

Noise



Self-assessment – February 2025

Net zero

Housing Ombudsman Service recommendation	Current assessment
Landlords should consider their net zero plans for insulation to ensure that the thermal insulation activity planned will also provide noise insulation and will not make any existing noise transference issues worse.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Where works specifically relate to upgrading of EWI loft insulation and doors and windows there would be an associated benefit in improved decibel performance over the previous installations.• Positive effects would also arise from the better fitment and sealing that closes up gaps and holes in the fabric. As with any wall measure, be that CWI or EWI, thermal performance can broadly be translated to noise transfer, as more dense materials and walls will block some noise transfer.

Void standard

Housing Ombudsman Service recommendation	Current assessment
Landlords should update their void standard to ensure that: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ carpets are not removed unless they are in a poor state of repair▪ hard flooring is removed when there have been reports of noise linked to the property▪ properties have adequate insulation from transference noise	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In addition to our approach to voids we assess the potential noise impact on all new developments.• Our contracts require contractors/developers to ensure acoustic performance complies with current building regulations. Whilst this concentrates primarily on the construction methodology of the building, as part of the planning application process we often carry out noise surveys to measure the external environment

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ anti-vibration mats are fitted into the washing machine space as standard. <p>If landlords assess the condition of the carpets as good, they should ask the prospective tenant if they wish to keep them and if so, to sign a liability waiver.</p>	<p>impact and implement measures in accordance with planning requirements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our approach to floor coverings aligns with the recommendations. Carpets are assessed and, if in good condition, are left in place. The lettings team engages with incoming customers to determine if they prefer the carpet to remain or be removed. For hard floor coverings, the same approach is taken unless there are reports of noise nuisance. • Currently, vibration mats are not fitted, but this will be considered during the lettable standard review. it is likely that vibration mats will be added to future standards, especially in blocks and schemes.
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Good neighbourhood management policy

Housing Ombudsman Service recommendation	Current assessment
<p>Landlords should have a proactive good neighbourhood management policy, distinct to the ASB policy, with a clear suite of options for maintaining good neighbourhood relationships and a matrix for assessing which option is the most appropriate.</p> <p>These options should include mediation, information sharing and community building events and, where appropriate, dedicated staffing. This will ensure that low level issues of neighbour friction are dealt with at the appropriate levels and not inappropriately handled as potential ASB.</p> <p>Landlords should 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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighbourhood and Community policy has been published. • Annual Roadshows and mediation services are in place. Multi-agency partnerships attended our roadshows across our localities. Customer Panel were involved in reviewing and engagement with the roadshows. • Police Tasking meetings are attended by Housing Officer. • We will continue to look at whether the Neighbourhood and Community policy fully covers all areas of this recommendation, or whether additional policy is required.

<p>Landlords should have a triage methodology for identifying whether a noise report should be handled under the ASB policy or the good neighbourhood management policy. This should include a recognition that the time the noise occurred has a bearing on whether the noise is anti-social in nature.</p> <p>Landlords should provide training on this triage methodology, including regular refresher training and whenever there is staff change.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We define ASB in relation to noise as part of our ASB policy. We have guidance on our website which explains what we consider noise nuisance and day-to-day living noise. • We have further ASB colleague training planned for 2025/26 through external consultants. • We will be looking into the development of a more formalised triage methodology and a more specific good neighbourhood policy.
<p>Landlords should give consideration to separating the role responsible for collecting rent from the role handling noise reports to avoid any perception of a conflict of interest and a concern that the resident might get a different service on their noise report than they might do otherwise if they are in arrears.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Income collection is managed by our dedicated Customer Accounts Officers within our Operations team whilst all other tenancy control and management is undertaken within our Localities team with dedicated Housing Officer patches and specialist support from Tenancy Enforcement Officers.
<p>Landlords should review the job descriptions of public-facing roles to ensure that the handling of reports under the good neighbourhood management policy is recognised as part of their housing service provision duties.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our Housing Officer job description was reviewed and a job evaluation exercise completed in August 2023. The role changed to reflect the increased responsibilities and experience needed to effect good Neighbourhood Management.
<p>Landlords have demonstrated the benefits of staff being present on some estates to provide early intervention where noise is reported. However, these resources are often limited and targeted at hotspots. Landlords should review its presence on estates and the data and information that prioritises intervention, to support an effective good neighbourhood strategy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our noise app and soon to be introduced ASB app will support customers to record and report incidents of noise. The noise app currently records sound and the ASB app will record sound and picture.

