Please ask us if you would like this document in large print, on audio tape, in braille or in other languages.
Introduction

This booklet has been designed to give you essential information about Villages Housing’s procedure for dealing with anti-social behaviour and briefly outlines the following:-

- Types of Anti-Social Behaviour
- Roles and Responsibilities
- Timescales
- Investigation
- Working with our communities
- Remedies
- Useful Telephone Numbers
- Useful website addresses

Anti-social behaviour can take many forms and includes the following:

- **Harassment** – including assault; domestic violence; verbal abuse; racist, sexist or homophobic remarks; threats of violence; damage to property.
- **Yobbish behaviour** - including intimidating groups taking over public spaces.
- **Drugs** – selling drugs; drug abuse.
- **Graffiti** – offensive graffiti; damage to property; vandalism.
- **Noise** - Playing loud music constantly; shouting; arguing; excessive banging of doors.
- **Pets** – not being kept under control; dog fouling; constant barking.
- **Gardens** – untidy; overgrown; dumped household items.
- **Motor Vehicles** - car or vehicle repairs on the roadside; on grass verges; in gardens; abandoned vehicles.
- **Begging.**
- **Anti-Social drinking.**
- **The misuse of fireworks.**
Types of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB):

Hate Crimes/Incidents & Harassment
What is a hate crime/incident or harassment?

A hate crime or incident (not all will be criminal offences) or harassment occurs when anti-social behaviour or nuisance is deliberately or persistently targeted on an individual or a group and is motivated by the offender’s hate of someone because of race, sexuality, disability, age, religion etc and can include the following:

- **Race**: on the grounds of a person’s racial or perceived racial group.
- **Disability**: on the grounds of a person’s disability.
- **Age**: on the basis of a person’s age.
- **Religion**: on the basis of a person’s religion or perceived religion.
- **Sexuality**: on the grounds of a person’s sexual orientation or gender.

Racial Harassment

What is racial harassment?

*A racist incident is any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person*  
(The McPherson Report, Stephen Lawrence Inquiry.)

Villages Housing condemns any kind of harassment, racist or otherwise, and together with our crime prevention partners gives full commitment to prevent and deal with racially motivated incidents and crimes.

Racial harassment will be dealt with by working with other agencies to take action against those who are responsible. At all times we will work to protect the interests of the victim.

A home visit or office interview will be carried out within 24 hours of the reported incident. As part of the interview we will complete a racial incident reporting form which will be sent to various agencies including the Police.

We will photograph racist and offensive graffiti and remove it within 24 hours. Any damage to a tenant’s property will be made good within 24 hours wherever possible.

When the investigation is completed, the Estate Management Officer (EMO) will work with the Police and other agencies to determine what action to take, for example, warnings; injunctions; criminal charges; eviction etc.

It is the policy of Villages Housing to support the victims of harassment, racial or otherwise, and to take firm action against the perpetrator(s). This is clearly stated in our tenancy agreements.

Domestic Violence

What is Domestic Violence?

Domestic violence is any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between adults who are or who have been in a relationship together, or between family members, regardless of gender or sexuality.

Villages believes that none of its tenants should live in fear of violence from a spouse or partner, a former spouse or partner, or other member of their household; we will take steps to assist and support any person suffering from or threatened with violence. Such violence may be physical, emotional or psychological. It is most often perpetrated by men but may also be perpetrated by women and between same sex partners as well as heterosexual partners.

Villages aim to offer assistance to any of its tenants or their families who are suffering from domestic violence or threats of violence from someone within their home or from someone outside their home, such as former partners.
Noise Nuisance
What is noise nuisance?

Some examples are the playing of loud music; slamming doors; shouting and arguing; to an extent that it affects the quality of life of people living in neighbouring properties.

Most allegations of noise nuisance will be dealt with initially by the EMO. In some cases it will be necessary to issue warnings if there is a clear breach of tenancy. We will also work with Environmental Services who have legal powers to restrict noise nuisance.

Other types of ASB and breaches of tenancy

Examples include: selling drugs from a Villages property; yobbish behaviour; anti-social drinking; failing to properly control dogs; repairing cars in gardens (where there is no dropped kerb or driveway to the property) or on grass verges; failing to take care of the property; failing to maintain the gardens.

Roles and Responsibilities: Estate Management Officers (EMOs)

Estate Management Officers will be the main contact for those who are suffering ASB. The EMO will be responsible for:

- responding to complaints by investigating within timescales;
- interviewing complainants and those alleged to be causing problems;
- explaining the process to complainants and agreeing an Action Plan;
- considering the suitability of the case for referral to the Mediation Service;
- taking firm action including legal action;
- keeping complainants informed of progress;
- notifying complainant when closing a case.

