

# Sanction of Housing Benefit in relation to anti-social behaviour

## Guidance for pilot areas

November 2007

## Contents

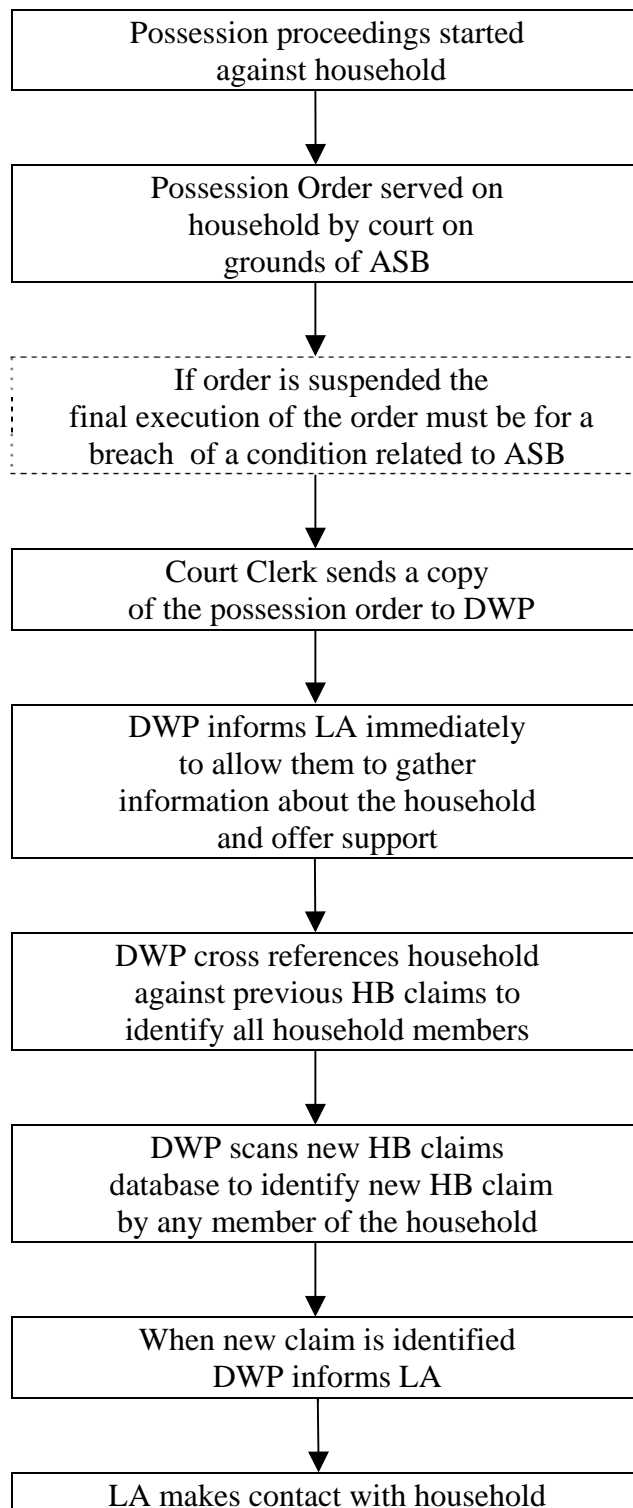
<b>1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. Outline of the sanction process .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3. Glossary of terms .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>4. Legislation.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>5. Pre eviction actions .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>6. When a household meets the criteria .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>7. When you make contact with the household .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>8. Assessing the household’s rehabilitation needs.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>9. The support offered .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>10. If the household agrees to engage.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>11. If the household doesn’t agree to engage with support .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>12. When you are deciding whether or not a sanction is appropriate .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>14. When you have decided not to use the sanction process .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>15. When you have decided to use the sanction process.....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>16. When you have decided to impose a sanction .....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>17. After the sanction is imposed .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>18. Appeals and judicial review .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>19. Miscellaneous .....</b>	<b>32</b>

## **1. Introduction**

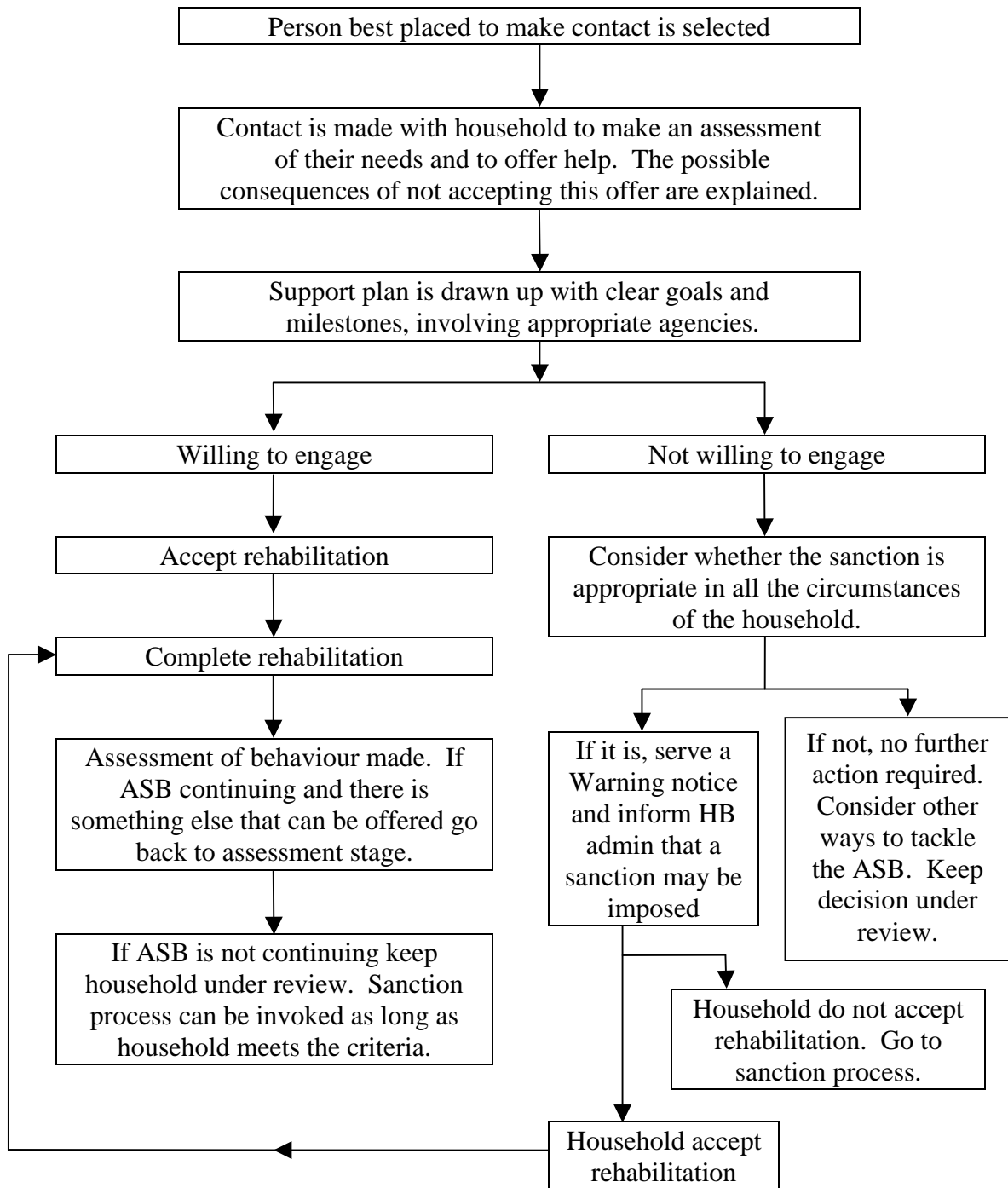
- 1.1. A small number of households are often responsible for a high proportion of anti-social behaviour. Often described as “neighbours from hell”, these households ruin lives and impact on whole communities.
- 1.2. We must deal with these families and individuals if we are to tackle both anti-social behaviour and its long term causes. Many individuals have multiple problems in addition to their anti-social behaviour. Mental health, alcohol and drug problems, poor basic and life skills, domestic violence, poor school attendance, poverty and worklessness are recurrent issues that cannot be solved through short lived actions from single local agencies. A recurring theme from research is that action needs to be concerted across local services and sustained for as long as necessary.
- 1.3. The Government has introduced new powers to deal with anti-social behaviour such as anti-social behaviour orders, acceptable behaviour contracts, dispersal orders and penalty notices for disorder. In 2003, the strategy to tackle anti-social behaviour was launched.
- 1.4. The Respect Action Plan, published in January 2006, sought to build upon the successes of the strategy by taking the Respect Agenda broader, deeper and further. Key actions included increasing access to constructive activities for young people, increasing the support available to parents and setting up a national network of intensive family support schemes to tackle the most challenging households. Such schemes have had a high degree of success with households that engage with them.
- 1.5. However, despite there being more support available to households with problems, a significant minority refuse to engage. The Action Plan therefore contained an action to consider sanctions for households who refuse help. A sanction of Housing Benefit was developed to target those households evicted for anti-social behaviour who refuse to take up support. The measure was contained in the Welfare Reform Act 2007 and will be piloted in eight local authorities for two years starting 1<sup>st</sup> November 2007.
- 1.6. The intention is not to sanction large numbers and there are safeguards to protect the vulnerable. This guidance gives further detail on the extra considerations when dealing with groups such as those with mental health conditions and physical or mental impairment. It is right that these groups be afforded extra protection.
- 1.7. The Government has a strong belief that the welfare state should combine rights with responsibilities. The right to benefit can only come with a responsibility to behave with respect for others. We believe this measure strikes the right balance.

