



How to...

*Manage anti-social behaviour
cases effectively*



1 How to... manage ASB cases effectively

Managing anti-social behaviour (ASB) cases effectively is a key feature of a high quality, customer-focused ASB service. Its importance is highlighted in commitment three of the Respect ASB Charter for Housing which focuses on taking swift action to protect communities and includes the building block of applying consistent and robust processes for managing ASB cases.

A strong, effective approach to managing casework will ensure that:

- You protect victims, witnesses and communities from harm
- Service users receive a fair, consistent service
- You take timely, appropriate action to prevent and address ASB.

Getting it right

Effective casework underpins all activity to reduce ASB, starting from when a complaint is received and continuing through until the problem is successfully resolved. This should be underpinned by comprehensive policies and procedures developed and agreed with tenants to reflect their priorities. Procedures to manage ASB cases should be:

- Service user and outcome-focused
- Clear and user-friendly to support staff to manage ASB effectively
- Backed up by staff training and support to put them into practice
- Reviewed annually to make sure they take account of new duties or powers and emerging case law
- Built into your IT system, prompting staff to take action at key points during the case
- Adhered to - if you pursue enforcement action, or are subject to legal challenge, you need to be able to show that you followed agreed procedures.

Learning from others

Helena Partnership is embedding its approach to ASB and demonstrating that it is a priority through its investment in training for staff. It provides comprehensive training and induction on its approach to ASB, its policies and how ASB fits with its wider aims and objectives. This ensures that staff are clear about what to do if they witness ASB or are told about an incident while carrying out their duties. Helena Partnerships has also trained 16 staff as domestic violence champions who, allocated to each department, support and guide staff who have identified a risk of domestic violence.

Contact: Joy Wilson
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Learning from others

Manchester City Council's Anti Social Behaviour Action Team, City West Housing Trust, Parkway Green Housing Trust, Northwards Housing and City South Manchester Housing Trust all use a common ASB case file system to ensure consistency. The approach includes guidance notes to assist and direct officers through the key stages of the case with prompts to consider the Equality Act, mental health and substance misuse issues and to ensure that all relevant information about the complainant and the perpetrator is captured. It also includes a check-list and management sign-off for cases requiring legal action.

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At the start

- Train and support staff so that they deal confidently with ASB complaints
- Make sure staff can prioritise complaints based on a harm-centred approach
- Set timescales for actions based on the seriousness of the case and risk of harm
- Make sure the facts are correct – with particular focus on how the behaviour is affecting the person or family members who are making the complaint - has ASB been committed? If it is not ASB what are you going to do to prevent it from escalating into ASB?
- Consider whether urgent protection is required to prevent further risk of harm. Can you respond swiftly?
- Check if the perpetrator is already known to you - do they pose a risk?
- Establish whether the person identified as the perpetrator by the complainant is the one responsible. Or are they themselves the victim?
- Ask what the complainant is expecting from you and what would be a satisfactory outcome for them – this gives you the chance to manage expectations
- At the outset, assess the complainant's vulnerability and the risk of further harm to them using the Risk Assessment Matrix (see overleaf)
- Ensure that any welfare and support needs identified are addressed and that the risk assessment is reviewed at each stage of case management
- Where appropriate, ensure action is taken against the perpetrator in tandem with the risk assessment
- Depending on the outcome of the risk assessment, consider holding an internal or external case conference, installing security measures, carrying out reassurance calls or visits, and making referrals to appropriate agencies
- Look to resolve the problem at the earliest opportunity, respond quickly and consider mediation early in the process
- Work with the complainant to agree a strategy for dealing with the case and a realistic action plan, with clear timescales and agreed communication methods between the officer and the complainant, using a standard template for consistency. Ask the complainant to sign it and give them a copy for reference
- Make sure that all commitments and promises detailed in the plan are kept, and the complainant understands what will happen next
- Be clear about what is expected of the complainant, such as maintaining diary sheets and reporting further incidents when they happen
- Consider the most appropriate tools to use in the situation – this may include non-legal options such as mediation
- Make sure that the complainant has the name and contact details for the officer dealing with the case and agree how often you will contact them
- Maintain strict confidentiality throughout
- Investigate the complaint and keep a record of how this has been done.

Assessing vulnerability: The Risk Assessment Matrix

The vulnerability of complainants should be assessed at the earliest possible opportunity following a report of ASB. The outcomes of the assessment should be shared with all agencies involved with the case to provide adequate support and protection to vulnerable complainants. Historically landlords and partner agencies have struggled to undertake this in a consistent or effective manner, and the impact on some complainants of repeated incidents of low level ASB went undetected.

