



# THE RESPECT STANDARD

BRENTHOUSING  
PARTNERSHIP

## a guide for tenants



BRENTHOUSING  
PARTNERSHIP

**Give respect Get respect**



## Message from the Director of Housing Management

“We have listened carefully to you, our residents, and made tackling nuisance and anti-social behaviour a top priority. We fully recognise the impact anti-social behaviour can have on the lives of our residents and that the actions of a few can ruin the lives of many others in the local community.

Brent is a diverse community and all our residents are entitled to occupy their homes free from harassment and the effects of anti-social behaviour.

I want to personally reassure you that Brent Housing Partnership will be taking all necessary action to protect you from nuisance and harassment. However we cannot achieve this on our own. We need to work with other agencies and you to ensure that you are able to enjoy your homes in peace.

To further demonstrate our commitment, Brent Housing Partnership has signed up to the government’s Respect Standard for Housing Management. This booklet is a guide to what this means for you.”

*Sandra Royer, Director  
Brent Housing Partnership*



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## Solving neighbour problems

In a busy urban environment like Brent, we can all expect a certain amount of noise and annoyance from others going about their normal everyday lives. Different sleep patterns, different views about behaviour of children and pets, and different lifestyles can lead to friction and disputes. Whilst we want to build a tolerant community where everyone respects their neighbours, we accept that there are circumstances where residents act unreasonably and fail to take their neighbours' needs into consideration.

Brent Housing Partnership (BHP) is responsible for managing council owned homes on behalf of the London Borough of Brent. We are committed to investigating your reports of nuisance or anti-social behaviour by neighbours and other individuals. We then decide on the best way of dealing with the problem.

This booklet introduces the government's RESPECT Agenda and aims to help residents resolve problems with neighbours and others whose actions are adversely affecting their quality of life. This booklet recognises there are many ways of solving problems between neighbours.

Where possible we prefer trying to settle disputes informally and to help those involved resolve any differences they may have. Depending on the circumstances, we may recommend mediation as the best way of resolving a dispute with your neighbour. Trained, independent staff will talk to you about the problem and contact the other person or people involved. The aim is to reach an agreement about what is to happen in the future, for example, not playing loud music at certain times.

However, we also recognise that there are times when either the seriousness, or persistent nature of the problem, will mean that BHP has to take appropriate legal action against the person or people involved as a result of their failure to abide by the terms and conditions of their tenancy.

## BHP's commitment

We feel it is essential to demonstrate to you our overall vision and commitment to protect your needs as residents.

To this end BHP:

- ▶ is committed to taking action to deal with anti-social behaviour;
- ▶ will do everything we can to support your right to quiet and peaceful enjoyment of your home;
- ▶ will take all reasonable steps to ensure that all our residents fully comply with their obligations under the terms and conditions of their tenancy;
- ▶ fully recognise the importance of multi-agency working and will therefore work in partnership with key partners such as the Police;
- ▶ will ensure that the service you receive from us is delivered within our agreed customer care standards.

*The ASB (anti-social behaviour) team who are committed to taking action on your behalf.*



## BHP's commitment to the RESPECT STANDARD



The Respect Standard for housing management aims to ensure that social landlords tackle unacceptable behaviour and its causes to improve the quality of life of residents. Monitored by central government, BHP has signed up to the standard and these are our commitments:

### **Accountability, leadership and commitment**

At BHP, we have made a public commitment to the community to do all we can to create a culture of respect. We will make sure that all our staff understand what it takes to make a positive difference and that they are prepared to carry out our promise.

### **Empowering and reassuring residents**

BHP will communicate regularly with you, the tenants, and leaseholders to let you know what's going on through meetings, leaflets and newsletters.

We will ask you what problems you experience and will listen to your suggestions on how best to resolve them. We also celebrate and reward people who go the extra mile to make a positive contribution to the neighbourhood.

### **Prevention & early intervention**

Some anti-social behaviour can be nipped in the bud. If problems are not dealt with quickly they often escalate. If early action isn't taken people who carry out anti-social behaviour feel they can get away with it leaving the rest of the community feeling helpless and disillusioned.

BHP has a strong presence in the community through the Neighbourhood Wardens who act as an effective deterrent and reassure residents that someone is looking out for them.

We also communicate acceptable standards of behaviour. The tenancy and leasehold agreements which you, the resident, sign makes you aware of how important it is to respect your neighbours and the local environment.

### **Support of victims and witnesses**

Many people find it stressful to bring forward complaints. BHP has made it easier for people to report incidents. Once a complaint is registered people need ongoing support.

This is especially important if court action takes place and a person is asked to give evidence.

We have launched our Victim & Witness Support Scheme and we are also part of the National Witness Mobility Programme.

