


Acceptable Behaviour Agreements

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Organisation:	North Tyneside MBC (learn more)
Number of properties:	15,952
Type:	Metropolitan/Unitary
Region:	North East
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North Tyneside Council uses Acceptable Behaviour Agreements as the cornerstone of its approach to tackling anti-social behaviour carried out by young people. The Council works closely with the police and Youth Offending Team, and with young people themselves, achieving an 85% compliance rate with the agreements.



Tool for a growing problem

Early in 2002 North Tyneside Council's local area housing office in North Shields was receiving increasing complaints about anti-social behaviour (ASB) on the New York and Moor Park housing estates. Young people were damaging property, writing graffiti, trespassing on private property and generally harassing those living in the area. The Council and police, with the support of the local residents association, decided to pilot the use of Acceptable Behaviour Agreements (ABAs) on the estate.

Initially the scheme was targeted at young people aged between 10 and 17 engaged in ASB. In the pilot, five young people and their parents signed ABAs. There was an immediate reduction in ASB incidents and complaints reduced. Significantly, the scheme received considerable publicity in the local press which sent out reassuring messages to the community.

Following the success of the initial pilot (police reported that incidents of ASB fell by 40% in the first year) the scheme was extended to cover the whole of the North Shields area. At the same time, the use of ABAs was extended to include adults engaged in noise nuisance, intimidation or criminal behaviour.

In July 2004 a specialist Safer Estates Team was set up within the Council's housing services department and, in partnership with the police, ABAs were extended to be used as a tool to tackle ASB across the whole borough and covering all tenures. The ABA process became part of the Council's [ASB policy and procedures](#) put in place in December 2004.

ABAs are not always the most appropriate tool to tackle anti-social behaviour. As part of its anti-social behaviour strategy North Tyneside Council uses a range of other tools:

- injunctions
- anti-social behaviour orders
- possession proceedings
- demotion orders changing a secure tenancy to an interim, insecure tenancy
- introductory tenancies.

How ABAs are used

Parents are sent [a letter](#) inviting them along with the young person to attend a meeting in the local council offices. The meeting discusses the nature of the ASB and the consequences for the young person and their family if it continues. For some parents this is the first time they are aware that there is a problem. The possible consequences for the young person in later life if they do not change their behaviour are outlined:

- issuing of an Anti Social Behaviour Order (ASBO)
- eviction for their family
- potential employers reluctant to employ someone who has been involved in incidents of ASB
- not being granted a tenancy of their own in the future.

All parties - the young person, their parents, the Housing Patch Manager, a police officer and the Safer Estates Officer - sign and receive a copy of the agreement so that there is no doubt about what has been agreed. [The agreement](#) specifies precisely the acts of ASB that the young person agrees not to do. ABAs are used to address a wide range of anti social behaviour including:

- harassment of residents and passers by
- verbal abuse
- criminal damage
- vandalism
- graffiti
- noise nuisance
- racial abuse
- threatening behaviour.

Failure to attend the meeting results in [another letter](#) advising that the Council will pursue legal action such as applying for an ASBO or commencing eviction proceedings.

An ABA lasts for 12 months, but can be renewed by agreement between both parties. The ABA is monitored on a four weekly basis by the housing patch office, the local police officer and the Safer Estates officer. Where there is a breach the young person and their parents are called back to discuss the breach and asked to sign a [First Breach Warning form](#) which indicates clearly that the next step is either commencing eviction proceedings or applying for an ASBO.

A breach of one of the first ABAs occurred five weeks after it was signed. The Council and

police acted quickly and used the press to publicise their intention to follow through with enforcement action.

Supporting young people

Following on the success of the initial scheme, the Council decided to further develop and extend the project.

It decided to introduce [ABA suspension notices](#). These notices are issued when other interventions, usually by the Youth Offending Team, are taking place and an agreement is reached that the young person is not required to sign a full ABA provided they engage with the support programme and no further ASB takes place.

The most recent development occurred in 2006 when ABAs were further enhanced to contain, where appropriate, a requirement for the young person to engage with positive activities. Examples of activities used by North Tyneside are:

- [Never too late](#) (N2L) – a support programme to address [drug and alcohol misuse](#)
- [Prison? Me? No Way!](#) – giving young people a meaningful insight into prison life
- Intensive Family Support, working alongside the Safer Estates Team, focusing on the rehabilitation and support of families who are at risk of being evicted as a result of ASB.

