

INNISFREE HOUSING ASSOCIATION
ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR POLICY
SUMMARY

- Innisfree will not tolerate any form of anti social behaviour.
- Anti Social Behaviour is any behaviour likely to cause alarm, harassment or distress. It can include: excessive noise disturbance; abusive behaviour; violence, threats & intimidation; keeping of dangerous pets, drug dealing, unprovoked assault, harassment of neighbours, racial and sexual harassment or other hate crimes, frequent serious disturbances, vandalism damage to property and unacceptable behaviour of children or visitors
- We have developed a policy and procedure which incorporates the legislation contained within the anti Social Behaviour Act 2003 and best practice contained within the Government's Respect Standard for Housing Management . We are committed to working towards meeting the requirements of this standard.
- Innisfree's Conditions of Tenancy prohibit anti social behaviour so perpetrators who are in breach of their tenancy and can face possession proceedings, demotion of tenancy and/or injunctions.
- Innisfree will encourage tenants who have suffered anti social behaviour to report such incidents and has set timescales and performance standards for responses to these reports. .
- Our approach will be victim centred and tenants will be supported through their Housing Officer. Emergency repairs will be carried out within 24 hours, offensive graffiti removed within 48 hours and security improvements will be offered.
- Our policy recognises the needs of our vulnerable tenants who may have been subjected to or have been involved in anti social behaviour.
- We will work together with the Police, Local Authorities and other agencies to tackle anti social behaviour locally.
- We will use a combined approach of prevention and enforcement when dealing with ASB.
- We will encourage the use of mediation where possible.
- We will publish our policy and provide residents with clear information on how to report ASB, how we will deal with ASB and encourage tenants to give us feedback on the effectiveness of the procedure.
- We will encourage tenants to give their views on the policy & procedure.
- Each case will be monitored monthly and details of all cases will be kept on a database and reported quarterly to the Housing Services Committee.
- The Anti Social Behaviour Policy will form part of the induction process for new staff.
 - Housing officers will be provided with training on tackling anti social

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ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR POLICY
Approved July 2007

1. Policy Statement

1.1 Housing Associations (HAs) have responsibilities for dealing with Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) and the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 s218A placed obligations on Associations to publish policies and procedures for dealing with ASB. In 2006, the Respect Standard for Housing Management was published outlining the key components to responding effectively to ASB and help create a culture of respect. We are committed to working towards meeting the Respect Standard and this is reflected in our revised policy and procedure.

1.2 In dealing with ASB, Innisfree will act within the provisions of the Disability Discriminations Act 1995 and Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. We have also adopted the requirements of the Housing Corporation Circular 08/04 in relation to the Regulatory Code and ASB. We will continue to work in partnership with local authorities to help deliver their Sustainable Community Strategies and Local Area Agreements.

1.3 This Policy should be looked at in conjunction with our policy on Anti Harassment as they are closely linked and overlap in many areas. However, our Harassment Policy has very specific and important guidelines on tackling racial harassment and we did not want this policy to be “watered down” by merging it with our ASB Policy. Nevertheless, although the policies are separate the procedure for tackling them is more or less the same in terms of timescales and action. The legal remedies (appendix A) are also applicable to both policies.

2. Introduction

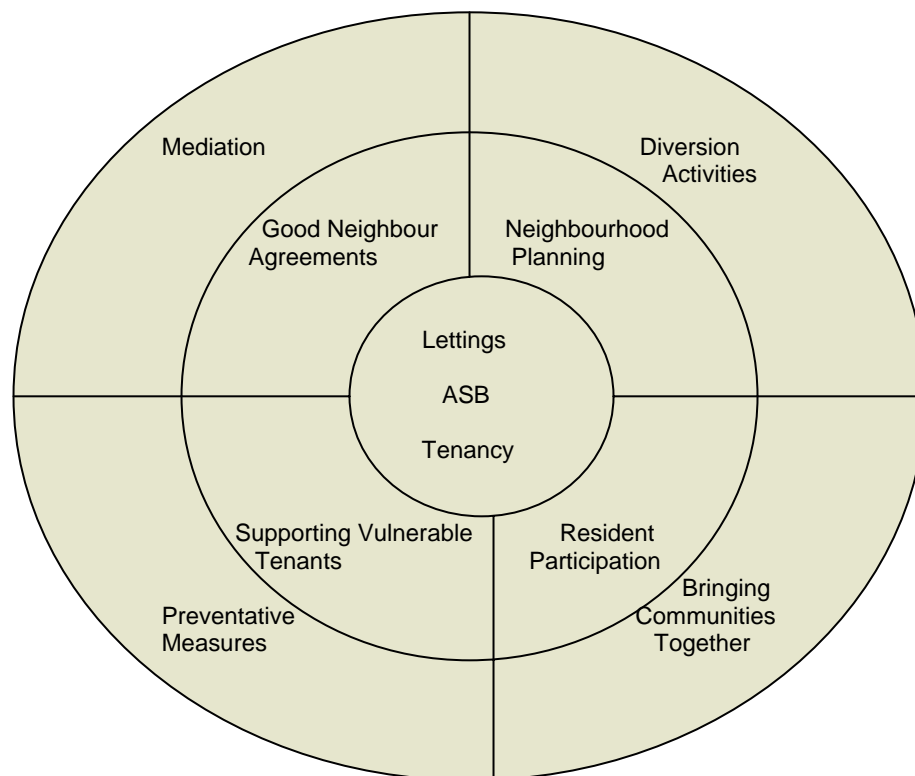
2.1 Respect for each other and for the area in which we live is at the heart of strong and prosperous communities. We are committed to upholding the right of residents to enjoy their home in peace and strive to provide as safe an environment as possible and will do so by using a combined strategy of prevention and enforcement in dealing with ASB. This will include attempting to tackle the causes and consequences of ASB, seeking a multi-agency approach for dealing with it and having a victim centered focus.

