

## Neighbourhood Management Policy

### 1. Policy Summary

- 1.1 The Neighbourhood and Community Standard states that "registered providers shall consult with tenants in developing a published policy for maintaining and improving the neighbourhoods associated with their homes".
- 1.2 To improve and maintain high standards in the areas we operate we consider neighbourhood management as a partnership between Midland Heart, our tenants and other partners working or operating in our neighbourhoods.

### 2. Policy Statement

- 2.1 This policy sets out our approach to effectively managing our housing and the areas and neighbourhoods around our homes. We aim to create environments in which our tenants feel safe and secure, which improves their wellbeing, and is somewhere our tenants can call home and feel proud of.
- 2.2 We recognise that if an estate or neighbourhood is badly maintained and unclean, it can lead to fear of crime and general unhappiness for our tenants.
- 2.3 Our approach supports the delivery of commitments in our Corporate Plan 2019-2025 'Making What Matters Brilliant' to ensure we help to create safe, balanced and sustainable communities, where people want to live, and more importantly choose to stay.
- 2.4 If delivered successfully, our strategy will enable healthy community development, where we see high levels of customer satisfaction, and a reduction in complaints associated with neighbourhood management issues. We will keep customers informed of our approach and interventions, when addressing issues they have raised.
- 2.5 There may be occasions where there is good reason to apply discretion when decision making. We will always consider the individual circumstances of the individual involved when making our decisions.
- 2.6 This policy should be read in conjunction with the Awaab's Law policy and related procedures.

### 3. Our objectives are:

3.1 The specific objectives of this Neighbourhood Management policy are to:

- ❖ Develop a pro-active approach to the management of our properties and neighbourhoods.
- ❖ Manage the environment with partner agencies and tenants to create balanced and sustainable neighbourhoods and communities.
- ❖ Ensure that all tenants are aware of their respective responsibilities and ours as their landlord.

### 4. Our approach...

Our approach to dealing with neighbourhood management issues is as follows (list is not exhaustive).

#### 4.1 Abandoned Properties

We are committed to making the best possible use of properties and ensuring that those in genuine housing need are placed into our homes. An abandoned property is where a property is not presently occupied by the tenant either as their main and principal home; or where a tenant has left the property with no intention of returning.

An abandoned property is considered a form of tenancy fraud, as a customer has obligations under their tenancy agreement to occupy their property or notify us of their intention to be away for a period of time or give notice to leave. Homes that are abandoned can become a blight on a neighbourhood, therefore it is important that upon identification, action is taken to address such issues.

#### 4.2 Abandoned/ Nuisance Vehicles

All vehicles on communal or other land owned by Midland Heart, aside from individual properties with off road parking, must be taxed and in a road worthy condition. A nuisance vehicle may be one that is causing an obstruction, the condition of the vehicle is having a detrimental effect on the appearance of the locality and/ or is a risk to health and safety. Action will be taken to remove a vehicle which does not meet these requirements, and/ or is deemed to be causing a nuisance.

#### 4.3 Graffiti

Graffiti impacts negatively on the appearance of our neighbourhoods. It can also be offensive and so swift action will be taken to address such issues. Graffiti reported and/or identified by colleagues will be removed from our properties or land owned by us in line with Neighbourhood Management Service Standards (Appendix 1), along with the reporting of criminal damage to the police, where applicable. Where graffiti has been identified on land owned by other landlords, we will use our partnering connections to report this and ensure it is removed.

#### **4.4 Untidy / Overgrown Gardens**

Untidy and/or overgrown gardens can negatively impact upon the appeal of estates and neighbourhoods, and they can also be an indicator to poor property condition. Following identification of an untidy or overgrown garden, tenants will be given the opportunity to rectify the issue. Continual failure to meet their responsibilities will be viewed as a breach of the tenancy agreement and all avenues will be explored to resolve the breach including the use of legal remedies.