## 2. Outline of the sanction process

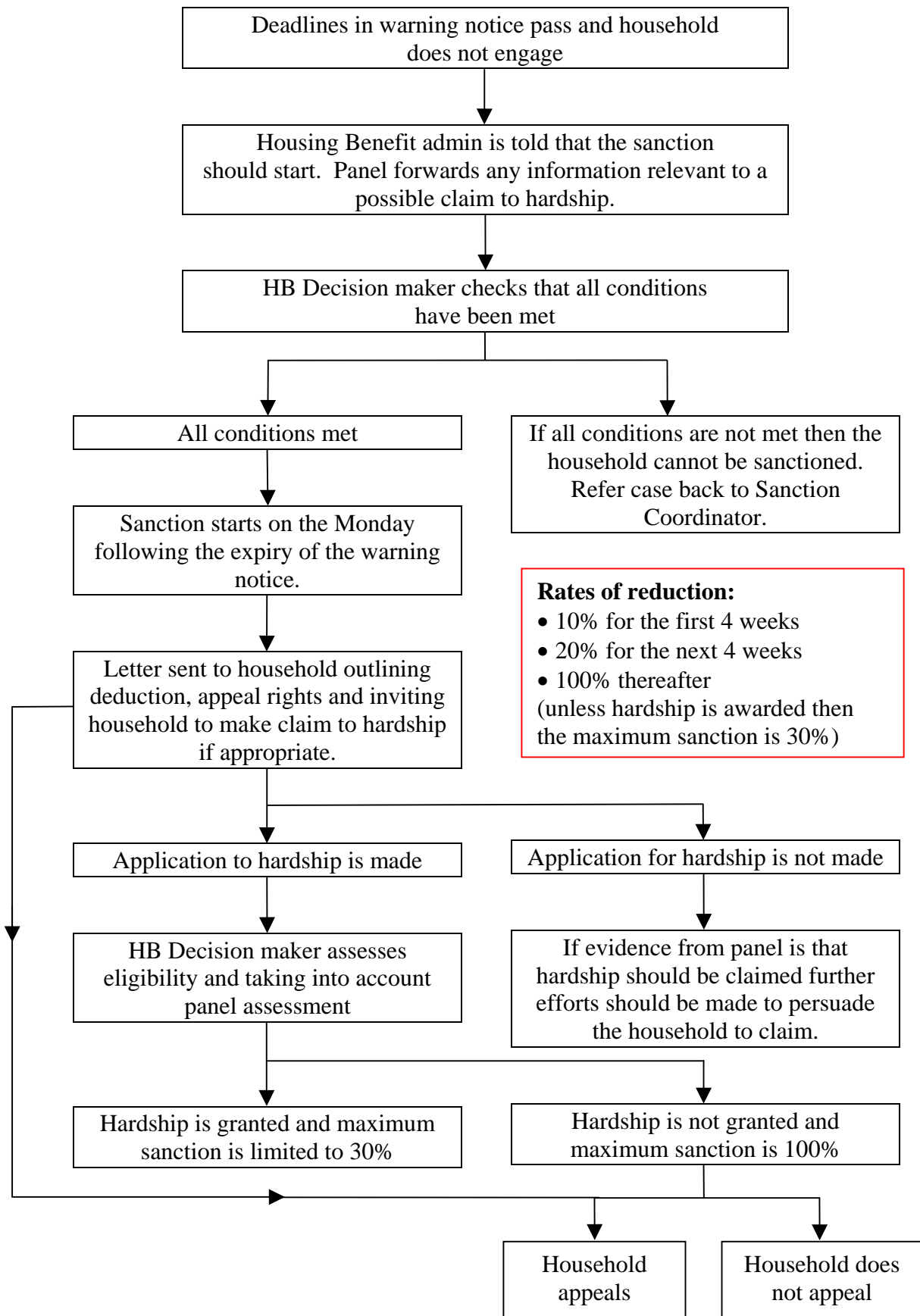
### Notification Processes



## Engagement Process



## Sanction process



### **3. Glossary of terms**

- 3.1. Household – this is used to mean anyone from an evicted property. It could be a single person, a couple or a family.
- 3.2. Evicted – this should be taken to mean that there has been a possession order and that the household left the property as a result of that order. It does not necessarily mean that bailiffs were required to physically evict them from the premises.

### **4. Legislation**

- 4.1. The scheme was introduced by [Section 31 of the Welfare Reform Act 2007](#).
- 4.2. This section amended the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992 by inserting Sections 130B-G, 137(1), 175(3), (4) and (5) and S176.
- 4.3. Regulations to implement these Sections have been made. They are:
  - [The Housing Benefit \(Loss of Benefit\) \(Pilot Scheme\) Regulations 2007](#)
  - and
  - [The Housing Benefit \(Loss of Benefit\) \(Pilot Scheme\) \(Supplementary\) Regulations 2007](#)
- 4.4. The Regulations come into force on 1st November 2007.

### **5. Pre eviction actions**

- 5.1. For the sanction to work effectively, there are certain groups that need to be informed about it. In particular, anti-social households, the Courts and social and private landlords in pilot areas need to be aware of the sanction policy.
- 5.2. Anti-social households
- 5.3. It is the intention that the sanction not only acts as a tool to get evicted households to engage with support, but that households that have not yet been evicted, but who may be under threat or eviction or subject to other forms of action to tackle their anti-social behaviour, see it as a reason to engage prior to eviction too.
- 5.4. It is therefore vital that such households understand that a sanction of future Housing Benefit may be a consequence of eviction for anti-social behaviour.
- 5.5. Local authorities should make publicity material in the form of leaflets available to all stakeholders and encourage awareness through its own correspondence to benefit claimants. A National Leaflet has been produced

to add to the current suite of nationally provided leaflets that local authorities can use.