This development stemmed from the recognition that the young person was often facing significant issues in their life that contributed to their ASB. The Safer Estates Team approach combines enforcement with referral to prevention and support measures. All young people issued with an ABA are referred to the Youth Offending Team.

Involving residents

When the scheme was initially piloted in 2002, the Council and local police already had strong links with the local residents' group who were consulted over the proposal to introduce ABAs. As the scheme was extended across the borough other resident and community groups were also consulted.

In June 2006 the Safer Estates Team established a focus group of council tenants and other residents from across the borough. Their remit is to review and monitor the Council's ASB policy and procedures. The group meets on a four to six weekly cycle and considers performance information in relation to ABA and other aspects of the Council's ASB policies.

Where ASBs appear on the agenda of a resident or community group, officers from the Safer Estates Team and local police officers will attend.

Impact of ABAs

Between April 2006 and March 2007, 313 people signed up to an ABA. This included 194 young people and 119 adults.

- 137 were associated with council tenancies

- 127 were associated with private rented tenancies
- 49 were associated with owner occupiers
- 52 required the person signing up to engage in a diversionary scheme
- 71 ABA suspension notices were issued
- 85% of the ABAs were not breached
- 24 who had breached their ABA were recalled and signed a First Breach Warning
- 11 were issued with ASBOs
- 5 had injunctions issued against them
- 4 were evicted from their council house
- 2 were served with Notices of Possession on behalf of their private landlord.

As well as reporting to the focus group and local resident and community groups, the use of ABAs and their performance is reported to meetings of the Area Housing Forum. Here ward councillors and tenant representatives can monitor progress in tackling ASB at a local level.

Performance is also monitored at a strategic level at monthly meetings between the Safer Estates Team and Northumbria Police. Operational performance is monitored at locally based Safer Estates meetings with the police. Decisions are made to put in place ABAs, monitor compliance, address breaches and agree on subsequent action.

The Council has recently surveyed everyone who reported ASB within the previous twelve months as part of their review of ASB policy and procedures. The feedback has been used to inform policy development and has been reported to the focus group. One outcome was the need to keep the community fully informed on the actions being taken and the outcomes achieved.

Lessons learned

The Safer Estates Team has identified the following as having a significant impact on the success of the scheme in North Tyneside:

- strong commitment from North Tyneside Council and Northumbria Police
- strong links locally between housing officers and the police
- regular local Safer Estates meetings between the Council and police to nominate for new ABAs and monitor existing ABAs
- delivery of attendance notices by police officers - ensuring a high level of attendance at sign up meetings
- use of the [local press to publicise success](#) as both a reassurance to the community and a warning to those who commit acts of ASB.

Awards and commendations

North Tyneside has won local and national awards for the positive impact of its ASB policy including ABAs.

In February 2006 the Safer Estates Team won the Mayor's award for their positive impact on the community. The role of ABAs in tackling ASB was part of this award.










In November 2006 the national award 'Community Police Officer of the Year' was won by a North Tyneside Police Sergeant. The successful use of ABAs were cited amongst the reasons for his award.

In February 2007 two North Tyneside residents, both members of local community groups, received national Respect awards for 'taking a stand'. In both cases the winners were involved in supporting the ABA process by encouraging local residents to report ASB and to provide evidence to enable ABAs to be made.

Future developments

The Council sees ABAs as a very effective tool in tackling ASB through early intervention. Since its inception in 2002 it has evolved and the Safer Estates Team will continue to use and develop ABAs as part of its overall strategy to eradicate social exclusion.

Supporting content

-  [Anti-social behaviour policy and procedures](#) December 2004 - North Tyneside MBC
-  [Letter of invitation to sign an ABA](#) North Tyneside MBC 78Kb
-  [Sample ABAs](#) North Tyneside MBC
-  [Letter on failure to sign an ABA](#) North Tyneside MBC 69Kb
-  [Proforma first breach warning](#) North Tyneside MBC 78Kb
-  [Sample ABA suspension notice](#) North Tyneside MBC 84Kb
-  [It's 'never too late' to get help for drug and alcohol problems, young people told](#) 16 December 2005 - North Tyneside MBC 62Kb
-  [Drugs and Alcohol: A Guide for Families](#) North Tyneside MBC 670Kb
-  [Press coverage of the Council's use of ABAs](#) 2002 - North Tyneside MBC 313Kb

More information on

-  [North Tyneside MBC](#)

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