

PROBLEMS
process
SOLUTIONS
boundaries HOUSING
tenants
issues
PRACTICALITIES
disputes
NOISE abuse
POLLUTION
ACTION drugs
vehicles
communication
THEMES
legality RIGHTS

Anti-Social Behaviour

Good Practice Guide

Anti-Social Behaviour Good Practice Guide

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Anti-Social Behaviour Good Practice Guide

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to this Anti-Social Behaviour Good Practice Guide which has been developed to provide housing associations and their residents with a comprehensive resource package to use in the prevention and battle against anti-social behaviour (ASB) and neighbour nuisance. Wherever you live or work, we hope you will find it to be a practical, easy to use and effective "toolkit".

The Guide has been developed and written by CENTRAL Consultancy & Training with Innovation & Good Practice funding and support from the Housing Corporation. CENTRAL would like to acknowledge and thank the following organisations and individuals who have given their input, advice and feedback throughout the development process:

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The Guide has been divided into three inter-related sections:

- **"Problem"** pages which will help you to identify and discuss the nature and scope of different areas of anti-social behaviour
- **"Theme"** pages which set out the framework for the various over-arching or underlying processes that run through all the problem pages
- **"Practical"** pages - a range of checklists, action plans and other appendices and matrices which will support you in working on the processes outlined in the Theme Pages

In writing this Guide the authors have recognised that in order to tackle the problem effectively, there is a need for all those involved in tackling ASB to implement a "holistic" approach.

We suggest you:

- Commence intervention as early as possible
- Acknowledge that very few problems "go away" and are, in fact, likely to get worse
- Not look for just one remedy, but adopt a "toolkit" approach
- Try informal approaches before invoking more formal procedures
- Accept that cross-departmental and partnership working (particularly with residents) is the most effective way of working
- Try not to reinvent the wheel - use other peoples' good practice ideas!
- Appreciate the difference between ASB, neighbour disputes and clashes of personality and life-style
- Avoid complicated solutions to simple problems
- Celebrate (and publish!) successes, make use of and learn from failure
- Decide and differentiate between those responsible for a problem and those with the authority to sort it out
- Always appreciate social exclusion and equal opportunities issues
- Recognise the importance of prevention
- Focus on outcomes - both those that you want to achieve, but also those that you don't - negative ones that may be the result of failure, or as a by-product of success
- Above all, be reasonable and encourage others to be reasonable too!

How to use this Guide

This Guide is not designed to be read like a textbook, from "cover to cover". Whatever your role and level of responsibility, its flexible structure allows you to dip into relevant sections as appropriate:

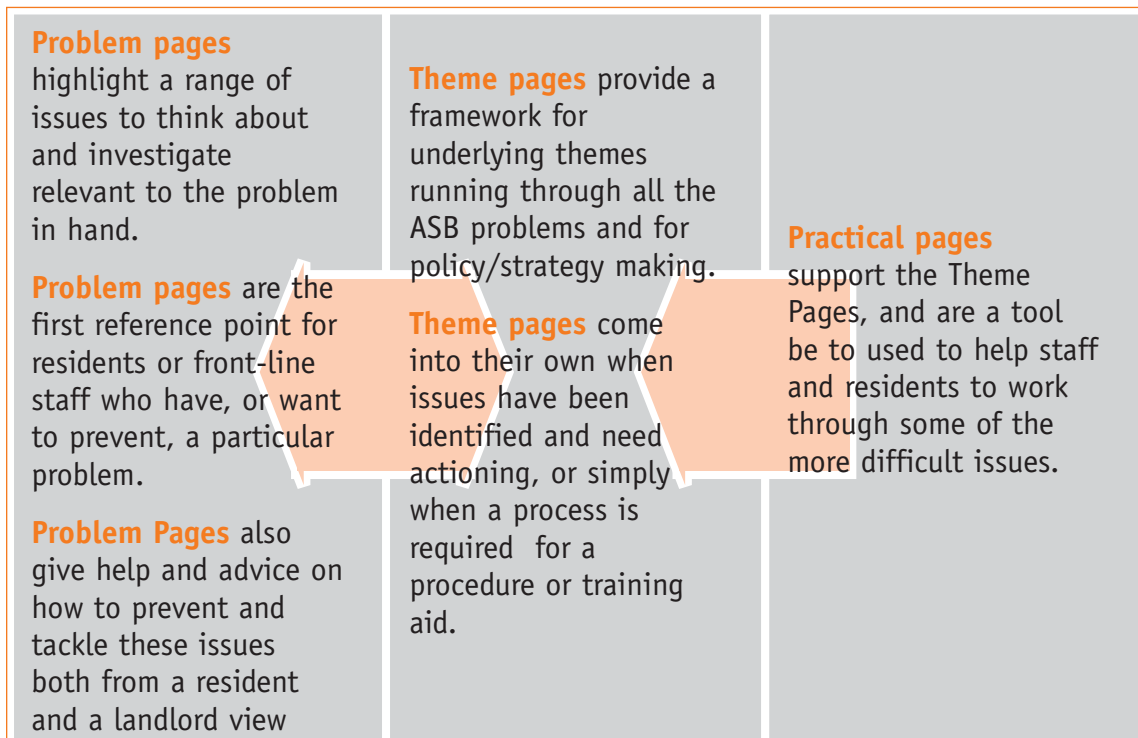
- Front-line staff can use it to handle complaints on the 'phone or face-to-face
- Residents can use it to see what can be done about a particular problem or to find ideas for prevention
- Policy-makers and strategists can "cut and paste" sections to build policies and procedures
- Managers can use it as a training aid
- Directors can adopt it as a resource when reporting to the Board