- 5.6. Tenant handbooks, newsletters and forums may also be used to communicate with tenants.
- 5.7. In the social sector, households who behave anti-socially are usually warned by their landlord as soon as a complaint has been investigated, either face to face, in writing or both. The landlord will advise them of the consequences for them if the ASB were to continue.
- 5.8. Landlords should be encouraged to include the sanction among the other consequences mentioned in such meeting and letters.
- 5.9. Subsequent communications such as any accompanying a Notice of Intention to Seek Possession or following possession proceedings should also mention the sanction.
- 5.10. Private Landlords
- 5.11. Private Landlords generally do not seek possession on grounds of ASB, preferring to let tenancies lapse or by issuing the statutory two months notice on 'no fault' grounds.
- 5.12. However, they are more likely to have tenants who are sanctioned because those evicted from social housing who refuse support are unlikely to secure another social sector tenancy and may find new accommodation in the private sector.
- 5.13. Local authorities should be proactive in encouraging private landlords to tackle ASB rather than simply passing the perpetrators on to other landlords. For example, private landlords should be encouraged to work with (i.e. provide information to) the police / social landlord / LA etc so that they might use ABCs, injunctions, etc.
- 5.14. They will need to be persuaded that such action is for the good of their community and that they will see a benefit through improved visibility for their properties being zero tolerant of anti social behaviour.
- 5.15. You may wish to inform any private landlords you have close links to that if they do intend to evict an anti-social tenant, if they do so on ASB grounds rather than on 'no fault' grounds then the sanction may be used in future. However, most are unlikely to see seeking possession on discretionary grounds rather than the easier, cheaper and faster 'no fault' route an attractive prospect. Some may argue that using ASB grounds means the outcome is uncertain and neighbours may have to suffer for longer, aside from the costs/ hassle of taking a case requiring evidence, etc.
- 5.16. It has been suggested that local authorities write out to private landlords that they have a record of and advise them of the sanction process and how they should inform their tenants of what could happen if they take Possession because of ASB. However, care must be taken not to simply confuse

tenants who will not be eligible for a sanction should they be given the standard two months notice even if it was their behaviour that prompted the notice. It is important that landlords do not issue empty threats.

- 5.17. Local authorities should try to be seen as supportive rather than obstructive to landlords, including providing leaflets and information and other forms of help to tackle their anti-social tenants. Private Sector Housing Sections may be able to assist in this role.
- 5.18. Possession proceedings
- 5.19. The sanction does not change the process of seeking possession at all.
- 5.20. However, it will be helpful to ensure that the perpetrators are clearly identified and the nature of the ASB is clearly set out by the landlord in the claim for possession. This is what the court will require anyway.
- 5.21. ASB must be listed on the possession order as grounds for eviction for a sanction to subsequently be used.
- 5.22. The situation may arise where the original (suspended or postponed) possession order wasn't on grounds of ASB but then ASB develops (and is added to the possession order) and this is the reason the order is executed. Or the original (suspended) possession order was on grounds of ASB but then rent arrears develop (and this is added to the possession order) and this is the reason the order is executed.
- 5.23. For the sanction to apply, the order must take effect as a result of ASB.
- 5.24. Therefore it doesn't matter in what order ASB is added to the claim for possession but it does matter what on what grounds the order is finally executed.
- 5.25. If the possession order is postponed/ suspended and there are conditions attached to the suspension/ postponement, if the breached condition did not relate to ASB then the sanction cannot be used.
- 5.26. As the use of the sanction is dependent on being evicted on grounds of ASB it is possible that people will try to claim that they didn't live at the address the household were evicted from.
- 5.27. If you are party to possession proceedings (or know landlords that are), it may be helpful to name all of the people living in the household as part of the trial bundle. This could then be used to challenge any future denial of living at the address.
- 5.28. DWP will also be cross-checking possession orders with any previous claim to Housing Benefit which should list all members of the household.

## 6. When a household meets the criteria

- 6.1. The Courts will inform DWP whenever an order for possession is made on grounds of ASB.
- 6.2. The information that DWP will get from the court is limited to the name of the tenant/s, the address from which they have been evicted and the name and address of the Landlord.
- 6.3. DWP will run a scan to get information about any previous claim to Housing Benefit to get details of the rest of the household, including any dependents and non-dependents.
- 6.4. DWP will then pass this information to the relevant local authority. **You should nominate an officer to be the point of contact.**
- 6.5. DWP will inform the local authority at the point when the possession order is granted. The reason for this is twofold:
  - To enable you to make enquiries from the Landlord and other agencies about the circumstances of the household and the grounds for the eviction while it is still fresh in their mind (it may be months or years before a new claim to Housing Benefit is made and the court papers are likely to be filed away shortly after the eviction takes place).
  - To enable you to approach the household at an early stage (even before eviction takes place in the case of a suspended / postponed order for possession) and offer support and rehabilitation. If the order is outright you may have to find the household first.
- 6.6. DWP will also notify you when any former occupant makes a new claim to Housing Benefit. This is the next trigger in the process and if you have not already approached the household this is the point at which you should make contact with them and start the assessment process.
- 6.7. The household may split up after eviction.
- 6.8. The sanction can be applied to anyone who occupied a dwelling at the time a possession order was served on that dwelling on grounds of anti-social behaviour and who left the property as a result.
- 6.9. Therefore, it doesn't matter if the household splits. All former members of the household could potentially be subject to a sanction if they subsequently make a claim to Housing Benefit.
- 6.10. The only exception to this is if a former occupier forms a new household as part of a couple with a person who has not been evicted on grounds of ASB. If a person evicted for ASB moves in with someone else as to live as a couple then they cannot be sanctioned (Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992 (130E) (3)). If someone else moves in not as part of a couple, either as a dependent or non-dependent, then this will not preclude the use of the sanction.

- 6.11. In the unlikely event that two people with different possession orders, both for ASB, move in together a couple, you would be able to use the sanction.
- 6.12. You would also not apply a sanction to a household where a person who had been evicted for ASB moved in as a dependent. For example, if a child moved into his aunt's house and became her dependent you would not be able to sanction the aunt's HB.
- 6.13. If the household splits you will have to assess which members of the former household contributed to the anti-social behaviour and need rehabilitation. If, for example, if the evicted household had an abusive partner or teenager who has now left the household then the remaining members may not have a need for rehabilitation. **No further action should be taken against those who were not involved and who do not need rehabilitation.**
- 6.14. However, you should look to address any family dynamics which may have had a bearing on ASB even if one or two members of the family are identified as the main perpetrators. We would not want a member of the family to move out to avoid the sanction only to move back in a few months down the line - which may well happen where families are in an unstable state.
- 6.15. Even if the perpetrator was not a member of the household it is possible that those who were not the main perpetrators still need support to change their behaviour. If, for example, the ASB was caused by visitors to the property then you may want the household to get some support in dealing with visitors in future to prevent a reoccurrence.
- 6.16. In other circumstances, such as when the ASB was caused solely by a member of the household who no longer is part of that household and the remaining members have no rehabilitation need then there will be no reason to sanction that household.
- 6.17. The person who has left can be subject to a sanction if they make their own claim for Housing Benefit.
- 6.18. It does not matter whose name the tenancy and/or the claim to Housing Benefit is in. As long as the household is made up of persons that have been evicted for ASB they can be sanctioned regardless of the actual name on the tenancy agreement or benefit claim.
- 6.19. DWP will be scanning all new Housing Benefit claims for all the members of the household so former occupiers will show up no matter who makes the claim. The household therefore cannot escape the sanction just by changing the person who claims Housing Benefit or whose name is on the tenancy agreement.

## **7. When you make contact with the household**

- 7.1. Each pilot area should have a named individual or post holder responsible for coordinating the use of the sanction. They should have links to other

agencies and clear referral pathways for the undertaking of prompt assessments.

