

**SPECIAL NEEDS RESIDENTIAL FACILITIES IN VANCOUVER: Record of public complaints on the operation of facilities**

*Prepared by Social Planning, Community Services, City of Vancouver, with the assistance of Development Services, Licenses and Inspections, and the Vancouver Police Department.*

**SUMMARY**

Special Needs Residential Facilities (SNRF) provide care to people with illnesses and disabilities. There are currently 148 SNRF in Vancouver and these homes enable their residents to live in neighbourhoods throughout the city. With the exception of small facilities licensed under the Community Care and Assisted Living Act, SNRF are conditional approval uses, meaning that neighbours are notified and applications considered on a case by case basis.

The City's SNRF definitions and approval process have been in force for 25 years. During this time, there has been consistent pattern that the initial applications for SNRF are met with neighbourhood opposition. Except for seniors' facilities, most SNRF regardless of their size, location or the client group served, are met with concerns related to:

- reduction of property values;
- disruption of a quiet neighbourhood;
- safety and crime fears;
- increased traffic/parking; and
- additional social problems being caused by the presence of a facility.

In the course of working on these applications and their permit renewals, staff have noticed that the initial concerns expressed by neighbours are rarely borne out in the actual operation of these homes. To test this assumption, staff reviewed all relevant City electronic records ( 1994 to the present) and hard files, and the Police reviewed all calls relating to SNRF addresses for the past 2 years.

A summary of the findings is as follows:

- 71% of the City's 148 SNRF have no calls/complaints registered either in City files or in Police files.
- From 1981 to the present, the City has received no more than one or two complaints per year regarding the operation of the entire stock of Special Needs Residential Facilities. In a number of years there were no complaints at all. ( This compares to an average of 150 complaints per year the City receives about illegal suites, or close to 500 per year about untidy premises.)

- In the 2 years of Police records for these 148 buildings, there are a total of 73 calls from the public:
  - 33% relate to reports of theft from or damage to vehicles parked in front of a home, or stolen or recovered vehicles.
  - 42.4% can be connected to the facility. Some of these are complaints about the behaviour of a resident of a facility e.g. a complaint that a teenaged boy is banging on the door. Others relate to the address but are not complaints e.g. a call from a café near a seniors home, reporting a confused senior.
  - 24.6% related to events in the vicinity of a facility and may or may not be linked to the facility e.g. a car driving in the lane without due care; an intoxicated male fighting with another male.

In the view of the Police, this call rate is low. In comparison, locations that the Police view as “problem premises” generate about 2 community calls per month each.

Staff also reviewed the record of calls/complaints on the basis of facility type e.g. mental health facility, resources for children/youth, seniors’ facilities etc. In summary, the results were as follows:

- Vancouver has 37 SNRF which house people with mental illnesses. 28 had no calls/complaints recorded. Only 5 had calls in which there was a complaint about the behaviour of the residents or relating to the operation of the home. These were all single objections e.g. one objection in 1996 about garbage cans not being looked after; one incident in 2004 where a tenant threatened a neighbour.
- 7 homes provide alcohol/drug programs. Calls/complaints were registered on 5 homes, some relating to behaviour of residents and some regarding incidents in the general vicinity. Complaints relating to residents included one about too many people; two complaints about noise and smoking in the back yard; and one about a stolen bicycle.
- 17 homes house people with developmental disabilities. The City received a single complaint about one home in 1989. There are no other complaints in the City or Police data.
- 3 homes for people with head injuries. Two homes show no calls. A neighbour of the third house has registered several complaints re: parking, a wandering resident, and disrespectful staff.
- 21 homes for children/youth. 10 homes have no complaints while 11 homes have calls/complaints recorded. Calls relating to the behaviour of residents or the operation of the home were often single incidents e.g. a complaint in 1986 about kids making racist comments, or a call in 2003 about damage in a neighbour’s yard. In some cases there were behaviours which occurred over

some time, or repeat complaints about the same issue. These generally related to noise, garbage and property damage and to inadequate supervision.

