

Out of Order: Learning lessons from complaint about antisocial behaviour (August 2023)

LGSCO questions for councillors (August 2023)

Executive / Service response

Does your council scrutinise the outcomes of complaints?

ASB Officer's when finalising an ASB report must follow an internal case closure process, this process is implemented as a final check list to ensure that all complainants receive the same high level of service.

The complainant is regularly kept up to date in terms of the investigation, case development and outcomes. Any ASB cases that are open for longer than 3 months are automatically reviewed by a supervisor in a separate meeting, this promotes good practice and ensures that victims are being updated and cases are being dealt with appropriately.

In all ASB investigations, complainants receive an acknowledgement letter with their allocated ASB Officers name and contact details, this ensures the ASB officer is contactable at any stage by the complainant.

When a case is finalised by an ASB Officer, the complainant is updated verbally and in writing with what actions have been taken and rationale on the closure of their case.

If a complainant feels their complaint is not being dealt with satisfactory or they are unhappy with the outcome of the case, complainants are made aware (if eligible) of their right to activate an ASB case review (community trigger). Officers provide information on how complainants can activate an ASB case review and direct complainants to the Tameside Council website for further information and application process.

Tameside Council recognises the importance of customer complaints and welcomes complaints as a valuable form of feedback about its services. The Council is committed to using the information it receives to help drive forward improvements.

	<p>Cases are scrutinised within the Bi-weekly ASB meeting and discussed with colleagues and the team leader to ensure that the officer has explored all avenues within their investigation. Officers can also request for meetings to take place on a 1-1 basis with their team leader if they require assistance in resolving a case, this gives the opportunity for the team leader to assess the actions taken so far and advise on the next steps in case resolution.</p>
<p>Where things have gone wrong, how does your council learn from complaints? Are these processes effective?</p>	<p>Tameside Council have an internal ASB guide document, this document is for guidance for ASB Officer's on how to deal with customer complaints effectively, this document is constantly evolving and is updated regularly.</p> <p>The internal ASB guide is regularly updated and will be amended if lessons are learnt from investigations. Staff are regularly made aware of any changes to the process, through 1-2-1 coaching sessions and team meetings.</p> <p>Tameside Council inform complainants about their right for a community trigger, this ensures the council and partners are responding to cases of ASB appropriately and consider whether further action should be taken or if any internal processes should be reviewed.</p>
<p>How does your council use Ombudsman reports and decisions to develop its own policy and practice?</p>	<p>Tameside Council ASB Officers have been provided with additional training and launched an improved process with the aim of improving customer satisfaction, the ASB Team have since seen a significant reduction in repeat calls into the service.</p> <p>The last Ombudsman report for ASB team was in September 2022. In line with recommendations from the Ombudsman, all actions were completed within 30 days, this included amending community trigger information on the Tameside Council website, informing all ASB staff of the findings and what action to take in future investigations.</p> <p>In addition to the Ombudsman report, meetings are held with Legal Services who reviewed the reports and recommended further actions if required.</p>

How do your council's ASB policies and practice put victims at the heart of its investigations?

Tameside Council's ASB policy has a service standard to be courteous and professional at all times, to support those who make reports of ASB and keep them informed of case developments from the initial acknowledgement of the report to the closing of the case.

Involving the victims at all times throughout the process, we use informal sanctions such as verbal and written warnings, this can include Acceptable Behaviour Contracts.

Tameside Council also consider using legal sanctions were informal ones have failed or is not appropriate due to the seriousness of the behaviour, this may include Community Protection Warnings, Community Protection Notices and Injunctions.

ASB Officers will refer victims of ASB to appropriate agencies including Victim Support or mental health services, the information for all relevant services to refer victims is included within the ASB Guide.

Officers are regularly made aware of any groups that our community safety partnership officers are working with that may be beneficial to both our victims and perpetrators and are updated in our team meetings with any new projects.

Methods of contact are tailored to each victim and their preferences to ensure we meet the needs of our victims, in some circumstances victims may only wish to be contacted via letter or email or we can provide a more hands on approach with home visits if requested.

How do your council's processes promote good liaison and proactive working with other relevant agencies?

In many cases, it is not possible to resolve reports of ASB via one organisation and so we use a partnership approach in most reports to resolve the complaint.

Regular Community Safety Partnership meetings are attended with partner agencies to identify repeat subjects and share information between agencies to promote a targeted pro-active approach in resolving cases and reducing ASB.

PACT meetings are attended by ASB Officers to liaise with the police and the public to discuss ASB reporting, incidents and prevention.

	<p>Events, drop in sessions and school presentations are attended by ASB officers to promote partnership working with both GMP and housing providers, building relationships with partners within their allocated areas.</p> <p>ASB Officers review reports of ASB and if appropriate, submit intelligence directly to the Police Intelligence Hub, information and education is provided to the public on how they to submit ASB reports directly through Crimestoppers/101.</p>
Is it clear to the public what the ASB case review is, and how they can access this?	<p>Tameside Council information on how the public can access the ASB case review is at www.tameside.gov.uk/reportantisocialbehaviour.</p> <p>During an ASB investigation, Officer's will inform complainants of their right to an ASB case review and direct them to the above web site to submit their application.</p>
Do officers understand they should signpost people to the case review process where appropriate?	<p>All Council ASB Officers recently attended an ASB case review training programme provided by registered charity ASB Help in July 2023.</p> <p>Within this training programme it was explained in detail how ASB Officers should recognise the complainants right to activate an ASB case review. The ASB internal guide document has recently been updated, an ASB Officer must consider if the complainant has a right to activate a case review, and if so, the case review process will be provided to the complainant in writing.</p>