

MAGNA HOUSING

PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH REPORTS OF ANTI- SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR (ASB)

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This procedure supports our ASB Policy, Hate Incident, Crime and Harassment Policy, Domestic Abuse Policy, Safeguarding Policy & Procedure and provides guidance to colleagues on dealing with reports about anti-social behaviour (ASB).
- 1.2 The aims of this procedure are to resolve an ASB problem quickly, taking the appropriate action to remedy the situation, and to keep the complainant informed throughout the case.
- 1.3 The procedure has been drawn up to take account of the provisions of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003, the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, Modern Slavery Act 2015 as well as other legislation and available good practice and guidance from the Department for Communities and Local Government, Regulator of Social Housing, the National Housing Federation and other sources.
- 1.4 The head of housing services is responsible for compliance with this procedure.

2. Definitions of anti-social behaviour

- 2.1 According to the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, ASB is behaviour which causes or is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to one or more people who are not in the same household as the perpetrator.
- 2.2 The Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 further describes ASB in a housing related setting as “conduct capable of causing housing-related nuisance or annoyance to any person”. We use the term ASB to describe “behaviour that unreasonably interferes with other people’s rights to the use and enjoyment of their home and community.”
- 2.3 ASB can take a number of forms. Some ASB is of a serious, criminal nature. Other behaviour may not be criminal in nature but can be equally detrimental to the quality of life in a community.

3. Receiving, acknowledging and allocating a report of ASB.

3.1 All reports will be triaged by the community safety team in order to consistently categorise and risk assess the complainant. Reported ASB (Category A&B detailed below) will be allocated to and managed by the CSOs. Reports about nuisance (Category C detailed below) will be allocated to and managed by housing officers. The case management procedure is the same for all categories.

3.2 If the report made does not need an investigation, for instance a one off party or an isolated incident of dog barking, the CSO or housing officer may contact the households involved without opening a case. If the problem then persists or worsens, the case management procedure should be followed.

3.3 CSOs must acknowledge reports of ASB (where the complainant is known) and create a case on Aspire CRM. A standard acknowledgement letter is sent. The following timescales must be used:

3.3.1 Category A: Allegations of Extreme Anti-Social Behaviour Response time one working day

Some examples may be:

- Criminal activity involving violence
- Drug dealing
- Hate Crime & Hate related incidents
- Assault
- Threats of violence
- Harassment
- Domestic abuse
- Modern slavery

3.3.2 Category B: Allegations of Serious Anti-Social Behaviour Response time three working days

Some examples may be:

- Aggressive and abusive behaviour
- Frequent and persistent disturbances (including noise)
- Drug, solvent and alcohol abuse in communal areas
- Vandalism

3.3.3 Category C: Allegations of Nuisance Response time five working days

Some examples may be:

- Pet nuisance e.g. Dog fouling, barking
- Constant door slamming and arguing
- Operating noisy machinery for excessive amounts of time

Anonymous complaints

3.4 Sometimes, a report about ASB will be made anonymously. Anonymous complaints should not be ignored. While it is sometimes difficult to act on the basis of an anonymous complaint alone, and it will be impossible to present sufficient evidence to be successful in a court action, as much information as possible must be gathered. The CSO must check the substance of the complaint. This may include writing to a number of other customers to gauge any issues in the neighbourhood.

Reported ASB involving non-tenants

3.5 There is much less that we can do to resolve the situation with non-customers. However, we can offer advice to the complainant about other agencies they can contact.

Complaints about homeowners

3.6 If the alleged perpetrator is a home owner (leaseholder or shared owner), the home ownership officer will deal with the report. They should contact legal services and ask for a copy of the lease agreement. The regulations will normally be found in the first schedule of the lease. The home ownership officer should discuss the complaint with legal services. There are measures we can take to enforce breaches of covenants, such as applying for an injunction and in extreme cases we can serve a notice under section 146 of the Law of Property Act 1925. These notices specify the breach of lease, giving the leaseholder a chance to remedy it. If a First Tier Tribunal or a court then determines that a breach has occurred, or if the leaseholder admits the breach, we can serve a notice of forfeiture. Forfeiture means ending the lease and repossession by us because the lease conditions have not been met.

3.7 In practice, forfeiture would be an unlikely remedy. However, the home ownership officer can consider other non-legal remedies to tackle ASB by leaseholders as set out later in the procedure.

3.8 If the ASB reported is of a particularly serious or persistent nature, the case will be passed to the community safety team.

Sheltered and Supported housing

3.9 Where the ASB involves supported housing customers, the CSO must liaise with support colleagues about the complaints, whether the support is provided by us or by another agency such as social services. Not all of the investigative processes or remedies set out in these procedures will be appropriate. The CSO must take particular care where the ASB involves customers with learning disabilities or mental health problems.

3.10 For complaints received by the sheltered housing and support service on behalf of a customer, the referral form (available on The Hub) should be used by the referring colleague in order to ascertain any vulnerabilities and support already in place.

Complaints involving a Hate Related incident

3.11 Complaints involving a hate related incident must take into account our Hate Incident, Crime and Harassment Policy and will be dealt with as a category A case.

4. Logging the details of the complaint

4.1 The CSO must log all the details and related paperwork on Aspire CRM. The CSO must obtain as much relevant information as possible from the complainant.