- 4 homes with Corrections programs. There were no complaints to the City on any of these homes. Police showed 2 complaints about one home: one noise complaint and one harassment report.
- 33 seniors' care facilities. 19 have no calls/complaints. 8 have calls to the Police re: stolen/damaged vehicles. 6 have other miscellaneous calls to the Police, mainly about incidents happening in the vicinity.
- 7 homes for women. 4 have no calls. For the other three, a next door neighbour of one complained twice about too many people in back yard; too many cars; and a man coming to her door asking about house. Calls about the other two related to supervision of children and a suspicious man sitting on the front steps.
- 5 shelters. Two show no complaints. For the other three, there were a total of 13 calls/complaints: one about line ups, 7 about aggressive behaviour or fighting, one about failure to pay a taxi, one robbery, one Crime stoppers tip, one indecent act and one report of damage to a car.
- 14 homes for other groups. These include homes for people with physical disabilities, eating disorders, hospices, adult and family emergency homes, and a resource for people with AIDS. There were no calls/complaints relating to the operation of these homes.

## Conclusions

Given the time period covered in this review ( almost 12 years of City electronic records and information from older hard files, and 2 years of Police data), the number of calls/complaints relating to the behaviour of SNRF residents or the operation of these homes is low. Many of the issues noted are minor.

It is interesting that, while the public expresses extreme concerns about homes for people with mental illnesses during the application process for these buildings, 75% of mental health homes have no calls/complaints recorded. Resources for children and youth do show a higher occurrence of calls, with slightly more than half of our 21 homes showing calls/complaints. In the assessment of City staff, most of the incidents can be linked to problems with supervision or management. Several shelters (all in the Downtown/Downtown Eastside) have complaints relating to aggressive behaviour of people outside their buildings. While aggression is always a concern, a larger perspective is that shelters and other buildings which are well staffed are the subject of far fewer complaints than unstaffed SROs.

Overall, the information in this review suggests that the vast majority of SNRF operate without negatively affecting their neighbours.

Social Planning staff are of the view that the complaints we have received about the operation of SNRF largely relate to issues with supervision and can generally be addressed if the operator is attentive. Good, ongoing communication between facilities and their neighbours is also important. Staff believe that, based on the record of actual complaints, the fears related to people who receive housing and care in SNRFs are not warranted, and the City's review and approval process could more productively focus on ensuring that homes have management plans, that neighbours and operators understand how any problems will be reported and dealt with, and that operators are clear about their responsibility for ongoing communication with neighbours.

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### **A. BACKGROUND**

The City currently has 148 buildings categorized as Special Needs Residential Facilities (SNRF). These include facilities licensed under the Provincial *Community Care and Assisted Living Act* and which provide a significant degree of care to people who have severe physical, mental or developmental disabilities or illnesses, addictions, or who by reason of being minors, are under the legal custody of the Province. The Special Needs Residential Facility category also includes “Group Living” homes which also provide care in relation to illnesses and disabilities, but the programs are less medically-oriented and less intense than those found in licensed community care facilities.

Except for small facilities licensed under the *Community Care and Assisted Living Act* (which by Provincial law are approved as outright uses), Special Needs Residential Facilities are conditional approval uses in Vancouver. SNRF are allowable in virtually every zoning district of the city but each application is considered on a case-by-case basis. The approval process includes the notification of neighbours and often includes information sessions for neighbours which may be sponsored by the applicant or the City.

The City’s SNRF definitions and approval process have been in force for 25 years. During this time, it has been a consistent pattern that the initial applications for SNRF are met with neighbourhood opposition. Except for seniors’ facilities, which generally are subject to less opposition, most SNRF regardless of their size, location, or the client group to be served are met with similar concerns. Neighbours commonly refer to:

- reduction of property values;
- disruption of a quiet neighbourhood;
- safety and crime fears;
- increased traffic/parking; and
- additional social problems being caused by the presence of a facility.

