

# ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR (ASB) SERVICE UPDATE

## 1 INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) is a key service for residents in Stockport. Tackling ASB is fundamental in maintaining safe and sustainable communities. Stockport Homes Group (SHG) is committed to helping the Council deliver its key priorities on this agenda. During 2019/20 a review was carried out into the Community Safety Services delivered across Stockport which identified opportunities to provide a more joined up and efficient approach to improve outcomes across the Borough. As a result of the review, Stockport Council commissioned SHG to deliver ASB services in the residential private sector in addition to SHG managed neighbourhoods.

The purpose of this report is to outline the key outcomes of SHG's delivery of ASB services both in SHG managed neighbourhoods and in private sector residential areas during 2020/21 and 2021/22.

## 2 ASB PERFORMANCE DURING 2020/21 AND YEAR TO DATE 2021/22

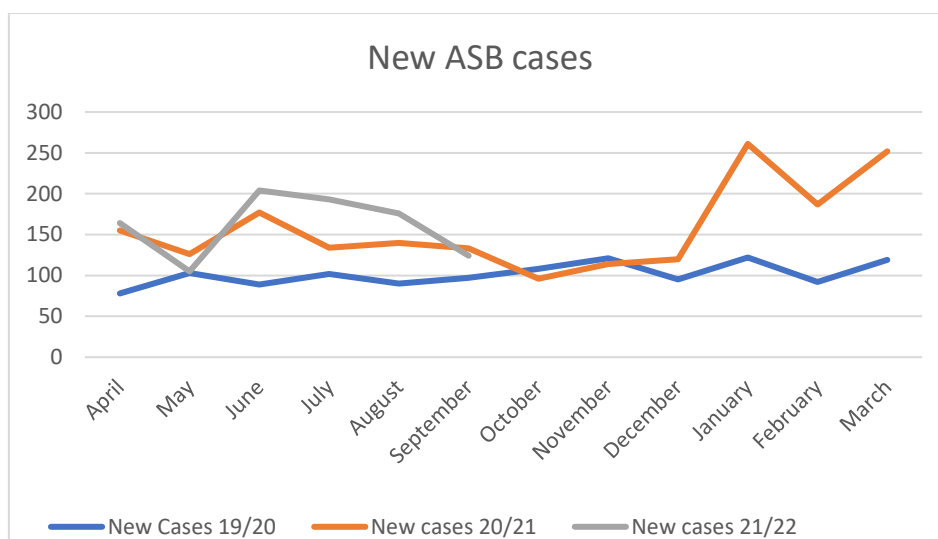
- 2.1 The commissioned ASB provision includes responding to, investigating and taking appropriate action in reports of ASB in residential communities across the whole of Stockport regardless of tenure. The exception within this agreement include domestic complaints that could be considered to be solely classified as a Statutory Nuisance (noise, smoke, accumulations, animals, premises etc) as defined by Environmental Protection Act 1990, sec 79).
- 2.2 SHG is not currently commissioned to investigate complaints of ASB in the open environment/public spaces including but not limited to car cruising, street drinking, dog control, and incidences in parks, libraries, other public buildings or the town centre. These complaints are dealt with by officers at the Council
- 2.3 SHG's ASB performance is measured against agreed key performance measures including:
- Number of new cases arising
  - Percentage of cases successfully resolved
  - The time taken to resolve ASB
  - Satisfaction with the outcome of the case
  - The use of non-legal and legal action to resolve ASB cases.

- 2.4 The number of new cases received by the service has increased significantly in the past 18 months and this can be attributed to the effects of the Covid pandemic. Cases in 2020/21 increased by 56% compared to the previous year, as detailed in the table below, and cases so far in 2021/22 continue to remain high and have not returned to pre-pandemic levels, despite restrictions being lifted<sup>1</sup>. A breakdown of new cases by geographical area for 2020/21 and year to date 2021/22 can be found at Appendix One.
- 2.5 Whilst it is evident that the amount of ASB has increased during the pandemic, it is also clear that tolerance levels during the various lockdowns were lower, leading to more reports of ASB. A deterioration in mental health during the pandemic, increases in alcohol and substance misuse as a coping mechanism and reduced access to services are all thought to be contributing to the ongoing high level of cases being received. SHG is an active member of the Greater Manchester Housing Providers (GMHP) Community Safety Group, Greater Manchester Police and Crime Leads Group and HouseMark, the leading data and insight company for the UK housing sector and it is apparent from discussions with Community Safety Leads in each of these groups, that the increased levels of ASB is a trend which is not unique to Stockport but is being seen regionally and indeed nationally<sup>2</sup>.

