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Hate incidents in social rented housing: A review of approaches and the use of the Tackling Hate Incident Toolkit

Research Summary

Social research

Number: 06/2013

In 2008, the Wales Social Landlords Anti-Social Behaviour Forum (ASB) published *Tackling Hate Incidents – a Toolkit for Social Landlords in Wales* (the Toolkit).

In 2012, the Welsh Government commissioned Shelter Cymru and Tai Pawb to undertake a process and impact evaluation to assess the effectiveness of the Toolkit and provide evidence to enable its further development.

The research was carried out between June and November 2012.

Findings:

The research found that the Toolkit is used by just over a third of social landlords in Wales (our survey indicated 37%), mostly by Registered Social Landlords. Social landlords who do not use the Toolkit indicated that their methods follow the ethos of the Toolkit.

Stakeholders generally view the Toolkit as a helpful reference guide for social landlords to ensure their policies and practices are effective for tackling hate incidents.

The research identified a range of approaches and good practice that social landlords are using to deal with hate incidents.

A number of themes arose from the findings:

(i) Awareness and recognition of hate incidents:

One of the major barriers to effectively tackling hate incidents is a lack of awareness amongst the general public (including victims and perpetrators of hate incidents) and organisations (including social landlord staff) of what a hate incident

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Analysis for Policy

is and whom it affects. Thus, tenants might not report it because they do not realise that they had experienced a hate incident and therefore did not report it.

The research touched upon the complexities of hate incidents, the importance of adequate social landlord staff training and effective monitoring of hate incidents. The Toolkit was identified as a useful resource to increase an organisation's awareness of hate incidents and their ability to recognise them as such.

Consistency of responses across Wales

The research picked up on the issue of the consistency of responses to hate incidents from social landlords across Wales. Social landlords reported a wide range of different responses, depending on local context and need. Stakeholders emphasised the need to ensure awareness of hate incidents towards people with some of the lesser known protected characteristics in more rural areas of Wales.

A multi-agency approach to tackling hate incidents

There was evidence of effective partnership working between social landlords and other organisations to tackle hate incidents. Social landlords who use the Toolkit stated that they had good partnership working even before the implementation of the Toolkit.

It was clear that a multi-agency approach incorporating both local and national organisations (and service users) is required for social landlords to effectively tackle hate incidents. However, the results indicated that there might be less engagement with agencies other than the police and community safety partnerships.

Barriers to reporting

Social landlords reported numerous ways in which tenants can report hate incidents, including telephone, email and third party reporting systems. However, as noted, hate incidents are notoriously under-reported, and this is also apparent in social housing.

There are thought to be numerous reasons why victims are reluctant to report hate incidents to their social landlord. These include victims' lack of awareness of what a hate incident actually is, the fear that nothing will be done after reporting the incident, fear of repercussions and issues - whether real or perceived - over the user-friendliness of the reporting systems.

The monitoring of outcome data of hate incident work

Our research found that there is a lack of formal monitoring of what is being done to tackle hate incidents, thereby making it difficult for social landlords to accurately measure the success of their approaches. However, some landlords do recognise this and are aiming to improve their monitoring of hate incidents and what they use the monitoring data for.

Resolution of the hate incidents or crime

The research found that hate incidents are dealt with by social

landlords in a variety of ways, ranging from eviction to mediation and restorative justice. Essentially, many social landlords highlighted the need for the response and case resolution to be victim-centred.

Background

Hate incidents are defined as a manifestation of prejudice based on the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. These characteristics are: Age, Gender, Disability; Religion or Belief; Sexual Orientation; Race, Gender Reassignment, Pregnancy and Maternity and Marriage and Civil Partnership¹.

Whilst hate crime involves a criminal offence (for example, assault or criminal damage), hate incidents encompass a broader spectrum of anti-social behaviour (ASB), including non-criminal behaviour. Dealing with hate crime and hate incidents is often seen as

¹ Nevertheless, only five protected characteristics are measured in terms of Hate Crime by the police, they are: Disability, Religion and Belief, Sexual Orientation, Race and Gender Reassignment

an aspect of management of ASB².

