

# NEIGHBOURHOOD & ESTATE MANAGEMENT POLICY

Customer Service

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## 1. Purpose

- 1.1. This Policy explains how we aim to ensure that our neighbourhoods, care and support schemes and services, and communal areas are safe, clean and well maintained. We strive to provide excellent services to those communities and want our neighbourhoods, schemes and services to be places where current and future customers want to live. The way in how we manage, maintain and invest in those areas directly affects the quality of life and the environment enjoyed by our customers.
- 1.2. We will do this by:
  - Working co-operatively with customers to take all reasonable steps to ensure communal areas and shared spaces are safe, clean and well maintained.
  - Working co-operatively with customers to identify solutions to local problems.
  - Involve customers to monitor and scrutinise standards to local service delivery within our neighbourhoods, schemes and services.
  - Developing neighbourhood plans with customers, local partners and stakeholders to ensure plans reflect the priorities for customers in their local area, identifying what matters most and take actions to reflect those priorities.
  - We will work in partnership with local authority departments, the police and other relevant agencies as appropriate to effectively manage and deal with reports of anti-social behaviour and hate crime within the neighbourhoods we manage.
  - Take a proactive approach to neighbourhood and estate management through strong partnerships between ourselves and local stakeholders and ensuring that our neighbourhoods, schemes and services are well maintained, safe and offer local opportunities of support to local customers.
  - Ensure tenants within our estates and neighbourhoods fulfil their contractual obligations and, where applicable, take relevant action to enforce tenancy conditions in line with the appropriate tenancy agreement.

## 2. Scope

- 2.1. This policy is owned by the Chief Executive officer and Chief Customer Officer. It is subject to approval via the Customer Influence Assurance Committee and the Customer Experience Committee.
- 2.2. This policy applies to all of our properties and customers, including Housing Services, Care & Support, Home Ownership, and Scotland. It does not apply to members of the public that we do not have a contractual relationship with, claims of personal injury, or sub tenants of a leaseholder.
- 2.3. The policy relates to our management of neighbourhoods, schemes and services and internal and external communal shared spaces, as well as tenancy management.

### Legislation

- 2.4. Government legislation impacts how we manage our communities and implement our Neighbourhood and Estate Management Policy. The legislation set out below helps us to deliver this Policy:
  - The Housing Act 1985
  - The Housing Act 1988

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- 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



#### 2.5. Scottish Legislation:

- [Housing \(Scotland\) Act 1987](#)
- [Housing \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#)
- [Anti-social behaviour etc \(Scotland\) Act 2004](#)
- [Civic Government \(Scotland\) Act 1982](#)
- [Public health etc \(Scotland\) Act 2008](#)

#### Regulation

2.6. This Policy also aims to comply with the following Regulations:

##### **RSH Transparency, Influence & Accountability Standard**

Registered providers must take tenants' views into account in their decision making about how landlord services are delivered and communicate how tenants' views have been considered.

##### **RSH Neighbourhood & Community Standard**

Registered providers must work cooperatively with tenants, other landlords and relevant organisations to take all reasonable steps to ensure the safety of shared spaces.

Registered providers must co-operate with relevant partners to promote social and economic wellbeing in the areas where they provide social housing.

Registered providers must work in partnership with appropriate local authority departments, the police and other relevant organisations to deter and tackle ASB and hate incidents in the neighbourhoods where they provide social housing.

##### **RSH Tenancy Standard**

Registered providers must support tenants to maintain their tenancy or license.

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Registered providers must support relevant tenants living in eligible housing to mutually exchange their homes.

### **RSH Safety & Quality Standard**

When acting as landlords, registered providers must take all reasonable steps to ensure the health & safety of tenants in their homes and associated communal areas.



## **2.7. Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) Charter Outcomes:**

### 3: Participation

Social landlords manage their businesses so that tenants and other customers are offered a range of opportunities that make it easy for them to participate in and influence their landlord's decisions at a level they feel comfortable with.

### 6 – Estate Management

Tenants and customers live in well maintained neighbourhoods where they feel safe.

### 13 – Value for Money

Tenants, owners and other customers received services that provide continually improving value for the rent and other charges they pay.

