



ASB FOCUS GROUP

Held on Thursday 21st January 2010 at /pm
In the Boardroom, Southgate House

Present:	Victoria King-Lowe (VKL)	Anti-Social Behaviour Manager
	Sara Taylor (ST)	Anti-Social Behaviour Officer
	Loretta Sadler (LS)	Anti-Social Behaviour Officer
	Emily Jones (EJ)	Trainee Housing Officer
	Lyn Scudamore (Lyn S)	Resident Involvement Officer
	Mark Boyce	Resident
	Brian Hore	Resident
	Luke Rudge	Resident
	Lesley Barrett	Resident
	Gordon Barrington	Resident
	Don Jones	Resident
	Joseph Blackwood	Resident
	June Bettridge	Resident
	Mo Norman	Resident
	Danny Bower	Resident
	Sandie Norris	Resident
	Sheena Sacratt	Resident
	Nick Hayward	Resident
	Josephine Gilbert	Resident
	Renford Perry	Resident

Item	Action
1 Apologies	
1.1 Julian Hailes	
2 Introduction and health/safety issues	
2.1 Lyn S welcomed everyone to the anti-social behaviour (ASB) Focus Group and outlined the purpose of the evening.	

<p>3 Identifying cost of service</p>	
<p>3.1 VKL explained the cost of the ASB service, giving a breakdown of the costs and explaining how much was afforded to Staff, Expenses, Services and Publicity. VKL explained what was included in each category, such as the use of the mediation, victim and witness support in the Services element of the budget.</p> <p>3.2 She explained that the cost of the ASB service to tenants is £0.78 per week of their weekly rent.</p> <p>3.3 Lesley Barrett asked if the amount given is the budget that GCH are allocated to spend, or the actual amount that they do spend each year. She also asked whether any overspend comes out of next years budget. VKL explained that the amount is the budget that GCH are given, and that any overspend comes out of the corporate budget rather than next years ASB budget. ST added that if there was an overspend the team would look at trying to expand the budget for the following year and likewise with an underspend.</p> <p>3.4 A resident asked if GCH still have a Police officer working for them. VKL reported that GCH do not have Police officers working within the organisation, rather they work in partnership. She added that GCH are looking to involve a Police officer internally to work with the ASB team in the future. ST explained that the ASB team have very good working relationships with the Police and they are very efficient at working together on cases.</p> <p>3.5 A resident asked about court costs, which are not included in the ASB budget and are accounted for under a corporate budget. He asked if GCH are able to recover the costs of a case from the perpetrator, rather than tenants who haven't been affected by the case having to pay their 78p per week. VKL explained that currently GCH can recover costs of recharges and court costs, however these can be paid over a long period of time. VKL also explained that we operate a recharge policy for deliberate damage to properties and would look in to being able to recover more costs from perpetrators in the future as legislation changes.</p> <p>A resident asked what the difference is between GCH and the Police, regarding the actions they take. VKL explained that the Police use criminal courts to prosecute under criminal law, whereas GCH use the civil courts and only use legal tools as a prevention and eviction method.</p>	

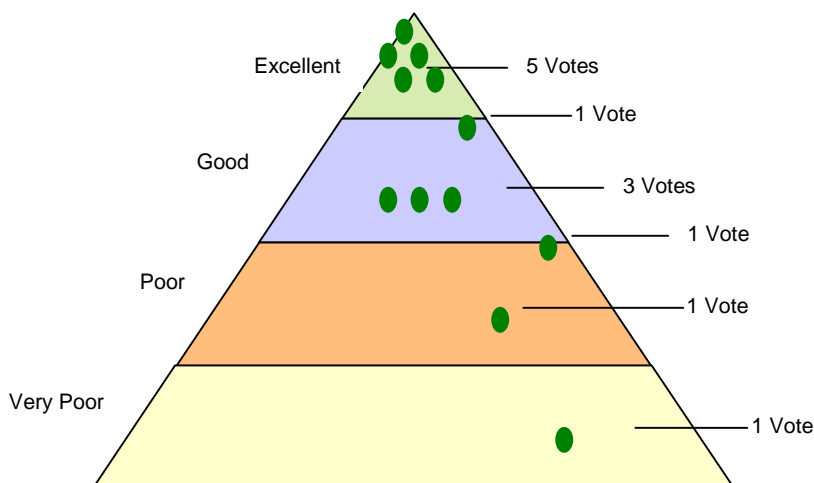
<p>4 Rating the service</p>	
<p>4.1 ST explained to residents what the ASB team do which is over and above the current service standards;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Witness Support – GCH have set up witness support groups to support victims of ASB and also held their first annual Witness Recognition event last November to award the bravery of witnesses giving evidence in court. • Reassurance Packs – the ASB team regularly issue victims of ASB with reassurance packs, which include safety devices. These are free of charge to the victim and in addition to target hardening measures. • Multi-Agency Academies – GCH organise and run multi-agency academies, where the Police, Community Safety Partners and other local agencies attend to share good practice and learn from each other. ST explained that they found from these academies that the most agencies had misconceptions about the others. She explained that the Police weren't aware of all the powers GCH had, and vice versa. She said that all agencies, but particularly GCH and the Police, now work closer and more effectively together. VKL added that ASB team staff have even attended Police operations in order to get evidence at the earliest opportunity, in order to take swift legal action against perpetrators. • Good neighbour Agreements (GNA) – ST explained that a new plan for GNA's had been drawn up following consultation with residents, as old GNA's weren't working effectively enough. She explained instances when GNA's would be used, and also explained introductory tenancies. • Meet The People Events – ST explained how the Police and Community Safety Partners attend Meet the People events and walk around estates with residents to highlight any issues of ASB in their area. These events are currently under review and further consultation will be held with customers on new proposals. • Multi-Agency Steering Group –VKL explained the purpose of this and that it is chaired by the Police Inspector and vice-chaired by VKL. She explained that more complex cases got o the steering group for a course of action to be agreed. 	


