Good neighbourhood management policy

Homes Plus

Policy	Good neighbourhood management policy
Date adopted	June 2024
Date of next review	June 2027
Version	1
Responsible board	Homes board
Responsible officer	Head of neighbourhoods

Housing plus Group is committed to providing excellent customer service, so that every time you contact us you have a good experience. Our good neighbourhood management policy sets out what you can expect from us when you need our help resolving an issue with a neighbour.

1. Policy statement and purpose

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) is a term that covers a wide range of behaviours. Some behaviours can cause a nuisance or annoyance to neighbours and residents but may not be classed as ASB. This kind of behaviour can still cause upset and frustration to neighbours and residents, which can create tensions in local communities.

If someone's behaviour is causing a problem but it isn't classed as ASB, we will take a different approach.

We will:

- Assess all incidents or issues with neighbours that are reported to us, to understand if they will be dealt with under our ASB policy or good neighbourhood management policy. We will explain our decision to the person who reported the issue, as soon as possible.
- Continue to reassess our decisions about cases, each time a report is received about the same person or regarding the same behaviour. If appropriate, a case may move from being managed under the good neighbourhood management policy to the ASB policy, or vice versa.
- Focus on finding a solution to issues, rather than seeking to find fault or blame.
- Ask for the cooperation and support of all parties involved. Please note that if cooperation or support is refused from any party, we may not be able to continue to help.
- Consider the support needs of all parties involved and work to identify suitable referrals and support, where necessary.
- Work with partner agencies and share information, to identify the best possible support and guidance we can offer to the people involved in a case.

2. This policy applies to

This policy applies to all properties we own or manage, in line with a customer's tenancy agreement or lease. It also covers land owned by us, including communal areas and customer's private gardens. We will offer advice and support to people living near to or within communities where we have properties, if they are affected by the behaviour of one of our customers.

3. What the policy covers

We understand that each individual has different tolerances, expectations and perceptions of the behaviour of other people. This means that some people will see certain behaviour as anti-social, even if it is not. If we receive a report of behaviour that isn't classed as ASB, we will use this policy to try and help.

Examples of this type of behaviour include, but are not limited to:

- Issues with parking spaces
- Positioning of wheelie bins
- Boundary disputes
- Cooking smells
- A baby crying
- D-I-Y that is occurring during reasonable hours
- Situations where all parties are contributing to the issue or dispute
- Issues arising from a difference in lifestyle. An example of this is someone working nights and having a problem with a neighbour making noise during the day

To help us decide whether a report should be dealt with in line with this policy, we will consider the following factors:

- The intention of the behaviour
- What is causing the behaviour
- Whether the behaviour can be classed as unreasonable activity
- How often the behaviour is occurring
- How long the behaviour lasts
- What time of day issues are happening
- What impact the behaviour is having on other residents

4. Support

Sometimes a person's health and wellbeing can change how they see certain behaviours and how those behaviours affect them.

When we receive reports that will be managed in line with this policy, we will check whether the person making the report has any health and wellbeing needs that we can help with. This could be through our support services or by making referrals to specialist agencies.

We might ask for information about a customer's health so that we can provide the most appropriate response to a report. If this consent is not provided, it may limit our ability to help any further.

5. Ways we can help

Our focus is to improve difficult relationships between neighbours by raising awareness of common issues, helping people to understand the impact of their behaviour and supporting them to reach compromises.

Our good neighbour guidance has been developed to help you to avoid issues with neighbours. It offers practical advice about how to resolve the most common problems that occur between neighbours, without needing to involve us. You can read the guidance on page 4.

If you report an incident to us that will be dealt with in line with this policy, we may:

- Ask if you can speak to your neighbour about your concerns, if it is safe and appropriate for you to do so. We will give you plenty of support and advice about how to approach this conversation.
- Speak to your neighbour on your behalf, to explain how you feel and try to find a solution. We might offer advice about measures that you or your neighbour can take, to minimise any impact on each other.
- Refer you and your neighbour to an external mediation service.
- Carry out an inspection to see if any property improvements could help resolve a situation.
- Ask you and your neighbour to sign a Good Neighbour Agreement

We will always try to find a practical solution to issues that have been raised. Not all solutions will be suitable for all cases.

If a report is dealt with in line with this policy, we would not consider using any legal services or tools to find a resolution.

Once we have tried all options available to us to resolve a situation, we will inform the people involved that there is nothing further we are able to do.

6. Working with our partners

There could be times when we feel that we cannot resolve a situation on our own and we will need to work with partner agencies.

If we are working with partner agencies, we will always share, store and dispose of information in line with legislation and the appropriate sharing arrangements.

7. Request for confidentiality

The purpose of this policy is to support relationships between neighbours. For that reason, it is unlikely that we will be able to help if a person making a report wants to remain anonymous.

8. Right to appeal

If you do not agree with our decision to deal with a report in line with this policy - for example, you believe it should be managed in line with our ASB policy - you have the right to appeal. You can find more detail about how to appeal in our appeals policy.

