

Paragon Housing Association Limited

POLICY:	ESTATE MANAGEMENT
POLICY AREA:	HOUSING MANAGEMENT
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1. Aims

The aim of our estate management policy is to maintain and improve the estate environment. This will be achieved by providing a comprehensive Estate Management service to enable tenants to have peaceful enjoyment of their homes surrounded by a clean, tidy, safe and secure environment.

In accordance with the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 the Association will seek to involve our tenants in policy decisions.

This policy is supported by detailed procedures and a range of related policies. The main policies are:

- Neighbour Disputes and Anti-social Behaviour Policy
- Allocations Policy
- Void Management Policy
- Racial Harassment Policy
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Tenant Participation Policy
- Tenant Participation Strategy
- Abandoned House Policy

2. Objectives

- To ensure that tenants comply with their conditions of tenancy as set out in the Tenancy Agreement.
- To foster good landlord/tenant relationships and encourage interest and involvement within the estates for the benefit of the community.
- To ensure the quality of the housing stock and its environment is maintained and improved.
- To work in close co-operation with other organisations that provides services in the area (i.e. cleansing, street lighting, roads, Police etc.)

3. The Scottish Social Housing Charter (The Charter)

This policy is designed to comply with the Scottish Social Housing Charter (The Charter).

Charter Outcome No 1: Equalities

Social landlords perform all aspects of their housing services so that:

- Every tenant and other customer has their individual needs recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and housing services.

Charter Outcome No 2 Communication

Social landlords manage their businesses so that:

- Tenants and other customers find it easy to communicate with their landlord and get the information they need about their landlord, how and why it makes decisions and the services it provided.

Charter Outcome No 3: Participation

Social landlords manage their businesses so that:

- Tenants and other customers find it easy to participate in and influence their landlord's decisions at a level they feel comfortable with.

Charter Outcome No 4: Housing quality and maintenance

Social landlords manage their business so that:

- Tenant's homes, as a minimum, meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) by April 2015 and continue to meet it thereafter, and when they are allocated, are always clean, tidy and in a good state of repair.

Charter Outcome 6 Estate management, anti-social behaviour, neighbour nuisance and tenancy disputes

Social landlords, working in partnership with other agencies, help to ensure that:

- Tenants and other customers live in well-maintained neighbourhoods where they feel safe.

Charter Outcome 11: Tenancy Sustainment

Social landlords ensure that:

- Tenants get the information they need on how to obtain support to remain in their home; and ensure suitable support is available, including services provided directly by the landlord and by other organisations.

Charter Outcome No 13: Value for Money

Social landlords manage all aspects of their business so that:

- Tenants, owners and other customers receive services that provide

4. Our Estate Management Commitment

1. Estate and Property Inspections

In the course of their regular duties the Association's staff will look for and report on any signs of deterioration to properties, common areas, open space areas, etc. Regular inspections will be carried out of the common areas such as stairs, entrances, bin stores, drying areas, common pathways, lock-up garages and parking areas. This will identify problems and appropriate action will be taken to maintain them to a reasonable standard.

2. Garden Areas

The Association's staff will carry out regular inspections of garden areas and where the tenant fails to maintain their garden to an acceptable level they will be contacted and reminded of the conditions of their tenancy and given reasonable time to achieve the necessary improvements. If the tenant fails to do the work the Association may carry out the work and charge the tenant. This is in addition to any other legal remedies the Association may have.

3. Open Space Maintenance

A number of estates have the provision of open space areas. These areas were provided for the benefit of an estate as a whole.

All tenants and residents will be encouraged to recognise their responsibility for and to take a pride in, the upkeep of the open space areas.

Play Areas and Equipment

Play areas will be regularly checked to monitor the safety of play equipment provided by the Association. Where play equipment is found to be damaged, prompt action will be taken to have it repaired, removed or made secure.

Soft and Hard Landscape Maintenance

Soft landscape is defined as plants, shrubs, trees and grass areas.

Hard landscape is defined as paths, parking areas, brick or block laid areas, play areas and play equipment.

