

report any act of harassment, including graffiti, that you see to us or to the Police. Anything you report to us will be treated in confidence.

#### **What if I'm being harassed or abused by Innisfree staff?**

We will take strong action against any member of our staff or contractors who harass you or your household.

- Report any incident involving our staff immediately to the Head of Housing or Chief Executive.
- Report any incident involving a contractor immediately to a housing officer or to the Head of Housing.

#### **Assaults on staff**

We will take strong action if you, members of your household or visitors - assault, abuse, or harass our staff or our contractors. This can involve commencing legal action to end your tenancy.

## **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

*Get legal advice urgently if your partner has been violent, or you, or a household member, have had to leave home because of violence.*

You can speak to your Housing Officer or to a housing officer of the same sex, if you prefer, in confidence, about our policy on domestic violence. A full copy of our Domestic Violence Policy is available on request.

#### **What options are open to me?**

This will depend on whether you are married, unmarried, a joint tenant, a sole tenant or simply living with the tenant, and whether you have children. Some of the options are:

#### **Injunctions**

You could apply for an injunction to prevent any further violence or contact, or to exclude someone from the premises or from the area. You may be entitled to Legal Aid to cover the cost.

#### **Police**

It can be useful to contact the Police to make sure an incident is recorded. You do not have to press criminal charges. Some Police Stations now have specialist Domestic Violence Units.

#### **Women's Aid Refuges**

Refuges can give temporary accommodation and support to women escaping violence.

#### **Local Council**

If you feel you cannot stay where you are because of violence – contact your local Council. It has a duty to help anyone who is homeless or threatened with homelessness.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

For details of refuges and other advice about nuisance or harassment contact your Housing Officer, local Citizens' Advice Bureau, a solicitor or a Law Centre.

A full copy of our Anti Harassment and Anti Social Behaviour Policies are available from your Housing Officer.



**Innisfree**  
Housing Association

A charitable Housing Association



**In business for neighbourhoods**

# **ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR, HARASSMENT & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

# 8



**This leaflet covers your responsibilities and rights, and action that Innisfree can take regarding various forms of anti-social behaviour.**

## **NUISANCE**

Anti Social Behaviour can take many forms. These may include nuisance caused by noise, music, animals; unsightly or unhygienic dumping of rubbish; business use that causes disturbance; inappropriate use of communal areas. Some of these matters are covered in our leaflet 'Living in your home'. Other matters that are common or can cause serious distress are included here.

#### **Noise Nuisance**

Noise is by far the most common problem between neighbours. Can you hear your neighbours? If so, they can probably hear you. So be considerate:

- Avoid doing loud work (such as vacuuming) at night;
- Inform your neighbours if you are having a party;
- Don't play your TV, radio, hi-fi or musical instruments too loudly;
- Avoid banging doors - they sound louder than you may think.

If you suffer from noise nuisance:

- Speak to the people causing the problem; they may not be aware they are disturbing you.
- This applies equally with regard to noisy childrens' games or babies crying. (If you suspect a problem of child abuse, you should contact social services or speak to your Housing Officer)
- Report late night noisy parties to the police or your council's 24 hour noise abatement service.

If you have tried to sort things out yourself but the nuisance continues, you can:

- Contact the Environmental Health Department or the police. You can use these services whether the people causing the problems are Innisfree tenants or not.
- Take action yourself by complaining to a magistrates’ court (you can get advice first from a Law Centre or Citizens Advice Bureau).
- Alternatively, if there is a regular or continuing problem with an Innisfree tenant, speak to your Housing Officer. He or she will try his or her best to help you resolve the problem between yourselves.

### **Vandalism and graffiti**

These cost everyone time and money as well as causing inconvenience and offence. Tell your Housing Officer about any vandalism or graffiti you see. If we can identify them, we will charge vandals with the cost of repairs to Innisfree property and may take legal action.

## **WHAT CAN INNISFREE DO ABOUT ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR?**

If another tenant, someone in their household or a visitor is causing anti social behaviour, we can try to help you deal with it. You should make a note of the time, the place and the people involved in any incident (if known). We will investigate complaints and try to help those involved to reach an amicable solution.

Action we can take includes:

### **Mediation**

In the case of disagreement between neighbours we will always encourage both sides, with a bit of ‘give and take’, to reach a solution. Some Local Authorities have independent mediation services to help with this type of problem. We may refer residents to these services.

### **Involving other agencies**

Anti Social Behaviour problems sometimes involve unruly or neglected children; bored or disruptive young people, violent domestic relationships, mental health and alcohol problems or cultural misunderstandings. Innisfree will use its links with headteachers, youth workers, social services, mental health services, the Police, the probation service, voluntary agencies etc. to try to find appropriate solutions.

### **Legal action**

We may take legal action where:

- A serious breach of tenancy is involved;
- Actions cause alarm, distress, nuisance or annoyance to a person, regardless of whether the action is deliberate or illegal;
- The behaviour amounts to harassment.

Our action could involve:

- Working with the police and the problem tenant or family member to sign an ‘Acceptable Behaviour Contract’;
- Getting, or helping a resident to get, an injunction or a court order (for example an Anti-social Behaviour Order, a Curfew Order etc.) to stop the problem;
- Applying for a ‘power of arrest’ to be attached to one of these orders;
- Taking possession proceedings against the offender;
- Applying to court to change the offender’s tenancy to a type that is easier for IHA to end, if it should become necessary.

We will need substantial evidence of nuisance and people providing written evidence may also need to appear in Court.

## **HARASSMENT**

Innisfree Housing Association will not tolerate harassment of our residents, staff or anyone working for us (e.g. contractors). If we can identify the person/people we will take action against them. All tenants are responsible for their own behaviour and that of members of their household and of their visitors.

### **What is “harassment”?**

Harassment is a deliberate act that causes harm or distress to a person or group because of who they are. It may include threatening or intimidating them, for example because of their race, colour, ethnic origin, nationality, religion, sex, age, disability, because they are lesbian or gay, or for another similar reason.

It can take many forms including:

- discriminatory, abusive or insulting behaviour or language,
- abusive graffiti,

- using, or threatening violence,
- damage to property,
- unwanted or unwelcome sexual or racist comments.

## ***We must all act to stop harassment***

### **What will Innisfree do if I report harassment?**

We take harassment very seriously and will thoroughly investigate all reports. Our aim is to support you and take action against the people responsible.

We will:

- Acknowledge your complaint the same working day
- Interview you within 72 hours.
- Agree a course of action with you.
- Arrange support for you. This can include contacting victim support organisations and giving you phone numbers to call if you need help in an emergency.
- Photograph any damage to your home and carry out repairs, including removing graffiti, within 24 hours.
- Take out an injunction to stop the offender going near you or your home, if we can.
- Try to find you a permanent or a temporary move, if you cannot stay safely in your home.
- Monitor all cases of harassment.

### **What can I do?**

- Report any case of harassment to your Housing Officer.
- Keep a note of any incidents including details of time, place, what happened, who was involved and the names of any witnesses. If the Police were called, keep a note of the name or number of any Police Officer involved.
- If you can, take a photograph of, or keep anything that could be used in evidence – for example photograph graffiti or a broken window, keep sticks or stones that were thrown.

***Ask your Housing Officer for a diary form to help you collect your evidence.***

### **What we can all do**

People who harass aim to cause fear and distress. We must all act to stop them. Please