## **3. Principles**

### **3.1. We will:**

- Treat all customers with fairness and respect.
- Assess our service to deliver fair and equitable outcomes, using data to understand the diverse needs of our customers.
- Communicate and provide information clearly, in accessible formats, ensuring all communications are relevant and appropriate to the needs of our customers.
- Support customers to use our service, ensuring that our services are accessible to all, including enabling our customers to be supported by an advocate or representative.
- Engage with customers when reviewing and updating this Policy, creating meaningful opportunities to influence our service. We will tailor these opportunities to meet the needs of customers wishing to participate.
- Keep customers up to date on progress, next steps and outcomes on services that affect them.
- Clearly set out our decision-making criteria, setting these out in the Roles and Responsibilities section below and in any associated procedures.
- Provide customers with information about how we are performing against this Policy and the actions we are taking to improve performance if required. Performance measures will be set out in any associated Procedure(s).
- Self-refer to the RSH if we fail to meet any of these principles in a material way and put improvement actions in place to minimise recurrence.

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- 3.2. We will deliver grounds maintenance and cleaning services in communal areas to ensure they are kept clean and tidy. These services are provided by external contractors and internal teams who deliver a standardised service across the Group with minor variations to accommodate local requirements. Such services are service chargeable.
- 3.3. We will work co-operatively with customers, other landlords and relevant organisations in the maintenance and upkeep of internal and external shared spaces by supporting customers in scrutinising local service delivery from contractors and our services and teams.
- 3.4. Security and safety is a high priority for customers, we will ensure all walkways, stairwells and footpaths are well maintained with sufficient lighting to provide customers with safe access and deter anti-social behaviour.
- 3.5. Where CCTV is installed within our communal areas, it will be used to provide reassurance to customers and to help prevent crime. Usage will be in line with legislation and good practice and used as necessary for the purpose of crime prevention and detection. Footage will be made available to the Police upon their request but will not be made available to individual customers.
- 3.6. We will manage contracts and standards, considering quality assurance information, local inspections and customer feedback.
- 3.7. When planning new developments and communal area improvements we will consider the impact on service charges and try to minimise costs.
- 3.8. We will ensure these services provide value for money and provide customers with a breakdown of any services carried out in communal areas and how these are reflected in their service charges.
- 3.9. We will maintain trees in communal areas which are owned by us where they present a potential health and safety risk and take the appropriate action to make safe.
- 3.10. We will remove graffiti (hate crime related graffiti will be obliterated as an emergency repair, with follow on works to reinstate the surface as a routine repair) and repair damage caused by vandalism, fly tipping, abandoned vehicles and deal with other environmental issues on our land and property. It is recognised that such issues have a negative impact on the estate and environment and negatively affect customer satisfaction with their area, where a customer of ours is identified as being responsible, we will charge them through a recoverable charge or take legal action against their tenancy as appropriate.
- 3.11. Where pest infestations are identified within internal communal areas we will organise treatment. Upon further investigation if an infestation is caused by a customer or customers due to their living arrangements, a recharge to the customer will be applicable.

### Tenancy Management

- 3.12. Customers will be provided with a comprehensive sign up and handbook at the commencement of their tenancy. These detail our customers rights and responsibilities, and services including estate management, housing management, repairs and maintenance, landscape maintenance in addition to landlord and tenant responsibilities, and the standards to expect in the delivery of our services.

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- 3.13. New customers will be visited shortly after the commencement of their tenancy, with regular contact throughout the first 12 months, to establish good relationships, offer advice, and assist in engaging support, if required, in setting up and sustaining their tenancy.
- 3.14. Advice and information will be provided on welfare benefits, including assistance in applying for Universal Credit or Housing Benefit to encourage tenants to maximise their entitlement - thereby assisting them to pay their rent and in running and maintaining their home. The importance of ensuring rent is paid on time will be stressed to tenants and debt counselling offered.
- 3.15. We will provide advice and support to customers wishing to make changes to their tenancy through succession, assignment or mutual exchange, adding or removing joint tenants or household occupants, and a range of other matters that arise during the term of the tenancy.
- 3.16. Customers have the right to improve their homes in line with their tenancy agreement, lease or license. Improvements may include (but are not limited to):
- Internal and external decoration
  - Electrical upgrades
  - Kitchen and bathrooms improvements
  - Structural improvements
  - Heating improvements

Customers are required to request permission in writing from ourselves prior to commencing any works.

- 3.17. We will take appropriate action where breaches of tenancy conditions occur.

