

Statement of Antisocial Behaviour

Our Policies

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• Introduction

Antisocial behaviour (ASB) can have a major impact on residents living in properties managed by Homes For Islington. We recognise this and the statement outlines first our policies on ASB and then the procedures for dealing with the range of situations where ASB occurs.

A summary of these policies and procedures is available at our Area Housing Offices

• What is Antisocial Behaviour?

The term antisocial behaviour is very broad and includes all types of behaviour, which interfere with the quiet enjoyment of your home. This usually falls short of the criminal, but seriously impacts on the quality of life of local people.

The Housing Act 1996 and Antisocial Behaviour Act 2003 define antisocial behaviour as being conduct which:

- “is capable of causing nuisance or annoyance to any person; and
- directly or indirectly relates to or affects the housing management functions of a relevant landlord: or

- consists of or involves using or threatening to use housing accommodation owned or managed by a relevant landlord for an unlawful purpose.”

Examples of Antisocial Behaviour include but are not limited to:

- verbal abuse and threatening behaviour,
- neighbour disputes,
- uncontrolled pets and animals,
- noise nuisance – residential and business,
- litter, rubbish dumping and fly tipping,
- graffiti, vandalism, throwing missiles and criminal damage,
- nuisance from vehicles including parking and abandonment,
- intimidating gatherings in public places,
- aggressive begging,
- harassment on the basis of gender, race, sexual orientation, disability, faith or religious belief or lack of religious belief, age or refugee status
- substance misuse including public drunkenness, using and selling drugs,
- prostitution, soliciting and kerb crawling,
- reckless riding of mopeds or bicycles in streets or unauthorised areas

Our Policies

• **Our Antisocial behaviour policy**

Homes For Islington is committed to ensuring that all residents enjoy their right to peace, quiet, and security in their homes. We recognise that antisocial behaviour can have a severe effect on the well being of residents and that we have a duty to take action to minimise it. Consequently we are using a range of measures to both prevent ASB happening in the first place and to take action to stop it.

We recognise that tackling ASB has broad consequences that affect other priorities such as letting properties and achieving customer satisfaction. We will take appropriate and prompt action within our powers to deal with disruptive tenants and other persons causing a nuisance or harassment on estates or in individual dwellings. There is an antisocial behaviour officer in each of HFI's directly managed housing offices.

• **Where this fits in with the rest of the borough.**

HFI is one of a range of partners involved in Islington's Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership. Others include the police, health authority, fire service, and various council departments. This partnership has an ASB strategy that sets out the priorities and actions for the Council and all partner agencies. These include:

- safeguarding the environment, tackling litter and rubbish dumping, graffiti, and noise
- reducing the opportunity for ASB, by setting up activities to occupy young people and providing support to families
- tackling ASB across a range of tenures, working with other landlords including Housing Associations and using new powers such as demoted tenancies
- supporting communities and local neighbourhoods, to encourage resident involvement and identify hotspots of activity for action

The strategy takes into account appropriate legislation including the recent ASB Act 2003 that introduced various measures including powers to close down drug addresses and to disperse groups of people acting in an anti-social manner. These powers can only be used

successfully by working in partnership with different agencies in the borough. HFI is a key partner in this respect.

- **Service standards**

Our aims in dealing with nuisance and other forms of antisocial behaviour are:

- To clarify acceptable behaviour for all residents including at the time that a tenant signs up to their tenancy and during our first visit to a new tenant.
- To encourage and enable a self-help approach where this is appropriate
- To give tenants realistic expectations of the service Homes for Islington provides
- To work effectively with partners in dealing with anti-social behaviour: e.g. police, social services, environmental health, both strategically and on each case
- To be effective where action is taken ensuring all tools available are used including ongoing monitoring and review of all cases
- To speedily formally acknowledge every report of anti-social behaviour

Every report of antisocial behaviour will be investigated by the Area Housing team.

We will:

- Take all complaints seriously and initially assume that the complaint is justified - using a customer-focused approach and ensuring that victims feel that they are being believed
- Seek to identify and interview all interested parties
- Start investigations as soon as possible and act within set timescales i.e. where harassment takes place – victims must be visited/interviewed within 24 hrs of initial complaint and where possible perpetrators must be interviewed within 48 hours and no later than that 72 hours
- Provide responses that move from advice, conciliation and support for tenants' own action to action by HFI on behalf of those experiencing the bad behaviour
- Take appropriate action against perpetrators, ranging from warning letters to legal action including both without notice injunctions/injunctions, committal proceedings, possession proceedings, demoted tenancy action, and evictions
- Seek to agree the action to be taken with the complainant.

