

# Community Housing Tenancy Management

## Communities Scrutiny 1st February 2024



## **Introduction**

In recent years the landscape around housing tenancy management has changed. The historical image of a Housing Officer as an enforcement official with a rule book and an expectation to enter our tenant's homes at will stipulating our view of model behaviour has significantly changed.

In addition, the commitment by all social landlords to avoid evicting households into homelessness may appear weak to the general public but there is greater understanding of the cost to families and the public purse of such approaches. Impacts of threatened evictions include lifetime lasting adverse childhood experiences; disruption and increased demands to public services such as social care, health and education and the police; increased costs to Local Authorities of homelessness all of which makes alternative and more long lasting approaches more appropriate for all involved.

This has resulted in Housing tenancy management being more about dialogue, collaboration and alternative approaches as opposed to more formal, process driven actions that may not ultimately resolve the "problem".

However, the time and patience to achieve positive outcomes with this type of approach is often under pressure from communities who have to live alongside families who causes issues.

## **Background**

Housing Officers are required to manage often fraught situations involving a mixture of complex issues such as mental health, drug and alcohol abuse, child protection, domestic abuse, safeguarding, threats of suicide but they must also be aware that the health and safety of our tenants is our utmost priority. This includes an increasing focus on public health and safety issues such as mould and condensation and fire safety following significant events in the housing sector and the changing policy and legislative landscape.

Housing staff face pressure to deal with an increasingly wide range of issues and also increasing workloads, such as increases in rent arrears for example, which place competing demands on their time. The impact of the needs of customers on managing these priorities, such as the additional demands that dealing with a person with mental health issues can place on officers, can be significant. We have examples of Housing Officers who regularly spend time engaging with individuals with mental health issues that have no housing issues that we can deal with for them.

Denbighshire's Community Housing team has moved away from Housing roles that would previously deal with specialist areas of work such as Income Management or Neighbourhood matters, to create generic Housing Officers who can provide a

better and more holistic service to tenants in a locality and which also increases our efficiency in managing workloads.

## **Society's Challenges**

The challenges for households and communities have changed in recent years, and therefore, for Housing staff, challenges have also increased. This is due to the impact of the pandemic lockdowns on society as a whole, the cost of living crisis increasing pressure on households and communities, and the ever growing pressures on other services that are important to support quality neighbourhoods, including services like drug and alcohol support, mental health support and local policing.

The levels of tolerance and attitudes towards neighbours is also a factor. Often much of Housing Officer workloads is complaints about different standards and attitudes which are very difficult to deal with. The ability to change the behaviour of a household who may not have the same standards and attitude towards garden maintenance as their neighbours, for example, is a challenge.

We ultimately have to decide if an issue is a clear breach of tenancy and is it "serious and persistent" enough to warrant action. In the vast majority of cases we deal with we would seek to resolve an issue through dialogue and support.

## **Safe Communities**

We want to create safe and secure communities. Where there are more serious issues such as criminal activity or serious nuisance, we will take more formal action. However, any legal action is a long and resource-intensive process that could also require neighbours to provide evidence and act as witnesses, which many quite understandably do not wish to do. Any formal sanction has to be proven to the County Court.

An issue that leads to a criminal conviction, such as drug dealing for example, does not necessarily also mean that a family should lose their home due to the behaviour of a member of their household. Criminal offences are dealt with by criminal remedies however where there has been serious nuisance caused in a community there may be grounds to apply for eviction but we have to convince the Court that this is reasonable and proportionate.

Social media can also play a part in spreading intolerance and false information in communities and also fuel disputes between neighbours.

## **New Tenancies**

### **The Allocation Policy & Process**

There is high demand for social rented homes in the county, and few vacancies to meet demand.

The Allocations Policy is governed by Housing Act 1996 and the Code of Guidance for Homelessness and Allocations 2016 and Welsh Statutory Instruments 2014 No 2603 (w. 257) – Housing Wales – The Allocations of Homelessness (Eligibility) (Wales) Regulations 2014.

Denbighshire County Council is a member of the Conwy, Denbighshire and Flintshire SARTH Partnership, which in turn has developed 'The Common Housing Allocation Policy', 2018 known as SARTH. As a Local Housing Authority, we are required by law to carry out housing related duties and functions. We have a role to ensure that Social Housing is an effective housing option for people on low incomes or who cannot rent or buy privately. We must ensure social housing properties in our area are allocated according to this policy.

Anyone over 16 can apply for social housing, either as a sole or joint applicant. All applicants and their household members are verified to ensure that they are eligible for an allocation of social housing.

Part of the application process is to check that the applicant's household does not contain someone ineligible i.e. because they are unsuitable to be a tenant because of serious unacceptable behaviour. However, previous serious unacceptable behaviour may not justify a decision to treat the applicant as ineligible where the applicant can show that the behaviour has improved.

Applicants found ineligible because of unacceptable behaviour can reapply at any time, but will not be eligible until they can show that their behaviour is now satisfactory.

### **Pre-Tenancy Verification & Assessment Process**

Vacancies are allocated to those applicants listed in the highest band (in date order). Every applicant household has their circumstances verified by us as their prospective Landlord before an allocation is made. Verification checks may include a visit to an applicant's current home, and making enquiries with third parties such as former landlords and health professionals (and sometimes the Police if any ASB or Criminal Behaviour history has been disclosed as part of the application process).

As well as verification, the purpose of this process is also to ascertain that the applicant has access to all the support required to successfully take on a new tenancy. At this stage, the Housing Officers will submit relevant referrals in an

attempt to have support in place as soon as possible. At this stage, referrals are often made to SPOA, Supporting People Pathway, 'Key to Advice' etc.

If during the verification process, a significant concern has become apparent - an offer may be withdrawn and the applicant referred back to the SARTH Register Team but more often than now, once the verification process is complete – the applicants are presented with a formal offer of the accommodation.

### **New Tenancy Follow-Up Contact**

A month after the new tenancy has been granted and the property handed over to the new tenant, a Housing Officer will visit to check-in with the new tenant(s). The purpose of this contact is to ensure that the tenant(s) have moved in, and all appropriate paperwork and payment plans set-up timely and correctly. This contact is also an opportunity to check whether the new tenant is in need of any additional help or support with setting up their tenancy. Should there be no concerns or support requirement noted, the Housing Officer will not carry out any further new tenancy follow-up visits. If there are outstanding matters to deal with, the Housing Officer will follow a person centred approach to on-going contact and will maintain contact with the new tenants(s) until they have settled-in and all outstanding matters addressed.

### **Cyclical Tenancy Verification/Check-In Visits**

We have introduced regular, cyclical tenancy visits where we aim to visit every household. The aim of this is to ensure we can get to know all our tenants and their households, help identify issues at an earlier stage and improve communication with our customers in their communities.

People occasionally comment that they do not know their Housing Officer. Most households do not need anything from us and a lack of contact from us usually means we are dealing with negative issues with other households. Carrying out routine visits is resource intensive but it has real value if we can spot an early sign of a problem whilst also maintaining a more visual presence in our communities.

