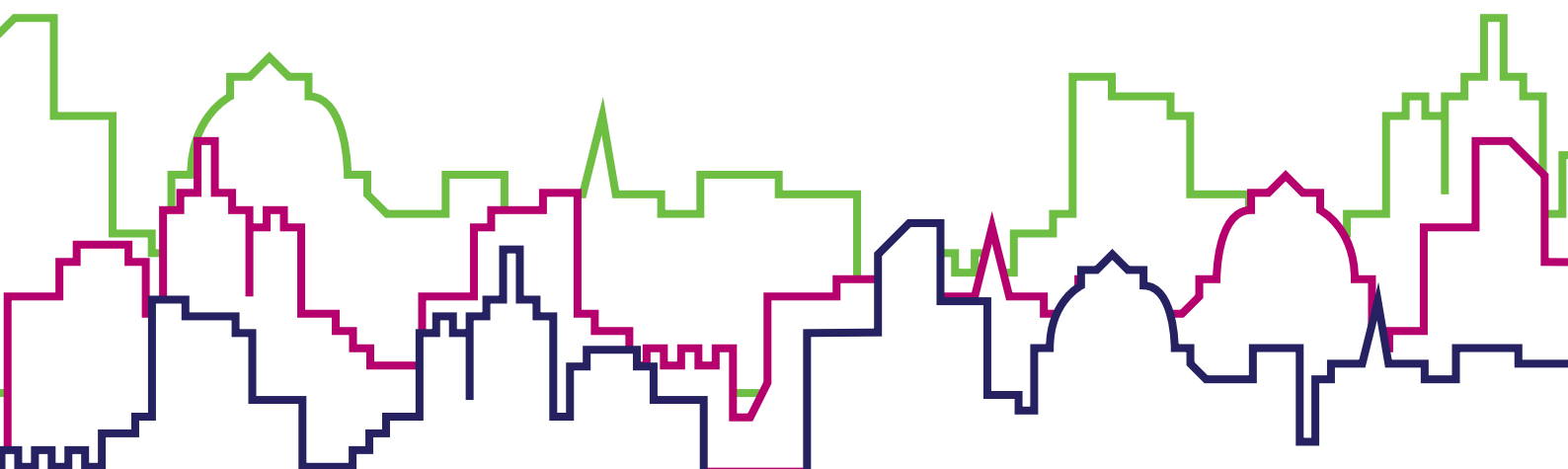


Anti-Social Behaviour Policy 2013

Type of document: Policy Statement

Document group: Community Safety

The purpose of this policy statement is to set out for the benefit of our customers and partners our approach to tackling anti social behaviour, which includes racial incidents, racial harassment and hate crimes.



1. Purpose & Scope

1.1 The purpose of this policy statement is to set out for the benefit of our customers and partners our approach to tackling anti social behaviour (ASB), which includes racial incidents, racial harassment and hate crimes. We want to ensure that customers know what to expect from Unity if they are affected by ASB and report the problem to us.

1.2 This policy covers the framework for dealing with:

- anti social behaviour
- reports of racial incidents and harassment
- hate crimes

This policy does not cover our approach to domestic violence and abuse which is set out in a separate policy statement.

2. Policy Objectives

2.1 Our aim is to ensure that ASB is dealt with quickly and effectively. We are committed to supporting victims and witnesses of ASB and using all available powers and means to tackle the issue by a combination of prevention, support, diversion and legal enforcement when a perpetrator does not change their behaviour.

2.2 Unity will develop and maintain procedures for the effective handling of ASB complaints and work closely with relevant external agencies to achieve a satisfactory outcome for the complainant and the community.

3. Definition of Anti Social Behaviour

3.1 Unity uses the following definition of anti-social behaviour based on the Crime and Disorder Act 1998:

'Behaviour that is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to one or more persons not of the same household'.

3.2 We also accept that there are other definitions of anti social behaviour such as conduct which is capable of causing a

nuisance or annoyance. A broad definition of anti social behaviour is difficult but what is important to us in defining anti social behaviour is the effect of the behaviour on members of the community.

