

## Communities and Neighbourhood Management Policy

Policy Category	Housing
Policy Reference Number	HG_GRP_HSG_221
Version Number	2.2
Date Effective From	8 <sup>th</sup> March 2024
Applicable to	Operations, maintenance, health and safety, asset and development (including agency workers and volunteers) and contractors
Policy Owner	Director of Housing and Communities
Policy Author	Policy Business Partner
Approved by	Board – 24 <sup>th</sup> January 2023
Equality Assessment	October 2022
Next review and risk assessment scheduled	March 2025
Distribution	<p>Internal: All Home Group colleagues, volunteers and agency workers. Communicated via Home World Intranet, all operations email</p> <p>External: Summary on Home Group website. Full policy available on request to Home Group policy team</p>
Key search terms	Neighbourhood management; area inspections; community plans; grounds maintenance; tree management; communities; cleaning arrangements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For the full version history of this policy, click <a href="#">HERE</a></li> <li>Please avoid referring to printed versions of this policy or saving it on shared/ individual drives. All policies and supporting resources can be found under 'Policy and Procedures' on the intranet. Printed and saved versions may quickly go out of date- contact <a href="mailto:policy@homegroup.org.uk">policy@homegroup.org.uk</a> for support and advice</li> <li>Some hyperlinks to internal resources may not work if accessed externally. Contact <a href="mailto:policy@homegroup.org.uk">policy@homegroup.org.uk</a> if you require access to additional resources highlighted in the policy</li> </ul>	

## 1.0 Communities and Neighbourhood Management Policy Statement

Achieving our mission of 'Building homes, independence and aspirations' really does drive everything we do. At the heart of our Strategy are our customers and communities and ensuring that our property including communal areas and neighbourhoods are safe, clean and well-maintained are key parts of this.

Within our strategy, our priority in our homes and in our communities is getting the basics right in a consistent way – customers have told us this is a must do. Beyond this, we will work with customers and local stakeholders to develop a new approach to collaboration and invest in building communities that our customers feel safe in.

We recognise that well managed neighbourhoods are most effective when everyone works together, resulting in a better quality of life for our customers and happier communities. We want our customers to love where they live and be extremely proud of their surroundings.

As well as the physical side, we focus on the social, environmental and economic wellbeing aspects of our communities. This means, for example, working collaboratively to help reduce fuel poverty and improve living conditions for our customers through our work with the Greener Futures Partnership. We will seek to work with a range of partners to deliver a coordinated approach to employability and support individual customers and communities to thrive and grow.

Our Customer Promise sets out our commitments on the services our customers can expect us to deliver, and this policy helps deliver many strands of this. There are six elements to our promise:

- Providing a safe place to live.
- Delivering a reliable repairs service.
- Caring about you.
- Helping communities grow.
- Telling you where your money goes.
- Working together with customers and partners.

## 2.0 Policy scope

This policy sets our standards of practice in relation to communities and neighbourhood management of the areas associated with our property (including communal areas) and the social, environmental and economic wellbeing aspects of communities where we own property or have a sustained interest. In line with our development programme, we'll build and invest in areas where we already have a strong geographical presence so that we are able to make a meaningful impact in our communities.

We've written this policy with the help of our customers and have taken account of issues that matter to them. We've also used examples of good practice and focussed on opportunities to improve how we work where we can.

To help achieve the standards set out in this policy it must not be used in isolation. The delivery of this policy requires a collaborative approach and is strengthened by dedicated workstreams from our Operational Delivery Plan and our other policies and associated resources including:

- Property Management policy
- Tenure policy
- Allocations policy
- Health and Safety policy
- Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour policy
- Procurement policy
- Service Charge policy

Colleagues can access our policies [here](#) and customers can access them [here](#).

Equality, diversity, inclusion, and belonging is hugely important to us at Home Group, and it is encouraged and promoted in everything we do. Our Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging policy underpins our commitment and standards of practice.

This policy applies to all Operations in England and Scotland and includes those elements not covered by our other policies as outlined above. It is owned at Director level, and the assigned Director is ultimately accountable for the implementation of it. Our Operations function and maintenance are primarily responsible for the delivery aspect, and work alongside health and safety and our asset and development teams.

### 2.1 Compliance Requirements

We comply with all relevant regulation and legislation at the time of publishing including, but not limited to:

Regulatory Standards for Social Housing England; Scottish Social Housing Charter; Equality Act 2010; Environmental Protection Act 1990; Occupiers Liability Act 1984 and Occupiers Liability (Scotland) Act 1960.