4.2 It is vital from the outset that the complainant's expectations are managed effectively. The CSO will discuss with the complainant what options, if any are available to resolve their concerns. This will involve completing an action plan with them. The action plan will include:

4.2.1 Actions to be completed by the CSO and complainant.

4.2.2 Agreed method and frequency of contact.

4.2.2 The complainant's expectations and what interventions are available.

4.3 The action plan will be saved to the case, and a copy sent to the complainant upon completion.

Contacting other agencies

4.4 If there are any other agencies involved with the complainant or their household such as Social Services, probation, health services etc. then the CSO may need to contact the agency to gather further information or seek advice or help. Information sharing must be done in compliance with our Data Protection Procedure, and in line with the information sharing protocols in place. Relevant information sharing protocols can be found on The Hub. If in doubt about if or when information should be shared, the CSO should consult the area housing manager (community safety) or the company solicitor.

5. Assessing Vulnerability

5.1 A Vulnerable Victims Risk Assessment (VVA) must be completed for every opened case. This enables us to 'score' the vulnerability of the complainant, taking into account any mental or physical health problems, the effect the ASB is having on them and whether or not the wider the community is affected.

- 5.2 If a score of 25 or above is reached, an ASB risk assessment conference (ASBRAC) must be organised by the CSO. This should happen within five working days of the assessment being completed. Other agencies which must be invited are:
- Police this may include any reports of cuckooing;
 - Childrens' Services if the ASB includes, or is affecting children.
 - Mental Health team if the complainant is already linked in with them.
 - The Local Authority/ Police ASB Team.
- 5.3 Other agencies which should also be considered are the complainant's GP, social services, drug / alcohol support services, tenancy support providers, or sheltered housing advisors.
- 5.4 The meeting must be minuted, detailing any agreed actions and timescales with the attending agencies in order to best safeguard the complainant.
- 5.5 Where there are safeguarding concerns, our Safeguarding Children and Adults Procedure should be used.
- 5.6 A further VVA should be completed after two weeks to assess whether the risk has reduced. If the score remains over 25, fortnightly reviews must be undertaken in order to monitor the case progress, and identify any associated risks in order that these are managed effectively and by the appropriate agency.
- 5.7 The CSM will check compliance with this stage of the case management in order to ensure that the VVAs are taking place, and that any risk is considered, and managed effectively. VVAs will be checked on every case on a monthly basis.

6. Contacting the alleged perpetrators

- 6.1 Once the CSO has gathered information about the ASB, they should contact the alleged perpetrator where agreed with the complainant. This initial contact can be by letter, email, telephone or by visit, but must detail the allegations being made. If evidence exists that the behaviour is proven, the CSO must make clear to the perpetrator what they need to do to prevent any further action being taken. For example, this may involve stopping loud music or other noise at night, or keeping pets under control. In some cases, bringing the complaint to the attention of the alleged perpetrator will be enough to stop the behaviour.
- 6.2 If the complainant does not wish their name to be used, the CSO must take reasonable care when talking to the alleged perpetrator so that the identity of the complainant is not disclosed.

- 6.3 The CSO must keep in contact with the complainant(s) in line with the actions agreed and documented on the action plan for confirmation as to whether the behaviour has stopped, in which case no further action is required. The case can then be closed as set out in section 16.
- 6.4 If further complaints of ASB are received while the case is open, a home visit to the perpetrator will be undertaken. At the home visit, the allegations will be discussed and where appropriate an action plan agreed detailing what measures the alleged perpetrator can/should take in order to stop the ASB. A copy of any action plan will be sent to the alleged perpetrator. In cases of low level nuisance, a second warning letter may be more appropriate.
- 6.5 If monitoring shows that the behaviour has not improved, further action will need to be considered. These may be legal remedies or other solutions.

7. Gathering Evidence

Complaint logs

- 7.1 In most cases where anti-social behaviour appears to be of a frequent nature, we will encourage the complainant to use the online reporting form on our website, email us updates or incidents, or issue an incident diary to the individual customers complaining. It must be explained to the complainant that they must provide as much detail as possible, including;
 - 7.1.1 Date of incident(s).
 - 7.1.2 Time and duration of incident(s).
 - 7.1.3 What has happened.
 - 7.1.4 Names of the people involved (if known).
 - 7.1.5 Details of how it has affected them.
- 7.2 CSOs must advise complainants of the importance of them maintaining records. The records have a dual purpose; detailing the nature, severity and frequency of the ASB (and, therefore, the relevance of court action) and where court action is pursued they will be used as evidence. They therefore need to be accurate, factual, recorded as soon after the incident as possible, and provided to us as agreed in the action plan.
- 7.3 Where complaint logs are not provided as requested, the CSO must contact the complainants to ascertain why. If it is because the ASB has ceased, then the case can be closed using the procedures set out in section 16. If the behaviour has not ceased, but the complainant is unwilling to provide the information, the CSO should advise the complainant that without their evidence, it may not be possible to take any further action and the case may be closed.

