

ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR POLICY

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Arhag believes that everyone is entitled to a safe, peaceful and secure home and neighbourhood.
- 1.2 The Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 requires Registered Providers to publish a statement of their policies and procedures for dealing with Anti-Social Behaviour.
- 1.3 This policy lays out the way in which Arhag will tackle Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) in its properties and on its estates and how we will work with residents, partner agencies and the wider community to address issues of Anti-Social Behaviour and to provide an Anti-Social Behaviour Service that meets the needs of our customers.
- 1.4 Tackling anti-social behaviour is a priority for Arhag we are committed to dealing firmly, fairly and promptly with acts of anti-social behaviour and nuisance.

2.0 Legal and Policy Framework

- 2.1 In implementing this policy Arhag will ensure that we meet statutory obligations under relevant legislation including the following:-
 - Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003
 - Housing Acts 1988 and 1996
 - Crime and Disorder Act 1998
 - Environmental Protection Act 1990
 - Police reform act 2002
 - Human rights act 1998

2.2 This policy should be implemented with due regard to the following Arhag policies and procedures:

- Harassment Policy and Procedure
- Domestic Abuse Policy and Procedure
- Tenancy Management procedure
- Allocations and Lettings Procedure
- Estate Management Policy
- Covert Surveillance (RIPA) policy and procedure.

3.0 Definition and Categorisation

3.1 Arhag recognises that a number of different definitions can be used to specify what is and is not anti-social behaviour. Arhag defines Anti-Social Behaviour in the following ways:

- Conduct which is capable of causing nuisance or annoyance to any person, and which directly or indirectly relates to, or affects the management functions of a relevant landlord (Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003)
- Any conduct which consists of or involves using or threatening to use housing accommodation owned or managed by the relevant landlord for unlawful purposes (Housing Act 1996)
- Anything, which causes or is likely to cause a nuisance or annoyance to other persons in the neighbourhood or behaving in a manner that be may be considered anti social (Arhag's Tenancy Agreement)

3.2 ASB is usually a pattern of behaviour. Where a one-off incident is reported, it will usually be dealt with as a Housing Management issue initially, with advice and assistance being offered to the person reporting the issue.

3.3 The exception to this is where the incident involves violence, threats of violence, harassment or any other significant risk factor. Issues of this nature will be given urgent priority.

3.4 Each report of Anti-Social Behaviour will be assessed based on the information provided and the case will then be assigned with a category.

3.3 Arhag will categorise anti-social behaviour reports as follows:

Priority	Seriousness	Response Times	Examples
Priority 1	Severe Urgent	Officer to make contact within 1 working day and complete an interview and detailed assessment (within 1 – 2 working days) subject to victim's expressed needs etc	Violence Threats of violence Domestic Abuse Hate crime or hate related harassment (on the grounds of race, religion, sex, sexuality, age or disability) Drug dealing/drug use Serious health and safety issues (E.g. drug paraphernalia)
Priority 2	Moderate Minor	Officer to make contact within 3 working days (moving to 5 working days), arranging an interview and initial assessment completing this within 10 working days.	Noise Neighbour disputes Verbal abuse Fly tipping/Environmental Vehicle Nuisance Damage to property (unless serious health and safety issues) Gangs hanging around Alcohol related (unless there is violence/threats of violence or other serious factors)

4.0 Arhag's general approach to tackling Anti-Social Behaviour

4.1 Arhag's approach to tackling anti social behaviour will be proportionate and dependant upon the type of behaviour that is of concern. However we will always take a victim focussed approach and take each complaint or report seriously.

4.2 The key objectives of this Policy and Procedure are:

- To minimise the impact of anti-social behaviour through support for victims and witnesses
- To ensure appropriate responses to reported incidents
- To take action to resolve problems when they arise
- To use the full range of legal and non-legal remedies to stop anti-social behaviour and minimise the impact on affected communities and individuals
- To promote responsible behaviour
- To ensure that our residents know about our services in relation to ASB and how to access them

5.0 What Arhag expects from tenants

5.1 Arhag expects that all tenants will keep to the conditions specified in their tenancy or lease agreement. The agreement is explained to new tenants when they sign up for an Arhag property and then again at the 6 week 'settling-in' visit.