In relation to the estate open spaces the Association has a general responsibility for the maintenance, repair and when necessary, the renewal of un-adopted roadways, footpaths, kerbs, laybys, pedestrian ways, parking areas, open spaces (including play areas and areas of hard and soft landscaping) situated within the estate, and boundary fencing communal to the estate.

Services undertaken may include

- Grass cutting
- Hedge, shrub and woodland maintenance
- Weed control
- Litter collection
- Sweeping, cleansing and lighting
- Communal boundary/other communal fencing to estate

There will be local variation depending on the division of responsibilities with

the relevant local authority.

Stirling Council Area

The Association is responsible for arranging the maintenance open space areas within the estates in the Stirling area. The Association will arrange the works and the costs will be shared between the Association and property owners in accordance with title deed provisions.

Falkirk Council Area

Some elements of the maintenance of the open space areas within the estates in the Falkirk area are carried out by Falkirk Council on a permanent basis. This arrangement is governed by a legal agreement.

This Agreement does not cover all elements of open space maintenance. Property owners within the estate, including the Association are responsible for anything not covered. The Association will arrange the works and the costs will be shared between the Association and property owners in accordance with title deed provisions.

The main items **NOT** included in the agreement are

- Major replacement and removal of shrubs and trees
- Work to trees over 3 metres high
- Work to non-adopted footpaths, roads and play areas and open spaces
- Maintenance such as weed clearing of hard landscaping (e.g. slabbed or tarmac areas), fencing and play areas

Clackmannanshire Council Area

In the main, the soft landscaped areas within the estate in Clackmannanshire are maintained by the Council at no charge to the Association or owners. The Council is responsible for inspecting the work carried out by their staff.

Communal hard landscaping **NOT** adopted by the local authority is the responsibility of the Association to maintain and owners in these estates have a responsibility to pay an equal share.

Standards of the maintenance of these areas will be monitored regularly. Staff will liaise with the appropriate contractor or local authority representative to carry out remedial work if it does not meet the agreed contract specifications.

4. General Environment

The Association's staff will monitor the general environmental conditions of the estates and where necessary, liaise with other agencies to ensure that action is taken to resolve problems.

Residents will be discouraged from parking in areas other than within their own garden or in communal parking areas.

Written permission will be required for caravans, boats and trailers on Association land. It will only be granted if the item does not cause a nuisance or annoyance to neighbours and there are no complaints received about the lack of car parking in common parking areas. If there are parking problems identified the owners of these items will be asked to remove them.

5. Vandalism/Graffiti

Graffiti/vandalism to Association property will be removed or repaired urgently particularly if the graffiti is one of a racial or malicious nature. All such damage must be recorded and photographs taken as it may be useful in any court proceedings.

If the person who causes the graffiti/vandalism is identified, then further action will be taken by the Association. This could be deemed as either a criminal offence within the jurisdiction of the Police, or if there are no witnesses, a rechargeable repair to the tenant concerned.

6. Cars and Abandoned Vehicles

The Association aims to minimise the nuisance and danger to residents of unsafe or abandoned vehicles left on its property either by residents or outside parties.

If an abandoned vehicle is identified it will be reported to the relevant local authority to initiate their procedures for removal.

7. Void Properties

The Association's staff will endeavour to ensure that void properties are repaired and relet within our published targets thus minimising rent loss to the Association.

Front and rear door locks (where applicable) will be changed between each tenancy.

Gardens will be kept in a neat and tidy condition during the void period.

The tenant will be responsible for paying the cost of any work that may be required when moving out of a house to bring it up to an acceptable standard for a new tenant. This includes items such as:

- Cleaning out houses.
- Removing rubbish from rooms, attics and outhouses

- Removing rubbish from bin areas and communal areas (unless special uplift has been arranged with local authority).
- Lifting and removing floor coverings.
- Removing panelling, tiles, shelves and other fixtures which have been badly fitted and repairing or replacing plaster or plasterboard.
- Removing non approved alterations to the property

8. Abandoned Properties

The Association's staff will ensure abandoned properties are promptly identified. Action taken will be in accordance with the Association's Abandoned House Policy. Abandoned house notifications are served and a register of houses and property found in them is kept to reflect the requirements of the current legislation.

