

Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour



Stoke on Trent Housing Society recognises that anti-social behaviour (including nuisance and neighbour disputes) can have a significant effect on your quality of life. Our aim is to ensure you enjoy safety and security in your own homes wherever possible. This leaflet sets out the kind of action you can expect us to take to deal with anti-social behaviour and how you can help.

What is Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)?

There are many definitions of ASB however Stoke on Trent Housing Society has adopted the ASB Crime & Policing Act 2014 definition as follows:

- *Conduct that can cause, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm, or distress to any person*
- *Conduct capable of causing nuisance or annoyance to a person in relation to that person's occupation of residential premises*
- *Conduct capable of causing housing-related nuisance or annoyance to any person*

The Types of behaviour we would consider to be ASB include:

- Intimidation or harassment
- Aggressive or threatening behaviour to another person
- Violence against another person
- Hate crime which targets someone because of a perceived difference such as race or religion
- Criminal behaviour or activity in your home or neighbourhood, for example prostitution, selling drugs
- Noise which is excessive in volume and duration or occurs at unreasonable hours.

Disagreements between neighbours or different lifestyles will not be classified as ASB. Examples of these are:

- Noise from domestic appliances or the occasional DIY
- Noise from children playing in their homes and gardens
- Lifestyle choices such as cooking smells, BBQs, the occasional party
- Friction between day and night workers and parking disputes
- Overgrown hedges and gardens

Sorting Things Out Early

Many neighbour problems can be sorted out simply by talking to each other. Sometimes people genuinely don't know they are creating a nuisance. It is always best to try to talk to your neighbour directly in the first instance, if you feel you can. Remember:

- ✓ Be prepared to negotiate, it might be a one-off occasion, or someone is going through a difficult time.
- ✓ Be diplomatic. Try not to shout, swear, or raise your voice as this may make the situation worse.
- ✓ Explain to your neighbour why you are speaking to them and work together to find a solution.
- ✓ If your neighbour reacts badly and you feel uneasy, walk away.
- ✓ Never use social media to share your feelings or to vent about a neighbour.

How Quickly will we respond?

When we receive your complaint, we will let you know how quickly we can deal with it. The following are the priorities we use, with some examples.

Emergencies - we will respond within one working day for things like severe harassment, where people are being physically threatened or there is a danger to life. If you experience the above telephone the police as well.

Serious anti-social behaviour - we will respond within 3 working days where, for example, there is loud music affecting many people, reports of drug dealing, dangerous dogs, criminal behaviour

General anti-social behaviour - we will respond within 5 working days to general noise i.e. late night DIY, barking dogs, rubbish dumping or loud music.

What we will do

- ✓ We will agree an Action Plan with you. This will include what you can expect from us and what we expect from you.
- ✓ We will contact you at intervals agreed with you whilst the case is open.
- ✓ We will contact you before we close the case.

With your consent, we will interview the person you have complained about. Although we will keep your identity confidential, your neighbour may guess who made the complaint. We will inform your neighbour of what we will do if any anti-social behaviour continues, and we will monitor the situation.

Some incidents of ASB are very difficult to prove. It is therefore important that we gather as much evidence as possible. If you are asked to keep a record of the ASB, we call this an incident diary, this is because it is required if we need to take legal action.

We will agree with you what action we intend to take and what you can do to assist. If we do not intend to take further action, we will explain why. Where the report is a lifestyle issue, we will provide advice and support about how you can resolve your differences with your neighbour. This may include the offer of independent mediation.

What if there is no improvement?

We will work to ensure that wherever possible anti-social behaviour is prevented or tackled at an early stage by appropriate intervention and support. If informal action does not work, we may:

- Issue verbal or written warnings
- Require an undertaking to be signed by your neighbour, we call this an Acceptable Behaviour Agreement.
- Offer mediation.

If the ASB is persistent and continues, and informal attempts have not worked then we will consider taking legal action against the perpetrator which could include applying for an injunction.

For very serious cases of ASB, and as a last resort we will take action to evict the person causing the ASB. This course of action can be lengthy and requires substantial evidence, so we would require your support. You may also be required to give witness evidence in court.

We will also work in partnership with the Police, and other agencies to prevent and resolve incidents of ASB.

Closing A Case

We will always contact you to seek your agreement to close a case and explain the reasons why.

What Can You Do to Prevent ASB?

- Don't do DIY at unsociable hours
- If you are having a party where there may be some noise, let your neighbour know in advance
- Don't use noisy domestic appliances such as washing machines and vacuum cleaners between 11pm and 7am
- Be considerate when parking
- Use stands for audio equipment and don't put them up against a wall that you share with your neighbour
- If you have people living underneath you, make sure floors are covered with a good quality underlay. This helps reduce noise. Carpets absorb more noise.
- If you live in one of our houses, make sure that dogs are not left alone for long periods where they may bark and cause a nuisance to others.
- Remember that you are responsible for your visitors and that they must also be considerate of your neighbours

How to Get in Touch

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Write to Stoke on Trent Housing Society, The Trevor Jones Office, Hammond House, Ridgway Road, Hanley, ST1 3AX.