In the course of discussing and approving SNRF applications, reviewing applications to renew time-limited permits, and receiving various feedback from the neighbours of these facilities about how the facilities are operating in the long term, staff have

noticed that the initial concerns expressed by neighbours rarely appear to be borne out in the actual operation of these homes.

In order to test this assumption, staff have reviewed all the records in relevant Development files, the City's electronic data systems ( which contain information from 1994 to present), and Departmental files. Vancouver Police staff have reviewed all calls to the Police in the past two years (approximately November 2003 to November 2005) pertaining to all Special Needs Residential Facilities in the city.

This report summarizes these records of complaints/calls from the public relating to Special Needs Residential Facilities.

It is acknowledged that neighbours may have concerns or complaints about some facilities which they do not forward to the City or the Police. However the number of calls recorded by the City over a period of 12 or more years, and by the Police for the past 2 years, is so small as to suggest that the vast majority of SNRF operate without affecting neighbours. For over 70% of the City's 148 SNRF, there is not a single public call or complaint on record.

### **About the data**

We searched records of all buildings currently being used as Special Needs Residential Facilities. While there is some turnover in the stock, with older buildings periodically being phased out and some new locations added, many of the City's existing SNRF have been in operation at the same location for decades. Based on 114 facilities for which dates of approval were available:

- 2% have been in operation since the 1950s or earlier
- 19% since the 1960s
- 20% since the 1970s
- 25% since the 1980s
- 24% since the 1990s
- 10% since 2000

In reviewing City records, we have pulled out all calls/complaints which have been received once facilities are in operation. City records include Development files, which contain information on the initial public response to proposed Special Needs Residential Facilities as well as neighbours' responses to subsequent notifications to renew operating permits. They also include complaints received by Property Use inspectors or phone/email complaints referred to Social Planning. The City's electronic record keeping systems date from 1994. In a few cases, we have found complaints in hard files dating from the 1980s.

The Police were asked to check the last 2 years of calls from the public relating to all existing SNRF addresses. Police record all calls. Some may be tied to an address but may or may not have anything to do with the facility or its residents e.g. damage to a car parked in front. Some do relate to resident or staff behaviour. We have listed all Police calls received from the public so that the reader can see what the call referred to and judge whether the call has any relationship to the operation the facility.

## B. FINDINGS

Overall, the record shows that:

- 71% of the City's 148 SNRF have no calls/complaints registered either in City files or in Police files.
- From 1981 to the present, the City has received no more than one or two complaints per year regarding the operation of the entire stock of Special Needs Residential Facilities. In a number of years there were no complaints at all.

While some people may have complaints they do not forward to the City, this call rate is very low. For context, the public does complain regularly about suspected illegal suites. In 2005, the City received 132 complaints about illegal suites. 150 complaints on illegal suites were received in 2004, and 222 in 2003. The City also receives about 500 complaints per year about untidy premises

- In the 2 years of Police records for these 148 buildings, there are a total of 73 calls from the public:
  - 24 calls (33%) relate to reports of theft from or damage to vehicles parked in front of a home, or stolen or recovered vehicles.
  - 31 calls (42.4%) can be connected to the facility. Some of these are complaints about the behaviour of a resident of a facility; others relate to the address but are not complaints e.g. a complaint re: a teen-aged boy banging on the door for 30 minutes vs. a call from a café near a seniors home, reporting a confused male. This senior resident is returned to the lodge.
  - 18 calls (24.6%) related to events in the vicinity of a facility and may or may not be linked to the facility e.g. a car driving in the lane without due care; an intoxicated male fighting with another male.

The Police do not see a total of 73 calls over 2 years to a 148 separate locations as constituting a drain on police resources. In comparison, for each premises which Police see as a "problem premises" there are approximately 2 calls from the community per month. [If SNRF generated that rate of calls, there would be 7000 public calls over 2 years, compared to the 73 community calls actually received].

The remainder of this report will look more closely at the SNRF for which one more calls or complaints were registered, either in the City or the Police records. 29% of the City's 148 SNRF have one or more call/complaint noted. However in 4% of the cases, the only call related to a Police report of an audible alarm. Excluding these, we have 25% of buildings (37 buildings) where a call or complaint is registered. As noted above, the calls include all complaints to the City and all calls to Police, including theft from

auto reports and calls which may or may not be actual complaints which relate to the facility in question.

