

Housing Services Anti-Social Behaviour Policy Annual Review



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Borough Council

Anti-Social Behaviour Policy Annual Review

The Housing Services Anti-Social Behaviour Policy was approved by Cabinet in 2022 to ensure we meet the Regulator of Social Housing consumer standards.

The policy, combined with the Tenancy Agreement strike a balance between:

- Prevention.
- Early intervention.
- Support.
- Enforcement.

Housing Services
Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
2022 – 2026



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Policy aims

- To re-enforce Housing Services zero tolerance approach to housing related nuisance and anti-social behaviour in Council properties.
- To ensure Council tenants feel safe in their homes and communities.
- That Council tenants are aware of the actions we will take to resolve issues and that we will take appropriate actions.
- To ensure Council tenants are fully aware of their responsibilities around their behaviour and that of their visitors.
- To ensure Housing Services meet the regulatory standards relating to the Neighbourhood and Community Involvement Standard.
- To promote and advertise Housing Services partnership working with other agencies to prevent and tackle anti-social behaviour in the neighbourhoods where we own homes.



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Anti-Social Behaviour Policy Annual Review

Prevention

Key to building strong and safe communities is ensuring that we allocate our properties correctly.

Housing Services new Allocation Policy and online application system went live in June 2023.

The Allocation Policy was updated to ensure that we can meet the needs of Darlington residents and also assisted us in strengthening our ability to carry out appropriate checks on applicants.

The policy increased our stance against anti-social behaviour and ensures that we will suspend or when necessary, restrict applicants from our waiting list.



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Early intervention & Support

The Tenancy Enforcement team use all available tools to help to resolve neighbour issues before they escalate such as:

- Mediation.
- Facilitated conversations.
- Advice.
- Support.

Following guidance from the Housing Ombudsman, useful information was provided to all Council tenants in 2023 on how to be a good neighbour. This was promoted in the bi-annual Housing magazine, Housing Connect as well as being advertised online and via social media.

Our pro-active support stance is re-enforced through the policy with all parties involved being fully supported throughout. We agree levels of regular contact with complainants and make referrals when necessary to support agencies and Victim Support.



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We recognise that both victims and perpetrators require support and this can at times resolve issues rather than enforcement action.

Case Example:

‘Complaints were received regarding excessive noise throughout the night and a tenant was heard damaging their flat. The tenant had been a resident of the flat for several years and was known to have health problems. Officers visited and observed damaged doors and walls.

The Housing Plus Officer liaised with Mental Health services regarding their concerns, and a Community Psychiatric Nurse was put in place and following the concerns raised a change in medication was reviewed and a support plan put in place.

The tenant’s mental health stabilised meaning there were no further reports of anti-social behaviour and property conditions were rectified’.



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Anti-Social Behaviour Policy Annual Review

Enforcement Action

When early intervention has not succeeded or for those serious cases enforcement action is a valuable tool to resolve issues.

This can range from a warning letter to a possession order from the County Court or a closure order being granted via Magistrates Court.



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Anti-Social Behaviour Policy Annual Review

In 2022, 3 premises closure orders were obtained for anti-social behaviour and criminal activity.

‘An anti-social behaviour closure order was granted on a 3-bedroom house. Between the period of February 2022 and August 2022, Durham Constabulary and Housing Services received significant complaints regarding excessive visitors frequenting the property.

The address was linked to organised crime groups with links to the use of drug dealing and drug taking. The collaborative work of both Housing Services and the Police meant intelligence gathering and reports from residents could be used to interrupt criminal and ASB activity at the address.

The property was closed for a period of 6 months prior to Housing Services applying for mandatory grounds of possession. The tenant was subsequently evicted on the 18th April 2023’.



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Performance

In 2022/23 444 cases involving Council tenants were opened.

The main themes were:

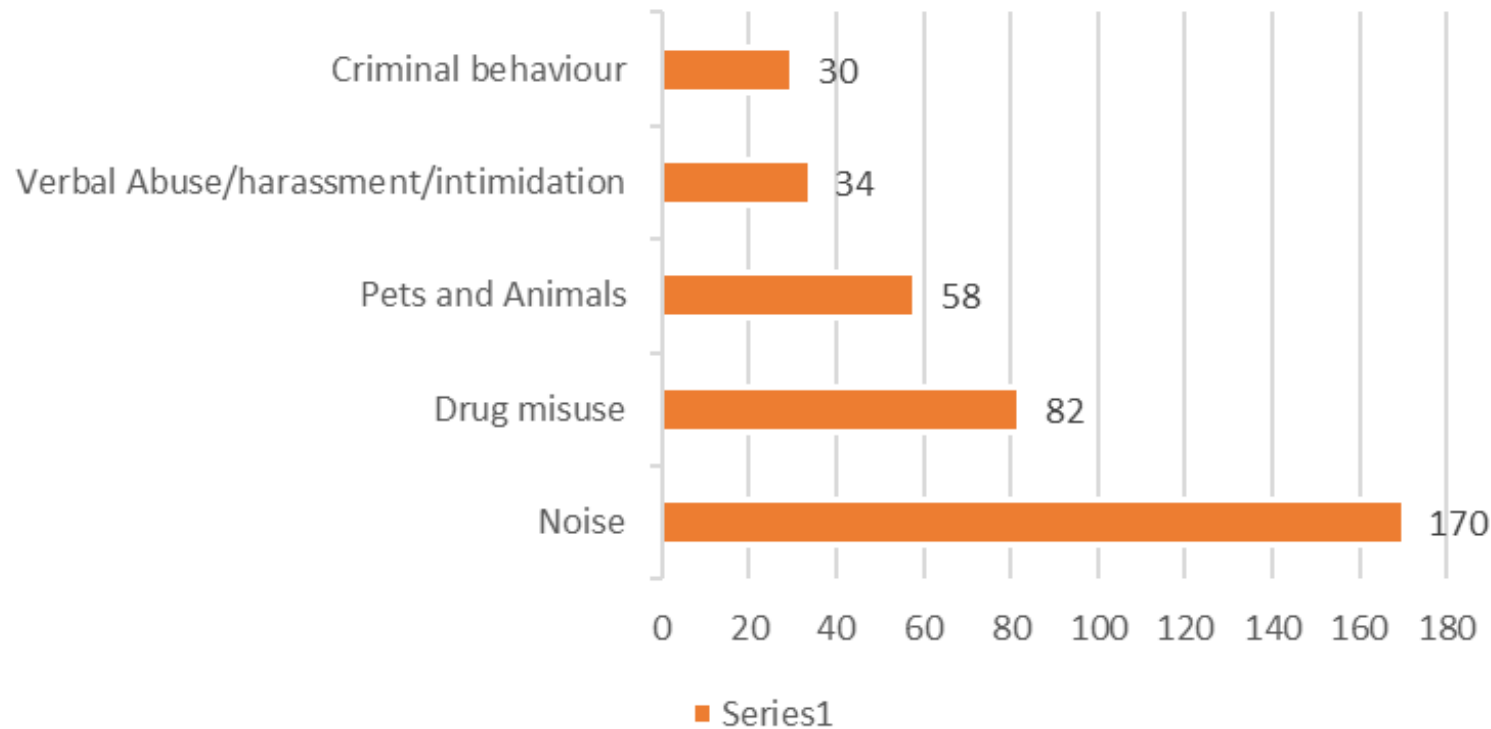
- ⌚ Noise.
- ⌚ Alleged drug misuse.
- ⌚ Pets and animals.
- ⌚ Verbal abuse and harassment.
- ⌚ Criminal behaviour.



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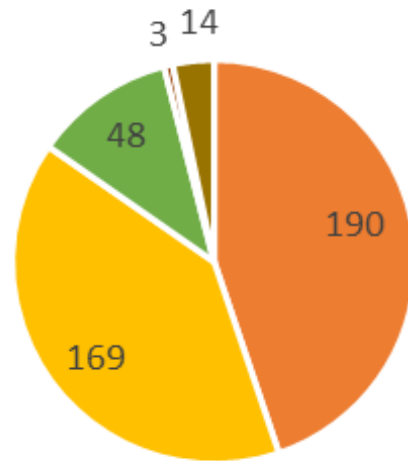
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Main reasons for ASB complaints in 2022/2023



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Case Closure Reasons 2022/2023



- Advice given
- No further reports
- Complainant not assisting/withdrawn
- Mediation
- Legal action

A total number of 424 cases were positively resolved in 2022/23.

The majority of complaints are resolved through early intervention



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What have we done in the last 12 months?

- Taken on additional resource within the team to ensure we meet timescales.
- Reviewed all procedures and processes around dealing with cases, ensuring that these are robust and that the right questions are asked from the very beginning of the case and that we meet regulatory standards.
- Invested in additional noise monitoring equipment.
- Re-designed the online reporting form to ensure any complaints about Council tenants goes to the right team first time to reduce delays.
- Increased promotion of the team through the website, social media and Housing Connect magazine so tenants know who to contact.
- Maintained close working relationships with Police and Civic Enforcement to ensure a joined-up approach to dealing with ASB in our communities.
- Attended ASB awareness week with Civic Enforcement colleagues to promote the service.



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Anti-Social Behaviour Policy Annual Review



What will we do over the next 12 months?

- Continue to build effective relationships with communities and agencies to ensure effective resolutions for ASB.
- Ensure that our procedures meet the new Regulator of Social Housing consumer standards.
- Embrace continuous learning from feedback and complaints.
- Review the feedback procedure and documents to make this easier for tenants to complete and to ensure effective feedback is collected.



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