Anti-social behaviour (ASB) policy

Housing Ombudsman Service recommendation	Current assessment
<p>ASB policy timescales should be realistic and achievable. Adherence to timescales should form part of governance reporting.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our ASB Policy was reviewed in January 2024, timescales were reviewed and increased in many circumstances as a result of the process. • ASB reporting will be included in our KPI packs from April 2025 including an audit review of policy implementation and timescale compliance. Our Customer Panel have reviewed draft and provided commentary on experiences. • Audit tool for reviewing open ASB cases is now in place.
<p>Where options for action are included in an ASB policy, there should be clearly set out thresholds when they will be considered and/or when they might be considered inappropriate.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is set out in our ASB Policy. We have dedicated pages on our website that gives examples of where we wouldn't consider managing incidents reported as noise nuisance, for example, DIY activity between 9-5pm.
<p>ASB policies should be realistic and practicable. Landlords should review their existing policy for whether it is routinely complied with or whether it is inherently unworkable, particularly in regard to the frequency of updates to residents, the number of stages and the likely outcomes.</p> <p>Landlords should engage residents in the review of the ASB 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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our ASB Policy was reviewed in January 2024, timescales were reviewed and increased in many circumstances as a result of the process. • ASB reporting will be included in our KPI packs from April 2025 including an audit review of policy implementation and timescale compliance. Our Customer Panel have reviewed draft and provided commentary on experiences. • Audit tool for reviewing open ASB cases is now in place.

Allocations policy

Housing Ombudsman Service recommendation	Current assessment
<p>All applications for housing should be assessed for the impact on the existing community and not just those considered to be sensitive.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We do not have applications for housing; we have nominations from local authorities. • We do not currently assess every allocation on the impact they may make to the existing community. We are reliant on references for customers from current / previous landlord, local authorities etc. and if this mentioned ASB we carry out further investigations. • We have sensitive lets and local lettings plans where needed. These are normally requested from the housing officer if they are aware of a particular issue at a block or scheme.
<p>When considering housing applications from families or households with multiple occupants, consideration should be given to the suitability of allocating properties above ground floor, where previous reports of noise nuisance (whether upheld or not) have been made and whether any mitigations can be made to the home.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the Housing Officer wants a sensitive let or local lettings plan due to previous noise nuisance issues in the block, they would notify our Lettings team. These are submitted to the local authority for approval before allocations work. • Mitigations to the home would be considered by the Housing Officer as part of void works and subject to budget considerations. This could be developed further.
<p>New tenancy agreements for flats above ground floor should include clauses that hard flooring is not permitted.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We don't have different tenancy agreements for flats above ground floor. Our current tenancy agreement refers to laminated flooring in apartments and that we can limit the use if needed. We can consider amending the tenancy agreement; current versions were legally approved post-merger.

Multi-agency relationships

Housing Ombudsman Service recommendation	Current assessment
Landlords will often need to work with other agencies, including the police and environmental health, when responding to noise reports, however the strength of those relationships are inconsistent. Landlords should consider the service level agreements they have in place with different bodies and their effectiveness, and whether roles and responsibilities are clear.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Recent open cases that have been audited and demonstrate strong partnership working with Police, local authority and third sector support providers.

Data, record keeping and information sharing

Housing Ombudsman Service recommendation	Current assessment
Databases should align noise reports to both the person the report has been made against and the address the report has been made against. Where the investigation of the report concludes that it is the nature of the address, rather than the person occupying it, that is the reason the noise is occurring, this should be captured on the databases to ensure that the noise report is aligned to the causation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">All four of our localities are using the REACT database to record noise complaints. We have an app which is due to go live in June 2025, that can be downloaded to record noise and moving film that can then be logged directly by the complainant on REACT for review by the appointed officer.
Landlords should consider their current approach to retaining the evidence of noise that a resident submits and satisfy themselves it is sufficiently accurate and robust to ensure that they cannot lose the evidence provided. Due regard should be given to the requirements of GDPR for the retention and processing of data.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Currently using a noise app, this will be replaced shortly with the REACT app that has the capacity to send noise and film recordings directly into the database.

