

# **Safer and Stronger Communities**

## **Anti-social Behaviour Victims Charter**

### **Purpose – Minimum Standards**

In October 2009, the Home Secretary announced tougher local action against anti-social behaviour (ASB). The aim is to build on measures already in place, and to effectively and swiftly tackle the harmful impact of ASB, which can make life a misery for local residents.

The Home Secretary set out that it is expected all **Crime and Disorder Partnerships - such as Sefton's Safer and Stronger Communities Partnership (SSCP)** - will deliver a minimum set of standards and tell communities how the Partnership plans to tackle ASB.

This **Anti-social Behaviour (ASB) Victims Charter** has been produced by Sefton SSCP for Sefton residents. It outlines those minimum standards, telling you how we will tackle ASB within Sefton, and ensure that our communities are both safer and stronger. It provides information on the agencies which form part of Sefton SSCP, how ASB will be tackled and what support will be provided to you if you are a victim of ASB.

We will treat everyone with fairness, dignity and respect and approach cases with an open mind, taking into account personal circumstances.

### **Sefton Minimum Standards for Tackling Anti-social Behaviour**

1. **Make it easy to report ASB to the police;**
2. **Listen to your concerns and treat you with respect and in confidence;**
3. **Investigate every report of ASB and discuss all available options with you first;**
4. **Keep you updated on the progress of your case;**
5. **Aim to protect victims from future harm by offering advice and practical support;**
6. **Support all victims and witnesses throughout the investigation;**
7. **If you report more than one incident of ASB in two weeks, you will be referred to the Anti-social Behaviour Unit.**
8. **The Partnership will aim to reduce ASB by tackling the causes, including managing offenders and problem families;**
9. **We will keep the community informed about what we are doing to tackle ASB through monthly updates using newsletters, websites and media.**
10. **We will encourage residents to share their views about ASB and encourage victims to tell us how they felt about the service they received to help us meet community needs.**

## **What is the SSCP?**

The SSCP is a statutory partnership of agencies including Sefton Council, Merseyside Police, NHS Sefton, Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service, Merseyside Probation Trust, Sefton CVS, registered social landlords and many others. The agencies in the SSCP work together to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour, to improve the quality of life for residents of Sefton.

## **What is Sefton's Anti-social Behaviour (ASB) Unit?**

The ASB Unit is a multi-agency team, consisting of Sefton Council ASB investigators, Police Officers, Police Community Support & Traffic Officers (PCS&TO's), and Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service. It has a dedicated specialist Victim Champion and a legal team. The ASB Unit works under one roof, providing a focussed approach to reduce anti-social behaviour and crime and the fear of these issues.

## **What is ASB?**

ASB is conduct which causes or is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to one or more persons not of the same household as the perpetrator.

ASB takes many forms and includes rowdy or inconsiderate behaviour, noisy behaviour, graffiti, damage, street drinking, threatening or abusive behaviour or intimidation. This is not an exhaustive list, however these are the most common forms of ASB.

## **How can I report ASB?**

Contact **Merseyside Police** on **0151-709 6010**. Your call will be logged and you will be advised of what will happen next.

You can also call into your local **One Stop Shop**, in Bootle and Southport, to make a report in person, or call Sefton Plus on 0845 140 0845.

If you are a tenant, you can also contact your **local housing office** and report ASB to your registered social landlord.

In an emergency, always dial 999. An emergency can be:

- If the incident is happening now;
- If people are injured, being threatened or are in danger;
- The offender is still there or is nearby.

You can also report incidents anonymously by calling Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

## **What can I expect the police to do?**

The police will risk assess your call and respond in 10 minutes to emergencies, within an hour to anyone assessed as vulnerable and within 24 hours to other non-emergency calls.

The Police will:

- Treat your report as anonymous if you wish;
- Ask you for information about victims, witnesses and offenders and why you believe you may have been targeted;
- Take appropriate action as soon as sufficient information/evidence has been gathered;
- Keep you informed of the outcome of the incident you have reported.

