

Anti-Social Behaviour and Hate Incidents Policy.

Verda Living RP Limited

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Document Owner:	Sam Winnard
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1 Background

This policy sets out how Verda Living RP Limited (Verda Living) will deter and tackle Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) and hate incidents in the neighbourhoods where we own homes. Our approach enables colleagues to work in partnership with residents, communities and key agencies, in order to promote safe and good quality neighbourhoods and enable residents to live comfortably in their homes.

Verda Living has adopted the legal definition of ASB as being:

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

Verda Living has adopted the definition of Hate Incidents to be any non-criminal act perceived by the victim or any other person to be motivated by hostility or prejudice based on a person's protected characteristics (these typically include race, religion, sexual orientation, disability and gender identity). These incidents can include verbal abuse, harassment, bullying, or other behaviours that create a hostile environment.

Through the Neighbourhood and Community Standard, the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) expects Verda Living to work in partnership with other agencies to prevent and tackle ASB in the neighbourhoods where we own homes. This policy sets how we aim to meet the standard.

We recognise that if left unchallenged, ASB and hate incidents can have a significant negative impact on the quality of life of those living in the community where the ASB and hate incidents are occurring.

We take ASB and hate incidents to be deliberate and intentional acts that may result in nuisance, annoyance, harassment, alarm or distress to others. We include in our definition the failure to address inconsiderate behaviour of this nature.

We expect our residents not to commit, or allow their family, other household members, visitors or pets to commit acts of ASB towards any person reasonably entitled to be in the vicinity of any of our properties, including residents, Verda Living Limited staff and contractors.

In relation to our residents, our properties, and the neighbourhoods where we have a presence, Verda Living Limited will be proactive in its approach to preventing ASB and intervening where it does occur. We will be accountable for the actions taken to deter and tackle ASB and hate incidents.

We will encourage tolerance of the differences that exist between individuals in our communities. In general we do not consider cooking smells, the noise of children playing, minor disputes within and between households, one off parties, sounds from moving around the home and communal areas and other features of everyday life to be ASB. However we can take account of time, frequency and impact of such matters and may investigate at our discretion.

This policy will be made available on our website, and a procedure will be developed to support its implementation.

Separate policies set out our approaches to:

- Allocation of property (allocations policy)
- Protecting vulnerable residents (safeguarding policy)

- Work on empty/void properties (voids policy)

2 Policy aims and objectives

We aim to deliver positive outcomes from our work to deter and tackle ASB, including ensuring that living environments are safe and comfortable for residents living in Verda Living homes.

In adopting and implementing this policy we have the following objectives:

- Minimise the occurrence of ASB
- Residents feel supported when they experience ASB
- Appropriate action against perpetrators of ASB is taken and recorded
- Reported ASB is resolved without the need for legal action
- Strong resident satisfaction scores in relation to ASB
- Adherence to all relevant legislation and regulatory standards.

To ensure these aims are met, we will:

- Be clear with our residents about our approaches to ASB and neighbourhood issues
- Agree actions with complainants and victims where possible
- Communicate that the expression of different lifestyles is not necessarily ASB
- Recognise that effective partnership working is fundamental to addressing ASB
- Provide direct support for perpetrators of ASB where appropriate, only resorting to enforcement where necessary
- Use powers set out in legislation appropriately and proportionately
- Consider formal legal action, including possession, only as a last resort in the most serious cases or when other measures have failed
- Ensure colleagues are aware of this policy and trained to deal effectively with ASB
- Give consideration to ASB in the design of new build homes
- Use data and feedback to monitor performance, trends, effects of our work, and to identify opportunities to improve our approaches.

3 Communication and resident involvement

We will be clear about landlord, resident and partner responsibilities so that residents understand the different approaches we can take in relation to ASB and neighbourhood issues. Our parameters for opening and closing cases will be clearly stated.

We will maintain regular and ongoing communication with residents who report ASB and have a case opened; including provision of a named contact and agreed contact schedule. This ensures that Verda Living and the resident both have the most up to date information.