- 7.2. However, this person may not always be the best person to make the first contact with the household.
- 7.3. The most appropriate person to make the initial contact will vary from household to household. Obviously choosing the right person will be easiest where the household is already known to you or to another agency so you should try and identify other agencies already involved with an established relationship.
- 7.4. Prior knowledge of the household will help determine what agencies need to be involved and assist in identifying the most appropriate person to make the initial approach.
- 7.5. If the household is not already known to you (most likely to arise if the person has been evicted by a private landlord or has moved from another pilot area) they may be known to other agencies, so try to identify any with an established relationship.
- 7.6. You should start gathering information about the household prior to contacting them. The circumstances of the eviction may give some clues about what kind of issues the household may have and this may help to identify the best person(s) to approach them.
- 7.7. **Whoever makes the initial contact should be able to demonstrate competence in dealing with anti-social households and be experienced in assessing their needs.** Possibilities include:
  - The sanction coordinator
  - An anti-social behaviour coordinator
  - The suggested lead support agency
  - Social services
  - Other agencies/intermediaries already known to and trusted by the household
- 7.8. If you don't succeed at making contact with the household initially you should be persistent. Different methods of making contact should be tried.
- 7.9. Suggestions for making contact include:
  - Making several visits, both announced and unannounced
  - Including telephone contacts, texts, emails, letters and visits
  - Using intermediaries or agencies already known to and trusted by the household e.g. social services, local mental health support group, school.

- 7.10. You should also document these attempts in case of future challenges.
- 7.11. The number of attempts you should make to contact the household will depend on the characteristics of the household. You should certainly try more than once. Some people may feel threatened on the first attempt (e.g. those with mental health problems or those with mistrust of the authorities). You must give people full opportunity to engage.
- 7.12. If you think that the person feels threatened by you then you should try contact through trusted intermediaries, if available.
- 7.13. However, a refusal to meet with you may be construed as a failure to engage at an early stage and you should consider issuing a warning notice and the use of the sanction.

## **8. Assessing the household's rehabilitation needs**

- 8.1. The process for deciding what support is appropriate will vary from pilot area to pilot area and perhaps from household to household.
- 8.2. In general, rehabilitation plans should be drawn up by meeting with the household, completing a full assessment and drawing up the support/action plan with their input. This will also involve discussion with other agencies working with them as well as with members of the household and including them all in this support plan.
- 8.3. In all cases the assessment of rehabilitation need should be done by trained professionals with experience of dealing with this client group. **This cannot and should not be done by Housing Benefit staff.**
- 8.4. If you have a Family Intervention Project (FIP) you may link the assessment into the FIP process and therefore assessments will be undertaken by FIP workers such as NCH.
- 8.5. If you don't have a FIP you should set up a coordinating ASB group who will assess and call in additional professional help if it does not exist within the group itself.
- 8.6. In some cases it may be appropriate for a support agency that has been identified as working with the household to lead the process. This leading support agency would then gather information from any other agencies involved with the household. The leading agency would then draw up a support plan in discussion with these agencies and also involving members of the household.
- 8.7. The agencies that may need to be involved in the assessment process will depend on the make up of the household and their needs. For consistency and efficiency we would want those who are trained in assessing support needs that are multi-faceted to do the assessment.
- 8.8. Even if you have had previous involvement with the household (i.e. before eviction) a new assessment should be made to decide whether or not they

should be considered for the sanction. The decision to sanction must take into account the current circumstances of the household and the eviction may have resulted in changed circumstances.

- 8.9. If you have prior knowledge of the household the assessment should include:
  - A review of what support has already been offered or taken up
  - A review of how successful this support has been
- 8.10. Involving the household in the assessment process is important for securing engagement. However, some households may refuse to talk to you altogether.
- 8.11. Assessment and drawing up a rehabilitation plan will be more difficult if the household refuse to be involved in the process.
- 8.12. Agencies involved with the household may assist with drawing up an initial plan. This may have the aim of drawing the household into the process. You may then get their input into further plans.
- 8.13. If the household are flatly refusing to participate, you will need to make a decision about their suitability for the sanction.
- 8.14. If possible you should try and make a distinction between ‘cannot’ engage and ‘will not’ engage.
- 8.15. If it is ‘cannot’ you should seek contact via other agencies e.g. voluntary sector mental health support worker.
- 8.16. If it is ‘will not’ then you should adopt an assertive approach and invoke the sanction process if there is no engagement and the household clearly meet the criteria. The household should not escape the sanction simply by refusing to cooperate.
- 8.17. However, you may decide that their support needs are too high for the sanction to be an effective tool.
- 8.18. If you cannot make the distinction then sustained attempts should be made to engage until you have more information about the household.

## **9. The support offered**

- 9.1. The purpose of the sanction is to secure engagement with rehabilitation. If there is no support available then you cannot use the sanction.
- 9.2. The rehabilitation must “have the aim of ending, or avoiding repetition of, the conduct which may lead or has led to the making of a relevant order for possession.”
- 9.3. For some people, especially those with complex needs and dual diagnoses you may not be able to offer support to meet all of their needs.

- 9.4. In these cases, if you feel that there is some rehab that you can offer which may go some way to addressing their needs then you should offer it, even if it does not solve all of the issues a person has. It may be enough to prevent a reoccurrence of the eviction.
- 9.5. Other methods to deal with ASB can be used at the same time – e.g. an ABC could be used to try and stop anti-social behaviour in the time before the rehab has had a chance to actually work. But the two aren't linked i.e. you couldn't sanction HB for a breach of the ABC.
- 9.6. You may also be able to enlist the help of other support agencies, such as the probation service. However, resources may be an issue and therefore actions should be complementary and not place additional burdens on services.

## **10. If the household agrees to engage**

- 10.1. It is hoped that most households will accept the offer of help when it is offered. This is more likely where the household has been involved in the assessment of their needs.
- 10.2. Ideally you should be working with local service providers so that places on support programmes are available quickly.
- 10.3. However, just because someone agrees to engage does not mean the end of your involvement. It is possible that people will agree to engage to escape the sanction but have no intention of engaging in practice. You should keep the household under review to ensure that they are engaging and continue to do so to address their behaviour.
- 10.4. If at any time they disengage you will have to decide whether the support offered is still appropriate and consider the use of a warning notice and sanction if necessary.
- 10.5. The decision as to whether or not a household has engaged sufficiently will be down to the judgement of the support agency delivering the support. The support provider should have clear idea what they mean by engagement right from the start and be able to clearly communicate to the household what is expected of them.
- 10.6. Issues with engagement
- 10.7. If someone agrees to take part in a support programme but does not actually engage or is disruptive then determined attempts should be made to secure their engagement.
- 10.8. As far as possible the household should be engaged right at the start and involved in drawing up the support plan in the first place. If the household feel like they have been involved in identifying their own needs and have helped recommend changes then they are more likely to engage.
- 10.9. If this has not been the case then suggestions include:

- Keep working with them and explaining the benefits of rehab.
  - Offer to take them for a visit to the support provider and accompany them where possible to the first session.
  - Arrange for them to meet someone that has benefited from attending rehab to discuss this with them in more detail.
- 10.10. If attempts to create engagement fail then review the rehabilitation that has been offered. In order to bring about a sustained change in behaviour the support should be delivered in a way that is meaningful, relevant and engaging to those taking part.
- 10.11. You should seek the views of the individual to see if there is anything else that they think would be more suitable for them that would achieve the same outcome.
- 10.12. Ultimately though, you will have to decide if their behaviour amounts to a failure to engage. If you decide that they are not engaging then you will have to consider issuing a warning notice and using the benefit sanction.
- 10.13. It is possible that the household will appear to be engaging but their behaviour doesn't improve.
- 10.14. As the sanction is designed to secure engagement with rehabilitation, the fact that the rehabilitation isn't working is not a justification for using the sanction.
- 10.15. If, in the view of the support provider the household is engaging then there are a few issues to consider:
- 10.16. It should be recognised that changing behaviour takes time and the more complex an individual's issues are, the longer it will take to bring about a positive change in behaviour. Therefore, in the short term engagement with support may not stop all ASB.
- 10.17. You may be able to address the behaviour in this short-term period, by discussing the benefits of improved behaviour and perhaps using other methods such as an ABC. The support offered will then be aimed at stopping the ASB altogether.
- 10.18. It is also a possibility that the rehabilitation is not appropriate. If the support offered hasn't had any effect on behaviour then you should review it and consider other alternatives.
- 10.19. It is also possible that complaints continue to be made about the household.
- 10.20. As part of the initial assessment, as well as identifying support you should also challenge any ongoing ASB/complaints. Outline the complaints, ask what happened and explain the consequences of the behaviour continuing.

