

# Housing Good Neighbourhood Management Policy

Housing Landlord Services

HLSPOL20

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# Document

<b>Name of Policy</b>	Good Neighbourhood Management Policy
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<b>Purpose of policy</b>	To outline New Forest District Council's (NFDC) approach to dealing with reports and the management of neighbourhood issues which are not considered to be Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) but still require a landlord response.
<b>Policy applies to</b>	This policy and the subsequent arrangements apply to all directly and indirectly employed housing staff within NFDC and, where appropriate, tenants, contractors and members of the public.
<b>Lead officer</b>	Housing ASB & Neighbourhood Manager
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<b>Updated overview</b>	New Policy

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# Introduction

This Policy related to the Council's housing landlord's function.

The Purpose of this Policy is to foster positive relationships with our residents and to deliver better outcomes by implementing and building on recommendations made in the October 2022 Housing Ombudsman's Spotlight reports "time to be heard and noise reports".

The Council has a responsibility to prevent Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) by keeping homes, neighbourhoods, and communal areas under its control, safe and clean.

The Council accepts that everyone has a right to their chosen lawful lifestyle providing that it does not spoil the quality of life of others. The Council has an important role to play in making sure that such rights and obligations are managed effectively.

Our service standard dictates that all reports of ASB and Neighbourhood management issues are responded to, with clear actions agreed on how NFDC can assist with resolving the reported problem.

In cases that don't meet the threshold for ASB intervention, this policy outlines the Council's commitments to how we will manage our neighbourhoods and how we will respond to behaviours which are not ASB or considered a breach of tenancy. These behaviours can still be impactful but require a different response where residents are provided with access to the appropriate advice and tools so that as neighbours, they can work together to resolve any differences.

This policy excludes hate crime and domestic abuse as these are dealt with under separate policies and procedures.

The policy is distinct from our ASB Policy and any incident or reports of ASB will be dealt through the main ASB Policy.

Behaviour towards our staff and contractors is dealt with through our internal accident, incident reporting & investigating policy.

How we use CCTV is dealt with through the Council's [CCTV Policy](#).

Complaints about the way we manage our response to ASB or Neighbourhood issues are dealt with through our [corporate complaint Policy](#).

## Objectives:

The Council is committed to creating good neighbourhoods by:

- Using preventative and early intervention measures to reduce incidents of ASB under our ASB policy.
- Emphasising the importance of early and proactive action to prevent cases from escalating.
- Providing early and effective triaging and assessment of reports to see if reports meet the threshold to be considered ASB or requires our intervention to maintain a good neighbourhood relationship.
- Responding to all cases of neighbourhood issues with clear actions agreed with residents.
- Working in partnership with Police, Hampshire County Council, Health, Education and other public bodies at both formal and informal levels to prevent and respond effectively to neighbourhood issues.
- Make available self-help tools focusing on communication over conflict to prevent issues escalating to ASB.
- Providing effective communication, providing clear explanations on how residents reports will be managed, what actions the Council can take, what actions residents must take and what limitations we may face.
- Supporting tenants and encouraging positive neighbour relationships and educating tenant on “how to be a good neighbour”
- Regularly review reports to confirm if they need to be responded to under our ASB Policy

# Legislative and regulatory context

The Regulator of Social Housing launched its new regulatory framework on 1 April 2024. The Regulatory standards relating to managing neighbourhoods are contained within the new Customer Standards, which include Neighbourhood and Community Standards, Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard and the Tenants Satisfaction Measure Standards, which stipulate:

## Safer Neighbourhoods standards

- Registered providers must have a policy on how they work with relevant organisations to deter and tackle ASB in the neighbourhoods where they provide social housing.
- Registered providers must clearly set out their approach for how they tackle and deter hate incidents in neighbourhoods where they provide social housing.
- Registered providers must enable ASB to be reported easily and keep tenants informed about the progress of their case.
- Registered providers must provide prompt and appropriate action in response to ASB, having regard to the full range of tools and legal powers available to them.
- Registered providers must support tenants who are affected by ASB, including by signposting them to agencies who can give them appropriate support and assistance.

