Edition 1 – December 2006

# STANDARD ISSUE

## RESPECT STANDARD FOR HOUSING MANAGEMENT

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## LATEST NEWS

**Welcome to the first edition of Standard Issue from Communities and Local Government. I hope that you find this newsletter informative. For each edition we plan to highlight best practice around a different theme, and for this first edition we have settled upon engaging residents. Many of you have contributed and let us know what you have been doing to engage residents both pre and post sign-up. We have had an overwhelming response – so a big thank you. We have not been able to use everything provided for this edition, but rest assured, all material provided has been squirreled away and has given us a good stock of best practice to draw on.**

This edition maps out the planned format of future editions.

- Best practice;
- Update of the work of the Respect Squad;
- Signatory landlord profile;
- Guide to a particular tool or power; and
- View of the Standard and Respect from a high profile figure.

**But most importantly this is your newsletter. We want to know what you think, what more we should include and other areas you would like us to cover, so don't be shy please feel free to email me.**

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you who attended the launch event for the Standard – those summer months really do seem a long time ago now, it is hard to believe that it is just over three months. For those of you who could not attend, the launch was held in Ealing Town Hall with an impressive array of speakers including Housing Minister Baroness Andrews, expert practitioners talking about the Standard's commitments and some lively dance from Ealing Homes Urban Dance Group.

Since the launch event sign-up to the Standard has kept a good pace and certainly kept us busy! As of 23 November we had over 100 signatories and we know that many more are currently working with residents, and undertaking gap analysis in preparation for sign-up. So we are feeling very positive about the take up of the Standard. It also seems from your feedback that you are finding the Standard a real help in bench marking the services you provide.

So what next? Well to mark the first 100 days of the Standard we are holding a reception here at Communities and Local Government on Tuesday 5th December where signatories to date will meet each other and listen to a few words from Ruth Kelly, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Louise Casey, the Government Co-ordinator for Respect, and, John Rouse, the Chief Executive of the Housing Corporation. Hopefully many of you will be attending and be able to toast the first 100 days over a glass of wine or two! ■

**Robert Attrill, Editor, Standard Issue**  
Robert.attrill@communities.gsi.gov.uk



## PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

In this edition we will be focusing on engaging residents. Before revealing some of the great work you have carried out we thought we would let residents outline their views. We attended the TPAS Annual Conference back in August where an interactive voting session was run on the Respect Standard. In summary residents felt:

- They should be involved in target setting in tackling anti-social behaviour.
- When action is taken it should be advertised.
- Introductory tenancies were seen as an under used tool.

- Dedicated officers to tackle ASB allowed transparency and accountability.
- Swift use of enforcement tools was needed to nip anti-social behaviour in the bud; but needed to work in conjunction with prevention and support.

So with that in mind we emailed you to ask what you had been doing to involve residents both pre and post sign-up. We were very impressed with the quantity and quality of activity that had been going on – from newsletters, articles in the local press to just getting out there and knocking on residents

doors – we found all of this really encouraging.

Below is a selection of your responses which we hope may give all of you some further ideas about what more you could possibly do. ■

## BOROUGH OF POOLE

Prior to sign up Poole Housing Partnership publicised the Standard and what it entailed through our formal tenant and leaseholder framework and at our Board meeting. Once commitment was given to sign up to the Standard we undertook a gap analysis with residents, officers and other key partners so as to develop an action plan for implementation. Staff and residents prior to sign up attended seminars and conferences including participation in The London ALMO group on tackling ASB.

We feel that work with residents post sign up is a continuous project. We are publicising in our newsletters and at various forums what the Standard means and what residents can expect. We recently launched a reward scheme, 'Poole Housing Partnership Plus', which was a top priority for residents in a recent satisfaction survey. We also plan to hold a big publicity campaign in the spring of 2007 on ASB and the Standard.

**Bill Shaw** – Poole Housing Partnership



## NEWARK AND SHERWOOD HOMES

Post sign up at our Tenants Annual Conference on 7 October 2006, the Chair of our Board, the Chair of Newark and Sherwood District Tenants and Residents Associations plus all interested parties signed a poster depicting the Respect Standard for Housing Management. This was captured on video and photographs and press releases were issued.

**Caroline Meek** – Assistant Housing Director

## SERVITE HOMES

To ensure that we fully embraced our residents' views about the new Respect Standard, Servite went out to all regional panels to discuss the Standard and gave residents the opportunity to highlight any issues that they wanted us to feed back to the Communities and Local Government.

The consultation exercise became a road show with lots of tenants giving us really positive feedback about the Standard and how they saw Servite developing its services to ensure that we can realistically meet the Standard and continuously improve upon it.

