



**Muirhouse
Housing
Association**

Policy: Estate Management

Title of Policy:	Estate Management Policy
Date of Adoption or Last Review:	25 March 2019
Lead Officer:	Ainan Groat
Date of Next Review:	April 2022
Scottish Social Housing Charter Outcomes and Standards:	<p>Outcome 1: Equality</p> <p>Outcome 2: Communication</p> <p>Outcome 3: Participation</p> <p>Standard 13: Value for Money</p>
Regulatory Standards of Governance and Financial Management:	<p>Standard 2 – 2.1, 2.2, 2.3 <i>“The RSL is open about and accountable for what it does. It understands and takes account of the needs and priorities of its tenants, service users and stakeholders. And its primary focus is the sustainable achievement of these priorities.”</i></p> <p>Standard 5 – 5.3 <i>“The RSL conducts its affairs with honesty and integrity</i></p>

Muirhouse Housing Association Estate Management Policy

1. Introduction

We take a proactive approach to the management of our properties, estates and neighbourhoods. We aim to promote a sense of pride and community ownership within the local area. Estate management is a central element of the service we provide to our tenants and is considered a high priority by our customers.

Our staff team will have a regular presence in our estates monitoring and inspecting the environment, addressing tenancy issues and engaging with our customers.

2. Purpose

Our estate management service aims to:

- ensure that our homes and surrounding area are managed and maintained to a high standard, within pleasant, safe and secure neighbourhoods, and that provision is made for future investment in the stock.
- provide a direct housing management service, ensuring that tenancy conditions are adhered to and providing or arranging advice and support where required.
- encourage tenants to participate in and influence decisions about the management of their local areas.

3. Scope

3.1 Scottish Social Housing Charter

The Scottish Social Housing Charter states what tenants can expect from social landlords, in terms of the quality and value for money of the services they receive, the standard of their homes, and opportunities for communication and participation in the decisions that affect them. This policy aims to ensure we meet the Charter standards and outcomes, in particular:

Outcome 1, Equality: 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.

Outcome 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 provides.*

Outcome 3, Participation: *tenants and other customers find it easy to participate in and influence their landlord's decisions at a level they feel comfortable with.*

Standard 13, Value for Money: *Tenants, owners and other customers receive services that provide continually improving value for the rent and other charges they pay.*

3.2 Equality Act

We aim to promote equality and diversity and operate equal opportunities policies which inform all aspects of our business. We will ensure that it adheres to the Equality Act 2010 by being committed to equal and fair treatment for all and opposed to any form of unlawful discrimination.

In the implementation of our estate management policy, no one will be treated differently or less favourably than others because of any of the protected characteristics as listed in the Equality Act 2010:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

We will ensure that we comply with the Equality Act 2010 when evaluating our buildings and surrounding environments.

Upon request, we will make information about our Estate Management Policy and procedures available in alternative formats, such as large print, audio, Braille, and community languages

4. **Managing and maintaining our housing stock**

We will undertake detailed surveys of our stock on a regular basis, and have in place an Asset Management Strategy to ensure our properties continue to be maintained to a high standard

Our Housing Services team will carry out regular estate visits during which we will inspect closes, stairs, entrances, bin areas, drying areas, parking

areas, gardens and open spaces. We will keep a written record of each visit, including the issues noted and action taken.

Staff carrying out estate visits will check for any maintenance issues and arrange repairs or other action promptly. Staff will also check cleanliness and general upkeep of the area (including issues such as graffiti, fly tipping, litter, dog fouling, unkempt gardens, parking, abandoned vehicles), and action promptly either directly with tenants or by liaising with other agencies

To enable us to take effective action on issues which are outwith our direct control, we will place a high priority on the importance of establishing close working relationships with other agencies such as City of Edinburgh Council environmental services and cleansing, the Community Safety Team, the Police, and external contractors.

We will monitor the performance of external contractors such as garden contractors and cleaners of communal stairs, to ensure that services are provided to a high standard.

4.1 Alterations and Improvements

Tenants have the right to carry out alterations or improvements but must first get our written permission as per section 5.19 of the Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement. We will not refuse permission unreasonably. We may grant permission with conditions including the standard of the work expected, any relevant planning permission received. If a tenant makes an alteration or improvement with our permission, they may be entitled to compensation at the end of their tenancy. If they carry out any alterations or improvements without our permission, we will require them to restore the property to its previous condition at their own cost. We are also entitled to restore the house to its previous condition during or at the end of the tenancy and are entitled to charge them for the work.

