

# Community Cohesion Strategy

## 2011-14

### **OUR MISSION**

To deliver excellent, customer focused  
and cost effective housing services  
to all our residents



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Please feel free to get in touch with us if:

- You feel this document is not as clear and easy to read as you would expect; or
- You believe that we aren't doing the things that this document says we will do; or
- You just want to talk to someone about this document

Whatever the reason, if you want to talk to us about this document you should contact:

**Head of Community Cohesion on Freephone 0800 195 5552**

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## Introduction

- 1.1** SHP delivers a range of housing services directly to the tenants and leaseholders of the London Borough of Sutton (“the Council”).
- 1.2** The Community Cohesion team deliver services aimed at helping people feel safe in their homes including tackling anti-social behaviour (ASB), creating welcoming environments, engaging with residents to involve them in their community and tackling community tensions. The service promotes positive relationships and tries to ensure that no member of the community is disrespected, neglected, or disadvantaged. Integral to service delivery is partnership working with other stakeholders in the community.
- 1.3** This strategy identifies the medium term approach to the delivery of these services and has been developed taking in to account the views of, and feedback from, customers. As part of the development of estate action plans we engaged in a programme of visits to over 2,000 homes, participation at residents’ association meetings and specific consultation exercises such as the St. Helier Festival and the Residents’ Conference. In addition, outcomes from service based surveys (e.g. ASB) and the STATUS survey have been incorporated in the strategy.
- 1.4** There are complementary service strategies for Asset Management, External Services, Income Management, Leasehold Services and Older People’s Services. Together with the strategies for the support services and strategic drivers, our

strategies provide the focus for achieving our Priorities.

## Where Are We Now?

- 2.1** The current state of the services is reflected in the following:
  - The 2010 STATUS survey indicated that 77.4% of non sheltered tenants are satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live, a rise of almost 3 per cent since 2008, (and 8% since 2006);
  - Our service delivery in relation to tenancy management and anti-social behaviour remains in the same position as in the 2007 Audit Commission inspection with more strengths than weaknesses, including areas of best practice in anti-social behaviour;
  - We work extensively with a range of partners and share intelligence via the Safer Sutton Partnership Service, multi agency Public Protection Arrangements, the multi agency Risk Assessment Conference and a number of police-led initiatives including Ward Panels;
  - The local community doesn’t suffer from the deep polarisations and hostilities that are the root causes of community tensions in other areas;
  - We offer a support service to victims and survivors of domestic violence and this service is recognised as being of a high quality;
  - Survivors of domestic violence have formed a very active support group, Breath, and this group is supported by SHP;

- With our colleagues and partners we ensure that graffiti, litter and abandoned vehicles are dealt with quickly - offensive or obscene graffiti is removed within 24 hours. We also work with partners to design out crime (e.g. better lighting at Sutton Court);
- We deliver diversionary activities with partners (e.g. Kickz with Crystal Palace FC and the Police);
- We are involved in a range of activities with residents (e.g. planting days, making a difference days, mini Olympics, activity centre trips) including inter-generational activities (e.g. young people teaching sheltered housing residents to play Nintendo Wii and the residents teaching them games like scrabble and darts);
- Estate Action Plans have been developed in consultation with residents to identify how we will tackle their neighbourhood priorities;
- Residents are actively involved in decision making in a variety of ways. We have a number of active residents associations and panels and coffee mornings are held in our sheltered schemes, where we canvas residents' views on a variety of subjects;
- We have developed and implemented a family intervention project with partners in the Council;
- We carry out a 6-week visit to all new tenants to identify how well they have settled in to their tenancy and to address any immediate issues that have

arisen. There is also a follow up visit after eight months;

- In addition, we carry out tenancy checks on around 15% of all tenants each year and are currently involved in a project with the Council to tackle social housing tenancy fraud.
- There are increasing demands on the availability of social housing nationally. The national initiative to tackle tenancy fraud placed a responsibility on social housing providers to tackle the issue of unlawful and tenancy misuse and to protect public funds. We have implemented a tenancy fraud initiative to tackle the problem in Sutton. In 2010-11 we successfully repossessed over 20 properties under this initiative.

**2.2** It was the view of the Audit Commission in their inspection of October 2009 that strengths outweigh weaknesses in tenancy management. They commented that “Tenants are given information and support to sustain their tenancies and introductory tenancies are having a positive impact. ASB is being effectively addressed with partners using a range of methods and diversionary activities. The service is well promoted and easy to access with support for victims and witnesses. However, not all new tenants are receiving early visits and tenancy fraud is not being addressed effectively.”

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## Where Do We Want To Be?