This visit provides our tenants with an opportunity to ask for advice about their tenancy, raise concerns about the property or neighbourhood, and to give us general feedback. During the visit, the Housing Officer may need to check who is living at the property, the condition of the property, check that the property is not being used for anything that breaches the Occupation Contract and check that all the details in our records are up to date.

If there is a need for intervention or support from us, then we will agree how and when we can help. If a household do not need anything we will agree to visit again in the future and can update our records about their family circumstances.

We will be reviewing the impact of this work during 2024.

## **Process for Managing Complaints of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)**

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) is a term which covers a broad range of issues. There are several definitions for ASB but it is most defined as 'anything causing a nuisance or annoyance'.

We ask that any person whom is experiencing ASB should report the issue to us as the Landlord. If the nuisance being experienced takes the form of threats of violence or any other possible criminal activity, victims/complainants will be advised and encouraged to report this to the Police also.

We use the following methods for dealing with ASB:

- Direct contact and conversation with the complainant
- Ask the victim to complete diary sheets or in the case of noise nuisance and/or report via the 'The Noise App' if they have access to the app.
- Installing sound monitoring equipment
- Offer mediation between the relevant parties
- Draw up Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABCs) between the parties concerned.
- Issue warnings to the alleged perpetrator

In investigating serious ASB, we use the following methods:

- Work with the alleged perpetrator to uncover deeper issues which may be contributing to the behaviours such as safeguarding
- Involve other agencies such as the Police or Environmental Health.
- Facilitate or attend Multi-Disciplinary Meetings/Complex Case Conferences
- Apply to the Court for an injunction.
- Go to Court to get the person behaving in an anti-social way evicted, if they are a tenant.

We would only seek to have someone evicted for ASB if the behaviour is serious and persistent and all other interventions have failed. To evict an individual, we as the landlord would need substantial evidence that we could rely on in court.

Prior to considering tenancy management enforcement action, to be compliant with the Equalities Act 2010, we as a Landlord must determine that the action is 'proportionate' i.e. that the issuing of proceedings was a "proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim".

## **Partnerships**

Partnership working is crucial to tackling issues that might negatively affect individuals and the wider community, in order to protect people's quality of life and well-being.

We have forged strong links with partner agencies so that we can work together to take a holistic approach to managing ASB. Examples of partnerships that we work with are:

### **MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences)**



MARAC is a local meeting to discuss how to help victims at high risk of murder or serious harm. A Domestic Abuse specialist (IDVA), Police, Probation, Social Services, Health, Housing and other specialists from the statutory and voluntary sectors. Conferences are held weekly within the most serious cases being listed for wider discussion at a larger conference meeting at the end of the month.

During the MARAC meeting, all relevant information about individuals is shared, and then the representatives discuss options for increasing the safety of the victim and turn these into a co-ordinated plan. The primary focus of the MARAC is to safeguard the primary victim. The MARAC will also make links with others forums to safeguard children and manage the behaviour of the perpetrator.

See below for the number of Denbighshire Council Housing households listed to be discussed at MARAC during 2023:

<b>2023</b>	<b>Cases Discussed Weekly</b>	<b>Referred to Monthly Conference</b>
January	15	3
February	8	3
March	1	1
April	8	3
May	7	2
June	8	0
July	3	1
August	10	0
September	5	0
October	13	2
November	7	2
December	9	1

## **ADAPT (Domestic Abuse Prevention Service)**



Repeat perpetrators are referred into this group (meets monthly). The aim of this intervention programme is to help people improve their relationships and to avoid using abuse.

### **Monthly Liaison Meetings with the Neighbourhood Policing Teams (North & South)**

We work in close partnership with the Neighbourhood Policing Teams. This forum was set-up by ourselves to ensure that we have a regular opportunity to discuss any issues arising locally, and share timely and relevant information where appropriate to do so.

### **Conwy & Denbighshire Anti-Social Behaviour Tasking Group**

We also attend the monthly ASB Tasking Meeting where the most serious or persistent ASB issues within the counties of Conwy & Denbighshire are discussed. This meeting is attended by Police, Probation, Housing, Social-Services, and Mental Health Services etc, thus to ensure a partnership approach to managing and monitoring ongoing cases.

### **Joint work with Youth Service**



We work with the Youth service who have a number of interventions and programmes around the county. Some of their work involves work with individual young people and also wider activity to engage and offer diversionary activity and support for young people within their communities. We have some recent examples of this in Clawdd Poncen, Rhualt, Meliden and Rhyl.



## Community Resilience Team

Much of the work we do when engaging with communities and working alongside partners like Countryside Services and The Youth Service involves the Community Resilience Team. Posts are funded by the Housing service to support us working alongside other services and residents to improve community engagement and resilience.

The team give support to local resident's groups and partners agencies around the county, and organise events on a wide range of issues at our community centres, advice roadshows and activities to get people involved. These include cost of living support, armchair exercise and art and crafts to reduce loneliness.

### Community Resilience Update

Our community resilience team have been busy over the summer, delivering support, advice and fun activity programmes within our communities. These include:

#### Let's Play Out

During the summer holidays, we worked in partnership with South Denbighshire Community Partnership (SCDP), Denbighshire Leisure Ltd, and Denbighshire Play. Together we delivered Let's Play Outside sessions in Corwen (Wednesday's 10:30am-12:30pm) and Llangollen (Wednesday's 2:00-3:00pm) for over 100 people! Activities included sports, messy play and art crafts. Families said that they really enjoyed the weekly sessions and can't wait for them to be on every school holidays. Please keep an eye on SCDP's Facebook page for more information <https://www.facebook.com/SouthDenbighshireCommunityPartnership>



#### Cost of Living Roadshows

Working in partnership with Welsh Water, Nest, Warm Wales, Cambrian Credit Union, Citizen's Advice Denbighshire, Wales Illegal Money Lending Unit, and Working Denbighshire, our team have been on four across the county, advising people about the cost-of-living crisis.

We wanted to visit our communities, listen to people about their worries, offer advice and support about rising costs of energy, fuel and food. Partners were able to share ideas, hints and tips to help over the coming months.

Over 450 residents came along to our roadshows, with 26 being referred for more support. Feedback from the events showed that this is something that communities want, and we hope to be out and about again soon. Please keep an eye on our social media accounts for up-to-date information.



#### Croeso Cynnes / Warm Welcome

This winter, we are supporting the Croeso Cynnes/Warm Welcome project, where a safe, warm place is available to anyone. Denbighshire County Council are putting together a timetable of venues that will be hosting Warm Welcomes across the County. People can pop along to a local hub, where they will find a warm welcome, fun activities and a hot cuppa! Once this timetable has been confirmed, it will be announced on the Council's website, so keep an eye out. Everyone is welcome!



#### Eat Well, Cook Slow Project:

After a successful pilot in 2020/21, Denbighshire Housing and Citizens Advice Denbighshire came together again to deliver slow cookers to our tenants.