## 3.0 Standards

### Standard 1: Clean, safe and well-maintained neighbourhoods

Our customers deserve great places to live that are clean, safe and well-maintained. There are many fundamental elements including those outlined in this policy, which when interlinked help contribute to achieving this standard. In most cases, this means looking beyond the scope of this policy and considering broader matters including tenancy and property management, as the relationship between them is closely connected and each aspect has an important part to play.

As a result of taking an all-encompassing approach, we hope a better quality of life is achieved for our customers, happier places to live are created and anti-social behaviour and crime are deterred.

### Inspections

Alongside listening and acting on what our customers tell us, undertaking inspections of our property and neighbourhoods are some of the main ways we establish they are safe and are being looked after. We manage many types of property in different locations and the services we provide reflect that. This means we have a suite of inspections in place and our approach to them varies, depending on the circumstances and the associated obligations. Most of our standards for inspections including fire safety, legionella and void

properties are contained within our other policies i.e., Health and Safety and Property Management. The majority of these inspections are statutory and when conducted, also help provide further opportunities to identify issues which may influence actions closely linked to this policy.

For the purpose of this policy, it's our standards of practice for area inspections that is included in the scope as outlined below.

### *Area Inspections*

We all have a responsibility for making sure our property and neighbourhoods are places that are well-maintained and safe, and our area inspections help us monitor the condition of them. Area inspections do not replace our statutory inspections as highlighted above, but instead compliment them.

For area inspections to be most effective, a collaborative approach between various organisational functions including Service Delivery and Maintenance, our customers, partners and stakeholders is usually required.

We encourage active involvement in our inspections so that we can get the most out of them. Colleagues take ownership of issues and concerns raised, any action assigned to them and share feedback in a timely and appropriate manner.

Area inspections are undertaken more regularly where there are high risk factors including large numbers of anti-social behaviour, complaints, empty and/or condition of properties and vulnerable customers. They are led by the designated colleague in line with our policy compliance notes, procedures and/or other supporting resources.

### *Grounds maintenance and cleaning arrangements*

We aim to ensure our communal areas and land surrounding our property looks good, is well-kept and functions properly.

Designated colleagues should be familiar with the quality standards for grounds maintenance and cleaning arrangements in their area. Colleagues establish and maintain good working relationships with delivery partners and ensure we get the agreed standards of service delivery in line with the appropriate agreement in place. Our Procurement policy must be followed when buying goods, services or works.

We also encourage customers to take an active role in making sure quality standards are met and designated colleagues ensure relevant information is suitably communicated to them.

### *Tree management*

We value the important environmental and aesthetic impact trees have in our neighbourhoods. We aim to maintain a healthy tree population on land we own or manage in communal areas.

Requests for works to trees are dealt with efficiently, consistently and fairly by the relevant function, and each request is assigned a priority level and timescale for response based on the risk imposed.

We inspect and survey areas of land where trees are present to determine the level of risk and how often they should be inspected. We also plant new trees when suitable opportunities arise.

We don't usually inspect or undertake works to trees in customer gardens unless they pose a health and safety risk and/or are damaging property. Generally, the maintenance of trees in customer gardens is the responsibility of our customers and as such is usually outlined in their agreement with us.

We investigate reports of vandalism/damage to trees in our ownership/management and take appropriate action against the person(s) deemed to have caused the damage.

We also work with local authorities where necessary on matters including overgrown trees and are mindful of tree preservation orders where they are in force.

### Shared responsibility

Effective neighbourhood management is built on the success of shared responsibilities and each stakeholder taking ownership and being accountable for their part.

We use different methods to work with our customers on what responsibilities are theirs including using opportunities at tenancy sign up, being transparent on our responsibilities and those of our partners. Occasionally it may be necessary to take further action in line with some of our other policies, including our Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour policy where we need to help protect our customers and communities suffering from anti-social behaviour. In some cases, we may also need to use our Tenure policy when customers fail to accept responsibility to address a breach in their agreement with us.

Colleagues and partners acting on behalf of Home Group should be alert and assess for risk when out visiting property and neighbourhoods. Appropriate steps should be taken to remedy any risk identified or be reported in the correct way.

The areas surrounding our property have a combination of adopted and unadopted roads, footpaths and communal land. Adopted areas are the responsibility of the Local Authority. We oversee the maintenance of unadopted areas even when services are provided by a third party. In most cases, customers are required to contribute towards the cost of maintenance in accordance with our Service Charge policy.

### Standard 2: Promoting social, environmental and economic well-being

One of our Strategy goals is to deliver for our customers and offering practical support to our communities where it's needed. Putting customers at the heart of their neighbourhood by listening to the things that matter to them and making improvements where we can help support this. We also offer a range of options to our customers to enable them and their communities to flourish - from participating in the Home Achievement Programme or undertaking an apprenticeship, to leading the organisation at the very top level by becoming a member of Home Group board.

