



Report to **Cabinet**

Subject: **Respect Standard for Housing Management**

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1. Purpose of Report

To update Cabinet on the new Respect Standard for Housing Management.

2. Respect Standard For Housing Management

As part of the cross-government Respect Action Plan published in January 2006, a commitment to develop a new Respect Standard for Housing Management was developed. The final standard was published on 17 August 2006, following consultation.

The government's proposals to deliver the Respect Agenda are set out in the Respect Action Plan. The Respect initiative aims to ensure that local agencies tackle unacceptable behaviour and its causes to improve the quality of life of residents.

The Respect Standard for Housing Management forms part of this initiative and is aimed at all social landlords. It is a voluntary standard, which the government wants as many landlords as possible to sign.

Objective of the Standard

To build on the existing duty upon social landlords to have policies and procedures on anti-social behaviour (ASB) by providing a 'benchmark' of the core components of an effective response to tackling ASB and delivering respect.

To help maximise the role of social landlords in managing neighbourhoods and to make sure tenants and residents feel confident, safe and supported in their communities.

To make clear to residents what they can and should expect from their landlord, to enable tenants to monitor the service they receive and in turn, to help make clear to residents their own responsibilities.

Background

It is acknowledged that in order to tackle ASB effectively and deliver sustainable communities people need to feel safe and secure within their homes and communities.

Whilst, the Respect Standard for Housing Management focuses on the role that social landlords play in tackling ASB, it is recognised that it is not restricted to social tenants. Many social landlords operate in multi-tenure areas and are usually heavily involved in neighbourhood management and have the systems in place to identify any trends or problems within an area.

It is recognised that strong housing management can make a real difference to the quality of lives of residents and that Housing Managers are often the first to identify problems and the first agency experiencing an approach on an ASB issue. An assertive response is seen as critical to problems, combining support with sanctions, where behaviour does not improve is critical to creating and protecting strong, inclusive and sustainable communities.

The government wants people to feel empowered through “raising confidence that ASB conduct will be addressed creating a virtuous circle of engagement that builds trust and sustains shared values” (ODPM:2006).

The Respect Standard

The government is advocating that housing organisations sign up to the Respect Standard for Housing Management and that in signing the organisation is making a visible commitment to tenants, residents and other interested parties. The expectation of this commitment is that the organisation is doing all it reasonably can to provide excellent services to tackle ASB and deliver respect through their housing management role and broader involvement in neighbourhood management.

In signing up to this commitment organisations will be seen as signalling their dedication to helping to create, sustain and improve:-

- “Places where people feel bound together by shared values, and supported by a sense of community;
- Places where “pro-social” behaviour is valued and encouraged;
- Places where anti-social behaviour and disrespect for people and local environments is not tolerated;
- Places where the decent majority are not fearful of using public space and are free to enjoy their homes without disturbance and/or harassment;
- Places where people are confident they will have the full support of agencies in challenging unacceptable behaviour;

- Places where people are kept informed of action taken to tackle anti-social behaviour and are encouraged to play an active part in their communities.” (ODPM:2006)

The Respect Standard will comprise of six commitments which will outline core components or building blocks built on good practice and clear foundations which help to ensure a clear and robust set of standards which, when delivered, will provide an effective service in tackling anti-social behaviour and delivering respect.

The commitments are as follows:-

1. Accountability leadership and commitment;
2. Empowering and reassuring residents;
3. Prevention and early intervention;
4. Tailored services for residents and provision of support for victims and witnesses;
5. Protecting communities through swift enforcement;
6. Support to tackle the causes of anti-social behaviour.

A detailed outline of the components of these building blocks are enclosed at Appendix 1.

3. Signing up to the Standard

Signing up to the standard is voluntary and will not involve accreditation. There is a strong expectation that landlords will undertake a self-assessment of the level, quality and scope of their services or undertake a gap analysis to see what more they need to do before setting in place an action plan.

Sign up to the standard will be on-line via a dedicated web-page, where an electronic registration form, requesting some basic information can be completed. Upon registration the signatories will receive a certificate signed by the Secretary of State highlighting their commitment. Signatories will also receive the Respect Standard logo electronically, which they will be entitled to use.