- 7.4 If complaint logs are received, but they do not provide evidence of ASB, the CSO must advise the complainant that no further intervention by the CSO is appropriate and where applicable they may be signposted to another team or agency for support or advice and the case will be closed.
- 7.5 We have a close working relationship with both Dorset Police and Avon & Somerset Police which aids our work in tackling the county lines/cuckooing issue. As soon as a possible address is identified, we will conduct regular joint visits and welfare checks with the police.

Noise monitoring equipment

- 7.6 Where complaints involve alleged noise nuisance, it may be appropriate to use noise monitoring equipment.
- 7.7 Where this is considered, the CSO must obtain an appropriate signed agreement from the complainant. A copy must be left with or emailed to the complainant, the other stored electronically on the case file.
- 7.8 Installation guidelines kept with the noise monitoring equipment must be followed by the CSO.
- 7.9 When noise monitoring equipment is received back at the office, the information must be analysed and a report produced within five working days. The report template used will depend on the equipment used; for Bruel & Kjaer Matron equipment it will be; for the Campbell Associates NORSONIC 140 equipment the report template is held within the NORREVIEW software.
- 7.10 Following assessment of the recordings, if no breaches of tenancy are evidenced, the recordings will be destroyed. The report will be retained. If there are breaches of tenancy evidenced, the recordings will be stored securely and in accordance with the Procedure for Implementing Data Protection. The recordings will not be held for longer than necessary, usually once a case is closed, or a notice or injunction has expired.
- 7.11 The complainant will be notified of the outcome of the recordings, and can be sent the report if requested. If the recordings are to be destroyed, the complainant will be notified. The complainant and/or the perpetrator can be offered the opportunity to listen to the recordings. This must be done at a Magna office.

Professional witnesses

- 7.12 Professional witnesses can provide a record of incidents and sometimes take video or photographic evidence. Such cases include those where no customers are willing to give evidence.

Where this is felt to be a reasonable option, the CSO should get advice from legal services.

CCTV evidence

7.13 We have our own CCTV equipment. This can be used to gather independent evidence about more serious on-going ASB. If the CSO feels this may be appropriate, justified and proportionate they should discuss the option with the area housing manager (community safety) and authorisation obtained (CCTV assessment form on The Hub) as per the Close Circuit Television (CCTV) Procedure.

Photographs

7.14 Photographs should be electronically time and date stamped. Where this is not possible, the date and time should be clearly noted.

Video evidence

7.15 CSOs must explain to complainants that any video evidence they supply must:

7.15.1 be time and date stamped.

7.15.2 only record incidents of anti-social behaviour.

7.15.3 comply with guidance in the Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) Procedure.

7.16 CSOs will check the validity of any video evidence with legal services.

Information from the police & other agencies

7.17 We have information sharing protocols in place with the police forces in areas where we have homes. The protocols may be used to gather information where there is alleged criminal behaviour or fraudulent activity. The area housing manager (community safety) is the authorised person to request formal disclosure from the police. Disclosures will be stored securely and in accordance with the Procedure for Implementing Data Protection.

7.18 All members of the Community Safety Team have secure email addresses in order to share sensitive data (Criminal Justice Secure Mail). All requests of a sensitive nature must be made using CJSM.

7.19 In some cases, it may be possible to gather evidence from other agencies about the anti-social behaviour or its effect on the complaint. For example, social services, GPs, or other agencies may supply supporting information or evidence. The standard Authority to Disclose Information form should be used for this purpose.

8. Support for complainants

- 8.1 The best form of support for all complainants will be to deal with their complaint quickly and efficiently and to keep them informed at all stages. However, in cases of persistent or severe ASB, the CSO must consider what further support can be provided.
- 8.2 Examples of the sort of support that can be offered include referrals to our own specialist support service, or to other agencies such as Victim Support; a specialist domestic abuse service; advice about rehousing if this is desired; target hardening; or advice from the police about crime prevention.

9. Deciding which remedy is appropriate

- 9.1 There are a range of legal and non-legal remedies available. The CSO must decide on the best approach, taking into account the nature and severity of the ASB and its effect on the complainant. In general, non-legal remedies should be the first consideration, unless the behaviour is of a serious, persistent or criminal nature.

10. Non-legal remedies for tackling anti-social behaviour

Mediation

- 10.1 Mediation is a voluntary process in which trained, experienced mediators acting as a neutral third party help people who are in dispute to work together to solve their problem.
- 10.2 CSOs who feel that mediation may work in a particular case should offer this solution to both parties involved, using an approved mediation specialist as included on our approved supplier database. The referral must be made by the CSO.
- 10.3 Mediation will only be appropriate where two or more parties are unable to communicate effectively with each other, who cannot find the solution themselves, but who do wish to settle their dispute.

Community engagement fund

- 10.4 In some cases, e.g. where the anti-social behaviour is not severe but is persistent, it may be an option to consider a bid to the community engagement fund forum for money from their community engagement fund. Examples may include bids for extra lighting, improved car parking facilities, planting to deter access to ground floor windows, the installation of locking bollards to prevent unauthorised access, the provision of litter bins etc.

Local authority dog wardens

10.5 Local authority dog wardens can issue Community Protection Notices or warnings, supply dog bins or signs, or give advice to customers.