Examples of behaviour considered to be anti social include:

- Threatening and intimidating behaviour
- Harassment of all types including racial and homophobic harassment
- Using abusive or insulting words including graffiti
- Damaging or threatening to damage another person's home or possessions
- Noise arising from nuisance neighbours
- Rubbish dumping
- Using our properties for any criminal immoral or illegal purpose

4. Racial incidents and racial harassment

4.1 Unity will not tolerate racial harassment and will take prompt and effective action to support customers, their families and visitors when such incidents occur. We aim to create sustainable communities where people from different backgrounds can live within a culture of co-operation and respect. We have set out our approach to dealing with racial incidents and harassment in this policy statement however we also aim to:

- Raise awareness of racial harassment
- Reduce tolerance of such behaviour
- Increase the rate at which racial harassment is reported

4.2 Definition of a racial incident

We have adopted the definition of a racist incident based on the McPherson enquiry into the death of Stephen Lawrence which defined a racist incident as follows:

'A racist incident is any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person.'

4.3 What is racial harassment?

Racial harassment can take many forms but unlike other incidents of anti social behaviour the harassment is likely to be racially motivated, pre-meditated and recur over a period of time.

Examples of the types of incidents experienced by victims where the motive was racial include:

- Unprovoked assaults
- Vandalism to property
- Racist graffiti on a customer's property or in the vicinity of their home
- Arson or attempted arson
- Verbal abuse
- Damage to property used by a particular ethnic group
- Threatening or abusive racist behaviour, letters, text messages, emails and phone calls



5. Hate Crime

5.1 Unity takes hate crime very seriously. A hate crime is a broad term taken to mean any crime where the perpetrators prejudice against an identifiable group of people is a factor in determining who is targeted. This not only includes race but also includes, homophobia, disability and religious grounds. We will regard an incident as a hate crime where the complainant believes he or she has been targeted as a result of a group.

5.2 Definition of hate crime

Hate crime is defined a harassment or other acts which is intended or is likely to cause offence, harm or discrimination, committed against an individual or a group on the basis of perceived differences.

Examples of the types of behaviour consider hate crimes include:

- Physical, verbal or non verbal conduct of a sexual nature which is unwarranted and offensive to the recipient
- Behaviour which is offensive or hostile towards a disabled person
- Behaviour which is offensive or hostile towards a person based on their religious beliefs or practices
- Offensive or hostile behaviour towards a person on the basis of their sex, disability, religion, sexual orientation or as a result of belonging to a particular group

6. Service Standards

6.1 We aim to provide a high quality ASB service to our customers that is effective and culturally sensitive. We have clear service standards when dealing with anti social behaviour which have been developed with our customers. We also have a number of national standards that we have to meet that are set out by our regulator.

6.2 In order to provide the best possible service to our customers we will continue to develop service standards that are challenging and lead to continuous improvement.

We have set out in this policy statement the service standards that customers can expect from us when dealing with ASB. We will also set out these standards and a summary of our approach to tackling ASB in a separate information leaflet for tenants.

7. Legislation & Regulation

In tackling anti social behaviour Unity will have regard to all relevant legislation, regulation and good practice. In particular we will have regard to the following requirements:

- Unity is required by the Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003 to publish a statement of its policies and procedures for dealing with anti social behaviour. This statement will be made available in a separate information leaflet for customers.
- The HCA Community and Neighbourhood Standard require Unity to:
 - ✓ Keep the neighbourhood and communal areas associated with our tenants homes clean and safe
 - ✓ Co-operate with relevant partners to help promote social, environmental and economic wellbeing in the areas where we own properties
 - ✓ Work in partnership with other public agencies to prevent and tackle anti-social behaviour in the neighbourhoods where we own properties
- To demonstrate to our customers and our regulators that we are determined to take positive action to deal effectively with all forms of anti social behaviour we are committed to developing high quality services that exceeds the requirement of the Chartered Institute of Housings Respect ASB charter for housing.

8. Unity's approach to anti-social behaviour

8.1 We will demonstrate strong leadership and a commitment to tackling ASB

Resources - Dealing with ASB is a core housing management activity for which we will allocate sufficient resources. We will ensure that our staff receive the necessary training and possess the skills to deliver an effective ASB service.