The Risk Assessment Matrix (RAM) was developed in 2010 to support landlords and the police in addressing this issue. Made up of carefully structured questions, it highlights risk at an early stage and prioritises it according to the level of severity. Once the level of risk has been identified, the Matrix will then guide the case handling officer towards taking the appropriate and necessary steps to protect the complainant from further harm.

You can find a copy of the RAM and examples of how different landlords have adapted it to suit their own needs at www.cih.org/practicehub

Learn with us. Improve with us. Influence with us.

This scorecard is designed to help you identify vulnerable victims, witnesses, and complainants. It should be used as a guide, and in combination with your own judgement (and that of your neighbourhood partners) to help ascertain what support and protection is required in any given situation. All action taken as a result of your assessment should be discussed with the witness to ensure it meets their needs.																											
History	1. Other than this occasion - how often do you have problems?	5 Daily 3 Most days 2 Most weeks 1 Most months 0 Only occasionally																									
	2. Do you think the current incident is linked to previous incidents? If so why?	2 Yes 0 No																									
	3. Do you think that incidents are happening more often and/or are getting worse?	2 Yes 0 No																									
	4. Do you know the offender(s)?	2 They know each other well 1 They are 'known' to each other 0 They do not know each other																									
	5. Does the perpetrator (or their associates) have a history of or reputation for intimidation or harassment?	6 Perpetrator or their associates are currently harassing the complainant 4 Perpetrator or their associates have harassed the complainant in the past 2 Perpetrator or their associates have not harassed the complainant, but have a history or reputation for harassment or violent behaviour 0 Perpetrator or their associates have no history or reputation for harassment or intimidation																									
	6. Have you informed any other agencies about what has happened? If yes, are you happy for us to discuss the problem with them? Details:	0 Yes 1 No																									
Vulnerability	7. Which of the following do you think that this incident deliberately targeted? Specify:	4 You 3 Your family 1 Your community 0 None																									
	8. Do you feel that this incident is associated with your faith, nationality, ethnicity, sexuality, gender or disability? Details:	3 Yes 0 No																									
	9. In addition to what has happened, do you feel that there is anything that is increasing your or your household's personal risk (e.g. because of personal circumstances)? Details:	3 Yes 0 No																									
	10. How affected do you feel by what has happened? Details:	0 Not at all 1 Affected a little 2 Moderately affected 3 Affected a lot 5 Extremely affected																									
Support	11. Has yours or anyone's health been affected as a result of this and any previous incidents? Details:	3 Physical health 3 Mental health																									
	12. Do you have a social worker, health visitor or any other type of professional support? Can we speak to them about this? Details:	0 No 1 Yes																									
	13. Do you have any friends and family to support you?	3 Complainant lives alone and is isolated 2 The complainant is isolated from people who can offer support 1 The complainant has a few people to draw on for support 0 The complainant has a close network of people to draw on for support																									
	14. Apart from any official on you, do you think anyone else has been affected by what has happened? Details:	1 Your family 3 Local community 0 Other																									
TOTAL SCORE:																											
Based on these factors and your own judgement, adjust the scoring accordingly																											
<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 10%; text-align: center;">Low</td> <td style="width: 10%; text-align: center;">0</td> <td style="width: 10%; text-align: center;">4</td> <td style="width: 10%; text-align: center;">8</td> <td style="width: 10%; text-align: center;">12</td> <td style="width: 10%; text-align: center;">16</td> <td style="width: 10%; text-align: center;">20</td> <td style="width: 10%; text-align: center;">22</td> <td style="width: 10%; text-align: center;">24</td> <td style="width: 10%; text-align: center;">26</td> <td style="width: 10%; text-align: center;">28</td> <td style="width: 10%; text-align: center;">30</td> <td style="width: 10%; text-align: center;">High</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="12" style="text-align: center;">Medium</td> </tr> </table>			Low	0	4	8	12	16	20	22	24	26	28	30	High	Medium											
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Medium																											

Learning from others

Following a review of the ASB service with service users, **Bromsgrove and District Housing Trust** has devised a checklist to guide staff in managing service users' expectations from the outset. This ensures that residents are aware of the possible ways in which their ASB complaints may be resolved and understand the likely outcomes.

