

Neighbourhood and Community Policy

Contents

1. Our purpose
2. Overview
3. Aims and Objectives
4. Scope of Policy and Exclusions
5. Roles, Responsibilities and Duties
6. Impact Assessments and Key Considerations
7. Definitions
8. Our Policy
9. Monitoring and Reporting
10. Quality Assurance
11. Communication, Training and Implementation
12. Legal and regulatory framework
13. Information Sharing and Confidentiality

1. Our purpose

We're proud to be able to support tens of thousands of people across England by providing affordable housing and care to help people live independently.

Everything starts at home, and we are privileged to be able to do work which makes a real difference to the lives of people in our communities. Everything we do is about people – whether that's providing a good quality, safe home or providing care which helps someone to live an independent life.

We live and breathe this social purpose.

2. Overview

Part of our purpose is ensuring that the environment in which you live is one you can be proud of. We will take a proactive approach to maintaining our neighbourhoods so that they are clean, safe, secure places to live, covering both internal and external communal areas.

This policy sets out our approach, including ways in which you can feed back to help us improve your local area to help improve safety, security and pride in your community.

3. Aims and Objectives

- ◆ This policy supports the delivery of one of the four strands of our Simpler, Stronger, Better Strategy: *to Improve our Customer Offer*.
- ◆ This policy aims to clearly set out how we will meet the requirements of the Neighbourhood and Community Standard, which is issued by the Regulator of Social Housing, and requires all registered providers to have policies and practices in respect of

the upkeep of common parts and communal areas, and for providing responsive neighbourhood management services.

- ◆ It shows how we deliver value for money in the services we provide in your neighbourhood.
- ◆ It links with our Customer Involvement & Empowerment Strategy, providing clarity on how you can get involved in influencing how we deliver our services in the communities where you live.

4. Scope of Policy and Exclusions

This policy sets out our responsibilities and commitments related to neighbourhood management. It covers all of our properties and customers, whether you rent your home, or are a shared owner or leaseholder.

It has been developed to meet the following requirements:

- ◆ Health and safety requirements, particularly around building safety issues, such as fire;
- ◆ The Regulator of Social Housing's Consumer Standards; and
- ◆ Requirements as set out in specific local management agreements.

In some cases, although GSA may own some properties on an estate, responsibility for overall estate management lies with another landlord, or the Local Authority (LA), so we are not responsible for maintaining it. We will explain in this policy how we work with other organisations on your behalf to make sure these estates and neighbourhoods are well maintained.

Our Locality Model helps us to deliver (and monitor the effectiveness of) our management services. Each locality area has a Locality Board, made up of colleagues from our housing, customer care, estates, property, surveying and repairs teams. These groups meet regularly to share local knowledge and insights. They are responsible for identifying performance issues and developing joined-up, local approaches to improve services for customers in the communities they serve. By creating cross-operational teams and working collaboratively at a local level, we can respond to your needs faster and deliver our core services more effectively.

5. Roles, Responsibilities and Duties

The **Director of Homes and Communities** has overall responsibility for this policy. They support and give guidance to Locality Teams and wider organisation, and bring to the Executive Team's attention any issues that need to be addressed or decided upon.

The **Head of Health and Safety** has overall responsibility for ensuring this policy covers relevant health and safety requirements.

The **Director of Property** has overall responsibility for ensuring:

- ◆ assets are maintained (e.g. door entry systems, gates and lifts);
- ◆ repair responsibilities are fulfilled in blocks and estates; and

- ◆ programmes are in place for delivering estate management works (e.g. cleaning and grounds maintenance, and tree works).

All Colleagues must have an awareness of our neighbourhood responsibilities and report any issues of poor maintenance or standards when working or visiting blocks or estates.

6. Impact Assessments and Key Considerations

Under the Equality Act 2010 we must consider whether our policies adversely affect our customers and/or colleagues. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been completed for this activity, the results of which show there should be no negative impact on any customers with a protected characteristic. This will be monitored through regular customer satisfaction surveys and any other more informal feedback.

7. Definitions

Managing agents are third party organisations that are responsible for the management and services provided on some of our blocks and estates. In most cases, managing agents are appointed by the freeholder of an estate or block.

Local Authority (LA) refers to local district, borough or county councils. They are officially responsible for all the public services and facilities in a particular area, including responsibility for refuse and recycling collection and for public spaces.

A **TORT Notice** is a legal document which can be served to the owner of an item which is left abandoned on private land. The Torts (Interference with Goods) Act 1977 allows landlords to sell or dispose of goods if reasonable efforts to trace the owner fail.

