



Dealing with Anti-Social Behaviour



Welwyn Hatfield
Community Housing Trust



Dealing with Anti-Social Behaviour

The **Community Housing Trust** aims to work with tenants and local communities to provide a secure, clean and safe environment for people to live in. We take reports of anti-social behaviour seriously and will work with you and others to resolve problems and prevent them happening again. We recognise that taking legal action may be necessary in some cases.

This leaflet sets out how we are working with our customers and the wider community to tackle anti-social behaviour in our neighbourhoods. It sets out our approach to dealing with the problem. It explains how we can help you if you have concerns about anti-social behaviour, whether this affects you or your family or anyone else in your area.



Our approach to Anti-Social Behaviour

The **Community Housing Trust** has an **Anti-Social Behaviour strategy**, which explains how we will deal with the problem firmly, whilst making sure the rights and interests of victims and witnesses are protected. A copy of the strategy is available free of charge upon request. If you would like a copy please contact your local **Housing Office** (see back cover for details).

What is anti-social behaviour?

The government defines anti-social behaviour as 'behaviour which causes or is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to one or more persons not of the same household' – Section 1 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

It applies to people living or working in the local area, including people who own or rent their homes, and **Housing Trust** staff.

The following list sets out some examples of anti-social behaviour:

- Aggressive and threatening language and behaviour
- Violence against people and property
- Causing nuisance or harassment against another person or group of persons based on race, disability, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation or any other factor
- Using or selling drugs or other illegal substances
- Loud noise, especially late at night
- Allowing pets to make too much noise, or to be a danger to others
- Vandalising property, including graffiti
- Dumping rubbish and litter
- Nuisance from vehicles, including anti-social parking and abandoned vehicles
- Domestic violence
- Being intolerant of other people's lifestyles
- Being a general nuisance in the community.





How will Community Housing Trust deal with anti-social behaviour?

We will:

- Work with other organisations including the police, Welwyn Hatfield Council, housing associations and local groups to prevent anti-social behaviour and deal with its effects
- Clearly state in your tenancy agreement the behaviour required of tenants
- Give advice on how to sort out minor neighbour disputes
- Give information to customers on how to report anti-social behaviour, and where an investigation is underway, provide regular reports on the progress of cases
- Act quickly in response to complaints of anti-social behaviour
- Support people reporting or witnessing anti-social behaviour
- Explain to customers how other organisations may be able to help
- Deal firmly with people behaving anti-socially and take legal action where appropriate
- Respect the confidentiality of individuals when they report an incident, and work within the law relating to data protection

Letting us know

There are several ways you or your representative can report anti-social behaviour:

- Telephone the **Community Development Team** on **01707 357 000**, or write to us at the address on the back cover
- Call in person to our **Housing Offices** in Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield
- Complete an online form at www.welhat-cht.org.uk
- Email us at communities@welhat-cht.org.uk
- Attend a drop in session for advice and guidance – we will advertise when and where these are being held
- Contact the council's **Street Wardens** on **01707 357 000**

Talking it through

If you feel able to, and where the situation is not too serious, you should approach the other people involved to discuss the matter. This allows everyone to understand the different points of view and often leads to the problem being sorted out without any involvement by the Trust.

If you find the other party is being unreasonable, or you feel unable to approach them, please contact us and we will look at other ways to resolve the problem.

The first steps

Many problems are simple to sort out, for example overgrown gardens and abandoned vehicles. In these cases we will work with the person involved to solve them.



What happens next?

Where cases are not as simple, for example those which involve nuisance or harassment, we will talk to you in more detail before starting an investigation.

Depending on the nature of the complaint, a member of the **Community Development Team** or your **Neighbourhood Housing Officer** will discuss the best course of action with you.

We may send you **Incident Log Sheets** so you can write down what has happened, or arrange an appointment to discuss the matter in full. The meeting can take place at your home, or somewhere else if you prefer.

Where the matter is serious, for example where someone's safety is threatened, investigations will start within 24 hours of you reporting it to us. We will ask you questions about the problems, and may need to speak to other people in your household who have been affected. We may decide at this point to write or contact the person alleged to be causing you the nuisance.

The Nuisance Action Plan

Together we'll agree a **Nuisance Action Plan**, stating what you should do and what we will do to sort out the problem. From then on, we will be working in partnership with you, keeping to the actions we jointly agreed. The **Action Plan** will include contact details of the Officer investigating your complaints. It will also include details of other agencies that may be able to help, for example the **Police**.

Mediation

Where the problem is caused by a neighbour dispute and you do not feel comfortable about talking it through with the other party we can arrange mediation, which we may pay for. This is where expert advisors can help all parties reach a fair conclusion to the problem.

Gathering evidence

Before we can start taking action, we will need evidence from you, or others who have witnessed the behaviour. Examples include:

- Information that you or other witnesses give us, either in writing or in person
- **Incident Log Sheets**, completed by you or other witnesses, which provide details of incidents when they happen
- Supporting evidence from other agencies such as the **Police** or **Street Wardens**.