- 10.21. However, you should keep an open mind about complaints, as relations with neighbours may have deteriorated to the point where complaints are no longer reasonable. All complaints should be assessed as to whether they are well grounded or malicious, as per your normal procedures for dealing with complaints.
- 10.22. Because the rehabilitation may take time to take effect it is suggested that permission is sought from the person(s) undergoing rehabilitation to allow information about the process to be shared with neighbours and other complainants. This would include details of the rehabilitation offered and their efforts to comply and any improvement shown (the level of detail would have to be agreed in advance with the household). Constructive views from neighbours should also be invited. This would provide confirmation that the matter is being dealt with and enable the 'community' view to be constructive, thereby reducing or sidelining destructive or malicious complaints.
- 10.23. Some people may partially engage but not take up all the parts of the rehabilitation programme.
- 10.24. In some cases some parts of the rehabilitation will be easier to engage with than others. For example, people may find attending a parenting class quite straightforward but struggle to address a drug or alcohol problem.
- 10.25. The key thing is to make sure that the 'package' of support is properly determined at the start. All goals should be achievable and agreed and it may be that some changes can only be made slowly.
- 10.26. If the whole package is reasonable and takes into account the difficulty in dealing with some issues then a failure to engage with any part of the programme should not be tolerated.
- 10.27. Some members of a household may engage but other members refuse to take up support. In such circumstances the use of a sanction should be considered. The sanction process could be used where individuals within a household with identified support needs do not engage with the help offered, even if others in the household have accepted the support.
- 10.28. Attempts as outlined elsewhere should be made to find out why some are not engaging and get them to engage before using the sanction.
- 10.29. You should consider how important it is for the whole household to engage before you sanction and potentially undo the engagement of some members of the household to get movement from other members. If you consider that the main perpetrators have engaged or that the anti-social behaviour has stopped then you may want to leave it as it is. If you feel that one or more member not engaging will undermine the work of others then using the sanction may be appropriate.
- 10.30. The chaotic nature of the households involved means that appointments may be missed. The importance of attending should be clearly spelled out

to the household so that they understand the consequences of they do not attend.

- 10.31. If the household misses appointments you will have to find out why and consider whether the reason constitutes good cause.
- 10.32. The household cannot be sanctioned if they can show that they had good cause not to carry out the actions contained in the warning notice. The matters and circumstances that should be taken into account when considering whether they have good cause are contained in Regulation 5 of the [Supplementary Regulations](#).
- 10.33. The list is not exhaustive and you have wide discretion to decide that some other reason was good cause for them not attending.
- 10.34. The number of missed appointments is not the issue. Some people may miss many appointments but have proven they had good cause for missing all of them. Others may miss appointments with no good reason. The underlying reasons will determine whether missing the appointments amount to not engaging.
- 10.35. To avoid missed appointments, where possible you should involve the household in planning the next appointment.
- 10.36. You could also try to identify any concerns they have. They may have issues with the support itself, or there may be other barriers to them getting to appointments. Consider reviewing the support, including the nature of it, the supplier and the venue. You may need to offer an alternative programme, provide transport or phone them regularly to remind them to attend.
- 10.37. If they are just deciding not to attend without any good reason consider if the support is appropriate. The support should be meaningful, relevant and engaging to those taking part.
- 10.38. The consequences of not attending should be made clear to the household and ultimately you will have to consider issuing a warning notice with a view to using the sanction.
- 10.39. If the household seems keen to engage at the start but then stops engaging you will need to investigate why. There may be a change in their circumstances or it could be that the support is no longer appropriate.
- 10.40. If they have stopped engaging because of issues with the support offered then you should review it and change it if necessary. The support should be meaningful, relevant and engaging to those taking part.
- 10.41. The consequences of not engaging with support should be made clear to the household and ultimately you will have to consider issuing a warning notice with a view to using the sanction.

- 10.42. It is possible that a household will do everything you have asked of them in a warning notice but are still behaving anti-socially.
- 10.43. As the sanction is designed to secure engagement with rehabilitation, the fact that the rehabilitation hasn't worked is not a justification for using the sanction.
- 10.44. Changing behaviour takes time and the more complex an individual's issues are, the longer it will take to bring about a positive change in behaviour. Before deciding that the rehabilitation "hasn't worked" consider whether enough time has been allowed for the desired change to take effect.
- 10.45. If you are satisfied that enough time has been given for any changes to take effect then you should try to find out why it has not worked. Consider:
- Undiagnosed personality or mental health conditions.
  - Unresolved personality clashes with neighbours that may necessitate relocating the household.
  - That you did not identify the nature of the behaviour and so the support offered was not appropriate.
  - That you did not identify the underlying cause of the behaviour and so the support offered was not appropriate.
- 10.46. Consider if there is other support that you can offer that may be more successful. If further or additional support is offered, but the household doesn't engage then the sanction process can be used. A warning notice would have to be issued before a sanction could be used.
- 10.47. If further, necessary support isn't available you will not be able to use the sanction and will have to explore other methods of addressing the behaviour such as an injunction or ASBO.
- 10.48. In all cases where a decision has to be made whether or not to sanction the decision maker should be separate from the support agencies so they are not seen to be the ones sanctioning. This is important in order to maintain the trust of the household in the support service.
- 10.49. In most cases the decision to sanction will be made by a Panel of Senior Officers who will be the decision makers. Those working operationally with the household offering support and intervention should provide evidence to the panel but not be involved in the decision whether or not to impose the sanction.
- 10.50. Councillors should not play any part in decision making.

## **11. If the household doesn't agree to engage with support**

- 11.1. Firstly, you must be satisfied that a reasonable attempt has been made to engage with the household.

- 11.2. You must then decide whether or not a sanction is appropriate in all the circumstances of the household.
- 11.3. If there is no availability and no alternative provision or way to expedite matters then the sanction cannot be used until a place is available and the person has refused to take it up. You should try to arrange with local service providers to keep places open for enough time to allow for the notice period in a warning notice.

## **12. When you are deciding whether or not a sanction is appropriate**

- 12.1. Each pilot area will need to decide who will be involved in the decision making process.
- 12.2. It is envisaged that in most cases decisions on whether to sanction or not will be made by a panel of key professionals and support workers. This may include senior officers from services including Housing (homelessness), ASB Unit / Support Services and others who may be acting as the lead professional to the household
- 12.3. Other non-core agencies and support organisations can also be made aware through initial set-up contacts that their skills may be called upon if circumstances dictate. Proactive encouragement of groups and linkages to LAA and other national targets will help.
- 12.4. It may be appropriate to involve health services in some cases but not necessarily as a matter of course. There are no additional powers to obtain medical records, so where health issues may be relevant you should ask for information from the household and seek consent to consult with medical professionals if necessary.
- 12.5. The Police should be involved if there are issues relating to criminal activity or ongoing ASB.
- 12.6. In a multi-agency approach, some agencies may support the use of the sanction process but others may oppose it. If this is the case there will need to be a clear separation from assessment and decision. All agencies should provide evidence and make recommendations to the panel but the final decisions should rest with the panel.
- 12.7. In determining whether or not a sanction should be imposed the following should be taken into account as part of the assessment:
  - the individual circumstances of the household and the impact that a sanction is likely to have;
  - previous support provided and the impact of that support on the household's behaviour;
  - efforts made to engage with the household and the response by that household;

- details of support available to the household and when that is available (if not immediately);
  - that the individual(s) know and understand that a sanction may be imposed and what this will mean in practical terms;
  - the likelihood that sanction will bring about desired outcome i.e. behaviour change.
- 12.8. The household should be given an opportunity to explain why they will not engage and whether or not there are any circumstances that we should take into account.
- 12.9. They should also be asked questions relating to the likely impact of the sanction upon their ability to secure right to adequate housing, their physical and/or mental health and their ability to maintain education, training, and work.
- 12.10. When doing this you should take into account literacy levels, language, communications skills, and also consider that written communication may not be effective as face to face.
- 12.11. You should be satisfied that the household knows and understands the consequences of their actions and the likely effect of the sanction upon them.
- 12.12. Where the household may be vulnerable – refer to the guidance on vulnerable groups.