2.2 We will do whatever is possible to promote community cohesion and the importance of being a good neighbour but when a person’s behaviour unreasonably interferes with a tenant’s right to quiet enjoyment of his/her home or adversely affects the quality of life of the local community, we will invoke our policy and procedure. We recognise the importance of making every effort to tackle ASB, resolving problems quickly and avoiding legal action if at all possible.

However, we accept the very real fact that legal action is sometimes the only effective method for resolving problems.

3. Strategic Approach

3.1 In 2006, Lemos + Crane researchers considered the myriad of activities carried out by Associations in community development and to deal with ASB, drew together best practice and produced a coherent model of working. Their 'layered approach' below combining enforcement and prevention is a best practice model we will adopt and aim to work towards.



3.2 At the core of the model are the rights and responsibilities contractually set out in tenancy agreements between residents and Innisfree. Where these contractual agreements are breached by ASB, we will act to stop the ASB. However, we also recognise the link between community cohesion and tackling ASB. Therefore, as well as enforcing tenancy conditions, where possible and where we have time and resources, we will also use prevention and diversion measures to lessen the conditions under which ASB might occur.

3.3 It highlights the importance of close joint working between Associations and Community Groups to improve the management of local neighbourhoods, better induction of new tenants and promotion of good neighbour agreements. There are also clear and important links with our Tenant Involvement activities and Supported Housing Services in terms of prevention.

4. Case Management Approach

4.1 In case management of ASB, we take a complainant/witness centred approach. All reports are taken seriously, investigated thoroughly and those affected are kept updated on progress. When ASB occurs, we intervene early and maintain tenancies where possible, and do all we can to help vulnerable tenants access support. Where enforcement action is necessary, the action taken will be:

- Prompt
- Firm
- Sensitive
- Proportionate

ASB is a community problem, and in most instances we will need the involvement of residents and to work in partnership with other local agencies in finding a solution.

5. The Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003

The introduction of new legislation in 2003 gave new powers to Housing Associations to tackle Anti Social Behaviour. The Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003 was introduced because the Government was dissatisfied with the existing measures available for tackling anti social behaviour. In particular, they were unhappy with the lack of a co-ordinated approach between the Police, Local Authorities and Housing Associations, growing public concern about the level of unaddressed anti social behaviour, too many restrictions on injunctions that were available and insufficient Police powers to deal with drug related problems. Finally, they were not satisfied with “possession action” solely as a remedy as this generally only moved problems elsewhere. The key legislation is detailed on the attached “legal remedies” paper marked “Appendix A”.

6.The Respect Standard for Housing Management.

6.1 The Respect Standard for Housing Management is a voluntary standard for Associations to sign up to. It outlines the core components essential to delivering an effective response to anti-social behaviour and building stronger communities, such as accountability, leadership, giving greater resident empowerment, and supporting community efforts at tackling anti-social behaviour.

6.2 The Standard is built around six core commitments with a combined 68 “building blocks” Associations are expected to meet.

- **Accountability, leadership, and commitment**

Landlords need to make a visible commitment to the community so that everyone is clear they take issues of anti-social behaviour and Respect seriously and will deliver what they say they will.

- **Empowering and reassuring residents**

Landlords and the community need to work as one through involving residents and giving them input into decision making. Engagement and effective communications act to reassure and empower communities.

- **Prevention and early intervention**

Landlords can play a key role in preventing anti-social behaviour from occurring. Where it does occur if problems are addressed quickly this often gets the best results.