### **Protecting our residents through swift enforcement**

BHP has an impressive record of robust action against perpetrators of anti-social behaviour by using the powers available. These have included anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs), injunctions and measures to take away security of tenure. Using these powers we have dealt with persistent and serious offenders swiftly.

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

BHP will always aim to protect the community from anti-social behaviour. But we need solutions that work in the long term. Sometimes the best way of doing that, alongside taking firm action, is to offer support to people to change their behaviour.

Anti-social behaviour can stem from or be caused by family breakdown, lack of parenting skills, problems with drugs and alcohol and mental health issues. Support programmes can get to the root causes and put an end to behaviour that damages other's lives. They help people get back on track so everyone can look to a positive future.

In addition to this support BHP, through the Neighbourhood Warden service, promotes community activities particularly for younger residents.

## **Types of nuisance and anti-social behaviour**

Below are examples of nuisance and anti-social behaviour. These will give you an insight into the types of behaviour that fall outside the terms and conditions of your tenancy agreement with Brent Council.

**Anti-social behaviour occurs when behaviour by one household or individuals in an area threatens the physical or mental health, safety or security of another household or individual.**

### **Noise nuisance**

Noise is a common problem amongst our residents. Some noise is tolerable and inevitable in a densely populated environment, but it becomes a nuisance when its level and frequency make an unreasonable invasion on your right to peace and quiet.

Noise nuisance can range from playing loud music or listening to the television at unreasonable levels, to shouting or slamming doors loudly and inconsiderate use of electrical appliances. Removing flooring such as carpets or installing wooden/laminate flooring can seriously reduce the effectiveness of the sound insulation of your property and cause annoyance to your neighbours. Playing your car radio loudly whilst leaving or arriving at the car park for your property, especially at night, can also cause annoyance to your neighbours.

Brent Council can take action against serious noise nuisance under the Environmental Protection Act (1990) resulting in criminal prosecution and/or confiscation of sound equipment. BHP may also take action against perpetrators of noise nuisance under the Housing Act (1996).

### **Graffiti, vandalism and damage to council property**

Any type of graffiti, vandalism or damage to council property is not only in breach of the tenancy agreement but the perpetrator will also be liable to prosecution by the police. Criminal damage includes damage to the block or the estate and the property of residents who live on the estate.

If you witness anyone causing damage to council property, you should immediately contact your housing officer and/or the police.

### **Obstructing communal areas**

Dumping rubbish on communal balconies, staircases or landings, in corridors, entrance areas or any shared areas, can cause nuisance or danger to others.

All household rubbish should be put in the bins provided. Blocking communal areas by leaving gas cylinders, washing, rubbish, prams, fridges, bicycles or other objects in the way, is in breach of the tenancy agreement and can represent a serious fire hazard. These items will be removed and you will be charged for this.

If you, your family or visitors to your home are found to be loitering in communal areas thereby creating a nuisance and annoyance to others, you will be deemed to be in breach of your tenancy and action will be taken against you.

### **Racial harassment**

BHP is committed to evicting any tenant who racially abuses or threatens another resident. A racial incident is classified as “any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person”.

Threatening, insulting or abusive words and behaviour (spoken or written) are a criminal offence and perpetrators should be reported to the community safety unit at your police station or a BHP officer. BHP will not tolerate any harassment due to race, ethnicity, nationality, culture, sexuality, gender, age, marital status, religion or disability.

### **Criminal activity**

Examples of criminal activity include drug dealing and usage, prostitution and handling stolen goods. As well as being in breach of the tenancy agreement, these acts are against the law.

If you suspect a neighbour of committing these crimes, please voice your concerns directly to your housing officer or the police. BHP is working with the police to ensure that we are tough on crime.

### **Domestic abuse**

Everyone has the right to live in a safe environment, free from abuse. If you or someone you know is suffering from domestic violence, neglect or abuse, either emotional or sexual, you can contact the Community Safety Unit at your local police station. BHP provides confidential advice and assistance.

## **Your responsibilities**

Your tenancy agreement sets out what you can expect from us and what we can expect from you. By signing the terms and conditions you have agreed:

- ▶ **NOT** to cause a nuisance, or let your family, friends or visitors cause a nuisance by making too much noise.
- ▶ **NOT** to cause a nuisance, or let your family, friends or visitors cause a nuisance by harassing anyone.
- ▶ **NOT** to be involved in criminal activity.
- ▶ **NOT** to damage the property and to return it to the council in a good state when you leave.
- ▶ **TO** dispose of your rubbish in the appropriate bins provided.
- ▶ **TO** be responsible for the good behaviour of your family, friends and visitors in your home or on the estate. For example, you are personally responsible for the conduct of your children.
- ▶ **TO** ensure that any pets the council has given you permission to have are kept under control and do not make a mess, cause a nuisance, or damage your home or the estate you live on.
- ▶ **NOT** to use your washing machine or do DIY outside normal daylight hours.

