

Neighbourhood management policy

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1. Scope

This policy outlines Ealing Council's approach to neighbourhood management for all homes in the housing revenue account, and applies to all communal areas, whether internal or external, owned or managed by Ealing Council, and excludes temporary accommodation.

All forms of anti-social behaviour (ASB) are included in this policy.

This policy explains our roles and responsibilities, how we involve residents and our approach to different elements of neighbourhood management.

This policy will comply with the regulator's neighbourhood and community standard through partnership working with our tenants and external organisations and our commitment to keeping neighbourhoods and communal areas clean and safe.

This policy covers those residents in Ealing who have a secure tenancy or leasehold agreement with Ealing Council, as well as council staff and contractors providing services set out in this policy.

2. Aims

This policy explores our responsibilities as a landlord and aims to cover how we:

- provide quality services that keep communal and external areas in a good state of repair, clean, safe, and free from hazards for use by Ealing Council residents and visitors
- have a robust process to manage health and safety risks to residents and visitors in our neighbourhoods

- provide residents with a range of opportunities to influence and be involved in the delivery of neighbourhood management services and monitoring how they are being delivered
- listen and act on concerns raised by residents about their neighbourhood and having a clear, simple and accessible approach to complaints to ensure they are resolved promptly
- work in partnership with other relevant agencies to deal effectively with anti-social behaviour (ASB) and other neighbourhood issues

3. Policy statement

Neighbourhood management is a key role of registered providers. The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) neighbourhood and community consumer standard states that 'registered providers shall consult with tenants in developing a published policy for maintaining and improving the neighbourhoods associated with their homes'.

Neighbourhood management is most effective when residents and landlords work together to make their communities a better place to live. We own and manage homes in neighbourhoods where there is a mix of our homes and private owners.

This policy sets out our commitment to maintaining and improving neighbourhoods and providing services to residents so they can live in a safe and secure environment in a neighbourhood they are proud of. The specific objectives of the neighbourhood management policy are to:

- ensure that all residents are aware of our responsibilities as landlord
- ensure that all residents are aware of their respective responsibilities
- outline our pro-active approach to our neighbourhood inspection regime
- develop our approach to our 'nicer neighbourhood walkabouts' to collaborate on estate improvements with residents
- manage anti-social behaviour with partner agencies and residents to create sustainable neighbourhoods
- develop service standards to measure performance delivery and resident satisfaction relating to the tenant satisfaction measures

4. Our responsibilities

We will carry out regular estate inspections of our neighbourhoods to carry out safety checks and meet our repairing obligations and monitor performance of our contractors.

We will conduct internal and external inspections of the communal areas of our blocks of flats, to detect any health and safety concerns, to identify any repairs and monitor the performance of our contractors.

We will take appropriate actions following all neighbourhood inspections.

We will undertake fire risk assessments in our blocks of flats.

We will use contractors who will carry out our ground maintenance service maintaining communal areas, shrubbery, trees, and hedges on our behalf.

We will use estate services to maintain areas of hardstanding, including our paths and parking areas, and carry out all internal cleaning.

We will work with local police and other estate services to help keep our neighbourhoods free from environmental ASB, litter, fly tipping, and abandoned vehicles.

We will monitor and manage our contractors who provide cleaning, grounds maintenance and repairs in communal areas.

We will deal effectively through partnership working and take any necessary enforcement action to keep our neighbourhoods and communities safe.

We will identify and deal effectively with breaches of tenancy that are visible on the estates.

We will carry out regular walkabouts with our engaged residents to work collaboratively to improve our neighbourhoods.

5. Resident responsibilities

Making sure that homes, gardens, and driveways are well maintained and in good condition in line with their tenancy agreement. Where below standard the local team will work with the resident to resolve the issue.

Promptly reporting any communal repairs for which we are responsible.

Helping us meet our health and safety responsibilities in ensuring that communal areas are kept clean, tidy, safe, and free from obstruction and to not use them to store personal belongings or other items.