**3.1** We want to see a service where communities are able to exist together in a state of harmony and through peaceful relationships, characterised by a climate of mutual understanding and respect, because there is:

- A well developed partnership network to tackle ASB operating with a longer term, strategic approach and involving other housing providers within and across community boundaries;
- Close, co-ordinated working between SHP teams (e.g. repairs and external services) ensuring we provide safe, clean and welcoming neighbourhoods;
- An effective approach to domestic violence and hate crime developed in consultation with our residents;
- A range of activities that are diverting young people away from crime and anti-social behaviour, rewarding positive engagement, and based on the views and involvement of young people;
- A Leadership skills course for young people and opportunities for apprenticeship schemes with our partners and local employers;
- An effective, joined up approach to deal with drug dealing in our communities.
- Working with resident's to agree local offers
- Training resident's, in partnership with RSLs and contractors in DIY skills

- Training residents, in partnership with Crystal Palace Football Club to deliver football coaching sessions on estates.

## Our Strategic Objectives

**4.1** In order to achieve our desired service level we have prioritised a number of strategic objectives and identified the scope of each objective across the service. These strategic objectives are:

- **To ensure all our residents are able to have quiet enjoyment of their homes [CC01]**  
*Covering domestic violence, hate crimes, anti-social behaviour, vulnerable residents*
- **To ensure the environments around homes are ones in which residents can take pride [CC02]**  
*Covering graffiti removal, grounds maintenance, street cleansing, communal areas, street lighting, designing out crime*
- **To deliver community initiatives which positively engage and divert the attention of people whose behaviour may otherwise be negative [CC03]**  
*Covering sporting/recreational activities, special events, estate action plans, community leadership & empowerment*
- **To respond collectively to wider community tensions or extremist views which might result in disharmony [CC04]**  
*Covering tension monitoring, preventing extremism, communication methods*

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**4.2** To measure our progress in meeting these objectives we will use quantitative and qualitative indicators including:

- Tenant satisfaction with their neighbourhood as a place to live;
- Service standards for responding to reported ASB cases;
- Success in resolving ASB cases;
- Tenant satisfaction with the way ASB cases are handled and resolved;
- The number of tenancy checks that are carried out;
- Tenant satisfaction with the sign up process and 6 week visit
- Success in completing estate inspections.

**4.3** Issues relating to the cleanliness and safety of communal blocks and grounds and open spaces are dealt with in partnership with our external services team (see External Services Strategy 2011-14).

## Our Drivers

**5.1** In delivering our services we will seek to embed the organisation's strategic drivers:

- We will promote a more co-ordinated approach to involving **customers** in service design and delivery. We will enable residents, including under-represented groups, to shape the agenda and to meaningfully participate in the development and monitoring of services through a range of mechanisms which are responsive to their preferences for involvement;

- We will ensure that the **diversity** of the local community is reflected in the services we offer by using the available resident profiling information to tailor our services and prioritise our resources. We will make our services accessible to all residents and we will meet with all residents groups to discuss ways in which they can be more representative of their communities;
- We will seek to reduce the **risk** associated with a lack of community cohesion of a rise in extremism including an apparent rise in the BNP's popularity. By a wider strategic partnership approach we will reduce the risk that the current economic situation will create inter-ethnic rivalry and resentment over employment opportunities;
- We will take account of **sustainability** issues in creating cleaner, greener and safer neighbourhoods by developing well designed spaces where people feel safe and secure and where crime does not undermine the quality of life. We will work with our partners to reduce litter, graffiti and abandoned vehicles and maintain pleasant communal spaces;
- Through our partnership working we will seek to pool resources wherever possible in order to secure greater **value for money** and we will also use partnership working to attract more inward investment. In addition, we will seek to make more cost effective use will be made of technology in tackling antisocial behaviour.

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## Issues To Consider

6.1 The issues which may impact on service delivery that we are aware of are:

- Community Cohesion is currently high on the political agenda and is regarded as a Government priority but this may not continue as pressure is exerted to use resources for other priorities;
- The coalition Government drive on the “Big Society” to encourage more resident volunteers in their communities
- The continued expansion of the EU and the economic migration of workers can impact significantly on community cohesion, putting pressure on housing and local services and increasing inter-ethnic rivalry and resentment over employment opportunities and services;
- The potential rise in gang culture would not only cause community tension but might exploit a lack of community cohesion and gain momentum from such circumstances;
- In addition to our own services we have a role to support our partners but this should not distract us from the pursuit of our priorities;
- The current economic situation can cause increased community tensions and new communities can be used as scapegoats.
- As budget cuts continue to impact on us and our partners, additional/new funding streams will need to be

identified to support our community development initiatives

- The effects of possible changes to housing law, such as the replacement of secure tenancies with fixed – term tenancies
- The effects of changes to housing benefit and the housing allowance possibly displacing residents from inner London

## Expected Impact

7.1 We expect, through the successful implementation of this strategy, to have the following impact:

- **Customers** will feel safer in their home and expectations around behaviour will be more consistent, appropriate and proportionate. Community tensions will be reduced as people feel they are being treated fairly and there is better understanding through mutual respect and the celebration of differences. There will be a greater feeling, particularly amongst young people of having a voice and the environment in which people live will be more welcoming;
- **SHP** will benefit from increased working across teams and, as a result of a greater understanding of it’s customers, will be able to provide high quality, accessible, inclusive and effective community cohesion services;

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- **Other organisations** who are stakeholders in the community will have a better understanding of who we are and what we can do to work with them in building cohesive communities. As a result we will be seen as more effective and significant partners.