Upon sign up Servite were given indications that we were one of the first RSL's to sign up and we went out to the press across our 6 regions. I went out to each of the areas armed with leaflets explaining exactly what the Standard is about and what it means to residents. Again this was well received and residents are pleased that we

are embracing the Standard and are aiming to combat ASB. I also presented the ways Servite are currently applying itself to the Standard and how we plan to expand upon this in the future.

**Adam Benimkadem**  
National Anti-social Behaviour Co-ordinator

## KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA TMO

We will be promoting the Respect Standard, and our commitment to it, at our TMO AGM, usually 200 tenants attend. We will have a stand at the AGM on Respect with examples of some of the initiatives and work we have produced. Our next edition of TMO Link in January, which is sent to all of our residents, will have a specific article on Respect and will outline how the TMO meet its commitments in delivering the service.

**Ian Twyford**

Kensington and Chelsea Tenants Management Organisation



## INSPIRED?

Why not keep us up to date with what you have done with your community to show your public commitment to signing and meeting the Standard.

## COULD YOU USE THE RESPECT SQUAD?

This column will be a opportunity for the Respect Squad to talk about some of the cases they have dealt with and invite others to contact them if they require assistance. This article introduces them.

The Respect Squad is a team of trouble shooters, all experts in their field, who can be called in to help local agencies up and down the country tackle anti-social behaviour causing misery to communities.

The squad forms part of the Respect Task Force's drive to ensure that there is no let up in tackling anti-social behaviour, until every community in every

part of the country gets a swift and effective response to their problems.

The squad members are experienced frontline staff from police and local authorities, all with a successful track record of tackling anti-social behaviour. To see their profiles, visit [www.respect.gov.uk](http://www.respect.gov.uk)

### Who can make a referral to the squad?

As a social landlord, you are entitled, along with local authorities, Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships, MPs, police chiefs and councillors, to make a referral to the Respect Squad if you hear of incidents

## CHEVIOT HOUSING



Having signed the Standard we did a press release which is in this month's newsletter. We have also involved kids/families on our estates that developed and have been involved with the Access to Basketball (A2B) Project. In recent weeks we have received definitions, poems and other things on Respect from children who have engaged on the A2B initiative. They have told us what they think Respect means and they are getting involved as we have introduced a rewards scheme to run alongside the A2B Respect project.

**Paul Nilsen** – Housing Manager

of serious anti-social behaviour which is not being tackled with a co-ordinated response from local agencies. A percentage of the squad's cases are reserved for signatories to the Respect Standard.

### How does it work?

Once the squad is invited to look at a particular case, a mission team made up of Squad members will be tasked with contacting those on the receiving end of the anti-social behaviour and local services. They will make an assessment based on the facts of the case, of strengths or weaknesses in action being taken locally and any future plans that local

agencies have. They will make recommendations back to the Chair of the local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership. The results of the intervention will be published on the Respect Task Force website [www.respect.gov.uk](http://www.respect.gov.uk)

### How can you refer a case?

If you've got a difficult case which you think meets the criteria you can refer cases online at [www.respect.gov.uk](http://www.respect.gov.uk). If you've tried other approaches why not call in the Squad today? ■



## GETTING TO KNOW YOU...

**Standard Issue will profile the work of a signatory landlord in each edition. For this edition we are turning our attention to Bournemouth, with thanks to Gary Josey, Head of Housing Landlord Services at Bournemouth Borough Council for this article .**

The Stock Options Appraisal (SOA) sign-off in 2005 shaped a lot of the recent vision for Bournemouth's Council Housing service. This gave us a mandate to retain the housing stock as part of Bournemouth Borough Council, but with a proviso 'don't stay the same' and a commitment for greater tenant involvement in all aspects of the service.

In the year since the sign-off things have moved on at pace. 'The new and updated Bournemouth Standard' is an essential long-term vision for the service and tackling anti-social behaviour is a key part of it.

Last year an Anti-Social Behaviour Officer and Estates Officer joined us to co-ordinate a new estate based ASB approach with a robust estate inspection programme. Now residents lead multi-agency inspection teams with impressive results. We currently have a 287 per cent increase in ASB reporting, as resident Chris Harris says: "People now feel much more confident about reporting anti-social behaviour. They now know the Council are taking it seriously and feel they are doing something positive about it."

Two new ASB case workers have recently joined the team illustrating our priorities in diverting our resources to this. There is also significant join-up with the Council's Community Safety team, Police, Fire and a comprehensive multi-agency approach. A further feature of the new ASB service is a willingness to work out of hours and at weekends.

The Respect Standard for Housing Management is a continuation of our public commitment. Yes it is challenging, yet with the right amount of commitment, achievable.