If you suffer a 'one off' incident your call will be logged and you will receive advice from a local Neighbourhood Police Officer or a member of Merseyside Police staff.

Your case will be risk assessed on the information you provide. If you are believed to be vulnerable due to your personal circumstances or the circumstances of the incident you will be referred to the ASB Unit immediately.

If you report repeat anti-social behaviour incidents (**more than one incident within two weeks**), your case will also be referred to the **ASB Unit**.

In addition, One Stop Shops or your registered social landlord can refer your case to the ASB Unit.

### **What can I expect from the ASB Unit?**

Your case will be allocated to an ASB investigator who will contact you to discuss the issues and agree with you relevant actions to address your concerns.

The officer will seek to resolve your ASB issues as soon as possible and you will be regularly updated. You can say how often you wish to be contacted by your investigating officer and you will be provided with direct contact telephone numbers.

If you are a tenant of a housing association, with your consent the ASB Unit will liaise with your local housing officer and work in partnership with them to resolve your problem.

If you are a private tenant the ASB Unit will link in with your landlord, again if you consent, to resolve your problem.

### **How soon will I be contacted?**

Your case will be assessed – through your answers to a series of questions - to identify its level of risk –high, medium or low risk.

**High risk** – you will be contacted within **24 hours** of the referral.

**Medium or low risk** – you will be contacted by the ASB Unit within **five working days** of the referral.

The officer will agree with you how regularly you wish to be updated. You will also be provided with a direct contact number for the ASB investigator and the direct number to your local Neighbourhood Police office.

### **High risk cases**

If your case is classed as '**high risk**', measures will be put in place to support you including a single point of contact for 'out of hours' support. Other measures could include CCTV, a panic attack alarm, daily visits and other additional services as necessary. **The ASB Unit will ensure that you agree with any of the measures offered prior to arranging this service.**

### **Information sharing**

The information that you provide will be treated **confidentially**, however it may be necessary to pass your information onto other agencies in order to solve your ASB problem. If other agencies can assist, the information will only be shared with them with your permission.

If you agree that we should challenge the perpetrator and take certain actions, it may be necessary that the information that you provide is disclosed to the perpetrator, depending on the level of action taken. **Disclosure of information will only happen with your consent.**

### **Actions that can be taken**

The action taken will be relevant to the case and will take into account your needs and possible vulnerability.

Actions include:

- Advising people (and their parents if they are under 18) that their behaviour is unacceptable via letter, or in more serious cases may involve an interview at a police station;
- Engaging young people in Acceptable Behaviour Contracts where they will agree to certain conditions in relation to their behaviour. In addition, we will seek to identify the cause of anti-social behaviour and look at the person's situation to aim to prevent further ASB;
- If the case is more serious and there is supporting evidence, legal proceedings may be pursued through application for an **Anti-social Behaviour Order** via the courts;
- Where a person under 18 is granted an Anti-social Behaviour Order we will seek to impose a **Parenting Order** to ensure that the parents take their responsibilities seriously. There are significant consequences in breaching these orders.

## **Neighbour disputes**

The ASB Unit can offer a mediation service using the ASB Victims Champion who will seek to resolve your problem. Within a dispute both parties can feel like victims and this can seriously affect your quality of life. There are a number of measures which the Victims Champion can advise you of to resolve your dispute.

## **Vulnerable victims**

It may be that your situation causes you to be vulnerable due to your health, age, disability or another reason. If you are considered to be vulnerable we will make sure that the ASB investigators and the Victims Champion put in place the necessary support to help you. If you feel you are vulnerable please tell your ASB investigator who will endeavour to provide you with the support you need.

## **Vulnerable young people**

Not all anti-social behaviour is caused by young people, however some young people are at risk of negative influences that can lead to them engaging in ASB which can lead to committing crime.

We have a statutory responsibility to prevent young people's behaviour escalating into anti-social or criminal.

We will:

- Work with partners to address the issues that can cause a young person to behave anti-socially;
- Engage young people in positive activities to encourage better use of their spare time;
- Share information with other agencies where appropriate and necessary.