Estate Management Officers (EMOs) will involve other agencies when necessary such as the Police; Environmental Services; Social Services; Family Intervention Units; Oldham Council’s Community Safety Unit (CSU); Knowsley Council’s Joint Agency Group (JAG) and Knowsley Housing Trust’s ASB Unit.

Complainants will be expected to work closely with EMOs in addressing ASB. Detailed records of incidents are very important to decide the appropriate action, particularly in the event of legal action. We will do everything possible to encourage complainants by respecting confidentiality.

What we expect from you:

- Tell us immediately of any serious problems;
- If the incident is a criminal matter, inform the police who can provide us with evidence;
- Keep records of incidents and tell us who was involved;
- Encourage others who are experiencing the same problems to contact us

What you can expect from us:

Timescales

A complaint may be made in writing; electronically; verbally; via a third party (for example a friend or relative of the complainant); another agency; Villages Board member; Local Councillor; or Member of Parliament.

- **High priority cases (Category A):** an investigation will commence within 24 hours of the complaint being received.
- **Medium priority cases (Category B):** an investigation will commence within 2 working days of the complaint being received.
- **Standard priority cases (Category C):** an investigation will commence within 5 working days of the complaint being received.
- **Referrals to The Mediation Service:** will be made within 10 days of the initial investigation of the complaint.

Definitions of these categories can be obtained from our ASB procedure which is available at our Stockbridge and Fitton Hill offices.
Investigation

Where a complaint is found to be justified the EMO will, if appropriate, arrange an interview with the complainant(s) and may also arrange to interview the alleged perpetrator(s), depending upon the type of complaint.

Full consideration will be given to the personal safety and confidentiality of all parties. For example, it may be appropriate to hold the interviews away from the relevant property, at a neutral venue or at the Housing Office.

When diary sheets are issued, the EMO will advise how to complete them. Guidance notes are included in the diary sheets which explain how to record descriptions and the type of language used by those causing the ASB.

The EMO will agree with the complainant(s) timescales for the return of the diary sheets. As a general rule, we would expect them to be returned within 10 working days. After the agreed timescale has elapsed and the diary sheets have not been returned, the EMO will contact the complainant to pursue them.

On the evidence available, the EMO may agree an action plan with the complainant.

Some examples of action that may be taken are:

- a door knocking exercise or mail drop to establish further witnesses;
- sending warning letters to the alleged perpetrator(s);
- collecting witness statements;
- arranging a case conference with other agencies;
- exploring ways of taking joint action with the Police or other agencies;
- consider taking legal action.

The EMO will keep the complainant(s) informed of progress throughout the investigation.

When the case is completed, we will inform the complainant(s) in writing that the case is closed. A ‘feedback form’ will be enclosed which may be used to tell us how well we dealt with the issue and will ask for suggestions on how to improve the service.

The complainant(s) may query this response if they do not agree with the decision.

Complainants who are dissatisfied with our response will be referred to Villages Housing’s Complaints Procedure.

Working with our communities

We will do everything possible to work with and support people who are willing to assist in the process of stopping anti-social behaviour, including:

- treating information confidentially;
- providing a place where people feel confident to discuss their concerns;
- arranging more frequent visits by our staff and/or other agencies;
- taking legal action, for example, injunctions which can restrict the movement of those who may be intimidating witnesses;
- arranging special support, for example, home link alarms which provide urgent connection to the Police;
- assisting in making special arrangements for people who are attending court.

In all cases, the wishes and concerns of the witnesses will be our first consideration in any action we take.
What we can do to stop the problem?

Our aim, wherever possible, is to prevent the escalation of ASB. However we may need to resort to more formal action involving other agencies and our legal experts, some of these are shown below.

The Mediation Service

Villages Housing recognise that not all anti-social behaviour and neighbour disputes can be resolved by the landlord.

EMOs will refer to The Mediation Service where they consider that this may be the only way resolve the issue(s).

Mediation offers a service to tenants of Villages which is independent, confidential and impartial. Mediation is a step-by-step process in which an independent third party helps people in dispute to reach a mutually acceptable solution. Mediators are specially trained volunteers recruited from all sections of the community who will visit people in their own homes to listen and to use their skills to resolve disputes. Mediators will arrange family and community conferencing as they deem appropriate.

Injunctions

An injunction is a court order telling the defendant that she/he must do something or, more often, not do something. For example, an injunction may prevent the defendant from approaching a person or place.

Injunctions can be adapted to a variety of circumstances and if the injunction order is broken by the defendant, it could result in imprisonment for contempt of court. However in such circumstances, a very high standard of evidence is required to prove that the injunction has been broken.

In an urgent case involving a risk of serious harm it is possible to obtain an injunction without even telling the defendant that there is a case going to court. Such injunctions are only likely to apply to cases which involve, for example, a very real threat of violence or harassment.

Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABCs)

Normally ABCs are used with young people aged between 10 and 18 years who would potentially benefit from the scheme. ABCs are used to ‘nip problems in the bud’; they are intended to warn the young person that any further reports of anti-social behaviour could result in legal action being taken, possibly in the form of an Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBOs) and possibly possession proceedings against their parents, if they are tenants of Villages Housing.

Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs)

ASBOs may be used in more serious cases where other efforts to modify the behaviour of individual(s) have been unsuccessful. An ASBO may be sought where there is evidence of harassment, alarm or distress caused by the behaviour of the person(s) responsible. Seeking an ASBO will normally involve a range of agencies in case-conferences or other detailed discussions. An ASBO may, for example, prevent the individual(s) from associating with others who have been involved in anti-social activities or from going into a particular area where they have already caused problems.

Notice of Seeking Possession (NSP)

Where there is a clear breach of tenancy, for example, where a tenant has been convicted of using their property for illegal purposes, it would be appropriate to serve an NSP.

The serving of the Notice can substantially reduce the problems because the tenant would be under threat of losing their home through possession proceedings.
Notice Requiring Possession (NRP)

NRP s apply to Starter Tenants, that is, those who are new tenants and are ‘on probation’ for 12 months.

Therefore if a new tenant acts anti-socially within the first 12 months of their tenancy, an application for possession may be made in the County Court. It is essential in these cases to have clear and strong evidence in the form of diary sheets and witness statements.

Demoted Tenancy

The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 gives Villages Housing the power to apply to the County Court for the demotion of a tenancy where a tenant or a resident or visitor to the dwelling is guilty of anti-social behaviour.

It is essential in these cases to have clear and strong evidence in the form of diary sheets and witness statements.

A demotion order will mean that the tenant is in a similar position to the Starter Tenant, that is, the Demoted Tenancy will normally last for 12 months. If there is clear and persistent evidence of ASB within the 12 months the demoted tenancy will be terminated and the tenant(s) will be evicted.

Family Intervention Programme (FIP)

Family problems, poor educational attainment, unemployment, alcohol and drug misuse can all contribute to anti-social behaviour. Parents are the major influence on their children’s behaviour and play a major role in promoting positive behaviour. Villages is committed to working with our partners to encourage families who experience serious problems to engage with the ‘Family Intervention Programme’ in order to promote good parenting and reduce ASB in our communities.
Useful Telephone Numbers:

**Stockbridge Office main telephone number**  0151 480 1313
**Out of hours emergency repairs**  0151 290 7375

**Fitton Hill Office main telephone number**  0161 633 4060
**Out of hours emergency repairs**  0845 389 7247

**Crime Stoppers**  0800 555 111

**Merseyside Police**  0151 709 6010

**Greater Manchester Police**  0161 872 5050

**National Domestic Violence Helpline**  0808 2000 247
24 hours a day, 7 days a week helpline

**ChildLine**  0800 11 11
For children and young people

**Male Advice & Enquiry Line**  0845 064 6800
For men who are experiencing domestic violence.
Relatives or friends of males who are experiencing domestic violence may also call this number for advice.

**Men’s Aid**  0871 223 9986
Men’s Aid provides free practical advice and support to men suffering abuse.

**Women’s Aid**  0117 944 4411
Women’s Aid supports abused women and children.

**Worst Kept Secret**  0800 028 3398
Provides a free phone confidential helpline offering support and advice to victims of domestic violence.

**Knowsley Domestic Violence Support Services**  0151 548 3333

**Oldham Family Crisis unit**  0161 628 4991
24 hours helpline for female victims of domestic violence and South Asian women who experience mental health problems.

**Oldham Social Services Children & Families Helpline**
   **Office Hours only**  0161 911 3730
   **Emergency Duty Team, out of hours.**  0161 628 5933

**Villages Housing comprises:**

The Villages Housing Association Ltd. (VHA) a Registered Social Landlord (Reg. no. L3417), including the Fitton Hill Estate Management Committee, (FHEMC)

and

Villages Community Housing Association Ltd. (VCHA) a Registered Social Landlord (Reg. no. LH4231) and a Registered Exempt Charity under the Charitable 1965 Act.

**Directors**

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**Deputy Chief Executive & Service Delivery Director - Stockbridge**
Jed Pearson

**Finance and Resources Director**
Serge Botcherby

**Service Delivery Director – Fitton Hill**
Bernie McConnell

**Commercial Director**
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**Corporate Services Director**
Ken Mason

**Initiatives Director**
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**VHA Board Chair**
Mike Carter

**VCHA Board Chair**
Andrew Greenhill

**FHEMC Chair**
Peter Fairhurst