Taking action

When we have collected evidence we will decide what to do next. We will visit the perpetrator to hear their side of the story, and where appropriate tell them that their actions are a breach of their tenancy agreement.

We will respond with a mixture of intervention and enforcement. Where needed, we will take appropriate legal action to make sure that the anti-social behaviour ends.



Preventing further incidents of anti-social behaviour

There are several steps we can take to prevent further incidents of anti-social behaviour, for example taking legal action, and, as a last resort, evicting someone behaving anti-socially from their home. If we need to go to court to take legal action, we may ask witnesses or victims to give evidence. This is not always needed, but will strengthen our case. We will talk this over with you first, to make sure you are comfortable doing so. Other actions we might take include:

- Arranging help and support for the perpetrator to enable them to improve their behaviour
- Drawing up an Acceptable Behaviour Contract or Parental Control Agreement
- Applying to the court for an Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO)
- Applying to the court for an injunction (this may include the power of arrest)
- Applying to the court for a possession order or suspended possession order, which may lead to eviction.

Any legal action taken by the Community Housing Trust will be tailored to the individual circumstances of the case and may be taken in partnership with other agencies, such as the council, Police and other organisations.

Providing support

We know that it may be difficult for you to report an incident and where required, to give evidence. We will give you (and other witnesses) as much support and guidance as possible. We may also refer you to other local agencies that specialise in supporting victims and witnesses.

Keeping you informed

We will keep you informed of developments in your case at all times. **Senior managers** check the progress of cases with **Officers** often, to make sure we are getting it right.

Closing the complaint

When we have completed our investigation, and either the nuisance has ceased or no further action is required, we will discuss closing the case with you. We will write to confirm when we have closed a case, and give you a contact number in case of further problems.

We will send you a **Customer Satisfaction Form** asking for your opinion on the way the case was handled. This helps us to continually improve service quality.



Working in Partnership

We will work with individuals, communities and groups to deal with local issues, such as safety and security, crime, vandalism and drug and alcohol abuse.

We belong to the local **Community Safety Partnership**, which has been set up to focus on these issues.

We work closely with the council's **Street Wardens** who have a key role in helping to prevent anti-social behaviour by working with people to improve safety in local neighbourhoods.

Confidentiality

Personal information will not be given to a third party without your permission, either during or after a case has been investigated. This includes information that we give to the person causing anti-social behaviour. When keeping or disclosing information about the case we will at all times comply with the **Data Protection Act (1998)**.



Our performance

We have set challenging targets for dealing with incidents of anti-social behaviour and we continuously monitor our performance to make sure they are met. Our performance targets are set out on the right.

Customer satisfaction with the way cases are handled will be monitored through the satisfaction survey. We aim to improve levels of satisfaction.

Response times for dealing with cases:

Urgent cases: Investigation begins within 24 hours of being told about anti-social behaviour

Hate crime: Investigation begins within 24 hours of being told

Police involvement: Where needed, we will contact police within 24 hours of being told

Providing Incident Log Sheets to victims: Within 24 hours of request

Routine cases: Investigation begins within ten working days of nuisance log sheets being received

We will work with our customers to review our service standards each year. This is to make sure we are reaching the agreed levels of performance. We will also use the review process to look at how we can improve services for the future. If you would like to be involved in reviewing our service standards please contact our **Communications and Customer Services Team** on 01707 357 715 or 01707 357 614.



How to contact us

Community Development Team

Telephone: 01707 357 000

Email: communities@welhat-cht.org.uk

Write to: 51 Bridge Road East, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL7 1JR

Neighbourhood Housing Offices:

Welwyn Garden City

Telephone: 01707 357 796

Email: wgc.housing@welhat-cht.org.uk

Write to: 51 Bridge Road East, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL7 1JR

Hatfield

Telephone: 01707 357 088

Email: hatfield.housing@welhat-cht.org.uk

Write to: 30/32 Town Centre, Hatfield, Herts, AL10 0LD

Your feedback is important to us. We would like to hear from you if:

- you feel that the Community Housing Trust is not meeting the standards set out in this leaflet
- you have any questions about our services
- you wish to make a comment, compliment or complaint about our services

You can give feedback by:

- contacting the service or team you have been dealing with direct
 - contacting your local Housing Office
 - completing a 'Comments, Compliments and Complaints' form.
- Forms are available on our website (www.welhat-cht.org.uk), from our offices, or can be sent to you on request.



Access to information

We want our customers to be able to access information and services as easily as possible, in ways that suit them. We can provide information in different formats or other help where this is needed. The type of help we can provide includes:

- Translations into:
 - Different languages
 - Braille
 - Easy Read
 - Large print
 - Audio
- Accessible pdf documents
- Telephone interpreting
- Face-to-face interpreting (including sign language)

Please contact your local Housing Office or our Communications and Customer Service team if you need help accessing any information about our services.

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Welwyn Hatfield
Community Housing Trust

Working in Partnership with