	New Cases 19/20	New cases 20/21	New cases 21/22 (YTD)
April	78	155	164
May	103	126	105
June	89	177	204
July	102	134	193
August	90	140	176
September	97	133	124
October	108	96	
November	121	114	
December	95	120	
January	122	261	
February	92	187	
March	119	252	
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1216</b>	<b>1895</b>	<b>966</b>

<sup>1</sup> Figures represent cases in both SHG managed neighbourhoods as well as private

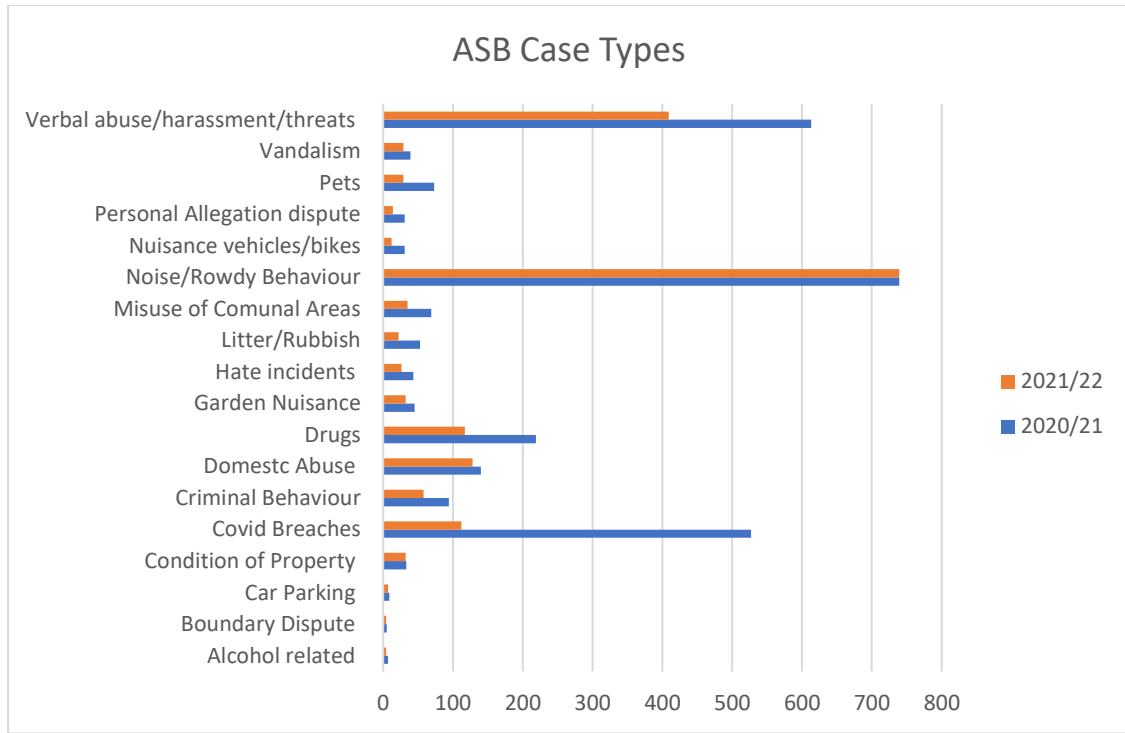
<sup>2</sup> <https://www.lbc.co.uk/news/noisy-neighbour-complaints-soar-more-quarter-during-covid-lockdowns/>



2.6 A breakdown of the main types of ASB complained about is as follows. In 2020/21 the largest type of ASB related to noise, followed by Covid restriction breaches in properties and the third highest type was verbal harassment/threats or violence. In 2021/22 to date, noise remains the largest type of ASB complaint with verbal harassment coming second. As expected Covid related complaints have reduced significantly but Domestic Abuse is continuing to increase. A new Domestic Abuse Case Officer has recently been recruited to deal with all cases of this type with a view to protecting victims whilst preventing homelessness and trying to bring about change in perpetrator behaviour.