Not smoking inside communal areas, being considerate when smoking outside and disposing of cigarette ends responsibly.

For the safety of all residents, and visitors, residents must not leave or charge any items in communal areas. This includes (but is not limited to) mobility scooters, bicycles /scooters (including electric powered), and pushchairs. Any items left in communal areas can make escape in the event of a fire more difficult. Or make it harder for the emergency services to reach residents. Some items can cause fires, and some can make a fire worse. Items can also cause injury if tripped over or misused.

Making sure that any animals kept at the property are always under control and are not causing any nuisance (sound, sight, or odour).

Not engaging in ASB, nuisance or annoyance to neighbours and reporting any concerns to the council's community safety team.

Not hoarding anything at the property (including animals) as this can cause a serious health and safety issue.

Residents must make sure that they and other members of their household or visitors only park vehicles in the parking areas. If a parking scheme is in operation, they must only park with a valid permit. Residents must not park where vehicles could block emergency access or exit points, or where they could cause inconvenience, nuisance, or a potential danger.

Residents are responsible for ensuring that their household rubbish is disposed of appropriately, this includes both general household waste and large items such as household furniture.

6. Neighbourhood inspections

Alongside feedback from residents, regular inspections of our schemes and neighbourhoods are one of the main ways that we can make sure our homes are safe, being looked after, and to identify any problems that need addressing. As well as carrying out regular formal inspections all Ealing Council housing staff when they are out and about will have a pro-active approach and be alert to issues that need addressing.

The frequency of our formal neighbourhood inspections will be determined following an assessment based on a range of factors including:

- previous reported levels of anti-social behaviour, damage, and goods abandoned or stored in communal areas
- the type and the cost of services delivered
- the level of complaints, reported repairs, and the historic performance of contractors
- the extent, age, and condition of communal facilities, including any reports of damage
- poorly kept gardens
- the amount or type of properties including the number of high-rise blocks
- any exceptional events such as storm damage or heavy snow

The results of the risk assessments will determine the frequency of the estate inspections and will be reviewed at least once every year.

All estates with communal areas or facilities will be formally inspected no less than twice a year, and our house to flat converted Victorian street properties with communal areas or facilities will be formally inspected no less than once a year. Where necessary this can be as frequent as every 4 weeks where serious persistent issues are identified that are compromising the safety of residents, and/or the appearance of the neighbourhood. We will publish the dates of our formal estate inspections and we will provide feedback on any issues that are identified and how we are resolving them.

Our inspection grading (for example, estate or block standards) will ensure that we are consistent in our standards of assessment. We will assess estates as good, satisfactory, or poor. Where a neighbourhood is frequently assessed as poor, we will consider taking a planned approach with specific actions for improvement to ensure that any additional services or facilities are costed, planned, and monitored. Where additional services or initiatives are needed, we will work with residents to design effective solutions that improve the quality of life of those residents living on our neighbourhoods.

Our caretaking teams will also regularly attend our estates and deal with any immediate health and safety concerns, cleanliness issues, graffiti, or fly-tipping.

7. Communal areas

On our estate inspections we will ensure that communal areas are safe, well-lit, clean, and tidy. Communal areas include but are not limited to:

- shared hallways, landings, stairs, and lifts
- shared doorways, porches, windows in communal areas
- shared bin stores and drying areas
- shared gardens and grassed areas
- paths and parking areas

We have a legal duty to ensure that all fire escapes and fire routes are always kept clear. We can only do this in partnership with all residents. Residents may be charged for any costs incurred by Ealing Council for the removal of items left in communal areas. If we know who owns the item(s), we may recharge the costs we have incurred. If we do not know who the owner is, we may recharge the costs to multiple properties.

8. Grounds maintenance and tree management

We want our homes and communities to be attractive and pleasant places to live. We aim to keep the communal grounds and open spaces we own well-kept to a good standard. We use a grounds maintenance contractor to maintain our open space areas and communal gardens on our behalf.