Respect

Housing Ombudsman Service recommendation	Current assessment
Landlords should ensure the tone of communication does not result in perceptions of bias against, or being dismissive of, the resident reporting noise.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This has been reviewed as part of our ASB Policy refresh in January 2024.
Landlords should begin preparing for the Access to Information Scheme and communicate this to staff in emphasising the need for professional courtesy and respect for residents in internal and external communication.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This is in preparation, we are awaiting publication of the consultation outcome.

Starting the tenancy

Housing Ombudsman Service recommendation	Current assessment
Landlords should provide information leaflets on 'how to be a good neighbour' as standard with the new tenancy induction pack, especially on estates where there have been ASB issues previously or where sensitive lettings policies are in place.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We have a dedicated page on our website which was updated in line with our ASB policy refresh in January 2024.• We produced a new digital Tenancy Handbook in autumn 2024. We do not customise the pack depending on the estate / home being let.

Existing tenancies

Housing Ombudsman Service recommendation	Current assessment
For existing tenancy agreements where hard flooring is only permitted with permission and/or with conditions (such as appropriate underlay or that permission will be rescinded if a noise report is made), if a noise report is made, those clauses should be inspected against and enforced.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This is actioned when identified. We have a Tenancy Sustainment Fund which is available to consider alternative flooring when the family unit is identified as vulnerable.
For existing tenancies where carpets were removed and/or hard flooring is present, the landlord should signpost residents where appropriate to funding for carpets and rugs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We have a Tenancy Sustainment Fund and applications can be submitted to this.

Handling a noise report

Housing Ombudsman Service recommendation	Current assessment
Landlords should assure themselves that it is clear to residents when and how to report noise nuisance to them, with a full range of accessible and inclusive options available for residents to report noise.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Our customer satisfaction scores for ease to report noise/ASB are consistently high. Customers can report it through the noise app, or Contact Centre and there is an out of hours escalation for tenancy management (on call duty officer).• Consideration of further policy on good neighbourhoods may be required.
Residents must be clearly told if their noise report is being handled within the good neighbourhood management policy or is considered to be ASB.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cases are individually evaluated and risk assessed as to whether they will be managed as ASB. If they are not considered ASB, we work with Neighbourhood and Community Policy offers at non enforcement solutions to look to resolve the concern.• Consideration of further policy on good neighbourhoods may be required.

<p>If landlords are aware there is going to be a delay in addressing a noise report and the timescales provided to the resident will not be met, explain this at the earliest available opportunity and provide revised timescales.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our Locality Manager reviews and indicates timescale adherence. We do proactive case management, face to face and through calls.
<p>If a policy stipulates that certain options must be considered when responding to a noise report, it is essential for the landlord to demonstrate consideration of that option and this must be documented, even if the decision is not to use that option to enable the landlord to answer any subsequent complaint. The decision should be clearly communicated to the complainant including the reasons why.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All case notes reviewed on the Locality Manager review. • Audits in place to validate that customers are updated in an appropriate timescale as per our policy. • Consideration of further policy on good neighbourhoods may be required.
<p>Noise recordings submitted by residents should always be listened to by the case handler to ensure robust investigations that are informed by a true understanding of the noise being reported.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed by Housing Officer and Tenancy Enforcement Officer. Reviews are then completed by Locality Managers.
<p>Landlords should review the current provision of staff training, supervision, guidance and support and whether this is conducive to ensuring high standard of customer care. Particular consideration should be given to how confident and equipped staff feel in having difficult conversations, including managing expectations and delivering unwelcome news.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accredited training for frontline colleagues and reviewing managers is in the process of being procured and will be rolled out in quarter 1 / quarter 2 2025/26.
<p>Line managers should be aware of an individual's caseload and the significant decisions taken in those cases and, wherever possible, handover meetings should be conducted where the ownership of a noise report is transferred.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We do case reviews, and our Locality Managers operate a buddy system.
<p>Landlords should ensure that information is provided as standard to residents who make noise reports about their right to make a complaint if they are dissatisfied with the landlord's proposal for handling the situation or the actions taken by the landlord to address the situation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implemented in our complaints policy.

<p>The member of staff who has been handling the noise report that is being complained about should never be allocated the complaint to investigate.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We have a dedicated team in our Customer Experience Directorate who oversee our complaints handling.
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