Case Types	2020/21	2021/22
Alcohol related	7	4
Boundary Dispute	5	4
Car Parking	9	7
Condition of Property	33	32
Covid Breaches	527	112
Criminal Behaviour	94	58
Domestic Abuse	140	128
Drugs	219	117
Garden Nuisance	45	32
Hate incidents	43	26
Litter/Rubbish	53	22
Misuse of Communal Areas	69	35
Noise/Rowdy Behaviour	739	739
Nuisance vehicles/bikes	31	12
Personal Allegation dispute	31	14
Pets	73	29
Vandalism	39	29

Verbal abuse/harassment/threats	613	409
YE/YTD <sup>3</sup>	2763	1805



- 2.7 Performance is also monitored by how many cases are successfully resolved. A successfully resolved case is defined as a case in which the behaviour being complained of has either stopped completely, or is now so sporadic, that there is no legitimate or proportionate further action that SHG can take.
- 2.8 As at the 19<sup>th</sup> September 2021, SHG has successfully resolved 100% of cases in an average of 48 days against a target of 52 days. However, 98.52% of complainants were satisfied with the outcome of the case on closure, evidencing that whilst a case is resolved and the behaviour has stopped, customers remain unhappy. A customer may remain dissatisfied in a successfully resolved case if they had not achieved the outcome they had wanted. For example, the nuisance can be stopped in cases as a result of an injunction, but the complainants wanted the outcome to be eviction.
- 2.9 The performance of the service both within SHG managed neighbourhoods and the private sector, compared with national

<sup>3</sup> The total number of case types is higher than the total number of new cases received, as there is often more than one type of nuisance in some cases.

- 2.10 averages, is upper quartile meaning the Councils performance is now also in this region<sup>4</sup>.
- 2.11 SHG is committed to using its full range of both non-legal and legal tools to address ASB, taking action that is incremental in nature, giving opportunity for changes in behaviour and with an overall aim of sustaining tenancies. There was a range of initiatives to enhance the safety of neighbourhoods in 2020/21, including ‘target hardening’ work for 212 customers experiencing ASB. SHG was proactive in serving 45 Community Protection Warnings with the majority used to tackle Covid related ASB and also served four Community Protection Notices on behalf of the Council. SHG also secured 44 injunctions and undertakings to address ‘hotspot’ issues as well as 13 Acceptable Behaviour Contracts and one nuisance premises closure order.
- 2.12 SHG recognises possession as a useful tool in tackling ASB but supports the Council’s policy to reduce homelessness and therefore uses eviction as an absolute last resort. In 2020 Notices of Seeking Possession were served upon several persistent nuisance tenants; however, a national eviction ban that was in force during Lockdown meant that these could not be progressed until after 31<sup>st</sup> May 2021 when the ban was lifted. During that time most tenants modified their behavior meaning eviction was no longer necessary, however one tenant still failed to comply with the notice and was subsequently being evicted in August 2021.
- 2.13 So far in 2021/22 SHG has continued to take positive action including 15 injunctions with one committal to prison for being breached. Officers have served nine Community Protection Warnings and four Acceptable Behaviour Contracts. As the effects of Covid on ASB levels gradually recedes it is widely anticipated that new case numbers will reduce, however many cases dealt relate to lifestyle differences between households which are not related to Covid and SHG will continue to use tools such as mediation and community conferencing to address disputes
- 2.14 These figures include those cases referred to SHG from Councillors. Councillor Bailey has asked that SHG review communication to members once referrals are made, providing reassurance to members of progress whilst maintaining confidentiality of the specific case where appropriate.
- 2.15 SHG’s ASB Service is accessible and responsive to Members who make enquires on behalf of members of the public in response of ASB they are experiencing and a series of workshops for Councilors on “ASB Tools and Powers” are scheduled to take place in early October. The workshops will cover how investigations are carried out, what legal and non-legal remedies SHG use and highlight some of the key issues the

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<sup>4</sup> Average performance across the country being 81 per cent of customers being satisfied with outcome of case, being resolved in an average of 84 days.

team plan to tackle going forward including domestic abuse and cuckooing.