As a general comment about the relationship of Police to SNRF facilities, Police do respond to calls from the staff of facilities, most commonly to report a young person who has gone AWOL. Staff are legally obliged to report youth who have missed curfew, or older people who have dementia and have wandered. Neighbours who see a Police car parked in front of a SNRF may erroneously assume that there is some problem they should be concerned about. Staff make far more calls to the Police than the public does, as part of their normal business and the vast majority of Police visits to facilities are part of the ongoing relationship between the Police and staff, and not an indication of problems.

To continue the discussion of calls/complaints from the public, we have grouped the facilities by the program focus e.g. mental health facility, home for people with a developmental delay; resource for children/youth; seniors' facility etc.

## 1. Mental Health Facilities

City records show 37 homes which provide care to people with a mental illness. The majority of these homes are licensed under the *Community Care and Assisted Living Act* and they provide supports to different groups i.e. some are long term homes for older people who will always live in a group setting; others are for younger people who may only need a year or two of support before they are able to live independently.

The review of calls/complaints shows:

- 28 ( 75% ) of homes have no calls or complaints from the public
- for 4 of the remaining homes, the recorded call had no relationship to the operation of home. e.g. the only call(s) on record for these 4 homes were as follows:

*Home #1:* 2 calls about the abduction of a staff member by an ex-partner

*Home #2:* 1 call re: a stolen car parked out front

*Home #3:* someone called 911 by accident

*Home #4:* a general observation by Police that quite a few cars in this block are broken into, and stolen vehicles recovered.

- For 5 homes, the call/complaint related to the tenants of the home and/or the operation. The calls noted are the only calls on record for each home.

*Home #1:* One complaint to the City in 1982 about a resident causing problems in the neighbourhood

*Home #2:* One complaint in response to City re-notification in November, 1991: " The men wander across 12<sup>th</sup> to get to the store, numerous times almost getting hit. Often I find residents in my yard, hiding in the bushes smoking cigarettes."

*Home #3:* One objection during City re-notification in 1996 re: garbage cans being knocked over by dogs and not picked up by staff.

*Home #4:* One call to VPD on July 23, 2004. Tenant threatened neighbour. Staff called Police. Tenant arrested under Mental Health Act.

*Home # 5:* One call to VPD on November 23, 2004. Male in phone booth across from this location is making odd noises. Neighbour fears for man's safety.

## **2. Alcohol/Drug Treatment or Recovery**

Seven SNRF provide various alcohol/drug supports, including one facility that provides detox beds, one treatment facility, and five which provide supportive recovery.

The review of records shows:

- 2 homes have no calls/complaints from the public
- 5 homes show calls/complaints. These are as follows:

*Home #1:* One complaint to City in 1994 re: the number of people in the house; people milling around in front of house. One complaint in 1995 to City about number of people. Three calls to VPD re: incident in last 2 years where a van delivered a large quantity of marijuana, which staff called police to pick up.

*Home #2:* One complaint to City in 1999 about parking issues; one complaint to City in 2001 re: noise and people smoking in back yard. 2006 re-notification by City - 56 neighbours notified; one complaint about noise and people smoking in back yard.

*Home #3:* One call to VPD: Passer-by observed man passed out on sidewalk in front of this location.

*Home #4:* 5 calls to VPD:

- citizen reports intoxicated male fighting with another male
- vehicle parked out front is broken into
- crime-stoppers tip
- male hit by car in alley north of building
- male believes he's watching male who just stole his bike, sitting in front of this address.

*Home #5:* One call to VPD re: 5 males in the lane behind this facility, with a gun. All males checked and released to parents. None lived at this address. One call to VPD re: a stolen vehicle recovered in front of this address. One objection to City re-notification in January 2006. Believes that the treatment centre encourages drug addicts to congregate in area. Addicts trespass on his property.