9. Repairs

The Association's staff will ensure that job orders for repair requests are placed timeously and will monitor their progress and liaise with our jobbing contractor to remedy any problems.

10. Homeowners

The Association's staff will seek to involve homeowners in our efforts to achieve our estate management objectives.

In accordance with the Code of Conduct for Property Factors the Association will provide each owner with a written statement of service setting out, in a simple and transparent way, the terms and service delivery standards of the arrangement in place between the Association and the homeowner.

5. **Tenant/Homeowner Involvement**

This policy operates in conjunction with the Tenant Participation Policy, Tenant Participation Strategy and Factoring Policy. The Association will seek to maximise opportunities for tenants and homeowners to influence and participate in the decision making processes relating our estate management services.

The Association encourages and supports Registered Tenants Organisations and promotes community involvement in estates.

To ensure the involvement of tenants in the Association's decision making processes a Focus Group made up of cross section of "stakeholders" will be used to facilitate the consultation process.

6. **Information and Advice**

The Association recognises that Estate Management is not solely about looking

after buildings and the physical environment. It is also about providing and arranging necessary advice and support to tenants and residents.

Estate management covers a diverse range of issues such as:-

- Providing advice and assistance on tenancy matters.
- Enforcing tenancy conditions.
- Staff promoting Welfare Benefits to encourage maximum uptake.
- The Association's Tenant's Handbook includes advice for new and existing tenants.

New Tenants

Staff will work closely with all new tenants to ensure that they are fully aware of their responsibilities under their tenancy agreement and how they should comply with them.

New tenants will be provided with advice and assistance on a range of tenancy matters when they sign up for their new home e.g. welfare benefits, energy efficiency.

Staff will carry out new tenancy visits to all new tenants within 6 – 8 weeks of the start date of their tenancy. During the visit staff will ensure that the tenant is fully aware of their responsibilities under their tenancy agreement, including how much rent they should pay

Our policy is driven by the belief that tenants should not be forced to get transport to our office to access the services. Home visits are arranged and contact points are staffed by experienced officers.

7. Working with Other Agencies

In addressing issues, staff will work in partnership with other agencies, such as the local authority departments, police and other appropriate agencies.

Co-operation with those agencies, who have specialist knowledge or, particular powers, can bring many positive benefits to the Association and its tenants alike.

The Association will, where appropriate, take a multi-agency approach to solving problems.

8. Equal Opportunities

The Association aims to promote equal opportunities and will ensure that its staff act in a manner which will not discriminate against any individual, household or group on the grounds of any the nine protected characteristics as set out in the Equality Act 2010. These are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion and belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

9. Complaints

The Association is committed to providing high-quality customer services. It accepts that despite the best efforts of staff, problems may arise from time to time. If its customers feel dissatisfied with its policies, the way these are implemented or the level and quality of service provided, they may wish to make a complaint.

- Should such a situation arise staff are committed to investigating the matter fully and ensuring a satisfactory solution is achieved as quickly as possible.
- The Association has adopted the SPSO's complaints handling procedure which sets out the standard approach to handling complaints which is to be used across the housing sector.
- A customer who is dissatisfied about the action taken or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by the Association or on its behalf can use the Association's complaints handling procedure.
- Details of the Association's Complaints Policy can be obtained from the office or from the website.

10. Training

The Association will ensure that staff dealing with estate management and associated policies will have the appropriate training and knowledge to perform their job effectively.

11. Monitoring

Estate management is monitored by the Housing Manager to ensure that standards are met and any problematic areas are identified at an early stage and brought to the attention of the Director and the Housing Management and Investment Sub Committee.

The Association will ensure that it complies with the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) Regulatory Framework for social housing and guidance for monitoring the Association's performance in achieving the outcomes and standards in the Charter.

In addition, the Association participates in benchmarking processes with other registered housing associations and these statistics are presented to the

Management Committee.

12. Review

This policy will be reviewed no later than 5 years from the date of approval. However, if there are any changes in legislation, good practice or operational changes which may affect the content then the review may be undertaken earlier.