- **Tailored services for residents and provision of support for victims and witnesses**

Success rests on people being prepared to report and then give support to agencies in taking action. Every case and every person deserves a robust, tailored and sensitive response.

- **Protecting communities through swift enforcement**

Government has provided landlords with the tools they need to tackle a whole range of anti-social behaviour. Landlords need to understand how tools work and be prepared to use them quickly to protect communities

- **Support to tackle the causes of anti-social behaviour**

Provision of support can put an end to unacceptable behaviour by tackling underlying causes. This leads to sustainable outcomes and gets people's lives back on track.

The Government will be encouraging residents to get engaged and hold their landlord to account. The Audit Commission, who carry out inspections of landlords, are also looking to strengthen their guidelines to landlords on what they expect a good landlord to be achieving in tackling anti-social behaviour. This will reflect the content of the Standard.

6.3 Innisfree has signed a "commitment" to working towards meeting the 6 Core Objectives and we will be undertaking a "Gap Analysis" exercise to assess how well we meet them.

5.0 Social Landlords Crime and Nuisance Group

This group was established in 1995 and now has 270 members representing 3 million tenancies. The group was set up to ensure that a Landlord's perspective was not overlooked in the various initiatives that have been introduced to tackle Anti Social Behaviour.

7.1 The main achievements to date have been to lobby parliament, consult and represent social landlords, bring practitioners together, preparing best practice guidance for Landlords and providing training and networking opportunities.

7.2 We hope to become more involved with this group in time as it may prove to be a supportive and useful resource.

8. iN Business for Neighbourhoods

In September 2003, The National Housing Federation launched "iN Business for Neighbourhoods". Innisfree was an "early adopter" and was asked to consider carefully what we were doing to fulfil the three commitments: to neighbourhoods, to customers and to excellence.

8.1 The aim was to not only improve the image of the Housing Association sector but to promote good practice too. The NHF has been working hard to achieve greater recognition of the best practice of neighbourhood contributors in the sector and as a result improve partnerships. Key areas that have been examined are: neighbourhood services, tenant and resident involvement and ways of tackling anti social behaviour. The programme has also focused on continuous improvement in services to tenants and on greater community development.

8.2 The Association is fully committed to the principles of iN Business and will we continue to work closely with our tenants and with our partners in our local neighbourhoods to ensure that our own commitment to the Irish Community remains at the top of our agenda. We will do this unrelentingly in the context of iN Business for Neighbourhoods.

9. Objectives

9.1 In responding to ASB, our objectives are:

- To put preventative measures in place as soon as possible.
- To assess all the nuisance problems reported and take them seriously.
- Where possible, support residents so that they can deal with minor neighbour disputes themselves.
- Where we have the power & resources to do so, take firm but proportionate action against perpetrators.
- Support complainants and keep them updated on progress to resolution and beyond.

- Work in partnership with other agencies involved, and keep them updated.
- Have regard for any communication and vulnerability issues involved.

10. Definition

10.1 Anti-social behaviour is defined in the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 as: 'behaviour likely to cause **alarm, harassment or distress**.

10.2 The Housing Act definition of Anti-social behaviour is:

“Engaging or threatening to engage in conduct causing or likely to cause a nuisance or annoyance to a person residing, visiting or otherwise engaging in lawful activity in the locality”.

11. Types of Anti Social Behaviour

To help us prioritise and respond appropriately to reports of ASB, the following categories of ASB are adopted:

Category	Example
Category A (Urgent)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threat to life • Actual violence • Serious threat of violence (including domestic violence) • Serious harassment (including racial harassment) • Offensive graffiti
Category B (Serious)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selling drugs • Prostitution • Vandalism and damage to property • Aggressive or abusive behaviour (no serious threat of violence) • Young People congregating in large groups and causing a nuisance
Category C (Minor)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unreasonable noise - loud music, shouting, banging doors, car horns, late night use of domestic appliances • Pets not under control • Neighbour disputes • Dumped rubbish • Abandoned cars
Non ASB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Normal level of noise • Children playing and not causing a nuisance

N.B. The above examples are provided as guidance only. Circumstances and the severity of incidents may mean that incidents are categorised differently. For example, persistent and severe noise disturbance and a dangerous pet may come under category

B. Therefore, officers will need to exercise reasonable judgement when categorising incidents and consult their managers if unsure.