### **13. Vulnerable Groups**

- 13.1. With all vulnerable groups, a full assessment should be completed and discussed by the panel before a decision is made about imposing the sanction. We would hope that the household would be persuaded to engage.

#### **13.2. Children**

- 13.3. Households with children will automatically qualify for the hardship rate of a maximum 30% reduction (as long as they apply). There is therefore already some protection built in for children and the fact that there are children in the household should not mean that the sanction should not be used.
- 13.4. Where there are children in the household, Children’s Services should be consulted. Children’s Services will use their own assessment tools to decide whether or not they should be involved and may decide they do not want to be involved in every case.
- 13.5. The likely impact of the sanction upon any children in the household should be considered then balanced against the potential benefits of the household engaging with support as a result of the sanction.

### 13.6. **People with mental health difficulties**

- 13.7. Caution should be exercised when dealing with a vulnerable client group such as those who have a severe and enduring mental illness. What some may identify as anti-social behaviour may be as a result of a person's condition.
- 13.8. When people with mental health issues experience a crisis they will often withdraw from all social contact. This will result in that person not responding to contact from the local authority or other agencies.
- 13.9. People with mental health problems can be vulnerable to exploitation by people who move into their homes and engage in anti-social behaviour. Some people with mental health problems are unable to prevent this happening.
- 13.10. There are two separate groups you may have to deal with. Those with diagnosed mental health conditions and those with undiagnosed mental health conditions.
- 13.11. Where a person has a mental health condition and in the opinion of a mental health professional the ASB is caused by that condition than a sanction should not be used. It is unlikely that the threat of a benefit sanction would act to encourage the take up of support.
- 13.12. If a person's mental health is such that they lack insight into the consequences of his actions or inactivity then again the sanction should not be used.
- 13.13. You should consider how best to engage with them. Where possible you should consult the individual concerned. Where there is an intermediary e.g. Community Mental Health Team, Community Practice Nurse or mental health advocate, and the person gives their permission, consider working through that intermediary.
- 13.14. Where behaviour persists that is deemed sufficiently 'unacceptable' to trigger eviction, it may often be symptomatic of a much wider problem, and an early warning sign that the person has relapsed, is in an acutely psychotic/ manic phase of their illness, or has stopped taking medication.
- 13.15. There are already widely-used legislative provisions contained in the Mental Health Act 1983 for situations where crisis/relapse has occurred in a 'care in the community' patient. See sections 2, 3, 135 and 136.
- 13.16. Most mental health patients in the community have a care plan involving professionals such as Social Worker, Community Psychiatric Nurse, Occupational Therapist or Support worker. Contact may be set at fortnightly visits but this can be stepped up to daily visits if the client is in crisis.
- 13.17. The root cause of non-engagement needs to be tackled by early intervention of a Community Mental Health Team. It may be difficult for

the client to function on a basic level, let alone comply with the terms of a warning notice. A range of measures are open to the Care Coordinator - an out-patients appointment can be brought forward, an on-call Psychiatrist seen, a spell of respite care arranged, medication reviewed etc. In such cases, it would be expedient to postpone making any decision to impose a sanction for an agreed period, pending the efforts of the MH professionals to resolve the cause of crisis.

- 13.18. Look to alternative methods of addressing the ASB. The best route for this may be by alerting and engaging the MH Team. This already happens where, for instance, Housing Officers become aware of a situation and inform the relevant mental health professionals.
- 13.19. Where possible establish clear dialogue with the client's Care Coordinator and seek to engage with him or her, as well as with the client. Defer to their judgement (and that of the Psychiatrist) as to whether or not it is the mental illness that is causing the ASB.
- 13.20. 'Dual diagnoses' are common and prevalent, with patients having alcohol or substance abuse in addition to a classified mental illness.
- 13.21. Some conditions, such as borderline personality disorder, have previously been deemed 'untreatable' by any conventional interventions such as therapy or drug treatment. However, therapies have now been developed such that NICE are currently developing guidelines for the treatment of Antisocial Personality Disorder and Borderline Personality Disorder which are due for publication Summer 2008. It is a known practice that people with personality disorders are often excluded from services, but this is bad practice and actually many symptoms are similar to mental illness (mania, psychosis, depression, self harm) and people often benefit from medication. This issue is further detailed by NIMHE's 2003 report, 'Personality Disorder: no longer a diagnosis of exclusion'.
- 13.22. The assessment of every household should consider the possibility of undiagnosed mental health conditions being present. Staff empowered to make sanction decisions should have sufficient training or experience in dealing appropriately with people with mental health issues or should defer to those with expertise in the area.
- 13.23. If a mental health condition is suspected, but the client is not known to mental health services and won't be persuaded to see their GP voluntarily, request an assessment by a Mental Health Social Worker. For example, there is a 24 hour on-call team in Manchester, and there may be equivalent services in your area.
- 13.24. If the situation is extreme enough and the person seems at risk of, or is causing, imminent harm to themselves or others, involve the police. The police should be informed that the person has mental health problems to ensure early diversion from the criminal justice system to the mental health system.

13.25. Cases of ASB where mental health needs are a cause or contributing factor are always difficult cases to deal with, and require positive multi-agency working with support services and mental health services. Where mental health issues are involved or suspected, a decision to proceed with a sanction should only be done once a mental health assessment has been completed. This can take quite a considerable length of time.

13.26. Even if the mental health condition is not deemed to be a cause of the ASB and the condition appears to be being managed, be aware of fluctuating conditions. Two of the serious mental illnesses, schizophrenia and bi-polar, are both 'fluctuating' conditions. Where the available evidence and opinion points to there being a crisis or relapse in a person's mental state, it would be unjust to impose a sanction.

### **13.27. Physical and/or sensory impairments**

13.28. You should consider whether a physical or sensory impairment is the cause of the ASB, seeking professional advice where necessary. Where a person has a health condition and in the opinion of a professional the ASB is caused by that condition then a sanction should not be used. It is unlikely that the threat of a benefit sanction would act to encourage the take up of support.

13.29. The rehabilitation plan should take account of the impairment. Where an impairment is deemed not to be a contributing factor in the ASB and a decision is made to use the sanction process, you must ensure that the requirements of the warning notice are achievable. For example, those with a physical disability may find it very difficult to travel to some locations.

13.30. Consider the possibility that the condition may fluctuate and keep the plan under review to take account of changes.

### **13.31. Learning difficulties**

13.32. People with learning difficulties can be vulnerable to exploitation by people who move into their homes and engage in anti-social behaviour. Some people with learning difficulties are unable to prevent this happening.

13.33. Where a person has a learning difficulty and in the opinion of a professional the ASB is caused by that learning difficulty the sanction process should not be used. It is unlikely that the threat of a benefit sanction would act to encourage the take up of support.

13.34. If a person's learning difficulty is such that they lack insight into the consequences of his actions or inactivity then again the sanction should not be used.

13.35. The rehabilitation plan should take account of learning difficulties. Where learning difficulties are deemed not to be a contributing factor in the ASB and a decision is made to use the sanction process, you must ensure that the requirements of the warning notice are understood and achievable. For

example, those with a learning difficulty may find it difficult to understand what they are expected to do as a result of warning notice and what the consequences for them are.

13.36. If necessary, defer to others with sufficient training or experience in dealing appropriately with people with learning difficulties.

