

Neighbourhood Management Policy

Scope of Policy

This policy sets out the responsibilities of both Platform Housing Group (the Group) and our customers in relation to the environments in which we have our homes. This policy should be read in conjunction with customers' individual tenancy and leasehold agreements, which further define these responsibilities.

Our neighbourhood management service refers to the management of the environment around our properties to ensure our neighbourhoods are well maintained, safe and secure places. However, as many of our homes are in areas of mixed tenure, we will not always be responsible for all aspects of maintenance concerning the physical surroundings of our homes.

Applicability

The policy applies to all members of the Group.

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 The maintenance of the physical environment is very important to our customers and us; it affects feelings of safety and security and pride in the local community. We also recognise that clean and secure common areas can have a positive impact on reducing anti-social behaviour and criminal activity and is fundamental to our aim to 'build a better future by investing in affordable homes and services'.

This policy explains the framework within which we deliver these requirements.

2. Context

- 2.1 The Neighbourhood and Community Standard, issued by the Regulator of Social Housing, requires all registered providers to have policies and practices in respect of the upkeep of common parts and communal areas, and for providing responsive neighbourhood management services.

3. Aims and Objectives

- 3.1 Our aims and objectives are broadly as follows:
- to ensure that our customers are meeting their tenancy conditions and enforce them when they are not;
 - to clearly set out our and our customers' responsibilities in maintaining common areas;
 - to ensure our customers are aware that we can provide support and advice about how they can comply with their obligations;
 - to ensure that our customers are not directly or indirectly discriminated against as a result of our approach to Neighbourhood Management;

- to take appropriate action where tenancy conditions are not being met and which impacts on neighbourhoods;
- to maintain, in conjunction with our customers, clean, safe and secure external and internal communal areas in our neighbourhoods;
- to undertake periodic inspections to ensure common areas are repaired in line with Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018;
- to have appropriate contracts in place which ensure clear standards of service and are communicated to customers;
- to work with our partners and contractors in delivering services to the agreed standard through monitoring and audit to ensure value for money for customers; and
- to actively work in partnership with other key agencies to provide services that will benefit all members of the community.

3.2 Customers may report any issues of concern in relation to their neighbourhood via the following methods:

- our website;
- customer portal;
- by email;
- by phone;
- in writing;
- in person; or
- by completion of a Customer Feedback form.

4. Policy Outline

4.1 Contract Management

Neighbourhood management services carried out across the Group are provided by a variety of in-house teams and contractors. We will ensure that we monitor these contractors closely through a combination of inspections, contract meetings and by gathering and reviewing customer feedback to ensure value for money and quality of service.

4.2 Neighbourhood Inspections

We will regularly conduct inspections of our neighbourhoods and communal areas to ensure they are clean, tidy and safe places to live, that our service standards are being met and services are being delivered to agreed specifications by our contractors and partners. These inspections will also include a range of checks for health and safety reasons including but not limited to:

- fire alarm testing;
- emergency lighting;
- legionella testing;

- playgrounds; and
- management of internal communal areas.

We may also carry out scheduled neighbourhood walkabouts with customers and partners in some areas on occasion to proactively identify and action neighbourhood issues such as graffiti, fly tipping, dog fouling and parking. Business intelligence will be used to help decide where and when neighbourhood walkabouts take place.

The Group Fire Safety Management Policy sets out our approach to health and safety hazards arising from fire and how the Group aims to prevent or minimise the risks to residents, employees, contractors and visitors, of a fire occurring as reasonably and practically the Group can.

4.3 Customer and Community Engagement

The Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard, issued by the Regulator of Social Housing requires all registered providers to enable its customers with a range of opportunities to be involved in, and influence, policies, decisions, and monitor and scrutinise performance.