Contact: annette.trow@bdht.co.uk or marie.hailing@bdht.co.uk

During the case

- Where ASB is being committed, challenge the perpetrator(s) appropriately, swiftly and with authority
- Follow up in writing
- Keep the complainant updated
- Assess, and act on, the perpetrator's support needs
- If other agencies haven't responded to your referrals, chase them
- Make sure staff know how to make referrals and what they should do if this becomes a barrier to progress
- Systematically record every action taken on a case – remember, if it isn't logged, it didn't happen
- Share action taken with partners
- Carry out regular, systematic quality checks, with a supporting audit trail, to make sure:
 - That staff dealing with ASB are taking a consistent, appropriate approach – this is particularly important where work is being done by a number of people who may be in different locations and/or working generically
 - That the quality of letters, communication and action planning is acceptable
 - That appropriate action is being taken and the right tools are used
 - That targets and promises are being met
 - Whether the challenge to the perpetrator has stopped the ASB. If not what is being done to stop further harm to the complainant?
- Have you considered Equality Act implications and justification?
- Consider proportionality at each stage and be satisfied that the intervention used is reasonable and proportionate to the ASB being complained of
- Before beginning court proceedings, carry out an internal case review, supported by a checklist, to make sure that all actions have been recorded, that the needs of the perpetrator have been thoroughly assessed and acted upon, and that, of all the available tools and powers, this is the only option
- Measure, record and evaluate the impact of the harm caused on the community.

Learning from others

Carrick Housing's Neighbourhood Enforcement Team has developed a human rights form which must be completed and then agreed by the housing manager in every case that requires enforcement action. This gives a safeguard to ensure that all possible steps have been taken and also provides evidence to court that the landlord is acting reasonably.

Contact: Adam Fitzpatrick: afitzpatrick@carrickhousing.org.uk

Learning from others

Sovereign Housing's IT system for managing ASB casework enables partner organisations to log in and input information to support the case.

Contact: Rebecca Horne
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At the end

- Proactively close cases down – it's inefficient not to
- Let the complainant know that you are closing the case – face to face if possible – and make it clear that they can come back for help if further problems occur
- Notify any partners involved
- Publicise successful outcomes
- Carry out satisfaction surveys with the complainant and witnesses – and act on the findings
- Review what worked and what didn't – capture and share the learning and success factors
- Consider surveying the perpetrator to understand what aspects of your approach were most effective in resolving the situation – this can help you to target resources and deal with similar cases in the future.

Learning from others

The **Gentoo Group** is researching which actions are most effective in preventing ASB from reoccurring. As part of the research, Gentoo has analysed perpetrator profiles and characteristics, and has been able to identify who is most likely to reoffend. Gentoo will use the findings to inform decisions on how resources are allocated and how prevention and support activity is targeted. It will also help it to understand which tools are most effective. This will be published jointly with CIH in autumn 2011.

Contact: Melanie Smith at melanie.smith@gentoogroup.com

Finding out more - the principles of effective ASB case management

In 2010 the Home Office, CIH, the National Policing Improvement Agency, the Association of Chief Police Officers, the Social Landlords Crime and Nuisance Group, and a number of social housing landlords and community safety partnerships developed a set of ASB casework principles. These set out a general framework for the case management of ASB at a neighbourhood level by both the police and housing. The principles provide practical advice for case handling officers and cover five key areas:

- Opening a case
- Early intervention
- Enforcement and use of preventative tools
- Legal considerations
- Closing a case.

Throughout, the principles emphasise the need to protect individuals and communities and, where possible, change the behaviour of perpetrators, through effective case management.

You can download the principles from www.cih.org/practicehub



Useful resources and information

To find out more about and sign-up to the Respect ASB Charter for Housing go to www.cih.org/respectcharter

CIH Practice Brief Respect: Delivering the ASB Charter for Housing (September 2011):
http://www.cih.org/publication/display/vpathDCR//templatedata/cih/publication/data/Respect_Delivering_the_ASB_charter_for_housing (CIH members have free access to this resource)

CIH Housing Practice Issue 16 (August 2011) Empowering communities to tackle anti-social behaviour:
www.cih.org/publication-free/display/vpathDCR//templatedata/cih/publication-free/data/Empowering_communities_to_tackle_anti-social_behaviour

CIH Housing Practice Issue 9 (June 2011) Anti-social behaviour:
www.cih.org/publication-free/display/vpathDCR//templatedata/cih/publication-free/data/Anti-social_behaviour

Effective ASB Case Management Principles (Home Office 2010):
<http://www.cih.org/practicehub>

Tackling anti-social behaviour: tools and powers – toolkit for social landlords (England) (DCLG, Home Office, CIH and SLCNG March 2010):
www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/toolpowersguide

CIH practice online: Tackling anti-social behaviour:
www.cih.org/practiceonline/ (CIH Corporate and Fellow members have free access to this resource)



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