

Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy 2023-2025

Introduction

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council (WHBC) is committed to making Welwyn Hatfield a safe place to live where residents and visitors are not adversely impacted by the effects of crime and anti-social behaviour.

The term anti-social behaviour (ASB) can relate to a range of activities from serious criminal activity to communal or environmental nuisance. For the purpose of this strategy we refer to Part 1 of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, relating to our responsibilities as a Local Authority and as a housing provider, which defines ASB as being:

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

The ASB Strategy will be supported by an ASB Policy and an ASB Action Plan to case ensure that the key commitments are delivered operationally within the Strategy.

Purpose

The ASB Strategy sets out how the council will tackle crime and ASB through a framework of prevention, early intervention, support and enforcement.

It also sets out how we will do this in partnership with other agencies (statutory, non-statutory and voluntary) to reduce both the number of incidents and the impact of ASB, and to ensure that victims and perpetrators receive support relevant to their needs and circumstances.

Our Corporate Focus

The Council's Corporate Plan (2023-2024) sets out five corporate objectives and the ASB Strategy is linked to the following corporate objectives:

- a) Evolving, vibrant town centres and a growing economy
- b) A sense of community where people feel safe

National Context

The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 streamlined nineteen ASB tools into 6 more effective powers and also placed a greater focus on the impact of ASB on victims and their needs. It also introduced the use of positive requirements to compliment the use of prohibitions. Whilst WHBC have been using many of these powers such as the civil injunction and community protection notices, this strategy informs how we will work with partners and stakeholder and our powers to tackle high impact ASB, crime and reduce the harm caused to victims.

The Crime and Policing Act 1998 places a statutory duty on councils to work with the Police and other agencies to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour. The council does this via the Community Safety Partnership.

The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 sets out commitments that council housing tenants should be able to expect from their landlord. With a focus on resident safety and resident voice, the Act aims to make landlords have more accountability for resident satisfaction and provide decent homes. In addition, the Neighbourhood and Community Standard published by the Regulator of Social Housing sets out the expected service standards that Councils should provide to tenants with regard to tackling anti-social behaviour. This strategy sets out how we will tackle ASB, support residents and measure satisfaction.

Local Delivery and Resources

The Council has a wide range of responsibilities and resources to tackle ASB;

- The Neighbourhood and Enforcement Team manages both low level and serious cases of ASB. To demonstrate our commitment to keeping our communities safe, there are three dedicated ASB Officers, an ASB Co-ordinator and a Team Leader investigating and managing reports of ASB as well as driving service improvements. A patch based network of 10 Neighbourhood Officers deal with low level nuisance and neighbour disputes. The ASB team provide a tenure blind service fulfilling the council's obligations as a Local Authority and provider of social housing.
- The Community Safety Partnership is a strategic partnership that exists to reduce crime and ASB in accordance with the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. The Council's commitment to this initiative consists of a Community Partnerships Co-ordinator, Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator and a Safer Communities Officer who publish and deliver on the Community Safety Action Plan that encompasses a range of initiatives

to engage, educate, communicate with and support our communities. The Community Partnerships Team also provides a preventative and targeted response to youth ASB and other emerging issues.

- The Environment Services Team and Public Health and Protection Team have responsibilities to deal with environmental crime including noise, dog control, graffiti, littering, fly-tipping and abandoned vehicles. These responsibilities arise, in particular, from the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014. The protection of the environment is delivered via two teams within the Council; the street wardens, who also support enforcement of the Public Spaces Protection Orders, and the Environment Team.
- A Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) is in place in Hatfield town centre in response to local concerns and prevent anti-social behaviour linked to alcohol consumption, aggressive begging and public urination. Whilst the focus remains one of outreach and support, WHBC will enforce the PSPO via the street warden and ASB teams and will work in partnership with Hertfordshire Constabulary to provide an incident logging service via 101 as well as proactive town centre patrols and enforcement of the PSPO. A key aspect of the PSPO is that Resolve charity workers provide outreach support to tackle rough sleeping.