9. Policy review

We will review this policy in three years' time, unless we need to do so before.

10. Links to other documents

Allocations policy

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) policy

Domestic abuse policy

Hate crime policy

Tenancy policy

Transfer and exceptional moves policy

Appendix 1 - Good neighbour guidance

Issues between neighbours

No matter where we live, our neighours have different values or opinions, different lifestyles and different expectations of others.

Unfortunately, this can sometimes result in issues.

It is important to remember that being a good neighbour involves compromise.

Sometimes it can be best to ignore an issue. Perhaps your neighbour was noisier than normal because they were having a birthday party or another one-off event. Or perhaps they just needed to put some shelves up. Although this might have disturbed you, a bit of tolerance can avoid this situation turning into a bigger issue.

Wherever possible, and when it is safe to do so, step one in any dispute is to try talking. Often, neighbours might not realise that their behaviour is causing a problem. It is important to be reasonable and avoid confrontation.

Talking to your neighbour

If you decide to approach your neighbour, try to remember to:

- Pick a time when you are feeling calm. Shouting or being angry will cause more issues.
- Think about what you want to say and keep the conversation about the main problem.
- Let your neighbour know what is causing you an issue and explain why.
- Avoid jumping to conclusions.
- Listen to the other person's response. They might have a good reason for their behaviour or it might have been a one-off occasion.
- Try to reach a solution that you are both happy with.
- Walk away if either of you are getting angry.

If there is any reason that you cannot approach your neighbour and you need our help to try and resolve an issue, please get in touch. We will review your case to understand whether we will deal with it in line with the good neighbourhood management policy.

If we find that the issue you are reporting should be dealt with in line with our Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) policy, we will open a case to investigate.

How to be a good neighbour

Keep the noise down

Remember that no house or flat is totally soundproof. Everyone can expect to hear some noise from neighbours.

There are things you can do to minimise disturbance:

- Talk to your neighbours about what they can hear from your home, especially if you live in a flat.
- Keep your TV and music at a reasonable level. This is particularly important if you have your windows open because the noise will travel further.
- Keep TVs and audio equipment away from any walls that you share with a neighbour and off the floor, if possible.
- Only clean and carry out D-I-Y during reasonable hours.

- If you have permission to keep a dog, make sure it is not left barking in your home or garden for extended periods of time.
- Tell your neighbours if you are intending to hold a party.
- Ask guests to leave quietly, without banging doors or revving car engines.
- Remember that noise can travel through walls and floors. If people live below you, fit carpets and underlay. The only places you are not allowed to do this are your kitchen and bathroom.
- Close doors gently - do not slam them.
- If possible, make sure your fridge, freezer and washing machine are not next to any connecting walls.
- Stand washing machines and/or spin dryers on a piece of carpet or a rubber mat, to reduce vibration.
- Mow the lawn or use loud garden equipment at a reasonable time.
- If you will be carrying out potentially noisy activities, such as using power tools or working on adjoining walls or floors, let your neighbours know beforehand. Use hand tools wherever possible, to minimise disruption.

Look after your garden and communal areas

- Keep your garden tidy and free of rubbish.
- If your neighbour's trees or hedges are a problem, you can prune or remove anything that comes over to your side of boundary as long as you offer any clippings back to your neighbour. Some trees are protected so it is always best to check with your neighbour before you take any action.
- Keep communal areas free of prams, bicycles and any other personal belongings.
- If you share a communal door, please make sure it is always kept closed and you do not let anyone in that you don't know.
- If you have a communal bin area, please dispose of your rubbish correctly and make sure the area around the bins is kept tidy.
- If you have a dog, make sure you clear up any dog mess. Remember that not everyone is comfortable around dogs so make sure dogs are not left to roam free in communal areas.

Car parking

- Park considerately and make sure you are not blocking entrances, dropped kerbs, garages or pavements.
- Remember that anyone can park on a public road, as long as they are following any signposted restrictions and not causing an obstruction. This means that you cannot stop people from parking directly in front of your house.
- Most car parks owned by Homes Plus can be used by all residents and visitors. We are unable to manage car parks or provide dedicated parking spaces. You can contact your neighbourhood officer if you want to see if there are any specific parking arrangements where you live.

Bins and recycling

- Make sure you put all rubbish in the bins provided.
- Remember to put your bin out for collection on the correct day and always bring it back in after it has been emptied.

Vehicles and repairs

- Do not rev engines excessively.
- Close doors quietly and use horns only in emergencies.
- Keep in-car music levels down.
- If possible, carry out work in a garage.
- Try to do noisy repairs during the day.

Children playing/ball games

- Remember that children need to play. While that can sometimes cause an annoyance, that is not usually the intention.
- Try to make sure your children do not kick balls against walls and fences.
- Reminder your children that they must not climb over fences or enter neighbours' gardens to get balls or toys back.
- Encourage your children to use local parks and designated play spaces, as long as you feel they are safe there.
- If you are being disturbed by children playing, do not speak to them directly. Talk to their parents, if you can.

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