Over time we'll be developing our work on community plans with our customers and partners. We aim to introduce a tiered approach to our plans to respond to the differing needs and requirements of our communities, so that we can help make a real difference to them. Every plan will be unique but could include the following elements:

- Customer employability
- Volunteering opportunities
- Regeneration / development
- Sharing best practices and expertise
- Commitment to work in partnership with key local players and creating community hubs

These are examples only and this list is not exhaustive.

As we develop our plans further, we'll update our supporting resources so that they clearly define relevant roles and responsibilities and direct our working practices.

We recognise the many benefits working in partnership can bring and building relationships and trust with our customers and partners is very important to us. Where it's relevant we co-operate with local partnership arrangements and local authority strategic housing functions so together we can help deliver successful outcomes for our customers and communities.

When opportunities arise to support with local initiatives, plans or activities in communities and where we can help, we'll make every effort to do so.

### **Standard 3: Communication and Engagement**

We are open and transparent in our communication and provide a variety of ways our customers can contact us, for example, by email, telephone and online.

Information can be provided in different formats, and we often work with customer groups to review our documents to ensure they are easy to use.

We encourage active customer involvement and provide a range of opportunities to influence and monitor activity connected to this policy. This includes Customer Promise Assessments, consultation, surveys, community plans and area inspections. We ensure any relevant feedback and/or the outcome(s) is provided to those involved in a timely manner, so that they can monitor progress and take account of their input.

We are also maximising the use of digital technology to work more efficiently where we can, not only to help with our communication and engagement but in many other aspects associated with this policy.

Customers have been involved in the development of this policy.

### **Standard 4: Learning, continuous improvement and value for money**

We are committed to learning from our customers, partners, and other organisations to improve our services and manage costs associated with the delivery of this policy.

Making use of community benefit funds where they are built into supplier contracts so that we can invest in our customers and communities is very important to us.

Being proactive and dealing with issues promptly and looking for opportunities to do things differently where we can, will also help us be more efficient and reduce costs in the longer term.



Should the need arise to raise a complaint, compliment or comment then our Complaints, Compliments and Comments policy and procedures should be followed. Alongside the use of customer satisfaction results, other data and intelligence, we use this information to identify trends and re-occurring issues so that we learn and make future improvements.

From time to time, we may also introduce pilot initiatives to help simplify our processes and/or test new ways of working before being implemented. We ensure pilot initiatives are communicated effectively and the appropriate approval is sought before being rolled out further.

#### 4.0 Key definitions

Word / phrase	Definition
Area inspections	An inspection of property and neighbourhoods.
Community	A group of people living in the same area.
Community plans	The development of a tiered approach to community planning.
Greener Futures Partnership	A unique collaboration of the UK's largest not-for-profit social housing providers which share the core objective of creating sustainable tenancies, homes and communities.
Grounds maintenance	A variety of work to outdoor communal areas including grass cutting and maintenance of shrubs, hedges and flower beds.
Neighbourhood	The land and buildings surrounding our property, including communal areas.
Property	A building or buildings and the land belonging to it or them.
Tree management	Maintaining and improving the tree population on land we own or manage in communal areas.

#### 5.0 Supporting documents

In order to comply with Home Group's approach to Communities and Neighbourhood Management and achieve the standards set out above, the relevant processes and policy compliance notes must be followed in line with stated roles and responsibilities. Colleagues should refer to our [internal index](#) for the full list of supporting documents.

#### 6.0 Version history

Version Number	Effective Date	Amendment made by (job title)	Version approved by (job title)	Description of Changes
1.0	March 2019	Policy business partner	Head of Service Delivery	First policy approved
1.1	March 2021	Policy Manager	Director of Housing and Communities	Updated last and next review dates following desk top review and risk assessment Updated policy owner job title

1.2	2.2.22	Policy Business Partner	Director of Housing and Communities	Desk top review and risk assessment completed and approved on 2 <sup>nd</sup> February 2022.
2.0	17.2.23	Policy Business Partner	Board	Policy re-written following a full review. The tone has changed to reflect organisational priorities and more emphasis has been given to social and wellbeing aspects. Policy standards align with regulatory standards and reflect strategic aims. Policy standards reduced from 5 standards to 4 and now include elements on responsibilities, tree management in communal areas as well as community plans and learning and continuous improvement. Connection to associated policies has also been strengthened. Name of policy has changed from Neighbourhood and Estate Management policy to Communities and Neighbourhood Management policy.
2.1	31.3.23	Policy Business Partner	Director of Housing and Communities	Desk top review completed, and risk assessment approved 22.3.23
2.2	8.3.24	Policy Business Partner	Director of Housing and Communities	Desk top review completed, and risk assessment approved 23.2.24. Policy name change made to section 2 (Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Policy)