12. Performance Standards & Monitoring

Action	When By	Who
Compile incident report and pass onto Housing Officer (HO)	Immediately	Housing Officer or Duty Officer receiving initial report of ASB
Interview with complainant – category A	Immediately or within 1 working day of receipt of incident report	HO
Interview with complainant – category B and C	Within 5 working days of receipt of incident report	HO
Contact complainant to monitor situation and update on status of case	Monthly (more frequent in severe cases) or as agreed with complainant	HO
Agreed action plan	Within 1 working day of receipt of action report from HO	Proposed by HO Authorised by Housing Director (HD) or Supported Housing Manager (SHM)
Further Action – continuous monitoring	If the case requires further action, a minimum of monthly monitoring of the case management (more frequent if there are security issues or threat of violence).	HO/HD
Closure of case	If no further action by Innisfree, within 5 working days of agreeing this with the Housing Director. Notify tenant of action taken in writing.	Authorised by HD (For isolated low level nuisance cases, the HO can close the case) HO
Post Closure- monitoring and support	Category B and C cases (except for minor nuisance cases) –contact complainant 1 month after closure (or as agreed). Category A cases – contact complainant monthly for 3 months after closure (or as agreed).	HO

12.1 Performance Indicators

Key performance information is reported quarterly to the Housing Services Committee. The information is used to identify ongoing and new cases, demonstrate the amount of time officers are dedicating to this area of work, to assess any trends and to inform action plans for improving performance.

ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR	
Performance Indicators:	Number
Number of cases brought forward from last quarter	
Number of new cases	
Number of cases closed	
% of responses within target time (against target)	
Cases by type & Category	
% of complainants satisfied (overall and by ethnicity) with how ASB reported was managed by Innisfree	
Number of cases 6 months or more	
No of NOSP's served for ASB	
No of cases referred to court	
No of evictions for ASB	
No of ABC contracts signed:	

12.2 ASB Database

Innisfree maintains an ASB database. The information collected allows for the following analysis:

- Identifying linked incidents and patterns of behaviour
- Identify geographical areas with high levels of ASB
- Produce summary reporting for PIs and submission to Committee

12.3 External Performance Reporting

Housing Corporation

ASB Performance information is reported to the Housing Corporation in the annual Regulatory Statistical Return (RSR).

Local Authorities

We provide annual performance information on ASB to various Boroughs.

13. Continuous Improvement

13.1 Innisfree is committed to achieving high standards and continuous improvement in service provision. We will learn from our case work, feedback from tenants and will employ a range of prevention and diversion measures. We aim to maintain a peaceful and secure environment for our residents by:

- a) Taking positive steps to discourage nuisance and anti-social behaviour at a very early stage in initial interviews with applicants, at sign up stage and during a 3 week follow up visit specifically to discuss tenancy conditions,

tenant obligations and policies with new tenants. We will also encourage the signing of "Good Neighbour Agreements" and promote what it means to be a good neighbour.

- b) publicising our policy in tenancy agreements, newsletters, handbooks, on our website and during meetings with tenants.
- c) Encouraging neighbours to resolve any dispute directly and in a positive manner.
- d) Responding to complaints quickly and in an efficient, sensitive and consistent manner, meeting publicised timescales and targets;
- e) Dealing with all complaints seriously and confidentially;
- f) Ensuring that sufficient support and advice is provided to those suffering nuisance including rehousing a tenant if there is a serious threat of violence; supporting and guiding tenants who are to give evidence at court;
- g) Ensuring that properties are secure, graffiti is removed and repairs undertaken within published timescales;
- h) Consulting and working in partnership with residents and other agencies including local authorities, social services, the Police, environmental health, mediation services;
- i) Encouraging sustainable communities and community cohesion at our schemes.
- j) Using mediation where parties are agreeable;
- k) Consider legal action where:
 - . *behaviour is causing serious nuisance or annoyance to an individual and/or group of residents;*
 - . *there has been a serious breach of tenancy agreement;*
 - . *damage is being caused to Innisfree property;*
 - . *there is a likelihood of violence/personal injury.*
- l) Assisting tenants with pursuing their own action (legal or other) to resolve a nuisance problem;
- m) Adopting best practice and complying with legislation;
- n) Regularly updating policies and procedures;
- o) Providing training for staff;
- p) Providing translations/interpreters where required;
- q) Monitoring and review cases every month and reporting cases to Housing Services Committee quarterly;
- r) Allocating resources to tackle potential and actual problems with anti social behaviour
- s) Undertaking all action within Innisfree's Policy on Equalities and Diversity.

13.2 Tenant Involvement, views and feedback

We will implement changes to our procedures where we receive constructive feedback from tenants through:

- Satisfaction Surveys
- ASB Feedback forms
- Meetings and Focus Groups

- **Complaints**

We will actively involve tenants when reviewing our approach to ASB and seek their views on any changes to policy .

13.3 Staffing

Officers who deal with ASB are provided with training on legislation and best practice. All new staff are trained as part of their induction.

Staff dealing with ASB may face many stressful situations so senior management will offer advice, training and support where appropriate to ensure their safety and well being.