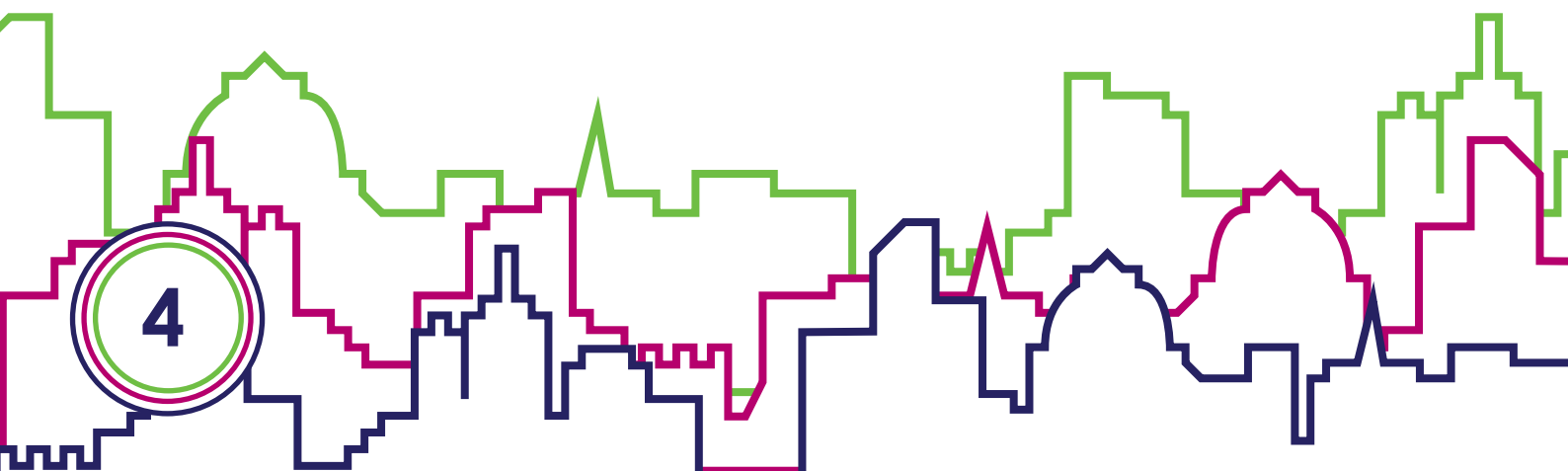
Obligations - We will ensure that all customers are aware of their obligations under the tenancy agreement and make it clear to customers that ASB will not be tolerated

Partnership - Unity cannot always resolve ASB complaints in isolation. As a result we will actively engage with relevant partners including the Council, Police, local Community Safety Partnership and other agencies. We will share information with our external partners for the purpose of preventing and tackling anti social behaviour and crime.

Performance - We will monitor our performance on ASB by measuring how well we deliver on our service promises to customers. Our performance against our agreed service standards will be measured and reported to our senior management team, the Board, partner agencies and our customers. We will measure and assess our performance against our targets and service standards by:

- Conducting regular surveys of service users to assess their levels of satisfaction
- Opening up the ASB service to scrutiny for example by developing a programme of focus group meetings, mystery shopping and tenant inspection

Improvements - Whenever it is appropriate we will develop a service improvement plan as the vehicle for delivering continuous service improvements. We will provide customers with the opportunity to shape and review services through our resident involvement frameworks.



8.2 We will provide an accessible and accountable ASB service to our customers.

Access - We will provide an ASB service that is widely accessible to all our customers. We want to encourage the reporting of ASB and will ensure that tenants are aware of how to report ASB to us.

Response - When we respond to complaints of ASB we will:

- Refer cases to the Police for urgent action where there is an immediate risk of harm
- Acknowledge a report and provide details of the name of the member of staff handling the case
- Make initial contact and interview a complainant within 10 days
- Make contact with a complainant within 24 hours where the incident involves a hate incident or hate crime or a physical assault
- Remove racist or other forms of offensive graffiti within one working day

Information - We want to ensure all our customers are aware of the service that we provide and the action that we and our partners have taken to tackle ASB. To achieve this we will provide information through our customer newsletter, leaflets and other publications. We will do this in order to:

- Ensure that the community are aware of the work that we and our partners are undertaking
- Build community confidence to report incidents of ASB
- Deter individuals from engaging in ASB
- Assist in the enforcement of court orders where a perpetrator is continuing to cause problems

Tailored - We want to provide services that meet the needs of our customers and are delivered equally. To do this we are working towards achieving the following objectives:

- Continuing to collecting information about the demographic profile of our customers and using this information to review and shape our services
- Measuring the satisfaction of service users for example through surveys or focus group meetings and using customer feedback to contribute to service improvements

Neighbourhood - We cannot tackle ASB without the help and support of the community. Where it is appropriate we will work with customers and community groups to develop a neighbourhood approach to tackling ASB that focuses on locally agreed strategies for preventing and tackling ASB.

8.3 We will protect the communities in which we work through prompt enforcement action to deal with ASB before it escalates.

Enforcement - We will try to resolve cases without the need to take legal action against individuals. However where the behaviour is persistent or of such a serious nature we will not hesitate to take enforcement action against the perpetrators of ASB where this is the most appropriate and proportionate means of protecting individuals and the community.

