

'When enough is enough...'

As part of our commitment to tackling anti-social behaviour, Westlea now has a dedicated team of two anti-social behaviour officers who are working with residents and partnership agencies to reduce and resolve anti-social behaviour issues in your area.

This team works with your Neighbourhood Housing Officers and offers advice, support and – where necessary – arranges court action.

Westlea also works very closely with the Police, North Wiltshire District Council, the youth offending team and a variety of other support agencies in the local Community Safety Partnership. The Partnership works together to discuss people causing nuisance in the area and what should be done to try and resolve the problem; working together means any action taken is likely to be much more effective. Although often the only way of dealing with those causing anti-social behaviour is court action, sometimes other solutions can work better. Over the past few years the Partnership has taken joint action against a number of individuals - introducing support plans, Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (see below) and Injunctions which have all had a positive effect on our neighbourhoods.

- **14 Injunctions were taken out in 2007 alone and 4 Acceptable Behaviour Contracts are currently in force.**
- **Since 2003 Westlea have obtained 13 Final Possession Orders against anti-social tenants resulting in 12 evictions.**

The new team at Westlea is part of our support for the government's 'RESPECT' standard. This is about central government, local agencies, local communities and ultimately every citizen working together to build a society in which we can respect one another - where anti-social behaviour is rare and tackled effectively, and communities can live in peace together.

Success with Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABCs)

An Acceptable Behaviour Contract (ABC) is an informal agreement between Westlea, the Community Safety Partnership and the perpetrator of anti-social behaviour. The purpose of the ABC is to give the perpetrator the opportunity to change their behaviour voluntarily. The ABCs Westlea has used so far have been very successful and resulted in a dramatic change of behaviour in some cases. One ABC was so successful it resulted in Westlea giving him a reference to his future employer to help him with his career. The agreements include clauses which prohibit the person responsible for antisocial behaviour from engaging in certain activities which have caused a nuisance, annoyance, harassment or distress to other residents in their area. For example, agreeing not to play music excessively loud during certain times; not to act in an intimidating or threatening way to their neighbours; not to throw stones, balls or other objects at neighbours; not to cause damage to another resident's property; and not to allow their visitors to cause a nuisance.

If you are experiencing anti-social behaviour, please contact your neighbourhood housing officer at Westlea on 01249 465465.

SOME RECENT EXAMPLES OF ACTION TAKEN BY WESTLEA

1 CORSHAM

Residents of Weller Road had to deal with a couple of brothers running a skip hire business from their property – on a daily basis bringing home a variety of skips on the back of lorries, filled with scrap rubbish and metal. Their lorries often took up all the parking spaces in the street, making it difficult for other residents to park. The brothers started work at about 6.30am every morning, throwing scrap metal items from one truck to the other. When they were asked to keep the noise down by neighbours the response given was abusive. Eventually residents had enough and four of them said that they would be willing to let Westlea use their evidence (recorded in 'nuisance logs' or diaries) to take the brothers to court and request an injunction. An injunction is a civil court ruling that forbids or prohibits people from doing things which cause anti-social behaviour or a nuisance to other residents. Two of the witnesses came to court and the other two gave their evidence anonymously through their housing officer. The judge granted the injunction request and since the court hearing there have been no further problems in the street.

2 WOOTTON BASSETT

Residents in Queens Road called Westlea to report that a variety of police officers were evacuating their street. The Police said that they had found explosives in one of our properties and they were concerned for the safety of the residents. The son of a resident had been experimenting with a number of chemicals and there were explosives at the property. They called for the bomb disposal unit and the police who proceeded to evacuate the street until the property could be made secure.

Residents were exhausted by this disruption and also very concerned for the safety of their families and wanted something done. Residents agreed to come forward to help Westlea take out an injunction against the neighbours causing the nuisance. The judge granted an injunction against one of the occupants and the two other residents at the property entered into a court undertaking. An undertaking is similar to an injunction but it is a promise to the court in relation to future conduct. They agreed that they would not keep



explosives at the property; they would not engage in conduct causing or likely to cause a nuisance to their neighbours; they would not keep dogs or allow visitors to keep dogs in their property; and they would not play any musical instrument, stereo or TV so loudly it can be heard from outside the property. Since this action was taken no further incidents have occurred.

3 NESTON

A resident in Neston caused extreme noise nuisance to his neighbours by regularly playing his guitar - plugged into an amplifier - at all hours of the day and night. He played his music loud on

a regular basis and also banged pots on the neighbours' wall and sang loudly on a regular basis. With the help of neighbours, Westlea obtained an injunction against this tenant which forbade him from singing, playing guitar and using musical equipment so loudly that it caused a nuisance to neighbours in the area. However the moment he received the injunction notice he breached it. Westlea applied to the court for a penalty to be imposed for this and at a court hearing last month the resident was found guilty of breaching the injunction on 13 different occasions and sentenced to six months in prison. Witness evidence was given by his neighbour, Environmental Health and Westlea.

4 MALMESBURY

A suspended Possession Order obtained in February last year on a Malmesbury property brought to an end months of anti-social behaviour caused by groups of teenagers who had blighted neighbours' lives by behaving in a drunken and anti-social manner. Frequent rowdy parties which included under age drinking and drug taking had taken place at the address with the consent of the tenant. In addition, further nuisance was caused by teenagers breaking into the property and setting bonfires in the back garden. Two teenagers had to be hospitalised after taking drugs associated with the address. Neighbours were too intimidated to come forward as witnesses so Westlea officers presented their evidence. However the fact that neighbours had not come forward was one of the reasons the Judge gave for not making a Final Possession Order. But since the Court hearing there have been no further reports of nuisance here.