We will not tolerate abuse of staff, contractors or representatives and firm action will be taken against perpetrators when this occurs-in line with our policies on ASB and abuse from tenants. Refraining from harassment of our staff is a condition in our tenancy agreements.

14. Prevention and Diversion measures

14.1 Good Neighbour Agreements & Neighbourhood Planning

Two fundamental strategies recently adopted by Innisfree to drive improvements, involve tenants, prevent ASB and promote community cohesion are Neighbourhood Planning and Good Neighbour Agreements.

Good Neighbour Agreements:

We will now promote such agreements to all new tenants and existing tenants where appropriate. Tenants are asked to sign up to a set of acceptable behaviour standards, to respect their neighbours and their local environment. This includes upholding standards of behaviour in public places and making it clear that no-go areas would not be tolerated.

Neighbourhood Plans

This is a new area for Innisfree but we intend to adopt a Neighbourhood Planning approach to housing and estate management in partnership with other Associations. Partner agencies are consulted and tenants involved to ensure we understand their concerns and involve them in dealing with solutions. Action Plans are tailored to cover the full range of local concerns. In drawing up plans we will have regard for the profile of local residents, age, ethnicity and disability and any history of ASB in the local area. This will all be considered when decisions are made on how resources are allocated.

14.2 Lettings Plans

Where appropriate, we will promote the use of a local lettings plan with the Local Authority to develop and maintain sustainable communities. The Plan will have regard for issues such as child density, support needs and the local environment.

14.3 Involving Local Communities

We recognise the importance of talking to local residents in the wider community at an early stage in relation to new developments. This approach is crucial and will help with community development and cohesion and will enable any concerns to be addressed at an early stage and prior to new tenants moving in.

14.4 Friends of Innisfree Projects

Subject to funding available in our “Friends Fund” we will actively seek to develop community activities including diversionary projects and training opportunities to channel younger people and potentially disruptive tenants into more productive activities. This includes arranging and funding summer activities for children, tenant fun days, involvement in sporting events, youth initiatives, carrying out improvements to schemes, participating in Community events organised by partner Associations.

14.5 Tenant Involvement related activities

We recognise that we need to do more to involve our younger tenants who may be at risk of feeling alienated or excluded. Finding ways to constructively involve our tenants will also contribute to minimising ASB at certain schemes and improving neighbour relations.

14.6 Identifying support needs early

Our floating support services provide tenancy support to specific tenants in Local Authorities where we are contracted to do so. Through this service we are able to provide more intensive support to vulnerable tenants with support needs to help them maintain their tenancies.

14.7 Post tenancy assessments

All new tenants will receive a visit after 3 weeks of moving in so the housing officer can assess how they are settling in, identify any potential problems and discuss the tenancy conditions and policies in more detail with them.

14.8 Refusals to transfer

If a tenant has caused ASB all requests to transfer to another property will be refused until a clear period of 6 months has passed without any further ASB being caused.

14.9 Starter Tenancies – We are introducing the use of starter tenancies for tenants new to social housing. Starter Tenancies are only converted to assured tenancies if the tenant does not breach their tenancy conditions. If the tenant does engage in ASB and will not address their behaviour, the Starter Tenancy can be extended and allows for decisive enforcement action by serving a S21 notice requiring possession.

14.10 Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABCs)

We have used ABC contracts in a small number of cases but we intend to use them on a more frequent basis. ABCs are informal contracts, though not without legal significance. Because the ABC is a voluntary contract, it has greater flexibility and can be drawn up without the need to attend court.

Under the ABC, the person agrees not to be involved with certain specified anti-social acts. The ABC spells out the behaviour that the person has agreed to stop.

ABCs aim to ensure that people who behave anti-socially take responsibility for their actions and improve their behaviour.

The terms of the ABC are developed and agreed with the perpetrator in an interview. The contract normally lasts for six months. It is not legally binding but, if breached, can be used as evidence if enforcement action needs to be taken through the courts.

15. What tenants can do to help tackle ASB

15.1 We cannot tackle ASB alone. There are a number of things that we will expect our tenants to do to help us. These are:

- a) Being aware of the mixed society we live in and show tolerance to other people who may have a different background or lifestyle, be of a different race, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, gender, age, cultural or religious beliefs.
- b) Realising that your enjoyment of life at home should not cause a neighbour any distress.
- c) Speaking to neighbours when a problem arises-using a friendly approach. Discussing the problem may resolve it much quicker and with less ill feeling than involving Innisfree. We will not play a part in settling disputes between neighbours which are the result of lifestyle differences;
- d) Read and understand the terms of the tenancy agreement and ensure that all behaviour complies with this.
- e) Make children and visitors aware of the need for good, neighbourly behaviour;
- f) Reporting incidents to us and other relevant agencies such as the Police or Environmental Health.
- g) Keep us informed of details of ongoing problems;
- h) Assist us with keeping records of nuisance and anti social behaviour;
- i) Understand that we will use a range of measures to try and tackle ASB and resolve problems depending on the severity of the case. Legal Action is not appropriate in all cases and if we do decide to take such action it will be a last resort.
- j) Understand the limitations we have as a Landlord when trying to deal with cases of anti social behaviour;
- k) Co-operate with us in trying to resolve anti social behaviour, including attempting mediation.

