

Introduction

This policy describes Great Places approach to effectively managing the communal areas and neighbourhoods around our homes and schemes, recognising that whether we manage just a few homes in a particular area or are a significant landlord in a neighbourhood, we have a contribution to offer locally.

The policy supports the delivery of commitments in the Great Homes and Great Communities section of our Corporate Plan and our Sustainable Neighbourhoods Strategy to ensure we help to create safe, vibrant and sustainable communities where people want to make their home.

It compliments both our Neighbourhood and Independence & Wellbeing Service Delivery Frameworks which defines our approach to creating successful neighbourhoods by working together with our customers and partners to take collective responsibility for looking after the local neighbourhood. Great Places takes a proactive approach to managing our schemes and neighbourhoods and have developed a patch based model that ensures we have a visible presence at schemes and in neighbourhoods, meeting customers, identifying issues and making sure we maintain our high standards. Our relationship with our customers is a two-way one with responsibilities on either side and we expect customers to take responsibility, with our support if needed, to look after and respect their homes, their communal areas and the neighbourhoods in which they live.

Context

Great Places is a regional housing association with over 20,000 homes across **37** local authorities in the north of England. Our stock profile is equally broad ranging from individual houses on a multi-tenure street, new build development sites, large scale housing estates, small blocks of flats and large city apartment blocks. This complexity in geography and stock profile requires Great Places to adopt a flexible and balanced approach to tackling scheme and neighbourhood management issues and how we influence and support local stakeholders.

Our Neighbourhood & Scheme Management Policy responds to the specific regulatory requirement set out in the Neighbourhood and Community Standard to consult with our customers in developing a published policy for maintaining and improving the communal areas and neighbourhoods associated with their homes.

The policy also adheres to all applicable statutory and legal requirements in relation to the local neighbourhood environment, including:

- Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005
- Environmental Protection Act 1990
- Refuse Disposal (Amenity) Act 1978
- The Removal, Storage and Disposal of Vehicles (Prescribed Sums and Charges) Regulations 2008
- Law of Torts (Interference with Goods) Act 1977

- Public Health Act 1936.
- The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- Occupier's Liability Act (1957, Revised 1984)
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act (1974)
- Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003
- Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
- Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Act 2002

Aim & Objectives

This policy aims to set out our pro-active approach to neighbourhood and scheme management ensuring that we create safe, attractive and vibrant schemes and neighbourhoods.

The policy objectives are:

- To manage and maintain our schemes and neighbourhoods in partnership with our customers ensuring we both meet our responsibilities
- To work alongside key local services (e.g. refuse collection, highways, streetscene)
- To ensure the grounds and communal facilities we own and manage are safe and well maintained
- To provide high quality services that enhance our schemes and neighbourhoods and represent value-for-money to our customers
- To put customers at the heart of their neighbourhood by encouraging active customer involvement and consultation on all aspects of neighbourhood management

Shared Responsibilities

Our relationship with our customers is a two-way one with responsibilities on either side and by having realistic expectations of each other, and ensuring that they are understood and accepted, we can deliver effective scheme and neighbourhood management:

Our responsibilities as landlords include:

- Providing quality services that keep communal and external areas in a good state of repair and cleanliness, safe, free from hazards and fit for use by customers and visitors.
- Ensuring that there are no Health and Safety risks to customers and visitors in our schemes and neighbourhoods
- Making scheme and neighbourhood improvements and where appropriate consult with customers
- Giving customers a wide range of opportunities to influence and be involved in how neighbourhood services are delivered, how performance is monitored and how satisfaction is assessed in accordance with the Regulators 'Tenant Involvement and Empowerment' standard.

- Listening and acting on concerns raised by customers with regard to their scheme and neighbourhood and having a clear, simple and accessible approach to complaints to ensure they are resolved promptly.
- Partnership working with key local services to deal effectively with customer concerns or issues.

Customers' responsibilities include:

- Making sure that homes, gardens and driveways are well maintained and in good condition in line with their tenancy or lease agreement.
- Promptly reporting any repairs which we are responsible.
- Helping us meet our health and safety responsibility 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.
- Making sure that pets are kept under control, are not used in a threatening manner and do not defecate/urinate in communal areas.
- Not engaging in anti-social behaviour, nuisance or annoyance to neighbours and reporting any concerns.
- To not hoard items, animals or anything at the premises.
- Take out an appropriate contents insurance policy (Great Places can provide details of our partner provider on request)

Scheme & Neighbourhood Inspections

Alongside feedback from customers, regular inspections of our schemes and neighbourhoods are one of main ways that we can ensure that schemes and local neighbourhoods are being looked after and to identify problems that need to be addressed. These inspections will also focus on ensuring that our contractors are delivering high quality and value for money services.

