



# ***ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR STRATEGY***

Estuary is a housing association with charitable status

## Summary

Estuary Housing Association will take a structured proactive approach to dealing with community sustainability, with a core focus on tackling nuisance and anti social behaviour.

This document sets out Estuary Housing Association's intent in dealing with anti social behaviour and the measures it will use in effectively implementing its approach.

The drive is to keep this document succinct in order to demonstrate a clear and well targeted approach. Each year a SMART (Specific Measurable Appropriate Realistic Timed) action plan will be constructed to underpin this strategy.

In order to deliver a successful strategy we will involve all our key stakeholders including residents, staff, community groups, Police, local authorities. Contributors to this document are supplied in appendix 1. Our commitment continues, and includes involving stakeholders in developing and reviewing this strategy too.

## Background

It is generally acknowledged that anti social behaviour (both reality and perception) has become a bigger problem over recent years.

Our National Housing Federation status survey results (published Feb 2004) show that residents in Estuary Housing Association homes are no exception. The information contained below shows a direct and significant increase in every category of nuisance. Figures show percentage of residents surveyed that perceive a problem.

|                    | <b>2000</b> | <b>2003</b> |
|--------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Litter and Rubbish | 68%         | 75%         |
| Vandalism          | 66%         | 73%         |
| Noise              | 52%         | 60%         |
| Graffiti           | 47%         | 55%         |
| Drugs              | 38%         | 49%         |
| Other crimes       | 40%         | 57%         |
| Neighbours         | 41%         | 48%         |
| Property damage    | 21%         | 25%         |
| Racial harassment  | 8%          | 10%         |

This strategy aims to provide a co-ordinated approach to tackling anti social behaviour, drawing together existing policies, procedures and established working practices and implementing new ways of working.

## **Policy statement**

Estuary Housing Association believes that everyone has the right to quiet enjoyment of their own home, to live the way they want on the understanding that it does not affect the quality of life for others. We will work with residents and other agencies taking every practical and reasonable step to ensure that this right is upheld.

We will help residents where possible to resolve the problems themselves getting involved whenever anti-social behaviour or harassment is serious and persistent taking whatever action necessary to resolve the situation.

We will respond to complaints about anti-social behaviour and harassment quickly and efficiently, sensitively, confidentially and objectively, taking action where necessary to stop anti-social behaviour and harassment of any kind.

**Neighbour Disputes** – are defined as being caused by thoughtlessness, misunderstandings, age differences, incompatible lifestyles, minor one off or occasional breaches of tenancy terms.

**Neighbour Nuisance** – is defined as frequent alleged breaches of tenancy terms such as noise problems that could require the involvement of statutory authorities. This nuisance may affect more than one person.

**Harassment** – is defined as the persecution or intimidation by residents, members of their household or their visitors that has an adverse affect on a person or a group of people. This will include but not be exclusive to race, colour, religion, nationality, sex, sexuality or disability.

**Racial Harassment** is any incident that the victim or any other person believes is racially motivated. This is covered by our racial harassment policy.

## **Aims of this strategy**

- Develop a consistent, co-ordinated and inclusive corporate approach to tackling anti social behaviour.
- Set parameters for a range of measures to prevent anti social behaviour and enforce tenancy conditions.
- Implement a framework for monitoring and improving our approach (including our policy and procedure) and the development of action plans for effective application of the measures set out in this strategy.

## **Key Strategy One – Prevention**

Wherever possible we will deploy measures to prevent anti social behaviour;

- Using **Lettings Plans and Allocation Quotas** to help balance communities. We are particularly aware that this may be appropriate on new developments where there is no established community.

To protect the fairness of this process Estuary Housing Association will only implement letting plans or allocation quotas where it is first agreed by the Federation of Estuary Residents.

- **Partnering** with other organisations helps us make use of specialist skills that may not be present in Estuary.

We will work with mediation services and support those groups by making relevant and timely referrals.

Using floating support services helps some of our more vulnerable residents sustain their tenancies. We will continue to work in collaboration with these services.

Working in conjunction with Environmental Health departments with local authorities allows us access to evidence collected by specialist equipment and specialist officers.

- **Supporting community regeneration projects** helps establish solid foundations for the areas within which we work.

We will support the CIRCLES project to provide an outreach counselling facility on the Woodgrange Drive Estate.

- **Investing in our communities** will remain a key part of our role. We will involve residents, particularly consulting and working with young people, to discourage anti social behaviour. Consultation will involve seeking the views of all groups including leaseholders, tenants and owner occupiers.

We will financially support estate based projects that improve the environment, e.g. installation of CCTV, improved street lighting, installation of door entry systems and planting/landscaping public areas.