It is also possible for social landlords in a dedicated area to form a 'consortia' and sign up to the standard together. This approach may only be adopted, however, where every landlord is satisfied that the services provided to all residents in the area covered by the consortia will meet the demands of the standard.

Whilst this will be a voluntary commitment, the landlord will need to consider the level, quality and scope of services they provide meets the benchmark of the standard. For those landlords who are confident this is the case they will make a public statement to tenants/residents that they commit to deliver a level of service in line with the service. Once registered the landlord may brand themselves as signatories to the standard their delivery against their commitments will be monitored through the Housing Inspection Programme.

Residents will legitimately hold the expectation that landlords will do what they say they will where they sign up to the standard and, as such, should be able to

challenge their landlords where performance falls short through the standard complaint procedure.

The delivery against the Respect Standard will be broadly commensurate with the level of service required to gain a 'good' rating against the anti-social behaviour section of the Estate Management Key Line of Enquiry (KLOE) set by the Housing Inspectorate which is part of the Audit Commission. This KLOE is to be revised in October 2006. This revision will affect subsequent inspections after April 2007. As part of the Home Office Respect Action Plan the government are committed to the consideration of introducing 'Respect Diagnostics' through joint work with the Audit Commission. These will be short, focused assessments which would act to identify strengths and weaknesses in performance against the Respect Standard and it is expected that such assessments will happen a short notice or as a result of declining performance.

The standard will provide a clear benchmark recognising those landlords who are already delivering excellent services and providing a clear level for those landlords, striving to improve, to aim for.

It will also empower residents, providing them with a clear expectation of the service they have a right to expect while upholding their own responsibilities.

4. Implications for Gedling

The Housing Department already has in place clear policies and procedures, which are published and made available as widely as possible. The department has recently attained the quality standard ISO 9002 throughout the department, which has aided a consistent approach and ensures all staff are aware of the policies and procedures with regard to ASB.

The department works closely with the Crime and Anti-social Behaviour Reduction Partnership, which has recently started to engage with other social landlords in the area. The Respect Standard for Housing Management does have the potential to develop a 'double standard' approach to Anti-social Behaviour should all social housing organisations, either not sign-up or develop different standards of delivery.

It is important that any work on this is fully integrated with the council's wider work through the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership and is consistent with the emergent South Nottinghamshire Anti-social Behavior strategy.

The department has developed a self-assessment mechanism based on the Audit Commission Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE). All sections are currently being reviewed and action plans will be drawn up and built into the department's Performance Plan. KLOE 6, the Estate Management self-assessment will be key to our performance against the Respect Standard for Housing Management. To help landlords in establishing and monitoring their own performance indicators, the government intends to publish a toolkit on performance management linked to the standard in early 2007.

The department will soon implement Introductory Tenancies and is soon to consider the introduction of Demoted Tenancies and the suspension of the Right to Buy for proven anti-social behaviour.

5. Proposals

It is proposed that housing department will undertake an initial self-assessment based on the Respect Standard for Housing Management. Following this, a review of the department's policies and procedures will be undertaken and consideration given to sign-up.

Consideration should also be given to the introduction of further sanctions, such as the use of Parenting Orders and rewards for good behaviour.

It is further proposed that a pilot of the standard is undertaken in the Area Based Initiatives of Netherfield and Daybrook.

Further reports will be brought to Cabinet following this work.

5. Recommendation

That Cabinet notes the introduction of the Respect standard for Housing Management

That Cabinet agrees that a pilot of the Respect Standard for Housing Management is undertaken within the Area Based Initiatives of Netherfield and Daybrook.

Commitment 1

Accountability, leadership and commitment

Building Blocks:

- Demonstrable commitment to tackling anti-social behaviour and creating a culture of respect;
- Backing up commitment by aligning capacity and resources and providing value for money;
- Assignment of responsibility so that everyone delivering services is clear about their role and what is expected of them;
- Seeking out best practice and adopting new approaches;
- Delivery of outcomes defined by measurable local target (e.g. year on year increases in resident satisfaction by estate or neighbourhood as measured by regular surveys);
- Continually reviewing performance to inform improvement planning and engaging residents and partners in the process;
- Commitment to robust policies of zero tolerance towards abuse of staff, resident representatives and voluntary workers in delivering their functions.

