

Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy

1. Introduction

Maryhill Housing Association is committed to ensuring that everyone is able to live peacefully in their home without suffering undue disturbance or nuisance from others.

The purpose of this strategy is to set out how the Association will manage reports of anti-social behaviour effectively and proactively and will work collaboratively with partner agencies to manage and reduce instances of anti-social behaviour in the areas in which we operate.

The Association has an Anti-Social Behaviour Policy which sets out the principles and standards that we aim to follow in our management of anti-social behaviour (ASB).

For the purposes of this strategy, unless otherwise stated, the following definitions shall apply.

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

ASB covers a wide range of actions and behaviours and is defined in the Anti-Social Behaviour etc (Scotland) Act 2004 as follows;

A person engages in ASB if he/she:

- Acts in a manner that causes or is likely to cause alarm, distress, nuisance or annoyance; or
- Pursues a course of conduct that causes or is likely to cause alarm, distress, nuisance or annoyance to at least one person residing in or visiting/engaging in lawful activity at or in the locality of the relevant house. "Conduct" includes speech and a "course of conduct" must involve conduct on at least two occasions.

2. Background – the local and national context

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 introduced new powers which are aimed at providing landlords with more powers to tackle anti-social behaviour by tenants. The Housing (Scotland) Act

- Allows landlords to introduce a suspension period for housing applications in circumstances where the applicant has acted in an anti-social manner in the locality of their house, where they have been convicted of an offence committed in the locality of their house, owes rent or has been evicted from a previous tenancy
- Introduces changes to sections 34 and 35 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 by enabling social landlords to create a Short Scottish Secure Tenancy (SSST) or to convert a tenancy to a SSST where tenants have acted in an anti-social manner within the last three years
- Extends the minimum term of an SSST from six months to one year and allows a further six months extension where further tenancy support is required.
- Requires landlords to notify the tenant of its reasons for seeking to terminate an SSST and to provide the tenant with an opportunity to ask for a review of the decision

- Removes the “reasonableness” test in actions for recovery of possession raised on the grounds that the tenant has been convicted of using the house for immoral or illegal purposes or has been convicted of an offence punishable by imprisonment committed in or in the locality of the house within the past year.

Anti-Social Behaviour in Maryhill

Anti-social behaviour reports are categorised according to the level of seriousness of the anti-social behaviour. Target response and resolution times are set for each category of anti-social behaviour and are monitored and reported on monthly.

Category A

The most serious cases including violence or aggression, drug dealing, threatening behaviour, harassment of any kind, racism, sectarianism and illegal use of the property

Category B

Medium level cases including persistent noise nuisance, vandalism and damage to the property or the communal areas, verbal abuse and failure to control children, pets or visitors.

Category C

Lower level cases including untidy gardens, parking in unauthorised areas, occasional noise nuisance, pet fouling or rubbish dumping.

During the year 2018/2019, the Association dealt with 452 cases of anti-social behaviour, with the highest number of cases relating to category B medium level cases

	No of cases	% of cases
Category A	26	6%
Category B	262	63%
Category C	127	31%
Total	415	

3. How this strategy was developed

This strategy was developed in response to customer feedback in our Customer Satisfaction Survey where a high number of residents cited issues with anti-social behaviour in their neighbourhood.

The strategy was devised through ongoing consultation with Registered Tenant Organisations (RTOs) and other tenant bodies including the Tenant Service Improvement Group (TSIG).

Feedback and comments from individual residents who have experienced anti-social behaviour and residents who have raised formal complaints about the way in which we have managed their reports of anti-social behaviour have also been used to inform the strategy.

Consultation with the housing teams has also been carried out.

The strategy has also been informed by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, the Anti-Social Behaviour etc Act (Scotland) 2004 and the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 in addition to guidance issued by the Scottish Government, the Scottish Housing Regulator and the Chartered Institute of Housing

4. Aims and Objectives

Vision

Our vision is: *Great homes in strong and thriving communities*

Mission

Our mission is: *Providing great housing and services for our customers, supporting strong, inclusive communities in North West Glasgow*

Values

Our values are to:

- Think customer first
- Deliver on our promises
- Celebrate diversity
- Keep improving

Corporate Plan

Maryhill Housing has a long- term strategic objective to “address poverty and enable customers to make their lives better” and one of the key objectives in the Corporate Plan is to work with partners to address crime and anti-social behaviour.

In addition, we recognize that effective management of anti-social behaviour can improve customer satisfaction, reduce complaints avoid properties becoming hard to let and improve satisfaction our management of neighbourhoods.

5. Legal and regulatory requirements

Social Landlords in Scotland have a number of legal and regulatory responsibilities to manage tenancies effectively.