16. Mediation

16.1 As already stated, evicting people may not fully address the issues behind anti social behaviour. An independent mediation service may be a more effective way of addressing the problems. Mediation is a means of conflict resolution. A mediation service helps people who are in dispute to reconcile their differences themselves. This can be more effective than having a solution imposed by the landlord or the courts.

16.2 Officers should make every effort to persuade all parties to enter into mediation. This is particularly important because officers will be expected to demonstrate at court that the Association has tried everything possible to try and resolve the dispute, but particularly mediation. Judges increasingly expect mediation to have been tried before a case reaches court and it is possible that a case could be dismissed if it hasn't.

16.3 Officers should consider trying "shuttle" mediation whereby officers may speak to one tenant first and then go off to speak to another separately. This process continues until there is some sort of breakthrough between the parties.

16.4 Mediation is likely to be more successful if:

- a) all parties to the dispute acknowledge that there is a problem;
- b) all parties to the dispute are willing to be involved and try;
- c) there is a prospect of it bringing about an acceptable solution;
- d) the dispute has not involved any form of violence or racial harassment;
- e) all parties to the dispute are present themselves during the mediation process, or have an advocate.

16.5 Mediation is not necessarily a "one off" process. If mediation is not very successful at the first attempt officers should not be discouraged from trying again and again as those involved may change their minds about the process, having tried once.

17. Supporting Victims/Adopting a Victim centred approach

17.1 The Association will adopt a victim centred approach in dealing with anti social behaviour and harassment, however, this does not mean that the alleged perpetrator is immediately assumed to be guilty.

17.2 It is important that the investigation into the case is carried out in a sensitive and sympathetic manner. Victims must feel that they have the confidence to tell officers about the problems they are experiencing. During an interview, no attempts should be made to undermine the victim's confidence by challenging the validity of their statement or by under-estimating the effect the anti social behaviour is having on the victim.

17.3 During any interviews, if it appears there are serious discrepancies in the validity of a victim's statement, under no circumstances should officers judge the

victim, but should sympathetically encourage the victim to give as much information as possible in order to facilitate an investigation.

17.4 In some cases a victim may know who the alleged perpetrators are but may be unwilling to tell as they lack confidence or are frightened. In such situations victims wishes should be respected but they must be made aware that we are restricted as to what we can do if they will not disclose the identity of the perpetrators.

17.5 Providing contact and support

This is an essential element of any action and support plan. During the formal interview the Housing Officer should provide a range of information, advice and assistance, which reflects the individual needs of the victim.

- Details of the Association's anti social behaviour policy and procedure
- Confirmation of any emergency repairs or graffiti removal.
- What action we will take as a result of the incident
- Help with translation if required.
- A follow up visit should be arranged in agreement with the complainant after the initial report details are taken.
- It is important that the Housing Officer maintains regular contact with the victim. Confirmation of future visits / appointments (at least 2 should be arranged within the next 6 weeks) to monitor the situation.

17.6 Referrals to external support / counselling agencies.

The victim should be advised of local agencies that can provide support, advice and counselling. Housing Officers should develop a network of such agencies for the local area (details of these agencies can be given to the victim). If the victim is in fear of further incidents they should be provided with the number of the local police station and any other crisis support lines that are appropriate.

18. Request for transfer by victim

- a) A tenant suffering anti social behaviour can apply for a transfer; however, we are not under any obligation to grant a transfer to every person who applies. It is important that those approved for a transfer are aware that there could be a long wait due to the shortage of vacancies. Serious ASB cases which have substantial evidence are awarded top priority under Innisfree's transfer policy.
- b) It might be appropriate to liaise with other Landlords with a view to arranging a reciprocal transfer if it is unlikely that Innisfree can rehouse from its own stock or a move to another area is required.
- c) In serious cases, where we feel circumstances warrant it, Innisfree

will arrange and pay for removal to another property. We will not pay for the renewal of any furnishings.

- d) It is essential that such moves are undertaken sensitively and that officers and all other people involved in the removal respect the need for strictest confidentiality.