## Transparency, influence, and accountability standards

- Registered providers must ensure complaints are addressed fairly, effectively, and promptly.

## Tenant Satisfaction Measures Standards (TSMs)

- Registered providers must collect and provide information to support effective scrutiny by tenants of their landlord's performance in managing their homes and neighbourhoods.

This places a requirement on landlords to publish performance statistics on the number of ASB cases relative to the size of the landlord (TSM NM01) and the collective response to the question 'How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with NFDC's approach to handling ASB.'

# Definitions

## **Anti-Social Behaviour:**

Under the Council's ASB Policy, the Council has adopted the following definition of ASB as set out in the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014:

- a) Conduct that has caused, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm, or distress to any person.
- b) Conduct capable of causing nuisance or annoyance to a person or relation to that person's occupation of residential premises.
- c) And conduct capable of causing housing-related nuisance or annoyance to any person.

The Council recognises that the decision to rule something as ASB is subjective. This is based on how the behaviour makes people feel. We understand that people have different tolerances, expectations and perceptions. Sometimes individuals will consider something to be ASB when it is not behaviour that could be considered unreasonable.

It is for this reason that when the Council decides whether something is to be defined as ASB we will consider not just the definition of ASB, but also whether the behaviour is unreasonable.

When deciding whether something is unreasonable, we will base this on several factors. This includes, but is not limited to:

1. The frequency of the problem – we are unlikely to consider something as ASB if it is a one-off incident unless it is particularly serious.
2. How long each incident lasts and/or the times of day that an incident occurs.
3. The impact upon the victim(s).
4. The intention of the alleged perpetrator and whether they mean to cause harm.

Our response to reports that are considered ASB are outlined in our **ASB Policy**. When applying this test, any behaviours that are not considered by officers to be ASB due to different lifestyles or every-day living situations that are not intended to cause nuisance, or annoyance will be responded to under this Good Neighbourhood Management Policy.

Under this Police we will only progress reports in cases where we are satisfied our intervention is appropriate and may resolve the issues, and there is no agency better placed to respond.

To ensure this happens an assessment of all ASB and reported problems between neighbours will be undertaken to identify not only the nature of the behaviour and the causes, but also to identify at an early-stage cases of neighbour nuisance or disagreements which may not to be classified as ASB, but may still impact resident's lives.



# Roles and responsibilities

All housing staff are responsible for promoting a clear message that NFDC does not tolerate ASB and will work with partner agencies to take appropriate action to resolve reports and allegations of ASB and reported problems between neighbours.

## Customer Services (CS) & the Housing Support Hub (HSH)

- Customer Services and the Housing Support Hub are likely to receive the initial reports and are responsible for logging the initial query and providing information of response times.

## Tenancy Sustainment Assistant / Neighbourhood Assistant

- Reviewing initial reports made to Housing resident services.
- Review and investigate minor complaints on instruction from the Neighbourhood Housing Officer.
- To provide help, advice, and information to residents on the full range of tenancy and neighbourhood management services
- Can also be responsible for managing and processing reports on instruction from the Neighbourhood Housing Officer.

## Void Co-Ordinator

- Responsible to administrating the reletting of properties.

## Temporary Accommodation Officer

- Responsible for managing and progressing reports in the NFDC Homeless Temporary accommodation.
- Ensuring that all tenants abide by the Licence conditions / non-secure tenancy. Providing advice and support whilst taking initial enforcement action (when appropriate).
- Liaising with other departments and agencies, taking joint action when required.
- Keeping accurate records and updating complainants.
- Referring and liaising with support services to assist alleged perpetrators with managing their licence / non-secure licence.
- Identifying cases which fall outside of the definition of ASB and working with residents to effectively resolve the issues using non-legal measures.
- Escalating complex or challenging cases to the ASB & Neighbourhood Housing Manager / Neighbourhood Housing Officer

## Neighbourhood Letting and Sustainment Officer

- To deliver Housing and Neighbourhood management services from the commencement of any type of tenancy provided by the Council.