Where we do not consider a matter to be ASB or are not able to take a case forward we will give a clear explanation of our decisions and signpost to external agencies where appropriate.

We will engage with residents to understand their views and expectations around ASB, and to shape how we manage reports of ASB and cases opened.

4 Prevention

Verda Living will put a strong focus on preventative measures tailored towards the needs of residents and their families. These might include:

- Assessment of potential support needs of residents at tenancy signup
- Explaining expectations around behaviour at tenancy signup
- Provision of support, or referral to support services, where potential need is identified
- Encouraging tolerance of lifestyle differences and respect for others' enjoyment of their home
- Encouraging prompt reporting of concerns about problematic behaviour
- Prompt and in-person responses to reports of ASB
- Multi-agency partnerships / partnerships with police and local authorities
- Use of action plans and acceptable behaviour agreements with perpetrators.

5 Intervention

Verda Living will take prompt, appropriate and decisive action to deal with ASB before it escalates. We will investigate cases to understand the issue and gather evidence where appropriate.

Our actions will focus on resolving the problem quickly and effectively, and as such we will seek to avoid use of formal action/use of powers. However, sometimes cases will not be effectively resolved this way or may escalate. We will use formal powers in such circumstances, again with a view to resolution.

We will act in line with key legislation related to ASB, and when intervening in ASB we will have regard to the full range of tools and legal powers available. Examples of non-legal and legal approaches are mediation, acceptable behaviour agreements, civil injunction, community protection notice, and possession orders.

In general, we will not resolve ASB by moving complainants or alleged perpetrators who are residents; we will deal with the problem and aim to sustain tenancies.

Evicting a Verda Living resident following enforcement action relating to ASB will be a last resort. If we use absolute grounds to seek possession where the legal tests are met, the resident will have the right to request a review of our decision to seek possession.

We will provide tailored care and support, with the aim of enabling residents to enjoy their home.

Each case will have an action plan which sets out clearly the steps being taken to resolve the ASB and the intended outcome or purpose of each step.

We will take account of underlying causes and vulnerabilities when dealing with residents accused of perpetrating ASB, to promote the best chances of resolution and to ensure that our actions are proportionate in line with the Equality Act.

6 Reporting ASB

Verda Living will ensure that all residents can easily report ASB, and will provide facilities so that ASB can be reported and managed online at any time of day.

ASB can also be reported by phone, email or letter or any other method stated in our customer service policy; with emergency out of hours incidents to be reported by telephone or online.

Contact details for all methods of reporting ASB will be provided to all customers at tenancy sign up and displayed clearly online.

We want people to feel confident in coming forward with information. Where complainants wish to remain anonymous, we will investigate the complaint, but our ability to take effective action may be limited.

7 Hate crimes

We take harassment / hate crimes in any form against any member of our community extremely seriously. Such conduct can have a very traumatic effect on the victim and a divisive effect on our communities. Racial and other harassment and hate crime may include, but is not limited to, violence, intimidation and/or abuse towards a person or group of people (or damage to their property) because of their race, colour, ethnic or national origin, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, age or religion. For recording purposes, we define hate crime as behaviour committed against a person or property which is motivated by hostility towards someone based on their race, colour, ethnic or national origin, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, age or religion.

We will look to involve our partners (e.g. local Police services) in these sorts of cases wherever appropriate.

We are committed to:

- Eliminating unlawful discrimination and harassment
- Promoting good relations between people of different backgrounds
- Maximising the reporting of incidents that are 'hate' motivated
- Supporting complainants and their families
- Taking action against perpetrators
- Monitoring the number of racial harassment and other hate crime incidents by type and geographical area
- Monitoring the actions taken in such cases by ourselves and partners, and satisfaction levels during and following case completions
- Reporting key monitoring data to board on a regular basis to give assurance that we are meeting our aims and objectives.

8 Domestic abuse

We want to achieve a community that does not tolerate domestic abuse and that affords effective support to all of its victims (whether adults or children), whilst holding perpetrators to account. Domestic abuse may fall within the definition of anti-social behaviour. Each case must be considered on its facts.

