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# All-Party Parliamentary Group on Anti-Social Behaviour

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**Shaun Bailey MP**  
APPG Chair

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## Forewords by Shaun Bailey MP - APPG Chair and Glenn Harris - CEO Midland Heart

In far too many of our communities the lives of the law-abiding majority are negatively impacted by the mindless actions of a few. Across all parties and all parts of our country we all want to see our communities become places that people not only want to live but where businesses want to invest and opportunities are equally created.

To do this we must address Anti-Social Behaviour head on and do more to support those organisations on the frontline of this work, including the police, local authorities, housing providers, community groups and charities.

That is why I have worked with these groups to establish the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Anti-Social Behaviour, whose first action will be to launch an inquiry into what more can be done to reduce Anti-Social Behaviour in our communities and what specifically housing providers can do and need to make things better for their tenants.

It is clear that this inquiry will need to look at how we allocate housing in our communities, the way partners should work together when addressing this issue and how the courts could play a better role.

However, much more also needs to be included and I would like you to help us shape this inquiry as well as provide evidence and insight over the next few months. Please let us have your thoughts on what else should be included by emailing [APPG@midlandheart.org.uk](mailto:APPG@midlandheart.org.uk)



**Glenn Harris,**  
Chief Executive of  
Midland Heart

**On behalf of the housing sector, I want to welcome the creation of this APPG and its initial focus on the issues faced by far too many people in communities up and down the country.**

We receive hundreds of calls a month from tenants whose lives are being made worse by the selfish actions of their neighbours. We of course want to help and make our communities safer more enjoyable places to live. However, in far too many cases we find ourselves unable to get to the solution we want, or our tenant deserves.

In cases where another of our tenants is acting in an anti-social way it is hard to take meaningful enforcement action and almost impossible to move them regardless of the impact they are having on others.

In cases where the issues being caused by someone in a property owned by themselves or another housing provider it is even harder to have a meaningful impact on the situation and stand up for those who are trying to get on with their lives in a peaceful and law-abiding way.

Around 4.4 million people in England live in homes where this is the case. If we can find ways to get organisations to work better together to support them and push for harder penalties for those who knowingly make lives worse for others it will make a real difference to many people's lives.

**I want to thank in advance all the parliamentarians, partner organisations and charities who have agreed to support this group. I look forward to working with you.**

## Introduction

**In far too many of our communities, people's lives are negatively affected by the actions of a mindless few. Anti-social behaviour (ASB) is a significant problem that is blighting far too many communities and making life miserable for people having to suffer the results of their neighbour's behaviour. Figures from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) indicate that whilst more serious violent crimes are reducing, incidents of ASB are on the rise.**

Housing Associations and other housing providers have seen these increases at first hand and can see that more needs to be done to address this concerning trend. Where serious ASB occurs, it can have a huge impact on the health and wellbeing of other residents. It also stops us all from achieving our goal of creating balanced and sustainable communities where people not only want to live but want to invest in and grow. The impact of ASB means that residents move out to escape the problem, resulting in constant turnover in tenants and the potential for a spiral of decline.

Experience from across the housing sector shows that effective legal enforcement is getting increasingly hard to achieve due to long delays at the County Courts. The time lapse between when incidents occurring and the final hearing has also dramatically increased by the effects of the pandemic, with victim support nationally reporting a 27% increase in the demand for their services.

The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on anti-social behaviour (ASB) is an informal cross-party group of MPs and Lords with an interest in tackling ASB. The APPG will discuss how ASB affects tenants and the issues impacting local authorities, housing providers, and other stakeholders in addressing it ultimately contributing to the development of policy and legislation in this complex area.

# The APPG on Anti-Social Behaviour

**Landlords have a responsibility and some powers to tackle anti-social behaviour.**

However, a 2021 report from the Civil Justice Council found that these powers in many cases do not go far enough and are often not being used to their full potential due to a host of reasons. This will be the focus of our first inquiry, as we look into the barriers and issues faced by the housing sector in addressing ASB, and how landlords, homeowners, local authorities, the police, and others can work together to effectively do this. It will also consider what central government can do to support housing providers and others to address and reduce ASB.

## Aims of the inquiry:

- To understand the current barriers the housing sector and other stakeholders face in dealing with ASB in our communities
- To set out recommendations for how stakeholders can work together more effectively in addressing and reducing ASB
- To set out recommendations for what government needs to change to support stakeholders in addressing and reducing ASB.

## Scope and format

**The inquiry will be held over four parliamentary hearings, at which the group will hear from people who have experienced ASB, academics, practitioners, representative bodies, and decision makers.**

The APPG will also put out a call for written evidence. The evidence will be collated and analysed by the APPG's secretariat and officers, informing a written report with clear recommendations for Government, local authorities, housing associations and other stakeholders.

The group will invite written evidence from people who have experienced ASB, experts, academics, and practitioners on the barriers to addressing and reducing ASB faced by landlords and stakeholders. The questions for the oral hearings and the written call for evidence are as follows:

- What are the main barriers faced by housing providers and others in addressing and reducing ASB?
- What needs to change to ensure the system for addressing and reducing ASB can better do so, and support the creation of healthy and balanced communities?
- What needs to change to better support victims of ASB and change the behaviour of perpetrators?

