
Neighbourhood Management Policy

Introduction

This is a joint Neighbourhood Management Policy between South Tyneside Council and South Tyneside Homes. The policy sets out our approach to managing, maintaining and improving neighbourhoods and communities.

Background

In December 2014 a new integrated Housing and Area Management service was introduced, with the following vision **'A high-performing service that understands the local area it serves and proactively deals with issues within communities'**.

The service is operated by South Tyneside Homes, on behalf of South Tyneside Council. The service combines housing management, area management, street cleansing, community safety and tenancy enforcement. The service is tenure-blind and therefore this policy applies to all neighbourhoods across the borough.

This policy meets South Tyneside Council's obligations as a landlord under the Homes and Communities Agency's Regulatory Framework.

Aims

This policy has been produced to ensure that we provide a service to residents which enables them to have quiet enjoyment of their homes in a safe and secure environment and neighbourhoods they are proud of.

The specific aims of the Neighbourhood Management Policy are to:

- Develop a pro-active approach to the management of our properties and neighbourhoods;
- Manage the environment in communal areas effectively;
- Ensure that all residents are aware of their respective responsibilities;
- Set appropriate standards to measure performance delivery and residents' satisfaction;

- Have clean and tidy properties and neighbourhoods;
- Work in partnership with residents and other organisations to jointly address issues and create a clean and safe environment.
- To create Cohesive Communities / Neighbourhoods where STH Residents and potential residents want to live

Community Area Forums (CAFs)

The borough is divided into 5 areas who each have a Community Area Forum (CAF)

- Hebburn
- Jarrow
- South Shields Central
- South Shields West
- East Shields and Whitburn

The CAF Meetings are held each quarter, and supports small-scale locally important social projects which contribute towards the aims, set out in the new South Tyneside Plan. Local community and voluntary groups can apply for grant assistance for such things as Equipment, Day Trips etc.

Walkabouts and inspections

A programme of walkabouts will be publicised to encourage residents to attend. We have introduced a new process for walkabouts to identify and respond to issues, making sure that there is a clear feedback process in place to residents. Key themes from walkabouts will feed into developing the strategic priorities of the area, these can then be addressed through the Community Area Forum (CAF) plans and spending prioritised accordingly. The walkabouts are designed to be resident led, where any residents who attend can direct the walkabout to the areas they have concerns over.

We will treat as priorities any issues which affect:

The Visual Amenity: For Example grounds maintenance issues, condition of internal communal areas, overgrown gardens, abandoned vehicles, bin and storage areas and signage.

Security: For example door entry systems, CCTV, Locks Entrance Doors, Bin Areas

Health and Safety: For Example issues which might impact upon people with a disability, tripping hazards in paved areas unclean areas, dumped household items or rubbish, bin chutes and bin rooms in high rise blocks

We will provide customers who have attended the walkabout with feedback about issues identified and what actions have been taken as a result. Our walkabouts will be advertised on our website (<http://www.southtynesidehomes.org.uk>), local neighbourhood housing offices as well as within the community areas where the walkabout is to be completed.

Responsive walkabouts will also take place with elected members and residents whenever requested.

Delivery Officers will also carry out inspections on their patch on a regular basis to proactively identify and respond to issues.

Garden maintenance

We recognise the impact that untidy gardens have on the overall appearance of neighbourhoods.

The tenancy agreement states that South Tyneside Council tenants must keep their gardens free from rubbish and debris with any grass or lawns cut and in good condition. We will identify untidy gardens through tenant support visits, estate inspections and walkabouts.

The Untidy Garden Procedure will be followed in relation to South Tyneside Council, which could ultimately lead to enforcement action for breach of tenancy.

A Garden Tidy scheme operates for those tenants of South Tyneside Homes that are unable to maintain their own gardens due to disability, ill health or age. Tenants must meet one or both of the following criteria to join this scheme:

- Be 65 years of age or older;
- Have a mental or physical impairment or an illness for which they are in receipt of disability benefit (Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment).

If either or both of these criteria are met, there must also be no one below pensionable age living at the property or any relatives living within the vicinity of the Borough that would be able to carry out the work.

Gardens will be maintained by STH's contractor twice per year for those that are accepted onto the scheme but work will be limited to simple grass cutting and tidying up. No excessive work will be undertaken.

Those tenants wishing to be considered for the scheme need to fill out the Garden Tidy application form and submit to their local area office for consideration. Each application will be assessed on a case-by-case basis according to the applicant's circumstances.

We will also identify untidy gardens of properties in other tenures and will encourage the resident to improve the appearance of their garden.

Where gardens from any tenure pose a potential statutory nuisance, these will be referred to the council's Environmental Health section for appropriate action to be taken.