The idea of the project was to connect with tenants who were at risk of falling into food and fuel poverty this winter. 66 tenants were given a slow cooker, fresh ingredients, a recipe book, and a link to online demonstrations on how to prepare meals, along with energy saving measures.

We checked in with tenants to see how they were getting on, as well as having a chat about maximising household income, reducing expenses where they could, resolve debt issues, energy and utility advice, and how to apply for grants and entitlements.

As this was such a successful project, we will continue to work with Citizen's Advice Denbighshire in the future, to help our tenants.



#### Pengwern Community Hub Official Opening:

This August, the Chairman of Denbighshire County Council officially opened the new Pengwern Community Hub. Families from the local community came along to enjoy activities including arts, crafts, nature, hair braiding, bracelets, keyring making to name a few. There was also bike health checks, entertainment and refreshments.

This new hub aims to increase opportunities for people to raise skills and aspirations, as well as resources to deliver activities and services to support people.

Cllr Rhys Thomas, Lead Member for Housing and Communities, said: "We are really proud to continue working with our partner organisations in supporting the hub's continued work to increase the overall wellbeing of the local community."

Margaret Sutherland, Chief Executive Officer of South Denbighshire Community Partnership (SDCP) said: "SDCP are delighted to have worked in partnership with Denbighshire County Council, Denbighshire Housing and Friends of Pengwern on the development of the community hub, which will provide enhanced activities and services for the Llangollen community."

"Extensive consultation in the summer of 2021 identified services and activities that the community felt were needed. All partners have a very clear aspiration for the hub to provide a place that the Llangollen Community will embrace and actively contribute to the management and direction of."

Keep an eye on the Hub's Facebook page for up-to-date activities they have planned.



#### Do you want to become a digital champion?

We recently surveyed our tenants and asked them about their digital skills, and if they'd like help and support to get online.

Over 400 tenants took part, and 134 said that they'd like to become a digital champion, helping others get online. This is an amazing response and has helped us, in partnership with Digital Communities Wales, put together a course to support this. We are contacting everyone who said they'd like to become a champion, and once we have enough numbers, we will run this in the New Year either face to face or online.

If you'd like to know more about this, or want to become a digital champion, please contact our Community Resilience team on community.resilience@denbighshire.gov.uk



## **Mediation**

We often use informal mediation to try and resolve issues between neighbours. Housing Officers will generally meet people separately and try to broker compromise and understanding of different opinions.

There are formal mediation services available that can resolve disputes between neighbours, however deeply entrenched, through experienced mediators bringing people together. This does however take some persuasion and in many cases people are simply unwilling, for a variety of reasons, and often understandably do not want to meet face to face with someone who is causing them deep distress and anxiety.

This would obviously only work where there is not a clear victim and perpetrator but where there is justification that both sides need to see a different opinion to their own. The mere suggestion of this can often offend people.

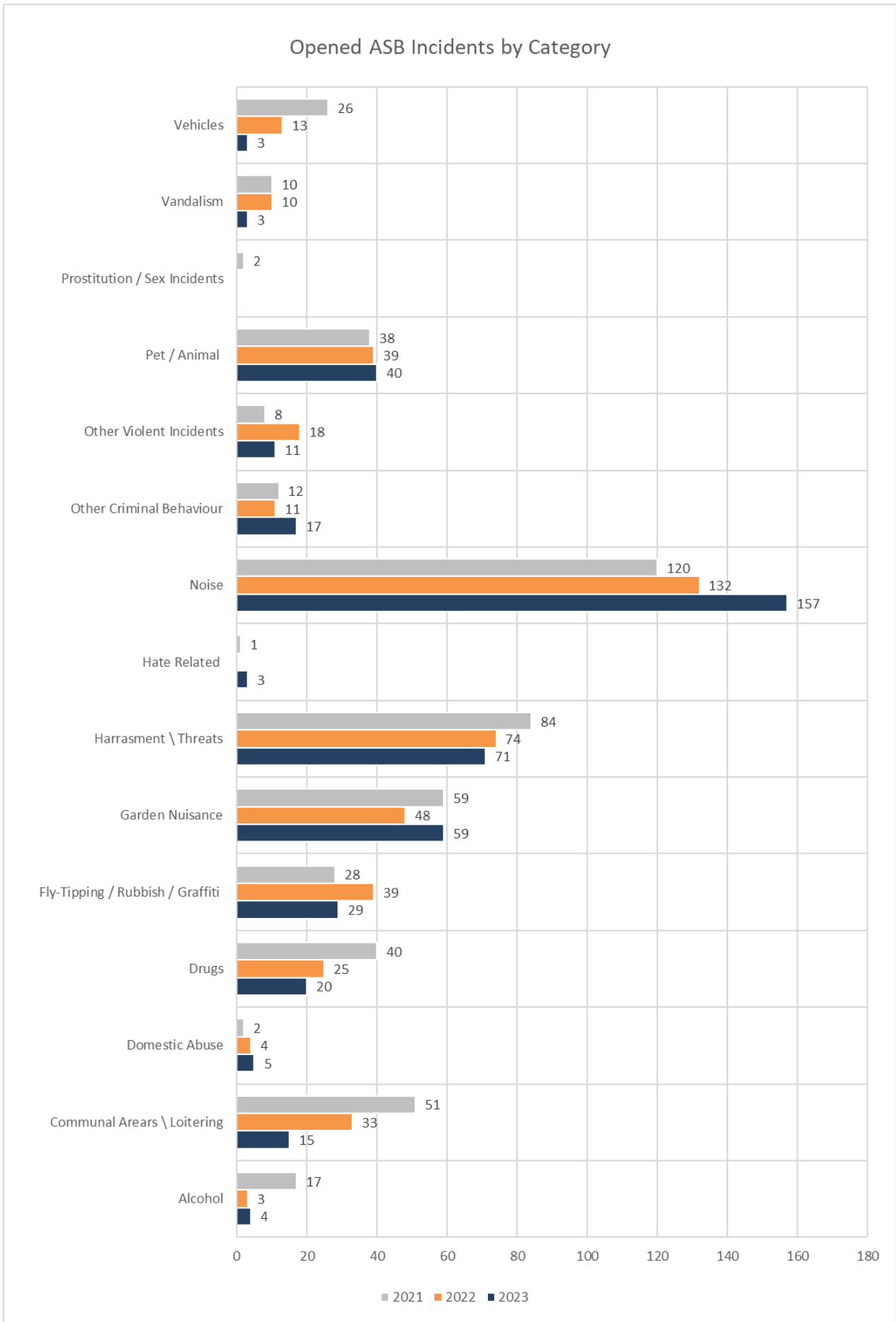
## **Other Non-Formal Actions**

We try and look at ways to be innovative to provide solutions and fairly low level and cost effective interventions may make a big difference to a problem.