- **Obligations of Tenants and Leaseholders**

We expect all our residents to abide by the terms of their tenancy agreements or lease and we will enforce any legal action available to us where terms have been breached. This includes responsibility for their own conduct, others residing with them such as children and visitors. We will explain the conditions of the tenancy or lease at the start and give a warning about what action will be taken if the agreement is broken. In serious incidents we will take legal action to enforce these terms, which could result in the loss of a home.

In ensuring that tenants are aware of their obligations we can provide information in a relevant format and/or language. The translation symbol appears on all publications, and interpretation facilities are available. We will also consider large print, braille or other formats.

- **Support of complainants and witnesses**

Homes for Islington take a victim orientated approach to antisocial behaviour and our procedures require complainants to be kept aware of the action being taken.. This requires

regular contact during which we can also provide any necessary support i.e. HFI Housing Support Service which offers a floating support service to vulnerable residents. We can provide a list of other support agencies including Victim Support etc, will undertake necessary repairs, take extra security measures, remove graffiti, work with the HFI Witness service and maintain confidentiality. If it is necessary to share information we will do so with information that is relevant and to individuals from partnering organisations on the information sharing protocol including meeting data protection legislation.

There are hotlines for reporting antisocial behaviour at each area housing office and an emergency number so that in severe circumstance temporary housing could be provided.

- **Professional witness scheme**

Homes For Islington operates a professional witness scheme in order to gain evidence where otherwise the likelihood of successful action being taken is poor. This may be because of intimidation, fear of identification, potential reprisals or simply because of the practicalities of gaining the evidence.

- **Harassment**

Harassment is defined as behaviour that is abusive, to individuals or groups, which is deliberate. It is often motivated by prejudice against the characteristics of the individual or group – for example, racial harassment consists of abusive behaviour towards one ethnic group, by a perpetrator of another ethnic group whose motive is racist.

We take harassment, whether on the grounds of race, religion, sexuality or for any other 'reason', very seriously. We have a policy that is victim centred, supports the witnesses, we will work with other agencies to resolve issues and take appropriate action ourselves.

- **Prevention of ASB**

We recognise that responding to ASB is not just about addressing bad behaviour but promoting tolerance, diversity and respect for others and listening to what is said. Consequently we have been involved in a number of projects aimed at the prevention of further ASB. These include school projects, working with the Young Peoples Parliament, parental support, identifying at risk children, working in partnership with child protection agencies, providing support and guidance as well as a number of youth inclusion projects.

Before legal action is taken against families with children we will seek to involve them at an early stage in the Acceptable Behaviour Contract scheme (ABC). This involves the family in a meeting with police and HFI officers to discuss the bad behaviour, draw up an agreement to address it and explaining what may happen if ASB continues.

There are also a number of diversionary projects. These include the Fire Brigades intensive 5 day Local Intervention Fire Education (LIFE) Project for 13-19 year olds, Arsenal's doubles club (football and literacy), after school and holiday clubs or activities.

In cases of neighbour dispute we will recommend the neighbourhood mediation service. This confidential service is provided in Islington by Camden Mediation Service who help to address issues of conflict between residents i.e. different lifestyles, noise problems.

- **Rehabilitation of perpetrators**

We will balance strong action with the need to rehabilitate perpetrators.

We understand that the perpetrators of ASB may have support needs themselves, that if addressed may resolve the problem. Where appropriate and available, we may provide tenancy support or work with another agency to provide support on a particular issue, for instance drug/alcohol abuse, mental health or parenting skills. At each directly managed area housing offices there is a Housing Support Officer who will take cases on a short-term basis. Additionally referral mechanisms are in place so that specialist support can be made available. We hope to prevent further antisocial behaviour and maintain the tenancy.

- **Multi-Agency Partnerships**

HFI recognises the benefits of multi-agency problem-solving groups to tackle ASB. Joint agencies working together with residents can pool resources, information, evidence and expertise to more successfully tackle ASB and prevent it re-occurring in future.

Four Multi-agency Geographical Panels (MAGPI's) have been set up to solve problems around local concerns with ASB and low level crime across the borough. These involve representatives from agencies including HFI, police, social services, environmental health and play and youth services, meeting together and coming up with solutions to issues such as a hotspot of drunken behaviour in a local park or a spate of graffiti on an estate.