We continuously appraise how we are doing with regular ASB resident focus groups. Themed residents groups are an integral element of a new approach of resident involvement and we engage with a larger range of our community. This has also been highly successful as one of our residents Derek Trewethay points out, "As a focus group member I am always amazed at the time and effort given by Council employees. It is a great step forward and we feel we have a much greater say in the decisions now."

Housing tenants and leaseholders also report their findings through a Council Scrutiny and Review Panel to which they have been co-opted onto for the last three years. Other residents' focus groups are also represented and as part of our work in 2007, a priority is to improve overall governance further, with a decision making Housing Board.

We still realise there is more to do. Sometimes we simply should have done more, been more responsive, interacted earlier or listened better. Recognising these challenges, working with our residents, will hopefully enable Bournemouth to continuously improve as an organisation and enable real community leadership to happen. Perhaps it's Trish Casserley, another one of our residents who best sums it up, "Compared to years ago things are much better now. People really do feel safer walking about in the community. They know they have opportunities to speak out about any concerns and know the Council really are listening."

If you think that any of the approaches set out here could help the work you are doing and you would like to find out more you can contact Bournemouth's ASB Officer, Roger Birt. Roger can be contacted via email at [roger.birt@bournemouth.gov.uk](mailto:roger.birt@bournemouth.gov.uk) ■

In this issue we answer some frequently asked questions on demotion orders.

#### What is a demotion order?

A demotion order allows landlords to apply to the courts to reduce the security of tenure for tenants. Demotion orders give a serious warning to the tenant, since if they continue to misbehave swift action can be taken to seek possession of their home.

#### What is the effect of a demotion order?

Demotion orders remove a number of tenancy rights, including the right to buy and the right to exchange. Upon granting of the order the tenancy is replaced with a less secure form of tenancy. Consequently, whereas with the secure or assured tenancy, the court has the final say in whether or not the tenancy can be terminated, with a demotion order, possession is much easier to obtain (compared with a postponed possession order) provided the social landlord follows the correct procedures.

#### What needs to be proven to be awarded a demotion order?

It has to be proven that normally the tenant, a person residing with the tenant or a visitor to the tenant's home:

- has engaged or threatens to engage in conduct capable of causing nuisance or annoyance and / or use of premises for unlawful purposes;
- and that the conduct directly or indirectly relates to or affects the housing management functions of the landlord.

The court also has to ensure that it is "reasonable" to grant the order.

#### How long does a demotion order last?

Initially a demotion order lasts for 12 months. The demotion period can be extended further if, during the period, the landlord commences possession proceedings. Should this happen, the demotion period is extended until possession proceedings conclude.

If however, the landlord is satisfied that the conduct of the tenant has improved and does not apply for possession, then after 12 months, the tenancy will normally revert back to its original form.

#### When could a demotion order be useful?

- In conjunction with other measures such as Anti Social Behaviour Injunctions, to serve as an extra indication to the tenant that the anti social behaviour will not be tolerated.
- Together with a possession order application, so that as an alternative or as well as a postponed possession order, the court has a further option with which to send a strong warning to the tenant.
- As a trigger for appropriate support (for example, a family interaction project) to address any underlying causes of the tenant's behaviour and sustain the tenancy if at all possible.

**For more information about demotion orders please see the Communities and Local Government publication "Demotion Orders", which will be revised in the first half of 2007**  
[www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1153021](http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1153021) ■

## BEST PRACTICE – DEMOTING TECHNIQUES

Ipswich Borough Homes has found demoting tenancies useful alongside other enforcement and support measures. We use them in cases where the nuisance is comparatively low level, but persistent.

For example our first demoted tenancy was used against a tenant who regularly undertook Stock Car repairs in his garden.

The nature of nuisance was such that possession action was considered not to be appropriate. As the tenant in question had not taken heed of warning letters and a Notice Seeking Possession, we decided to apply for a demotion order.

The demotion order was sufficient to provide a serious enough warning that his

behaviour was causing a nuisance to his neighbours and a continuation of his conduct could result in the loss of his home. The tenant's conduct improved considerably.

#### Chuks Asubo

Email – [chuks.asubo@ipswich.gov.uk](mailto:chuks.asubo@ipswich.gov.uk)

## The Defendant was a tenant of Castle Vale Housing Association in Birmingham who had been causing a nuisance and annoyance to her neighbours since May 2003. Complaints received consisted of shouting at neighbours, loud music, door slamming, youths congregating at the property, general bumping and banging, and threats and harassment of neighbours.