- ST highlighted the legal measures enforced by the team in the past year – 5x ASBI's, 2x possessions, 3x extended into tenancies, 1x crack house closure, 2x committals to prison, 1x DPPO and 1x dispersal order in conjunction with Police. She also mentioned; Job Shadowing, PIP's, Information Events (such as gay pride), Not In My Neighbourhood Week, new database for ASB cases, new policy, new role developed to deal with low-level ASB, publicity and non-legal action.

4.2 Positive Comments were made from residents who have used the ASB services;

- Don Jones said that GCH “have broken their backs” to help with the dispersal order in the Laurels. He said that the team was “tremendous” and “brilliant”, and that everything they have done in the last 12 months has improved. He said, “when I needed you, you were there”.
- Gordon Barrington said that it is a good indicator to GCH that, out of all the people at the meeting, two thirds had spoken about their experience of dealing with the ASB team, and they “all said only positive things”

Lyn S completed the excellent > poor pyramid with residents;



5 Service Improvement/Decline										
Decline					Improvement					
● 1	2	3	4	5	● 6	7●	● 8	● 9	●● 10	●●
										
<p>5.1 Lyn S explained that the results from tonight’s discussion would be used to improve ASB services for the future.</p> <p>5.2 Lesley Barrett asked about the analysis of information gathered from the Witness Support event, as attendees have not yet received any feedback about it. VKL explained that she is in the process of writing up the findings, but is trying to tie partner agencies down to certain agreements that will improve services. She said that she intends to give the reports to residents as a whole, rather than bits here and there. Lesley asked if the feedback had been helpful, and VKL agreed that it had been very helpful in helping to decide which services could be improved.</p> <p>5.3 Lyn S informed residents that the minutes from the meeting would be on the website within 1 week, and a reactionary report would be written by VKL and issued within 2 weeks.</p>										
6 Reviewing Service Standards and Draft ASB Policy										
<p>6.1 VKL went through the ASB Policy and asked for any suggested amendments;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • P5 – residents felt that the wording of the initial contact/action plan sent service standard should be changed. Currently the team should contact complainants within 1 working day for serious ASB complaints, and within 5 working days for minor ASB. Residents felt that all complainants should be contacted within 1 working day for every complaint, no matter whether it is classed as serious or minor. They agreed that the action plan could then still be sent out within 5 days for minor complaints, and stay within 1 working day for serious ones. • Residents also highlighted that complaints made to the out of hours Respect Line should be followed up within 										

24 hours to tie in with the acknowledgement procedure for all other complaints. They also felt that the ASB Respect Line should be explained more within the policy, to outline the service it provides. One resident also highlighted the issue of people not knowing the Respect Line telephone number, and said that when tenants phone there is a message that says the office is now closed, before the automated service gives options for the Respect Line. Residents felt that the automated service should be heard first when tenants call; otherwise many of them presume that the respect Line is closed.

- P6 – ‘Types of ASB’ table. Some members of the group did not like how GCH classify ‘serious’ and ‘minor’ anti-social behaviour. One suggestion was that it should be changed to ‘crimes against people’ and ‘crimes against property’. It was also suggested that ‘suspected drug using/dealing’ should be changed to ‘actual drug use’ and ‘suspected drug use’. However, VKL explained that it needs to remain as ‘suspected’ as it is difficult for us to prove ‘actual’ drug use. Another suggestion was that ‘ASB of Gangs’ should be added to the list. However, it was noted that the policy would then need to explain clearly that only when groups are causing a nuisance is it classed as ASB. It was agreed that ‘criminal damage’ would be moved from the ‘minor’ group to ‘serious’, and that the revised policy would also include an explanation of how criminal damage is dealt with by the Police and by GCH.
- P7 & P8 – no amendments
- P9 – VKL asked if the expectations of tenants and complainants were set out clearly enough. All agreed that they were.
- P10 – there were some concerns regarding the statement that GCH will take ‘proportionate action to the amount of alarm/distress caused by the ASB’ as some of the group felt that the definition of ‘distress’ is too subjective. VKL reassured that GCH would always take firm action and would not down play the level of distress caused in each case however need to be proportionate in the action they are taken, an example was given and the group agreed.
- P11 to P15 – no amendments.
- P16 – VKL asked if there was enough information about hate crime and domestic violence as these were

<p>previously separate policies. All agreed there is and this would sufficient.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • P18 to P22 – no amendments. <p>6.2 The group were in agreement that the Policy could be publicised once the necessary amendments have been made.</p>	
<p>7 Summary</p>	
<p>7.1 Lyn S explained that the minutes of the meeting would be posted on GCH website within one working week. She also stated that the reaction report would be sent out within 2 working weeks. VKL will also provide a copy of the report detailing feedback from the witness support event, by the end of March.</p>	
<p>8 Any other business</p>	
<p>8.1 ST and VKL explained briefly that GCH wish to set up a resident's steering group. Those who expressed their interest in participating were;</p> <p>Renford Perry, Luke Rudge, Josephine Gilbert, Lesley Barrett, Nick Hayward, Mark Boyce</p>	