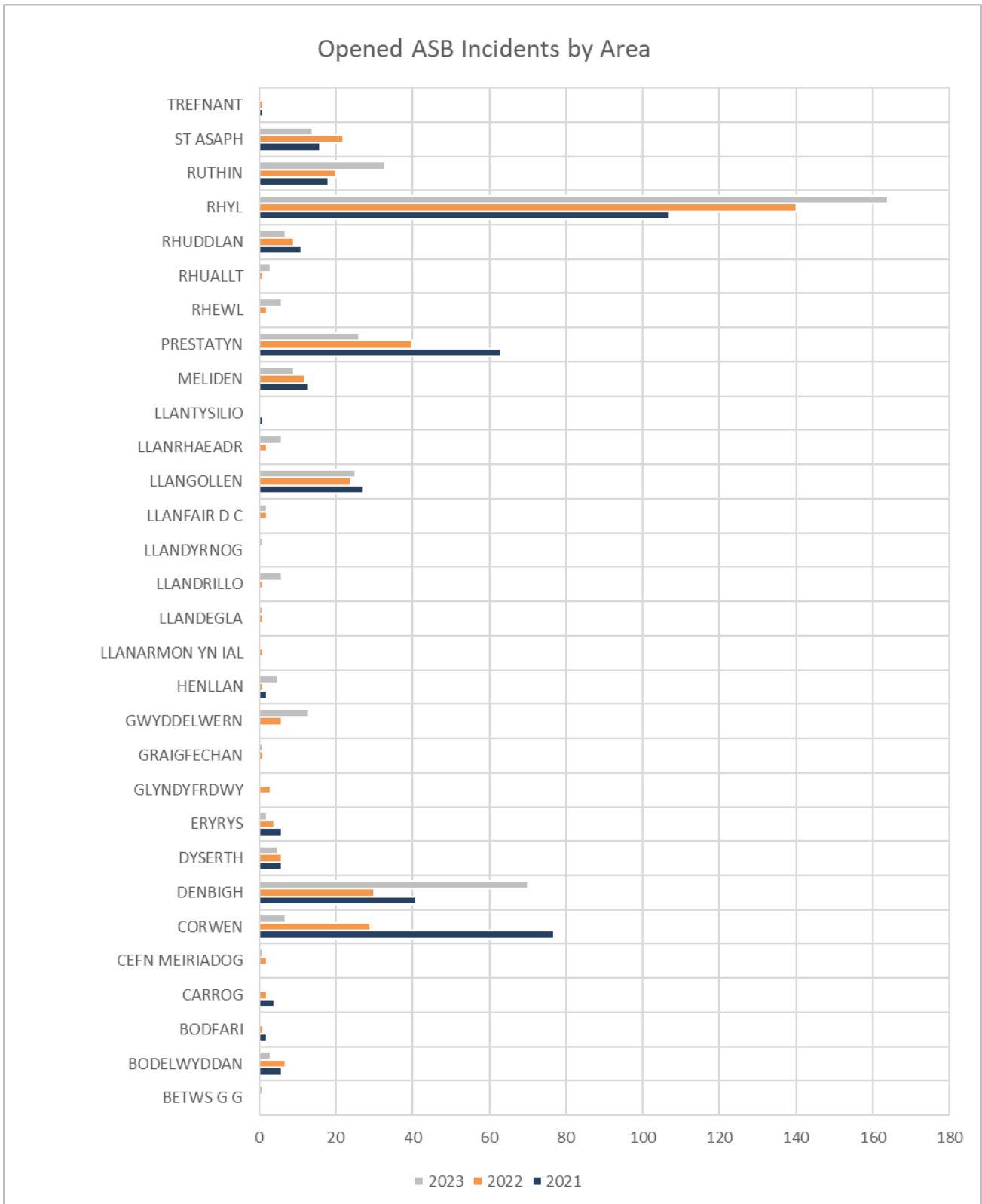
Examples include:

- Supplying dog barking deterrent devices
- Providing headphones to play music.
- Provided sound proofing between homes
- Provided additional floor covering to reduce noise transfer
- Improve boundaries between properties for increased security and privacy
- Provided domestic CCTV cameras
- Offering Dog Training sessions
- Provision of soft closers on cupboards and doors

**Statistics** - This graph shows the nature and volume of incidents over 3 years -



This graph shows the geographical areas where incidents have occurred -



## Proactive Neighbourhood Management

### Clean, Tidy and Green Neighbourhood Management

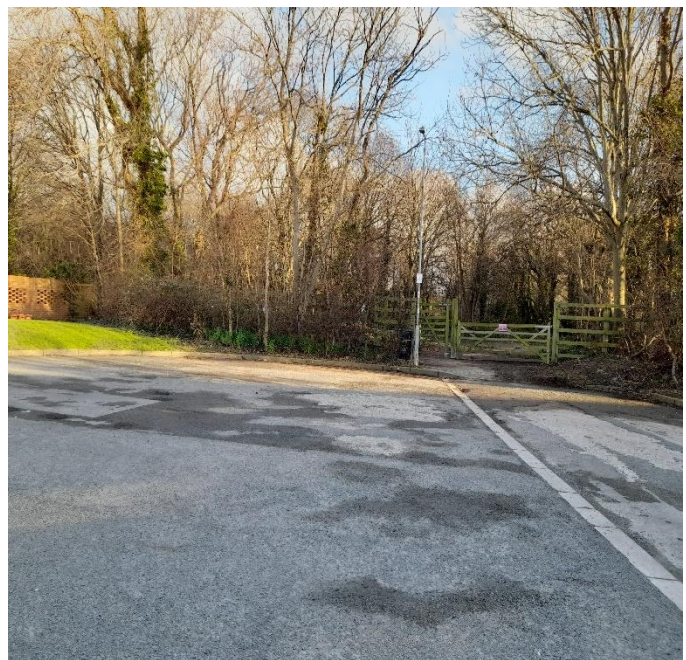
In addition to dealing with individual households we aim to take a proactive approach to managing our neighbourhoods.

In addition to Housing Officer's being out and about, our Green Space team are regularly visiting our neighbourhoods to keep an eye on a range of issues, such as grounds maintenance, play areas and communal area cleaning.

We work with services like Streetscene, Housing Enforcement and Countryside Services to ensure we can provide neighbourhoods that are clean, tidy and green and deliver a service that is proactive and preventative as well as responding to issues.

Working with the Community Resilience team and the above services where we have areas that are prone to fly tipping we will hold Clean Up days. This gets the community involved in clearing rubbish from the area and enables residents to dispose of unwanted items and prevent potential future fly tipping. This has been successful in Bruton Park in Rhyl where the use of a refuse lorry hired for the day has enabled us clear large volumes of unwanted items.

An estate walkabout between residents, various services and the local members have been successful in raising awareness of issues in the area.



## Tenancy Support

Housing Officers will only have limited time resources to deal with cases. Additional support is vital to help with dealing with issues in communities. The following example shows how our own Tenancy Support team have been able to add additional time and more intensive support to resolve issues to support the housing outcomes.