In some cases, it may be more appropriate for us to support others in taking legal action, for example, the Police or the Community Safety Team.

Tools - We will ensure that staff are aware of the full range of tools and powers that are available to us and to our partners. There are a wide range of powers and measures available to tackle ASB and the appropriate legal action will depend on the individual case, but these may include serving a notice seeking possession, possession proceedings, demoted tenancy proceedings or injunctions.

Casework - We will adopt consistent and robust approach to how we respond to reports of ASB. We will:

- Ensure that victims and witnesses are kept up to date with their case at regular agreed intervals
- Not disclose the name of any victim or witness without their prior consent
- Provide all complainants with a copy of an agreed Action Plan
- Regularly undertake sample quality audits of ASB complaints to ensure that this policy and our procedures are followed

Evidence - We will take a proactive approach to gathering evidence from a wide range of sources to support effective enforcement action. Our approach will be proportionate to the effect that the ASB has on the victim and the community. In certain cases we may utilise CCTV surveillance or engage professional witnesses to gather evidence such as Street Wardens, PCSO'S and the Police.

8.4 We will adopt a supportive approach to working with victims and witnesses of ASB.

Witness support - We recognise that support for victims and witnesses is essential to tackling ASB. We will do all we reasonably can to identify those that are vulnerable and their support needs. Witness support arrangements will be put in place which subject to an assessment of the needs of the individual on a case by case basis could include:

- Providing advice on additional security for their home
- Requesting the police or council staff such as street wardens to increase patrols in a particular neighbourhood
- Providing staff with the information they need to make referrals to other specialist victim support agencies.
- Use appropriate legal action in response to complaints of witness intimidation
- Support victims and witnesses through the legal process or support victims to take their own action.

8.5 We will encourage individual and community responsibility

Tolerance - We will work to build strong communities on our estates by promoting individual responsibility and tolerance. We will do this by:

- Promoting and supporting tenant groups
- Developing Good Neighbour Agreements with customer support and encouraging customers to resolve neighbour disputes directly
- Promoting initiatives to develop inter-generational tolerance
- Developing schemes that will reward positive behaviour

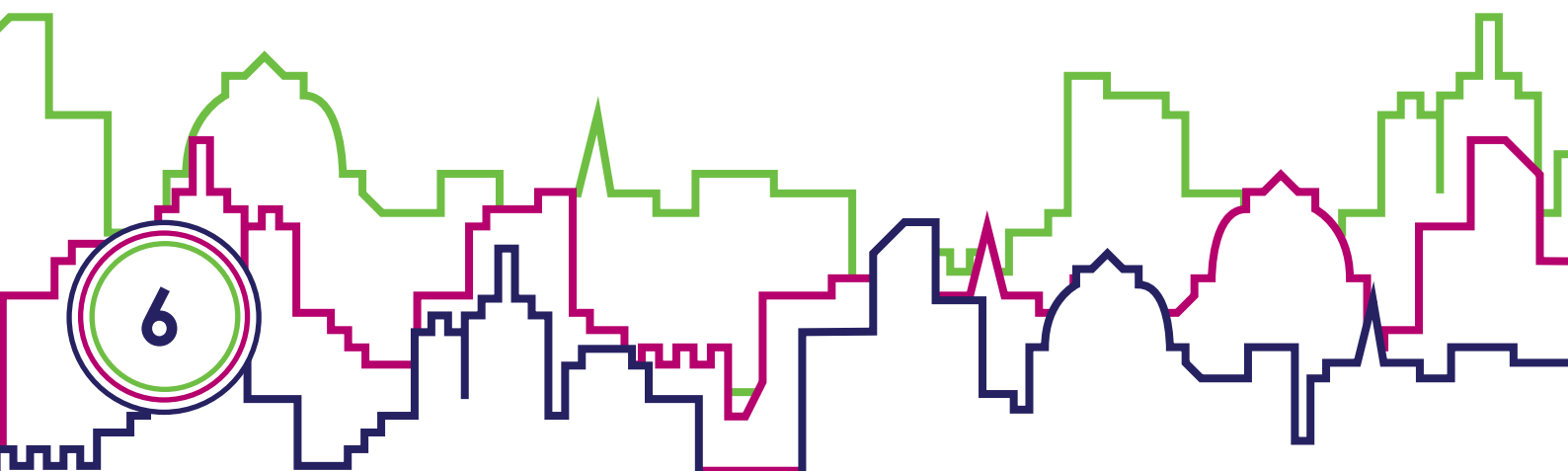
8.6 We will focus on prevention and early intervention and provide support to enable perpetrators to change their behaviour.

