

Policy Title	Neighbourhood Policy
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Contents

1	PURPOSE	2
2	SCOPE	2
3	LEGISLATION, REGULATION, GUIDANCE AND BEST PRACTICE	2
4	INTRODUCTION	3
5	LEADERSHIP, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITY	3
5.1	Leadership and commitment	3
5.2	Organisational Roles and Responsibilities	4
6	OPERATION.....	4
6.1	Estate Management.....	4
7	RISK MANAGEMENT	8
7.1	Actions to address risks and opportunities	8
8	SUPPORT	8
8.1	Resources.....	8
8.2	Competence and Training	8
8.3	Awareness and Communication.....	8
8.4	Data Protection	8
8.5	Documented Information, Records Management.....	8
9	MONITORING	9
10	BREACHES OF THIS POLICY	9
11	CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT	9
12	REVIEW	9

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 This Policy sets out our aims and principles for managing the neighbourhoods in which One Housing owns homes to ensure they are clean, safe, attractive and well managed.
- 1.2 To achieve this we will work with residents to identify solutions to local problems, including anti-social behaviour and environmental issues. We will develop Neighbourhood Plans with residents and local partners to ensure we focus on the issues that matter most to residents.

2 SCOPE

- 2.1 The Policy applies to all One Housing properties, including rented and home ownership and covers key provisions in delivering good neighbourhood management:
 - Estate Management
 - Tenancy Enforcement
 - Tenancy Sustainment
- 2.2 This Policy applies to all customers of One Housing including tenants, leaseholders, shared owners or service users. It does not apply to members of the public that we do not have a contractual relationship with, claims for personal injury, or sub-tenants of a leaseholder.

3 LEGISLATION, REGULATION, GUIDANCE AND BEST PRACTICE

- 3.1 The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) Neighbourhood and Community Standard as set out in the Regulatory Framework states that registered providers shall:
 - Keep the neighbourhood and communal areas associated with the homes they own clean and safe.
 - Work in partnership with their tenants and other providers and public bodies where it is effective to do so.
- 3.2 The Social Housing White Paper expects landlords to provide good quality homes and neighbourhoods for residents to live in. The review of the Consumers Standards will focus on:
 - Safety – within the home and communal areas
 - Quality – of the home, communal space and services
 - Neighbourhood – working in partnership to contribute to the wellbeing of a neighbourhoods
 - Satisfaction measures – responsible neighbourhood management
- 3.2 Government legislation impacts how we manage our communities and implement our Neighbourhood Policy. The legislation set out below helps us to deliver this Policy:
 - The Housing Act 1985
 - The Housing Act 1988
 - The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003
 - The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
 - The Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005
 - The Localism Act 2011
 - Law of Torts (interference with Goods) Act 1977
 - The Removal, Storage and Disposal of Vehicles Regulations 2008
 - Environmental Protection Act 1990
 - Refuse Disposal (Amenity) Act 1978
 - The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005

- Public Health Act 1936
- Town and Country Planning Act 1990
- The Town and Country Planning (Trees) Regulations 1999

4 INTRODUCTION

- 4.1 Our vision and values help us to deliver a high-quality service and sets a standard for how we interact with our customers, colleagues and other stakeholders. We create places for people to call home by keeping our promises, doing a great job, working together, valuing diversity and looking for ways to improve
- 4.2 Neighbourhood management refers to the effective management of the environment around our properties and any common areas, to ensure they are well maintained and a safe and secure place to live.
- 4.3 We want customers to be proud of their homes and communities and appreciate that having a consistent approach to neighbourhood management is crucial for keeping neighbourhoods clean, safe and well maintained. We will deliver services for our estates and neighbourhoods in line with our service offer.
- 4.4 We will complete regular visual inspections of these areas and will encourage customers and stakeholders to join us on these visits where the standards are reviewed and graded. We will identify service improvements and work with stakeholders to deliver these.
- 4.5 We will work with all relevant partners, contractors and organisations to ensure that our homes, neighbourhoods and shared areas are managed and maintained to the highest standard.
- 4.6 We will ensure that:
- Our communal areas are maintained to our Estate Management Service Standard.
 - Grounds maintenance works are carried out within contractual agreements.
 - Residents are aware of their responsibilities in relation to their property and the surrounding environment.
 - Any issues relating to services supplied to our neighbourhoods are appropriately dealt with.
 - We will consult with local residents on issues that affect their neighbourhood.
 - We will develop appropriate indicators and measures to monitor and improve our neighbourhood related services.
 - Deliver a value for money service.
- 4.7 We will develop a Neighbourhood Plan for any neighbourhoods experiencing multiple issues which will set out a number of key objectives to improve a defined area. These plans will take a tailored approach to tackle issues raised by residents with the key aims of:
- Improving the quality of life of those living there.
 - Improving the overall appearance of the area.
 - Increasing customer satisfaction of those living there.