5.2 Arhag expects tenants to be tolerant. This does not mean that you have to put up with genuine anti-social behaviour but where problems arise because of differing lifestyles, we expect you to be reasonable.

5.3 Unless the ASB is serious/urgent Arhag would usually expect you to speak to the person that is causing a problem in the first instance. Things can often be resolved more easily between the two parties that are involved in a dispute. Getting Arhag involved can sometimes make things worse.

5.4 Unless the ASB is serious, we would expect you to try mediation. We offer a free mediation service and an independent mediation organisation will meet with you and your neighbour and help you to agree a solution to the problems that you are experiencing.

5.5 Where the ASB is serious or where the above steps haven't worked, we would expect you to assist us with gathering evidence. We may ask you to keep a diary of events or, in some cases, we may ask you to come to Court and give first hand evidence about what you have experienced.

5.6 Where residents will not assist or are unable to assist with gathering evidence, Arhag will review the case to see whether evidence may be gathered by other means. When deciding how to proceed we will look at seriousness of the issue, the cost of obtaining further evidence and the likelihood of achieving a successful outcome. Residents will be told of the impact on Arhag's ability to take action if first-hand evidence is not available.

6 What Arhag Will Do

6.1 When a case is initially reported we will:

- Give the person reporting the problem the opportunity to speak to a Duty Housing Officer to obtain immediate advice
- Acknowledge the complaint within 2 working days
- Arrange an interview to obtain full details of the incidents within 24 Hours for Priority 1 cases and 5 working days for Priority 2 cases
- Provide a reference number and the name and contact details of the officer who will be investigating the complaint
- Provide details of other agencies that can provide support or assistance

6.2 During the initial meeting/interview with the case officer, we will:

- Explain Arhag's policy and procedure
- Provide further information about support services or other agencies that can assist
- Jointly agree an action plan with you, which states what Arhag will do and anything that you will need to do in order to take the case further
- We will ask what outcome you would like and we will be open and honest about whether it is realistic/achievable
- Agree how often you would like to be contacted/updated
- Get agreement from you before discussing your complaint with the other party or any other agencies

- Assess any risks to you and, where necessary, order emergency repairs and additional security measures to your property

6.3 During the investigation stage we will:

- (With your permission) contact the person(s) complained about (or the tenant/leaseholder if complaint is against their family/visitors) and work with them to resolve the problem
- Check to see if there are any other complaints of a similar nature on file about the alleged perpetrator;
- Work with other agencies (e.g. the Police, Environmental Services and Social Services) to try to resolve the problem and/or obtain evidence
- Formulate an agreed action plan, with other agencies if appropriate
- Keep you informed of progress by contacting you at the frequency agreed as part of the joint Action Plan.

7 Actions to tackle ASB

7.1 Arhag will adopt a pro-active approach to complaints of antisocial behaviour and is committed to taking appropriate action to solve problems.

7.2 We will consider the following actions, along with any other appropriate actions, to resolve problems

Prevention

- Setting clear policies and service standards for managing antisocial behaviour in consultation with tenants and leaseholders
- Explaining the rights and obligations contained within the tenancy agreement during the sign-up process
- Carrying out follow up visits to new tenants to ensure that they understand their rights and responsibilities
- Promoting and encouraging Mediation for all Priority 2 cases
- Good Neighbour Agreements

- Publicising successful outcomes to reassure the community
- Arranging or working with external agencies to provide diversionary activities where appropriate

Early Intervention

- Early intervention by Housing Officer
- Mediation or community mediation
- Resolving issues through support provision for vulnerable perpetrators
- Issuing warning letters
- Acceptable Behaviour Contracts
- Parenting Contracts
- Carry out checks with relevant statutory agencies and making referrals where necessary