#### **4.5 Pests and Vermin**

Pests and vermin can seriously impact our tenants' lives, cause damage to our properties and impact on the appearance of our neighbourhoods. Pests and vermin are often attracted to areas which are suffering the effects of domestic, bulky waste and fly-tipping, and/or untidy or overgrown gardens. It is therefore vital we work with our tenants, and partners to tackle such issues and whilst treating the root cause, resolving the pest issues.

#### **4.6 Communal areas and communal inspections**

Tenants who access their home via an internal or external communal area, shall be responsible for ensuring that they, their visitors, and household members abide by their tenancy agreement conditions.

Tenants must ensure that no items are left in the communal area and that no rubbish or litter is deposited, otherwise in a designated bin or recycling area. Tenants and their visitors must also not interfere with or cause damage to any door entry system, security or safety equipment. Fire doors must not be propped open unless they are in a scheme with an electronic closure mechanism which activates in the event of a fire alarm. Furthermore, tenants must ensure that no damage or vandalism occurs to any features of communal areas. There is a 'no smoking' policy in the internal communal areas of our buildings, as smoking in a public place is against the law.

Due to potential dangers of obstructing access or means of escape in the event of a fire, we expect no items to be left in a communal area. If any high-risk items (e.g., mobility scooter, e-bike, motorcycle, moped or any machinery having a petrol or diesel engine) are found, the customer who owns the items will be contacted and asked to remove the item immediately. Failure to do so would be a breach of the tenancy agreement and would be treated as a serious risk to other tenants, and so the item will be removed and placed into storage.

We reserve the right to remove items left or placed in communal areas, including personal objects such as pot plants and ornaments on window ledges.

Our colleagues have a duty in the course of their day-to-day work to note any repairs or maintenance issues identified within a communal area, scheme or neighbourhood, particularly those which pose a threat to health and safety and report these promptly.

A programme of neighbourhood and communal inspections will be undertaken by designated officers, to ensure our buildings and estates are safe, clean and well maintained. Our approach to inspecting our communal areas is set out in our Environmental Services Leaflet.

#### **4.7 Tree Management**

We will ensure that all trees on Midland Heart owned communal areas and estates are managed and maintained through a proactive and risk-based approach. We will survey all tree stock using an asset management approach and we will maintain a geodatabase of these assets.

We will ensure that all arboriculture works will be carried out, in accordance with good arboriculture practice, and we will maintain our trees in a safe and sustainable way, whilst developing and increasing biodiversity and seasonal character in our trees, for the benefit of wildlife, tenants and communities.

We will not maintain trees in private or individual gardens. This will be the responsibility of the customer as detailed in their tenancy/ licence/ leasehold agreement (where applicable).

#### **4.8 Waste Management**

We are responsible for addressing litter and fly-tipping in communal areas within the boundaries of the land that we own and will arrange clearance accordingly. We will clean and maintain communal bin stores and chutes.

Tenants are expected to take all reasonable care to ensure that their household rubbish is properly stored and disposed of appropriately. Refuse must be adequately bagged and stored until collection in bin stores or other designated areas. Tenants are also responsible for making arrangements for the disposal of large items such as household furniture and must comply with the local arrangements for the collection of refuse.

We will work in partnership with our Local Authority partners to encourage our tenants to recycle their household and bulky waste. Where possible, we will provide locations for the positioning of recycling facilities.

#### **4.9 Environmental Nuisance/ Antisocial Behaviour (ASB)**

Environmental nuisance/ ASB covers a variety of acts, such as:

- Vandalism and damage to property
- Graffiti
- Fly-tipping
- Littering or drugs paraphernalia
- Misuse of communal areas
- Animal nuisance e.g., dog fouling / damage
- Car repairs / vehicle nuisance & inappropriate use
- Malodorous substances (i.e., cannabis, unpleasant/ foul smells from properties/ bin areas)

We will investigate instances of environmental nuisance and work with partner agencies to identify the offender and take the appropriate enforcement action in conjunction with our Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.

We will encourage tenants who witness environmental nuisances to report it to ourselves and any other relevant organisation such as the Police or Environmental Health. We will take appropriate action to rectify the result of environmental ASB, which is not the responsibility of a customer.

