**SFHA Housing Management Forum Practice Exchange**

What would you do?

**Complaint 1**

The downstairs tenant Mrs A started complaining about the noise from her new neighbours Mrs B and the fact she was moving furniture about. We explained Mrs B was literally moving in. Mrs B had already approached Mrs A before moving in to say there would be a little bit of noise over a couple of days while she got the flat the way she wanted. All very reasonable.

Mrs A started complaining every week that Mrs B was making noise walking along the floorboards, running her washing machine causing noise nuisance.  We explained to Mrs A that was normal household noise – she countered she had never heard it before ‘that woman’ moved in. We reminded her that her previous neighbour had been bed bound for several years. Mrs B had tried speaking to Mrs A but she snubbed her on numerous occasions.

These complaints kept coming and other residents who live nowhere near the property started to complain (Mrs A and  a core of neighbours in the development  do everything together and are in and out of each other’s houses all the time – they are the ones that turn up at all Association events and are on the tenants group).  These residents started saying Mrs B was anti-social and looking at them funnily.  They claimed she was stomping on the floors upstairs to cause distress to Mrs A and  moving Mrs A’s flower pots (the Maintenance Officer tried to move one it was so heavy he couldn’t and  so how the upstairs neighbour was able)  they had witnessed this.  We sent staff round to ‘stomp’ on the floors the upstairs neighbour’s carpet was so thick you couldn’t hear a thing.

Regards the noise nuisance we visited Mrs B flat and had staff in Mrs A flat at the same time. You couldn’t hear them walking upstairs, or the TV, washing machine etc.  We offered mediation to try and resolve things. Mrs B totally up for it Mrs A and other residents refused.

Mrs A and other residents were ’not happy we were doing nothing’ so got a delegation together to come and talk to us. They listed complaints (all investigated and not upheld) and basically said Mrs B was not their ‘sort of people’ and didn’t fit in. We explained there was no ASB and what they were doing was getting close to harassment.

Unhappy with the outcome Mrs A involved her family who claimed this was impacting on her health. The family were very annoyed with us threatening all sorts if something happened to their mother – interestingly though they wouldn’t have her go live with them to give her some respite from the alleged awful situation.  The family stepped away from the complaints

Mrs A and the other residents then involved local Councillors the local MP and MSP (who turned out to be some relative/family friend   of Mrs A).  They complained jointly and separately so you can imagine the time taken to respond to all parties.  We advised we would not be investigating any more complaints citing our vivacious complaints section of our Complaint Policy.

They continued to make unfounded complaints and they all began shunning Mrs B until Mrs B could not take it anymore and asked for a move. We decided to do this.

As soon as they saw Mrs B was moving out on of the complainers asked if her friend could have the property. We moved someone else in upstairs the complaints stopped but then started about someone else.

**Complaint 2**

We moved in a gentleman. He was in his 60’s. Within weeks we started getting complaints from Mrs A and other residents that he had abandoned his property. We investigated and he hadn’t. He was helping his daughter who had split with her partner with child care. Interestingly he told us all the neighbours had tried to pop by at some point and he had thanked them for their interest but said he just wanted to keep himself to himself – it was  after these visits the  complaints started.   As above Mrs A & Co complained to the Police (reporting him continually about his car e.g. claiming it was not taxed, he shouldn’t be driving) and the local authority. Plus new Councillors had been elected so they all got involved. We visited all the complainers individually and explained we would not be taking action and they were harassing this man. Complaints continued and we took the decision not to do anything. Mrs A and the other residents then complained to the local Councillors/MSP etc. that we weren’t doing anything but we stood firm. Eventually they appeared to lose interest and then turned their attention to an extremely vulnerable tenant with various issues.

**Complaint 3**

This tenant has lived at the development longer than any of the complainers, but suddenly we started receiving complaints about them. Mrs A and other residents (the same core residents who complained before). They have been claiming there has been drug dealing going on at the property, they are frightened to be in their own homes, visitors to the property are anti social etc. Police have been involved (we did a joint public meeting with them and all residents were told who to phone to report incidents etc.) The Police have no evidence of ASB. All the local MSP, MP and Councillors have been involved and now washed their hands of it. We installed CCTV to record any this ASB – absolutely nothing.  n Mrs A and other residents have been very vocal that this tenant and her visitors (family and friends) are not their sort of people.

**Complaint 4**

We moved an elderly couple in a few weeks ago and they are loving their new house. The old lady went to put something in the bins and put it in the wrong one by accident. We received a phone call from Mrs A and one other resident reporting the new tenant for this. We just called her to let her know and she popped back and put it in the right bin. Then we received a phone call from Environmental Health because they had received complaints…

**Action we have taken to date**:

Mediation offered and refused by Mrs A and the other residents (in all cases the tenant they are complaining about happy to take part)

Police involved  - no evidence of ASB and no records of the residents reporting any  ASB issues to the Police

CCTV installed – no evidence on CCTV

Dealt with local Councillors/MP and MSP and family members

Public meetings with residents

One to one meetings with residents

Follow on letters

Clear information issued about what we can and can’t do as landlords

Mrs A regularly makes complaints about repair service which have gone to the Ombudsman (not upheld) but a lot of hours dedicated to  pulling all the info together for the Ombudsman.