



Housing Services Maintaining & Improving Neighbourhoods Policy

Approved by: Executive Committee

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Next review date: May 2027

Applies to: RHP (Association)

Maintaining & Improving Neighbourhoods

INTRODUCTION

RHP is committed to ensuring that we maintain and improve our estates and neighbourhoods so they are well maintained and safe, so our customers are proud to live there.

The purpose of this policy is to set out our approach to managing estates and neighbourhoods which we own and manage. This policy applies to all of RHP's customers regardless of tenure type.

RHP'S APPROACH

As part of a good neighbourhood management policy we recognise that it should include a clear suite of options for maintaining good neighbourhood relationships and a matrix for assessing which option is the most appropriate. These options include mediation, information sharing and community building events and, where appropriate, dedicated staffing or teams based on estates (such as our caretakers and housing team). This approach will ensure that low level issues of neighbour friction are dealt with at the appropriate levels and not inappropriately handled as potential ASB. We will engage residents in the development of the good neighbourhood management policy, including residents who have recently raised a formal complaint with the landlord, to assure themselves that it reflects the expectations of residents and will be effective. The policy will be reviewed by the Customer Scrutiny Group and published on our website as part of the consultation process.

RHP aims to improve our estates and neighbourhoods and communities by encouraging a culture of independence, pride and respect; and will engage with the relevant local authority and other partners to address an issue identified in a neighbourhood that is RHP's responsibility or where a joint approach can tackle an issue.

Shared Responsibilities

Effective neighbourhood management is built on the success of shared responsibilities between customers and RHP as the landlord. Neighbourhood management is most effective when residents and landlords work together to make their communities a better place to live. We are aware that we own homes in neighbourhoods where there is a mix of social housing and private owners. We will work closely with the local authorities and other landowners to ensure that identified issues are quickly addressed and appropriately.

Our responsibilities as landlord include:

- ▶ Delivering quality services to keep communal and external areas clean and safe and in a good state of repair.
- ▶ Carry out regular and scheduled estate inspections to inspect and maintain a regular and visible presence on our estates
- ▶ Carry out weekly health and safety inspections in our retirement living communal areas. Including fire alarm points, fire doors and flushing of low usage of water points.
- ▶ Ensure areas within our ownership are maintained to an agreed standard within the specific contract.
- ▶ Work in partnership with key stakeholders and agencies to ensure our estates are free from environmental crime and anti-social behaviour.
- ▶ Ensure our caretaking service provide cleaning services to the communal areas we are responsible for.
- ▶ Appoint a grounds contractor to provide grounds maintenance services to communal grounds within our ownership.
- ▶ Carry out regular cleaning and grounds inspections to ensure quality and compliant services are being delivered.
- ▶ Remove bulk items of rubbish promptly using our contractors to provide a value for money solution.
- ▶ Remove offensive graffiti as soon as possible.
- ▶ Carry out fire risk assessments in our blocks of flats to identify and address fire risks.
- ▶ Carry out a programme of maintenance and checks of shared facilities such as lifts, emergency lighting, water tanks, play areas to ensure they are safe and fit for purpose.
- ▶ Provide customers a wide range of opportunities to influence and be involved in how neighbourhood services are delivered and how performance is monitored and how satisfaction is assessed.
- ▶ Work closely with customer to develop schemes, community facilities, activities, and events to support the community.

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Communal areas on our estates – We will ensure that any open spaces including communal garden areas and garage areas that RHP maintain are clean, safe and well maintained by RHP or our partners. This will include ensuring that any trees, shrubs or other areas of planting on our land and identified for inclusion in our ground's maintenance schedule are well maintained.

Caretaking and Cleaning – We understand the importance of a clean and tidy estate. Many of our estates and blocks have a caretaking service. To make sure the cleaning and gardening is to a high standard, we undertake regular inspections of our areas. If we experience any problems from our inspections or from customer feedback we will take the appropriate action to make good/resolve the issue.