We are mindful of the need to ensure that survivors are supported in accessing remedies specifically designed to address domestic abuse (for example non-molestation orders) whilst other enforcement tools may be used by us and/or other agencies in appropriate cases (e.g. to provide protection to the victim and/or prevent impact on the wider community).

9 Partnership working

We will maintain good working relationships with support services that can provide support to complainants and perpetrators; and will seek to work in a coordinated manner to support positive outcomes for residents and neighbourhoods.

We will work in partnership with other agencies in relation to intervention, particularly around the use of legal powers, where agencies other than Verda Living must take the lead.

Verda Living will participate fully and constructively if requested by relevant bodies to attend an ASB Case Review, with a view to contributing to resolution of persistent ASB issues.

10 Support to victims, witnesses and perpetrators

Where Verda Living is responsible for dealing with an ASB issue, we will make sure that residents are kept informed about the status of their case.

If the matter sits outside Verda Living responsibility, we will signpost residents to other avenues to assist with the issue.

We will offer support to residents experiencing ASB to assist their wellbeing. We will also offer support to those perpetrating ASB to try to resolve the behaviour and sustain their tenancy.

Support to complainants may include:

- Regular contact, explanation of the scope of our interventions, clear action planning and accountability for its completion
- Prompt resolution of physical damage to property
- Additional security fitted to property (target hardening)
- Referral to specialist agencies that can provide support and assistance
- Consideration of rehousing options and assistance to progress these if suitable and required
- Accompanying to court and ensuring appropriate arrangements are made to facilitate attendance
- Explanations of the outcome of any court process and next steps

Support to perpetrators may include:

- Ongoing support and clear explanations of expectations and processes underway
- Referral to specialist support e.g. substance misuse, parenting, mental health, finances
- Referral to statutory agencies e.g. social services

We will liaise with external agencies over progress of the case to support joined up approaches, especially where decisions and steps taken will impact on their client and the nature of support required.

11 Confidentiality, data protection and information exchange

Whilst we respect privacy and confidentiality and are mindful of our legal obligations under the Data Protection Act 1988, (GDPR from May 2018), tackling anti-social behaviour requires robust information exchange between statutory and non-statutory agencies. We will agree specific protocols for information sharing with local authorities and police.

We will share information with other agencies where it is lawful to do so to help us detect and prevent ASB and to protect our communities. The type of information which might be shared includes, but is not limited to:

- The nature and location of incidents of anti-social behaviour
- Personal information as to complainants and witnesses
- Details of relevant visits to the property by agencies including the police
- Convictions, cautions, reprimands, bail conditions, progress of criminal cases.

Complainants may seek to provide information confidentially. This may be for a variety of reasons, for example because they are fearful of retaliation by the perpetrator if they are identified. Our policy is to seek permission before disclosing the identity of complainants and witnesses to perpetrators, their legal representatives, or other interested parties. Where anonymous evidence may by virtue of its content necessarily reveal the identity of the maker of the statement, we will discuss this with the maker of the statement. Notwithstanding any request for anonymity, information relating to complainants and perpetrators may however have to be shared with other agencies for lawful purposes, such as the purpose of preventing crime.

12 Rights and responsibilities

Landlord and residents' responsibilities relating to ASB are set out at Appendix 1.

We will confirm these with new residents at tenancy sign up and publish them on our website. We will take other periodic opportunities to restate residents' rights and responsibilities e.g. in newsletters, at community events etc.

Where a resident reports ASB or raises concerns with us, we will confirm rights and responsibilities with them.

13 Service standards

We will take prompt action to address resident concerns relating to ASB in accordance with our service standards.