ASB Commitments for 2023-2025

Below outlines our priorities for the next three years:

- Maintain a harm-centred and accessible 'victim first' service.
- Achieve communities where people feel safe through preventing anti-social behaviour and taking action that is proportionate and timely.
- Maintain effective partnership responses and information sharing to combat county lines, cuckooing and associated serious violence and criminality within the CSP.
- Identify improvements in our partnership response to the increasing demand of individuals with substance misuse issues, serious mental health problems/complex needs and dual diagnosis.
- Provide a robust response to domestic abuse, violence against women and girls (VAWG), hate crime and any other form of harassment and or intimidation.
- Tackle the issue of Youth ASB and the relationship and involvement that some of those young people have with county lines.

How will we achieve our objectives?

There are a number of key actions that we will undertake through this strategy to meet our service aims and achieve our objectives. The strategy is supported by an ASB Policy and Action Plan that provides further details on specific actions, responsibilities and timescales.

Commitment One

Maintain a harm-centred approach and accessible 'victim first' service.

Our response will be focussed on the impact of the incident and support for people who are more vulnerable. We will:

- Focus on the harm and impact and not just the seriousness that an incident of ASB or crime has upon the victim.
- Complete a risk assessment in the early stages of reporting and periodically thereafter to assess the vulnerability and identify any needs of the victim and, where possible, the perpetrator.
- Participate in local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements where appropriate and use the cross agency case management SafetyNet system to ensure a co-ordinated response to vulnerable and repeat victims.
- Use a variety of channels through which to report ASB, including via our website/email, the use of the Noise App and noise monitoring equipment, to increase accessibility to the service and a faster response and intervention.
- Follow the case management procedure to ensure that those accessing the service get a consistent and fair approach, a dedicated case officer, proportionate action plan and regular reviews.

Commitment Two

Achieve communities where people feel safe through preventing anti-social behaviour and taking action that is proportionate and timely

Prevention is crucial to developing safe and sustainable communities and early intervention can prevent ASB from escalating. We will:

- Work with partners under the Community Safety Partnership to develop and support community-led preventative and diversionary activities, especially in response to youth ASB.
- Reduce the opportunity for crime and ASB by being proactive with mobile patrols, participating in Community Involvement Days (CID), targeting hotspots areas with the PSPO and making use of CCTV.
- Refer to a Mediation service to assist with neighbour disputes.
- Engage with residents in a meaningful and consistent way to re-enforce responsible behaviour and take prompt and effective action where necessary.

- Engage meaningfully with partners and the community to address Borough wide youth ASB, designing out areas to prevent incidents reoccurring and taking appropriate enforcement action when necessary.

Commitment Three

Maintain effective partnership responses and information sharing to combat county lines, cuckooing and associated serious violence and criminality within the CSP.

Effective Partnership working is an integral part of our ASB Strategy as well as a statutory requirement under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. The Community Safety Action Plan provides a robust partnership response encompassing a range of initiatives to engage, educate, communicate and support our communities. We will;

- Continue to be an active member of various partnership arrangements such as; Community Safety Partnership (CSP), Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA), Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC).
- Host and chair the ASB Forum to action plan hot spot areas and discuss high level cases of ASB and crime and police priorities.
- Conduct joint proactive patrols to increase reassurance and public perception.
- Maintain multi-agency safeguarding information sharing arrangements where appropriate.
- Develop relationships with statutory, non-statutory and voluntary sectors to enhance partnership working and create opportunities and improve outcomes for the residents of WHBC.

Commitment Four

Identify improvements in our partnership response to the increasing demand of individuals with substance misuse issues, serious mental health problems/complex needs and dual diagnosis.

- Maintain the Public Spaces Protection Order in Hatfield Town Centre to tackle the impact that street drinking and drug taking has on visitors, residents and traders.
- Continue to engage with agencies who provide outreach and a supportive approach to engagement with and improve outcomes for high impact abusers of drugs and alcohol.
- Make use of our powers to enforce Closure Orders on premises that are being used to deal drugs and where neighbours are experiencing the effects of associated crime and ASB.

- Focus on disrupting 'County Lines', 'cuckooing', and associated serious violence and criminality within the CSP by joint working with 'Operation Scorpion' and 'Community Safety Units'.