It is important all service charges reflect value for money for our residents. We will monitor the quality of the services delivered by our cleaning and grounds maintenance contractors during our estate or neighbourhood inspections.

Trees that are owned by Ealing Council will be surveyed and maintained every 5 years. Any trees identified as being dangerous outside of this cycle will be made safe.

9. Vehicles and parking

Abandoned vehicles and inconsiderate parking can impact on the appearance of a neighbourhood, create health and safety issues, and encourage ASB.

Where residents want to keep other vehicles such as a caravan, boat, or trailer on our estates they should seek our permission first as these additional vehicles can pose a problem where parking is limited or the vehicle is a health and safety concern, or in our opinion has a detrimental impact on the appearance of the local area.

We encourage our residents and their visitors to park responsibly on roads or parking spaces provided and not on grass verges. We will work with residents and external agencies to reduce irresponsible parking, abandoned vehicles, and resolve access problems for emergency and service vehicles.

During estate inspections we will check that garage sites are kept clean and tidy, and we will act where we need to. Vehicles parked on our land must be taxed, insured, and roadworthy. We do not allow vehicles with a Statutory Off-Road Notification (SORN) on our land.

We will work with the Drivers and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) to identify owners of suspected abandoned vehicles and arrange for the vehicle to be removed, stored, and disposed of if the owner does not respond after the required notice period.

Where the owner is identified we may re-charge the costs for the removal, storage and disposal of the vehicle or take legal action.

10. Graffiti and vandalism

Graffiti negatively impacts the appearance of a neighbourhood.

Vandalism and graffiti are not acceptable. We want all residents and staff to report graffiti and vandalism if noticed.

Where there is a health and safety risk, repair works are carried out within 24 hours. We aim to complete all other repairs within 5 working days.

All offensive graffiti will be removed within 24 hours of notification. We aim to remove all other graffiti within 2 working days of notification.

All incidents of vandalism and graffiti are recorded. We will investigate and endeavour to identify the perpetrator, prosecuting where evidence allows.

11. Abandoned properties

We will implement our abandoned property procedure within 24 hours of identifying or being notified of a suspected abandoned property.

12. Gardens and yards

Overgrown and untidy gardens can have a detrimental impact on our neighbourhoods and can often indicate that there are issues with property condition or that our residents may need some additional support in their tenancy.

Residents must maintain their own gardens, trees, hedges, window boxes, patios, fencing, and gates to a reasonable standard. Where below standard, the neighbourhood housing officer will work with the tenant to resolve the issue, using a support first approach. Residents may be charged for any work we need to do to their garden to bring it up to the required standard.

Where residents meet the criteria (registered disabled and or over 70, with no family member living in the borough) they will be placed on the gardening service to help them sustain their tenancy.

13. Rubbish and recycling

We will work closely with the council's rubbish and recycling team to ensure that estates have the appropriate facilities for disposing of rubbish and recycling.

We will act, wherever possible, against those found to be dumping rubbish or fly tipping on our estates, including recharging them for the costs and providing evidence to support prosecution.

Where we assess that rubbish and recycling facilities are required, or existing facilities require investment to improve, secure or encourage greater usage we will consider these sites for estate improvements or planned investment works.

Where we identify sites that have acute or long-term issues relating to rubbish, recycling, or fly-tipping, we may need to introduce additional services to address the issues. We will consult with residents before the implementation of any additional services.

14. Estate improvements

Estate improvements are a way Ealing Council can make enhancements to the physical environment that can have a positive impact on resident's lives and improve the way they feel about their neighbourhood.

We will work collaboratively with residents that live on the estate to consider their priorities and make joint decisions on how we spend budgets on estate improvements.

Where any proposed improvements would result in an additional service charge, we will consult with all leaseholders and residents before any works are carried out which will cost any individual leaseholder more than £250.