HFI also works closely with the Islington antisocial behaviour team (IASBT), which is a joint police/council and HFI team. The team leads on Islington's Anti-social Behaviour Strategy and promotes multi-agency working across the range of services in Islington. It helps agencies that are responsible for tackling ASB to do so more effectively by providing guidance, monitoring and supporting the ABC scheme and any legal action. It encourages multi-agency problem solving and leads on ASB issues generally on behalf of the police and council. Recent work has included helping the borough to implement the new powers contained within the ASB Act 2003.

- **Working with other agencies managing local authority housing**

Responsibility for Islington's stock transferred to the Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) Homes for Islington (HFI) in April 2004. Responsibility for housing management function at each of the 7 current housing offices is with HFI. Six of these offices are managed directly by HFI and one is managed by Partners for Improvement in Islington (Partners).

- **Data Protection and Information exchange**

We respect the rights of our customers to confidentiality. Where we share information with other agencies it is in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

Within the requirements of the Crime and Disorder Act an information sharing protocol was set up and signed by relevant partners including the Council, Police, Probation Service and Health Authority. Other agencies have since signed including the Fire Service and the main RSL's in the borough. A comprehensive list of Designated Information Sharing Officers is regularly updated and distributed.

- **Sharing information with tenants and the wider community**

Local communities are often the most important agents for change in areas facing problems of ASB. HFI recognises the importance of involving tenants and residents in ideas and actions to combat ASB. We recognise the need to keep tenants and residents up-to-date with news about ASB interventions by publicising our work at local Housing

Panels, through newsletters, leaflets, and in the local newspapers. This reinforces our commitment to taking ASB seriously, demonstrating that we are doing something to tackle ASB and encourages residents to report incidents to us.

Cross Tenure Issues

HFI recognises the importance of having close links with other landlord's in the borough for the purpose of tackling ASB. This ranges from Housing Associations who may manage whole estates to small private landlords. ASB can be experienced or caused by those who own their homes as leaseholders or owner-occupiers. HFI may act to protect owner occupiers or other tenants from the actions of it's tenants or leaseholders. Equally we will take action against people from other tenures to protect our tenants, leaseholders or staff.

Links to other tenures are supported by the Anti-social Behaviour Officers through their work within the ASB strategy. The main Registered Social Landlords (RSL's include housing associations, housing action trusts) in the borough are part of the Information sharing protocol which enables HFI to exchange information about individuals or matters to assist with legal action to tackle ASB. An RSL Forum also meets regularly when cross-tenure ASB issues are included in the agenda.

Training of staff dealing with Anti Social behaviour

We ensure that our staff understand our policy, are trained in our procedures, and are kept up to date with changes in legislation and examples of good practice.

Protection of staff

We recognise that staff who work on their own can be vulnerable and seek to minimise the risks involved. We require staff to complete risk assessments, advise others of their movements, provide mobile phones and not work alone if they put themselves in a potential dangerous situation by doing so.

Our Procedures

Managing Complaints of Antisocial behaviour

The way that a complaint of ASB is progressed will depend upon the nature of the incident, the severity of the problem and the evidence that is available. In most cases we will follow a step-by-step approach to resolve an issue before the use of legal action.

Please try to tell your local area housing office about a problem with ASB as soon as possible. Try to provide as much detail as you can about the incident and who is responsible.

We realise that you will not always know who this is, but a description or a vehicle registration number can be a big help. If the behaviour involves any sort of criminal activity, you should also tell the police.

We will manage ASB cases in the following way:

- Reports can be made by telephoning our ASB hotline or the area housing office, writing, e-mailing or in person. The ASB Hotline Numbers are:-

Boleyn Road Area Housing Office 0207 527 8346

Central Street Area Housing Office 0207 527 6247

Holland Walk Area Housing Office	0207 527 7477
Isledon Road Area Housing Office	0207 527 6567
Upper Street Area Housing Office	0207 527 5346
Lyon Street Area Housing Office	0207 527 6853

