

Neighbourhood Management Policy

Policy ref:	Neighbourhood Management
Policy author /holder	Director of Neighbourhoods
Date approved:	29 October 2019
Approved by:	Customer Services Committee
Effective date:	1 November 2019
Review date:	1 November 2022

1 Purpose and anticipated outcomes

LiveWest recognises that there is a clear relationship between the quality of the local environment and our customers' overall quality of life where we want our customers and their neighbours to love their homes. Our neighbourhoods should therefore, be safe and well looked after and with diverse communities that are strong and safe and where our customers want to live.

We are also fully committed to working to help avoid the negative stereotypes towards social housing customers and challenge this where it exists. We'll do this by empowering customers and ensuring their voices are heard.

Through this policy we aim to:

- Develop a pro-active approach to neighbourhood management
- Ensure the grounds and communal facilities we own and manage are well maintained and that where we instruct work, it provides value for money for our customers.
- Involve customers and other parties with an interest in understanding the neighbourhood needs
- Ensure that all customers are aware of their respective responsibilities
- Ensure we continue to comply with legislation and the Regulator's Consumer Standards (see section 6)

This policy operates within our values:

- Customer focused – we work with our customers to find solutions
- Challenge convention – we are resilient and aren't afraid of change
- Together we deliver - we work together to achieve outcomes

Our values are a key part of who we are and what we do. They reflect the way that we approach our customers, our people and our work at LiveWest.

Successful implementation and management of this policy will deliver improved outcomes for both our customers and LiveWest. These key outcomes include:

- Increased levels of satisfaction from our customers when asked about their neighbourhood
- A reduction in the number of complaints linked to our neighbourhoods and their management

2 Scope and definitions

This policy applies to all scheme-based staff, staff who manage our neighbourhoods, our customers, shared owners, freeholders, leaseholders and all the communal areas to buildings/estates owned, part-owned or managed by LiveWest.

It explains our approach to managing our neighbourhoods, how we will involve residents in neighbourhood improvements and our partnership working with other agencies.

We have several policies and procedures that deal specifically with tenancy management, anti-social behaviour and customer compliments, complaints and feedback. See section 6 for further details.

3 About this policy

3.1 Shared responsibilities

So that we continue to improve and maintain high standards, we consider neighbourhood management as a vital partnership between LiveWest, our customers and other partners working and operating in our neighbourhoods.

The support, involvement and co-operation of all customers is critical to successful neighbourhood management. Many issues that arise such as fly tipping, dog fouling, graffiti and broken door entry systems are costly to tackle and are often caused by a minority of customers or their visitors.

We need the involvement and support of our customers and for them to act responsibly. Customers pay for services through their rent and/or service charge, so where we believe that a customers' actions are the cause of problems we will try to identify the perpetrators and take appropriate action. This may include charging them for the costs we have incurred to clear up problems or legal action for example, seeking an injunction or possession order. We will also work with other agencies where it is appropriate to do so.

We expect customers to keep their gardens tidy, report communal repairs quickly and not to do anything that would adversely affect the environment that everyone shares and wants to enjoy. In return we will:

- Conduct regular neighbourhood inspections (including communal areas) and ensure that they are well maintained, tidy and free from graffiti
- Maintain cut grassed areas and shrubbery on communal land owned by LiveWest
- Work closely with local Police and other services to help keep our estates free from anti-social behaviour, harassment and hate crime
- Inspect communal areas regularly to ensure that they are clean, well maintained and kept clear of rubbish
- Conduct fire risk assessments in blocks of flats to identify and address fire risks
- Regularly check and maintain shared facilities such as lifts and water tanks to make sure they are safe and fit for purpose
- Let empty homes quickly to help maintain the appearance of the area
- In conjunction with customers, identify improvements, investment needs and work with them to develop neighbourhood plans to address those needs.

3.2 Neighbourhood Inspections

Our Estate team will complete regular inspections of neighbourhoods so that we can ensure local neighbourhoods are being looked after and to also identify any problems that need to be addressed.

The frequency of these inspections will be determined on an individual basis and based on the regular assessment of a range of factors, including:

- Anti-social behaviour
- The level and cost of services delivered
- The level of complaints and reported repairs
- The extent and condition of communal facilities, including any reports of damage
- Poorly kept gardens
- Type of properties including number of high-rise blocks

3.3 Estate Services

We will provide a range of services either directly or through contractors. Services will differ from neighbourhood to neighbourhood depending on local factors.

3.3.1 Tree Management

Our Estate team will carry out regular surveys (at least once every three years) of all trees on land owned by LiveWest where we will have a programme of planned works to keep trees in a healthy and safe condition.

LiveWest will consider requests to undertake works to trees carefully against:

- The risks posed by the tree
- Any inconvenience caused to neighbours/complainants
- The wider benefits the tree has to the environment
- The resources available

3.3.2 Communal cleaning and gardening

All schemes with communal areas will have a cleaning and gardening specification, clearly defining the standards and frequency of work. This work is carried out either by contractors or scheme-based staff.