The frequency of these inspections will be determined and reviewed regularly by the patch manager based on a range of factors, including:

- property type
- property location and local environment
- the type and complexity of services delivered
- feedback from customers
- an understanding of historical issues or any exceptional events such as flooding

Great Places will ensure every scheme will have an asset management programme that ensures that key scheme components are maintained to a high standard and replaces them within appropriate timescales.

Fire Safety

In schemes with communal areas Great Places will ensure all relevant buildings have a valid Fire Safety Assessment. Customers must not keep any personal items (including bikes, door mats, photographs, shoes, etc.) within the internal communal areas.

Grounds Maintenance & Tree Management

Where Great Places owns communal areas that include grass, borders or shrubs we will provide a grounds maintenance service that ensures these areas are maintained to high standard during the different seasons and represents value-for-money to customers.

Great Places values the important environmental and aesthetic impact trees have in our communities and we aim to maintain a healthy tree population where they are our responsibility to manage and maintain.

Where trees are situated within our customers private gardens it is generally the responsibility of the customer to maintain however we may inspect and undertake works where they pose a possible health and safety risk or are damaging the property.

Cleaning

The quality and cleanliness of the internal and external communal areas of our blocks affects the health quality of life for our customers and as part of our two-way relationship we both have a role to play in ensuring they remain clean and safe.

Where appropriate Great Places will provide regular cleaning of communal areas to ensure they are maintained to a high standard and represent value-for-money to customers. Cleaning requirements and frequency will vary significantly between different schemes however they will generally include keeping internal and external communal areas swept, mopped and free from litter and graffiti. Where blocks and schemes have communal facilities such as a kitchen, laundry rooms and resident lounges we will ensure that these are also cleaned and well maintained.

Gardens

Untidy and overgrown gardens can negatively impact upon the kerbside appeal of a neighbourhood and can often be an indicator of other tenancy and property issues. As part of our patch based service model, local Neighbourhood Services Managers will pro-actively work with the customer to rectify the issue and provide any other appropriate advice or guidance. Tenancy enforcement will only be used as a last resort.

Play Areas

Where play areas are under Great Places ownership, we will ensure that they are safe to use, regularly inspected and risk assessed to ensure they are fit for purpose.

We will ensure that all play area equipment is maintained in the appropriate condition using a combination of planned preventive maintenance and responsive repairs. All play areas and equipment are subject to an independent annual audit by a RoSPA accredited inspector.

Rubbish & Fly Tipping

Rubbish and fly tipping can have a significant negative impact on the appearance of schemes and neighbourhoods and have the potential to attract other types of anti-social behaviour. Great Places will investigate all instances of fly tipping and misuse of bin stores on our land, and in the event that we establish the identity of a customer or person responsible, a request to remove the items within a reasonable timescale will be given. In the event that the request is not adhered to, we will arrange for the removal of the items and will recharge those concerned for the cost of this service. Persistent offenders will be at risk of tenancy enforcement and potential prosecution.

Where fly tipping is being reported within our communities but not within the curtilage of our land we will work in partnership with local services and enforcement agencies to identify those responsible and support actions to resolve the issue.

Parking & Bike Stores

A significant number of our schemes provide customers with parking areas and we will work with customers to reduce irresponsible parking, parking-related disputes and resolve access problems for emergency and service vehicles. Unless it is specifically stated in a customer's tenancy agreement, parking is provided on a first come basis. Where it is deemed appropriate, and in consultation with customers, some schemes may operate a secure car park with gates or barriers limiting access.

We will work with the Drivers and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) to identify owners of suspected abandoned vehicles on our land and arrange for the vehicle to be removed, stored and disposed if the owner does not respond after giving the required notice. Where the owner is identified we may re-charge the costs for the removal, storage and disposal of the vehicle.

Some of our schemes also provide bike storage for use by customers. This storage is operated on a first come basis and customers are responsible for ensuring the security of their own bikes.

Partnership Working

Great Places owns a significant number of homes in neighbourhoods where there is a mix of different social housing and private owners. Our customers and Great Places staff will identify local neighbourhood issues that are not our responsibility, including; highways, footpaths, alleyways, street lighting and other

properties. We will work closely with Local Authorities and other land owners to ensure that identified issues are addressed quickly and appropriately.

We will also work collaboratively with other organisations, agencies and stakeholders, to influence those neighbourhood services delivered outside of our direct control to ensure they positively contribute to maintaining neighbourhoods that are clean, safe and attractive.