## Resources Required

**8.1** To successfully deliver this strategy we will require the appropriate level of resources, the implications of which are:





- The existing levels of staffing are sufficient to deliver the services required although it will be necessary to keep under continuous review the most effective ways in which to utilise these staff. In addition we must attract external funding for specific posts such as Domestic Violence Floating Support Worker and Tenancy Fraud Officer;

- We will need to continue to attract inward investment through partnership working but this level will need to increase. We will also need to consider ways in which pooling resources with our partners will provide additional benefits;
- Budget provision will need to be sustained for the mediation service, minor estate improvements and fear of crime projects and new funding is needed to deliver the diversionary activities, especially the provision of the leadership skills programme.









## Strategy Delivery

**9.1** The actions required to implement this strategy in its first year are contained in the appended Community Cohesion Service Plan 2011-12.





























## Service Plan Key

Reference	Service Improvement Plan reference	Summary of action	Responsible Officer	Start date	End date	Evidence of action having been completed
		Expected impact on customer focus (access, care or involvement)				Expected impact on risk
		Expected impact on equality & diversity				Expected impact on value for money

## Improvement Actions

CC.IA.11.01	SIP11.03	Introduce an annual cycle of planned tenancy audits	SH	Apr-11	Jun-11	<i>Published plan and evidence of 1<sup>st</sup> quarter implementation</i>
		Service delivery will be better tailored to reflect the range of needs of customers				Reduces the risk that the range and delivery of services do not reflect the profile of our customers
		By taking more account of the customer profile, services will be better tailored to the needs of all customers				Ensuring that service delivery matches the needs of customers makes delivery more efficient and effective
CC.IA.11.02	SIP11.03	Carry out a programme of community development activities that reflect our customer profile	SH	Apr-11	Oct-11	<i>Programme details and evidence of activities taking place with participation data</i>
		Service delivery will be better tailored to reflect the range of needs of customers				Reduces the risk that the range and delivery of services do not reflect the profile of our customers
		By taking more account of the customer profile, services will be better tailored to the needs of all customers				Ensuring that service delivery matches the needs of customers makes delivery more efficient and effective

## Operational Actions

CC.OA.01	Produce an annual activity report for the Board for the Community Cohesion teams.	SH	Apr-11	Jul-11	Report produced.
 ✓		Beyond maintaining current performance levels, there will be the following impact on the driver(s) indicated (✓):			
		The report will identify areas of activity that increase satisfaction and highlight if resources need to be targeted in certain areas of the service.			
CC.OA.02	Investigate the use of Family Intervention Tenancies (FITs)	SH	May-11	Sep-11	FIT agreed and implemented.
		Beyond maintaining current performance levels, there will be the following impact on the driver(s) indicated (✓):			
 ✓		The introduction of a FIT will help families with the most complex needs, who are at risk of eviction through ASB sustain their tenancies and avoid homelessness if successful.			
CC.OA.03	Investigate the possibility of offering a property management service to leaseholders	PW	Apr-11	Mar-12	New service implemented if appropriate.
	 ✓	Beyond maintaining current performance levels, there will be the following impact on the driver(s) indicated (✓):			
		Reduces the risk of tenants of leaseholders causing ASB and action to address the behaviour not forthcoming.			
CC.OA.04	Introduce a robust system of surveying customers who have reported ASB	JS	May-11	Jul-11	New system implemented.
 ✓		Beyond maintaining current performance levels, there will be the following impact on the driver(s) indicated (✓):			
		Increased level of satisfaction with case handling and outcome of ASB reports. Implement any learning from dissatisfaction.			
CC.OA.05	Implement a schedule of process mapping of all policies and procedures within the service.	PW	Apr-11	Mar-12	New policies and procedures produced.
		Beyond maintaining current performance levels, there will be the following impact on the driver(s) indicated (✓):			
	 ✓	Improves VFM by introducing SMARTer ways of working.			
CC.OA.06	Introduce robust procedures for engaging with, and providing feedback to residents on Neighbourhood Inspections.	SRJ	Jun-11	Sep-11	More residents attending inspections and a system of feedback introduced.
 ✓		Beyond maintaining current performance levels, there will be the following impact on the driver(s) indicated (✓):			
		Increased resident involvement with the process.			
CC.OA.07	Carry out a review of the Introductory tenancy review process	SH	Sep-11	Nov-11	A more robust procedure with realistic timescales.
	 ✓	Beyond maintaining current performance levels, there will be the following impact on the driver(s) indicated (✓):			
		Minimise the risk of action being taken outside the scope of the procedure.			





***Putting Customers First***  
***Making Services Accessible To All***  
***Achieving Value For Money***  
***Providing Quality Homes***  
***Creating Safe, Welcoming Neighbourhoods***

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