Street Cleansing service

The Handy Estates team is responsible for providing a pro-active street cleaning service. Handy Estates are continually striving to deal with issues prior to the Customer having to report them or even noticing them. The teams are always on the lookout for any Fly Tipping, littering, graffiti etc whilst they are carrying out their daily programmed tasks.

Communal areas

Tenants and leaseholders who pass through an internal communal area to access their home or have use of an external communal area shall be responsible for ensuring that they, their visitors and household members abide by their tenancy and leasehold conditions. Tenants and leaseholders must ensure that no items are left in the communal area and that no rubbish or litter is left in a communal area.

Tenants and leaseholders must also not interfere or cause damage to any door entry system, security or safety equipment. Everyone living in a building with a controlled door entry system is expected to use the system correctly by keeping the entrance door shut at all times and only allowing access to identified visitors to their home. Furthermore tenants and leaseholders must ensure that no damage or vandalism occurs to any feature of a communal area.

Due to potential dangers of obstructing access or means of escape in the event of a fire we will operate a zero tolerance approach to items left in a communal area. In the first instance we would aim to identify who the item belonged to in order to arrange immediate removal, however failing this we would arrange for the item to be removed with potential recharging.

Continual failure of the tenant or leaseholder to meet their responsibilities will be viewed as a breach of their tenancy agreement. Legal remedies will be appropriate where appropriate.

We will investigate all instances of damage and vandalism, and will work with partner agencies to identify the offender and take the appropriate enforcement action.

We will visit each communal area regularly to inspect communal areas for items and damage. We expect our officers to use their judgement and knowledge of their areas to increase this frequency where it is necessary and to produce action plans to deal with any problems. A cleaning schedule is in place for each communal area.

Fire risk assessments will be carried out and kept up to date for each block of flats and Housing Plus scheme.

Waste management

Tenants will be notified at the start of their tenancy of arrangements and scheduled days for uplift of refuse, bulk items and recyclable material.

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

We will operate an education and enforcement approach, as outlined above, to ensure that there residents meet their obligations in relation to disposal of waste.

Maintenance of Open Plan Areas

Open plan areas will be maintained by the Greenspace team under the Grounds Maintenance contracts. Work will be carried out throughout the year, with extra care taken during mid-March and October when it will be necessary to deal with weeds and scrubs more often. Estate areas are checked at random regularly and any reports from the public will also be investigated, with work being carried out accordingly as required.

Where Leisure land (e.g. parks, outdoor communal spaces) is concerned, Greenspace carry out risk assessments for each individual area. Based on the frequency of checks required which are identified during the risk assessments, areas are revisited within these timeframes and any necessary maintenance is carried out.

Infestations

Where an infestation is identified, this would be referred to South Tyneside Council's team of highly experienced pest control technicians that have comprehensive knowledge of dealing with a wide variety of pest problems and how to prevent them.

For tenants of South Tyneside Homes, we would cover the cost of any pest control works required as part of our duty as landlord. For non-tenants, a charge would be made in line with South Tyneside Council's Pest Control fee schedule, which can be found on the Council's website.

Trees

If STH identify an issue with Trees in any of our Neighbourhoods then we will refer these to Couth Tyneside Council's tree team to manage any concerns over roots, height, and growth.

Garage Sites and Parking Areas

It is a requirement of the tenancy agreement that the garage should not be used for any other purpose than as a private garage, and that the Tenant should not permit the garage to be used in such a way as to give rise to nuisance or inconvenience to the public or other tenants.

If we are aware of the Garage being misused we will visit the tenant to discuss the breach in their tenancy agreement, failing this we will write to the tenant advising on what action we will take, this may include seeking possession.

Resources and hotspots

We will target our resources pro-actively at 'hotspot' areas to resolve issues, but we will also coordinate our response to issues with education and enforcement action to prevent further recurrences, see below for further details.

Education and enforcement

One of the priorities for the new service is to combine education and enforcement to make a difference to residents' behaviour. It will not be effective to simply keep cleaning and removing issues such as dog fouling, fly-tipping, graffiti, etc. We will work with residents to educate them about their responsibilities to try and prevent issues from continuing to reoccur. However, this will be combined with an enforcement approach against those who continue to commit environmental crimes.

Partnership working

We will not be able to achieve our vision for the service without a strong partnership approach between South Tyneside Council and South Tyneside Homes. We will also work in partnership with other agencies and landlords who operate within the borough of South Tyneside to ensure that there is a pro-active approach to managing neighbourhoods and communities.

We will also work in partnership to maximise funding opportunities to jointly fund environmental schemes that will make a difference to neighbourhoods.

Communication

A key feature of the Housing and Area Management service is about ensuring clear communication takes place with elected members, local residents, other departments from within South Tyneside Homes and South Tyneside Council, and with external agencies. We will make sure that we follow-up on all enquiries that we receive and provide feedback to elected members and residents.