### **Neighbourhood Management**

- 3.18. We will work with customers 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
- 3.19. We will act quickly to tackle issues when they are reported and the costs that 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.
- 3.20. 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, see our ASB Policy for more details. We will work with partner agencies to investigate and identify the

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perpetrators and encourage customers to report anything they have witnessed. We will 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.

- 3.21. We will work with local partners including the Police, registered providers and local authority community safety teams to address issues such as anti-social behaviour and neighbour nuisance, environmental crime (such as fly tipping), vandalism, graffiti and vehicle abandonment across our neighbourhoods, schemes and services. We will, where possible, utilise mediation services to help resolve neighbour nuisance and anti-social behaviour.
- 3.22. We will work with customers and local stakeholders to tackle parking issues on our land we own in our neighbourhoods and schemes. This includes irresponsible parking and parking related disputes. We will manage, either directly or using third party managing agents, parking controls such as barriers and gates where they exist, and new parking controls will be considered where necessary, which may include enforcement measures. Any such new measures will be subject to local need and through consultation with affected customers.
- 3.23. We will communicate to customers about landlord and customer responsibilities, issues our customers have reported and how we have or are responding.
- 3.24. It is important that customers 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. We will address untidy gardens with customers and support them in maintaining their responsibilities.
- 3.25. Where we believe that a customer's actions are the cause of problems, we will work with partner agencies where possible to identify solutions and actions, this may also result in enforcement action(s) against a tenancy or tenancies, if appropriate. We may also look to recover any associated costs attributed to this resolution and outcome.
- 3.26. 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.
- 3.27. 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 customer and use all available resources to develop a plan to manage and resolve the issues this may present, following our Hoarding Procedures. 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 considering the mental and physical wellbeing of the customer, their support network and external agencies that can

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assist in resolving the issue. Enforcement action will only be taken when all other reasonable avenues to resolve the issue have failed.

### Neighbourhood Plans

- 3.28. We will proactively gather data and report on a wide range of indicators to analyse the performance of our neighbourhoods and (where possible) schemes. Data and information will be used to identify the individual characteristics of a neighbourhood and working with our customers we will identify the priorities for their neighbourhoods and schemes and develop a neighbourhood and / or scheme plan. This includes understanding the profile of our customers against any protected characteristics.
- 3.29. Where neighbourhoods or schemes are identified as needing intervention and or investment, through local engagement with customers and partners, a neighbourhood and/or scheme plan will be developed, with a focus on building resilience within a neighbourhood or scheme through projects and services linked to our Community & Livelihoods Strategy. Examples of actions set out within a neighbourhood or scheme plan would be:
- Customer involvement to shape and influence the outcomes in neighbourhoods
  - Focusing money advice and employment and training activities
  - Support local community groups
  - Support community activities throughout the year, such as community events & environmental improvements
  - Link in with local partners to enhance the offer for local customers
  - Improvements to neighbourhood
  - Provide customers with the opportunity to review and feedback on delivery progress
  - Working in partnership with partners, agencies, charities and the local authority to bring to life projects in neighbourhoods and estates which will benefit customers and the wider community
  - Funding through Riverside Foundation for community led projects, helping to address local challenges
  - Seek to establish match funding for projects from partner agencies.
- 3.30. We will offer a range of services that support our customers to navigate the cost-of-living crisis, such as employment & training, money advice, affordable warmth and the housing sustainment service.
- 3.31. In smaller areas where we own properties but are not the main registered provider of housing, or the number of our properties is much lower, such as rural or dispersed areas, we will tailor the approach and develop a smaller neighbourhood plan in partnership with customers and key stakeholders and in response to issues of concern.