### Case Study - Tenancy Support Team

#### Pen Picture

Perpetrator of ASB but also vulnerable and lonely often drinking with another tenant at the complex resulting in complaints from neighbours. As a result the neighbours are asking to move. NW Police involved with the ASB. Also has mobility needs and struggling with the stairs so it was agreed to arrange a managed move arranged to a more suitable ground floor property.

The other tenant / drinking partner was also moved to another location.

The tenant was referred to the Tenancy Support Service to ensure that the new tenancy could be sustainable and behaviour improved.

#### Support

Tenancy Support provided:

Practical support with all aspects of a house move

- Setting up the new tenancy and utilities
- Maximising income – accessing full benefit entitlement
- Setting up direct rent payment
- Better understanding tenancy responsibilities
- Accessing support with alcohol misuse and the underlying support needs
- Accessing Mental health support
- Accessing support with loneliness
- Accessing support for independent living

**Reflection**

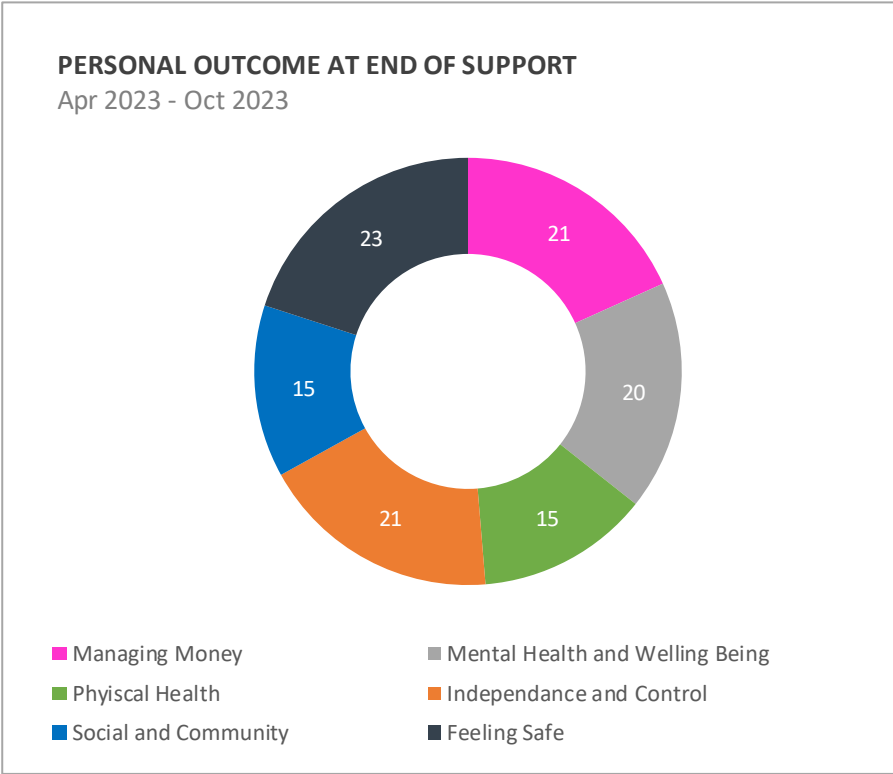
Tenant responded positively to support and engaged well and seemed genuine in wanting to get support with addiction.

Tenancy support was intensive to begin with and during this time tenant made every effort to abstain from drinking and with support put significant effort into making their new flat home.

Tenant would talk with Mental Health support services over phone but when it came to appointment she would always cancel at the point of closure until advised tenant did not wish to receive support.

Support from TST came to an end as all Tenancy aspects of support had been completed. Tenant was advised could re-access support at any point if she needed.

This chart shows the personal outcomes experienced by users of the Tenancy Support Team.



## Tenancy Management Case Study

An example of a case where we input significant resources but were not able to fully resolve the matter to the satisfaction of all involved. We know that cases like this can reoccur at any time requiring further intervention.

<p><b>Issue</b></p>	<p>Issues between our tenant who is 80 years old and an attached private occupier. Poor state of garden and dog barking.</p>
<p><b>Work of Housing Officer</b></p>	<p>Housing officer visits our tenant on a fortnightly basis. We have offered dog training sessions, dog care and walking services. There are no welfare concerns for the dog. We provided a dog barking deterrent device.</p>
<p><b>Can it be Resolved? What can a landlord do?</b></p>	<p>Poor state of the garden. The tenant's approach towards her garden has been evident for over 30 years and whilst we appreciate this is not how many people would choose how to enjoy their garden, she has had the philosophy that the garden should be allowed to grow with very limited maintenance. We will continue to engage with our tenant about this we have to accept that we would struggle to justify formal action regarding this matter after tolerating this for over 30 years of her tenancy.</p> <p>Nuisance from dog barking. This is a far more complex issue. The dog is really important to our tenant and our recent threats to seek removal of the dog has caused considerably distress. We are reassured that our tenant is engaging with us and has made a commitment to reduce the instances and frequency of the dog barking and we believe this to be the case.</p> <p>The neighbour suggests there has been some improvement. Whilst this means there will still be some nuisance caused by the barking we may have to accept a sustained improvement is the best outcome for everyone.</p> <p>We have to be proportionate. The characteristics of our tenant, the timing of the nuisance tending to be daytime and the fact that our tenant is engaging with us and is making genuine efforts to reduce the impact would significantly reduce the merit of any formal action.</p>



## Tenancy Management Tools

In handling ASB cases, there are a number of tools and legal powers that can be used to deal with the behaviour. It is important that the most appropriate action is pursued in order to ensure that issues are effectively resolved. Below are 2 examples of where we have used 2 different actions:

### **Acceptable Behaviour Contract (ABC)**

ABCs or Acceptable Behaviour Agreements as they are sometimes called are voluntary written agreements made between people involved in anti-social behaviour and the local police, housing department, the registered social landlord etc. The voluntary agreement is signed by an individual committing anti-social behaviour. In signing the contract, the individual is agreeing to abide by the terms specified and to work with the relevant support agencies. Ideally, the terms of the ABC are developed and agreed with the individual to ensure that they fully understand what is being asked of them and they are able to comply with the contract. Once the contract has been drafted, the individual and relevant agencies will all sign the document, and all parties receive a copy.

#### **Example 1: ABC to address tenant's non-disposal of waste & recycling resulting in an accumulation of rubbish in the rear garden.**

In this case, our tenant was persistently failing to dispose of refuse and recycling on a weekly basis. Tenant appeared to lack structure and motivation to deal with this issue. Subsequently, over a period of time – the accumulation of undisposed refuse and recycling accumulated to an unacceptable level within the rear garden area. This situation had occurred on a previously also. On the previous occasion, the waste from the garden was cleared by the Probation Service. On this occasion, we were unable to engage Probation Services again – we therefore facilitated a one off clearance and arranged for the provision of bigger bins and worked with the tenant to agree acceptable behaviour conditions (ABC) moving forward. To this day, this situation has not re-occurred. ABC now lapsed and we consider this case resolved.