We will provide customers with a range of involvement options, in line with our Customer and Community Engagement Policy, to jointly monitor how clean and safe our neighbourhoods are, that our service standards are being met and that our contractors and partners are delivering services to agreed specifications. This will be conducted through a range of activities such as, but not limited to:

- scrutiny of performance information by the Customer Experience Panel (CEP) our scrutiny panel(s);
- Mystery Shopping exercises and Focus Groups;
- recruitment of local 'Community Champions' who we will work with on neighbourhood matters
- working collaboratively with the Customer and Community Engagement team and external stakeholders such as the police, local authority and community groups to proactively tackle local issues i.e. fly-tipping or misuse of communal areas; and
- gathering and reviewing feedback from customers through a range of methods e.g. social media, surveys and community events.

4.4 Communal Cleaning

In buildings where there are shared internal communal areas we will be responsible for the cleaning of these areas. In-house teams and contractors will carry out communal cleaning, to a standard specification that details what tasks are required to keep the area in a clean and liveable state. In some buildings, cleaning is carried out according to an enhanced specification where it has been identified that additional work is required, such as due to unique features of the building. This service is paid for through customers' service charge, where applicable.

4.5 Window Cleaning

In some buildings, we provide a window cleaning service for the communal windows that is paid for through customers' service charge. The frequency of this service varies by area.

4.6 Grounds Maintenance

In schemes where there is shared external land such as lawns, pathways and hard standings, we will maintain these areas through a grounds maintenance service. In some areas external contractors will provide this service. This service is paid for through customers' service charge, where applicable.

The specification and frequency of this service will vary by area; we will provide this information to customers on request.

Customers will be responsible for maintaining any external space allocated to them or within the curtilage of their home such as gardens, driveways etc.

4.6.1 Tree Work

We will maintain all trees in external shared areas and ensure that any necessary work is carried out by specialist tree surgeons. Trees that are positioned within the boundary of private gardens are the responsibility of the customer, however, we encourage customers to contact us if they have trouble in maintaining a tree that poses a health and safety concern.

4.6.2 Graffiti Removal and Vandalism

We will remove any graffiti noted during proactive neighbourhood walkabouts or reported to us and ensure that any offensive graffiti is removed within 24 hours. Where we are able to identify the perpetrators of graffiti or vandalism we will pursue them through our anti-social behaviour procedure.

4.6.3 Dumped Rubbish, Fly-tipping and Bulky Waste

Customers must ensure that rubbish is disposed of in the appropriate manner using the facilities provided with their home. Arrangements for the removal of bulky items vary by local authority area and any associated costs are the responsibility of the customer.

Where we identify problems through proactive neighbourhood walkabouts or business intelligence with rubbish disposal, fly-tipping or bulk waste in our neighbourhoods we will take proportionate steps to investigate the matter and where necessary pursue perpetrators through our anti-social behaviour procedure.

4.6.4 **Sharps and Hazardous Materials Removal**

Where we receive reports or identify issues during proactive neighbourhood walkabouts of needles, syringes or other sharp hazardous materials in communal areas we will arrange removal by a specialist team or contractor within 24 hours. We encourage customers to report this to us as soon as identified and always avoid removing the item themselves.

4.7 **Parking and Garages**

We will advise customers if there is any parking attached to their tenancy. People applying for accommodation are encouraged to check if there are sufficient facilities for their needs prior to accepting a property.

On schemes with limited facilities, customers may be required to apply for a space or a garage. Additional charges and local policies may be in place where parking and garage allocations have been agreed, local teams will administer these.

Schemes with disabled parking facilities will be signposted and are for the use of disabled customers only.

Inappropriate or dangerous parking will be dealt with in line with the Antisocial Behaviour (ASB) Policy, which can include, but is not limited to:

- car repairs;
- parking of large or heavy vehicles; and
- neighbour parking disputes.

Garages should also be used in accordance with the conditions of the licence agreement and should not sub-let or used inappropriately. Breaches of such licence shall be dealt with in line with the Antisocial Behaviour (ASB) Policy and licence agreement conditions.

We reserve the right to amend local parking allocation arrangements to ensure a fair distribution of spaces between customers. This may include the introduction of parking fees.

In the case of ice and snow, health and safety guidance should be followed when gritting car parks or other outside areas.