ASB actions will be categorised and delivered within stated timescales as follows:

Category	Definition	Timescales
Category 1	Serious issues of ASB, where there is a serious risk or evidence of harm to individuals including:	Case opened within 1 working day of report

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abusive or threatening behaviour • Assault • Domestic abuse • Hate crime • Drug activity involving enforcement action e.g. a closure order • Cuckooing (taking over someone's home to facilitate crime or exploitation) 	<p>Action plan in place within 1 week of case opening</p> <p>Fortnightly contact established with resident within 28 days</p>
Category 2	<p>Other issues of ASB that cause irritation, upset, and impede enjoyment of property and neighbourhood stability including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noise nuisance • Neighbour disputes • Alcohol related disturbance • Animal nuisance • Criminal Damage • Drug use/dealing 	<p>Case opened within 3 working days of report</p> <p>Action plan in place within 2 weeks of case opening</p> <p>Fortnightly contact established with resident within 28 days</p>

We will keep accurate records on all reports of ASB and cases opened.

14 Customer feedback and complaints

Resident complaints about ASB services will be handled in line with our complaints policy.

Complaints relating to ASB will be monitored and used, individually and in aggregate, to refine and improve our services and performance.

15 Monitoring and compliance

We will monitor the delivery of our ASB service and report to operational staff, senior leadership team, the board, and our residents. Key performance indicators will be used to monitor and report performance, as well as complaints and compliments received. This allows us to be accountable for our service delivery, identify any trends which require intervention, and focus on delivery of the objectives stated above.

We will report against the Resident Satisfaction Measures prescribed by the Regulator of Social Housing, as well as indicators developed for internal use by staff in conjunction with residents.

Performance indicators that will be reported to the board and residents are detailed at Appendix 1. This is not an exhaustive list..

16 Annual Review

This policy is reviewed annually by the board of the Company.

Version	Date Approved	Date for Review	Updates
1.0	April 2025	April 2026	Creation of first version of policy

17 Appendix 1 – Landlord and resident responsibilities

Verda Living's ASB responsibilities are to:

- Show strong leadership, commitment and accountability on preventing and tackling ASB that reflects a shared understanding of responsibilities with other local agencies
- Ensure that residents are made aware of their responsibilities and rights in relation to ASB
- Place a strong focus on preventative measures tailored towards the needs of residents and their families
- Take prompt, appropriate and decisive action to deal with ASB before it escalates
- Work in partnership with other agencies to prevent and tackle ASB in the neighbourhoods where we own homes
- Ensure all residents can easily report ASB
- Focus on resolving ASB having regard to the full range of tools and legal powers available
- Ensure residents are kept informed about the status of their case where responsibility rests with Verda Living and are appropriately signposted where it does not
- Provide support to victims and witnesses
- Publish a policy on how we work with relevant partners to prevent and tackle ASB in areas where we own homes
- Participate constructively in an ASB Case Review when a person asks the relevant local bodies for one and the local threshold is met.

Residents of rented homes are responsible for:

- Ensuring their behaviour does not cause, and is not likely to cause, nuisance, annoyance, harassment, alarm or distress to others
- Ensuring the behaviour of their household members, family, friends and visitors does not cause, and is not likely to cause, nuisance, annoyance, harassment, alarm or distress to others
- Showing tolerance of other residents' day to day living and lifestyle differences where these occur
- Addressing minor disagreements and problems themselves, showing respect to others
- Reporting incidents of ASB promptly.

18 Appendix 2 - Performance Monitoring

We will monitor and report on the following:

Management information

Anti-social behaviour cases relative to the size of the landlord

- Number of cases opened for each 1,000 homes owned
- Number of cases that involve hate incidents

Responses to reports of ASB

- Number in timescale, total number reported, % in timescale

Cases opened within target time following initial report

- Cat 1 - Number in timescale, total number reported, % in timescale
- Cat 2 - Number in timescale, total number reported, % in timescale

Action plans completed within target time following initial report

- Number in timescale, total number due, % in timescale

Regular contact with complainants

- Number contacted with agreed frequency, total number of complainants, % contacted

Resolution of cases

- Number closed, total number of cases, % resolved

All performance will be reported against target, with a year to date figure in each reporting cycle and a year end figure provided annually.

Customer satisfaction

- % of residents who say they are satisfied with Verda Living's approach to handling anti-social behaviour
- % of residents who say it was easy to make a report of ASB
Number saying easy, total number of respondents, total number of report
- % of residents who say they are satisfied with the frequency of contact
- Number saying satisfied, total number of respondents, total number of cases.