- If you receive services from Partners for Improvement in Islington (i.e. you are in a PFI 1 property) – Please contact 0800 587 3595 during normal office hours.
- We will take all reports of ASB seriously and treat your report sensitively and in total confidence.
- In the first instance we will decide whether the incident requires an urgent response, for example in the case of violence, serious threats or harassment. In urgent cases we will respond to your complaint within 24 hours.
- We will consider any special needs you may have such as translating or interpreting facilities or an alternative to written diaries.
- We will complete an initial report and acknowledgement form when you first report an incident of ASB, and provide you with a copy of the acknowledgement form.
- We will make an appointment to carry out a more detailed interview, if necessary, within five working days.
- A detailed record will be kept of your complaint. If it is not resolvable immediately through straight forward advice a case file is opened.
- We will involve you in an action plan to help deal with problems or gather evidence. This could include asking you to keep a diary of incidents to help with our investigation. It also includes details about how we will keep you informed as the case is progressed.
- We will seek your permission before contacting anyone else about the ASB. If you do not want us to contact the person causing the nuisance, or other people, it could be more difficult for us to sort out the problem.
- We will contact relevant council departments (such as the Out of Hours Environmental Health Noise Team), as well as the local police. HFI will also consider the installation of noise recording equipment into those properties experiencing noise nuisance.
- As part of our investigation we will interview witnesses as appropriate. They may be asked to complete diary sheets so they can record the problems they have witnessed and this can be used as evidence.
- Where the alleged perpetrator is known and has already been approached by you, or where you are unable to approach them for a good reason, we will arrange an interview with them and record details of that interview.
- Where the perpetrator is not known we will do all we can to find out who is responsible. This may include the use of Professional Witnesses who are employed by us to gather evidence in some circumstances

- If appropriate we will warn alleged perpetrators that their behaviour is not acceptable and the consequences should it continue.
- Detailed notes will be kept of all interviews and action taken.
- Where we have evidence of ASB we will take action against those responsible. Details of the proposed action will be discussed with you before we proceed. The type of action we take will be appropriate to the issue and includes the following:

Warning letter

- To advise the person of the nuisance being caused and of the action that could be taken if the problem continues. In the case of tenants of social landlords such as Council or Housing Association it will include a warning about the possible breach of the terms and conditions of tenancy and the risk to that tenancy.

Mediation

- In cases of neighbour dispute we will recommend the confidential neighbourhood mediation service (Camden Mediation) to you. The mediators are trained to listen to those involved and help with difficult conversations. They help to address various issues including different lifestyles, noise, children and pets.

Acceptable Behaviour Contract (ABC) or Parental Control Agreement (PCA) -

- The contracts are voluntary written agreements, usually between young people, their parents, police and housing officers; which include a list of antisocial acts which the person has been involved in and which they agree not to continue. A breach could lead to legal action.

Demotion Order – (Demoted Tenancy)

- This court order means that a secure tenant can have their tenancy demoted to one where they have less rights, including no right to buy. If they commit further acts of ASB and there demotion order is breached, HFI can apply to the courts for an extension of they can have their tenancy ended without a future court hearing. The demotion lasts for one year, at the end of which the tenancy is restored to being a secure one.

Injunction/Without Notice Injunction

- A court order that prevents a person from specific acts. In serious cases it can carry the power of arrest and the terms can include banning a person from a property or area. If breached it is a criminal offence and may result in a fine or imprisonment.

Possession Order

- An order of the court that may lead to the eviction of a tenant, if it is shown that they, or a member of their family or visitors, are guilty of ASB. The Possession Order may be suspended, by the court, meaning that the tenant will not be evicted as long as they do not commit further ASB.

Antisocial Behaviour Order (ASBO)

- A court order against anyone over the age of ten that prevents a person from behaving in an anti-social manner. This can include banning a person from an area or associating with named individuals. If breached it is a criminal offence and could lead to imprisonment.

Case Review

- We will arrange follow-up meetings with you to review progress agreed in the action plan and discuss the way forward. This includes keeping you informed of progress with any legal action. We will also provide you with specialist support where appropriate such as via Islington Victim Support.
- We will work with other agencies in partnership, for example the police, environmental health, social services, youth offending services to ensure that they use the powers available to them to resolve matters where appropriate.
- We will share information with other relevant agencies where appropriate in accordance with the regulations of the Data Protection Act and the Crime and Disorder Act.
- We will do everything we reasonably can to bring your complaint to a satisfactory conclusion, and let you know if and when we decide to close a case.
- If you are not happy with the service you have received then HFI's complaints policy can be used to address this.

Monitoring

Each month we collect a number of local performance indicators to keep track of the number of harassment cases and other incidents of ASB and record the action being taken (either in support of the victim or against the perpetrator).

Consequently we regularly check on the number of actions taken including ABC's, ASBO's, Demotion Orders and possession action because of the Antisocial behaviour.