Police advice and help

10.6 The CSO should contact the police where the ASB is criminal in nature. They can provide advice and may on occasion agree to extra patrols in the area as a short-term measure. (Please see appendix 3 on county lines/cuckooing)

Estate services

10.7 Estate services can assist in deterring or reducing some forms of ASB. For example, they can clear away rubbish or needles dumped in communal areas, in order to improve the environment and remove focal points of ASB. They can also carry out regular patrols of communal areas and carry out spot checks.

Environmental Health/ Community Safety Teams

10.8 In some cases where it is felt that an independent view would be useful, or where a perpetrator is not a Magna tenant, contact should be made with the local authority Environmental Health service for advice.

10.9 If the anti-social behaviour is viewed as a statutory nuisance by the Environmental Health Officer, then any Abatement Notice or subsequent successful prosecution provides good evidence should we need to pursue a legal case.

Acceptable Behaviour Contracts

10.10 Acceptable behaviour contracts (ABCs), can be an effective way of dealing with anti-social individuals, especially where there are a number of problem behaviours.

10.11 ABCs are written in agreement with the perpetrator, and set out terms which the perpetrator agrees to adhere to. The CSO should discuss the terms with the perpetrator in order to encourage compliance.

10.12 The ABC will make clear what further action will be considered if the terms are breached. This may include injunctive action, or in serious cases, possession action.

10.13 Further information on ABCs can be found at Appendix 1.

11. Legal remedies for tackling anti-social behaviour

11.1 In all cases where legal action is to be considered, it is imperative to consider:

- 11.1.1 Is the action proportionate to the scale of the behaviour?
- 11.1.2 Have all non-legal remedies been considered where appropriate?

Solicitors warning letter

11.2 If the ASB or nuisance continues, the CSO can instruct legal services to send a warning letter to the perpetrator. This letter will include remedies available to us if the behaviour doesn't improve.

Serving a notice seeking possession (NSP)

11.3 If no other remedy is appropriate or has not worked, the CSO should serve a notice seeking possession (NSP). A request will be made to legal services to draw up the NSP using the Instruction Notice Request form.

11.4 As many details of the types of nuisance being caused should be specified on the NSP, e.g. "shouting, banging, swearing, late at night on 'X' date". It is essential that these details are accurate and checked by the CSO prior to service of the NSP.

11.5 The CSO should wherever possible serve the NSP by hand, so that the customer can be advised of the implications, and should have an explanatory covering letter which is produced by legal services. If personal service is not possible, it can be put through the letterbox. The method of service should be noted on the certificate of service. A copy of the NSP and certificate of service must be saved to the electronic case file.

11.6 If the tenancy is a joint tenancy, a NSP must be served on both customers.

Serving a Notice before Proceedings for a Demotion Order

11.7 A 'Notice before Proceedings for a Demotion Order' will be served on the perpetrator (Section 83 of the Housing Act 1985) which gives at least 28 days' notice of our intention to seek a demotion order. A request will be made to legal services to draw up the Notice before Proceedings for a Demotion order using the instruction notice request form.

11.8 The CSO can consider applying for a demotion order alongside other measures including an injunction, or serving a NSP alongside the Notice before Proceedings for a Demotion Order. This will be considered if appropriate and depending on the seriousness of the case.

11.9 The notice period of the Notice before Proceedings for a Demotion Order must expire before the application to demote the tenancy is lodged at the court.

11.10 The 1996 Housing Act introduced rules for NSPs served under Ground 14. Immediately the notice has been served, we can begin possession proceedings rather than have to wait for the normal 28 day expiry period. Waiving the notice period will only be used in the most serious cases, ordinarily alongside other action such as an injunction.

Action on expiry of the notice period

11.11 When the 28 day notice expires the CSO must consider whether the nuisance still exists and/or whether the case should proceed to court. The case should be discussed with the CSM to agree action.

11.12 The NSP has a life of 12 months and, therefore, further action can be delayed for a period if substantial improvements have occurred with the 28 day notice period.

11.13 If, for any reason no further action is to be taken or action is being delayed due to improvements in the behaviour, the CSO must contact the complainants and perpetrators to explain why.

Injunctions

11.14 An injunction is a court order which requires a person to either do a specific act or acts, or to refrain from doing a specific act or acts. Positive requirements should always be considered in order to address the underlying cause of the ASB; this may include attendance at an alcohol or drugs misuse course, or attending dog training classes.

11.15 Details of the different types of injunction available and penalties on breach are set out in guidance developed by the Home Office at https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/352562/ASB_Guidance_v8_July2014_final__2_.pdf. The breach of an injunction under Part 1 of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 can mean that an absolute ground for possession can be considered. Information is also available at Appendix 1.

Demoted tenancies

11.16 Demotion is an alternative option to requests for possession orders and may be considered appropriate for more low-level forms of ASB where possession proceedings are not appropriate. Demotion orders therefore serve as a last chance incentive for the perpetrator to improve his/her behaviour before possession proceedings are taken.

11.17 For a demotion order to be instigated the following grounds from the Housing Act 1996 must be evidenced:

11.17.1 That the tenant or a person residing or visiting the dwelling-house has engaged or has threatened to engage in conduct to which section 153A or 153B of the Housing Act 1996 (anti-social behaviour or the use of premises for unlawful purposes) applies; and

11.17.2 That it is reasonable to make the order.

11.18 Section 153A of the Housing Act 1996 applies to conduct which is capable of causing nuisance or annoyance to any person and directly or indirectly relates to or affects the housing management function of the landlord. Section 153B of the Housing Act 1996 applies to when the customer has used or threatened to use their home for an unlawful purpose.