### Ensuring Our Customers' Safety

- 3.32. We will take all reasonable steps to protect customers within our properties, as well as visitors, colleagues, contractors and members of the public, from risks associated with building safety by:

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- Ensuring each building has a designated building safety manager who is responsible for the safety of the communal areas and shared spaces.
- Building safety inspectors check all shared spaces regularly to ensure they are clear and safe. Any safety concerns raised through these inspections are reported and action taken as quickly as possible. Action may include the immediate removal of personal belongings, see our communal area risk management inspection procedure for more details.
- Regular fire risk assessments carried out on all buildings with a communal or shared space and follow up any concerns to reduce risk.
- Wherever safety equipment is needed, including fire doors, fire safety equipment such as fire alarms, emergency lighting, lift call points; these will be regularly checked.
- Check the safe operation of lifting equipment, including passenger lifts and stair lifts.
- Ensure lift call points are maintained and operational.
- Inspect, service and maintain any other mechanical or electrical systems present e.g. lighting, remote monitoring systems, automatic doors and gates / barriers and access control door entry systems.
- Provide our customers with up-to-date information in relation to their building safety, information provided will be accessible in all forms.
- Provide our employees with comprehensive building safety information.
- Ensure measures are in place to identify, manage and mitigate risks associated with hazardous materials including asbestos and water hygiene.
- Identify all fixed electrical installations, metered installations and electrical equipment, undertaking an inspection every 5 years.
- Inspect children's play areas within estates and neighbourhoods which are owned and managed by us to ROSPA standards.

## Customer Engagement and Involvement

- 3.33. We recognise that the involvement of customers is essential to maintaining safe, attractive neighbourhoods and schemes, using customers local knowledge, insight and feedback is key to this approach and we will use feedback and insight to shape the approach.
- 3.34. Customer feedback will be provided through Local Service Assessments, Patch Walks (inspections), Customer engagement sessions, such as tenants and residents association meetings, customer review panels (where applicable) and feedback from our complaints process.
- 3.35. We will carry out patch walks (inspections) across neighbourhoods to identify and address current issues. Customers and local stakeholders and partners (such as the Police, ward councillors, community groups) will be invited to patch walks within their areas.
- 3.36. Patch walks will be aligned with the relevant neighbourhood plan and the frequency of walks will be dependent on the issues and priorities identified within that neighbourhood plan.

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- 3.37. In supported housing properties and services customers are engaged to seek their feedback and the local teams work to co-produce service delivery changes.
- 3.38. Within retirement living and supported housing schemes we work with customers to gain their feedback around their homes, inspectors scrutinise accommodation and service standards, reporting into the quality team and Customer Experience Panel directly, making sure customer feedback shapes future development and improvements.
- 3.39. Customers will be consulted when any planned improvements to communal spaces are being considered and where possible prioritise improvements which customers request.

#### 4. Further Information and Support

- 4.1. Customers and other stakeholders can access our Policies through the Riverside website at [Our policies - Riverside](#) and [Our policies - Riverside Scotland](#). Internally, Policies are available on the Policy Management System at [Riverside Policies](#).
- 4.2. This Policy conforms to our Customer Care Policy. We aim to deliver high quality customer service across all business streams, operating areas, and subsidiaries, and within all activities whilst meeting all legal and regulatory requirements. This involves putting the customer first, respecting their rights, needs and views.
- 4.3. This Policy conforms to our Tailored Services & Reasonable Adjustment Policy. We aim to identify and support customers who, because of a protected characteristic, vulnerability or diverse need require extra support or an adjustment to access our services, in line with our organisational values of 'We Care', 'We are Inclusive' and 'We are Trusted'.
- 4.4. This Policy has been written in collaboration with our customers through our approved customer panels. Reviews will be undertaken every three years, or as required when new legislation or regulatory requirements are published, and customers will be given the opportunity to influence the way we work within the requirements set out in the relevant housing law and regulations described above, and in conjunction with our Customer Involvement and Engagement Strategy and Policy.
- 4.5. Here we share a passion and a vision to make a difference for our customers by transforming lives and revitalising neighbourhoods. To achieve our vision, we consistently look for ways of improving the way we work, and how we deliver our services so we can always put our customers first. Our Riverside Way represents who we are, what we stand for and guides how we work, treat our customers, and each other.
- 4.6. Data Protection and Privacy are at the heart of the services we offer and are the foundations of our relationships with our customers, colleagues, partners and stakeholders. Personal data is valuable, and we must always act fairly, ethically and with integrity when dealing with it. The fair and lawful handling and protection of personal data is critical to developing trust and confidence and building and sustaining long term relationships with those we provide homes to, and care for. We are dedicated to safeguarding the personal data under our care and to the continual development of a Privacy and Data Protection framework that is effective, fit for purpose and demonstrates an understanding of, and appreciation for Data Protection and the opportunities it brings. We are committed to the continuous cycle of improvement and enhancement of our compliance and governance framework.