- To ensure tenancy conditions are explained and to identify vulnerable tenants and to ensure that relevant support is provided through support agencies and others to assist them in maintaining their tenancy.
- To provide help, advice, and information to tenants to assist with sustaining their tenancy.
- To resolve any breaches of tenancy.
- Managing the process of ending tenancies as required.
- Dealing with tenancy requests such as succession, relationship breakdowns, approval of mutual exchanges and ensure compliance of any home improvements carried out by the tenant.
- Referring ASB or neighbourhood reports to the Neighbourhood Housing Officer

### Neighbourhood Housing Officer

- The main contact for residents and are responsible for managing and progressing reports under this Policy.
- Ensuring that all tenants abide by the Tenancy Conditions, taking enforcement action where appropriate.
- Liaising with other departments and agencies, taking joint action when required.
- Keeping accurate records and updating complainants.
- Referring and liaising with support services to assist alleged perpetrators with managing their tenancy.
- Identifying cases which fall outside of the definition of ASB and working with residents to effectively resolve the issues using non-legal measures.

### ASB and Neighbourhood Manager (ASBM)

- Lead Manager for the response to ASB and Neighbour issues
- Housing staff will liaise with the ASBM around High Risk or Complex cases when guidance and support is required.
- ASBM will review cases, looking at what more can be done, and work proactively with Housing Resident team to tackle the situation.
- ASBM can act as a single point of contact of high harm / high risk cases as necessary.
- ASBM will review staff training and processes so Housing Staff are aware and trained to use the appropriate tools to tackle ASB.
- ASBM will identify long standing cases and guide Housing Staff towards resolution.
- ASBM is responsible for the quality of the service and ASB performance.
- ASBM is responsible for updating Policy and Procedure to reflect current and good practice.

### Neighbourhood Letting and Tenancy Sustainment Manager

- Respond to service requests and complaints in line with the corporate complaint's procedure.
- Monitor staff compliance to the procedure.
- Deputise for the ASB & Neighbourhood manager.

### Tenant Engagement Manager

- Responsible for data collection and engagement around tenant satisfaction measures
- Collating the tenants' voice and working with the ASBM around service improvement, policy development and implementing learning following complaints.

### Service Manager for Housing Resident Services

- Responsible for service delivery and complaints made under the corporate complaint process.

### Strategic Director and Assistant Director – Housing & Communities (AD)

- Responsible for overall delivery of the service and complaints made under the corporate complaint process.

### Legal Team

- Where appropriate, the Estate Management Team will instruct, liaise, and seek advice from the Legal department when enforcement action is being considered /required.

### Other Service leads, managers & officers

The Neighbourhood Management Team will also liaise and seek advice from:

- Community Safety
- Service Manager - CCTV, Community Safety & Community Alarms
- Environmental and Regulatory Services
- Housing repairs / operations
- Open Spaces & Pest Control
- Benefit Services
- Service Manager for Housing Options & Tenancy Accounts
- Homelessness Officers
- Homesearch Team
- Tenant Accounts Manager / Rent team

# Our Good Neighbourhood Management Commitments

The Council recognises that some behaviours, whilst not ASB, can still cause a great deal of upset and frustration to residents. Some behaviours can also escalate to become ASB, as well as de-escalate and still cause tension between neighbours.

Generally, matters dealt with under these good neighbourhood management commitments will arise because of circumstances, rather than a genuine intention to cause someone else harm.

The council will not seek to label someone as a perpetrator or a victim.

As the behaviour will not be classed as ASB, it will therefore be unlikely to be an actionable tenancy breach. As such we will be unlikely to consider any of our legal tools which are available to use in ASB cases.

Like ASB reports the Council will consider the source/cause of the behaviour, intention, impact/harm and frequency.

Behaviours that generally will not be considered ASB and therefore will be responded to under this Policy could include:

- Normal household noise (such as noise from household appliances, children playing, children crying, normal dogs barking, occasional door slamming, toilets flushing, or sexualised noises).
- Noise caused due to outstanding property repairs.
- Smells from cooking.
- One-off parties, including BBQs.
- DIY within sociable hours.
- Noisy plumbing or appliances.
- Parking disputes.
- Messy gardens.
- Minor behavioural irritations – such as ‘dirty looks’, ‘staring’, or ‘non abusive’ comments.
- Household lifestyle clashes.
- Occasional bonfires.
- Complaints about CCTV.

