

What is an Acceptable Behaviour Contract (ABC)?

An Acceptable Behaviour Contract (ABC), sometimes referred to as an Acceptable Behaviour Agreement (ABA) is an early/low level intervention used to engage with an individual or group of perpetrators in order that they can recognise how their behaviour has a negative effect on others.

In considering whether an ABC is appropriate, a series of interviews are held with individual perpetrators to discuss reported anti-social behaviour, as well as identifying any individual support needs that could help to address the behaviour. The Anti-Social Behaviour Unit works with a number of partners who can offer support to both adults and young people in an attempt to curb anti-social behaviour. Where the reported anti-social behaviour is deemed to be serious, there is a risk of harm to victims and/or an individual perpetrator has already demonstrated an unwillingness to adhere to statutory interventions (i.e. Supervision Orders) an ABC may be dispensed with and an ASBO warning served or other legal intervention considered.

Where an ABC is deemed appropriate, the terms of the agreement are drawn up in consultation with the perpetrator, their parents (where recipients are under 18) and relevant partner agencies including the Police, Social Services and/or Youth Services as appropriate. The terms of the agreement should directly address the types of behaviour known to have been engaged in, to prevent alarm, harassment and distress.

The resulting ABC is a voluntary, signed agreement between an anti-social behaviour perpetrator and the council, which sets out a list of anti-social acts (terms) that the perpetrator agrees not to engage in and outlines the consequences if the contract is breached.

ABCs are more commonly used for young people but can also be used for adults. Contracts usually last for six months but can be renewed if both parties agree.

Whilst ABC's are not legally binding, they can in instances where the anti-social behaviour continues or escalates, be used in court as evidence in support of ASBO applications and/or eviction or possession proceedings.