Example of the conditions contained within the ABC can be seen below:

#### **Agreement as to future conduct:**

- *I will ensure that my front and rear garden areas at the property are kept clear of rubbish and household waste, and will remain in a maintained and reasonable standard (as illustrated in the enclosed photograph taken on [date]).*

- *I will fetch and leave my refuse, recycling and green and food waste bin (if applicable) out at the nearest accessible point to the road on collection day. I will return my bins to an appropriate storage space within the boundary of my property within the same day following the collection (bin collection schedule for your area attached).*
- *I will ensure that all bins are used correctly and that there will be no contamination (as outlined in the enclosed explanation sheets for correct use of bins).*
- *I will make timely contact with Denbighshire County Council in order to arrange and pay for removal of excess waste bags and any bulk items, this within no more than 2 weeks of the waste/items being left out in the garden (see attached contact details sheet).*
- *I agree to remain calm, and will not shout, swear, threaten or abuse of Denbighshire County Council's staff whilst making contact with the Council via telephone and/or in person.*

Should voluntary ABC not prove successful in resolving the issues, we could therefore consider applying for a legal remedy in the form of an injunction.

## **Injunctions**

The Police or any Social Landlord can apply for an injunction to prevent nuisance or annoyance to stop antisocial behaviour of any person aged 10 or over. Housing related injunctions can be granted where there is conduct capable of causing nuisance or annoyance to:

- A person in relation that person's occupation of residential premises (regardless of tenure), or
- Any person that directly or indirectly relates to the housing management functions of a local authority or other social landlord.

An application for a housing-related injunction can be made in relation to a person living in or visiting the residential premises.

An example of where we have successfully obtained an injunction as a result of a tenant's behaviour can be seen below:

**Example: Application for an Injunction to prevent ongoing drunk and disorderly behaviour from within and around a specific Council property.**

Council tenant living in an adjoining property next to elderly owner-occupiers. Tenant experienced personal heartache which sadly resulted in the tenant turning to substance misuse. Despite us being in regular contact with the tenant, her family and other agencies, the tenant's behaviour continued to deteriorate with the occurrence of loud rowdy parties overnight on a weekly basis (sometimes daily) which would often result in drunk and disorderly behaviour that occurred within the property and outside on to the street. Eventually an Injunction Order with the power of arrest was sought from the Court, and in this particular case - successfully granted. For some time thereafter, the behaviour did generally improve but following a return to the unacceptable behaviour – a Breach of Injunction Order action was pursued. Once again, the tenant had to attend Court with further conditions added to the original order. Following this second hearing, no further reports of nuisance have been reported to us since. The order has now lapsed and we consider this case to have been resolved.

See below for examples of the conditions noted within the order:

***The Court Ordered that [name of tenant] be forbidden (by herself or by instructing or encouraging any other person) from***

- 1. Engaging in or threatening to engage in conduct capable of causing nuisance or annoyance to any persons residing in, visiting or otherwise engaging in lawful activity (street address).*
- 2. Inciting or encouraging any person to engage in such behaviour.*
- 3. Engaging in conduct capable of causing housing related nuisance or annoyance to any person.*

***The Defendant must***

- 4. Engage with the relevant services in relation to her drug and alcohol misuse.*

## Management Move's

In exceptional circumstances, we may allocate vacant properties to facilitate the management of our own stock, for example, to resolve a complex situation and/or protect a vulnerable household. The number and reasons for such moves are recorded and scrutinised by the Neighbourhood Manager to ensure that such moves are kept to a minimum and do not impact on the fairness of allocations overall.

### **Investigation of Noise Complaint**

An older lady had lived alone in a 3 bedroom council property for many years. Residing in the adjoining property was a family who privately owned their property. The family consisted of a young adult with disabilities (non-verbal). Sadly, our tenant passed away. As per the Allocation Policy, we allocated the property to the highest listed applicants on the housing register - a couple with 2 teenage children. We were aware of that the incoming family had vulnerabilities of their own, but found no reason to not consider the allocation suitable.

Soon after the new family moved-in, we started to receive complaints from the neighbours about the behaviour of the family (loud shouting and arguing could be heard regularly). We initially approached the family who gave their reasons for why there was shouting and arguing within the home; this was verified by the agencies supporting the family. For some time we continued to keep in touch with the neighbours and monitored any improvement in the circumstances/behaviour of our household by maintaining regular case management meetings with our family and the support providers.

Regrettably, the neighbours reported very inconsistent improvement in the noise being heard. It was now becoming apparent that the noise emitting from our property was having a detrimental impact on the neighbours' disabled child. To assist us in gaging the level of the noise being heard, we, via our colleagues in the Environmental Health department deployed noise monitoring equipment to the neighbouring property (in case management, noise monitoring can be deployed up to 3 times). On all 3 occasions the monitoring concluded that the level of noise emitting was not at a level that would be constituted at a Statutory Nuisance; the monitoring picked up that loud shouting and arguing could be heard but not at a level that should be unacceptable to the ordinary person. However, we were in no doubt that despite this, the situation was clearly having a detrimental impact on the neighbouring family. By this time, both families were very frustrated with the situation and it was becoming increasingly likely that we were going to be

unable to repair the ill-feeling and distress caused by this situation (a situation that had been on-going with investigations and management for 2 years by this time).

Following on-going discussions with our tenant(s), a decision was made to move them. The family were moved to a different 3 bedroom property in a neighbouring location. Where they were placed was strategically chosen (and agreed with them). When their former property was vacant, we installed sound insulation boards to the adjoining walls in a bid to mitigate any further likely situations in the future.

Since the family were re-located, we have not received any complaints about their behaviour from their new neighbours. Equally, we have not received any further complaints from the previous neighbour about their new neighbours.

## Communications & Social Media

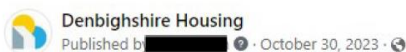
An important factor in managing issues in communities and ensuring facts and expectations are managed is how we are able to communicate. Social media is a great way to get information out quickly but can equally cause incorrect information to spread quickly. Below are some examples of information we have issued to communities in different formats.



### Marketing, engagement and communication



#### Example social media posts



Here to help!  
We are always here to help with any issues you might be having with your rent arrears, benefits and general money advice, anti-social behaviour or any other problems.  
So why not give us a call today on 01824 706000.



Polite Notice! Anti-social behaviour is no fun for anyone. Please treat your neighbours and people in your community with respect and consideration. For more information visit <https://www.denbighshirehousing.co.uk/anti-social-behaviour/>



We are proud that we have made the pledge! #makeastand  
Chartered Institute of Housing #whitenbbon #enothecycle #16daysofaction  
#internationaldayfortheeliminationofviolenceagainstwomenu

## Marketing, engagement and communication Example community/tenant bulletins



Dear Resident/Tenant, July 2023

Denbighshire Housing and the North Wales Police have been investigating recent complaints. These include anti-social behaviour, harassment, threats and violence within your community.

We always work with our communities, to resolve any problems where we can. People should feel safe in their community, being considerate and kind to neighbours.

We know we can't expect everyone to like and agree with each other's views. But we are asking you to be considerate of other people's opinions. No longer causing a nuisance or disturbance to others.