Customer involvement – We want to encourage customers to let us know how well we maintain the areas where they live. Customers can do this through, providing feedback through one of our surveys, our online forums, focus groups or just contacting us about a service issue. We encourage customers to get involved and give their views on our services and neighbourhoods. Getting involved can help our customers make a difference to the place where they live. The involvement opportunities for RHP customers focus on three key areas:

- ▶ Work with customers to set standards, challenge performance and drive improvements.
- ▶ Customer insight which helps improve and tailor services by collecting, analysing and acting on customers' views, preferences and needs.
- ▶ Community engagement which helps to identify and improve issues and the local area. For a full list of RHP's involvement opportunities please visit www.rhp.org.uk.

Customer responsibilities – It is important that customers ensure that all communal areas especially fire exits are free from personal items. Gardens and other areas let with the tenancy or lease are kept clean and in a good condition and comply with their tenancy/lease conditions. This will include garden maintenance, accumulations of rubbish, keeping of pets and the building of unauthorised structures etc. Where a breach is highlighted appropriate and proportionate action will be taken.

Estate inspections and fire clearances – Our estate managers inspect our communal areas monthly to ensure that the communal areas are free from any health and safety risks or hazards. Ensuring the communal areas are clean, well maintained and achieving our caretaking standards. Every six months our Estate Managers take the lead in carrying out estate hazard inspections. The purpose of this visit is to identify any issues that could cause harm or injury, including removing items from communal areas and make recommendations for estate improvements.

Planned works – RHP has a rolling programme of planned and cyclical works. We work with our contractors to deliver our planned works programme which includes refurbishing kitchens, bathrooms, windows and doors, and upgrading the fixed electrical wiring in our customers' homes. RHP uses the information gathered from stock condition surveys to collate our planned works programme.

Cyclical external redecoration – Our current policy for the external redecoration of our housing stock is to undertake the redecoration of our existing properties every ten years. However, this is subject to change depending on the immediate requirement of a particular scheme. All works and contracts are managed by approved consultants and RHP.

Tackling Anti-social behaviour – We use a range of strategies designed to tackle identified anti-social behaviour early on, which can stop problems from escalating. We work with partner agencies to tackle these issues and encourage victims of crime and anti-social behaviour to engage with statutory bodies. We have a published policy and procedure on anti-social behaviour and associated conditions within our tenancy agreements. Graffiti and rubbish is an eyesore which can make our estates look untidy and unwelcoming. Where the graffiti is on our buildings and it is offensive, we will aim to remove it with 24 hours. Where rubbish has been dumped on our estates our Estates services team will remove. We will try and identify perpetrators and where they are identified, action will be taken against them and they will be re-charged for this service.

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Noise - We recognise that noise nuisance is a common issue reported and that noise can affect people in different ways. Whilst some people may not hear things or be affected by noises, others may be sensitive to all or some noises. Noise is part of every day life and everyone can expect some noise from people who live around them. Some noise will not be classed as ASB, for example domestic household noise within reasonable hours, babies crying, children playing and one-off parties that are considered reasonable. Please see our ASB Toolkit for further guidance. Where noise is not considered to be ASB, we encourage customers to speak with neighbours to let them know what the noise is and how they are being affected. Where this doesn't work, or a customer feels unable to speak with their neighbour directly, we will consider whether it is appropriate to become involved and ways to help, which may include mediation and information sharing.

We encourage residents to contact their local Environmental Health Officer to report noise nuisance.

Parking & vehicles - We do not permit any abandoned or untaxed vehicles (including SORN unless in a garage that is paid for) on our land and it is important to keep sites free from these. This is to maximise the parking capacity and to keep our estates safe. It is illegal to abandon a vehicle on a road or any other land. The same law applies to abandoned caravans, trailers or parts of motor vehicles. We operate a controlled parking scheme on some of our estates in order to maintain an effective deterrent against unauthorised parking.