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- 4.7. We are looking into how we can make our Procedures more access to Customers and other stakeholders, in the meantime requests for information can be made through the CSC (processed as a STAIRS request). Internally, associated Procedures are available on the Processes and Procedures Hub at [Riverside Processes](#).
- 4.8. Other Strategies, Policies and Procedures that support this Policy are:
- Community & Livelihoods Strategy
  - Customer Experience Strategy
  - Building Safety Policy & Communal Area Risk Management Inspection Procedure
  - Responsive Repairs Policy
  - Community Safety Policy
  - Service Charge Policy
  - Neighbourhood Management Procedure
  - Tenancy Permissions Procedure
  - Tenancy Support Procedure

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<p>Housing Services, Home Ownership, Care and Support Operational Teams</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Work proactively with local partners, agencies and local authority to address anti-social behaviour and environmental issues</li> <li>•Involve customers and stakeholders in patch walks and service scrutiny (where applicable).</li> <li>•Ownership and delivery of Neighbourhood and Patch plans</li> <li>•Deal promptly with estate issues as and when identified</li> </ul>
<p>Community Planning &amp; Resilience Team</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Use internal and external data to analyse neighbourhoods and provide data to help form neighbourhood plans.</li> <li>•Develop neighbourhood plans to address local priorities.</li> </ul>
<p>Care and Support Quality Team</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Support with scrutiny of retirement living services where applicable.</li> </ul>
<p>Building Safety Team (Property Management)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Management of our shared spaces, to ensure safe, clean &amp; well maintained (safety and quality standards) &amp; Service Charges</li> <li>•Shared Spaces Inspections (hazard identification, repair identification &amp; functional testing)</li> <li>•Local engagement with customers &amp; other stakeholders around their shared space</li> </ul>
<p>Shared Spaces Contract Management</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Compliance with Consumer Standards and Statutory and regulatory health and safety assessments</li> <li>•Contract Management of Shared Spaces contracts (Repairs &amp; Maintenance Specialist Equipment and environmental services)</li> </ul>
<p>Asset Services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Planned works in relation to neighbourhood plans and customer priorities as applicable</li> </ul>

## 6. Risks

### Customer Experience

- 6.1. There is limited tolerance of variations to the service standards set and this is diminishing even further as we drive up the customer experience. We will continue to work towards improving delivery of customer services, the short-term consequence of making major improvements may be a temporary reduction in customer experience, however such reductions will only be tolerated where there is a clear articulation of the potential impact and an agreed action plan to return to acceptable levels.

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- 6.2. We have a full suite of customer experience KPIs which are scrutinised by Group Board, Riverside Scotland Board, Executive Directors, Customer Experience Committee and Care and Support Committee.

### Customer Safety

- 6.3. There is no appetite for risk of harm to customers and others. Targets for building safety KPIs are generally set at 100% against the standards agreed.
- 6.4. We have a full suite of Safety & Quality KPIs which are scrutinised by Group Board, Riverside Scotland Board, Executive Directors, Customer Experience Committee and Care and Support Committee.

## 7. Appeal & Complaints

- 7.1. As detailed in the Regulator of Social Housing's Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard, customers are invited to hold us to account for the decisions we make, that impact upon them, under this Policy.
- 7.2. If a customer wishes to appeal a decision made under this Policy/Procedure, this should be received and heard under our Tenancy Policy and Right to Review Procedure.
- 7.3. If a customer wishes to complain about the service they have received under this Policy, this should be handled through our Complaints Policy and Complaint Handling Procedure, which is governed by the Housing Ombudsman's [Complaint Handling Code of Practice](#) and the [Scottish Public Service Ombudsman Service](#).
- 7.4. These associated Policies and Procedures are available on our website at:
- England: <https://www.riverside.org.uk/you-your-home/customer-feedback/> or <https://www.riverside.org.uk/about-us/our-policies/>
  - Scotland: [Customer feedback | Complaints | Riverside Scotland](#) or <https://www.riversidescotland.org.uk/about-us/our-policies>
  - and are also available by contacting our Customer Service Centre.

## 8. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 8.1. We are committed to Equality, Diversity & Inclusion. We strive to be fair in our dealings with all people, communities and organisations, taking into account the diverse nature of their culture and background and actively promoting inclusion. This policy aligns with our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and has been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment.

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