

Anti-Social Behaviour: Our Service During the Coronavirus Pandemic

During the coronavirus pandemic, PCHA continues to be committed to investigating and resolving ASB issues affecting our residents and communities. However, we've had to make temporary changes to the way we deliver our service due to the restrictions of movement for our staff members and the safety of our residents and their families.

Changes to our ASB service

The primary changes are:

- Suspending all face-to-face home and site visits. We can still issue Warning Letters and Formal Cautions to households where we have received complaints about ASB. In these instances, we will also attempt to contact alleged perpetrators by telephone to discuss their behaviour.
- Introducing the use of Zoom and other social media platforms to enable us to interview victims or witnesses of serious ASB in a more sensitive way
- Exploring the use of a temporary platform for residents to share audio and/or visual recordings, as these files are often too large to be sent to us via email
- Continuing to offer a mediation service, although this will now be conducted using telephone or video conferencing.

Implications of these changes

These changes could mean it takes us slightly longer to investigate and resolve ASB cases. In addition, the introduction of the Coronavirus Act 2020 means we will also encounter delays in progressing legal action, particularly because:

- The four-week legal notice period has been extended to three months
- Possession cases are being stayed for a 90-day period.



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What will we/won't we investigate?

Despite these temporary changes to our service, the definition of ASB remains the same. Full details of the types of incident we will investigate can be found in our ASB information leaflet on our website [here](#).

As always, we expect residents to attempt to resolve minor neighbour disputes between themselves. The types of issues that we will NOT investigate as ASB include:

- Parking disputes
- General household living noise – babies crying, children playing, washing machine noise
- Cooking smells
- Boundary disputes
- Children playing.

Can PCHA enforce lockdown rules?

As a housing association, our statutory enforcement powers are quite limited and we are NOT able to investigate allegations of residents flouting lockdown rules. However, we work closely with the police who have set up a reporting tool on their website. If you wish to report such incidents you should report the incident to the Bromley Police using the following dedicated link: <https://www.met.police.uk/tua/tell-us-about/c19/tell-us-about-possible-breach-coronavirus-measures/>.

Mediation

In cases where evidence suggests that the behaviour of both parties is contributing to the ASB issues (regardless of who started it!), we will consider this to be a neighbour dispute that would be best resolved through mediation or a Good Neighbour Agreement. Mediation is an effective way of resolving neighbour disputes and can be arranged with or without both parties meeting face to face. The mediator will work with both parties to help them communicate and understand each other's concerns to jointly come up with solutions to help resolve the dispute. It is a voluntary process and both parties need to agree, however by taking part it could help to resolve issues without the need for enforcement action.

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What enforcement powers does PCHA have?

Our powers are limited and we will only take legal action where there is substantial evidence to do so. In many cases we get two different versions of events and the reality is we may never know the truth behind who started it, what exactly happened and how things escalated. Without clear evidence and/or independent witnesses we will expect residents to work with us to find a positive resolution, such as mediation. In these circumstances we will generally not take enforcement action against one party, although we may take enforcement action against both if the matter remains unresolved! However, whilst we are investigating an ASB issue, and throughout the process, it is vital that you do not retaliate or exacerbate the issue, otherwise we are unlikely to be able to help you.

Reporting ASB

If you feel you are experiencing ASB and your own attempts to resolve the issue with your neighbour have not been effective, you can report this to us by emailing housing@pcha.co.uk.

If we have been working with you on an open ASB case, you can still contact our Tenancy Services Officer or another team member directly. They will continue to support you on a weekly or fortnightly basis to share updates, keep logs and offer advice. While we are not able to meet face to face, this support will take place by telephone or email – whichever you prefer.

If you experience serious ASB (something that would be considered a crime), please report it to the Police by dialling 101, or 999 if it is an emergency. In addition, Crimestoppers remain open and you can call them anonymously on 0800 555 111.

Be considerate and tolerant

Finally, we would like to remind you to be particularly considerate of your neighbours during this time and try to keep noise levels reasonable. Excessive domestic noise, such as loud music, DIY noise or dogs barking, particularly during unsociable hours, can cause severe disturbance to your neighbours, who may already be distressed by being forced to stay at home, or to those who are elderly, have young children or are working shifts. Vice versa, please also be tolerant of others and recognise that some increase in daily noise level is inevitable with many people still stuck at home. This is a time for kindness and patience.