## Dealing with problems yourself

**This method is often the simplest way to resolve problems. Most people can be reasonable if approached in person. People are sometimes unaware that they are causing you a nuisance.**

**Speaking with someone face to face is certainly preferable to either shouting at them or writing letters to them because they are likely to become defensive. Before approaching your neighbour you should:**

- ▶ Think about what you want to say.
- ▶ Have a clear and simple message in mind - it will give you more confidence.
- ▶ Be clear about what the problem is and think about how it affects you.
- ▶ Do not stray from the main issue.
- ▶ Think beforehand what the outcome is likely to be.
- ▶ Try to choose a good moment.
- ▶ Before you talk to your neighbour, try talking to another person. eg a friend or your housing officer.

### **Some useful tips:**

- ▶ Try to stay calm and friendly; being aggressive is not going to help.
- ▶ Explain what the problem is, how you feel and how it affects you. Often people may not realise that a problem exists, especially when the problem is noise.
- ▶ Always listen to your neighbour and think about what they are saying. By listening as well as talking you help to build a good atmosphere where problems are more likely to be resolved.
- ▶ Try not to interrupt the other person when they are talking.
- ▶ Try not to shout, even if your neighbour does! Try to stay in control and not be abusive.
- ▶ Try not to bring up incidents from the past, especially if they are not relevant to the present dispute. Instead look to the future and how you want things to change.
- ▶ Be tolerant.
- ▶ If your neighbour is unreasonable - leave the discussion.

## Our responsibilities

BHP is responsible for the day to day running of council tenanted and leasehold properties. We make sure that all tenants and leaseholders keep to the terms and conditions of their tenancy or lease agreement. Nuisance behaviour is a breach of these, so if the person causing the nuisance is a council tenant or leaseholder, you should contact BHP's ASB (anti-social behaviour) team and they will investigate.

### **Action plan**

Your ASB officer will discuss an action plan with you to resolve the problem. He or she will be honest about the likely outcome of the various forms of action, particularly legal action. They will confirm the action plan in writing to you.

Depending on what happened, the action plan might include:

- ▶ you approaching your neighbour;
- ▶ mediation;
- ▶ an officer interviewing or writing to your neighbour;
- ▶ using specialist staff or equipment to analyse a noise nuisance problem;
- ▶ collecting further evidence, or using professional witnesses;
- ▶ starting legal action. Court action will only succeed if the right evidence is available;
- ▶ involving Brent Council departments or other organisations.

## Legal action BHP can take

Although legal action is the last step in the process, BHP will not hesitate to take action against the few who continually cause nuisance to our residents. This action may include:

### **Injunctions**

These can be obtained very quickly and can order your neighbour to stop doing something, for example, playing loud music or can order them to carry out an action such as clearing their garden of rubbish.

In serious cases of nuisance and harassment, where there is the threat of violence, the court can attach a power of arrest to the injunction. This can be obtained within 24 hours. If your neighbour continues the behaviour, the police have the power to arrest them immediately.

### **Possession Orders**

This process takes longer than obtaining an injunction and will normally involve evidence that has been gathered over a period of time being presented to the court. To obtain a possession order we need strong evidence that will stand up to close examination in court. If the judge is satisfied that the tenant has breached the terms of their tenancy, or specific requirements contained in the Housing Act, they can grant a possession order which means that the tenant can be evicted by county court bailiffs.

### **Anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs)**

These are legal orders which can be specifically used against people aged 10 or over. To obtain an order we have to work very closely with the police and the council. Incidents where these orders may be used include against groups of people who loiter in communal areas and who intimidate residents with their behaviour. An order could take the form of banning these people from a particular area or part of the borough.

Environmental Health can take criminal proceedings with a maximum fine of £5000 per offence. They can confiscate sound equipment and keep it permanently where justified. Evidence can be used for possession proceedings and/or anti-social behaviour orders.

### **Leaseholders**

Leaseholders are bound by the covenants contained in their leases not to behave in an anti-social manner. BHP is committed to applying to court for forfeiture of a lease (the leaseholder can lose the right to the lease) or an injunction in the event of a breach of covenant by a leaseholder. It is a requirement that we must prove to the court that the covenant has been broken.

## Reporting nuisance to BHP

If you are suffering from nuisance, you should contact BHP and ask to speak to your anti-social behaviour officer or housing officer.

Once you have reported the nuisance, the ASB officer will usually write to your neighbour, advising them of the complaint but not telling them where it has come from. The letter will also explain that if the complaint is justified or the behaviour continues, legal action may have to be taken. Your neighbour will be invited to meet with our ASB officer to resolve the problem.

