

ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR, HARASSMENT AND HATE CRIMES

WE ARE HERE TO HELP



DEVELOPING HOMES AND CREATING OPPORTUNITIES
FOR PEOPLE WITHIN WEST NORFOLK

Freebridge
COMMUNITY HOUSING

OUR POLICY STATEMENT

Freebridge Community Housing believes that everyone has the right to live the way they want to, providing it does not spoil the quality of life for others.

This means we expect tenants, those who live with them and their visitors to be tolerant, accepting and respectful of the needs and choices of other people. We will investigate all allegations of anti-social behaviour, harassment and hate crimes and take swift and appropriate action to prevent problems from getting worse. We want to make the places where our tenants live peaceful and secure.

This policy applies to all of our tenanted, shared owner and leasehold properties and to those living in them. It covers anti-social behaviour and all forms of harassment and hate crimes. We have a separate policy covering domestic abuse.

What is Anti Social Behaviour, Harassment and Hate Crime?

Anti Social Behaviour

Anti-social behaviour has no one definition. Freebridge uses the wording of the Housing Act 1988 and the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to guide them in defining Anti-social behaviour. This means that an incident will be considered to be Anti-social behaviour if it is potentially a criminal activity, and/or causes nuisance, annoyance, alarm, harassment, or distress to any person living in, visiting or employed in the area.

Anti-social behaviour in practice can be anything from graffiti, to physically attacking someone. We will record all incidents which we investigate and believe to be anti-social within the definition given on this page.

Harassment

Harassment is persecution or intimidation by tenants, members of their household or their visitors, of a person or group because of their race, ethnic or national origin, gender, sexuality, HIV status, religious beliefs, and disability, age or family circumstances.

Incidents of harassment can include sexual comments or gestures, offensive graffiti, abusive language and behaviour, violence or threats of violence towards people of all ages, and damage to homes or possessions because of their race, gender, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, disability, age or family circumstances.

Hate Crimes

Hate crimes are when a victim is targeted because of his or her membership of a certain social group, usually defined by race, religion, sexual orientation, disability, age, gender or political affiliation.

A hate crime generally refers to criminal acts which are seen to have been motivated by hatred of one or more of the listed conditions.

Incidents may involve physical assault, damage to property, bullying, harassment, verbal abuse or insults, offensive graffiti or letters/ emails.

We have adopted the following definition of a racist incident: -

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

(Macpherson Report 1999, Recommendation 12)

We will apply the same criteria to hate crimes so that, if anyone – the victim, a witness, the Police or our staff – perceives an incident to be a hate crime or racist incident, it will be recorded as such.

Incidents of racial harassment and hate crimes, for monitoring purposes are recorded in such a way to make them easily distinguishable from anti-social behaviour and other forms of harassment. We will work closely with other agencies to prevent and deal with racial harassment and hate crimes, including acting as a recognised reporting centre.



OUR COMMITMENT

We will work with tenants, residents and other agencies to:

- Respond to complaints of anti-social behaviour and harassment quickly and aim to resolve them in an efficient, sensitive and fair manner
- Take a victim centred approach to dealing with complaints, provide support to tenants and residents and take account of victims wishes when deciding on appropriate action
- Take action when appropriate against those responsible for anti-social behaviour, harassment and hate crimes
- Introduce preventative measures, enforcement, and rehabilitative action to stop anti-social behaviour and harassment of any kind
- Ensure all reports of anti-social behaviour, harassment and hate crimes are taken seriously, including any anonymous reports
- Support and empower witnesses and communities to take a stand against problems by working with a range of other agencies
- Work closely with other local Housing Providers and partners to tackle problems effecting residents on an estate or village wide basis
- Provide residents with opportunities to develop and continually improve our service.

We will ensure that we meet our duties under all relevant existing legislation and regulations.