13.37. **You should ensure that warning notices are understood by those that receive them.**

13.38. **Black/Minority/Ethnic groups**

13.39. Anecdotal evidence suggests that BME people may be disproportionately evicted. Therefore the pool of those meeting the first trigger in the sanction process may be skewed.

13.40. We will be collecting data on the make up of evicted and sanctioned households. We will monitor the effect of the sanction on different groups to ensure that it does not perpetuate or exacerbate discrimination.

13.41. **Drug users**

13.42. Where addiction to drugs or alcohol is involved you should consider the likelihood that the threat of a benefit sanction would act to encourage the take up of support.

13.43. If necessary, defer to others with sufficient training or experience in dealing appropriately with people with addiction.

13.44. **Domestic violence**

13.45. Domestic violence can be a key issue in ASB and often is overlooked.

13.46. There is a risk that a household will be punished as a whole for the actions of one person whom they are powerless to stop or intervene with. This should be balanced against the potential benefits of the perpetrator engaging with support as a result of the sanction.

13.47. Many victims of DV do not seek help for many years because of barriers they face. You should consider whether the risk of violence may be deemed good cause for not complying with a warning notice. For example, if a woman is told in a warning notice to attend a rehabilitation course but it appears her reason for not attending is fear of violence you should consider this “good cause” and consider alternative ways of helping.

13.48. If the household splits and one half of the couple can demonstrate that they were not responsible for the ASB then there would be no cause to sanction them.

**14. When you have decided not to use the sanction process**

- 14.1. If you have decided not to issue a warning notice your next steps will depend on why you have decided not to issue a warning notice.
- 14.2. If this is a decision taken in view of the current circumstances or behaviour of the household you may want to set a date for reviewing the decision, or decide in what circumstances a review would be appropriate, e.g. if the anti-social behaviour reoccurs.
- 14.3. If the decision was taken because significant vulnerabilities have been identified you should ensure that alternative measures to tackle any ongoing anti-social behaviour are put in place and options to review for changes to circumstance.
- 14.4. You should inform all relevant agencies of your decision.
- 14.5. A decision not to use the sanction process does not prevent you from continuing to offer such help and support you consider necessary. The intention is not to give up on such households.

## **15. When you have decided to use the sanction process**

- 15.1. The first step once a decision has been taken to use the sanction process is to issue a written warning notice.
- 15.2. The warning notice should clearly set out:
  - why the notice is being served
  - what specific members of the household must do
  - the timescale/deadlines
  - the consequences of not complying in practical terms
  - who to contact to discuss the notice
  - appeal rights
- 15.3. You will need to give careful consideration to the descriptions that you use. For example, if there are two parenting courses available you may wish to word the notice so that either can be used. This will reduce the chances that the support will be unavailable at the point that the household decides to engage.
- 15.4. The notice should be in plain language and be clear and precise but not threatening or aggressive.
- 15.5. The nature of the client group means that it is possible that the written warning notice will not even be opened by the recipient. Barriers may also be presented by difficulties in learning, literacy or language.

- 15.6. This means that the contents should be clearly communicated verbally, in person, as well as in writing and you should make sure that the contents have been understood.
- 15.7. You may also want to consider using intermediaries to communicate the conditions in the warning notice, particularly where the person is vulnerable.
- 15.8. The timescales contained in the warning notice will depend on the requirements contained in it. Some rehabilitation may be quite a long and involved process. For other forms of support there may be a waiting list so the timescale would have to take this into account.
- 15.9. You may want to put many dates in the notice (e.g. sign up within 14 days, then complete something else by another date), but you should be clear about what you will do if they meet some of them and not others.
- 15.10. The minimum notice period is one week. Regulation 6 of the [Supplementary Regulations](#) states that:
- “A person is to be regarded as having good cause for failing to take any action specified in a warning notice if the time specified in the warning notice for taking the action is less than one week after the date the warning notice was issued.”
- 15.11. If in response to the warning notice they decide to engage – use the guidance under Section 4.
- 15.12. Ideally you should be working with local service providers so that places are available quickly. They should also keep places open for enough time to allow for the notice period in a warning notice.
- 15.13. If a place will become available but there is going to be a delay until it can be taken up then the warning notice should give a realistic timescale i.e. the date specified to take up the support may have to be very long. In these circumstances you should consider reminding the household of the conditions in the warning notice as the date(s) for action get closer.
- 15.14. You should consider other activities that you could usefully offer in that period and include them in the warning notice.
- 15.15. If there is no availability, no alternative and no way to expedite matters then the sanction cannot be considered until a place is available and the person has refused to take it up.

## **16. When you have decided to impose a sanction**

- 16.1. A nominated person from the decision making panel should inform Housing Benefit administration as soon as the warning notice is issued and there is a realistic chance that the sanction will be applied. They will then be able to prepare and make sure that the sanction can be applied by the Monday following the date that the warning notice expires.

- 16.2. The nominated person should also confirm to the HB admin that the household has not complied once the warning notice has expired. There should be a nominated person within HB admin to send details and discuss cases.
- 16.3. The HB admin officer will check that the sanction process has been properly applied. For instance, they will check that the person/household to be sanctioned has been evicted for ASB and that a warning notice has been correctly issued. If there is a factual reason why the sanction should not start – for example, the warning notice was issued to an incorrect address – the sanction will not start. The HB admin officer will inform you when the sanction starts, or if the sanction is not started and the reasons for it not starting.
- 16.4. **The HB admin officer should not make a judgement on whether the sanction is appropriate or not.** They should not, for example, decide that because there are children in the household it is wrong to impose a sanction.
- 16.5. This system needs to work efficiently. It would be unhelpful if Housing Benefit was overpaid and had to be clawed back.

## **17. After the sanction is imposed**

- 17.1. The sanction will run from the Monday following the date the warning notice expires. Housing Benefit will be reduced by:
- 10% for a period of 4 weeks.
  - 20% for a further period of 4 weeks.
  - 100% for a period up to, for the pilot period, 31<sup>st</sup> October 2009 (the date on which the pilots come to an end).
- 17.2. The household may be entitled to hardship. In these cases, after week 8 of the sanction HB is reduced by 30% instead of 100%.
- 17.3. Hardship must be claimed and the claim made in writing (someone will at least have to sign the form).
- 17.4. However, if you have reason to believe that a household may qualify but are not claiming hardship then you should make all reasonable efforts to get them to confirm this and sign the form, including the use of intermediaries.
- 17.5. In most cases the claim should be straightforward to verify. The most problematic is likely to be claims on health grounds.
- 17.6. For hardship granted because of a claim to DLA or Attendance Allowance there should be documentation that the claimant can show you. If they don't have any, seek verification from DWP/ Jobcentre Plus, seeking person's/household's permission where necessary.

- 17.7. For other health conditions the main verification you are likely to need is an assessment of the likelihood that the health condition means that the sanction will in fact lead to hardship.
- 17.8. There are no additional powers to obtain medical records. You should ask for evidence from the household and seek consent to consult with medical professionals if necessary.
- 17.9. For the criteria relating to carers in Regulation 5(3)(d) the phrase “a considerable portion” has been used rather than a set number of hours. The phrase is not defined and should be given its ordinary meaning of “a large or significant part”. This is because caring responsibilities may fluctuate over time depending on the needs of the person being cared for. It is designed to allow each case to be considered on its own merits and allow maximum flexibility.
- 17.10. For hardship granted on other grounds you should take into account the considerations in Regulation 5 of the [Pilot Scheme Regulations](#):
- (5) A former occupier [should be granted hardship] where, after taking account of all the circumstances of the case including those set out in paragraph (6), the relevant authority is satisfied that, unless Housing Benefit is paid, he, or a member of his family, will suffer hardship.
  - (6) The circumstances which the relevant authority is to take into account in determining whether the former occupier, or a member of his family, will suffer hardship include—
    - (a) the resources which are likely to be available to his family and the length of time for which they might be available; and
    - (b) whether there is a substantial risk that essential items, including food, clothing and heating, will cease to be available to him or a member of his family, or will be available at considerably reduced levels and the length of time for which this might be so.
- 17.11. Strictly speaking the decision to award hardship or not is a benefit decision and should be made by the HB Decision Maker (HB DM). However, the panel that made the decision to sanction will have relevant knowledge and should provide the decision maker with relevant information on the likely hardship status of the household.
- 17.12. This will not only help the decision to be made promptly but will also enable the HB DM to pursue eligible households that do not apply for hardship to encourage them to apply.
- 17.13. **Reviews**
- 17.14. Each household subject to a sanction should be monitored and the decision to sanction should be reviewed on a regular and ongoing basis.
- 17.15. Monthly reviews will be appropriate in most cases. This is for two reasons:

- To give the household as much opportunity as possible to change their mind and engage.
- To review the circumstances of the household to determine if they have become vulnerable, fallen into hardship or no longer behaving anti-socially.