The Scottish Social Housing Charter sets out the standards which tenants and other customers can expect from social landlords. The management of anti-social behaviour is covered in standard 6 relating to estate management, anti-social behaviour, neighbour nuisance and tenancy disputes. The standard requires that;

“social landlords, working in partnership with other agencies, help to ensure that as far as reasonably possible that tenants and other customers live in well-maintained neighbourhoods where they feel safe.”

6. Links to other strategies and policies

Several policies and strategies link in with the management of anti-social behaviour, some key examples are listed below

- Allocations Policy
- Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
- Leased Properties Policy
- Pet Policy
- Complaints Procedure

7. How we will manage anti-social behaviour

The key objective of Maryhill's ASB procedure is ensure that disputes and anti-social behaviour are quickly and effectively addressed, in line with current legislation and good practice.

The management of all levels of anti-social behaviour cases is the responsibility of the Housing Officers and guidance on how cases should be managed is contained in the "Dealing with Anti-Social Behaviour Procedure Guide" of March 2018.

This strategy outlines a number of key priorities in our management of anti-social behaviour going forward

Promoting Positive Behaviour: In addition to tackling unacceptable behaviour, we will take the opportunity to promote positive behaviours. We will do this by;

- Promoting our "Good Neighbour Agreement" to new tenants at sign up
- Ensuring that letters addressing tenancy breaches give clear guidance as to what standard of behaviour is expected
- Ensuring that interviews with perpetrators of anti-social behaviour include guidance on the standards of behaviour expected
- Carrying our joint visits with the police where appropriate
- Make of "Acceptable Behaviour Contracts" to improve behaviour
- Re-issuing and promoting "Good Neighbour Agreements" with tenancy warning letters

Encourage reporting of anti-social behaviour: We are aware that many of our residents are reluctant to report instances of behaviour through fear of repercussions. This has been highlighted particularly by residents in our multi-storey blocks. We recognize that making complaints about neighbours can be difficult and we will aim to encourage more reporting of anti-social behaviour. We will do this by;

- Actively promoting our anti-social behaviour policies and procedures
- Promoting other ways of reporting crime and anti-social behaviour such as Crimestoppers and calling 101
- Exploring options to make reporting anti-social behaviour easier for our residents

Explaining what we can do and how we will do it: Residents do not always know what to expect from us when they report anti-social behaviour. In order to explain what we can do and how we will do it we will explain to residents who report anti-social behaviour;

- Who will deal with their case and when they can expect to be contacted
- How we can help resolve their complaint (including any limitations on doing this) and if we are unable to help, we will explain why
- Check with the resident how they want to proceed
- Agree what would be a satisfactory outcome
- Be clear about what we can do to help
- Explain any assistance available to them
- Agree the resident's responsibilities in resolving the case
- Agree a plan of action with the resident

We will produce a short summary of our anti-social behaviour procedures for issue to residents making complaints of anti-social behaviour.

Progressing Cases: We will manage cases proactively and take more account of previous incidents when considering what action should be taken. Our Anti-Social Behaviour Procedure Guide states "where there continues to be complaints and the behaviour has not changed and is still causing a nuisance, a Notice of Possession (NOP) should be served on the tenant.

- Where a tenant is persistently or regularly causing a nuisance, we will ensure that the case is progressed to the next level of enforcement.
- We will hold internal "case conferences" for high level cases which are not resolved within a reasonable timescale
- We will ensure appropriate manager oversight of serious cases

Using the powers granted in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014: We will revise our anti-social behaviour procedures to include clear guidance for officers on the use of the powers contained within the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014.

- We will seek possession of a property where a tenant has been convicted of an offence punishable by imprisonment in or in the locality of the property where we believe it necessary to protect neighbouring residents.
- We will consider creating a Short Scottish Secure Tenancy (SSST) in cases of serious or persistent anti-social behaviour where we believe it reasonable
- During the period an SSST is in force we will work with the tenant to provide them with appropriate support and guidance to manage their tenancy
- If the anti-social behaviour persists during the period of the SSST, we will consider extending the SSST or bringing it to an end
- We will monitor and report on the use of SSSTs

Managing anti-social behaviour in leased properties: We have a number of properties which are leased to other agencies such as Glasgow City Council, Serco and Quarriers. These properties are used by these agencies to provide temporary accommodation for homeless households, asylum seekers and vulnerable young people.

We have experienced issues with anti-social behaviour by occupants of flats which are leased to other agencies, some of which have caused serious alarm and distress to our residents. In order to manage these situations promptly and effectively we will escalate complaints in the following manner;

- Maintain regular contact and good working relationships with the agencies who lease our properties
- Ensure that all incidents which are reported to us are reported to the appropriate agency
- Maintain regular liaison with the case worker until the matter is resolved
- Escalate to a Housing Manager if the nuisance continues
- Issue a letter to the agency concerned setting out the incidents and our concerns and the effect the behaviour is having on our residents
- Issue a solicitor's letter if the nuisance continues
- Serve Notice on the agency to vacate the flat
- Where properties are recovered due to anti-social behaviour, we will not provide a replacement property to the agency concerned.