### **Anti-social behaviour team**

The ASB team is a specialist section dealing with complex nuisance, harassment and domestic violence issues. The team investigates serious complaints including working with other agencies and takes various actions to seek resolutions to problems. These actions have already been highlighted in this booklet.

The ASB team also recognises the impact that crime and disorder has on the communities we serve. To this end, BHP is committed to implementing the ASB strategy in line with Brent Council's crime and disorder strategy.

### **What we can do:**

As a specialist team, persistent and serious anti social behaviour and nuisance are our priority. We are here to help you enjoy your home in peace. When a case is referred to us we will contact and interview you and the person that you are complaining about. We will do everything to protect your confidentiality. We will try and resolve the problem by negotiation.

Another option is for our ASB officer to refer you to the Brent Mediation Service, who will take you and your neighbour through the process of mediation. This allows you and your neighbour to discuss the problem with a trained mediation officer present.

## Ten top tips to be a good neighbour

- ▶ Make sure a keyholder can be contacted if your burglar or car alarm goes off while you are on holiday;
- ▶ keep the volume of hi-fis, radios and televisions as low as possible especially at night;
- ▶ position fridges, freezers and speakers well away from party walls;
- ▶ use washing machines, vacuum cleaners and other noisy equipment during the day;
- ▶ try to ensure that your dog does not bark or whine for long periods of time;
- ▶ do DIY jobs during the day;
- ▶ keep your children under control when they are playing outside your property;
- ▶ if you play a musical instrument, try not to play it early in the morning or last thing at night;
- ▶ and remember - only carry out unavoidably noisy activities between 9am and 9pm.

Above all, be considerate and only treat your neighbours as you would expect to be treated yourself.

## EnviroCrime

EnviroCrime is a term that covers a wide range of unpleasant, anti-social activities that lowers the quality of life in our local environments. The most common EnviroCrimes are:

- ▶ graffiti
- ▶ vandalism
- ▶ dog fouling
- ▶ abandoned vehicles
- ▶ pollution
- ▶ noise nuisance
- ▶ littering
- ▶ fly-posters
- ▶ dumped rubbish and fly-tips.

### How is EnviroCrime being targeted?

Individually these EnviroCrimes are dealt with by a number of different enforcement units within BHP: Estate inspections team, Neighbourhood Warden service, Brent Council and also through other organisations such as the police, the DVLA and the Environment Agency. Where several EnviroCrimes persistently occur together, in a particular area, there is a negative impact on the environment and the local community. When this happens co-ordinated action is required

### How you can get involved?

You, the local people have a very important role to play in targeting EnviroCrime. This involves the following:

- ▶ reporting EnviroCrime hot spots
- ▶ suggesting improvements
- ▶ playing an active part in community clean up days
- ▶ implementing envirocrime prevention measures
- ▶ recycling your rubbish using the appropriate recycling bins
- ▶ helping to maintain the improvements that are achieved.

If your local area has **at least 4** different EnviroCrimes and they are occurring **persistently** at a **specific site** please contact Environmental Health: Tel: (020) 8937 5252 or through the website: [www.brent.gov.uk/eh](http://www.brent.gov.uk/eh). This will help them to identify EnviroCrime hot spots in the borough which can then be programmed onto their list of sites for intensive action.

BHP is committed to providing excellent services to achieve continued customer satisfaction.

## Useful contacts:

BHP ASB Team .....	020 8937 2951
Chancel House, Neasden Lane, London NW10 2UF	
email: asb@bhphousing.co.uk	
BHP website: www.bhphousing.co.uk	
BHP Neighbourhood Warden Confidential Hotline .....	020 8451 5050
Emergency services: Police, Fire, Ambulance .....	Dial 999
South Kilburn Housing Office.....	020 8937 2644
Community Resource Centre	
William Dunbar House	
Albert Road, London NW6 5DE	
Harlesden Police Station .....	020 965 1212
76 Craven Park Road, London NW10 8RJ	
Kilburn Police Station .....	020 8733 3773
38 Saulsbury Road, London NW6 6LT	
Wembley Police Station.....	020 8733 3221
603-605 Harrow Road, Wembley HA0 2HH	
Crimestoppers .....	Freephone 0800 555 111
Community Action Team.....	020 8733 3863
76 Craven Park Road, London NW10 8RJ	
London Borough of Brent – Emergency out of hours service.....	020 8937 1234
(available continuously from 5pm on Friday to 8am on Monday, and then nightly from 6pm to 8am on other days).	
One Stop Shops (Customer Service Line).....	020 8937 1200
Environmental Health.....	020 8937 5050
Noise Nuisance Team.....	020 8937 5252



*BHP's Neighbourhood Warden team*