Working with Partners

- Working with partner agencies at strategic and operational levels (e.g. the neighbourhood police, neighbourhood management, other landlords including the private rented sector, social services and schools);
 - Employing service delivery protocols where appropriate;
 - Active and effective participation on local partnerships, including Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships, where feasible and neighbourhood level structures where they operate (e.g. regeneration partnerships and neighbourhood management);
 - Information sharing;
 - Making the appropriate links between strategy on anti-social behaviour and respect and other strategies, including homelessness, supporting people, gypsy and travellers, community cohesion and diversity.

Commitment 2

Empowering and Reassuring Residents

Building Blocks:

- Involving residents, including young people, in setting local priorities as part of broader resident participation;
- Delivering regular, meaningful and accessible feed-back sessions on issues of local concern, involving partner agencies where appropriate (e.g. 'Face the People' sessions);

- Engaging residents in developing and agreeing local standards of conduct (e.g. through Good Neighbourhood Agreements);
- Facilitating 'community led audits' of anti-social behaviour hotspots and environmental problems (e.g. estate walks to identify graffiti and fly-tipping);
- Providing residents with regular updates of actions you and partner organisations have undertaken to tackle anti-social behaviour (both positive activities and use of enforcement action) and how they might be involved in delivering solutions (e.g. leaflet drops);
- Publicise use of enforcement tools (generally of specific uses where appropriate) so that the community is reassured and is aware of any terms so they can help report suspected breaches;
- Tailoring services to take account of diversity so that no one is unduly excluded through barriers to involvement, information and advice;
- Rewarding positive 'community minded' behaviour (e.g. sponsoring activities for young people who contribute to the community or who successfully address their behaviour and celebrating residents who are prepared to 'take a stand' and give support to action to tackle anti-social behaviour).

Working with Partners

- Working with partner agencies and the local media to promote action/successes in tackling anti-social behaviour. Where appropriate this could involve a multi-agency communications strategy.
- Making links between respect and broader area-based work on community capacity building and community cohesion (e.g. facilitating projects to foster inter-generational understanding or community wide mediation to resolve local issues that generate tensions within a neighbourhood);
- Working independently or with partner agencies to engage young people in constructive and purposeful activities (e.g. volunteering, community lean ups, sports and the arts and activities during school holidays)

Commitment 3

Prevention and Early Intervention

Building Blocks:

- Ensuring tenancy agreements and leases meet Office of Fair Trading (OFT) guidelines and contain clear prohibitions on anti-social conduct – linked where appropriate with Good Neighbour Agreements;
- Running user-friendly sign-up meetings for new residents to include a clear explanation of your policies on anti-social behaviour, how problems will be addressed, what you expect of the resident and what they can expect of you in return;
- Undertaking full assessments of any potential problems that may require tenancy support when entering into new tenancy agreements;

- Regularly reviewing allocations and lettings policies (including choice based schemes) to ensure issues of respect and anti-social behaviour are fully reflected – e.g. sensitive lettings to avoid potentially problematic situations;
- Adopting introductory or starter tenancy schemes for new residents where appropriate;
- Designing out anti-social behaviour through environmental gating schemes and improvements (e.g. security lighting);
- Deploying robust screening processes to determine whether mediation is appropriate at the earliest opportunity. Where it is – making appropriate referrals;
- Providing clear warnings backed by evidence of past action taken against perpetrators of anti-social behaviour;
- Using early intervention tools like Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (and Parenting Contracts if available) linked to provision of support where appropriate;
- Taking swift action on environmental damage (e.g. rapid removal of graffiti and clearance of fly-tipping) to give a strong signal that action will be taken.

Working with Partners

- Sharing of information when making/accepting nominations to identify any issues with past behaviour and establishing support needs;
- Providing evidence to partner agencies and working with them to identify anti-social behaviour hotspots and areas where incidents appear to be emerging and contributing to the delivery of tailored strategies to address these problems;
- Working with partner agencies to provide a visible presence in hotspots (e.g. community support officers/police and warden patrols);
- Working closely with warden schemes where available including sponsoring schemes where appropriate.