5 LEADERSHIP, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITY

5.1 Leadership and commitment

The Director of Customer Experience and the Director of Property Services are committed to supporting the delivery of this Policy through, people, systems, changes in regulation and the sufficient allocation of resources.

They will be supported by the Assistant Director of Operations (Property) and the Assistant Director – Housing Services, who are responsible for the operational delivery of the objectives set out in this Policy.

5.2 Organisational Roles and Responsibilities

- 5.1 Responsibility for the day-to-day operational management of the service lies with the Head of Property Management and Environmental Services, supported by their Managers and the Head of Resident Management and their Managers.
- 5.2 All customer facing teams have joint responsibility for the effective management of our neighbourhoods.

6 OPERATION

6.1 Estate Management

6.1.1 Estate Inspections

We will carry out regular inspections of our blocks and estates to ensure they are being maintained to an acceptable standard and to identify and rectify issues. Inspections will be no less than twice a year for small external communal spaces, up to the highest frequency of once a month for larger blocks with communal areas.

Frequency of inspections will depend on the characteristics of the blocks and estates and will cover issues, such as:

- ASB and crime; including fly-tipping
- Level of communal repairs
- Recent issues with estate upkeep; including exceptional events
- The age and condition of communal systems
- The type of property and connected risk level e.g. high-rise building, external only communal areas
- Fire risk profile and other building safety risks

Inspections will be rated on a 1 – 5 star rating, with 1 being the lowest and 5 the highest. A more detailed inspection would be arranged for any areas scoring below 3.5 to understand and address the specific issues. Progress since the last inspection will be noted and new actions reported and raised with the appropriate teams and/or contractors for action.

6.1.2 Security

We know security is a high priority for residents so we will ensure all walkways, stairwells and footpaths are well maintained with sufficient lighting to deter anti-social behaviour.

CCTV will be used to provide reassurance to residents and to reduce crime. Usage will be in line with good practice and legislation and used as necessary for the purpose of crime prevention and detection.

We will work in partnership with both residents and other agencies on initiatives to improve security and community safety in areas where One Housing owns properties.

6.1.3 Crime Prevention

We will work closely with police and local councils so that all developments incorporate crime prevention measures to create a safer and more secure environment. We will listen to local residents to identify what works well and can be repeated in other similar neighbourhoods.

All new developments that have open and maintainable common areas should meet 'secure by design' principles. We will ensure future upkeep and maintenance can be delivered in a cost-effective manner with minimum disruption to the environment.

6.1.4 Health and Safety

All customer facing teams will work closely together to ensure that the health and safety issues across neighbourhoods are identified, reported and rectified through regular inspections of our estates.

Inspections will happen regularly with frequency depending on layout/design of the development. They will aim to maintain a safe environment by taking immediate action to remedy any health and safety concerns.

Where we own play equipment, we will ensure that it is safe to use, fit for purpose and routinely inspected in line with statutory requirements and legislation. Play equipment will be visually inspected during estate inspections to check it is structurally safe, does not present a risk or hazard, is aesthetically pleasing and is an area that children would want to play.

6.1.5 Estate Cleaning

In blocks where One Housing owns or manages the entire block we will work with residents to agree standards of cleanliness. Where we do not have responsibility for cleaning, we will carry out regular inspections to ensure the standard agreed with the provider is maintained. Where they are not maintained we will, as the leaseholder or freeholder, address any concerns directly with the provider.

We will inform residents who is responsible for the cleaning through notices in the communal areas, setting out the specification for the estate and the frequency of attendance.

We will work closely with local authorities to ensure our estates have the appropriate facilities for disposal of rubbish and recycling. Residents will be advised how and where to dispose of their household waste and how to arrange disposal of bulk items through the local authority.