8. Our Policy

- ◆ We will maintain common entrances, halls, stairways, lifts, rubbish chutes, electric lighting and any other common parts and provide you with guidance on neighbourhood upkeep responsibilities.
- ◆ For blocks and estates which are managed by external managing agents, we will work with these agents to try and ensure that they maintain similar standards to those set out in this policy.
- ◆ We will work with partner organisations in the localities where we operate to tap into resources and expertise that can benefit your communities.

8.1 Maintenance of Shared Spaces

We will work co-operatively with customers, other landlords and relevant organisations to contribute to the upkeep and safety of shared spaces associated with their homes. We will achieve this through the following methods:

8.1.1 Estate Management

Our responsibilities:

- We will keep areas for which we are responsible well maintained to ensure that you live in a pleasant, safe, and clean environment.
- We will ensure that any plant or communal equipment (such as lifts or fire safety features) are regularly inspected, serviced and maintained.
- We will also provide additional services where these are included in your service charge (e.g. cleaning).

We will monitor that these services are delivered to the required standard and frequency as set out under sections 9 and 10 below.

Your responsibilities:

- You are responsible for keeping communal areas clean and tidy and free from items that might be a trip or fire hazard or obstruction. Our colleagues and contractors regularly inspect these communal areas and where items left in communal areas these will be removed. We will always try to identify the owner and ask them to remove the item first.
- You have a duty to follow our fire safety arrangements and should not do anything to interfere with these operating correctly as this could expose you and your neighbours to harm. This includes obstructing a fire escape route, wedging fire doors open, replacing your existing flat entry door with a non-fire safety compliant door and interfering with a fire alarm warning system.
- We ask that you report any concerns regarding safety immediately so that we can take prompt action to ensure that residents remain safe.

The table below sets out the activities that we undertake in our blocks, estates and neighbourhoods, depending on the type of property.

Activity	Details
Bulk Rubbish, Refuse and Fly Tipping	<p>You are responsible for ensuring that your refuse and recycling is disposed of safely, tidily, and as directed by the Local Authority (LA). Refuse collection is the responsibility of the LA. We will work with them to ensure that appropriate facilities and arrangements are in place for the disposal, storage, and collection of refuse and recycling facilities.</p> <p>We ask that you do not allow your rubbish to cause an obstruction in communal areas. We encourage you to report any dumping of bulk rubbish or fly-tipping on your estate; such reports will be treated as ASB and if it is on our land we will aim to have it removed within five working days (or 24 hours if it poses a H&S risk).</p>
CCTV	<p>Some of our buildings and estates may use CCTV cameras as part of the security arrangements. The use and provision of CCTV will be managed in line with our CCTV policy. We manage any personal data in line with data protection laws. Our privacy notice is available on our website at: https://www.greensquareaccord.co.uk/privacy-policy/</p>
Communal Grounds	<p>We will ensure there is a planned cycle of grounds maintenance for communal gardens. This may include grass cutting, shrub and flower bed</p>

Maintenance and Gardens	<p>maintenance and weed control, depending on the service specification for each particular area.</p>
Door Entry Systems and Gates	<p>We recognise the importance that well-maintained door entry systems and entry gates offer in making you feel safe in your home and will ensure that our buildings and estates are kept safe and secure. Door entry and gate systems will be installed to ensure that where they fail, they fail open, rather than locked shut. This is to ensure that in the event of a fire, you can evacuate.</p> <p>Where we are responsible for the maintenance of communal door entry systems and automated gates, they will be maintained by service contractors. In some cases, contractors will be appointed via the managing agent.</p> <p>To ensure your safety, and the security of our buildings and estates, we will investigate instances where we believe that a door has been tampered with or intentionally damaged. Where we identify repeat repairs of a similar nature which suggest interference, we will send out warning letters to customers or investigate the issue as an Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) case and managed in accordance with our ASB policy.</p> <p>We ask you to help ensure the safety of your neighbours by not providing access to unauthorised persons to the property (e.g. by ‘buzzing them in’).</p>
Fencing and party walls	<p>We are only responsible for the maintenance of boundary fences (any fence that acts as a boundary between our property and a public space such as a car park, pavement or alley way). You are responsible for privacy fences between yourself and your neighbour. (Normally the fence you are responsible for would be the left-hand side when facing away from the property). You should ensure that any repairs or changes made to fences comply with the existing boundaries.</p> <p>We will make safe any boundary structure if failing to do would constitute a health and safety risk. Any repairs will be completed in line with our Responsive Repairs Policy.</p> <p>Any requests that involve a party wall shared between our property and a non-GSA property will be handled by the Localities team.</p>
Graffiti and Vandalism	<p>Graffiti will be treated as Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB). Removal of graffiti on private property is the property owner’s responsibility. On GSA property, we will aim to remove graffiti within three working days of it being reported. However, if the graffiti is offensive then we will aim to remove it within one working day. Wherever possible we will erase graffiti from unpainted surfaces rather than block-out the graffiti with paint.</p> <p>Instances of graffiti caused by any GSA customer, members of their household, or visitors will be treated under our ASB Policy. We will report serious vandalism to the police and press charges where appropriate.</p>