\*This is not an exhaustive list.

## Preventing Neighbourhood issues:

- Using Introductory Tenancies to ensure new tenants fully understand their responsibilities.
- Completing nomination assessments to ensure that support needs are identified ahead of sign up.
- Comprehensive sign ups where tenancy obligations are explained, and support needs are recorded, and tenants are referred for additional support.
- Settling in visits – used to emphasis tenants’ obligations and highlight and follow up on any support needs.
- Carefully considering allocations for impact on existing neighbourhoods
- Provision of a good neighbourhood management leaflet to help us deliver this Policy.
- Under our Void Standard we will not remove carpets unless they are in poor condition, and we will remove laminate flooring.
- We will follow up on other measures as appropriate, such as anti-vibration mats into washing machines spaces above ground floor.
- Promote communication between neighbours through the provision of mediation.
- Provide a regular ground maintenance program.
- Provide a regular cleaning and block inspections program.
- Completed regular estate walkabouts.
- Organise “street walks” on the request of residents.

## Reporting Neighbourhood Management Issues

Reports should be reported to the Council at the earliest opportunity. Reports can be made including letters, telephones, emails, in person and online through our website. We will also receive reports from other agencies such as the Police.

NFDC will endeavour to respond to all suspected cases of Neighbourhood management issues within 5 working days.

The full timescales to responding to reports are set out in our internal procedure.

When assessing reports, we will let residents know whether this matter is likely to be dealt with as a neighbourhood management issue to ensure they are dealt with at the appropriate level and not ASB. This will aid in managing residents’ expectations at an early stage.

We will use the terminology “**Party 1**” and “**Party 2**” to avoid incorrectly labelling victims or perpetrators.

## Responding to reports and remedies

First getting neighbours to talk can be incredibly powerful and often stops a neighbour dispute escalating to more serious ASB. It allows different perspectives to be discussed, awareness and understanding to be developed. We can help by reviewing residents’ concerns and discuss effective ways of communicating with one another.

If residents need more formal help, we can talk to both neighbours and try and work out a solution. When appropriate to do so, residents will be asked to approach their neighbours first (either in person or by using a “Hello Neighbour card”).

Because the central purpose of this Policy is to build relationships between parties it is more difficult to assist if the person making the report wants to remain anonymous. We will seek to alleviate any concerns round confidentiality when residents request it.

Residents will be encouraged to engage and communicate with one another and understand one another’s point of view.

In some instances, the reported problem may need assistance from other agencies and will work with partners to identify practical solutions.

### **We will:**

- Provide advice on how best to communicate their problems or steps they can take to best manage the situation.
- Refer cases to mediation - mediation brings both neighbours together in a structured way, it can be used between two individuals or for groups of neighbours. It’s for cases when there is a clash of lifestyles or when both parties can take responsibility. Mediation can be face to face or done via shuttle techniques. The outcome of mediation should result in better understanding between neighbours and a shared agreement between them.
- Complete property inspections to establish any outstanding repairs or anything that may contribute to noise transference.
- Work with residents around options that may help reduce noise transference, such as understanding the importance of carpets, removal of hardwood flooring etc.

- Complete inspections on gardens under our untidy garden procedure to see if they are overgrown or have an accumulation of rubbish.
- Identify vulnerabilities and support needs/consider the needs for the parties involved and work to identify suitable referrals and support.
- Complete Dog Ownership Agreements and provide information on how to be a responsible pet owner.
- Facilitate Good Neighbourhood agreements between neighbours.
- Provide Housing Options to residents and assist with applications under the Council's Allocation Policy or a mutual exchange.
- Review reports to check it is being handled under the correct policy in cases where our interventions fail or are not successful and impact continues.
- In cases where we have formally responded to a report within the last 12 months before reopening the report, we may ask residents to keep a log of reports to establish the frequency of the reported problem or refer residents to solutions previously identified.