OUR APPROACH

1. Preventing Anti-Social Behaviour, Harassment and Hate Crimes

We will:

- We will use starter tenancies in our properties to help establish good behaviour before converting tenancies to assured status after a year. We may end any tenancies as appropriate anytime after six months and before the tenancy becomes assured

- Use the sign-up process and visits during starter tenancies to ensure that all new tenants are aware of their responsibilities and our approach on anti-social behaviour, harassment hate crimes and have adequate support in place to conduct their tenancy in a satisfactory manner
- Make it easy for people to contact us about any problems that they are experiencing
- Have published timescales for responding to complaints of anti-social behaviour, harassment and hate crimes and ensure these take into account the seriousness of the situation
- Alert people to complaints of anti-social behaviour as soon as we are aware and clarify what they need to do to stop the situation escalating
- Encourage individuals and communities to communicate with each other directly and develop their own resolutions to disputes
- Offer mediation where appropriate
- Consider how we can prevent anti-social behaviour when we are designing our properties
- Work with other agencies to deliver diversionary activities and promote community cohesion.

2. Rehabilitative and Enforcement Action

When we do take enforcement action we will make decisions on what is appropriate on a case by case basis. Whilst we will take a victim led approach, and will work with the victim to agree a plan of action. We will also try to balance the wishes of the victim(s) and other residents against any support needs or vulnerabilities that the perpetrator has.

Our Tenancy Enforcement Advisor will manage all cases for enforcement, and will:

- Ensure that all appropriate alternative options have been tried prior to commencing legal action
- Work closely with other agencies to ensure we respond consistently and effectively
- Work with complainants and victims to ensure they understand the action we can take, the evidence we require, and the roles of other agencies.

MONITORING AND REPORTING

Where anti-social behaviour, harassment or hate crimes are perpetrated by young people under 18, we will work closely with parents or guardians, social services and other relevant agencies.

Tenancy Enforcement

As a landlord we will consider taking legal action if other approaches have not worked or to complement other action.

These include:

- Demotion orders which affect the security of the tenancy
- Injunctions to prevent certain activities or behaviours in our properties
- Possession proceedings which could lead to eviction.

We would not normally offer a tenancy or licence to anyone who has been evicted from a previous tenancy for anti social behaviour, harassment or hate crimes.

3. Support to the person making the complaint and witnesses

When we are dealing with anti-social behaviour and harassment we will give the wishes of the person making the complaint the highest priority. We will ensure they are kept informed of progress throughout the case, including gaining their approval to close cases. We will ensure witnesses are given appropriate support.

Some of the ways in which we will provide support include:

- Security improvements
- Considering temporary or permanent re-housing
- Using professional witnesses to gather evidence
- Providing practical help with gathering evidence in different formats i.e. audio diaries
- Arranging for witnesses to be supported through and during any court hearings
- Providing financial support to those effected as a result of assisting with legal action
- Providing a consistent point of contact through our Tenancy Enforcement Advisor.

We will monitor anti-social behaviour by sort of behaviour, area, and severity, along with the following information about both the victim and perpetrator(s):

- Gender
- Ethnic origin
- Age
- Disability
- Religion
- Sexual orientation.

We will separately monitor all cases of racial harassment and hate crimes.

We will complete satisfaction surveying with both victims and perpetrators in order to allow us to continually develop our services.

If you have a problem you have been unable to resolve yourself, please contact your Tenancy Advisor on 03332 404 444, we will work with you to help resolve it.

Alternatively you can email full details to enquiries@freebridge.org.uk



IF YOU NEED ANY HELP TO UNDERSTAND THIS LEAFLET, PLEASE GET IN TOUCH

Freebridge Community Housing
Juniper House
Austin Street
King's Lynn
Norfolk PE30 1DZ

Email: enquiries@freebridge.org.uk

Main Switchboard Telephone: 03332 404 444.

Office Opening Hours:

8:45am - 5.15pm (Mon-Thurs)

8:45am - 4.45pm (Fri)

Bank Holidays, Saturday and Sunday Closed

Out of Office Hours:

The main telephone number (03332 404 444) will divert to our 24 hour emergency service.