

# Gloucester City Homes



## Mystery Shopping Evaluation

### Anti-Social Behaviour

### March 2008

### Introduction

Gloucester City Homes currently gains feedback from customers in various ways including satisfaction surveys, focus groups, resident groups, block and street representatives, compliments, comments and complaints. Mystery shopping enables us to identify where our service standards and procedures need to be developed.

On this occasion, we evaluated advice given to our customers regarding anti-social behaviour when they contacted Gloucester City Homes.

### Timing of Exercise

The mystery shop was conducted between 5<sup>th</sup> March 2008 and 17<sup>th</sup> March 2008.

### Executive Summary

Five trained tenant mystery shoppers carried out the exercise. There were five different scenarios for each shopper: two non-urgent and three urgent cases.

In summary, the Mystery Shop exercise found, on the whole, a good response. Calls were generally answered in the manner required and good advice was given on appointment times, recording of incidents and confidentiality. Areas for improvement include advice on external agencies who may be helpful, asking if the caller can be helped with anything else before the conversation ends, and reminding staff that general advice may be given over the telephone without breaching data protection. These issues will be actioned via staff awareness in the form of training sessions for customer services staff, co-ordinated and delivered by the Anti-Social Behaviour team. Further details of actions to be taken can be found in the corresponding Reaction Report.

## Results

### How the calls were answered

When the mystery shoppers contacted Gloucester City Homes, they explained a friend or relative has problems with anti-social behaviour in their neighbourhood and they would like advice on their behalf. First, the shoppers recorded how the telephone was answered.

#### Results of enquiry: initial telephone technique

How quickly was the call answered?	After 1 ring	1		
	After 2 rings	1		
	After 3 rings	1		
	After 4 rings	0		
	After 5 rings	1		
	>5 rings	1 (7 rings)		
Did the staff member confirm you have got through to Gloucester City Homes?	Yes	5	No	0
Did the staff member give you their name?	Yes	3	No	2
Did the staff member ask if they can help you?	Yes	5	No	0
Was the staff member courteous?	Yes	5	No	0
Were you transferred to another team?	Yes	0	No	5
<b>Comments</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff very polite, helpful and sincere.</li> <li>• Staff very friendly.</li> <li>• Automated phone options were clear.</li> <li>• No name was given so I didn't know who I was talking to.</li> <li>• Staff name given so quickly I didn't catch it so I asked again.</li> </ul>				

## Scenarios 1a and 1b – Request for advice on a non-urgent case of anti-social behaviour

The two mystery shoppers each described a case of non-urgent anti-social behaviour to the member of staff and asked a series of questions. The scenarios were:

- 1a:** a friend/relative is having problems with a neighbour who is persistently playing loud music late at night.
- 1b:** a friend/relative has problems with the behaviour of their neighbour's children. They are knocking on the door and running away and sometimes throwing stones into the garden.

### Results of enquiry: questions asked and staff responses

Question	Staff response
If your friend/relative want to discuss this in person with someone, how soon do they have to wait for an appointment?	Within 1 working day      1 Within 5 working days      0 Other: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff member would need to discuss this with an ASB staff member.</li> </ul>
Should they keep a record of the incidents?	No                      0 Yes                      2 Yes and we can send a log sheet out      0
What sort of steps might Gloucester City Homes take to sort this out?	Mediation                      0 Voluntary agreements      0 Legal action                      0
What sort of legal action might possibly be taken?	Court injunction                      1 Possession proceedings      1 Anti-Social Behaviour Order      1 Support criminal prosecution      1
Is there any other agency who can help with this problem?	None mentioned
Your friend/relative is concerned what might happen if their neighbour finds out they complained. Is there a possibility they will find out?	No, we have a strict confidentiality policy 1
At the end of the conversation, did the staff member ask if there was anything else they could help with?	Yes 0      No 2
<b>Comments</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff member very helpful.</li> <li>• The member of staff did not answer my questions and advised it was best if my relative went to the office with the details of the complaint.</li> </ul>	

## Scenarios 2a,b,c – Request for advice on an urgent case of anti-social behaviour

The three mystery shoppers each described a case of urgent anti-social behaviour to the member of staff and asked a series of questions. The scenarios were:

- 2a:** a female friend/relative is having problems with a male neighbour who is harassing them. The neighbour often knocks on the door and tries to invite himself around against the person's wishes.
- 2b:** a friend/relative is having problems with a neighbour verbally abusing them. Sometimes the neighbour is using racist language (the friend/relative is from an ethnic minority group).
- 2c:** a friend/relative suspects their neighbour of drug dealing. There is a continual stream of visitors and there is sometimes a strange smell coming from the property.