	Damage caused by vandalism will be repaired in line with our Responsive Repairs Policy.
Lifts	Where we are responsible for the maintenance of communal passenger lifts, we will use a service contractor to maintain and service them. More information on how we manage lifts is set out in our Lift Safety Policy.
Parking and Vehicles	<p>Parking provisions will vary from estate to estate, and additional information regarding parking schemes (including any restrictions) may also be included in your Tenancy Agreement or communicated to you separately.</p> <p>Where there is a parking scheme in place, you must not park without a valid permit. (This also applies to your visitors). In instances where you believe you or they have been incorrectly ticketed by our parking enforcement contractors, you should appeal directly with the parking contractor.</p> <p>Where we identify the need for parking enforcement, we will consult you before any arrangements are put in place. Where enforcement schemes are place on GSA owned land, you will be able to apply for parking permits.</p> <p>Where we are made aware of abandoned vehicles in our parking areas or private land, either through routine estate inspections, reports from you or other third parties, we will investigate. Where necessary, and after appropriate steps have been taken, abandoned vehicles will be removed. For vehicles abandoned on public roads, please contact the Local Authority.</p>
Pets	You must request permission from us to keep a pet in accordance with our Pets Procedure and your tenancy agreement. Customers who have pets should ensure that they do not cause nuisance or annoyance to other residents. It is your responsibility to clean after your pets in your neighbourhood and in communal areas. We may ask for the removal of a pet if we believe the animal is causing a nuisance or is a danger to other people.
Playground management	<p>We have a responsibility to ensure that all play equipment which we own or manage is safe and fit for purpose. This will be achieved through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Regular inspections of equipment and playgrounds/play areas ◆ Regular risk assessments and the implementation of remedial actions ◆ Visual assessments from estate services contractors who will report back any concerns to our Health and Safety team ◆ A system of proactive and reactive repairs to play equipment/areas. Any repairs undertaken to playground equipment will only be undertaken by persons qualified to do so.
Security Gates and Grilles on flat entrance doors and in communal areas	<p>You will not usually be permitted to install security gates and grilles to your flat entrance doors as gates of this type can often hinder entry to and exit from the premises for purposes of evacuation and firefighting.</p> <p>We will ask you to remove any that were fitted without permission and considered to be an unacceptable fire risk.</p>

Sharps and Hazardous Materials	Any sharp objects or hazardous materials that are found in areas for which we are responsible during estate visits will be removed to ensure your safety and that of our colleagues and contractors. Once reported, we will arrange for the materials to be removed within 24 hours by the appropriate contractor. We will also arrange for a deep clean to take place where necessary.
Tree Management	We have a risk-based, proactive tree inspection and maintenance programme. The aim is to effectively manage all trees on our land so that they do not pose a risk to you, to properties or to the public, and so they remain in good health and continue to thrive. Full details of our approach are set out in our Tree Policy.
Window cleaning	In some buildings, we provide a window cleaning service for the communal windows that is paid for through service charges. The frequency of window cleaning will vary depending on the scheme. We will consider adding other blocks to this schedule where necessary, subject to customer consultation, and the cost of this will be covered by the service charge.

8.1.2 Inspections

- We undertake inspections of internal and external communal areas on a regular basis. The frequency of inspections is determined by the risks present in the property. These inspections include identifying any potential repairs as well as ensuring health and safety concerns are recorded and addressed.
- We will encourage you to get involved in estate inspections by inviting you to block or estate walkabouts, where customers and colleagues jointly inspect the standards of the communal areas.

8.2 Local Co-operation

We will co-operate with relevant partners to promote social, environmental and economic wellbeing in the areas where they provide social housing. We will achieve this through the following methods:

8.2.1 Mixed Landlord Neighbourhoods

Not all schemes or neighbourhoods where we own properties are managed by us. Sometimes they may be there may be mixed responsibilities for management, or they may be managed by a third party. Where this is the case:

Our responsibilities:

- We will advise you of the party responsible for managing your scheme, the services they provide and any responsibilities retained by GSA.
- We will monitor the services delivered by external parties through estate inspections and other methods to ensure accountability and satisfaction.
- We will work in partnership with other land owners in the neighbourhood to encourage them to maintain similar standards to those set out in this policy.