## Background

Anti-social behaviour (ASB) was introduced into the housing lexicon by the Housing Act 1988, which introduced powers for local authorities to obtain injunctions with a power of arrest where there was a threat of, or actual violence.

The Act defined ASB as:

*“Conduct that is capable of causing nuisance or annoyance to some persons (who need not be a particular, identified person) and that directly or indirectly relates to, or relates to or affects, the landlord’s housing management function.”*

In response, social landlords began to address ASB in their properties and developed considerable resources and expertise in doing so. In response to criticisms that this approach punished perpetrators but did not address the underlying reasons for ASB, the Labour government elected in 1997, made one of its first actions setting up the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) to try and do so. The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 redefined ASB as *“harassment, alarm or distress to one or more persons not of the same household as the perpetrator”* and introduced the Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO) which became synonymous with the issue.

Housing providers increasingly came to be seen as authority figures on the subject, alongside the police. The Home Office established the ‘Anti-Social Behaviour Unit’ to formulate policy and support enforcement.

The coalition government (2010-2015) continued the focus with a twin-pronged, if uncoordinated, approach to ASB from the Home Office and the Troubled Families Programme through the Office of the Prime Minister. In response to increasing incidents and costs of addressing ASB, the coalition passed the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 giving housing providers increased powers to deal with the problem and redefined ASB as:

- Conduct has caused, or is likely to cause harassment, alarm, or distress to any person
- Conduct capable of causing nuisance or annoyance to a person in relation to that person’s occupation of residential premises, or
- Conduct capable of causing housing-related nuisance or annoyance to any person.

Finally, the regulatory framework for registered providers of housing requires them to work in partnership with other agencies to attempt to deal with incidents of ASB.

## The scale of the problem

During 2021, England & Wales's police forces received 1,416,946 crime reports about anti-social behaviour. Although this is a decrease of 24% from 2020's figure of 1,752,174 reports of anti-social behaviour, it remains a significant problem.

Between the years 2019/2020 to 2020/2021 we saw the number of ASB injunctions in our stock increase from 16 to 56 – **this represents a year-on-year increase of 250%**.

This is combined with the requirement for us to pursue **11 possession orders**, which could only be obtained following the lifting of the stay on possession proceedings on 20 September 2021, and **7 committal applications** during 2020/21.

Further, in a blog for Inside Housing, published just before ASB Awareness Week in 2021, the CEO of Resolve, **Rebecca Bryant**, revealed that their research had shown that:

**59%**

of people who reported ASB were dissatisfied with the way it was handled

**56%**

of people who were victims or witnesses of ASB did not report it

**45%**

said it was a problem where they live

**22%**

were satisfied with the way it was handled

**12%**

of all the adults surveyed, had been a victim of ASB in the last 12 months

**35%**

said the problem is getting worse.

**83%**

of people who had reported being a victim of ASB said more needed to be done to tackle it

# Timeline

The APPG inquiry will hold four oral evidence sessions over the next 12 months to hear from:

## Evidence session 1 (December 2022)

Evidence session with our interested landlord partners:

Questions for the session:

- What are the barriers to dealing with ASB?
- Who are your main partner agencies in doing this?
- How could you work together better – what are the barriers and solutions?
- What are the main tools you use to address ASB?
- What changes to national policy would help you to address ASB better?
  - More control over allocations
  - Quicker resolutions
  - A specialist Housing Court
- Are there any local barriers? What more could local authorities do?
- Recent trends and changes? Is its nature or location shifting at all?
- Where is the line between ASB and criminality? Is there one?
- Which groups are worst affected?
- Has the accepted definition of ASB altered in recent years? (A lot of stuff now classed as ASB would previously have been described using terms that sound more serious.)

## Evidence session 2 (January 2023)

Evidence session with leading housing academics:

**Vicky Heap** (Sheffield Hallam University)

**John Flint** (University of Sheffield)

Questions for the session:

- Overview of ASB policy history
- Main academic/research findings on ASB
- Main barriers/problems with current ASB policy
- What needs to change?

## APPG meeting (January 2023)

Meeting to discuss the inquiry and evidence gathered to date.

### **Evidence session 3 (January 2023)**

Evidence session with tenants and TPAS.

Questions for the session:

What are your experiences of ASB?

- How did your landlord perform dealing with it? What could they have done better?
- What do you expect from your landlord in addressing ASB?
- Do you think your landlord needs any more powers?

### **Evidence session 4 (February 2023)**

Evidence Session with other concerned organisations:

- PCCs
- Local authorities
- National Housing Federation and Chartered Institute of Housing
- Resolve
- HelpASB.

Questions for the session

- What is your experience of working with landlords in addressing ASB?
- What did they do well? What could they have done better?
- Do you think you/they need any further powers?
- What policy changes would make dealing with ASB quicker?

### **APPG meeting (March 2023)**

Session with MPs to share inquiry findings and ask for their final input and suggested recommendations.

### **APPG meeting to agree final report and recommendations (April 2023).**

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