11.19 Once a demotion order is granted the tenancy will last for a period of 12 months (demotion period) unless possession proceedings are started. If the behaviour of a demoted customer has noticeably improved and is considered satisfactory after the 12 month period, then the demoted tenancy ends and reverts to the original tenancy.

11.20 An assured or fixed term tenancy, if demoted will become a demoted assured short hold tenancy with the usual termination and possession requirements.

11.21 At court, there will usually be four possible outcomes of the claim:

11.21.1 If the court is satisfied that the grounds of the Tenancy Agreement have been breached and possession is the most suitable outcome then either a suspended or outright order will be granted.

11.21.2 Possession is not the most appropriate outcome and a demotion order would be more suitable then this will be granted.

11.21.3 The proceedings could be adjourned if the court feels that further consideration is required based on the need to receive additional evidence.

11.21.4 The court could refuse to grant an outright / suspended possession order, or demotion order.

11.22 The CSO will confirm the outcome of the hearing in writing to the perpetrator. If a demotion order is granted then a statement of the terms of the demoted tenancy will be provided to the customer with information about the demoted tenancy.

12. Possession for assured, assured shorthold and fixed term tenancies

12.1 The CSO should only consider court action where all reasonable efforts to resolve the problem by other means have failed; where there is statutory nuisance held as such by a court; where there are

multiple complaints supported by evidence; or where individual complaints of nuisance are serious and third party evidence is available (e.g. from the environmental health officer or similar).

12.2 Three of the grounds for possession (Housing Act 1988) relate to ASB and associated breaches of tenancy, of which two are discretionary (grounds 12 & 14 and one is mandatory (ground 7a). See Appendix 2 for full details on possession grounds.

12.3 Ground 7a is to be used only in exceptional circumstances and has a right of appeal.

Proportionality assessments

12.4 If action is being taken under a mandatory ground (Ground 7a on a Section 8 NSP, or Section 21 or a NTQ) or where we know the customer to have a disability and therefore protected under the Equality Act 2010, a proportionality assessment must be completed by the CSO.

12.5 If we have no information or are unsure whether the customer might be protected under the Equality Act 2010, a proportionality assessment will be completed.

Witness statements & preparing witnesses

12.6 Where complainants are prepared to give evidence in court then the CSO will need witness statements from each complainant. Legal services will help with this process and will take the witness statements. It is imperative that the witnesses are informed that these statements will be used in any proposed court action. A template witness statement letter is available if required.

12.7 Where the complainants are not prepared to give evidence in court, a hearsay statement can be produced and the CSO can give evidence on behalf of the complainant. Hearsay statements, whilst admissible, do not carry the weight that identifiable evidence does. However, there are times when the complainant is fearful of reprisals and this must be taken into consideration.

12.8 Special measures can be requested from the court in cases where the complainant is willing to attend, but is particularly vulnerable or anxious. This might include requesting a screen so that they do not have to see the defendant, or asking for a separate waiting room.

12.9 If the complainant has never been to court, the CSO can offer a pre-hearing visit to the court so that they can familiarise themselves with things such as where to park, where to wait, the layout of the court room and witness etiquette. The CSO will contact the court and make these arrangements, and can attend with them.

12.10 The CSO will arrange transport if the witnesses have no means to get to court. Any reimbursement of costs for transport or other expenses will be paid in line with the Procedure for the Reimbursement of Approved Expenses to Volunteers.

Attending court

12.11 If the decision is made to proceed with court action, the CSO should refer the case to legal services using an Instruction to Issue Court Proceedings Form. Legal services will draw up the particulars of claim.

12.12 A CSO and a member of legal services will represent us in court. Costs and legal fees will be charged to the customer, using a separate sundry account.

12.13 Officers attending court should ensure they:

12.13.1 observe appropriate dress code (suit or other smart clothing). Dark colours are preferable.

12.13.2 are not late.

12.13.3 take all relevant information.

12.14 If the judgment is for us to gain possession of the home, the judgment will stipulate when this should occur. It will either be:

12.14.1 28 days from the date of the judgment. If the customer doesn't comply with the order, the CSO will then need to instruct legal services to apply to the County Court for a warrant for possession.

OR

12.14.2 Forthwith (immediate possession). In this case, the CSO will instruct legal services to make an immediate application for a warrant for possession.

12.15 When a warrant for possession is issued it is the court who arranges and notifies both the customer and us of the eviction date. The Eviction Procedure must be followed.

12.16 The CSO must notify the complainants of the outcome of the court hearing if they are not in attendance.

12.17 If possession is not granted, there should be a review of the case to establish why our intended outcome wasn't successful. Legal action is costly, and it is important that any opportunities to prevent unnecessary costs or learn any lessons why something may have gone wrong are considered. The CSO should organise the review and invite the area housing manager (community safety), legal assistant, and company solicitor if appropriate.

