



Countering Anti Social Behaviour Policy

Policy: Countering Anti Social Behaviour

1 Introduction

This policy sets out the principles that underpin the Association's approach to anti-social behaviour (ASB) affecting its customers and the neighbourhoods in which they live. The accompanying procedures give detailed guidance to staff on how these principles should be put into effect. A summary of both the policy and procedure documents will also be published.

To ensure that all forms of ASB are dealt with effectively this policy will be used in conjunction with those aimed at combating hate motivated conduct, such as racial or diversity harassment and for handling domestic abuse. It will also be applied in accordance with the Association's policies for confidentiality and data protection, and equality, diversity and inclusion.

Through publishing a clear statement of its policy and procedures and having a robust approach to anti-social behaviour the Association aims to give existing residents, home seekers and others a clear message that ASB by them, their households or visitors is unacceptable.

2 Definition: What is anti-social behaviour or 'ASB'?

ASB is defined in the Crime & Disorder Act 1998 as:

"acting in a manner which causes or is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to one or more persons who are not of the same household."

Another definition is found in the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003:

"conduct which is capable of causing nuisance or annoyance to any person ... or involves using or threatening to use housing accommodation for an unlawful purpose."

Anti-Social Behaviour thus ranges from nuisance issues, such as loud music or dogs barking, through to more serious issues such as harassment and violence.

3 Policy statement

3.1 Context

The Association has a key role in supporting the creation and sustainability of communities in the neighbourhoods in which it works. It is committed to providing high quality housing services and ensuring that residents are able to enjoy their homes and feel they are secure and safe places to live.

The Association believes that

- everyone has a right to the peaceful enjoyment of their homes and neighbourhoods without the distress or fear that can result from ASB,
- people have the right to live their lives the way they want, providing their behaviour or actions are not detrimental to the quality of life of others, and
- tolerance and respect for the choices, diversity and lifestyles of individuals must be balanced with consideration towards the needs of others living in the neighbourhood.

Partnership working: In handling ASB, the Association is clear that partnership working can be particularly important in tackling what are complex problems. The powers available to the Association as a landlord and service provider to tackle ASB are limited, while the local authority and police have wider roles and powers. The Association is keen to work in partnership with these and other agencies working within the community.

In liaising with other agencies, the Association recognises that sharing information supports effective joint working. The Association will look to reach formal agreements, on how information should be used, and how it may be kept as confidential as possible. This will include the information sharing protocols sponsored by the police.

The Association's services will also be delivered and developed in partnership with residents, aiming for creativity in solving and preventing problems associated with ASB, both at the local and wider levels.

Multi-tenure working: The Association's approach to ASB should reach across tenures, and include all rented, leased and shared ownership properties managed by the Association. It should include taking appropriate action whether Association residents cause nuisance to those of other tenures, or are themselves victims of ASB from people who are not residents.

3.2 A strategic approach:

The Association's strategy for countering ASB will combine three broad elements:

- **Prevention and deterrence,**
- **Action to resolve reported ASB** including supporting those affected by it and helping those whose anti social conduct can be moderated with support, and
- **Using data to manage and improve performance on ASB** through gauging what works best and targeting resources

3.2.1 Prevention and deterrence

Preventing and deterring ASB, and stopping it escalating should be an integral part of the Association's approach. To this end procedures will:

- focus on promoting tolerance and respect while encouraging and helping residents to resolve their differences themselves,

- send out clear messages about the rights and responsibilities of residents, and the Association's commitment to taking action where necessary,
- make effective use of lettings procedures, in particular pre-tenancy risk and support assessments, Local Lettings Plans, and Sensitive Lettings approaches,
- ensure a firm approach is taken under Starter / Probationary Tenancy procedures ,
- integrate ASB prevention into Neighbourhood Walkabout / Estate Inspection processes, and
- be open to creative ideas that might minimise disruptive conduct.