## **3. Facilities for people with a developmental disability**

When the Woodlands-- a large regional institution for people with development disabilities-- was closed, a number of small homes were established in Vancouver and elsewhere in the Province. Vancouver has 17 SNRF listed as serving people with developmental disabilities, most of which were opened in the 1980s and 1990s.

Of these 17 homes, there is only one complaint which was received by the City in 1989 during re-notification. ( One letter of support was also received). The complaint was re: residents of home standing on their sundeck, rocking back and forth and moaning; putting hands inside their pants; and yelling. [This complaint occurred when residents had just moved out of Woodlands and were not accustomed to living in a community setting.]

#### **4. Facilities for people with head injuries**

Vancouver has 3 homes for people with head injuries. Two homes have no record of calls or complaints. For the other house, there was one complaint in 1998 about staff parking in front of other houses, and complaints in 2003 and 2004 from the same neighbour, re: one resident who was wandering in the neighbour's yard and urinating in public. The neighbour also complained about being treated disrespectfully by one staff person, in the past. [The Society reported to the City that the resident in question has brain cancer and lacks impulse control, and that the disrespectful staff person had been fired.]

Police reported that they may attend some homes for people with head injuries, at the request of the staff, to assist with disagreements between staff/residents or residents/residents.

#### **5. Resources for children and youth**

City records show 21 homes. These include group homes for youth in the care of the Province, two safe houses for street youth, one resource for autistic children/youth, and two Downtown resources for street youth.

- 9 homes show no calls/complaints. One additional home had only 2 calls to VPD re: an audible alarm.
- 11 homes show calls/complaints

*Home #1:* Complaints to the City in 1981 when the Province changed the model to a co-ed youth resource. Complaints re: property damage, rock assaults, house parents having little control. [Province changed model again; no complaints since.]

*Home #2:* One complaint to City from neighbour in 1986 re: kids threatening mother-in law, making racist, abusive comments. [Neighbour asked for and received apology.]

*Home #3:* One complaint to City in 1989 re: verbal abuse, loud music, staff unable to control kids. [Subsequent follow-up with neighbour indicated that kids were quieter, not a problem.] 1995: One complaint from another neighbour re: kids pouring coffee on someone; tossing lighted matchbooks and garbage into neighbour's yard.

*Home #4:* Two complaints during City re-notification process in 2000, one regarding youth hanging out in doorway and on street corner. Neighbour is uncomfortable walking by. One complaint was regarding litter. The VPD registered 5 calls in the past two years, four about cars parked out front in this Downtown location being broken into or stolen, and one call from staff who called 911 to report that a tenant had showed him a hand gun. Police retrieved gun from tenant's room.

*Home #5:* One call to VPD from neighbour who complained about noise but then cancelled the complaint as he was afraid of the neighbours.

*Home #6:* Complaint to City from adjacent business in August 2003, noting that the situation was better than when the resource was just housing, but that there were still problems with broken windows at his business, needles left in plants at front, kids loitering, garbage thrown on his roof.

*Home #7:* One complaint to City during re-notification in 2004. Neighbour observed kids making noise in the alley. April 20, 2005: One call to VPD. Male called 911 to complain that a tenant from the house was making telephone threats.

*Home #8:* One call to VPD in 2003. Male from house had broken a tree and lights in neighbour's yard.

*Home #9:* No complaints in City re-notifications done in 1997, 1999 or 2002. Phone complaint to City from new neighbour in 2005: smoking drugs in front of house, noise til 2 a.m., garbage thrown at house, some staff rude/some nice. One call to VPD re: threatening phone calls.

*Home #10:* Two complaints to City in September, 2005 re: this home for autistic children. "Screams on a constant basis." Similar complaint from 2<sup>nd</sup> neighbour. On December 7, 2005. Neighbour reports it's quieter, though still problem with coming and going, gate slamming, parking in front of house. [ This house is currently used for autistic children. It was previously a resource for developmentally disabled adults and there were no complaints about that use.]

*Home # 11:* One call to VPD re: teenaged boy banging on the door for 30 minutes.