Enforcement

- Injunctions
- Demoted Tenancies
- Lease forfeiture proceedings
- Enforcing the Tenancy Agreement
- Possession Proceedings
- Anti-Social Behaviour Orders
- Closure Orders

8 Victim and Witness Support

8.1 Arhag recognises that fear can prevent people from reporting or following up action against perpetrators of anti social behaviour. To tackle this, Arhag will give the utmost priority to supporting victims and staff both during and after cases, necessary action may include:

- Applying to the court for a 'without notice' order so as to provide some immediate respite;
- Assessing the need for witness protection measures, (such as increased security - new locks on windows and doors, a panic button);
- Using professional witnesses, hearsay evidence, anonymised witness statements and surveillance equipment (subject to

approval under Arhag's Covert Surveillance Policy) where people are too scared to come forward.

- Arranging support as necessary from such services as Victim Support and the Police's Domestic Violence Unit
- Individual customers, victims and any witnesses will be kept informed of progress at all stages

8.2 Arhag will engage with other partners, including Local Authority Crime Reduction Partnership, to access peer and witness support groups and best practice information

9 Multi-Agency Responses

9.1 Arhag recognises that it cannot tackle anti social behaviour in isolation, and it will work with the police and other key partners and stakeholders.

9.2 Arhag will endeavor to engage with Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership within its core local authority areas of operation, to tackle crime and anti social behaviour.

9.3 Arhag will sign up to Local Authority information sharing Protocols in its core areas of operation, in order to:

- Co-ordinate cross-borough responses to crime and anti-social behaviour in respect of housing management issues.
- Improve information-sharing and joined-up work for an effective response to incidents of crime and anti social behaviour.

9.4 Arhag will attend relevant multi-agency meetings in order to discuss cases and share good practice.

10 Case Closure

10.1 When a case is resolved, or if after investigation it cannot be taken any further, Arhag will:

- Discuss the reasons for closing the case with the person that experienced the problem

- Explain that it can be re-opened if problems recur
- Provide any further advice/support as necessary
- Confirm all of the above in writing

10.2 When a case has been closed the case officer will send a satisfaction survey, which will be used to obtain feedback and monitor the effectiveness of the service

10.3 One month after the case has been closed, the case officer will contact the person who reported the case, to make sure there have been no further incidents/problems

11. Equality and Diversity Implications

11.1 Arhag is committed to taking seriously all complaints of harassment, bullying, discrimination or victimisation, investigating and responding accordingly.

11.2 Arhag recognises that minority groups are both more likely to be victims of anti-social behaviour and feel unsafe in their homes. Arhag will ensure that staff are trained to deal with these cases and are able to follow the multi-agency approach essential to addressing such issues.

12 Performance and monitoring

12.1 Each ASB case will be reviewed at least monthly by the Housing Operations Manager, to ensure compliance with this policy. The Head of Housing will also periodically conduct compliance reviews.

12.2 Arhag will closely monitor anti-social behaviour cases and the services provided to tackle it. Arhag will work closely and liaise with other social landlords locally to benchmark its effectiveness in relation to anti-social behaviour.

12.3 Arhag will provide high level performance information in this service area for monitoring purposes to the Board, Senior Management Team and all residents through the quarterly newsletter.

12.4 Headline performance information will be reported to tenants and leaseholders on a regular basis, through a variety of means. More detailed performance information will be available upon request and as required.

13.0 Responsibility

13.1 It is the responsibility of the Chief Executive to ensure that this policy is in place.

13.2 The Head of Housing is responsible for the effective implementation of this policy

13.3 The head of Housing is also responsible for ensuring that staff involved in the tackling of anti social behaviour are trained.

14.0 Review and Board Approval

14.1 This policy will be reviewed each year taking account of any changes to legislation that may occur and best practice.

Person Responsible for the review of this policy:	Head of Housing
Date of this review:	November 2010
Date of Board approval:	26 th January 2011
Date the next review is due:	