



Contour Homes

Anti Social Behaviour Statement

Contour Homes is major provider of housing in the North West area, managing in excess of 20,000 homes.

We recognise that the way in which we manage our properties and the behaviour of our tenants has a significant impact on the neighbourhoods in which we work

Contour understands that anti-social behaviour can cause real misery in people's lives. We understand that although only a minority of individuals commit anti social behaviour the action of a few can have a disproportionate effect on the lives of the majority and can have a major impact on the quality of life of individuals and communities.

Contour wishes to work with customers and our other community partners to develop a robust, sustained approach towards tackling anti social behaviour to make your home and neighbourhood 'a great place to live'

Strategy

Contour will work jointly with local Crime and Disorder Partnerships in the areas in which we work. We will support and contribute towards local Crime and Disorder strategies and will work with partner agencies within the voluntary and statutory sector such as the Police, Local Authorities and Victim Support.

In tackling anti-social behaviour we will ensure that we comply with all appropriate legislation and regulations, and that we develop our policies and procedures to meet our legal obligations. We will use the powers available within the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 where appropriate.

We will use legislation and other tools effectively to assist us in developing a balanced approach towards the prevention of anti-social behaviour, in taking enforcement action and in seeking to assist with the rehabilitation of perpetrators.

In doing so, we will have regard to our wider obligations within communities; this includes the prevention of homelessness, and the protection of children and young people.

Where there is a complaint of anti-social behaviour we will intervene at an early stage. We will take a strong, consistent and fair approach towards taking enforcement action. We will agree a plan of action with you and will keep you informed.

We will work proactively with partner agencies in tackling anti-social behaviour and will seek the support of other organisations and agencies to work with us in developing the most effective approaches.

We will seek, where possible and practical, to reconcile parties in neighbour disputes. However, the needs of the 'victim' will always be paramount. This will include offering effective support and advice to victims including the support of specialist agencies.

We will ensure that our policies, procedures and actions always consider the needs of individuals and groups and that achieving equality and recognising diversity are central to our approaches.

We will seek to promote good race relations within our communities.

We will take very seriously all reported instances of hate crime.

We will endeavour to assist in supporting strong communities where people can feel safe and secure.

We will regularly review our policies and procedures and ensure that we learn from our experiences and consider 'best practice' in developing approaches towards anti-social behaviour.

What is Anti- Social Behaviour ?

There is no absolute definition of anti-social behaviour (ASB).

The Association adopts the definition of ASB that is set out in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. ASB is defined as '*acting in a manner that caused or was likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to one or more persons not of the same household*'

Neighbour Nuisance (NN)

The Association defines Neighbour Nuisance as detailed under section 144 and 148 of The Housing Act 1996 '*not to cause or do anything to cause a nuisance, annoyance or disturbance to a tenant or any other person residing in or visiting the dwelling house*'...

Hate Crime (HC)

The Association defines Hate Crime as harassment, intimidation, nuisance or Anti-Social Behaviour that is suffered by individuals because of their colour, race, nationality, ethnic origin, disability, sex or sexual orientation. The Association accepts the MacPherson Report definition of a racist incident as:

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

Some examples of anti-social behaviour are listed here:

- Racial Harassment
- Drug Dealing
- Serious noise problems
- Verbal abuse
- Domestic Violence
- Violent and criminal behaviour
- Vandalism
- Intimidation
- Dog Straying and fouling dogs
- Hate crime

Hate Crime and Racial Harassment

The Association recognises that some groups are unfortunately subjected to harassment, anti social behaviour and intimidation due to their racial or ethnic origin, because they lead a different lifestyle from others or are members of other minority groups.

Contour wishes to send out a strong message to it's customers that it operates a 'zero tolerance' approach to such behaviour.

The Association recognises that such groups and individuals often may not always report such problems, or perhaps do not have confidence that they will be supported.

To assist our customers Contour commits to the following;

- Ensuring access to interpreters where required

- Involving the relevant local authority racial harassment or equality specialists where applicable
- Making positive referrals for support to specialist agencies
- Make literature available in other languages
- Working closely with the Asylum Seekers teams where appropriate.
- Ensuring our staff are fully trained and aware of issues relating to equality and diversity
- Ensuring confidentiality is maintained
- Offering additional physical security where necessary

Preventing Anti Social Behaviour

Contour is committed first and foremost to preventing the occurrence of ASB

To do this we will use a range of actions to try to stop ASB occurring in the first instance. These include the following;