People have been using CCTV recording in your community. Please make sure when you are using CCTV you are adhering to the relevant guidelines and laws. For more information, visit <https://ico.org.uk/your-data-matters/domestic-cctv-systems-guidance-for-people-using-cctv/>

We would like to remind you to follow this advice. If not, and the problems continue, then a Community Protection Notice (CPN) or Acceptable Behaviour Contract (ABC) would be issued.

If you have any questions, please contact us at:  
Email: [housing@denbighshire.gov.uk](mailto:housing@denbighshire.gov.uk)  
Phone: 01824 706000

Kind regards

Geoff Davies  
Lead Officer Community Housing



Dear Resident, October 2020

Further to my letter in August, advising that parking at Penderfan was for tenants only, it has been brought to my attention that this has caused concerns and frustrations with local residents. We have monitored the situation and the parking area highlighted, seems to be underutilised by our tenants.



Dear Resident, October 2020

We have monitored the situation and the parking area highlighted, seems to be underutilised by our tenants.



To improve the parking situation, we have decided to reconsider the allocation of this parking provision and open up the space from the Friday 23 October 2020 to residents on Castle Street for use for cars only. No motorhomes, vans or commercial vehicles may be parked here. We will monitor the situation and if we find that these types of vehicles parked in the area, we reserve the right to retract permission, and allocate the space for tenants use only.

We thank you in advance for your cooperation in this matter. If you would like more information, please feel free to contact me on 01824 712247 or 01824 706000.

Yours sincerely,  
[Signature]  
Community Housing Officer

## Marketing, engagement and communication Example newsletter articles

### Tenancy Fraud



#### Action we take against tenancy fraud

We will investigate all allegations of tenancy fraud, as it is very serious. Where we have sufficient evidence that fraud has taken place, we will take action. This action can include a criminal prosecution and/or a claim for possession of the property through civil courts.

#### What can you do to help?

If you suspect someone is committing tenancy fraud please let us know by speaking to your Housing Officer, call us on 01824 706000 or email [housing@denbighshire.gov.uk](mailto:housing@denbighshire.gov.uk)

All reports will be treated in the strictest of confidence and you will remain anonymous to the reported party. You do not have to give us

#### What to do if you suspect fraud?

Tenancy fraud, for example, is when a tenant has a tenancy with us but lives somewhere else, sublet the home to another person (including family members). It also includes providing false information when applying for housing, or illegally applying to succeed a tenancy of someone who has died.

#### Code of conduct

We believe that our tenants have a right to be heard, understood and respected. We also believe that our staff have the right to work in a safe environment and free from any harm caused by others. We expect all tenants to treat our staff with courtesy and respect.

In a very small number of cases, where some tenants become frustrated, their actions become unacceptable because they give abuse of our staff. Actions that result in unreasonable demands and/or abusive behaviour towards our staff are unacceptable.

Aggressive or abusive behaviour includes language (whether verbal or written) that may be considered harassing, threatening or intimidating. We will look into it.

Staff to feel afraid, threatened or abused and may include threats, personal verbal abuse, derogatory remarks and gestures. Such threatening and abusive behaviour towards staff, causing our staff to feel unsafe in the neighbourhood is unacceptable. We will not tolerate such behaviour towards our staff and is a clear breach of your tenancy agreement and could result in us taking action to end the tenancy.

We are always willing to be open and consultative with our tenants so we can be and would appreciate a similar response without foul language and intimidating behaviour from you.

### Housing Disrepair Claims - Beware of

We know solicitors are knocking on doors offering to help tenants on a "no win no fee" basis who have experienced repairs and suggesting compensation may be due. We don't want to frighten people and certainly do not want to stop tenants from challenging us, but please be cautious. You may be liable for costs if you change your mind and if you are unsuccessful in court.

1. If you do have a claim, let us know by email.
2. If you are unsure, we will advise you on our complaints procedure and we will look into it.
3. If you are still unsure, you can contact the Ombudsman for Wales for free advice on any of this.

### Anti-social behaviour (ASB)

As I am sure you can appreciate, we have seen an increase in anti-social behaviour in our communities during the pandemic. It has been difficult circumstances for everyone. However, we are asking everyone if they could be thoughtful and considerate to their neighbours during this pandemic. Following the Welsh Government's latest advice and rules, parking considerately, not shouting and screaming, being aware of what your children are up to in the community, are just a few examples of how we can all help each other.

If you would like to report any ASB, please contact us on 01824 706000 or via our website [www.denbighshirehousing.co.uk/anti-social-behaviour/](http://www.denbighshirehousing.co.uk/anti-social-behaviour/)

### Alcohol Abuse and Domestic Violence

When you look at alcohol abuse and domestic abuse, it is easy to see that there are connections between the two behaviours.

Often the violence in the home is accompanied by excessive drinking of alcohol over a long period. While the drinking is not usually the cause of the violence, it can make the situation more volatile, increasing the severity and frequency of the abusive episodes.

While drinking can make the violence worse, it may also become an escape for the abused person, which in turn escalates the cycle of domestic abuse even further. This violence can affect any children exposed to the situation in many negative ways.

Alcohol abuse combined with domestic abuse often results in increased injury to the battered spouse, and everyday drinking is one of the leading risk factors for domestic abuse.

If you or someone you know is experiencing domestic abuse, you can go ring the Live Fear Free Helpline on 0808 8010 800

Anyone in immediate danger should call 999.

#LiveFearFree #Youarenotalone

You can also visit the Alcoholics Anonymous website for help and also find your nearest group.

<https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/Home>

#### Our Pledge:

Domestic abuse is one of the biggest issues we face. In 2019, Denbighshire Housing made a pledge in support of people experiencing domestic abuse. A large proportion of domestic abuse goes unreported, but studies suggest millions of people are affected every year. Tragically, two women are killed every week by their partner or ex-partner.

Our pledge is focused on four commitments that we are agreeing to make to provide support for people experiencing domestic abuse. These include:

- Putting in place and embedding a policy to support our tenants who are affected by domestic abuse.

- Making information about national and local domestic abuse support available on our website and other relevant places, so it is easily accessible.

- Amending or putting in place an HR policy, to support staff who may be experiencing domestic abuse.
- Appointing a champion, at a senior level, to own the activity of what we are doing to support people experiencing domestic abuse.

For more information about our pledge, please visit <http://www.ch.gov.uk/makeastand>

#### Useful helplines:

The National Domestic Violence Helpline is a free, confidential helpline run by Women's Aid and Refuge for anyone experiencing domestic abuse and it is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. You can contact them on 0808 2000 247 or visit [www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk](http://www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk)

Women's Aid provides a range of information and support on domestic abuse, including support for people experiencing domestic abuse, and people who are concerned that others may be. You can contact them on 0808 80 10 800 or visit <https://www.welthomensaid.org.uk>



## **A Day in the life of a Housing Officer**

### **We asked one of the Housing Officer's to describe their day -**

I started work at **8:50am** as I needed to prepare for my day of visits. I quickly check my emails and update our Finance system to confirm that some works have been completed as I had asked a contractor to clean up some fly tipping for me.