13. Possession action: assured shorthold tenants (including Starter tenancies)

- 13.1 Where there is serious, continuing nuisance involving an assured shorthold tenant, court action for possession can be taken in the same way as described above for assured tenants. This should be the usual procedure to follow, whenever the desired outcome is to stop the ASB.
- 13.2 Alternatively, a notice may be served under section 21 of the Housing Act 1988. Under section 21, a court must grant possession if it is satisfied that we have complied with the correct process.
- 13.3 The option of serving a Section 21 notice should only be used where the desired outcome is to repossess the home. It should therefore only be used in severe cases of persistent ASB, where all other reasonable approaches and attempts to stop the behaviour have been tried without success. Where this option is used, it must be authorised by the area housing manager (community safety)
- 13.4 A Section 21 notice will usually be the most appropriate step where a demoted customer is involved.
- 13.5 If the tenancy is still in the starter period refer to the Starter Tenancy Procedure to bring the tenancy to an end. For a fixed term tenancy still in the starter period refer to the Fixed Term Tenancy Procedure.

14. Possession action: licence holders

- 14.1 Where there is serious or continuing ASB from a licence holder in supported housing, then a written 28 day notice to quit may be served. However, in exceptional circumstances, where there is seriously disruptive or violent behaviour, less notice can be given. Where less notice is considered necessary, this must be discussed with legal services.

15. Action by other agencies

- 15.1 There are a number of measures that the police, local authorities and other agencies can take to tackle some forms of ASB. These measures may be useful in addition to remedies we can take. They may also be useful in cases where the ASB is not caused by our customers.
- 15.2 Some of the actions available to partner agencies such as the police are:

- 15.2.1 **Dispersal powers:** which allow the police to direct people to leave a public place and not return for a specified time.
- 15.2.2 **Community protection notices:** designed to deal with particular on-going instances of environmental ASB and can be used against individuals or organisations.
- 15.2.3 **Public space protection orders:** these deal with a particular nuisance or problem in a specific public area.
- 15.2.4 **Closure of premises:** which prevents people from using a residential home for 3 to 6 months because they have committed ASB there (Please see appendix 3 on county lines/cuckooing including partial and complete closure orders)
- 15.2.5 **Criminal behaviour orders:** made on conviction to prevent ASB.

15.3 It is crucial that a multi-agency approach is adopted; several of the actions available to partner agencies such as the Criminal behaviour order and closure powers can mean a mandatory ground for possession if breached.

16. Closing a Case

16.1 A case may be closed for a number of reasons:

- 16.1.1 The complainant and perpetrator may come to their own amicable solution, through mediation or some other means.
- 16.1.2 The complainant may confirm that the ASB has ceased.
- 16.1.3 The perpetrators home may be repossessed.
- 16.1.4 There may be no further meaningful intervention that we can provide.
- 16.1.5 Another agency may be better placed to deal with the issues, so the complainant is signposted to the appropriate agency.
- 16.1.6 The intervention by the CSO has stopped the problem.

16.2 When a CSO closes a case, the complainant must be advised. A standard letter must be sent to the complainant, and if appropriate to the alleged perpetrator, to confirm this. A satisfaction survey is included in the letter. This is to ensure that we gather feedback from complainants about how we dealt with their case and their experiences of the process.

16.3 The CSO will destroy any noise recordings or CCTV evidence in accordance with the Procedure for Implementing Data Protection.

17. Monitoring & Satisfaction

17.1 Details of all closed cases are reported to the Digital Architecture, Data and Innovation team on a quarterly basis via Aspire CRM. The community safety administrator will liaise monthly with the team to ascertain which complainants have returned their surveys and will attempt to make contact with those who have not in order to gauge satisfaction and team performance information.

17.2 Each CSO will have access to of their current caseload on Aspire CRM. This includes the numbers of open and closed cases and how many cases were resolved within our target timeframe. It will also provide information on activities undertaken such as preventative/enforcement action.

17.3 The results of the satisfaction survey will be logged and will be included in the quarterly performance information under customer contact in order to monitor performance.

Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABCs)

Acceptable behaviour contracts (ABCs), can be an effective way of dealing with anti-social individuals, especially where there are a number of problem behaviours. They can also be very effective at dealing with young people early, to nip problem behaviours in the bud before they escalate.

ABCs are a written agreement between a perpetrator of anti-social behaviour and the agency or agencies acting locally to prevent that behaviour. The terms of an ABC can be discussed with the perpetrator before they are drafted and signed to encourage compliance. There is no formal sanction associated with refusing to sign an ABC, so if an individual does not wish to sign, they cannot be forced to do so. However, refusal to sign an ABC may persuade a court that only a civil injunction or a criminal behaviour order will prevent the anti-social behaviour.

While there are no formal sanctions associated with breaching the conditions of an ABC, agencies should consider further steps if the individual does not change their behaviour. Potential further action should be made clear in the ABC so that the perpetrator is aware of the consequences of failing to comply. This may include injunctive action, or in serious cases, possession action.

In cases where court proceedings are subsequently deemed necessary, the work undertaken as part of drafting an ABC can form part of the evidence pack. For instance, any discussion with victims and communities to assess the impact of the behaviour could form the basis of a community impact statement for the court.