Customer & Community Engagement

We encourage our customers and communities to engage with us at a local level and our local Neighbourhood Service Managers actively seek the feedback, comments and views while managing their patch.

Where specific services are delivered by Great Places (e.g. Grounds Maintenance) we will actively survey customers on a regular basis as part of our contractor performance management and to influence future decisions regarding appropriate service levels and design specifications for new buildings and schemes.

Financial / value for money implications

Delivering value for money through this Scheme & Neighbourhood Management Policy and more generally our approach to scheme and neighbourhood management is about the right service delivered efficiently in a way that benefits our customers and maintains our assets.

Implications for customers

We know that our customers want an attractive and safe place to live, one that improves their wellbeing and makes them more likely to be happy in their home. We will offer opportunities to engage with us that will create more trust and understanding; customers will be able to have a direct influence on their local area and our service delivery.

Our ways of working create a different relationship with customers, one where we expect them to proactively engage in the relationship and community and to respect their home and neighbours, but equally where we understand that they can hold us to account for our actions.

Equality and Diversity implications

This policy applies to all our properties and customers as appropriate. This has no bearing on the profile of the tenant including age, race, gender. It does not target or disproportionately affect any group of people based on any of the protected characteristics.

How performance will be monitored

There are a range of measures and performance indicators which enable Great Places to monitor the overall effectiveness of its approach to scheme and neighbourhood management and implementation of this policy.

Customer Satisfaction is a Critical Success Factor for the business; it is monitored and regularly reported to the Board. Benchmarking with other housing providers sets our performance in context across the sector. We track impacts monthly as well as having an annual ICS surveys to understand how customers feel about us as a landlord. Our Scheme & Neighbourhood Management Policy is will have a positive impact on this.

Measures to support this policy will include those around ASB, caretaking, repairs, grounds maintenance, customer satisfaction and complaints.

Risk

The risks to delivering this policy include local staff not having the capacity, skills, or knowledge, to engage with customers to provide effective scheme and neighbourhood management services. The risks have been mitigated by the focus on the relevant staff being out and about with customers for most of their time, and having appropriate induction and ongoing professional development to be able to give accurate advice to customers on a wide range of issues.

Links to related policies

Allocations Policy

We work closely with our local authority partners to develop fairness and transparency in the application and allocation processes for both our social and affordable tenancies, so that applicants are clearly aware of our expectations and their responsibilities when moving into a Great Places home.

Anti-social Behaviour Policy

Working with our customers and alongside partner agencies to challenge and deal with neighbour nuisance and anti-social behaviour is a key part of our approach to scheme and neighbourhood management.

Customer Voice Strategy

Feedback from our customers will help enable Great Places to understand the effectiveness of its approach to scheme and neighbourhood management.

Customer Experience Strategy

This strategy shapes the way we interact and provide services to our customers

Community Investment Strategy

This strategy in part informs the level of resource we target towards supporting customers to improve their circumstances, sustain their tenancies and create sustainable communities.

I&W Strategy

This strategy in part informs the level of resource we target towards supporting customers to improve their circumstances and sustain their tenancies.

Equality Impact Assessment

1. Is this a key strategic document, major policy or procedure or service change? Examples may include: Homeless Strategy/ Customer Involvement Strategy	YES		NO	
			✓	
2. What impact will your document or service delivery change have on the public or staff, giving particular regard to potential impacts on minority groups? Issues to consider include race, disability, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, carers and other socio-economic factors	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW	DON'T KNOW
3. Please explain your answer: Provide a narrative explaining why you gave the impact rating above.				

1. If, for question 2 you have answered LOW, there is no need to continue to an Equality Impact Assessment.
2. If, for question 2 you have answered DON'T KNOW, please discuss with a member of the EIA Group who can confirm whether an EIA is required.
3. If you have answered YES to question 1, and you have identified MEDIUM or HIGH impact in 2, you should move on to an Equality Impact Assessment and complete the section below:

If you have completed a full Equality Impact Assessment please provide the following:

What are the main conclusions of the Equality Impact Assessment? (Q10 from the full EIA form) N/A
As a result of these conclusions what actions (if any) will be included in your business actions and wider review processes? (Q11 from the full EIA form) N/A

Policy Approval Date:	October 2020
Equality Impact Assessment Date:	October 2020
Safeguarding impact	N/A
Policy Review Date:	October 2023 (Deferred to March 24 for scrutiny)
Lead Team:	Tenancy Management SEG
Level of Authorisation Required:	CSDT