

Anti-social behaviour (ASB)

If you decide to take on a tenancy with the Trust you should understand that an important part of your tenancy is to be a good neighbour. The action of a few can affect the quality of life of some individuals, and sometimes whole communities. This is why the Trust takes anti-social behaviour very seriously.

What is Anti-social behaviour?

We treat any behaviour that is likely to cause nuisance, harassment, alarm or distress to anyone, as anti-social behaviour, this may be ongoing behaviour or one off incidents.

What do I do if I have a problem with my neighbour?

If a problem occurs between neighbours, it is often best to try and sort the matter out with your neighbour yourself. By speaking to your neighbour, you may be able to settle the matter straight away without having to do anything else. Your neighbour might even be unaware that there was a problem in the first place.

We understand that this may not work or be appropriate in all cases. If it doesn't, please contact us and we will talk to you about the problem and tell you how we may help. There are a number of ways you can do this; call into one of our local shops, telephone us, write to us, send us an email on:

complaints@wrekinhousingtrust.org.uk, or let us know via our website on www.wrekinhousingtrust.org.uk. Please refer to the contacts page for the individual shops details. If you live in the Borough of Telford & Wrekin, you can also report it to the anti-social behaviour reporting line by telephone on **01952 384384**, If in the Shropshire area telephone **0345 678 9020** or Staffordshire contact **0300 111 8000**.

How long will it take for the Trust to respond to my report?

We take anti-social behaviour very seriously, so we aim to contact you about your complaint within the following timescales:

- Serious allegations (such as physical assault) – within one working day and suggest you should have contacted the Police if it is of a criminal nature.
- Racist or abusive graffiti or dangerous rubbish – within one working day.
- All other complaints – within five working days.

After I've complained, what happens next?

We will try and help you sort out minor problems as quickly as possible. If things are, or become, more serious your Housing Executive will work with you to agree on an action plan of what we will do, and what you will need to do, and outline the process for dealing with reports of ASB.

We cannot tackle the complex issue of ASB on our own, so we work closely with several organisations in the Local Community Safety Partnership and through this partnership with your Police and Crime Commissioner. We may need to put you in

touch with other agencies, such as the environmental health team. If we do this we will support you and them to help resolve the problem.

We can't take action without evidence, so we are likely to ask you to record details of any on-going anti-social behaviour, how long it lasts and who is doing it. We will provide you with diary sheets to help you do this. We may ask you to complete a witness statement and attend court if we need to take legal action.

We will not approach the person(s) you are complaining about to investigate the complaint without your permission to do so. We will not tell them who has complained about them without you giving us permission. However, in some circumstances it can be obvious where a complaint has come from, for example if you complain about loud music from your next door neighbour, then they may have a good idea who has complained about them.

Where you have given us permission, we will discuss the complaint with the person(s) you are complaining about to hear what they have to say and gain their co-operation in resolving the issue.

We will discuss our findings with you and agree any further actions and anything that we will need you to do.

Your case will be closed when the action plan is complete and/or if no further action is appropriate or possible. We will tell you when we intend to close the case and why we are doing so.

Will the Trust keep me updated with what's going on?

If we identify ASB, we will agree an action plan with you setting out what we will do about it and what we will need you to do. We will keep you informed about the things we do and will ask you to do the same to try to tailor support to your needs. We will support victims and witnesses and work with other agencies, perhaps through:

- Keeping in regular contact with you,
- Witness support groups,
- Victim support,
- Housing support,
- Mediation,
- Referrals to other agencies,
- Support during legal action,
- Additional security measures,

How you can help – being a good neighbour

Being a good neighbour is an important part of living in your home and community.

A good neighbour is:

- Considerate – respects peoples' rights and privacy and thinks how their behaviour affects others.
- Tolerant – understand that people have different ways of doing things and that is okay.
- Responsible – for the actions of themselves, their family, visitors and pets.
- Law abiding – does not engage in illegal activity. Takes responsibility and reports to the Police.

As a good neighbour you should:

- Talk things over with your neighbour when there are problems, listen to other peoples' points of view, and try to come to an agreement that works for everyone.
- Keep the noise coming from your home (music, parties, alarms, pets, cars and so on) at a reasonable level, particularly at night.
- Be tolerant of neighbours' children playing outside.
- Park considerately so as not to block your neighbours' access to their property.
- Keep your garden tidy and free of rubbish.
- Avoid dropping litter, take it home with you.
- Control your pets and clean up after them.
- Dispose of bulky items responsibly, by taking to your local Community Recycling Centre or contacting your local Council who will pick up bulky waste for a charge.
- Avoid keeping untaxed or un-roadworthy vehicles at your home or in the neighbourhood.
- Comply with the terms of your Tenancy Agreement.

What happens in mediation?

One of the most effective ways of resolving disputes is with the help of an independent mediator, who can act impartially and not take sides.

Mediation is a voluntary process that gives all parties a chance to express their views and to be heard. The mediator will help the parties come up with an agreement that is decided by them rather than being imposed by others.

Remedies for dealing with ASB and gathering evidence

The Trust will take action where it is considered to be appropriate, and will utilise the full range of non-legal and legal remedies available, which include:

- Interviewing and warning alleged perpetrators,
- Mediation,
- Acceptable behaviour contracts,
- Parenting contracts,
- Injunctions,
- Demotion of tenancies,
- Possession proceedings,

- The serving of a Section 21 Notice if the tenant is on an Assured Shorthold Tenancy,
- The non-renewal of a Fixed Term Tenancy.

To take legal action, we will need independent evidence to prove to a judge what is happening. The judge will also need to see that the anti-social behaviour is of a nature and severity where the legal action is appropriate, and the judge will need to decide whether it is reasonable for the tenant to lose their home because of the ASB.

Keeping diary sheets are an important part of obtaining information to capture what has been happening and help establish the nature and extent of the problems and impact it is having on others. Your Housing Executive will let you know if they feel it would be useful for you to complete diary sheets and provide you with advice on completing and returning them.

Eviction will be considered along with, other interventions and the most appropriate course of action will be taken.

As part of the Trust's commitment to tackling ASB, we have signed up to Respect – the ASB Charter for Housing and promise to try and live up to it. You can find out more about this by visiting www.cih.org/respectcharter/

Please remember, some incidents of anti-social behaviour are extremely difficult to prove or may not be of a severity or nature where we can take action and therefore it may not be possible to achieve a positive outcome.