Civil Housing Injunction

The injunction under Part 1 of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 is a civil power which can be applied for to deal with anti-social individuals. The injunction can offer fast and effective protection for victims and communities and set a clear standard of behaviour for perpetrators, stopping the person's behaviour from escalating.

Although the injunction is a civil power, it is still a formal sanction and many professionals will want to consider informal approaches before resorting to court action, especially in the case of under 18s. However, where informal approaches have not worked or professionals decide that a formal response is needed more quickly, they should be free to do so.

Test

For anti-social behaviour in a housing context the nuisance or annoyance test will apply, that is, where the conduct is capable of causing nuisance or annoyance to a person in relation to that person's occupation of residential premises or the conduct is capable of causing housing-related nuisance or annoyance to any person. Only social landlords, local councils or the police

will be able to apply for an injunction under these provisions in the legislation. In the case of social landlords only, “housing-related” means directly or indirectly relating to their housing management function.

The injunction can be applied for by the police, local councils and social landlords against perpetrators in social housing, the private-rented sector and owner-occupiers. This means that it can be used against perpetrators who are not even customers of the social landlord who is applying for the order.

The injunction can also be used in situations where the perpetrator has allowed another person to engage in anti-social behaviour, as opposed to actively engaging in such behaviour themselves. For example, in a case where another person, such as a visitor or lodger, is or has been behaving anti-socially, the injunction could be used against the problem visitor, lodger or owner if applicable. An agency seeking to apply for the injunction must produce evidence (to the civil standard of proof, that is, ‘on the balance of probabilities’) and satisfy the court that it is both ‘just and convenient’ to grant the order

When can injunctions be used?

The injunction can be used to deal with a wide range of behaviours, many of which can cause serious harm to victims and communities in both housing-related and non-housing related situations. This can include vandalism, public drunkenness, aggressive begging, irresponsible dog ownership, noisy or abusive behaviour towards neighbours, or bullying. Agencies must make proportionate and reasonable judgements before applying for the injunction. Injunctions should not be used to stop reasonable, trivial or benign behaviours that have not caused, or are not likely to cause, anti-social behaviour to victims or communities. Failure to make such reasonable and proportionate judgements will increase the likelihood that an application will not be successful.

What to include:

The injunction will include relevant prohibitions to get individuals to stop behaving anti-socially. It can also include positive requirements to get the individual to deal with the underlying cause of their behaviour. Agencies will have the discretion to tailor the positive requirements in each case to address the respondent’s individual circumstances, behaviour and needs. Positive requirements could include the following:

- The respondent attending alcohol awareness classes for alcohol-related problems;
- Irresponsible dog owners attending dog training classes provided by animal welfare charities; or
- The respondent attending mediation sessions with neighbours or victims

Power of arrest:

The court can attach a power of arrest to any prohibition or requirement in the injunction, except a positive requirement, that is, a requirement that the respondent participates in a particular activity. The court can only attach a power of arrest if:

- the anti-social behaviour in which the respondent has engaged, or threatens to engage, consists of or includes the use, or threatened use, of violence against other persons; or
- there is a significant risk of harm to other persons from the respondent.

Penalty on breach

The breach of the injunction is not a criminal offence. However, due to the potential severity of the penalties which the court can impose on respondents, the criminal standard of proof – ‘beyond reasonable doubt’ – is applied in breach proceedings.

For adults, breach is dealt with by a civil contempt of court, which is punishable by up to two years in prison and/or an unlimited fine. The imprisonment is for contempt of court, not for the conduct. For the under 18s, breach proceedings are dealt with in the youth court and could result in a supervision order with a supervision, curfew or activity requirement.

Grounds 12 and 14 of the Housing Act 1988 are the most commonly used grounds for possession in anti-social behaviour cases against assured and fixed term assured shorthold tenants. Before making a possession order, the court must be satisfied that it is reasonable to make a court order.

Ground 12 (discretionary)

We may seek possession if an express clause in the tenancy agreement is broken, under the Housing Act 1988 Schedule 2, Part II, ground 12. This states that:

‘Any obligation of the tenancy (other than one related to the payment of rent) has been broken or not performed.’

Ground 14 (discretionary)

We may seek possession under the Housing Act 1988 Schedule 2, Part II, ground 14 as amended and extended by the Housing Act 1996 section 148. This states that:

‘The tenant or a person residing in or visiting the dwelling-house has been guilty of conduct causing or likely to cause a nuisance or annoyance to a person residing, visiting or otherwise engaged in a lawful activity in the locality of the dwelling or has been convicted of using the dwelling or allowing it to be used for immoral or illegal purposes or an arrestable offence committed in or in the locality of the dwelling house.’

This means that with Ground 14 it is not necessary to prove a nuisance has actually been caused, just likely to cause a nuisance and annoyance is sufficient. It also means that if a tenant has been convicted e.g. of supplying drugs or assaulting a neighbour, we can seek possession.

Ground 7a (mandatory)

The Anti-social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014 introduced a new absolute ground for possession of secure and assured tenancies where anti-social behaviour or criminality has already been proven by another court. Ground 7a is intended only for the most serious cases of anti-social behaviour.