As part of the Wales Specific Duties through the Equality Act 2010, the Welsh Government launched a Strategic Equality Plan in April 2012, which includes an objective to tackle hate crime. In addition, in 2013, the Welsh Government will be delivering a Hate Crime Framework for Action with the aim of developing a standardised approach on an all-Wales basis. The framework will be targeted at the Welsh Government, local authorities and stakeholders and its three key objectives will be to:

- (i) prevent hate crime;
- (ii) increase reporting, training and access to support; and
- (iii) improve the operational response to hate crime.

Research, together with the long-standing experiences of Tai Pawb and its partner organisations,

² See: Home Office, 2012, Challenge It, Report It, Stop It; and, Home Office, White Paper, 2012, Putting Victims First: More Effective Responses to Anti-social Behaviour, Cm 8367 para 1.15

suggest that social landlords must play a key role in preventing and tackling hate crime. In recent years, numerous examples have shown that even incidents which might be classed as “lower level abuse”, can, if repeated, have very serious consequences for victims of hate crime.

Methods

The aims of this research were to:

- (i) ascertain how widely the Toolkit is used - including identifying examples - and whether its aims have been met;
- (ii) identify - where the Toolkit has not been used - whether an alternative approach has been adopted and, if so, how successful this has been;
- (iii) identify if improvements are needed to the Toolkit or suggest alternative processes for achieving the Toolkit’s aims; and
- (iv) further capture what work social landlords in Wales are doing to tackle hate incidents and assess how this work might be improved.

The evaluation was undertaken between June and October 2012 and involved consultation with social landlords, wider stakeholders and victims of hate incidents.

Social landlords were primarily asked for their views by way of an online questionnaire.

A response rate of around 80% was received from regulated social landlords. However, despite the Research Team's efforts to engage with them by telephone, email and post, few responses were received from de minimus³ landlords.

The second stage of the research involved:

(i) a series of one-to-one interviews with 10 stakeholders (including social landlords);

(ii) three focus groups with 47 interested stakeholders (two in south Wales and one in north Wales); and

(iii) a series of one-to-one interviews with six victims of hate

incidents in Wales.

The Research Team employed someone with experience of hate incidents, known as a Peer Research Officer. He helped design the research interview scripts and interviewed participants alongside our Research Officers.

Finally, the methodology involved the collection of good practice examples from social landlords and other stakeholders working to tackle hate incidents in Wales.

Recommendations

Recommendations were developed under the three broad themes of:

(i) Promotion of the Toolkit and better awareness;

(ii) Partnership working; and

(iii) Changes to the Toolkit.

The Research Team included specific suggestions to the Welsh Government and social landlords on how the recommendations could be implemented.

³ registered social landlords with less than 250 properties

Promotion of the Toolkit and better awareness

The Welsh Government should:

Further promote the Toolkit to social landlords who had not previously heard of it, thereby ensuring that their organisation is best equipped to deal with hate incidents.

Ensure that the Toolkit is further promoted amongst stakeholders such as victim support and voluntary organisations, police, probation, the Crown Prosecution Service and others.

Ensure that the Toolkit promotes a consistent but local and personalised response to hate incidents and a response which is victim-centred. The Toolkit should further encourage consultation and engagement with victims of hate incidents to ensure a victim-centred service.

Ensure that social landlords in areas less exposed to particular protected characteristics are fully aware of hate incidents. The Toolkit should be further promoted to

social landlords in more rural areas of Wales.

Consider these recommendations in the evaluation of the Wales Housing Management Standard for Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour and in the Welsh Government Framework for Action on Hate Crime.

Social landlords should:

Ensure that use of the Toolkit is accompanied by regular training of management and all frontline staff to raise awareness of hate incidents and that there is a consistent, cross-organisational commitment and approach to dealing with such incidents.

Offer training on all protected characteristics affected by hate incidents and crime, including the potential additional vulnerability of some individuals (e.g. mental health issues, learning disabilities, age etc), even if landlords feel they do not have hate incidents in their area.