A decision was taken to serve the Defendant with a Notice Seeking Possession as well as with a Notice Before Proceedings for a Demotion Order, and this was done on 24 November 2004. Proceedings were subsequently issued and the first hearing took place on 25 April 2005 when the Defendant was represented by solicitors. She indicated that she would be defending the matter and Directions were given. A further Case Management Conference took place on 6 July 2005.

The Defendant maintained that she was not as bad as the Claimant and the witnesses were trying to make out. She denied the allegations which had been made against her and the matter proceeded to a fully contested trial in November 2005.

At the trial, the Defendant's argument was that her neighbours were over-sensitive. The Judge disagreed and although he fully accepted the evidence of the Claimant, decided to give the Defendant one more chance by making a Demotion Order, as a Suspended Possession Order would result in further litigation.

It was only a matter of a few weeks before the Defendant breached the Order. Interestingly, prior to the trial, the Defendant's behaviour had improved significantly, but once she thought she had "got away with it", she simply carried on as before. A Notice Requiring Possession was served upon her in December 2005. Once this expired, possession proceedings were commenced. By the time a Possession Order was made, the Defendant had vacated her property because an Injunction with an Exclusion Order attached had already been obtained against her. It was also necessary to obtain an ASBO against the Defendant's boyfriend who was a minor.

Had the Demotion Order not been applied for, then, as the Trial Judge had quite rightly recognised, proceedings would have been protracted. Given the way the Defendant reacted when she was served with the Notice Requiring Possession, this would have made life extremely difficult for the Defendant's neighbours. The Demotion Order meant that Castle Vale Housing Association could take swift eviction action as soon as there was a breach of the Demotion Order.

#### Dorota Pawlowski

E-mail – [Dorota.pawlowski@cobbetts.com](mailto:Dorota.pawlowski@cobbetts.com)

## MY VIEW...

from Louise Casey the Government Co-ordinator  
for Respect



**The Respect drive is a priority because it's what communities want. Polls show that anti-social behaviour is the number one issue for communities. That's why all of us in public service should be focussed on this issue.**

And the drive has special significance for those working in social housing. Almost 1 in 5 people live in social housing and they perceive up to four times more anti-social behaviour than other groups. You certainly won't need me to tell you that housing managers can help tackle these problems. You see problems early and people are willing to approach housing managers in a way that, for whatever reason, they are reluctant to approach agencies like the police.

Public perception of anti-social behaviour as an issue is down from 21% to 17%. We've achieved a lot and I'm grateful to all of you who've contributed to that. But there's still much to do.

That means taking enforcement action where necessary. I could point to areas that have used hundreds of housing injunctions in the last year. I could point to comparable areas where that figure is less than 10. That tells me that in some areas too little action is being taken to tackle serious problems that make people's lives a misery. That doesn't mean demonizing social tenants. It means being honest about where there are problems and taking action to protect those communities.

The Respect programme is also about doing more to tackle the causes of anti-social behaviour such as putting resources into good quality parenting programmes like PPP and Webster Stratton that can increase parenting skills and significantly reduce children's anti-social behaviour; broadening the range of people who can apply for parenting orders, investing in activities for young people and rolling out a network of 50 Family Intervention Projects to deal with the problems of the most difficult families.

I know that housing providers (or even central government!) can't impose the kind of communities that we all want to see. Strong communities are an essential part of making that happen.



However, you can create the opportunity for those to develop. If people are too scared to go out, or they see that housing managers don't confront problems how can we expect them to have the confidence to do so?

And a key part of giving the community that confidence is telling them about the action that you have taken. Research shows that people who feel informed about efforts to tackle anti-social behaviour have high levels of confidence in local agencies. So by telling people about what you've done you can lower perceptions of anti-social behaviour and boost public confidence in you. Communication and accountability to local residents are central to the Respect drive.

That's why the Respect Standard for Housing Management is so important. I'm pleased that social landlords are already signing up to the Standard. But signing is only the start. The key thing about the Standard is that it means something to your residents. That means publicising your commitments – through consultative meetings, by sending out what you've signed to every resident, by holding sessions to let people know how you're doing on an ongoing basis. I really do expect that when I'm in your area in six months time and when I ask residents "what does your landlord do for you?", I want them to point to the Standard and tell me that they know about it and that you are delivering on it.

I know that important though housing providers are you can't do this alone. And we don't expect you to. The Respect programme is about ensuring all services deliver on this issue. And the 'system' is re-gearing to make that happen. For example, Respect is now a mandatory outcome in LAAs focussing local authority minds on this issue, the Police Performance Assessment Framework prioritises tackling anti-social behaviour and the review of the Crime and Disorder Act will result in more effective partnership working on CDRPs.

But housing providers remain central to the challenge of making Respect vision a reality. I'm sure that you, as signatory landlords to the Respect Standard will meet that challenge! ■