

# 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 try 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 try to ensure our customers are aware that we can provide support and advice about how they can comply with their obligations.
- To try to ensure that our customers are not directly or indirectly discriminated against as a result of our approach to Neighbourhood Management.

- 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 and through monitoring and audit try to ensure they offer value for money for customers.
- 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 webchat
- By webform
- By phone
- In writing
- In person
- 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 try to ensure that we monitor these contractors closely through a combination of inspections, contract meetings and by gathering and reviewing customer feedback to aim to deliver value for money and quality of service.

### **4.2 Neighbourhood Inspections**

We will regularly conduct inspections of our neighbourhoods and communal areas to try 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 testing
- Legionella testing

- Asbestos condition inspection
- Electrical installation testing and inspection
- Heating servicing
- Lifting equipment
- Playgrounds inspections
- Management of internal communal areas

We may also carry out scheduled neighbourhood walkabouts with customers and partners in some areas on occasion.

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 far as the Group can.

Please refer to our 'Fire Safety in Communal Areas' document for more details of the Group's 'zero tolerance' approach in its 'general needs' common areas and 'managed use' approach in some properties such as specialist housing schemes.

#### 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 Voice Panel (CVP) our scrutiny panel(s).
- Mystery Shopping exercises and Focus Groups.
- Recruitment of local 'Community Reps' who we will work with on neighbourhood matters.
- 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 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.

We are working towards standardising our specification for communal cleaning across the Group.

#### **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. We are reviewing our grounds maintenance specification with a view to standardising our approach across the Group.

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. We will maintain these trees in addition to a grounds maintenance service. In some areas external contractors will provide this service. This service is paid for through customers' service charge, where applicable. 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 reported to us and try to 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 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 of needles, syringes or other sharp hazardous materials in communal areas we will aim to 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
- neighbour parking disputes

Garages should also be used in accordance with the conditions of the licence agreement and should not be 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.

Customers should be encouraged to report any defects/damage they may encounter on their garages, as commonly garage roofs are built using asbestos cement sheets so it is important that if customers do see/cause damage they report this as soon as possible.

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, local authority and DVLA.

#### **4.8 Playgrounds**

In line with best practice, playgrounds owned and management by the Group are subject to weekly inspections, an annual risk assessment and thorough examination of playground equipment.

#### **4.9 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 signposting as appropriate.

#### **4.10 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.

#### **4.11 Disposal of Refuse and Bulky Items**

Customers should ensure 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 try to ensure areas are kept clean and hygienic. Misuse of these areas by customers will be treated in line with the Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Policy.

#### **4.12 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.

#### 4.13 **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.
- 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.

Colleagues 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 Data Protection Policy.

NB – this section will be replaced by a specific CCTV and Video Surveillance Policy in the future.

### **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.

### **6. Complaints**

6.1 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.



## **7. Monitoring and Review**

- 7.1 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.
- 7.2 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.

## **8. Associated Documents**

- 8.1 List of documents - associated policies, procedures and publications:
- Neighbourhood and Community Standard (Regulator of Social Housing)
  - Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018
  - Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Policy
  - Data Protection Policy
  - Customer Commitments
  - Customer Feedback
  - Fire Safety Management Policy
  - Tenancy Management Policy
  - Hate Crime Policy
  - Health & Safety Policy
  - Fire Safety in Communal Areas
  - Repairs and Maintenance Policy
  - Service Charge Policy

<b>Author:</b>	Clare Greensall
<b>Document type:</b>	Policy
<b>Version 2:</b>	Final
<b>Version 2</b> <b>Approved by:</b> <b>Approved date:</b> <b>Release date:</b>	Performance & Risk Forum 28/09/2023 17/10/2023
<b>Version 1</b> <b>Approved by:</b> <b>Approved date:</b> <b>Release date:</b>	Risk & Performance Forum 22/07/2020 06/08/2020
<b>Customer Experience Panel:</b>	Yes 08/09/2023
<b>Next review date:</b>	09/2026
<b>DPIA completed:</b>	Yes
<b>EIA completed:</b>	Yes