Reports of smells from odorous substances such as cannabis smoking, has to involve a harm centred approach. In some cases, it may not be appropriate for ASB action to be taken, because it would not be proportionate, but where there are aggravating factors, such as the smoke exasperating a neighbour's health condition, then action may be required. We will take a case-by-case approach, and managing expectations of tenants and partners, as whilst this may be a tenancy breach, any action taken has to be reasonable and proportionate.

Tenants are responsible for making good or paying for damage caused by deliberate acts of vandalism or any results caused by environmental ASB by themselves, any member of their household or visitors.

#### **4.10 Noise**

We understand that noise is a driver for complaints from our tenants and that in most cases, reports concern household noise rather than that which would be regarded as anti-social behaviour (ASB).

We will triage noise reports to determine whether they should be handled under our ASB policy or our Neighbourhood Management policy. We will consider the time the noise occurred as well as the type of noise, when determining whether the noise is anti-social in nature.

Where noise is considered household in nature, we will provide advice and guidance on ways to minimise the impact of such, and to foster good neighbourhood relationships.

We will offer advice and support on practical measures such as, but not limited to:

- Carpeting of flooring, or removal of laminate.
- Conducting sound setting exercises and advising on suitable volumes (sound systems/ televisions).
- Suggesting headphones are used when listening to music or playing computer games.
- Reposition speakers or furniture away from party walls.
- Conducting a home check / property inspection to establish whether there are improvements which could be made e.g., slamming doors - slow-release hinges or door stops, washing machines - anti-vibration mats.
- Good neighbour agreements (to discuss and seek agreement on when activities causing the noise will be carried out, changed and/ or reduced).
- Responsible pet ownership.

### **5. Accessibility and Awareness**

5.1 Customers are encouraged to make initial reports to our Customer Hub, but if for any reason this is not appropriate reports can be made through any of our communication channels.

5.2 This includes to any member of staff, via phone, email and social media. Where reports are received through social media to maintain privacy and confidentiality, we

will respond via private message. We will promote the ways in which reports can be made through our main communication channels.

## **6. Reasonable Adjustment and Support**

- 6.1 We understand that some tenants and residents may have difficulty communicating their experiences with us, as such we will always make reasonable adjustments, enabling tenants and residents to report their concerns and engage in the process.
- 6.2 There is no prescribed list of reasonable adjustments; the adjustment will depend on the individual's needs. We will discuss the requirements with the person concerned and seek to reach agreement on what may be reasonable in the circumstances.
- 6.3 In the majority of cases, we will be able to agree and deliver the required reasonable adjustment with a minimum of delay. In some cases, we may need to consider in more detail how best to overcome the difficulty or seek advice from expert organisations that can assist with signposting and other forms of support.
- 6.4 There may be occasions where there is good reason to apply discretion. We will always consider the individual circumstances of the individual involved when making our decisions.
- 6.5 An equality impact assessment has been completed for this policy.

## **7. Partnership Working**

- 7.1 We own a significant number of homes in neighbourhoods where there is a mix of different social housing and private owners. Our tenants and staff will identify local neighbourhood issues that are not our responsibility, including highways, footpaths, alleyways, street lighting and other properties. We will work closely with Local Authorities and other landowners to ensure that identified issues are addressed quickly and appropriately.
- 7.2 We will also work collaboratively with other organisations, agencies and stakeholders, to influence those neighbourhood services delivered outside of our direct control, to ensure they positively contribute to maintaining neighbourhoods that are clean, safe and attractive.

## **Policy Document Control**

**Business Owner/Role:** Vicki Brownhill – Director of Tenancy and Neighbourhood Services

**Author/Role:** Vicki Brownhill – Director of Tenancy and Neighbourhood Services

**Directorate:** Tenancy Services

**Version Number:** V 1.1

**Customer Insight (if applicable):** Complaints data, The Housing Ombudsman – Spotlight on Noise report, a customer focus group and feedback from Operations Committee, shaped the development of this policy.

**Approved By/ Date Approved:** September 2024

**Next Review Date:** September 2026