5. **Housing management and tenancy issues**

Wherever possible, we will respond to tenancy issues noted during estate visits “on the spot”, directly with the tenants concerned, during or immediately following the visit.

We will carry out settling in visits for all new tenants within a maximum of 6 weeks of each new tenancy to allow the tenant to raise any concerns or issues and to allow us to intervene at an early stage if we have concerns, preventing any difficulties from escalating and accessing additional support for the tenant if required.

We will ensure that our Housing Services team has a visible presence across our estates and that tenants are aware that we will enforce tenancy conditions and will not permit our estates to be neglected.

Our staff will be approachable and encourage tenants to speak to them about issues and problems in the local area. Staff will have detailed knowledge of the area for which they are responsible.

Where neglect or breach of tenancy conditions is noted, we will remind tenants of their obligations, offer advice and assistance as appropriate, monitor the situation, and enforce tenancy conditions where necessary.

Where issues of nuisance and antisocial behaviour are noted, we will gather information and address these through our Antisocial Behaviour Policy and procedures.

We will treat all instances of vandalism and graffiti as serious and take urgent action to repair and to identify the offender. Where the offender can be identified and is a tenant we will recharge the cost of repair/graffiti removal and may report this to the Police.

Where bulk items of refuse have been dumped improperly and we can identify the person responsible, we will pursue them to ensure correct procedures for removal are followed and if necessary for the costs of removal. We will arrange for disposal where the person responsible cannot be identified.

5.1 Abandoned Properties

We aim to make the best use of our housing stock by identifying early any unoccupied properties, complying with legislation to repossess these properties and then reletting them swiftly to meet the needs of our tenants and applicants. We are aware that there is a long wait for housing in Muirhouse and we expect everyone who has been granted a tenancy to occupy it as their main and permanent home. We will deal swiftly with any instance where a tenant is not doing so and thereby depriving someone else of a home. The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 gives legal provision for a Scottish secure tenancy to be repossessed by the landlord if it appears to have been abandoned. The Scottish Secure Tenancies (Abandoned Property) Order 2002 specifies procedures to be implemented whenever property is found in abandoned houses. This is specified in section 6.4 of the Scottish Secure Tenancy agreement and in our detailed procedures.

5.2 Pets

Tenants who have sole use of a garden area are allowed to keep pets in their homes subject to the following conditions:

- Only one pet is allowed
- Only dogs or cats are allowed to be kept as pets.

The following general conditions apply to all permitted pets:

- Keeping the pet is not prohibited by law
- Tenant is responsible for the behaviour of any pets and must take all reasonable steps to keep pets under control, prevent them causing nuisance, annoyance or danger to neighbours or damage to the property
- MHA is entitled to require removal of the pet if causing nuisance or damage
- Tenant is responsible for cleaning up dog faeces.

6. Tenant involvement in the management of the local area

In line with our commitment to involving tenants in all aspects of our work, we will support and provide practical assistance to any group of tenants and residents who wish to set up a local group such as a residents group or Neighbourhood Watch scheme. We will work closely with tenants and residents' groups and will ask for feedback and respond to their views on the quality of estate management services we provide.

Where there are particular issues in a specific estate, street, close or building, we may hold meetings especially for the residents concerned, to hear their views and agree on a plan for resolving the problems.

We will carry out regular surveys on the quality of estate management services we provide.

We will carry out regular joint estate inspections and walkabouts with representatives of tenants and residents' groups, and with representatives of City of Edinburgh Council.

We will use special events such as garden competitions, good neighbour awards, and litter picking days to promote the involvement of tenants in the improvement of neighbourhoods.

7. Recording

A written record of each estate management visit will be completed in a standard format.

Any information of a personal or confidential nature will be recorded separately.

8. Complaints

We recognise that in the delivery of our services to customers there may be occasions when a customer is not satisfied with the way a particular issue was dealt with. Tenants, their representatives or others who use our service can make a complaint to any member of staff who will try to

resolve the matter straightaway. If this is not possible, we will make sure the matter is fully investigated in line with our complaints policy and procedure. Copies of these are available from our office or on our website. Feedback from complaints will be used to help improve our service.

9. Monitoring and performance

- 9.1 We will report annually to the Board on our performance in relation to estate management.
- 9.2 We will report annually to the Scottish Housing Regulator in the Annual Return to the Charter on the level of tenant satisfaction with our management of their neighbourhood.
- 9.3 We will report to tenants regularly on our performance in relation to estate management through Performance Reports and tenant's newsletters.

10. Policy review

- 11.1 This policy will be reviewed every 3 years unless key changes are required earlier to comply with legislation, guidance or new learning.