Sometimes there are serious issues within a young person's life driving their anti-social behaviour. Through Sefton Safer and Stronger Communities Partnership we will endeavour to establish what those risks are. This will include making regular assessments and implementing robust prevention plans to address the issues in all areas of their life, including their families. This may include targeted youth support and parenting support to ensure that the young person is steered onto the pathway of success to secure a more positive future.

## **Vulnerable families**

There are some families that have significant problems in how they function. The children can be out of control and the family may cause significant disruption to their neighbours. In Sefton, we now have specially trained workers within the **Family Intervention Programme** to support and assist in managing families who are at risk of losing their tenancies, as a result of anti-social behaviour.

We support families as part of getting to the root of an anti-social behaviour issue by assessing their needs. This is a process which involves various agencies to address issues in the lives of a young person or within families.

### **Attending court**

If your case involves you attending court, you will receive support from the **ASB Victims Champion** prior to, during and after any court appearance. This will include regular updates, telling you what will happen in the court itself, what the court will expect from you, keeping you safe while at court and also travelling to and from court.

We will also work with Witness Services, who will provide additional support. Prior to attending court in any case there is an opportunity for you to visit the court with Witness Services, and be shown what a courtroom looks like, so that you are best prepared for the day of the court appearance.

### **What else will Sefton SSCP do to tackle ASB?**

We will:

- Hold regular public meetings, at least monthly, to agree local priorities with your community;
- Publicise those priority issues and inform your community what has been done to tackle them;
- Give you details of local surgeries and other ways you can raise issues with us;
- Provide your community with monthly updates on local issues through newsletters and the SSCP website – [www.respectsefton.co.uk](http://www.respectsefton.co.uk). This can include what we have done to tackle ASB including arrests, convictions and details of ASBO's.

## **Your Right to Complain**

While we will try to respond swiftly and appropriately to every complaint reported to us, if you are not happy with the service that you have received you can raise this through our complaints procedure.

### **Step 1**

In the first instance speak to the ASB investigator who has been investigating your complaint and let them know why you are not happy with the service that you have received. The ASB investigator may be able to resolve your complaint there and then. If you are not happy after this ask to speak to a manager who will look into your complaint.

We call these informal complaints and we hope that most complaints can be resolved at this stage, however, if you are still not happy with the outcome

from the informal stage you can make a formal complaint. There are a number of ways to do this:

- Telephone Sefton Council on 0151-934 2088.
- By letter or completion of a form available from One Stop Shops (if you need assistance to complete the form, our One Stop Shop staff will be able to help you).
- Email us at [customerservices@sefton.gov.uk](mailto:customerservices@sefton.gov.uk)
- In person by visiting any of our One Stop Shops located throughout the borough.
- You may wish to contact your local councillor to assist you in making a complaint.

## **Step 2**

You will receive an acknowledgement of your complaint within three working days. This will give you details of the customer contact officer dealing with your complaint, including a telephone number should you wish to follow up your complaint with the department concerned.

The customer contact officer will investigate your complaint and respond to you within 14 days. If they cannot conclude the complaint within this time you will receive a letter telling you that the complaint will require further time to investigate.

### **Review by a senior officer**

If you are not satisfied with the response you receive, you can ask the contact officer to refer your complaint to a senior officer of the department concerned, who will review your complaint.

### **Review by the Chief Executive**

If you are not satisfied after receiving a response from a senior officer you can ask for your complaint to be reviewed by the Chief Executive. This is the final step in our complaints procedure. Your complaint will be reviewed for the final time and you will receive a full response.

### **The Local Government Ombudsman**

The Local Government Ombudsman is an independent body who investigates complaints about councils. You can pick up a leaflet about the Local Government Ombudsman from any of our One Stop Shops. You can also phone 0151-489 6000 to request a leaflet to be sent out to you. You can contact the Local Government Ombudsman at: PO Box 4771, Coventry CV4 0EH. Telephone 0845 602 1983 Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5pm. Alternatively, text 07624 804323 or email [advice@lgo.org.uk](mailto:advice@lgo.org.uk).