The package is designed so that you can customise and update it, although to ensure consistency and the integrity of the Guide, it is recommended that you delegate responsibility to specific individuals to undertake these tasks.

You can also use extracts from the Guide that may also be useful as printed documents - for resident newsletters and other literature, as aids for staff and for replying to complaints and queries.

It is also recommended that an electronic version of this Guide is available in reception areas, resource centres and resident meeting rooms.

Structure of the Guide



Managing ASB: The key stages and actions

In dealing with any ASB problem there is a logical progression of key stages that should be followed in order to ensure that all the angles are covered. However, at a practical level this does not mean that you cannot start different stages at the same time, or that stages cannot overlap or be handled out of sequence:

- 1. Identifying and defining the problem**
- 2. Analysing the cause**
- 3. Identifying and evaluating potential solutions**
- 4. Developing an action plan**
- 5. Implementing action plans**
- 6. Evaluating and reviewing**

Certain principles must also be applied throughout the whole process, however long, short, simple or complex it might be. These are to:

- Involve residents
- Work with partner agencies
- Inform all relevant parties about progress (or lack of it) regularly
- Keep accurate records and documents
- Benchmark your actions/performance with others and make use of Good Practice examples
- Use successes and failures to inform your overall approach as well as your next stage

Actions to take at each key stage

1. Identifying and defining the problem

- Collect and collate evidence and information from as early as possible
- Investigate systematically by asking yourself the following questions:
 - what is reasonable behaviour? - are there estate agreements that offer some definitions?
 - what is the underlying problem and the effect of this problem?
 - who does the problem involve? Consider here ALL the people involved - victims, witnesses and perpetrators
 - how can evidence be collected?
 - what are the costs/potential costs of the problem? (to be balanced later with the costs of the solution) and the costs of doing nothing?
 - how can the problem be contained or minimised? e.g. immediate responses, transfers, removal of graffiti

2. Analysing the cause

- What are the possible causes? Might it be complainant, neighbour; property, design, housing management? Collect information to identify and narrow down which of the possible causes is the real cause or causes
- Separate out cause and effect. For example: Youths loitering on street corners can have an effect on the community, but some of the possible causes are: (a) boredom (b) lack of facilities (c) lack of adult supervision
- Prioritise actions to tackle the causes - prioritise the most persistent or serious issues
- Calculate what the effects of the problem are costing you
- Analyse the cost of dealing with the causes - e.g. correcting poor sound insulation where there have been noise complaints
- Put together the information to present a sound case
- Build in a "reality check" - what are the limits to change or action? Be aware that no one can solve all the world's problems or change basic human behaviour. For example youths have always tended to gather in gangs and obviously it is not possible to stop gangs in general. We can only stop that gang indulging in that behaviour in that place at that time
- Re-prioritise your actions with this reality check in mind

3. Identifying and evaluating potential solutions

- Think creatively "outside the box", be innovative with your ideas and build on them
- Remember that it is not just about curing the immediate problem, but also about preventing similar in the future
- Think about the pros and cons of each solution and about what would help and hinder the situation
- Evaluate the cost of solution both against the cost of the problem but also against what you can afford
- Link the best solution(s) to the prioritised causes - but bear in mind that reality check!
- Keep in contact with residents groups to get their views and ideas
- Have in mind a timescale - what is appropriate and achievable in a reasonable time-frame - also consider short / medium and long-term solutions
- With the time-frame in mind, consider the availability of the necessary resources and the range of alternatives
- Choose your solution(s), taking your pick from a mix of legal and non-legal, complex and simple answers but consider contingencies if things go wrong