Unlike grounds 12 & 14, we will not be required to prove to the court that it is reasonable to grant possession. The test which must be met for relying on Ground 7a is that a customer, or a member of the customer’s household or a person visiting the home has met one of the following conditions:

- Convicted of a serious offence (specified in Schedule 2A to the Housing Act 1985);
- Found by a court to have breached a civil injunction;
- Convicted for breaching a criminal behaviour order;
- Convicted for breaching a noise abatement notice; or
- The customer’s home has been closed for more than 48 hours under a closure order for anti-social behaviour.

The offence / breach needs to have happened in the locality of the home or affected a person with a right to live in the locality or affected the landlord.

County Lines/Cuckooing

What is county lines?

County lines is the term used to describe urban gangs supplying drugs to other parts of the UK using dedicated mobile phone lines. The gangs are likely to exploit children and vulnerable adults in order to move and store drugs and money. To do this they will often use coercion, intimidation, violence and weapons.

The deal line is often treated as a 'brand' for the gangs who generally focus on supplying Class A drugs like heroin or crack cocaine.

An operating base is an essential feature of county lines gangs. They will regularly exploit vulnerable people, by building up a debt or using threats and violence in order to take over a person's home. This practice is commonly referred to as 'cuckooing'.

Once in an address these people may then invite other people to stay without asking the customers' permission and they may even bully or threaten that person to leave their own home.

Potential signs of cuckooing:

- An increase in people coming and going.
- An increase in cars or bikes outside.
- Litter outside.
- Signs of drugs use.
- The person who lives at an address has not been seen there recently or when seen, they have been anxious or distracted.
- An increase in anti-social behaviour at the home.

A small number of our customers and homes have been exploited by county line gangs. Our close working relationship with both Dorset Police and Avon & Somerset Police aids our work in tackling the county lines issue.

As soon as a possible home is identified, we will conduct regular joint visits and welfare checks with the police. This serves to gather information and also to talk with our customers who may not realise they are being exploited. Regular visits with the police are also designed to deter activity and make it as difficult as possible for criminal gangs to target these vulnerable addresses.

We meet regularly with partner organisations so that all available information and intelligence can be shared. This allows us to develop effective multi agency responses to the problem of county lines.

As part of this multi-agency approach we ensure all local safeguarding practices and procedures are adhered to. This is vital in ensuring all available support and safeguarding is in place for our vulnerable customers who are at risk of, or currently being exploited. This will often include working with schools, village agents, children's and adult social services.

In working to support vulnerable customers who are being cuckooed, if appropriate we may explore the possibility of a move away from the area where they are currently being exploited. We will then follow up with tenancy support and regular visits to further safeguard the customer.

Individuals with mental health and learning difficulties are often targeted by county lines gangs as they are particularly vulnerable. To ensure all relevant support is in place we will work with mental health services and other partners.

A proactive approach is also required in tackling county lines gangs. This will involve speaking to various customers who are often the eyes and ears in the community and can spot activity that appears out of place. This enables us to identify any new targets or customers that may be at risk of exploitation.

Training for colleagues – spotting tell tail signs of county lines / exploitation etc.

Use of ABC's - cuckooing letters.

General advice around concern

If you're being 'cuckooed' or think you know someone who is, contact the police by reporting online or calling 101 or call Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111. If you are in an emergency situation always call 999.

Typical legal actions when countering Cuckooing

The greatest and most effective powers are with the respective police constabulary and local authority.

Closure orders

In brief this is where a home can be closed and boarded to stop people going into them.

There is something commonly known as a partial closure order and this can enable the customer to stay in their home. A partial order enables the customer(s) to still live in the home but allows the police to enter so puts off gang members.

The partial closures enable vulnerable and exploited individuals to not lose the security of their home – something that happened often until new powers in the ASB Crime and Policing Bill 2014 Legislation.

A closure order can prohibit access to the premises, or part of them:

- at all times, or at specified times only
- by everyone (including the customer and other residents), or by specified persons only.

A closure order can be made for a maximum of three months. However, the police or local authority can apply, before expiry of the original term, for an extension up to a (overall) maximum of six months.

A Magistrates' Court can make a closure order only if it is satisfied that:

- A person has engaged, or is likely to engage, in disorder, antisocial or criminal behaviour on the premises.
- The use of the premises is, or is likely to be, associated with disorder or nuisance to members of the public.
- The order is necessary to prevent the occurrence, or re-occurrence, of the disorder, nuisance or antisocial/criminal behaviour.

Breach of a closure order without reasonable excuse is a criminal offence punishable with imprisonment and/or a fine.

In addition, breach of a closure order (prohibiting access to the customer's home for more than 48 hours) by a secure or assured tenant, or by someone living in the home or visiting, can lead to eviction under the mandatory ground for anti-social behaviour.

Additional County Lines terminology

Going Country

This is the most popular term that describes county lines activity. It can also mean the act of travelling to another city/town to deliver drugs or money.

Trapping

The act of selling drugs. Trapping can refer to the act of moving drugs from one town to another, or the act of selling drugs in one.

Trap House

A home used as a base from where drugs are sold (or sometimes manufactured). These houses usually are occupied by someone (usually adult drug users but sometimes young people are forced to stay in trap houses) location.

Trap Line

This refers to when someone owns a mobile phone specifically for the purpose of running and selling drugs.