We will work with customers to formalise a specification. A copy of this is available to all interested parties and reviewed on a regular basis.

3.3.3 Vandalism and graffiti

Vandalism and graffiti are not acceptable. We want all customers 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 five working days.

All graffiti of a directly personal nature and in breach of Anti-social behaviour policy will be removed within 24 hours of notification. We aim to remove all other graffiti within five days of notification.

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

3.3.4 Refuse, Recycling & Bin Stores

We will work closely with local authorities to ensure that neighbourhoods have the appropriate facilities for disposing of rubbish and recycling. Fly tipping is the illegal dumping of rubbish and we treat this problem very seriously – we will remove fly tipping where this is on our land and report to the local authority, where appropriate. The cost of fly tipping may be charged to the scheme and therefore, could have a potential impact on our customers service charge so tackling the root cause of fly tipping is important to us.

3.3.5 Vehicles and Parking

We may appoint a reputable company to operate a parking scheme, or parking maintenance, in our neighbourhoods to ensure the effective management/control of parking spaces, facilities, gates or barriers.

We will work with the Drivers and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) to identify owners of suspected abandoned vehicles and where this is on our land, arrange for the vehicle to be removed, stored and disposed of (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.

Parking issues that are on local authority land or on the public highway will need to be reported by customers and staff to the Police or Drivers and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) so that they can take the appropriate action.

3.4 Neighbourhood improvements

Neighbourhood improvements are planned works to the communal areas which are intended to enhance the local environment. Before deciding about spending budget on significant estate improvements, we will listen to our customers/community groups and through informal feedback and more formal tenant surveys, identify neighbourhoods which require focus, taking into account their priorities for improvement.

We have a dedicated team of community connectors whose role is to empower our customers to become active within their communities linking up with groups and other providers to focus on their priorities for the neighbourhood.

We offer a range of grants to groups for neighbourhood improvements and take advantage of our staff volunteer days. Our contractors also offer to deliver improvements as part of their commitments to social value.

3.5 Other Agencies Responsibilities

Where issues are identified or reported on estates that are not the responsibility of LiveWest they will be noted, and customers will be advised to report the issue directly to the relevant organisation. For example, to the Police, Environmental Health, managing agents or the local authority highways.

3.6 Satellite dishes

We will generally permit customers living in houses to fix their own satellite dish to their home if it is installed safely in accordance with planning regulations/building control and without damaging or spoiling the condition or appearance of the property.

Permission may be refused where a property is not considered appropriate (e.g. flats) or has undergone external refurbishment where we consider that a dish/additional aerial would damage the property. The method of construction of the home may also mean that permission is refused where the fitting of a satellite dish could damage the fabric of the building.

3.7 CCTV

CCTV installed by companies, housing associations and local authorities is covered by the Data Protection Act. Security systems installed by private householders, including cameras, are not covered by this legislation but the inappropriate use of privately installed CCTV may be a breach of civil law, could be considered a breach of the 2003 Sexual Offences Act (aimed at preventing voyeurism) or might be grounds for a complaint of harassment.

In conjunction with customers we will consider proposals to install CCTV where customers themselves together with the police consider that this could improve the safety and security of an estate or area. The installation and running costs will be met through an addition to the service charge payable as part of the rent (subject to proper consultation with all affected residents). Any such installation will meet the requirements of the Code of Practice on the installation and use of CCTV published by the Office of the Information Commissioner.

We will give customers permission to install their own CCTV equipment where they can show that it will meet a need for increased security on the following conditions:

- It is a camera sited at or near the front entrance, covering that entrance or its approach only
- The camera does not focus on neighbouring private homes, their gardens and other areas of private property.

We do not regard CCTV installation as an improvement and will not make payments under the compensation for improvements scheme.

4 Service standards, monitoring and review

We have a full commitment to this policy and will ensure appropriate training will be given to all staff.

The policy will be made widely available to customers and stakeholders via an appropriate range of online and printed communication platforms.

We will review customer feedback and identify areas for service improvement on a continuous basis so that we improve the value for money of services being delivered.

The policy will be reviewed every three years or earlier where there are changes in legislation or regulations.

5 Legal considerations

- 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
- Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003
- Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Neighbourhood & Community Standard (HCA, 2015)

6 Linked / associated policies and other references

Below is a list of linked or associated LiveWest documents and to which our employees, contractors and other individuals are required to comply, as appropriate:

Policies

- Anti-social behaviour
- Tenancy management
- Compliments, complaints and feedback

Procedures and Guidelines

- Abandoned, unroadworthy and untaxed vehicles
- Estate and scheme inspections
- Tenancy inspections
- Hoarding
- CCTV management
- Sensitive Customer Information (customer flagging)