- We will ensure that we meet our own management responsibilities and take action, where possible, to ensure that others do the same.
- We will escalate your issues and concerns to any third parties with management responsibilities, and will advocate on your behalf where we are able to do so.
- We will ensure that we are representing your best interests when dealing with other parties who provide services in your scheme or neighbourhood.

8.2.2 Partnership working

We are committed to working with other agencies, our partners and contractors in delivering services to the agreed standard and to provide services that will benefit all members of the community. This includes working with:

- local councillors, making sure standards are met
- local police, to deal with issues relating to crime
- other housing providers where we share estates
- parish councils, explaining what we do and meeting other local partners
- local authorities, including proactive working to manage issues like flytipping.

8.3 Safer Neighbourhoods

8.3.1 We will work in partnership with appropriate local authority departments, the police and other relevant organisations to deter and tackle anti-social behaviour (ASB) in the neighbourhoods where we provide social housing. You can find out more information about how we manage ASB in our ASB Policy.

8.4 Domestic Abuse

8.4.1 We will work co-operatively with other agencies tackling domestic abuse and enable customers to access appropriate support and advice. You can find more information in our Domestic Abuse Policy and on our website.

9. Customer Involvement

- 9.1 We want you to be given the opportunity to engage in local decisions and provide feedback on neighbourhood standards. Customer involvement allows us to understand your expectations and ensures the services we provide are effective in meeting them. We will work with you through customer focus groups, community projects and roadshows, as well as working with you on joint inspections through our Localities teams. Our work on customer involvement is overseen by our Customer Panel.
- 9.2 We will publish clear and relevant information about the services which are provided in your blocks and estates. We will provide opportunities for you to influence the services we provide in your neighbourhoods, being clear about any service charge implications.
- 9.3 You may report any issues of concern in relation to your neighbourhood via our website, using the customer portal, by email, by phone, in writing or in person.

9.4 You can find out more about our approach to customer involvement in our Customer Involvement and Empowerment Strategy.

10. Monitoring and Reporting

10.1 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are collated on different aspects of our estate management services, and are reported to Locality Boards, the Customer Panel, and our Homes and Customer Experience Committee.

10.2 We also report on our performance on our website and will report on Tenant Satisfaction Measures from April 2024. We are designing a wider scheme of publications for customers under the Access to Information Scheme which will be introduced in 2024. This will be published on our website.

11. Quality Assurance

- ◆ Service Standards
 - We carry out joint estate inspections with customers on larger schemes.
 - We carry out scheduled neighbourhood walkabouts with customers and partners in some areas on occasion to proactively identify and action neighbourhood issues such as graffiti, fly tipping, dog fouling and parking.
 - A customer satisfaction survey is undertaken on an annual basis and gathers feedback on your neighbourhoods, communal cleaning, window cleaning, and grounds maintenance. If the results indicate low satisfaction, we will take action to address this, based on the specific feedback given and the unique requirements of that particular estate.

12. Communication, Training and Implementation

We will make this policy available to customers on our website and also publish it internally so that colleagues are aware of its requirements.

13. Legal and regulatory framework

- The **Regulatory of Social Housing's (RSH's) Consumer Standards**, in particular the **Neighbourhood and Community Standard** – This sets out the expectations which are included in this policy regarding:
 - Maintenance of shared spaces;
 - Local co-operation;
 - Safer neighbourhoods; and
 - Domestic abuse
- **Environmental Protection Act (Controlled Waste Transfer)** - This act requires that we must take all reasonable steps to prevent unauthorised or harmful deposit, treatment or disposal of waste that occur in the process of delivering our services.

- **Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018** - This requires us to ensure that your homes are 'fit for human habitation', which means that they are safe, healthy and free from things that could cause serious harm.
- **Health and Safety at Work Act 1974** - This legislation requires us to ensure we meet the relevant health and safety standards as well as fire safety standards to protect our employees and contractors.
- **The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005** and associated legislation, such as **Fire Safety Act 2021** – This stipulates the need to carry out a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks for all workplaces /activities and for multi-occupied residential buildings, for the purpose of deciding what precautionary measures are necessary for fire safety. This includes evaluating the fire risks to the structure, external walls and common parts of buildings.

14. Information Sharing and Confidentiality

We will provide information as required in line with relevant law and regulation.

We collect information (personal data) to enable us to:

- ◆ manage and support our relationship with you to comply with legal obligations
- ◆ improve our services
- ◆ achieve our legitimate business aims

We are committed to complying with data protection legislation when handling your data.

You have rights including access to your data and to object to the way it is processed. For more information on how and why we process your data and how you can exercise your rights please view our full Privacy Policy on our website at [Privacy notice – GreenSquareAccord](#).