Ensure that social landlords who do not use the Toolkit have policies

and procedures that follow the best practice stated in the Toolkit, even if they believe the incidence of hate crime is low in their area.

Raise the awareness of what a hate incident is with tenants (including examples of hate incidents). The Toolkit could assist with this by providing a template/example information for social landlords to personalise.

Through the All Wales Social Landlords ASB Forum, continue its work on promoting good practice in relation to dealing with hate crime. The Forum should continue encouraging larger social landlords with established hate incidents policies to link with smaller social landlords in order to support and share good practice.

Offer and publicise accessible and user-friendly ways of reporting hate incidents. Such publicity should be accompanied by information on what victims can expect from their social landlord and what will happen next. The Toolkit could supply more information and examples of good practice in this area.

Partnership working

The Welsh Government should:

Consider promoting more good practice on multi-agency working through the Toolkit or other means. This could involve examples of cases where Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) structures are involved, including common risk assessment, examples of information sharing protocols, MARAC principles, terms of reference and coordination mechanisms. Where MARAC pilots are being developed, these should involve social landlords and the results of pilots should be promoted to social landlords.

Social landlords should:

In the case of local authorities, further develop preventative approaches, embed community cohesion and hate crime prevention into their Single Integrated Plans, policies and practices as advised in “Getting On Together – a Community Cohesion Strategy for Wales” and the subsequent “Mainstreaming Community Cohesion - Guidance for Local Authorities in Wales”

(Welsh Government, 2012). The guidance provides information on how to embed community cohesion and hate crime prevention into housing strategies, policies and practices. This will address gaps identified by some research participants in the work regarding hate crime prevention. Housing associations should follow similar practice and work in partnership with local authorities in making sure that the guidance is implemented.

Ensure that they are members of local multi-agency hate crime partnerships, where these exist. Where there are no formalised partnerships, social landlords should work with relevant agencies on a case by case basis.

Changes to the Toolkit

The Welsh Government should:
Further investigate effective means of encouraging people to report hate incidents, multi-agency working (including with schools) and reducing hate incidents demonstrated in this research by non-users of the Toolkit in order to include such good practice in the

Toolkit for the benefit of other social landlords.

Give consideration to converting the Toolkit into an online tool. This would ensure quick access through cross tabulation and search options, as well as providing an opportunity for regular updates in relation to changes in legislation, guidance and emerging good practice. This would prevent the document from becoming too bulky whilst offering an opportunity to add new content.

Consider including template/example information in the Toolkit on what a hate incident is, so that social landlords can personalise it in order to raise awareness of hate incidents amongst tenants.

Consider providing more information on ways to prevent hate crime, which could form a bigger part of the Toolkit (including good practice examples). This is because evidence suggests that the Toolkit is not currently widely used to reduce hate crime through prevention, including community cohesion initiatives and allocation

considerations, although this might be due to a number of wider factors.

Ensure that the Toolkit encourages further partnership between social landlords and wider stakeholders, including work with schools and other statutory and voluntary agencies.

Ensure that the Toolkit supplies more information and examples of good practice in relation to encouraging the reporting of hate incidents in accessible and user-friendly ways. This could be accompanied by examples, which could be used by social landlords, of what victims can expect from their social landlord and what will happen next.

Ensure that the Toolkit promotes common performance standards and standardised monitoring, supporting social landlords in doing this by providing templates and encouraging them to share their results with other social landlords. The Toolkit should focus on how monitoring data can be utilised to improve performance and outcomes for victims.

Ensure that the Toolkit further promotes victim-centred case resolution. An option of mediation or restorative justice should be available to the victim and perpetrator where appropriate and where they wish to pursue that line of resolution. Action needs to be taken to secure early intervention (to prevent escalation and the need to move). Where the victim agrees, perpetrators should face appropriate consequences of their behaviour and a strong message needs to be given to the perpetrators and the community about action being taken, where relevant.

Social landlords should:

Utilise monitoring data to regularly review their hate crime/ASB policies. This should also involve consultation with victims and victim support organisations.

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