Where parking areas are managed and/or maintained by third parties we will advise customers of this and who they should contact to report any issues with their space.

Cars parked on land owned by the Group should be roadworthy, have a valid MOT and vehicle tax. In cases of abandonment, the Group will endeavour to remove vehicles and will work with relevant authorities such as Police, Councils and DVLA.

4.8 Land Ownership Disputes/Fencing and Walls

We will investigate and, where possible, seek to resolve disputes between customers in relation to boundaries, such as fencing and walls by offering advice, guidance, mediation and sign-posting as appropriate.

4.9 Lifts

We will ensure that lifts are maintained and inspected regularly to ensure safe and efficient travel. Customers who would struggle to use stairs in the event of a lift being out of service or in an emergency should notify us immediately; this is to ensure suitable evacuation plans can be arranged.

4.10 Disposal of Refuse and Bulky Items

Customers should ensure that their bins are put out and removed on the day of collection. Any issues over the collection of waste should be directed to the relevant Local Authority. We will inspect bin rooms, stores and chutes regularly for health and safety reasons and to ensure areas are kept clean and hygienic. Misuse of these areas by customers will be treated in line with the Antisocial Behaviour (ASB) Policy.

4.11 Pests and Vermin

We are responsible for infestation within communal areas only. Infestations occurring within a customer's property are the responsibility of the customer to remove.

4.12 CCTV

On schemes that contain CCTV, we may monitor services 24 hours each day, 365 days of the year or access footage as necessary. We will use CCTV recordings to:

- prevent and detect criminal acts and anti-social behaviour in and around our homes and neighbourhoods;
- ensure safe environments for our colleagues and customers;
- protect our property and business interests; and
- investigate alleged breaches of tenancy.

Individuals found to be responsible for criminal acts may then be the subject of enforcement action or prosecution.

CCTV systems will be reviewed periodically using a data protection impact assessment to ensure that they are fit for purpose, have adequate controls, retention meets the Group's rules and signage is suitably located. Details will be recorded in the Group's CCTV Register.

Employees with access will be adequately trained to ensure compliant use of the system and sharing of footage or imagery in accordance with the data protection legislation.

For more information, please refer to the Group's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) Policy.

5. Equality and Diversity

- 5.1 We are committed to fairness and equality for all regardless of their colour, race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, age, religion or belief, family circumstances or offending history, as referred to in our relevant Group policies. Our aim is to ensure that our policies and procedures do not create an unfair disadvantage for anyone, either directly or indirectly.
- 5.2 Equality and data privacy impact assessments have been undertaken in respect of this policy and which identified no negative impacts on any person/group with a protected characteristic as a result of this policy.
- 5.3 The Group aims to meet the needs of its customers by providing an excellent service. However, it is acknowledged that occasionally things go wrong and customers may wish to complain. Should the need arise to make a complaint, please refer to the Group's Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy.

6. Monitoring and Review

- 6.1 This policy will be reviewed every three years or on the introduction of new legislation, best practice guidelines or required operational changes, whichever is the sooner.
- 6.2 Approved documents are valid for use after their approval date and remain in force beyond any expiry of their review date until a new version is available.

7. Associated Documents/Policies

- 7.1 List of documents/associated policies/publications:
 - Neighbourhood and Community Standard (Regulator of Social Housing)
 - Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018
 - Antisocial Behaviour (ASB) Policy
 - Customer and Community Engagement Policy
 - Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy
 - Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard
 - General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) Policy
 - Customer Commitments
 - Customer Feedback

- Fire Safety Management Policy
- Tenancy Management Policy
- Hate Crime Policy
- Group Health and Safety Policy

Author:	Gem Murphy/Peter Farmer/Clare Greensall
Document type:	Policy
Version 1:	Final
Version 1 Approved by: Approved date: Release date:	Risk & Performance Forum 22/07/2020 06/08/2020
Customer Experience Panel:	No
Next review date:	06/2023
DPIA completed:	Yes
EIA completed:	Yes
Employee Handbook amends:	No