### Results of enquiry: questions asked and staff responses

Question	Staff response
If your friend/relative want to discuss this in person with someone, how soon do they have to wait for an appointment?	Within 1 working day      3 Within 5 working days      0 Other: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Always ASB officer on duty – they could make an appointment or talk on the phone.</li> </ul>
Should they keep a record of the incidents?	No                              0 Yes                              3 Yes and we can send a log sheet out      2
What sort of steps might Gloucester City Homes take to sort this out?	Mediation                              2 Voluntary agreements              2 Legal action                              2 Other: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Action depends on whichever option is deemed most effective.</li> </ul>
What sort of legal action might possibly be taken?	Court injunction                              0 Possession proceedings              1 Anti-Social Behaviour Order              1 Support criminal prosecution              1
Is there any other agency who can help with this problem?	Police                              3 Other: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Law centre</li> </ul>
Your friend/relative is concerned what might happen if their neighbour finds out they complained. Is there a possibility they will find out?	No, we have a strict confidentiality policy              2 Other: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At first confidential but if mediation then neighbour would need to know.</li> <li>• Confidential unless mediation involved.</li> <li>• Suggested I could report the issue on their behalf.</li> </ul>

At the end of the conversation, did the staff member ask if there was anything else they could help with?	Yes	1	No	2
<b>Comments</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff member made me feel at ease - didn't push me for complainant's details.</li> <li>• I found it very easy to talk to the member of staff. They were helpful and sympathetic to the situation.</li> </ul>				

## Results Analysis

### Initial response

- Four out of the five calls were answered within the Service Standard of five rings.
- All staff members confirmed the caller had come through to Gloucester City Homes.
- On two occasions the staff member did not to give their name.
- All staff members asked how they could help the customer.
- All staff members were perceived as courteous.
- All calls were dealt with by Customer Service Officers (CSOs).

### Staff response to questions

#### a) Scenarios 1a and 1b – Request for advice on a non-urgent case of anti-social behaviour

- **Waiting time for appointment:** the Service Standard for a non-urgent ASB case is five working days. One CSO said one day, mostly likely because it is usually possible for someone to be seen on the same day if they come into the office. The other CSO was unsure of the answer.
- **Recording of incidents:** both CSOs correctly advised the complainant should record future incidents of the anti-social behaviour although they could have added that log sheets could also be sent out.
- **Remedial action:** when asked what action Gloucester City Homes might possibly take, one CSO listed all possible legal options although neither mentioned mediation or voluntary agreements.
- **Other agencies:** no other agencies were given as sources of advice, for example, Environmental Health is relevant regarding the noise disturbance.
- **Confidentiality:** one CSO correctly pointed out to the caller that GCH has a strict confidentiality policy which means the complainant's name would not be given to the perpetrator.
- **Offer to help with anything else:** neither of the CSOs offered to help with anything else before the call ended as prescribed by the Service Standards.
- **Other:** one mystery shopper could not obtain answers to their questions as the response each time was that the complainant should drop by the office to discuss the case in person with an ASB officer.

#### a) Scenarios 2a,b,c – Request for advice on an urgent case of anti-social behaviour

- **Waiting time for appointment:** the Service Standard for an urgent ASB case is one working day. All three CSOs gave the correct response and one assured the caller that an ASB officer is always on duty.
- **Recording of incidents:** all three CSOs correctly advised that the complainant should record future incidents and two also said that log sheets could be sent out once the complainant's details are provided.
- **Remedial action:** when asked what action Gloucester City Homes could take, two of the three staff members mentioned mediation, voluntary agreements and legal action while the third said the action taken will depend on an evaluation of all options. Regarding legal action all possible options were mentioned except court injunction.
- **Other agencies:** all three staff members rightly said the police could provide another avenue of advice and support and one included the law centre should the case lead to a prosecution.
- **Confidentiality:** two CSOs correctly advised of GCH's confidentiality policy. However, it was also pointed out that anonymity would be lost should mediation be involved.
- **Offer to help with anything else:** only one member of staff offered to help with anything else at the end of the conversation.

#### **Strengths**

- 80% of calls were answered within the Service Standard of five rings. For each call, the CSO's correctly answered the phone in regards to confirming the caller had come through to Gloucester City Homes, asking how they could help, and being courteous.
- Four out of five staff members assured the caller that the complainant could be seen in person promptly.
- All staff members correctly advised the complainant to record future incidents of anti-social behaviour.
- Each CSO rightly advised the urgent ASB case caller to contact the police for further advice and support.
- The CSO's did well to assure the caller that Gloucester City Homes will treat the case with utmost confidentiality.

Positive comments include:

- "Staff member very helpful."
- "Staff member made me feel at ease - didn't push me for complainant's details."
- "I found it very easy to talk to the member of staff. They were helpful and sympathetic to the situation."

#### **Weaknesses**

- Neither CSO could give other agencies that may help with the non-urgent cases of ASB.
- Only one out of the five calls ended with the CSO asking if there was anything else they could help with.
- One caller could not obtain advice over the telephone on behalf of the complainant.

## Conclusion

In summary, the Mystery Shop exercise found, on the whole, a good response. Calls were generally answered in the manner required and good advice was given on appointment times, recording of incidents and confidentiality. Areas for improvement include advice on external agencies who may be helpful, asking if the caller can be helped with anything else before the conversation ends, and reminding staff that general advice may be given over the telephone without breaching data protection. These issues will be actioned via staff awareness in the form of training sessions for customer services staff, co-ordinated and delivered by the Anti-Social Behaviour team. Further details of actions to be taken can be found in the corresponding Reaction Report.