15. Anti-social behaviour

Anti-social behaviour can have a serious impact on our neighbourhoods and our resident's quality of life. It can also affect Ealing Council's ability to maintain and improve our neighbourhoods. Examples of ASB could include noisy parties, loud arguments, or intimidating behaviour; and could consist of criminal activity such as hate crime, drug dealing, or threats of violence. Environmental ASB incorporates things like pet nuisance, fly-tipping, or an untidy garden. We aim to respond promptly to incidents of anti-social behaviour in our neighbourhoods and to reduce incidents occurring.

Ealing Council will encourage residents to report and provide information relating to incidents of ASB they experience or witness to both the council and other relevant statutory agencies such as the police or community safety team.

We will only progress investigations where we are satisfied, we have the powers to intervene and that our intervention or enforcement is appropriate. We will not deal with matters which after investigation we consider to be:

- entrenched personal disputes
- unintentional or accidental behaviour of children
- allegations that after investigation are not supported by evidence

We will make it completely clear to our existing and prospective residents that ASB is unacceptable and if it arises it may lead to action being taken against them. We will do this by going through the responsibilities of the tenancy agreement and providing advice on request.

We will respond to reports from anyone affected by ASB (residents, non-residents). If either the alleged perpetrator or victim is not a resident of Ealing Council, we will work with other agencies and offer support or signposting as required. If the alleged perpetrator is a resident, we would consider all actions available to us.

We also recognise there are times where there could be multiple victims and/or perpetrators and will act accordingly. This could include where a whole neighbourhood or community is being affected. To support this, we will use area-based initiatives including Community Protection Notices and Public Spaces Protection Orders.

We will work to reduce and minimise ASB through preventative action and will develop and maintain effective partnerships with local and national agencies with whom we can collaborate in tackling ASB. We will apply this policy in line with our ASB procedure.

We will be clear that whilst we work in partnership, our role is unique in so much as we are both the landlord and local authority. As a local authority we are best placed to investigate any statutory nuisance (as defined by the Environmental Protection Act 1990), for example, noise nuisance. The police and other statutory agencies may be in a better position to lead on an investigation, for example if the reported behaviour is criminal as well as anti-social.

We adopt a harm-centred approach to managing ASB. 'Harm-centred' means looking at and prioritising where harm is most likely to occur so it can be managed and minimised. We will use the following principles and are supported by the ASB procedure:

- action planning with the complainant to try to resolve the problem and agreeing a communication strategy with the complainant
- triaging low-impact cases allowing priority focus on high-impact cases
- encouraging complainants in low impact cases to speak with their neighbours, where appropriate and safe to do so, which can resolve matters more effectively. (We understand that this may not be appropriate in some situations.)
- we will refer cases to the Ealing Mediation Service where we believe mediation would be helpful

16. Noise nuisance

We recognise noise from neighbouring properties can be a real nuisance and have an adverse effect on the health and wellbeing of residents.

We have a noise nuisance team at Ealing Council who sit in our safer neighbourhood team who are skilled in supporting residents with noise nuisance. Noise officers will be responsible for investigating reports of noise, linking in with safer communities officers and police colleagues to ensure the most effective intervention, and where appropriate, enforcement actions are taken.

We have a range of remedies available to help maintain good neighbourhood relationships including mediation, information sharing, community building events and dedicated staffing. This will ensure that low level issues of neighbour friction are dealt with at the appropriate levels and not inappropriately handled as potential ASB.

The noise officer provides a specialist service for residents experiencing disturbance from noise. The team attend locations to witness incidents when they are occurring and can provide critical witness evidence for enforcement action.

We will review our presence in certain neighbourhoods and the data and information that prioritises intervention, to support an effective approach to neighbourhood management.

17. Engagement with our contractors

Our cleaning and grounds maintenance contractors are aware of the standards we expect on our estates and communal areas. We will meet monthly and share monitoring information with each other.

We will engage with our contractors, so they share information with us to help us recharge residents who fly tip.

We will carry out joint visits with our contractors where we have concerns over the quality of the estate or communal area.

18. Monitoring and review

Performance is also monitored monthly by the rebuilding the housing service programme board and the rebuilding the housing service executive board against targets of key performance indicators.