Managing anti-social behaviour in our multi and mini-multi properties:

We have a number of measures in place to tackle anti-social behaviour in our multi and mini-multi properties. These measures include CCTV coverage and a 24-hour on-site presence by our Neighbourhood Team. The Neighbourhood Team monitor the CCTV and provide incident sheets to the Housing Officers for any incidents related to tenancy management or anti-social behaviour.

The Housing Officers take appropriate action to follow up these incident reports, but we recognise that we can do more to make effective use of the reports we receive and in order to achieve this;

- All incident reports are now copied to the Housing Officer, the Housing Manager and the Head of Housing
- The Housing Manager will ensure that any incidents that are reported are followed up and dealt with in line with our procedures
- The Head of Housing will take an overview of the incidents and ensure that the Neighbourhood Team are supported appropriately
- The reports will be monitored to identify tenants causing persistent anti-social behaviour and ensure that action is escalated where appropriate
- Regular updates will be provided to the Neighbourhood Team on actions taken as a result of the reports

We will also consider area-based approaches to our management of anti-social behaviour where specific issues arise in other areas of our stock.

Local Allocations Policies: Maryhill Housing's Allocations Policy acknowledges that on some occasions an area or development may require a different approach to letting outside of the general Allocations Policy.

Some of these situations are;

- New housing developments
- An over concentration of vulnerable households with similar needs
- Anti-social behaviour
- Low demand for an area or certain house types

We will consider a local lettings plan for areas with a high concentration of anti-social behaviour where we consider that the plan is likely to significantly reduce anti-social behaviour and its impact on our residents.

Tenancy support and sustainment: We aim to support all our residents to manage and maintain their tenancies and will ensure that our pre-tenancy work with applicants provides clear guidance on how to manage a tenancy. We recognize that those causing and those experiencing anti-social behaviour will need our support;

Tenants causing anti-social behaviour

- We recognize that tenants will often require support to stop their anti-social behaviour and this should always form part of the discussions we have with alleged perpetrators of anti-social behaviour.
- Where we identify that drink or drugs are a factor in an anti-social behaviour case, we will suggest a referral to an appropriate alcohol or drugs agency.
- Where we identify that children are the cause of complaints, we will consider referrals to social work teams.
- We will encourage Housing Officers to become aware of support agencies who operate in their patches so that appropriate referrals for support can be made and will build a database of suitable agencies.

Tenants experiencing anti-social behaviour

- We will provide support to residents experiencing anti-social behaviour through regular visits and phone calls to keep them updated
- We will work collaboratively with local police to carry out joint visits and to request additional patrols in the area if required
- We will offer referrals to Victim Support

8. Case monitoring

Regular case monitoring will be carried out by Housing Managers who will retain an oversight of all category A cases and monitor samples of other cases in order to support

and coach the Housing Officers and to identify any weakness or areas of concern in our management of anti-social behaviour.

Cases will be monitored quarterly to identify any trends and learn any lessons which may be used to improve our management of anti-social behaviour.

9. Keeping customers informed

We will continue to consult regularly with Registered Tenant Organisations (RTOs) to inform our management of anti-social behaviour.

We will publicise our anti-social behaviour policies in our newsletters, on our website and via social media and will include performance information and outcomes of cases, suitably anonymised.

10. Working with other agencies

Working with partner agencies to address crime and anti-social behaviour is a key priority for us.

We work with a number of agencies to manage anti-social behaviour including;

- Police Scotland
- Glasgow City Council
- Mediation Services
- Victim Support
- Drug and Alcohol Services

We hold regular operational liaison meetings with the local police to share information and progress cases in our areas. In addition, we meet quarterly with the Area Commander to identify trends and ensure that the relationship is working well at all levels.

In order to ensure that we are working effectively with partner agencies we will;

- review the effectiveness of the police meetings to ensure they are providing tangible outcomes for our customers and
- Build up information about agencies and charities who work in our areas to ensure that Housing Officers are aware of support agencies for tenants and can make appropriate referrals and maximise the support available to our customers

11. Learning from complaints

Complaints about our management of anti-social behaviour will be monitored quarterly by the Head of Housing and this will be used to learn any lessons which may improve our management of anti-social behaviour and to identify any training needs and potential improvements to our anti-social behaviour procedures.

We will also use the feedback gained from Anti-Social Behaviour satisfaction surveys to inform and improve our management of anti-social behaviour.

12. Training and Development

We will provide training to all Housing Officers on the effective management of anti-social behaviour and specific training on our amended procedure and the use of the new powers granted by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014

We will also ensure that front- line staff are trained in interview skills, case building and evidence gathering, case progression and resolution and documenting information.