6.1.6 Communal Repairs

Communal repairs will be carried out within agreed timescales and standards. Residents will be able to report these by text, phone, MyOneHousing portal or online. Communal repairs are a key factor in customer satisfaction and will be monitored once they reported through to their satisfactory completion.

6.1.7 Grounds Maintenance

On land that One Housing own and manage we will maintain all shrubs, hedges and trees in-line with horticultural good practice to maintain pleasant surroundings and to prevent nuisance, such as blocked access ways, damage to buildings and restrictions of lights and signage.

We will manage the tree population on our land, ensuring that best practice guidelines and legislation is followed. We will hold a register of all trees we own and have a planned tree management programme in place informing the frequency of inspection and surveys.

6.1.8 Parking

We will encourage responsible parking on our estates and recognise that due to planning guidelines many of our estates have limited parking. One Housing residents

will have priority for parking permits on One Housing owned land and we will encourage residents to resolve parking issues between each other.

Parking signs will advise where parking is permitted and those who park in the wrong place, inconsiderately or dangerously risk enforcement action. We will arrange for removal of any vehicles on our land that are untaxed, abandoned or a danger, and re-charge the owner for any costs incurred. We may introduce parking enforcement schemes which will be run on our behalf by a third party who will collect any unauthorised parking charges.

We do not designate visitor or communal parking spaces to individual residents. Spaces are available for all residents and visitors to use. Households will only be able to apply for one parking bay and bays marked for disabled or blue badge use are only available to those who are eligible.

6.1.9 Estate Improvements

We will maintain an environmental improvement budget for making key improvements that are identified through resident feedback and are not covered by the Repair and Maintenance Policy. Bids for Environmental Improvements will be considered through our Resident Panels who meet on a quarterly basis.

6.1.10 Maintenance of the home, communal areas and private outside space

Our tenancy and lease agreements state the responsibilities of residents for maintaining the condition of their home, communal areas, gardens and balconies. In the interests of safety, we will enforce the removal of inappropriate items on balconies due to fire safety risks. No items are allowed to be stored in communal areas and any items found will be removed.

6.1.11 Pest control

As set out in our tenancy and lease agreements residents have a responsibility to prevent and treat pests that are attributable to their lifestyle or actions. They are responsible for reporting all issues relating to vermin, pests or insect infestation to us. If the infestation is the responsibility of the resident they will be advised to contact the local authority or a pest company if the infestation is within their own home or private garden.

Exceptions to this would be if the infestation is happening due to the cracks or holes that are allowing small rodents to enter and in such cases we would be responsible for repairs to close the gaps. Another example would be if an infestation of silverfish was as a result of damp in the property, this would be treated along with the damp.

We recognise the damage that can be caused to a property, and a households' health as a result of pests and vermin, and always consider the individual circumstances of each case and arrange pest control services when necessary. We will also provide advice on how to address the problem to ensure it does not reoccur.

If an infestation occurs in the communal areas, including rodents, wasps, pharaoh ants and pigeons, we will take steps to eradicate the infestation and prevent it from reoccurring, including any proofing works required. The response time will be dependent on the severity of the infestation.

6.1.12 Managing Agents

Where we have Managing Agents responsible for communal repairs/clearing we will work with them to ensure that agreed standards are met. Our Income and Service Charge teams will be responsible for ensuring that costs or communal services are

appropriate and where required with give sufficient challenge to ensure the affordability of service charges.

6.2 Tenancy Enforcement

6.2.1 Neighbour Nuisance

We will work with residents to resolve issues of neighbour nuisance, providing advice on action that can be taken and offering mediation where appropriate. Examples of neighbour nuisance includes:

- Noisy neighbours
- Rubbish dumping (including fly-tipping and littering)
- Vandalism
- Graffiti
- Dog nuisance (fouling, roaming and barking)
- Untidy gardens and balconies
- Blocking access to communal areas
- Misuse of parking

We will act quickly to tackle issues when they are reported and the costs we incur will be recharged via service charges to the estate if we are not able to identify the perpetrator(s) and recover the cost from them. We will take legal action where appropriate.

6.2.2 Anti-Social Behaviour

We will clearly set out what constitutes anti-social behaviour and how we can respond to resolve the issue and the support we can provide. We will work with partner agencies to investigate and identify the perpetrators and encourage residents to report anything they have witnessed. We focus on both individual reports of anti-social behaviour as well as the impact of anti-social behaviour on wider neighbourhoods.