17.16. Each pilot authority must decide who will carry out the review.

17.17. We suggest that it takes the form of a case conference with all relevant agencies – effectively a re-run of the panel that made the initial decision to sanction, unless new agencies have become involved with the household, in which case it might be appropriate to include them as well.

17.18. The review should assess all of the circumstances of the household, in particular:

- how the sanction is impacting on the household
- whether the sanction is having any effect on their willingness to engage
- whether the household is suffering hardship
- whether the anti-social behaviour is continuing

17.19. There are a number of reasons why you may decide the sanction should come to an end. These include:

- The sanction is causing serious hardship, particularly to innocent or vulnerable members of the household.
- The person who was responsible for the anti-social behaviour has left the household permanently (although it may only be possible to establish whether this is the case in the long term.)
- The sanction is having no effect on the household in terms of encouraging them to engage and is not likely to.
- The household has decided to positively engage with support services.
- The support initially offered is no longer available.

17.20. This list is not exhaustive.

17.21. The person accepts support after a period of being sanctioned

17.22. If the person decides to take up the offer after a period of being sanctioned it is possible that the place that was initially offered is no longer available. As far as possible you should have arrangements in place with support providers so that places are available at short notice, but it is unrealistic to

expect places to be kept open indefinitely on the off-chance that they will change their mind.

- 17.23. If the person decides to take up the offer of support after a period of being sanctioned, the sanction itself must stop. However, you need to ensure that the household really are engaging and not just saying that they will.
- 17.24. The most appropriate time to stop the sanction is likely to be on the day that they attend their first appointment with whatever support activity they have agreed to engage with.
- 17.25. However, if there is a significant delay before the first appointment is available then you must end the sanction sooner. In these cases the trigger for ending the sanction could be attending a meeting with the sanction coordinator (or other nominated person) and that person being satisfied that the willingness to engage is sincere.
- 17.26. If available, you may wish to offer other appropriate forms of rehabilitation in the meantime in order to keep their engagement going. You would not have to issue a warning notice for this unless the household refuse to take it up.
- 17.27. The support initially offered is no longer available
- 17.28. It is an important part of the scheme that if support is not available then the sanction cannot be applied. If the support is not available at all and is not likely to be in the near future then the sanction should be ended at the point when you know it will not be available.
- 17.29. If the original support offered is not going to be available but an alternative is then a new sanction warning notice should be issued and the household should be given time to decide whether or not to engage with it (unless the wording of the original warning notice allows for alternative forms of rehabilitation).
- 17.30. If a place will become available but there is going to be a delay until it can be taken up then hopefully there will be other forms of support that can be started more quickly. Ideally these should have been specified in the warning notice in the first place, but even if they weren't they can still be offered. If they are not in the warning notice and are refused then you may decide to serve another warning notice.
- 17.31. You must tell the Housing Benefit department of any decision to end the sanction as soon as possible.

## **18. Appeals and judicial review**

- 18.1. The household can raise a complaint at any stage of the process and ask for decisions to be reviewed. There is no right to appeal to a tribunal until the sanction is imposed and so any such complaint should follow your existing complaints procedure.

- 18.2. If a sanction is imposed, this is a benefit decision and can be appealed in the same way as any other benefit decision, including to the tribunal service.
- 18.3. The Tribunals Service has been informed about the sanction and should be prepared to deal with appeals against the decision to sanction.
- 18.4. This measure has attracted a lot of interest and a lot of criticism from various quarters. It is therefore likely that interested parties will be monitoring the use of the sanction and potentially willing to assist households up to and including funding a challenge by Judicial Review.
- 18.5. In the event that a Judicial Review becomes likely you should inform DWP immediately.

## **19. Miscellaneous**

### **19.1. Information to be provided to DWP**

19.2. In order to monitor the sanction and to enable us to deal with requests for information from Ministers and other interested parties, we will require you to provide the following information:

- further details of the households that we have notified you as having been subject to a possession order on grounds of ASB, including ethnicity, disability
- whenever a household approached after eviction voluntarily takes up rehabilitation
- whenever a warning notice is served
- whenever a sanction is imposed
- whenever a sanction is stopped or starts running again
- whenever hardship is applied for and the outcome of the application

19.3. We anticipate that the numbers involved will be so low that this can be done on an ad hoc basis. However, this information should in any case be provided within four weeks of the event to which it relates.

### **19.4. Information to be provided to the Housing Benefit Decision Maker**

19.5. In the event that a sanction is applied, the Housing Benefit Decision Maker will check that the decision to sanction has been made correctly. They will therefore need the following evidence:

- That the sanction is being applied to the right person
- That a relevant Order for Possession has been made
- That the person left the property

- That a written warning notice has been issued
- That the date for action in the warning notice passed, without “good cause”
- That the date of issue of the warning notice was more than 1 week before the date action had to be taken
- That the warning notice was sent to the correct address

19.6. The HB Decision Maker must not judge on the appropriateness of a sanction. That is, he must not refuse to sanction a case because he feels it would be unfair. The decision on the appropriateness of a sanction has been taken by the sanction coordinator in discussion with others. A refusal to sanction can only be made on questions of procedure or fact.

19.7. The HB decision maker will inform the sanction coordinator if the household reports any change of circumstances to the HB department that may have a material affect on the application of the sanction.

19.8. Information to be provided to other pilot areas

19.9. In the event that an evicted household moves from one pilot area to another, the original LA should provide information to the second LA in order for them to continue with the sanction process.

19.10. The information that might be requested will include:

- Details of any rehabilitation offered
- Details of any warning notice served
- Details of any rehabilitation taken up
- Details of any sanction applied

19.11. The trigger for this will be a request from DWP.

19.12. Record keeping

19.13. Any household that is subject to sanction processes can appeal the decisions that are made at any time. The measure is also likely to be subject to intense scrutiny, not least from Parliament and lobby groups. It is therefore vital that proper records are kept on decisions made at every step of the process.

19.14. Evaluation

19.15. The objectives of the evaluation are to monitor and explore the sanction of Housing Benefit scheme in eight local authority areas over the two year pilot period. Specifically to:

- Monitor and gather information on the implementation and scope of the pilot during the start/early stages (during first six months) and the experience of local authority staff and other key stakeholders in the statutory and voluntary sectors.
- Capture and evaluate how the pilot has operated during the two years of the pilot period and the experience of local authority staff; stakeholders in the statutory and voluntary sector
- Provide an in-depth profile of the households who have and have not been sanctioned
- Identify and understand why households have and have not been sanctioned
- Identify and understand the housing outcomes of as many of those sanctioned and not sanctioned as possible
- Identify and understand the wider outcomes in the neighbourhoods and communities of as many of those who have been sanctioned as possible

19.16. The researchers intend to make contact with the sanction coordinators in each area prior to the start of the pilots in November 2007. They will then provide further details of the research.

19.17. In order to make the evaluation as robust as possible we ask that you provide the researchers with as much help as you possibly can. In particular, they will need from you:

- Details of the arrangements in your area for the administration of the sanction
- Help in identifying key stakeholders
- Help in gaining consent and securing the involvement of the households within the scope of the sanction