19. Action Against Perpetrators

19.1 The Association will as far as possible take action against the alleged perpetrator of anti social behaviour rather than moving the person affected by it. Regardless of whether the alleged perpetrator is a tenant, there are now many remedies available for tackling the problem. In serious cases this could mean possession action or demotion of tenancy (if our tenant), Anti Social Behaviour Orders or an Injunction. If a criminal offence has taken place we refer the matter to the police to deal with. If the perpetrator is a tenant of another Association we will contact them and request that they pursue the matter.

19.2 We understand the importance of prevention and early intervention in cases to stop situations from escalating and to send a strong message to alleged perpetrators that we will not tolerate anti social behaviour.

20. Multi Landlord Estates

20. 1 Multi Landlord estates can create difficulty in managing ASB. Wherever possible we will ensure that there is a consortium management agreement in place that sets out clear standards and an agreed consistent approach to tackling ASB.

21. Sustainable tenancies and vulnerability

21.1 Anti Social Behaviour can be caused by tenants or family members who are vulnerable and can be problematic to deal with, and often cannot be resolved without the intervention of appropriate qualified support from health and/or caring services.

21.2 Although many vulnerable people can live in the community without difficulty vulnerability can make a person less able than most to manage the social relationships required for living without dispute. Vulnerable people may cause disturbance without realising the consequences for the people living around them. Conversely, they may be ill equipped to deal with neighbours who cause them disturbance or distress.

21.3 Being vulnerable does not mean that people cannot take responsibility for their actions. However, their personal circumstances may mean that they need help or support to live independently and sustain a tenancy. Innisfree's response needs to reflect this. It is important to remember that some tenants may become vulnerable or develop mental health issues at a later point in their tenancy and for

a variety of reasons. It is essential that Innisfree's response in such cases is sensitive and that staff make every effort to arrange appropriate support and assistance.

21.4 It is important that vulnerable applicants or existing tenants are properly assessed and assisted by professionals. If they are not then any future legal action taken is likely to fail because of their lack of support and vulnerability. Officers must consider the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 before deciding what action to take against a person with mental health problems or any other disability which appears to be causing Anti Social Behaviour.

21.5 Vulnerable people can include:

- a) people with mental health problems;
- b) people at risk through self neglect or unsanitary living conditions;
- c) people with alcohol or drug dependency;
- d) older people
- e) young people leaving care;
- f) unsupervised children;

21.6 There are preventative measures we can take at an early stage to ensure that we do not create concentrations of people who may either have difficulty in sustaining their tenancy due to vulnerability or have a history of anti-social behaviour. We will work together with the local authority, police, the local community and other agencies to reduce the risks of anti-social behaviour occurring.

21.7 When we consider letting a property to a vulnerable applicant we must give specific consideration to their special needs in relation to any reports of anti-social behaviour. We will not reject an applicant without first considering whether a tenancy could be sustained and if appropriate care and support via family, friends and voluntary or statutory agencies is in place.

21.8. When officers become aware that tenants need extra support, their role is to help them to gain access to such support, rather than supplying it directly.

This may be done through:

- a) Our own floating support schemes funded by Supporting People-which are in place to support vulnerable tenants, help them sustain their tenancy, and reduce or abate problems caused to neighbours and damage caused to Innisfree property.
- b) giving information about services offered by voluntary sector agencies, and their GP
- c) Contacting such agencies on the tenants behalf, with their consent;
- d) Formally referring tenants to other floating support schemes or social services for assessment under the Community Care regime, or to other appropriate agencies such as Environmental health or alcohol support services.

- e) Referring them to another agency if they require help maintaining the condition of their home to a good standard or need assistance with undertaking repairs which are the tenants responsibility.

21.9 In serious cases of ASB involving a vulnerable tenant, attempts should be made to involve social services or another support agency at all stages of the case. In the last resort, if it is considered that there is no housing management solution to abate the anti social behaviour caused by the tenant then legal action may have to be considered.

In such situations, liaison should continue with social services, GP's and family with a view to trying to arrange alternative housing for the vulnerable tenant and to ensure that the vulnerable tenant is receiving appropriate support.

Officers will make every effort to work together with social services and other health professionals to find a satisfactory resolution that does not result in a tenant's eviction

22. Nominations from Local Authorities

22.1 As well as enabling Associations to change lettings policies to tackle anti-social behaviour, it is vital that we have greater flexibility in obtaining information about nominations from the local authorities.

In particular Association's should:

A) Ensure that their agreements with local authorities will provide them with sufficient information at the nomination stage to provide the applicant with the care and support which may be necessary to meet the Association's requirements for sustaining a tenancy. This should include:

- i) the reasonable preference criteria under which the applicant has been nominated:
- ii) has a history of mental health issues;
- iii) whether the applicant has any known care needs or provision, a history of rent arrears or Housing Benefit fraud: and,
- iv) whether they have a known history of anti-social behaviour, including violence towards staff.