### **3 EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP WORKING**

- 3.1 SHG recognises that it cannot resolve issues of ASB in neighbourhoods in isolation and that the causes and effects of ASB are wide ranging, varied and can affect all members of the community, not just SHG customers. SHG continues to work in partnership with other agencies, in particular the Council and Greater Manchester Police (GMP), to ensure that all intelligence and measures available are used effectively to tackle ASB, regardless of who owns the property.
- 3.2 SHG has supported the Place Based Initiative (PBI) approach developed by the Council which works with vulnerable individuals and families, intervening early to deal with issues and vulnerabilities and prevent escalation into crisis situations and the need for a reactive, and often resource intensive and expensive, response. SHG has realigned a number of staffing resources to support the approach and attends the problem-solving meetings on a frequent basis.
- 3.3 Many complaints received by SHG relate to criminal behaviour including drug use/dealing, domestic abuse, hate crime and assaults for which a police response is more appropriate. Given the significant pressure faced by GMP at the present time in terms of resources, and following Her Majesty's Inspectorate escalating the force into special measures in 2020, SHG's ASB Team continue to support GMP to address criminal behaviour within neighbourhoods; this has included providing witnesses statements, carrying out reassurance door knocking exercises and "Street a Week" activities. SHG will continue to try and use civil proceedings where appropriate in dealing with incidents but recognises that this is not possible in all criminal related cases.
- 3.4 Resolving ASB in neighbourhoods is often a difficult and lengthy process, some needing legal interventions that prolong outcomes for customers, and whilst SHG always strives to deliver a high performing ASB service it is never complacent and recognises that there is always room for improvement. SHG acknowledges that some dissatisfaction in how ASB is handled still remains and it will continue to work with the Council and other agencies to effectively tackle issues as they arise.

### **4 THE POSITIVE ENGAGEMENT SERVICE**

- 4.1 SHG is not only committed to taking effective enforcement action against perpetrators of ASB but also to implementing effective interventions to assist perpetrators in modifying their behaviour and bringing about lasting change. The Positive Engagement Service continues to play an integral role in helping perpetrators of ASB change behaviours and

sustain tenancies successfully whilst reducing the need for injunctive or other legal action.

The overall purpose of the Positive Engagement Service is to prevent incidents and the reoccurrence of ASB in neighbourhoods managed by SHG, work with vulnerable perpetrators and support agencies to address and then prevent tenancy breaches occurring which result in legal action and, ultimately, homelessness.

- 4.2 Demand for the service has continued to increase and there has been ongoing significant success in resolving ASB by bringing about changes in behaviour. By recognising the individual needs of perpetrators and victims, Positive Engagement Officers (PEOs) supported 83 new referrals in 2020/21 of chaotic drug and alcohol users and people with mental health or anger management issues to help them sustain their tenancies. In total 90<sup>5</sup> cases were successfully closed during the year without the need for legal action an increase compared to 69 the year before. This contributed to reducing spend on legal action by £191,352 compared to anticipated spend. This approach has contributed to sustainable changes in behaviour, with 96.77 per cent of clients having stopped causing nuisance altogether as a result of this specialist support.

## **5 PREVENTION OF ASB THROUGH SPORTS**

- 5.1 SHG is also committed to preventing ASB from occurring in the first place and recognises that sport has a positive part to play in doing so. As restrictions have been lifted SHGs Youth Diversionary Officer has been able to recommence work with colleagues from various teams and partner agencies to engage with young people, on an outreach basis, with a view to diverting them away from challenging, anti social behaviour.
- 5.2 In August 2021, Foundations, SHGs charity, successfully used the power of football to give young people, the opportunity to pursue their interest in playing, leading and coaching the game and contribute to positive community engagement. "Football Unity" was a tournament that took place at Stockport Power League engaging over 75 young people. The majority of participants who participated were some of the hardest to reach and vulnerable young people in Stockport who have been drawn to participating in ASB and nuisance behaviours, and are at high risk of further involvement in low levels of criminality
- 5.3 The aim of Football Unity is to enhance the life chances of young people in the borough of Stockport firstly by promoting self-esteem, confidence and learning by bringing young people together to achieve a common

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<sup>5</sup> Walkabout activity with Police and other partners to gather intelligence and provide visible reassurance.

goal. It is hoped that further events linked to sport can be delivered across Stockport now that restrictions have been lifted.

## **6 ASB WORK OUTSIDE STOCKPORT**

- 6.1 SHG has also been commissioned to undertake ASB work for other landlords in Greater Manchester. The ASB Case Support Officers within the team currently deliver Lend-a-Cam CCTV installations, Noise Monitoring and Positive Engagement Services to organisations including Bolton at Home, ForHousing, Mosscafe St Vincent's and Arcon Housing. The income generated over the last two years from these services to other housing providers has equated to £16,390 and has been reinvested back into the ASB service within Stockport and has been used to upgrade some of the Lend-a-Cam CCTV systems for SHG's own customers in ASB cases. This has included purchasing five new rapid deployable CCTV systems for temporary use in the more serious cases of violence, threats and domestic abuse.
- 6.2 The income generated into the services has also contributed to the employment of a second ASB Case Support Officer being within the service to support Stockport residents with an increased number of equipment installations being offered.