We will use all the tools available to enforce tenancy and lease conditions, including injunctions, mediations, acceptable behaviour contracts and ultimately possession. We have a separate Anti-Social Behaviour Policy which provides more detail in this area.

6.2.3 Abandoned / Sub-let Properties

We will investigate all reports of abandoned properties and cases of sub-letting to ensure our homes are occupied and we know who is living in them. We will carry out tenancy audits to check legitimate occupancy to ensure the most appropriate use of our housing stock.

6.3 Tenancy Sustainment

6.3.1 New Tenancies

All new tenants will receive a comprehensive induction / sign up, ensuring they are aware of their rights and responsibilities. They will receive regular contact throughout the first 12 months of their tenancy as a means of support and assessment of adhering to starter/probationary tenancy conditions.

6.3.2 Property Appearance

It is important that residents adhere to their tenancy conditions. This requires the external appearance of the property to be kept in good condition, tidy and free from rubbish and unwanted items. External areas such as gardens should be well

maintained and not appear unkept. Balconies must be kept clear and tidy with no items overhanging or anything stored that may be a fire or safety hazard. Estate inspections and a programme of tenancy audits will help us identify and address properties kept in a poor condition and the impact on the wider neighbourhood.

6.3.2 Hoarding

Hoarding can pose a significant fire risk to both the people living in the hoarded property and those living nearby. It also increases the risk of pests and vermin infestation in both the property and neighbouring properties. When we are made aware of a case of hoarding we will work to engage the resident and use all available resources to develop a plan to manage and resolve the issues this may present. Where issues affect the wider neighbourhood we will develop a communication plan setting out the actions to be taken.

Each case will be assessed individually taking into account the mental and physical wellbeing of the resident, their support network and external agencies that can assist in resolving the issue. Enforcement action will only be taken when all other reasonable avenues to resolve the issue have failed.

7 RISK MANAGEMENT

7.1 Actions to address risks and opportunities

- 7.1.1 This Policy will be implemented in accordance with One Housing's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.
- 7.1.2 All staff involved with neighbourhood management must work collectively to ensure the safety of residents and the maintenance of homes and shared areas.

8 SUPPORT

8.1 Resources

- 8.1.1 This Policy will be co-ordinated by the Property Services and the Resident Management teams.

8.2 Competence and Training

- 8.2.1 Training in effective neighbourhood management will be tailored to reflect the diversity of One Housing's customer base to support staff to provide a 'Customer First' service.
- 8.2.2 All staff must be adequately trained and have knowledge on how, and where to report any issues raised by residents or other agencies about a neighbourhood.

8.3 Awareness and Communication

- 8.3.1 This Policy will be available to all staff and externally on request.

8.4 Data Protection

- 8.4.1 All staff must be sufficiently trained to ensure the requirements set out in the GDPR are met. Training is completed annually and included in the induction process for all new starters.

8.5 Documented Information, Records Management

- 8.5.1 Information is recorded at neighbourhood level where this is appropriate and possible.
Our systems and procedures will record all maintenance arrangements, orders instructed and associated costs. In addition, the records maintained by us will include and not limited to:

- a property register, recording all properties in ownership and management
- a record for third-party contractors providing services at each property
- a record of all repairs instructed and the subsequent cost arising
- a record of all insurances held by us and any claims made
- records relating to the inspection of communal areas and service standards, stored on a central database
- a record of all properties that are eligible for parking on our estates and those that have the right to park by way of a rental agreement
- a record of all contracts entered into by us

9 MONITORING

9.1 The following information will be recorded and used to monitor performance:

- Customer satisfaction levels across a range of services.
- Complaints and compliments.
- Meeting our Service Standards.

9.3 This information will be reported to Customer Services Committee and in any locally based communications.

10 BREACHES OF THIS POLICY

10.1 Any deviation from the principle of this policy must be authorised by an Assistant Director or Director and detailed records kept of why the exception has been agreed.

11 CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

11.1 Customer feedback will drive improvements in our neighbourhoods. This can be received through a number of ways, including satisfaction surveys, complaint handling and via involved residents. We will continue to report on the outcomes of customer feedback through our resident communication channels.

12 REVIEW

11.1 The Neighbourhood Policy will be reviewed every 3 years or earlier in response to regulatory or legislative changes.