

# acceptable

## behaviour contracts (ABCs)

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## What is an Acceptable Behaviour Contract (ABC)?

An Acceptable Behaviour Contract (more commonly named an 'ABC') is an individual agreement between the perpetrator of antisocial behaviour, the Council (as landlord) and the police whereby the perpetrator agrees not to carry on with specified acts of antisocial behaviour.

They are an established initiative being used by councils as a way of combating antisocial behaviour and are particularly aimed at young people.

ABCs are now also used by other organisations that have a responsibility for tackling antisocial behaviour for example, registered social landlords, health authorities, public transport providers, schools and any other agency which seeks to tackle the problems of antisocial behaviour caused by a person of any age.

## What is antisocial behaviour?

There are many definitions of antisocial behaviour. A common definition is:

**“Any behaviour which may cause, or be likely to cause, a nuisance or annoyance and which may be harassment, criminal, illegal and/or immoral behaviour”.**

Some examples of antisocial behaviour that may be appropriate for an ABC are:

- ▶ Riding mopeds or scooters through roads and paths and/or revving their engines.

- ▶ Harassment.
- ▶ Racial abuse.
- ▶ Violence or threats of violence to people or their property.
- ▶ Vandalism and graffiti.
- ▶ Blocking stairways, walkways, entrances or paths.
- ▶ Playing loud music.
- ▶ Intimidating or threatening behaviour in large groups.
- ▶ Shouting and yelling close to people's homes.
- ▶ Disorderly behaviour from drinking alcohol or smoking.
- ▶ Substance misuse.
- ▶ Climbing on roofs, vandalising lifts.
- ▶ Playing noisy or aggressive games near to people's homes.

This is not an extensive list and there are many other types of behaviour considered to be antisocial.

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## Who decides that an Acceptable Behaviour Contract (ABC) is appropriate?

Police from the Community Safety Unit in liaison with relevant council departments (for example housing services, youth offending team (YOT), education, legal services, social services) and any other relevant organisation responsible for tackling antisocial behaviour.

## How is the ABC made?

The perpetrator will be asked to attend a meeting at their local housing office or YOT office with their housing officer, youth worker, the police and any other appropriate person involved in the matter, for example social worker/probation officer.

If the perpetrator is under 18 a parent or guardian will also be asked to attend the meeting.

At the meeting the perpetrator's behaviour will be discussed and the consequences of such behaviour will be explained, that is, the action that the Council can take. Such action will include proceedings for possession of the perpetrator's home.

**The perpetrator will then be given the opportunity to stop the behaviour that is causing problems by signing an agreement, the ABC.**

## What would happen if the terms of the ABC were broken?

The perpetrator and their family could be evicted from their home and become homeless and/or the perpetrator could be taken to court where a magistrate

could make an Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO) against them.

### **What would happen if the conditions of the ASBO were broken?**

Breaking the conditions of the ASBO is a criminal offence and would result in the perpetrator being fined or sent to prison/ youth custody.

### **Why may the family be evicted if it was their child's behaviour causing a problem?**

When the parent/guardian first obtained their council home, or were housed by the Council, they signed a tenancy agreement or license agreement. Under the terms of that agreement they have certain responsibilities which cover their own behaviour and that of their children, their visitors and their children's visitors.

If any of those people are found to be causing antisocial behaviour, the Council may commence legal proceedings for the repossession of their home. If the court grants a Possession Order the whole family will be evicted from their home.

If the family are in hostel accommodation the Council does not need to obtain a Possession Order. They will be given notice to vacate the accommodation and evicted much more quickly.

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## **If evicted will the Council re-house the family?**

In most cases the Council will not provide any other housing for the family, as they will be considered to have made themselves intentionally homeless. The family can make an application to the Council's Homelessness Assessments Team and their case will be assessed under the current homelessness legislation.

If the family have been evicted from a hostel where they were placed pending enquiries into their homelessness application, the family will not be able to re-apply for housing.

## **What if the perpetrator will not sign the ABC or the parent/guardian will not allow them to?**

**The ABC is seen as a last chance for the perpetrator to mend their ways and/or for the parent/guardian to control their children. It is hoped that it will prevent the family from being evicted.**

If the perpetrator refuses to sign the ABC the Council will have to consider immediate legal action to obtain an ASBO and/or a Possession Order.

**We hope that you have found this leaflet helpful. If you have any queries about the information in this leaflet please contact your housing officer.**