# Tenants Rights, Leaseholders (including shared ownership) rights & responsibilities

Council tenants and leaseholders have clear rights and responsibilities in relation to ASB and neighbourhood management under their tenancy agreement or lease with the Council.

In general, a tenant/leaseholder has the right to be able to live in their home as they choose and without interference from any person. They have a responsibility to ensure that neither they, nor anyone living with them, or visiting their property acts in an anti-social manner, and this includes the behaviour and actions of children and pets. There are also various implied terms within the tenancy agreement to encourage and maintain good neighbour relationships.

In cases where tenants and leaseholders persist in breaching their tenancy agreement they can be evicted from their homes and the property returned to the Council's housing stock. Eviction will only be requested by the Court as a last resort and would only be used in serious tenancy breaches such as proven and serious Anti-Social behaviour and when all other interventions have failed. Eviction is for when the behaviour is to such an extent that it warrants making the person homeless.

The Council's Allocation Policy enables the Council to exclude those evicted from the Council's HomeSearch Housing Register (in certain circumstances). More information can be found under the Council's Letting Policy



# Support

Often a person's vulnerability may make them more likely to be a victim or perpetrator of ASB or result in a clash of lifestyles between neighbours.

Where identified or disclosed we will act upon on any support need of residents.

Support might include practical solutions such as property improvements, or additional security. As well as referrals to supporting agencies such as Adult Services or Children Services, Health Services

The council will endeavour to encourage awareness and engagement as a means of helping sustain tenancies.

# Closing reports under our Good Neighbourhood Management commitments

The Council requires the co-operation and support from all the parties involved.

The Council may close the report when the parties refuse a reasonable request or when mediation is recommended and considered the best option, but is refused.

Cases may also be closed when:

- The reported problem has stopped or is resolved.
- When the report is anonymous.
- When there has been no contact from Party 1 for the last 4 weeks.
- Party 1 has been provided with the necessary support and advice to self-help.
- Either party has refused mediation and refuse to work constructively with one another.

The decision to close a case will be discussed, and ideally agreed with Party 1.

The decision to formally close a case will be provided in writing to both parties and include advice and steps to take should the report restart.

Although a new report can be opened all the information from their previous report will be held on file and will be referred to as necessary.

# Partnership working

MHCLG's Regulatory Framework, under the Neighbourhood and Community Standard, requires registered housing providers to co-operate with relevant partners to help improve social, environmental and economic wellbeing in their areas and to work in partnership with other agencies to prevent and tackle ASB in the neighbourhoods where they own homes.

The Council has strong working relationships and links with agencies and services that support the needs of our residents when tackling the causes and effects of ASB. Our range of partners is wide.

Our partners include:

- The Council's Community Safety Team
- The Council's Environmental Protection Teams
- Hampshire Police
- Probation Service
- Housing Associations
- Youth Offending Team
- Hampshire Childrens and Adults Social Care
- NHS Mental Health Teams
- Schools
- Victim Support

We work with our partners in a variety of ways to improve our neighbourhoods and encourage good neighbour relationships, including regular meetings and other joint working arrangements under the Safer New Forest Partnership.

Of equal importance is our work with residents, resident groups and Tenant Engagement Service to look at ways to prevent, identify ways to improving our service and what methods we can take to support resident led projects, estate meetings, estate inspections and the provision of diversionary activities.

# Confidentiality and information sharing

We can only improve our neighbourhoods by working with our partners and a key element of this approach is the sharing of information in accordance with the Council's statutory obligations under the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations. All tenants will be made aware of how their personal information will be processed. Information recorded on the Council's system and on the tenants' file will be shared with other agencies as necessary.

A copy of the Privacy Notice is found here: [www.newforest.gov.uk/privacy](http://www.newforest.gov.uk/privacy)

## Monitor and review

This policy will be subject to regular review and amendment when necessary to accommodate new legislation, guidance, or local needs.

The Strategic Director for Housing and Communities has authority to make amendments in consultation with the Portfolio holder for Housing.

This policy will be available on the council's website at [www.newforest.gov.uk](http://www.newforest.gov.uk)