B) Include in any policy the objective criteria which they intend to use as a basis for exclusion and take into account the potential impact on the local authority and other Association's working in the area. (See Lettings Policy)

C) Ensure that the standards they set for accepting or rejecting applicants for housing are consistent with the standards they set for managing tenancies and taking action on breach of tenancies.

23. Resources

23.1 Legal action for ASB can be a very expensive process. So our “prevention” approach is critical for this reason. Officers should be mindful of costs when liaising with Solicitors and should refer to policy and procedure as much as possible. The free helpline provided by our Solicitors should be used in all cases where advice is needed.

24. Partnerships/Joint working with other agencies

24.1 We recognise the importance of establishing good working relationships with other agencies to assist us when dealing with and solving problems with anti-social behaviour. This is particularly important in light of the Government’s Respect Standard which encourages working together locally to tackle problems.

We are committed to working with our Local Borough “Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships” and the Police and local communities. We believe that taking a joined up, multi agency approach to tackling ASB involving statutory and voluntary agencies will help minimise the impact of ASB and enable us to work in partnership to prevent it occurring in the first place. This will include information sharing, cooperating with investigations and looking at wider initiatives in place to tackle ASB in the local community-particularly where are tenants are involved.

In addition to the Police , we continue to establish and nurture links with the agencies providing care and support to vulnerable tenants including Local Authority Social Services departments, Community Safety Units, Community Psychiatric Nurses, Health Service Providers, Probation service, Irish Voluntary Groups providing alcohol and drug recovery support, community groups, mediation services, anti social behaviour panels, racial & harassment incident panels, other Housing Associations and most importantly tenants, residents and the wider community .

25. Publicity

25.1 It is important that the Association’s anti social behaviour policy is widely known and understood by those who may have recourse to use it. The Association will therefore publicise its policy through the tenants’ newsletter, Tenants’ Handbook, and through other local voluntary and statutory agencies. We will also publicise any successful action taken and resolutions in newsletters. We will also produce a summary of the policy which can be made available to anyone who wishes to see it.

25.2 We will ensure that all relevant policies and procedures eg. Allocations and Lettings have clear guidelines for responding to transfer requests as a result of anti social behaviour and the policy will respect the wishes of the victim and, as far as possible, will aim to meet their rehousing needs.

26. Training

26.1 Staff will receive compulsory training on Anti Social Behaviour legislation and in best practice for dealing effectively and sensitively with such incidents.

26.2 As part of the staff induction, training will be given on the Anti Social Behaviour Policy and Procedure.

27. Equality and Diversity

27.1 The Association has a clear strategic and operational approach to Equality and Diversity that reflects our purpose of addressing the housing and related support needs of the Irish community in London.

27.2 Our policies and practices attempt to reflect the community in which we work. We believe that Irish people have suffered discrimination in housing provision and we are committed to positive action to redress the imbalance.

27.3 We will assess all of our policies to ensure that, where appropriate, full Equality Impact Assessments are undertaken.

27.4 We will act within the scope of our own strategies, the Disability Discrimination Act and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and aim to ensure that all tenants receive a fair and equal standard of service regardless of race, ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, religious or cultural beliefs, , disability, , class, colour, physical or mental health HIV/AIDS.

27.5 It is vital that the response given to those approaching us is based on the principle of equality of service, customer care, good practice and courtesy.

27.6 We will provide translation and interpreting services where considered appropriate.

28. Confidentiality

28.1 Innisfree is committed to the principle of confidentiality and requires that any information known, written or held about tenants remains confidential.

28.2 In cases of ASB we will only divulge information to a third party if we have the written consent of the person concerned and subject to Information Sharing Protocols and Data Protection Act.

29. Complaints

29.1 Innisfree is committed to providing a high quality and fair service to all tenants. If, for any reason, a tenant is dissatisfied with the service they have received they have a right to complain.

29.2 In the first instance, the tenant should speak to the housing officer for their property but if the tenant is still not happy they can make a formal complaint by using the Complaints Procedure. All staff will endeavour to respond quickly to remedy any complaint. Tenants will be informed of the steps that are being taken to investigate and deal with the matter. All tenants who complain will be provided with a copy of the Complaints Policy, which outlines the procedure and details tenants' rights.

30. Review

30.1 This policy will be reviewed every 3 years, unless there are any further changes to legislation or if we have suggestions for further improvements from tenants and stakeholders that would require the policy to be reviewed at an earlier stage.

ASB FLOW CHART OF ACTION

