



Helping you with anti-social behaviour



Inside

- What is anti-social behaviour?
- What is harassment?
- What is racial harassment?
- Other forms of anti-social behaviour
- What should I do if I am the victim of anti-social behaviour?
- Anti-social behaviour and the law

Helping you with anti-social behaviour

MST believes that everyone has the right to live the way they wish, as long as they do not spoil the quality of life for others.

This means being tolerant, accepting and respecting the needs and choices of others.

MST works within Metropolitan Housing Partnership's (MHP) anti-social behaviour policy. If your landlord is Metropolitan Housing Trust London (MHT) or Spirita, we will help you deal with these issues.

If you have a different landlord, we will help you understand and take action under your landlord's policy on anti-social behaviour.

What is anti-social behaviour?

Anti-social behaviour includes behaviour by residents, members of their household or visitors that cause annoyance, nuisance or disturbance to anyone else in the area. This also applies to people who have pets like cats, dogs and birds.

Anti-social behaviour can include harassment, racial harassment and domestic abuse.

Anti-social behaviour may:

- cause alarm or distress to someone
- cause a fear of violence
- interfere with someone's peace or comfort.

What is harassment?

Anyone can be harassed, but people are often harassed because of their race, ethnic origin, gender, sexuality, disability, age or religion.

Harassment can take many forms. This includes threatening or aggressive behaviour, both verbal and physical, and can involve attacks on property as well as people.

Someone can feel harassed because of your actions, whether you meant to harass them (deliberate harassment) or

not (accidental or unintentional harassment). What is important is how your actions make the person feel. If they feel harassed, they may be able to make a complaint against you. It is against the law and a criminal offence to harass someone.

What is racial harassment?

A racist incident is an incident that is believed to be racist by the 'victim' or any other person.

What is domestic abuse?

Domestic abuse can take many forms. It can include threatening behaviour in the home, violence, psychological, sexual, financial or emotional abuse. It is often a combination of these. It can involve family members as well as partners.

What other forms of anti-social behaviour are there?

Other forms include:

- noise
- damage to property
- environmental anti-social behaviour (for example, graffiti)
- The sale and use of illegal drugs
- misusing alcohol

- the behaviour or care of pets and animals
- disputes with neighbours.

What should I do if I am the victim of harassment or anti-social behaviour?

If you feel you are a victim of harassment or anti-social behaviour, you should report this to your housing officer as soon as possible. You should also talk to your support worker about it. Your support worker can help make sure that your housing officer is informed and will support you while action is taken.

What will you do if I am experiencing harassment or anti-social behaviour?

We take all reports of anti-social behaviour seriously. We want to make sure that everyone who uses our services are protected in their right to enjoy their home peacefully.

If you are a victim of anti-social behaviour, we will do the following.

- Listen to difficulties you are having and give you advice on how to deal with them. This includes offering guidance on how to deal with disputes with your neighbours.
- Work with your housing officer to support you to gather evidence of ongoing harassment or anti-social behaviour.
- Make sure that you are given support. With your housing officer, we will identify what other measures can be put in place to protect your safety. If you are at risk of violence this may include moving you somewhere else until the person harassing you has been moved away, or working with your housing officer to add more security to your home.
- Work with your landlord to try and make sure that damage to your home is repaired quickly and is of a good standard.
- Work with other organisations you are receiving support from to make sure that you are getting the help that you need.
- Help you to access new sources of support and follow-up support if necessary (for example, counselling services).

What are my responsibilities to stop harassment and anti-social behaviour happening?

Where you live, you have a responsibility not to harass anyone.

This includes residents, visitors, neighbours, staff or contractors. You also have a responsibility not to behave in such a way as to cause nuisance to your neighbours.

Visitors and guests

You are responsible for your visitors and pets. If you invite visitors into the building, you share responsibility for their behaviour. If they break our rules, we will take action against them and you. This could include you being evicted from the service.

For floating support services, if a visitor or guest is being anti-social and you are not able or not willing to prevent this, we may end your support.

If you have a visitor or guest who is causing you a problem, please tell your support worker.

What will you do if I have been accused of harassment or anti-social behaviour?

If you have been accused of being

involved in acts of harassment or anti-social behaviour, we will:

- Talk to you about your behaviour and its effect on other people.
- Work with your Housing Officer to help you talk to your neighbours and sort out disputes.
- Let you know what the likely outcomes of this behaviour will be for you if you continue.
- Review your Support Plan with you and include measures for reducing the likelihood of this behaviour. For example, you may need to reduce how much you drink or review the medication you take.
- Help you to access support services. For example, support with anger management, counselling and medical advice.
- Work with your housing officer, where appropriate, and keep them informed about the action you are taking to change your behaviour.

What happens to my housing and support if I have been accused of anti-social behaviour or harassment?

We will do everything we can to make sure that you can stay in your home and

continue to receive our services. If your landlord is Metropolitan Housing Trust London (MHT), Spiritra or another social landlord, your landlord should work with you and your support worker to ensure that everything is done to support you.

You may be asked by your landlord to sign an 'Acceptable Behaviour Contract' (ABC). This is a contract between you and your landlord which sets out how you intend to work (with your support contract) to change your behaviour. It could be a condition of retaining your tenancy. The rights of others also need to be protected. If anti-social behaviour continues, you will be going against the 'Acceptable Behaviour Contract' (ABC). In this case, your landlord will take action and we cannot intervene or stop this from happening.

Your tenancy or licence agreement will also say that if you or your visitors are found to be harassing people or causing a nuisance, your landlord could evict you and prosecute you.

Anti-social behaviour and the law

If you are involved in anti-social behaviour, legal action can be taken against you. Your landlord can take legal action if they have solid proof of anti-social behaviour or harassment. The action they may take includes the following:

1. Injunctions

- Injunctions can order people to stop doing something such as anti-social behaviour.
- Your landlord can apply to a court for an injunction. They can also be taken out by an individual through private legal action. Your housing officer should be able to give you advice on how to do this. The person taking out the injunction can apply for Legal Aid.
- Injunctions can be taken out quickly, sometimes within 24 hours in serious cases, or four to five weeks in less serious ones.
- The victim will have to be named in court evidence but won't necessarily have to go to court.
- If an injunction is broken, the punishment can include a fine or going to prison.

2. Court Possession Orders

- A court possession order gives the property back to your landlord.

- The court, not your landlord, will decide whether to grant a court possession order.
- Possession orders usually need more detailed evidence than an injunction.
- The victim will have to be named in court but may not have to go to court.
- The process is longer than for an injunction.
- The order can be stopped on condition that there is no further anti-social behaviour.

3. Anti-social behaviour order

- The anti-social behaviour order is necessary to protect people from further anti-social behaviour. It forbids the person who is the subject of the order from further anti-social behaviour.
- The police or local authority can apply for an 'anti-social behaviour order' from the magistrates' court.
- This is a court order that can be granted against anyone aged 10 or over who has acted in an anti-social way.
- If the person who has been given the order does not follow the conditions of the order, they could go to prison.

Both your support worker and housing officer will share information with the police and local authorities under joint procedures.