

Social unrest and the implications for LAs and social housing

10 November 2011

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Overview

- The issues
- The rhetoric
- The reality
- The reaction
- An informed debate?
- Issues for providers
- Response from the sector
- The Riot Report
- CIH help and support



The issues

- Riots and unrest across England in August 2011
- Mass media attention
- Public outcry
- Raised political questions about the need and ability for landlords to take possession action against rioters
- Focus on social housing tenants



The rhetoric...

“Why do rioters get their benefits from the State when they are not prepared to act like a normal member of society”

“Social housing is a precious resource, and hard-working taxpayers will rightly wonder why anyone involved in trashing or looting should benefit from this”

Grant Shapps – August 2011



More rhetoric

“Occupiers of social housing are in a privileged position and deserve to lose their home if convicted”

Wandsworth Council

“It sends a clear message that the Council will not tolerate this sort of behaviour from tenants in receipt of subsidised housing”

Greenwich Council



The reality

- There is no published information to indicate how many of the rioters were social housing tenants – **inference** rather than **fact**
- Despite early furore – only **2** landlords to date has issued possession orders
- Only **14** landlords have publicly backed eviction of tenants
- Possession against this ground is **discretionary** – it is up to the courts to decide, not the landlord



The reaction

- Reflated debate about who “deserves” social housing
- Housing Minister announces intention to review the “locality” requirement for possession proceedings for ASB and criminality
- Strong messages linking social housing and rioting
 - Report suggesting 84% of rioting took place in town centres within a five minute walk of housing estates
 - Social housing tenants = rioters



An informed debate...?

- Is it right to “punish” people twice?
- Where do evicted families go?
- Will the courts consider this a proportionate response in light of Weaver/ Pinnock?
- Is this actually going to act as a deterrent or is this just political grandstanding?
- Is it fair that a social tenant loses their home, but an owner occupier doesn't?
- Is it reasonable to extend remit for possession retrospectively?



Issues for housing providers

- Cost of issuing possession proceedings and eviction
- Adopting a hard stance reinforces the negative perceptions of our sector
- LA housing dept subject to political stance from local authorities – inconsistent with practice?
- How does evicting a tenant who has committed an offence in another area protect your communities
- Justifying to those who scrutinise you



What does the sector think?

- Mixed views on eviction as an approach and/or effective deterrent
- Local authorities more likely to consider this as an option - although some housing associations have said that they may consider it in some cases
- IH survey of 36 LAs found
 - 14 intended to pursue eviction
 - 13 consider on case by case basis
 - 9 would not seek possession
- Only Greenwich and Wandsworth have issued possession proceedings



Removal of locality clause?

- Again mixed views but more in agreement:
 - 71% strongly agreed or agreed with removal of locality clause
 - 26% strongly disagreed or disagreed
- Issues raised include:
 - issues should be dealt with by criminal justice system, not housing
 - locality is around protecting communities, not punitive justice
 - needs to be some link between incidents and the tenancy
 - removal should be limited to most serious of offences



The Riot Report

- Joint piece of work by CIH, Inside Housing and NHF:
 - Investigating the issues for housing and neighbourhoods where the riots took place
 - Gathering the views of housing professionals residents and wide variety of professionals working in communities
 - Looking at what could/should be done to help prevent a repeat
- The report will identify solutions and showcase good preventative work being carried out by social landlords



The new ASB Charter for Housing



- Launched June 2011
- Over 200 signatories to date
- Practice Brief published by CIH
Sept 2011 – implementing the Charter

Full details:

<http://www.cih.org/respectstandard>



Helping you drive improvement

- CIH ASB Action Team
www.cih.org/asbactionteam
- CIH Practice Hub
www.practicehub.cih.co.uk



Thank you

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