- We will seek references from all potential tenants and verify application details.
- We will introduce starter tenancies for new tenants and local lettings policies where appropriate
- We will make all new tenants aware of their responsibilities by fully explaining the tenancy agreement to them
- An ASB policy statement will be issued to all new tenants
- We will introduce 'good neighbour' or estate agreements when appropriate
- We will work with partner agencies such as the Police, Social Services, Probation, drug agencies and schools.
- We will assist in the support of youth initiatives and diversionary projects which provide positive opportunities for young people
- We will work with the Police to introduce acceptable behaviour contracts.
- We will help to provide tenancy support to vulnerable tenants or those having difficulty in managing their tenancy
- We will actively encourage the use of mediation
- We will carry out regular scheme inspections
- We will support clean-up campaigns on our estates
- We will be open and accessible to our customers to ensure that they feel confident in approaching us for help
- We will exclude customers from our waiting lists where it has been proven that they represent a real risk to the community
- We will carry out risk assessments where applications are received from previous offenders
- We will exchange information with our partners via agreed data exchange protocols and comply with the Data Protection Act 1998

- We will use clear and effective tenancy agreements and will tailor individual agreements where required to meet local situations

Confidentiality

All details relating to the complainant will remain confidential if requested. In all cases discretion will be utilised to ensure that the Officer carrying out investigations or interviews will not release any information to the perpetrator that may put the complainant in any further danger or any witnesses at risk.

All electronic records of a personal nature which are processed will correspond with the Data Protection Act 1998:

- * Obtained & processed fairly
- * Held for no longer than necessary
- * Subject to correct security measures
- * Kept accurate & up to date

Taking enforcement Action

We will seek to resolve instances of ASB wherever possible in a positive way.

Conciliation, mediation and working with outside agencies will be considered. However Contour recognises that in some circumstances this may not be possible or appropriate. In such situations Contour will consider taking the following action;

- Taking Possession Proceedings which could lead to eviction
- Voluntary undertakings
- Anti-social Behaviour Orders
- Injunctions
- Demoted tenancies
- Closure of premises (in partnership with the Police).
- Criminal prosecutions

If enforcement action is taken this could result in you:

- Losing your home
- Having difficulty in obtaining satisfactory references
- Experiencing difficulty in obtaining another property from a social landlord provider.
- Being imprisoned

The Association will ensure that all serious cases of ASB are reviewed by a senior staff member to ensure our action is fair and even handed. All legal action will be approved by a senior staff member and any case recommended for eviction proceedings will require the approval of an appropriate Board or Committee.

Rehabilitation

Contour recognises that some instances ASB may be as a result of problems with alcohol or drug abuse or mental health issues. In such situations Contour will seek to offer support to those perpetrators who are willing to actively engage in tackling their problems.

This will include working with specialist agencies who can offer specific support to customers with such needs.

We will make all reasonable attempts to engage with perpetrators who are willing to try to tackle their problems. However where individuals fail to engage with this process we will take the usual enforcement action.

Supporting Victims and witnesses

Contour is keen to offer support and reassurance to the victims and witness of ASB.

We will ensure that victims and witnesses receive every assistance when reporting and pursuing a complaint of ASB.

To ensure this is the case we are committed to:

- Recording each and every complaint accurately
- Investigating every complaint, even when reported anonymously
- Allocating a named case worker
- Clearly prioritising complaints
- Ensuring staff have clear policies and procedures to follow and that they have the necessary training
- Agreeing actions with victims and witnesses
- Maintaining confidentiality
- Where necessary, using professional witnesses
- Providing additional security where required
- Moving victims and witnesses for their protection when enforcement action is not appropriate or where there is serious risk
- Working with other relevant agencies in providing support and/or counselling

- Taking swift and effective action against perpetrators wherever possible
- Making measures available to support victims and witnesses before, during and after court action
- Keeping people informed at all stages of the investigation.
- Ensuring our staff receive excellent training and support to enable them to deal with ASB effectively
- Seeking feedback from victims and witnesses about our ways of working

Commitment to Continuous Improvement

Contour is committed to improving services and values the input of customers, staff, partners and other stakeholders in reviewing how we deliver services and how well we perform.

We will do this by encouraging involvement and feedback in the following ways;

- Carrying out service reviews via groups called INPANELS
- Through the Tenants Forum and Tenants Liaison Group
- Through customer involvement in our Board of Management
- Discussions with tenants and residents groups
- By conducting satisfaction surveys, mystery shopping and seeking customer feedback
- By working with other partners and agencies and learning best practice from others

Performance monitoring

- We will monitor our performance on a regular basis and will report quarterly to the appropriate Board or Committee on the numbers and types of ASB cases, we will also look at how cases are resolved and learn from this experience.
- We will set targets against which we will measure our performance, these will be reviewed regularly and we will seek to continually improve our performance and the way we deliver services.
- All serious cases of ASB will be monitored by a senior staff member

Complaints and Appeals

We understand that the way ASB is dealt with very important to our customers.

The Association has a complaints procedure which enables both those who are suffering from ASB and those accused of causing ASB to complain if they are unhappy about the way in which they have been treated, about our policies or our procedures. If you wish to make a complaint you may contact the Customer Services Centre on 0345 602 1120 or any of our offices.