I answer some telephone calls. One from a Homelessness Prevention Officer asking if there are any updates on a property identified for a person she is supporting as a potential new tenant. We talk about what the person will need to be able to move in and what financial help we can look for. Another call is from a customer about needing to increase a direct debit due to a change in benefits and the amount they need to pay has increased.

### **9:15am**

I head off to an office to print off some documents I need for the day ahead as I have a "sign up" with a new tenant today and a "Pre tenancy assessment" with a prospective new tenant tomorrow. I also print a letter for a tenant I have arranged to visit about rent payments, in case they are not in as agreed. I also scan documents from yesterday's work to upload into the Housing Management system.

On the way to my visit, I stop off at a flat to leave a Direct Debit form, a tenant has requested.

I now must visit someone due to missed rent payments. I have tried every method such as previous visits, letters, phone calls and emails so it is time for a further visit now. I knock several times, but I know the person works and is rarely home and the car is not there. I leave the letter I prepared earlier with all my details on advising the person to contact me.

As I am leaving the building, I am called over by another resident who asks me about a house they think has become available, closer to their daughter who is also her carer. We briefly talk over the circumstances and I offer advice and numbers to contact for more information and set off to my next visit.

### **10am**

At my next visit I meet a Manager who has come along because we need to visit someone who is on the Staff Protection Register. This means the tenant has been identified as a risk to staff. There have been some very concerning issues recently and we have worked hard trying to find ways to diffuse and resolve the situation. First though I ask the manager to accompany me to another house in the same street, which is currently unoccupied, as I have been told that the rear garden has been filled with fly tipping.

We are able to identify where the fly tipping has come from and we find several clues to confirm this. We take some photographs for evidence.

I was so disappointed to see the state of the alleyway nearby as over the last few years we have worked with environmental crime teams to tackle this fly tipping hotspot.

### **10:30am**

This visit has to be a two person as the tenant is on the Staff Protection Register. This person has chaotic behaviour, diagnosed Mental Health issues (Schizophrenia) and openly admits drug use on occasion. There are suspicions that this person possibly deals drugs and we have shared information on this with North Wales Police.

Property searches have been previously carried out, but nothing was found. Today, we are here to discuss some ongoing issues between this person and the neighbour. They were once friends but have fallen out and it got to the point that the police were being called on a regular basis but now knives were alleged used, arrests were made, and bail conditions put in place. This is a sensitive situation and has the potential to turn into a very dangerous one. We spoke to the tenant but we had to be careful as we didn't want to trigger any Mental Health issues and cause paranoia so we gave our reassurances and we planned to return to with North Wales Police.

### **11am**

My next visit was in the same street. This was a sign up of a new tenant who is a gentleman who had been a lodger in a house for years but has been asked to leave and then lost his job. The sign up takes a good hour as we run through everything from fire safety, gas safety, the laundry rooms and financial matters before we hand over the keys to his new home.

During the visit I identified he would benefit from a referral to Citizens Advice Denbighshire as he is unsure about his benefits with very recently having lost his job. This gentleman owned very few possessions so we had to look at ways of obtaining things for him and I was able to identify some recycled furniture and goods for his flat. He as very grateful so I took some real job satisfaction away with me.

I also remember before I left the area that I promised to post a form in someone's door. I had offered the day before when we spoke on the phone to post it in the mail, but he said he had not been receiving letters so as I knew I was in the area I said I would push it through.



**12:30pm**

I meet my Senior Housing Officer. I have received some calls/messages from an upset resident at our older person's accommodation. Her neighbour has allegedly been getting very drunk and verbally abusing and even threatening her. This took place over Christmas and is apparently because her little dog has been urinating near his door. Things have turned quite nasty at times and the police have been called. I wanted support as the perpetrator can be quite unpredictable at times.

We visited the lady and she said things had settled a little, but she said she really would like to move. She became tearful and said it was affecting her health. I explained how she could apply for a move and she said she had literacy issues so I offered to refer her to our Tenancy Support Team. She asked us not to visit the alleged perpetrator today and we agreed as he had seen us enter and as things were quiet. Sometimes a visit from an Officer can trigger things again so we left it for today.

There are other issues at the scheme. Firstly, we had bird feeding issues where an upset resident has sent pictures in of his car covered in bird droppings. We knew who the bird feeder was and had a chat about the bird feeding but she said she was only feeding from the small bird feeders and that she wasn't feeding seagulls or throwing food out. The lady produced all her letters from public protection, her RSPB leaflets and said she would fight this all the way. She then said if we are going to start on her about bird droppings then perhaps we should look at the dog fouling in the communal gardens. We agreed to monitor this and raise with the Dog Warden service if necessary. We left on good terms and the lady understood if we had complaints that we had to investigate them. I will need to update the complainant at some point.

Something I have learned is that if you raise a complaint to one person about an issue with them, they usually raise one about something else!

Secondly, sadly we had a resident who had passed away in hospital and a neighbour had the key to the deceased's flat. We have managed to locate their family in Tenerife who will be dealing with the case.

**1:30pm**

A quick lunch at home but didn't get much peace as my mobile was ringing most of the time.

## **2pm**

At my desk, I contact the fly tipping perpetrator from earlier and I tell her we have evidence she is responsible for the rubbish. She admits the rubbish is hers and I tell her that if I have to take further action it is a criminal offence. I will need to return and check on the area and give her a deadline to sort this matter out. I offered contact details of a reputable licenced waste carrier.

I have notes to write, missed calls to return, emails to respond to and listen to voicemails. Messages vary from the contact centre asking for advice about a case, a fellow Housing Officer asking for advice and a tenant telling me her good news that she no longer needs to take her cancer treatment. I need to add the notes about my visits and ensure I make the referrals for my customers.

I must prepare for another Pre-tenancy assessment the following day where we are looking at housing a larger family with 7 children. I need to read through the file and liaise with her Homelessness Support Co-ordinator. The purpose of the form is to check that all the circumstances / occupants are still the same and to ensure their needs match the house so we can make best use of our stock. I take several more calls from customers.

## **3pm**

Whilst I was hoping to benefit from a couple of hours at the end of day to check some rent accounts and catch-up with my outstanding admin work, this was not to be. I took a call from a concerned neighbour who reported that he had not seen his neighbour for a couple of days and that this was very unusual. It is not uncommon to receive calls such as this. Our records state that this person has no next of kin so I make enquiries with SPOA to check that he's not been admitted to hospital. I feel I need attend the property as I am concerned. I ring the Police who advise that they would not attend until such time we have gained access and know for sure that we would require their attendance. I make arrangements for one of our joiners to meet me at the address to force entry into the flat. Upon entry, we find the tenant deceased on the bathroom floor. I called the Emergency Services who asked that I remain at the scene until they are able to deploy someone to take over the scene. I left the site, and finished for the day at 6.10pm.