As general information, Police report that they routinely visit resources for children/youth. In addition to responding to reports from staff re: AWOL youth, the VPD Youth Squad also visits homes to keep in touch with the staff and youth. The presence of a Police car in front of a youth resource may be erroneously assumed by neighbours to mean that there is a problem, when the visit is, in fact, part of the normal relationship to VPD to these resources.

## **6. Corrections Facilities**

The City has 4 converted single family dwellings which house Federal Corrections clients. In addition, there are two downtown mixed-use buildings which house some corrections clients as part of a general population.

Of the 4 stand-alone facilities, two had no calls/complaints and the third had only one complaint in 1967 about the exterior appearance of the building.

The fourth facility was previously used for mentally ill clients and was changed to a Corrections facility in 2000. The City notified 75 neighbours in 2002 re: the renewal of the permit for the Corrections use, and received one letter of support. VPD reported two complaints: one noise complaint and one harassment report.

(The prior use of this particular building generated several complaints to the City in 1980 about patients wandering, trespassing, throwing bottles and panhandling; and in 1982 re: 3 break-ins by patients, and panhandling. The Health Authority ultimately cancelled its contract due to dissatisfaction with that operator.)

## **7. Seniors Care Facilities**

There are 33 seniors care facilities in the City.

- 19 have no calls/complaints registered.
- For an additional 8 facilities, the only calls are to VPD re: vehicles in parking being broken into; reporting stolen cars parked in lots, or damage to vehicles.
- For 6 facilities, there are no complaints in City files, but some calls via VPD.

Calls regarding the 6 facilities are as follows:

Home #1: One call to VPD in 2005. New staff member finds gun in new office. Unknown who placed gun there.

Home #2: Three calls to VPD in 2005.  
- 4 males attempt to break into complainant's car;  
- 74 year old male stabbed at ATM;  
- vehicle is driving thru lane without due care.

Home #3: One call to VPD from bus driver who could not get a resident from this home off his bus.

Home #4: Two calls to VPD: female entering building is pushed by male, purse stolen; nearby café reports confused male. Resident is returned to home.

Home #5: Two calls to VPD - suspicious males in underground parking. Teens in area offer patients a toke. Caller complains of several males in rear of building smoking pot.

Home #6: One call to VPD - neighbour sees male in window with hands down his pants.

## **8. Women's Facilities**

There are 7 homes for women, primarily transition houses for women who have experienced domestic violence. Of these, 4 have no calls. For the other 3:

Home #1: One call to City in 1983: too many people in front and back yards. 1994 - call from same neighbour. Man came to her door asking questions about the house; too many cars coming and going.

Home # 2: One complaint during City re-notification in 1992: children not properly supervised. 2005 - one call to VPD: neighbour put out small fire started by 9 year old boy.

Home #3: One call to VPD. Man reported suspicious male sitting on steps. Police arrive to find man wants to be arrested, but for no reason. They take the man home.

## 9. Shelters

There are 5 mass shelters listed. In some cases, the shelter is the only use in the building; in others the building also contains longer-term accommodation. Two have no calls/complaints. For the other 3:

Shelter #1: Two calls to VPD. One from male sleeping in lane reports that someone from this location said he would kill him if he didn't leave the area. One from taxi driver. Male dropped off here refused to pay and staff wouldn't help driver get his money.

Shelter #2: One complaint to City re: line-ups in August 2005. 8 calls to VPD:

- female walking in alley is robbed of cell phone
- Crimestoppers tip
- Aggressive male out front. Citizen calls EHS and Police
- Citizen reports a fight out front between 3 males
- Male reports female banging on window with shoe. She hits him with shoe.
- Citizen reports 2 females and male out front fighting
- Complainant said 'hello' to person walking out of building. Person was hostile.
- Male in west lane believed to live in building committing an indecent act.

Shelter #3: Two calls to VPD. One from male threatened by 8 males outside this location. He owes one of the males money and one call re: Female has car damaged and items stolen in front of this location.