3.2.2 Action to resolve ASB

Dealing with reports of Anti Social Behaviour

The Association believes it should ensure residents and their neighbourhoods are protected through effective enforcement action. To achieve this, procedures will make sure that:

- processes for reporting incidents of ASB are as easy to use as possible and that every report of ASB is properly recorded,
- reports of ASB are prioritised according to their severity, with investigations started as early as possible after receiving a reported of an incident and conducted in a timely manner,
- action against perpetrators is appropriate and proportionate to the severity of the behaviour, and is escalated depending on the nature and scale of the problem and with regard to risk ,
- efforts are made to help/seek support for residents who cause nuisance or ASB to stop them doing so, while being clear that if they are unwilling to co-operate tough action will be taken against them,
- action is taken in consultation and partnership with key partners such as the local authority and the police, and
- firm action is taken against those whose ASB is targeted at individuals from minority groups or is motivated by racism or other discriminatory reasons.

Detailed procedures will advise staff of the options for intervention available to deal with ASB and will guide them on how and when each should be used.

Securing support

- ***Supporting complainants and witnesses:*** The Association recognises that some people will have concerns about coming forward and making complaints, particularly if they feel that this could result in intimidation towards them if their identity is revealed. They may also have concerns about acting as witnesses in any legal action that might be taken by the Association or its partners once reported incidents have been investigated.

The Association will therefore work with partners to provide support to those reporting or experiencing ASB to encourage them to give the evidence necessary for investigation and action. Where this is not possible, the Association will as far as is practicable, work with partners to investigate incidents and gather evidence without directly involving the victim.

At all times individuals who have reported ASB will be kept informed of what is happening as investigations and action on their reports are taken forward.

- ***Support for behaviour change: helping perpetrators in changing their behaviour.*** The Association recognises that some anti-social behaviour issues may be a consequence directly or indirectly of a perpetrator's own problems such as drug or alcohol abuse; mental health; or disability related issues. The Association believes it should try to help tenants secure the necessary support to deal with personal problems or vulnerability that might underlie their inappropriate behaviour to others. It should nonetheless be made clear to perpetrators that ASB will not be tolerated in neighbourhoods where the Association works.

In line with the principles for sustaining tenancies set out in the Vulnerable Persons Protocol, staff will therefore work with appropriate agencies to ensure that perpetrators receive any support they might need to understand the effects of their anti-social actions and to seek a change in their behaviour.

3.2.3 Using data to manage and improve performance on ASB:

Monitoring the Association's activities on ASB and securing value for money

The Association is keen to improve its effectiveness in dealing with ASB. It will therefore gather and monitor data to identify ASB trends and target resources where they are most needed in both preventing ASB and dealing with ASB outbreaks. Such an intelligence based approach will be based on rigorous procedures to record and respond to individual incidents and to local feedback.

The Association believes its performance on ASB should be measured against challenging standards including timescales for actions, individual customer satisfaction and community confidence indicators, and should be benchmarked against comparable landlords. It is also clear that while services to tackle ASB must be a key part of its work, they should nonetheless be shown to provide value for money. The costs of using various anti-ASB approaches should therefore be recorded and scrutinised alongside other performance measures.

Procedures issued under this policy will set out detailed monitoring and reporting requirements and will provide for the Association's residents to be involved in reviewing and monitoring ASB service standards.

3.3 Staff training and protection

The Association is clear that its staff should feel confident in supporting victims and witnesses, in interviewing and challenging perpetrators, and in negotiating actions to achieve successful outcomes. The Association will train both specialist ASB staff and neighbourhood housing staff to deal with ASB effectively. Training will cover both their responsibility to residents and their own protection.

The Association is committed to a zero tolerance stance on the abuse of staff and contractors.

4 Racial and other harassment policies

The Association believes racial harassment and other hate motivated conduct should be taken particularly seriously, and a specific policy statement on this area will be prepared.

5 Review

The Association will review this policy and other associated policies periodically, in conjunction with stakeholders, to ensure its approach remains relevant and fit for purpose, and complies with legal and best practice requirements.