

Anti-social behaviour

- statement of policy

Our policy on anti-social behaviour

This statement outlines our policy on anti-social behaviour (ASB). You may want to also read our statement of procedures, which gives details of how to report anti-social behaviour, and how we will respond to it.

What is anti-social behaviour?

One of the most commonly used definitions of anti-social behaviour is in the Crime & Disorder Act 1998:

“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 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”

These include behaviour such as:

- harassment (including racial harassment and homophobic behaviour)
- intimidation, verbal abuse, violence or threats of violence
- assault
- unruly behaviour, public disturbance, missile throwing and damage by groups of individuals
- vandalism, rubbish, graffiti, fly tipping, fly posting, abandoned vehicles, arson and other criminal damage
- excessive noise
- drug or alcohol abuse.

Why and how are we dealing with anti-social behaviour?

We want to build more than houses – we want to work with local people to create communities where people want to live. Anti-social behaviour stops us doing this – this is a major reason why we need to deal with it.

Our approach will be in proportion to the problem. Serious problems need serious action, and we will use court action and police liaison where necessary.

We will also be creative about how we can solve and prevent problems, for example by working with residents using a community development approach.

When anti-social behaviour is first reported, a nominated member of staff will consider the case. This will normally be the member of staff responsible for housing management in that particular area. In particularly difficult cases a specialist member of staff (the Neighbour Relations Advisor) may also be involved.

The strategic context

Our board has agreed an anti-social behaviour strategy that focusses on four main areas:

- creating better neighbourhoods
- pre tenancy – managing the risk
- tackling problems on the ground - support and strong action
- targets and monitoring.

The strategy goes beyond our statutory obligations, building on our commitment to be iN Business for Neighbourhoods. Please let us know if you would like a copy of this strategy.

Obligations of residents

- residents need to be considerate to their neighbours, and keep noise and nuisance to a minimum. But, people also need to be tolerant – just because you can hear your neighbour making a noise doesn't mean it's a nuisance
- nobody should be tolerant of serious crime, or racial abuse
- residents are responsible for the behaviour of people who live with them and their invited guests, and these obligations are clearly set out in their tenancy agreements
- when residents report anti-social behaviour to us, they will need to remain closely involved in the problem
- often, low-level nuisance is best dealt with by the affected residents themselves
- when we are taking action on residents' behalf in more serious cases, we will still keep them informed and involve them in agreeing actions.

Support for complainants, witnesses and perpetrators

We will do what we can to support people affected. We will keep them informed of what is happening, and in serious cases work with other agencies such as the police.

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We will liaise with the police and the court service about providing support during any court proceedings. At all times witnesses will be kept informed and in some cases the courts may allocate a specific support worker.

Sometimes anti-social behaviour is caused by problems like drug or alcohol misuse, or mental illness. Addressing these problems directly may be better than court action.

There is more information on our support services in our statement of procedures – please let us know if you would like a copy.

Our approach to preventing anti-social behaviour

Prevention is an integral part of our approach to anti-social behaviour. This work is focussed on preventing anti-social behaviour in the first place, as well as stopping it from escalating. Examples of such measures include:

- the work of our specialist community development and housing staff in developing sustainable communities. A copy of our resident involvement policy is available on request
- independent mediation services
- the use of Acceptable Behaviour Contracts
- additional help from DCHA supported housing staff for people with particular vulnerability or challenging behaviour
- partnership working with other organisations.

Partnership working

We know that partnership working can often be particularly important in tackling complex problems. We work in partnership with a range of local and national organisations, including:

- local councils
- the police
- probation services and youth offending teams
- services
- court user groups
- health authorities and trusts
- schools and colleges
- the Social Landlords Crime & Nuisance Group.

Managing information

All reports of anti-social behaviour are recorded on a database that includes the type of incident being reported, the name and address of those reporting it, and the alleged perpetrators, and additional personal information such as age and ethnicity.

The information helps us to use our resources better, and use remedies that work. For example, we will look at the location where ASB is being committed such as play areas, open space, alleyways etc. By understanding the nature and location of ASB we can work with residents and those affected to tackle it.

Before we contact the person being complained about, or any third party, we will first discuss this action with the person reporting the problem.

When liaising with other agencies, we need to share information to work effectively together. In many cases, such as the police, we have formal agreements on how this information is used, and how it is kept as confidential as possible.

Other DCH policies

Racial and other harassment policies

We take racial harassment and other hate-crimes particularly seriously. The process for reporting such incidents is the same as with other anti-social behaviour, and we take care to monitor trends and offer appropriate support.

A copy of our harassment policy and procedure is available on request, as is our equality & diversity policy.

A multi-tenure approach

Our approach to anti-social behaviour goes across tenures, including all rented and shared ownership properties owned or leased by DCH.

This includes taking appropriate action if our residents either cause nuisance to other tenures, or are themselves victims of anti-social behaviour by non-DCH residents.

Staff training

All housing staff are periodically trained on responding to anti-social behaviour reports, and where appropriate to investigate and take necessary action. The training covers both their responsibility to residents and their own protection, and is reviewed in line with changes to law, regulation and good practice.