Allocations - We recognise that it is better to prevent ASB occurring than to have to deal with the consequences. We will ensure that our approach to allocations contributes towards building sustainable communities. We will carry out thorough pre tenancy checks and ensure that new tenants are aware of the standard of behaviour expected and the consequences of breaching the tenancy agreement. To achieve this we will:

- Adopt local lettings policies where necessary
- Identify and access support for new tenants to sustain their tenancies

Hotspots - We will work with partner agencies on prevention initiatives and to identify potential ASB hotspots. We will share information and target resources at areas worst affected by ASB.

Diversion - We will work together with partners, the community and voluntary groups in the provision of diversionary activities including youth projects. We will publicise and promote access to diversionary activities either provided by us or our partners.





Early intervention - We will intervene early in complaints of ASB and deal with problems quickly preventing them from escalating. Where appropriate and to resolve complaints promptly we will deliver either ourselves or in partnership with other agencies the following interventions:

- Mediation - sometimes people may not realise they are causing a problem to their neighbours. Mediation may be appropriate if the problem could be solved by two parties talking to each other
- Acceptable Behaviour Agreements - these are written agreements between an individual, Unity and the Police. The agreement is a promise that the individual will not carry out certain acts which are seen by others as anti social

- Warnings - in many cases it will be enough to issue either a verbal or written warning to a perpetrator to get them to stop causing problems
- Support - prevention through support may be an appropriate response in certain cases. We will ensure staff are aware of how to access services such as mental health and drug and alcohol teams to establish support packages. We will proactively participate in partnership arrangements to safeguard children and vulnerable adults.

8.7 We will ensure that a value for money approach is embedded in our ASB service

Value - We recognise the need to achieve value for money in all that we do. Value for money is important because we want to ensure that we have the resources to continually improve the quality of the service we provide. We want to apply our value for money principles to the ASB service and to do this we will:

- Develop mechanisms to capture, calculate and monitor the cost of dealing with incidents of ASB such as graffiti removal, vandalism and fly tipping and benchmark those costs against similar organisations to demonstrate value for money
- Use existing ASB service costs and service improvement proposals to allocate resources and set realistic budgets
- Review all procured services to maximise efficiencies
- Ensure that ASB service costs are scrutinised
- Provide customers with appropriate cost information when considering service development proposals
- Encourage all staff and customers to identify value for money opportunities

9. Consultation

Unity recognises the importance of working in partnership with our customers to develop and continuously improve our services. We will consult with customers and key partners from time to time on the content and operation of this policy.

10. Complaints

Unity will seek to resolve any complaint from customers over the operation of this policy at the first point of contact. If this cannot be done complaints will be dealt with through our formal complaints procedure.

11. Responsibility

11.1 Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation rests with the Housing Manager. The Housing Manager will ensure that staff receive the appropriate training and support to effectively achieve the objectives of this policy.

11.2 From time to time it may be necessary to develop specific Action Plans and strategies to support the full implementation of this policy. Responsibility for the delivery of these action plans and strategies will be allocated to the most appropriate member of staff.

12. Monitoring & Performance

12.1 Monitoring of the implementation of this policy will be the responsibility of the Board.

12.2 Unity will set performance targets for the operation of the ASB service. Progress against these targets will be reported to the Board and Executive Team. Unity will benchmark our performance against comparable housing associations and continue to learn from best practice in this area.

12.3 There are no specific Business Plan objectives relating to this policy.

13. Equality & Diversity

13.1 Unity acknowledges that our customers may have individual circumstances that could impact on their behaviour.

We will work with our customers to try to identify any problems and where appropriate we will refer customers to a specialist agency to reduce the risk of them causing anti social behaviour and losing their home. We will have regard to our Equality and Diversity Policy and take into account the language, translation and other personal needs of our customers.

13.2 An Equality Impact Assessment was carried out in respect of this policy on 01/02/2013. The EIA concluded that this policy is not directly or indirectly discriminatory

14. Associated Documents

- Anti Social Behaviour Procedure
- Domestic Violence & Abuse Policy
- Tenancy Agreement
- Allocations Policy
- Complaints Policy & Procedure
- Equality & Diversity Policy

15. Policy review summary

Policy title	Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
Policy group	Community Safety
Date created	February 2013
Person responsible	Housing Manager
Version	1.0
Approved by	Senior Management Team on: February 2013
Authorised by	Board on: February 2013
Review period	3 years unless required sooner
Review committee	Board
Date of last review	n/a
Date of next review	February 2016