4. Developing an action plan

- Agree it with victims and witnesses - involve them in the decision-making process
- Build in both prevention and cure aspects
- Provide for short/medium and long-term solutions
- Set clear priorities, time-scales and responsibilities
- Have a contingency plan for if things go wrong

5. Implementing action plans

- Communicate it to the people involved
- Decide who manages it and controls it
- Identify if there are knowledge or skills gaps which may compromise its successful implementation
- Assess the resources required
- Get commitment and support - from residents, staff, other agencies, and, if necessary the Board of Management

6. Evaluating and reviewing

- Monitor your results
- Verify whether the problem has been solved - don't assume that silence indicates this. If all is not well, revisit and reassess the cause and effect - go back round re-checking your understanding of the problem and the relevance of the solution
- Monitor the gains - keeping a watching brief
- Celebrate success and publish it if you can. Be aware of:
 - data protection legislation
 - the differing rules applied to under 18's and over 18's
 - your own literature vs. the media - legal advice can be useful
 - court reporting restrictions
 - use failure or partial success to "debrief" those involved and to inform changes in practices or procedures

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Anti-Social Behaviour Problems

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Problems:

ANIMALS, PETS AND BIRDS

Range of problems:

- Animal/pet is not appropriate for the type of property
- Large numbers of animals/pets are being kept
- The animals are being kept as part of a business. e.g. boarding cats
- The animal/pet is causing a nuisance through
 - noise
 - smells
 - fouling inside the property or communal areas
 - uncontrolled wandering
 - attacking people and/or damaging property

Issues to think about and investigate

- Is the animal or bird permanently or temporarily resident at the property?
- Does the animal or bird belong to the tenant or a visitor? Is it possible to identify the owner?
- Is the animal or bird being mistreated?
- How often does any nuisance occur? e.g. barking, fouling, etc
- Is the animal or bird of a type that needs a special licence or permission?
- In which type of property does the animal or bird reside?
- Is the animal providing comfort and support to its owner? e.g. Guide dogs

Taking preventive action

For Housing Associations:

- Have a carefully worded clause or clauses in the tenancy agreement:
 - use the term "animals" not "pets"
 - make it clear to tenants that they must seek written permission before getting a pet/pets
 - if you withhold permission unreasonably you may be challenged under the Human Rights Act. However such action is unlikely to be successful if you can show that the effect of the animal or bird's behaviour will have a substantial impact on others.
 - include visitors' animals as well as those owned by the occupants
- Include issues about animals in an Estate Agreement or similar document. Make sure it ties in with, and is referred to, in the tenancy agreement and the Tenants' Handbook

-
- Provide information to housing applicants about your policy on animals and birds
 - Include a question on your housing application form about animals or birds that will be moving with the household
 - Reinforce information about animals at tenancy sign-up and the "settling in" visit and check on animals or birds whenever the property is visited
 - With resident involvement, develop an Animal Owners Charter for residents to sign. Make sure this ties in with, and is referred to, in the Tenancy Agreement

For Residents:

- Check with your housing association about the policy on animals and birds before you get one, or before you look after one for someone else
- Make sure you are fully aware of the care needs of any animal or bird before you buy one. Consider carefully the implications of owning an animal, particularly for specific breeds of dogs and exotic animals which may need special licences. Certain breeds of dogs are covered by the Dangerous Dogs Act
- If you have a dog take it to an obedience class
- Make sure your animal does not foul in inappropriate places and if it does, use a pooper-scooper or a plastic bag!
- Take responsibility for any animal that you own, making sure that it is exercised, well-fed and cared for. Make sure you are up-to-date with immunisations and worming treatments. Ensure you clean up their mess and food remains regularly
- Try to get to know your neighbours - it's easier to speak to people about problems when you already know them
- Discuss issues about animals at residents meetings

Tackling problems

For Housing Associations:

- If the animal is causing problems which are a breach of the tenancy agreement and you have looked at all other options, consider issuing possession proceedings. Alternatively you could consider applying for an injunction
- Contact the local authority to see if they have a Dog Warden Service as they have statutory responsibility to enforce animal health and welfare

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