- **Design our new homes** factoring out triggers for anti social behaviour. Wherever possible all new homes will be designed and built to Secured by Design certification.

## Key Strategy Two - Enforcement

- **Information Sharing Protocols** help with communication between organisations. Exchanging information means that we can work with the police to take enforcement action. In particular we want to develop protocols for dealing with incidents of racial harassment.

We will become involved in multi agency groups and sign up to relevant protocols.

- **Enforcing tenancy conditions.** We will take a proactive approach in instigating possession proceedings for breaches in tenancy conditions. Wherever necessary we will appoint a qualified solicitor to help us to enforce breaches.

We issue starter tenancies to all our new residents (except where they are already a Housing Association or Local Authority tenant). Our Estate Management Officers will visit all new residents to ensure that tenancies are being conducted correctly. Where there are sustained problems it will be necessary to extend starter tenancies or in some cases bring them to an end.

- **Specific anti social behaviour tools** will be used instead of or in addition to possession proceedings. Estuary Housing Association will use Acceptable Behaviour Contracts, Anti Social Behaviour Orders and injunctions where appropriate. Estuary will actively consider the use of new measures as introduced by future statute.
- Where possible we will work in partnership with other registered social landlords to procure equipment to tackle anti social behaviour (for example, mobile recording equipment) and pool resources to provide a value for money service.

## Key Strategy Three - Support

- **Tenancy Support** will be sought from a dedicated source where appropriate.
- **Domestic Violence** is a particular circumstance that requires specific guidance in dealing with the adverse effects.

Estuary Housing Association will ensure that it operates an effective Domestic Violence policy and procedure.

- **Racial Harassment** is recognised by us as requiring specific focus. In particular we will ensure that a current Racial Harassment policy and procedure is in place and monitor these cases separately. We will keep up to date with legislation and

relevant guidelines as recommended by the Commission for Racial Equality.

- **Witness Support.** Estuary Housing Association recognises that witnesses are crucial to the success of tackling anti social behaviour. Witnesses are invariably part of the same community as the perpetrators of anti social behaviour.

We will work with witnesses, individually assessing the level of support right for them and helping to alleviate social or particular pressures. We will respect confidentiality and talk to witnesses about how their information will be used, with their agreement.

Where appropriate we may choose to employ professional witnesses or use third parties or other professional information.

## **Training**

Good quality training enables staff to deliver all three key strategies. Estuary Housing Association are committed to training staff in all areas of anti social behaviour (including Equality and Diversity issues associated with anti social behaviour and racial harassment).

Estuary Housing Association will support training for residents that are involved in monitoring and reviewing this strategy and the associated action plans.

## **Publicity**

Key performance indicators set for monitoring will be publicised to residents, through our newsletter and in our reception areas. Where appropriate, we will publicise our success in tackling individual cases of anti social behaviour and at every opportunity provide access to information about anti social behaviour.

## **Recording and Monitoring**

Estuary Housing Association will use this strategy as an overall steer and produce regular SMART action plans to underpin the strategy. These will be a set of indicators for monitoring that will be regularly reviewed by staff (monthly), the Federation of Estuary Residents (annually) and the Board of Management (annually).

An accessible system for staff to record cases will be developed whilst a set of indicators for monitoring trends in anti social behaviour type/location/ethnicity has been agreed.

## **Review**

Estuary Housing Association wants to deliver success. We will ensure full consultation and community involvement and provide all our residents access to information on our approach to anti social behaviour.

We will, wherever possible actively engage in benchmarking our service against others operating in the same sector and share good practice.

Both this strategy and the action plans will be reviewed where trends are highlighted from analysis of our customer feedback.

## **Appendix One Contributors during consultation**

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| Richard Barr      | Springboard Housing Association        |
| Michael Bracey    | Southend Youth & Connexions Service    |
| Rod Flanning      | Colchester Quakers Housing Association |
| Craig Glasper     | Swan Housing Association               |
| John Hills        | Architectual Liaison, Essex Police     |
| Dave Northcott    | Essex Police                           |
| Matt Penn-Gillam  | Southend PCT/Southend Borough Council  |
| Marie Phillips    | Federation of Estuary Residents        |
| Dennis Pomroy     | Federation of Estuary Residents        |
| Stuart Stackhouse | Chelmer Housing Partnership            |
| Jim Stickley      | Federation of Estuary Residents        |
| Lillian Watts     | Federation of Estuary Residents        |

## **Appendix Two References**

Crime and Disorder Act 1998  
Protection from Harassment Act 1997  
Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001  
Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003  
Housing Act 1996, 1998, 1985  
Data Protection Act 1998  
Race Relations Act 1976  
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