

## Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour

### Background

This is a major area of public policy concern. Absolute levels of crime have reduced in many areas, but concerns about safety and fear of crime have increased, research indicates that general anti-social behaviour is the primary cause of these concerns.

Recent article in Guardian said that this was the number one concern in MP's postbags.

Seen within housing as an important element of the neighbourhood renewal agenda.

Seen by politicians as part of the social responsibility issue.

Recent controversy caused by ODPM proposal to enable housing benefit to be withheld from tenants involved in anti-social behaviour. Many landlords concerned that a measure 'designed' to punish the culprit will only make rent collection harder and by others that such a move would be counter productive and undermine other elements of wider programmes to address anti-social behaviour in the round.

### Elements of ASB programmes

- **Enforcement**
- **Prevention**
- **Rehabilitation**

### Enforcement

- Introductory tenancies may be extended permanently for ASB (secure and assured tenancies)
- Tenancies may be 'demoted' to introductory tenancy in cases of ASB
- May get an order for immediate possession at a 'breach of injunction' hearing
- RSL's to participate in Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnerships

### Measures

- Injunctions
- Anti Social Behaviour Orders
- Acceptable Behaviour Contracts
- Possession proceedings  
(breach of Tenancy Conditions / with or without prior reduction in 'status' of tenancy)

ASB procedures should be published

Need to support witnesses to sustain cases

### Definition of Anti Social Behaviour

1996 'Act

"person or visitor guilty of conduct that is a nuisance or annoyance to others lawfully going about their business;

or

convicted of using a property for illegal or immoral purposes

or

arrestable offence in the locality

or

domestic violence causing other people to leave

New / recent clarification of ability of police & other agencies to share information with RSL's

## **Anti Social Behaviour Orders**

Civil prohibition on acts / locations

Breach is a criminal offence (subject to a maximum penalty of 5 years imprisonment)

- Granting of an ASBO can be (usefully) publicised.
- RSL can now apply for ASBO directly or LA / Police can do so on their behalf – as now

Interim ASBO's available at first court hearing

## **Prevention**

- Communicating Your Message
- Combination of support, diversion and credible sanctions
- Backed by warnings from the police

The reputation of the landlord will effect reporting 'Is it worthwhile bothering?'

Prevention at stage of processing considering applications

Prevention at stage of the lettings process

## **ASB and Estate Design**

It is possible to design out some elements of crime and safety problems at the design stage of new developments

- High quality door & window locks
- External spaces defined & secure
- Clear well lit sight lines and approaches to development/properties
- Windows overlooking the street
- Enclosed areas – residents only access
- Noise insulation
- Plus impact of dwelling mix  
[e.g. don't build 3 bed flats over 1 bed ground floor flats]

Mediation Services - objective is a non-confrontational diplomacy

Other approaches

- Uniformed wardens
- Diversionary projects for youth
- Re-housing with support (intensive)
- Reward schemes for good tenants
- Multi-agency tasking – esp' close liaison with Police

## **Rehabilitation**

Serious families evicted for ASB almost inevitably end up in private sector accommodation

The Dundee Project is a model for intensive support & outreach work with seriously problematic families.

Possible that RSL's could set up similar schemes [may be appropriate to do so collectively]

Could be part of the new Supporting People regime ?

There are problems for social landlords where some agencies fail to engage effectively in the collective processes required to address ASB issues.