Commitment Five

Provide a robust response to domestic abuse, violence against women and girls (VAWG), hate crime and any other form of harassment and or intimidation

Domestic abuse (DA), VAWG and hate crime has devastating effects on individuals, families and communities. Often, they are hidden crimes with victims not knowing how to or being afraid to approach others for help and support. We will:

- Embed Hertfordshire's Domestic Abuse (DA) Strategy and its priorities across the CSP, supported by our Domestic Abuse Co-Ordinator to ensure good practice in this area.
- Maintain our partnership working at the Welwyn Hatfield DA Forum and develop Domestic Abuse Champions in collaboration with Hertfordshire County Council.
- Adopt the DASH risk assessment and continue to be active members of the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences.
- Provide DA awareness and case management training for all frontline staff and Designated Safeguarding Champions via our DA Co-ordinator.
- Provide security and safety measures as appropriate for victims of DA, hate crime and those suffering from harassment and intimidation.
- Provide third party hate crime reporting centres and have hate crime champions operating within WHBC.
- Raising public awareness of the impacts of hate crime and making it clear that hate crime, harassment and bullying in any form will not be tolerated.
- Use data and partnership information to identify emerging issues and tensions to target intervention appropriately.

Commitment Six

Tackle the issue of Youth ASB and the relationship and involvement that some of those young people have with county lines.

Youths involved in ASB adversely affect the lives of victims, can blight neighbourhoods and affect the perception and confidence of safety in our neighbourhoods. To tackle this we will:

- Continue to be an active member of various partnership arrangements such as; Community Safety Partnership (CSP), Multi Agency Group for the Prevention of Youth Exclusion (MAGPYE) and Families First.
- Provide support, education and advice to partners and stakeholders to tackle youth ASB.
- Protect young people from becoming involved in serious youth violence by taking a prevention first approach.
- Provide a co-ordinated response to problem areas and encourage residents and staff to report a variety of youth ASB and estate management issues, such as litter and graffiti in order to react quickly.
- Make use of our powers to take enforcement action, such a Youth Injunctions where appropriate.

Resident Involvement

We are committed to involving our residents in the delivery of our ASB Strategy and service and will work with stakeholders and residents to ensure we consult on how we shape and monitor our services.

We will measure and report on the satisfaction from service users and take lessons learned from feedback to further develop our service.

We will listen to and engage with residents via Community Involvement Days and Community Audits to understand their perceptions and priorities, providing reassurance and driving through change and improvement to neighbourhoods.

Performance and Monitoring

A RAG (red, amber, Green) rated action plan will be used to deliver the commitments within the ASB Strategy and this will be monitored via the ASB Forum, with the Action Plan being a standard agenda item on the Joint Agency Group (JAG) for operational and problem solving to ensure that any blockages to implementation are identified and problem solved.

The following Key Performance Indicators will be used to monitor the service and how it is being delivered;

- Satisfaction with the service provided and how cases were handled.
- How many new cases have been opened each month.
- How many cases are open after 12 weeks.

We will contribute to meeting the objectives of the Community Safety Partnership and this will be measured through the Community Safety Action Plan and attendance at the Joint Actions Group (JAG) and the Responsible Authorities Group (RAG).

Value for Money

We seek early resolution to reports of ASB to prevent issues from escalating that results in prolonged intervention and expensive court costs.

We provide a self-help toolkit to encourage community resolution. We will also develop digital solutions for ease of reporting and quicker resolution.

Equality and Diversity

ASB impacts upon on our whole community, however we acknowledge that certain groups or individuals may be more susceptible or vulnerable due to age, disability, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, marital status and gender reassignment.

This Strategy has clear links to our Equality and Diversity Strategy which is committed to promoting equality and embracing the diversity of the residents of WHBC and our staff.

An Equality Impact Assessment will be completed on multiple actions within this strategy to ensure that any negative impacts on protected groups under equalities legislation are justified and proportionate and that we maximise the opportunity for positive impact.

Glossary

ASB	Anti-social Behaviour	CID	Community Information Day
CSP	Community Safety Partnership	DA	Domestic Abuse
JAG	Joint Action Group	MAYPYE	Multi Agency Group for the Prevention of Youth Exclusion
MAPPA	Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements	MARAC	Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference
PSPO	Public Spaces Protection Order	RAG	Responsible Authorities group
RAG	Red, Amber, Green	SNT	Safer Neighbourhood Team
WHBC	Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council		