Commitment 4

Tailored Services for residents and provision of support for Victims and Witnesses

Building Blocks:

- Making sure reporting is easy by offering a variety of reporting methods (i.e. Telephone hotlines, emails and reporting centres). This should be open to all (i.e. using jargon free plain English) and pay regard to diversity (i.e. translation of material, sensitivity in reporting hate crime);
- Ensuring the first point of contact is helpful, courteous and sensitive to the stress reporting incidents of anti-social behaviour often involves;
- Making sure all staff are clear about what procedures should be followed when they receive a complaint;
- Delivering to achievable but challenging deadlines for each key stage of the process and agreeing appropriate action with the complainant. On occasions

where deadlines cannot be met explanations should be given as soon as possible.

- Providing complainants with regular updates of progress of their case from the point of complaint to resolution and beyond, including the outcomes of any court hearings.
- Minimise burdens on complainants in collecting evidence (e.g. short focused use of diary sheets rather than prolonged sue with no clear outcome)
- Where attendance at court is required, full explanations of the procedures and pre-visits to court should be offered in advance and support offered throughout, including escort to court and mentoring.

Working with Partners

- Carrying out full assessments of the support needs of individuals who report anti-social behaviour or agree to provide evidence/act as witnesses;
- Systematically supporting victims either directly or in conjunction with specialist care and support agencies (e.g. witness support services and networks);
- Prompt deployment of reassurance measures where appropriate including regular patrols and (housing officers, wardens, police, etc.) visits, provision of personal alarms and CCTV systems;
- Focus on 'target hardening' (e.g. fire proof letter boxes and wide angle spy holes) liaising with Crime Prevention services as necessary;
- Liaison with court services to minimise the stresses of a hearing (e.g. secure holding areas).

Commitment 5

Protecting Communities through Swift Enforcement

Building Blocks:

- Ensuring staff are fully aware of the range of tools available and can identify how each will be used either alone or in line with broader policies and procedures. This should include use of Introductory/Starter Tenancies, Acceptable Behaviour Contracts, Anti-social Behaviour Orders, Injunctions, Parenting Contracts/Orders, Demotion, Right to Buy measures and possession action;
- Ensure staff are provided with training on how the tools operate and what each demands in terms of evidence gathering and consultation with other agencies;
- Having clear procedures in place to minimise the use of eviction, wherever possible (though it will sometimes be necessary), through use of other tools to tackle anti-social behaviour in situ. (e.g. injunctions, etc.);
- Ensuring robust case management procedures are in place which enable fast-tracking of legal action where required (e.g. systems which facilitate pursuing interim injunctions at short notice and enforcement of breaches);
- Proactive gathering of evidence of anti-social behaviour from a wide variety of sources;

- Commitment to visibly upholding standards of behaviour in public space and challenging those;
- Monitor use and outcomes of tools to feed into broader reviews of performance and improvement planning;

Working with Partners

- Develop strong working relationships and strategic links with partners, including the local authority, police and court service (e.g. through court user groups or court anti-social behaviour co-ordinators where available);
- Joint tasking of enforcement/evidence gathering from multi-agency staff;
- Have robust procedures in place to seek enforcement of breaches as quickly as possible through strong links to ensure proactive action backed up by the police and courts.

Commitment 6

Support to Tackle the Causes of Anti-social Behaviour

Building Blocks:

- Ensure staff are fully aware of range of support provision available and able to identify how each approach should be used as a core component of case management;
- Ensure staff have a clear understanding of how support provision should be linked with triggers (e.g. early intervention measures or use of enforcement action such as demotion);
- Ensure policies and procedures state clearly how support provision will be provided or accessed and the trigger/process by which support needs will be identified;
- A clear focus on delivering support and challenge solutions (i.e. linking support with enforcement at an early stage) rather than crisis-based interventions where problems have escalated;
- Making it clear to residents that enforcement action may be considered where suitable offers of support are refused and their behaviour does not improve;
- Clear policies and procedures on dealing with vulnerable residents (e.g. mental health issues and drug and alcohol problems).

Working with Partners

- Following assessment (involving multi-case conferencing where appropriate) deployment of 'floating support' designed to work with residents in stopping anti-social behaviour and where possible, maintaining a tenancy.
- Where available and appropriate referral to Family Intervention Programmes for residents with complex support needs who are causing anti-social behaviour in the community;

- Negotiate with local Supporting People teams in order to build on existing floating and residential housing related support schemes to ensure that the appropriate support is available for those residents/families with complex needs. Where no support currently exists explore possible opportunities for Supporting People to fund new support projects.