## **7 FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES**

### **CUCKOOING**

- 7.1 There is a form of crime currently impacting the residents of Stockport which cuts across a number of agencies within the Safer Stockport Partnership (SSP). Over the past decade cuckooing has become a nationally recognised issue for police forces and communities. During 2020/21 SHG Group (SHG) and Greater Manchester Police (GMP) has dealt with an increased number of cases where "cuckooing" had taken place. In the last six months alone, seven new cases have been identified.
- 7.2 Cuckooing is a form of exploitation whereby drug dealers take over the home of a vulnerable person (who may be a drug and/or alcohol user themselves) in order to use it as a base for drug dealing. Cuckooing is a phenomenon seen across the country and Stockport is no exception. SHG is working closely with partner agencies exploring opportunity to deliver a tenure neutral pilot project to support victims of cuckooing. The objectives of the project are, through specialist assertive outreach, to:
- Provide immediate support system to victims of cuckooing including visiting clients in custody, providing pay-as-you-go phones, practical help and support



- Provide harm reduction and facilitate access to substance misuse treatment, wider health services, support and recovery for victims
- Support the victim within with the criminal justice process
- Support the police or Council by preparing partial or full Closure Orders if necessary
- Engage with other drug users using the premises via texting to offer access to prescribing services and other support services
- Prepare other civil enforcement action including but not limited to Civil Injunctions.

7.3 Each of these measures is aimed at reducing the client's vulnerability and increasing their resilience, thereby reducing the opportunities for offenders to exploit them, and reducing the likelihood that they will become the victim of cuckooing again in future. Homelessness will be prevented from occurring by helping to safeguard tenancies at risk as a result of the anti-social behaviour associated with cuckooing.

## **8 CONCLUSION**

8.1 As can be seen, despite the significant increase in ASB cases over the past 18 months, performance levels remain high within the service. The team recognise however that there is always room for improvement and that some dissatisfaction with how cases are handled remains. As such the team will continue to work with the Council and other partners, to ensure cases any issues are addressed, and cases are resolved to the satisfaction of customers.

8.2 SHG works closely with partner agencies in a problem-solving approach to tackle ASB in neighbourhoods and will continue to try and use civil proceedings where appropriate in dealing with incidents but recognises that this is not possible in all criminal related cases.

8.3 SHG Positive Engagement Service continues to work with chaotic perpetrators of ASB and bring about lasting resolutions to cases and make significant efficiency savings for the organisation and reducing demand on Council Services.

8.4 The ASB service has been able to recommence delivering diversionary and prevention activities through sport in partnership with the Safer Stockport Partnerships, including a well-attended football event during the summer holidays.

8.5 SHG has negotiated further Service Level Agreements with other organisations generating an income into the service that is being

reinvested to improve Lend-a-Cam and Noise Monitoring Services for SHG tenants.

- 8.6 SHG is working with partners in exploring opportunities to address emerging issues in Stockport including cuckooing.

## **9 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 9.1 Scrutiny Committee is requested to:  
Note and comment on the report.

## Appendix One

<b>Case Numbers by Area</b>	<b>20/21</b>	<b>21/22 YTD</b>
Adswood/Bridgehall	111	53
Bramhall	38	8
Bredbury	31	14
Brinnington	216	170
Cale Green	21	9
Cheadle	24	55
Cheadle Heath	44	12
Cheadle Hulme	81	20
Davenport	12	6
Edgeley	126	63
Gatley	9	0
Great Moor	0	1
Hazel Grove	121	44
Heald Green	7	2
Heaton Chapel	37	21
Heaton Mersey	17	7
Heaton Moor	17	4
Heaton Norris	89	39
Heaviley	46	21
High Lane	4	1
Hillgate	22	12
Lancashire Hill	143	70
Manor	0	0
Marple	32	22
Mellor	5	1
Mottram St Est	120	22
Offerton	137	70
Offerton Estate	31	7
Rectory Fields	8	3
Reddish	197	103
Romiley	48	32
Shaw Heath	0	9
Stepping Hill	3	1
Stockport Centre	0	26
Victoria Park	37	12
Woodley	61	26
	<b>1895</b>	<b>966</b>

### Case Reports by Area