This policy will be reviewed in 6 months' time after we have carried out more extensive consultation. Then at least every 3 years or sooner if new legislation or regulations are introduced.

19. Resident consultation

We will consult with all affected residents where improvements will result in additional service charge costs. We will consult with all residents before any works are carried out.

We will work collaboratively with our involved residents to improve our estates and will engage with them on a quarterly walkabout.

We have consulted with our residents in developing this policy for maintaining and improving the neighbourhoods associated with their homes. This applies where Ealing Council has a responsibility (either exclusively or in part) for the condition of that neighbourhood. The policy shall include any communal areas associated with Ealing Council homes.

20. Equality and diversity

An equality impact assessment 'initial screening' has been carried out which determined we should ensure the policy references support for residents with a protected characteristic. Some residents because of a protected characteristic, for example, may be more likely to be a victim of hate crime and use our community safety service than others.

We aim to meet the diverse needs of all our tenants in a resident focused and sensitive manner.

Ealing Council opposes all forms of discrimination, which cause a person to be treated unjustly including on the grounds of race, ethnic origin or nationality, disability, gender, sexuality, age, income, appearance, faith or religious belief or non-belief and responsibility for dependents.

We are constantly looking at ways to make access to our services easier for everyone. This can include:

- providing information and responses in different ways when this will be helpful such as large print, translated into another language
- language interpreters including British Sign Language (BSL)
- arranging appointments around times of the week or periods to suit the needs of residents
- providing additional support for residents with physical/mental health conditions
- arranging for residents to speak to a member of staff of the same gender where possible
- having hearing induction loop systems in our offices

- undertaking home visits to residents who are unable to access our offices

21. Managing risk

Failure to have a policy on our approach to neighbourhood management and adequately delivering services in line with this policy impacts on our regulatory risk and could impact the sustainability of our neighbourhoods.

A robust neighbourhood inspection regime helps us manage health and safety risks present in our neighbourhoods and blocks. Our insurers rely upon reports from our neighbourhood inspections to help them defend any insurance claims they receive.

Key risk indicators for this policy would be resident satisfaction with their home and neighbourhood including formal complaints and any associated regulatory concerns. There is also a risk that failure to deliver this policy could impact our relationship with partners and stakeholders.

We will carry out an annual self-assessment against the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) neighbourhoods and community standard and collect and analyse data against the tenant satisfaction measures.

22. Legal framework and relevant documentation

The neighbourhood management policy links to the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) neighbourhood and community standard 2012. This standard sets out that housing providers should have a policy for neighbourhood management, demonstrating our commitment to working with our partners to maintain high standards across our neighbourhoods and ensuring that they are clean, safe, and secure.

- Public Health Act 1936
- The Occupiers Liability Act 1957 and 1984
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Law of Torts (Interference with Goods) Act 1977
- Refuse Disposal Amenity Act 1978
- Highways Act 1980
- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 and 1987
- Housing Act 1985, 1988, 1996, 1998 and 2004
- Environmental Protection Act 1990
- Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Regeneration Act 1993 (section 121)
- Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003
- Clean neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005
- The Regulatory Reform (Fire safety) Order 2005
- The Removal, Storage and Disposal of Vehicles (Prescribed sums and charges) Regulations 2008
- Equality Act 2010
- Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Building Safety Act 2022
- Data Protection Act 2018 and subsequent regulations

23. Governance

The Ealing cabinet has overall responsibility for ensuring that this policy is implemented to ensure compliance with the law.

In practical terms the chief executive reports to cabinet to demonstrate accountability for regulatory compliance across the council and will also ensure that we are fully compliant with our landlord function with robust controls in place to keep our residents safe and to make sure our estates and neighbourhoods are well maintained and cared for.

24. Associated policies and management plans

Tenancy management procedures

ASB procedures

Repairs Policy

Recharge Policy

Repairs Handbook

Safer Communities Enforcement Policy

Complaints Policy

Tenancy Agreement

Leasehold Agreement

Resident Involvement Strategy

25. Appendix

Equality impact assessment