



7 June 2005

## **War at the door**

Coventry is set to hit living rooms across the UK, as Whitefriars Housing Group lays down the welcome mat to viewers and offers an insight into its stance to tackle anti-social behaviour.

Nuisance noise, nasty neighbours and harassment, are just some of the topics BBC cameras caught as they spent three months stalking Whitefriars' Tenancy Enforcement Officer Tony Marsella.

Tony, who has worked for Whitefriars for two years, is set to appear in three of the eight episodes of War at the Door. He will be on the nation's screens tonight at 8.30pm.

War at the Door aims to throw light on anti-social behaviour and Tony's front-line role, which involves helping residents across Coventry, fitted into what the programme makers were looking for.

Tony said: "Although filming has taken place in other areas, Coventry has been chosen because it is leading the way in finding solutions to anti-social behaviour. Anti-social behaviour exists everywhere, but in Coventry we are working to ensure it doesn't have to be a fact of life.

"We also offer support to those experiencing anti-social behaviour, which, as the programme shows, can be extremely distressing. One of the positives shown is the work by residents living in Hampton Road to evict a neighbour – thanks to their evidence Whitefriars was able to secure an eviction for the benefit of the community."

“The programme focuses on the drama of evictions and extreme circumstances, but there is a lot more work to my role. My job is to ensure people can stay in their homes and to work through behaviour and problems which may affect their ability to do this.”

The camera crews visited Coventry last August for the initial programme, and with filming for a second series due to start on Friday, Tony is far from camera-shy.

The 36-year-old said: “You don’t really ever forget that someone’s putting a camera in your face, but I just got on with what I am paid to do.

“One of the most difficult things was closing the door continually in the camera man’s face. I had to do it every time I entered a house and it just wasn’t a natural thing to do!”

Tony is one of a 15-man team which works specifically to resolve anti-social behaviour. Asb4 is a unique initiative which aims to provide a one-stop-stop for local councils, housing associations and residents wanting to tackle community problems.

Services on offer include mediation, informal interventions, injunctions, ASBOs and evictions.

Heading up the team is Whitefriars’ asb4 Business Manager Gail Cooper.

She said: “Anti-social behaviour destroys lives and shatters communities. If left unchecked it can lead to neighbourhood decline with people moving away and residents abandoning housing.

“Our message to residents is ‘don’t suffer in silence’. If we know there’s a problem, we will work to resolve it. Often this can be done amicably, which doesn’t necessary make good TV, but is good news for the people of Coventry.

“As the programme shows, if we have residents willing to stand up and say they are not putting up with behaviour, we’ll support them to the court steps and beyond to ensure they can enjoy their homes in peace.”

**Ends**

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