## 10. Other facilities ( 14)

The remaining SNRF serve a variety of residents: people with eating disorders, physical disabilities, AIDS, people needing end-of-life care and several resources for adults and families. The call/complaint record is as follows:

- 1 home for eating disorders: no calls
- 3 homes for people with physical disabilities - one has calls re: citizen finding stolen property in bushes in front of building; vehicle in underground parking broken into.
- 3 family emergency homes - one complaint about operator ignoring landscaping conditions.
- 2 hospices - no calls
- 1 home for people with AIDs - no calls
- 4 homes for adults - no calls

### C. Conclusions

Applications to establish Special Needs Residential Facilities are routinely met with concern from neighbours and quite often, substantial opposition. However based on the record of actual complaints, these fears are not borne out once the homes are in operation.

While it can be assumed that neighbours of some homes have concerns or complaints that they do not forward to the City or the Police, the infrequency of complaints/calls we do have, and their generally minor nature, suggest that the majority of buildings operating as SNRF do not negatively affect their neighbours.

71% of the 148 buildings operating as Special Needs Residential Facilities have never had a single complaint or call registered with either the City or the VPD during the period covered by this review ( minimum of 10 years of City records; 2 years of Police records.)

As noted in the report, the City receives, at most, one or two complaints about SNRF per year. In comparison, we receive around 150 complaints per year about illegal suites and 500 complaints about untidy premises. The Police record shows a total of 73 calls from the public about all SNRF over the past 2 years. Less than half of these calls were actually connected to the facility, and not all of those were complaints. This rate of calls is very low compared to locations Police view as problem premises.

The record of calls/complaints also shows that public assumptions about some of the groups of people who benefit from support programs provided by Special Needs Residential Facilities, are not borne out. For example, neighbours generally express considerable concern that people with a mental illness will be disruptive. However the record shows that of the 37 homes housing people with a mental illness, 75% have no calls/complaints registered at all. There are only 3 complaints which relate to the behaviour of a person with a mental illness: one in 1982, one in 1991 and one in 2004. In a number of cases where there has been significant initial opposition to a home for people with mental illnesses, subsequent feedback from neighbours after a year or two of operation has been that the expected problems did not materialize.

Of the various client groups served, homes for children/youth appear to generate the most calls/complaints. Overall, about half (52%) of the youth resources have one or more calls/complaints registered, and about half (48%) have no calls/complaints.

However the total number of individual complaints about homes for children/youth is only 16, in a period from 1981 to the present. In some cases, the complaints refer to one incident which may be the only complaint on file for a home which has been in operation for decades. In others there may be 2-3 calls/complaints over a period of time, which may suggest problems with supervision which need to be addressed.

Looking at the nature of the calls/complaints for all SNRF, we believe that, for those which can be connected to the actual operation ( as opposed to events in the general vicinity of an address), the majority of complaints relating to residents' behaviour also reflect issues with supervision. This type of problem can generally be resolved by adjustments to staffing, supervision, and/or operating policies. In rare cases the supervision is good but an individual may simply not be appropriate for placement in a residential setting. There is no pattern of complaints that suggests that any one client group is, in itself, problematic or unsuitable for integration into the community.

The information reviewed in this report suggests that the vast majority of SNRF operate without negatively affecting their neighbours. Where there are problems with residents' behaviour, they can usually be addressed by changes in supervision. This being the case, Social Planning staff believe that the anxiety neighbours often express about SNRF is largely unwarranted. However we also strongly believe that both the City and the operator have a duty to address problems which do arise.

The City already uses time-limited permits for non-purpose built SNRF and requests that operators name a liaison person and provide management plans so that all parties know where to direct concerns and understand how any issues will be addressed. Recent City practise has been that staff will meet with the operator to discuss any complaint which is brought to our attention in a re-notification process. The operator is asked to identify steps to respond to the concern, and this information is provided to the complainant. Staff are of the view that paying attention to practical problem solving and encouraging ongoing communications between facility operators and their neighbours are good directions for the future and that these elements should be enhanced in the review and approval process.