

London Borough of Hillingdon Good Neighbourhood Management Policy

June 2024



HILLINGDON
LONDON

www.hillingdon.gov.uk

Contents

	Page
1. Introduction	2
2. Aims and Scope	2
3. Areas of Responsibility / Key Actions and Processes	5
Responsibilities	
Key Actions	
3.6 Making Reports	
3.7 Triaging Reports	
3.8 Managing Residents Expectations	
3.9 Terminology	
3.10 Evidence	
3.11 Through Investigations	
3.12 Request Case review	
3.13 Resident Co-operation	
3.14 Vulnerabilities and Support Needs	
3.15 Physical Measures to reduce noise transference	
3.16 Property Inspections	
3.17 Void Standards	
3.18 Flooring	
3.19 New Builds	
4. Monitoring and Performance	7
5. Training	7
6. Equality and Diversity	8
7. Accessibility	8
8. Data Protection and Information Exchange	8
9. Reviewing our Policy	8
10. Related Policies and Links to Further Information	8
11. Behaviours, Competencies and Professional Standards	9

1. Introduction

Policy Statement

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to foster good relationships between residents living in Council owned and managed housing.
- 1.2 The policy will provide a clear framework for dealing sensitively and proportionally with behaviours which are not considered to be Anti-social Behaviour (ASB) and therefore unlikely to be a tenancy breach. These behaviours require a different response from the Council as a landlord. ASB is a term that relates to a wide range of behaviours. We use the Anti-social Behaviour Crime & Policing Act 2014 (the ASB Act) definition of housing related ASB as behaviour 'that is causing or likely to cause nuisance or annoyance.' However, there will be behaviours which would not be reasonable or appropriate to categorise as ASB.
- 1.3 Where the behaviour is not ASB and therefore unlikely to be a tenancy breach, we will not seek to label someone as a perpetrator or a victim, nor will we be likely to consider any of our formal legal tools which are available to use in ASB cases.
- 1.4 Although some behaviours are not ASB they can still cause a great deal of upset and frustration to residents, creating tensions between neighbours and wider communities. Whilst the Council may be limited in our responses, this Policy is designed to secure better outcomes and set out how the Council may be able to assist.
- 1.5 Matters dealt with under this Policy will likely involve situations that have arisen as a result of circumstance, rather than a genuine and deliberate intention to cause someone else harm or distress.
- 1.6 Our Good Neighbourhood Management tool kit will help the Council deliver this policy.

2. Aims and Scope

Policy Principles

- 2.1 The definition of ASB is subjective and is based on how it makes someone feel. The Council recognises however that every individual person has different tolerances, expectations and perceptions when deciding what behaviour is or is not appropriate or acceptable. This means that some people will see certain behaviour as 'anti-social' even if the behaviour is not unreasonable.

2.2 Some behaviours may be clearly impact a resident but there is no intention by the other resident to cause harm or distress and/or the behaviour causing the harm or distress is not unreasonable. Examples of these types of behaviour which we do not consider to be ASB include but are not limited to:

- Parking disagreements (if the other driver is parking in accordance with all contractual/legal requirements)
- Boundary Disputes
- Fencing
- Children Playing Games/Playing (except in cases where damage has been caused to property persistently)
- Reasonable dog barking and cats defecating
- Cigarette and cooking smells
- Minor personal conflict such as 'dirty looks', the positioning of refuse bins, personal dislikes, personal relationship breakdowns, or children falling out with each other.
- Isolated incidents of loud music including one-off parties
- General household or living noise (babies crying, children playing, people talking and walking in their homes, closing doors and windows, vacuuming, and using white goods, DIY, windchimes, working from home in a computer-based role)
- Isolated incidents of loud shouting and arguing
- BBQ's and bonfires
- Use of Trampolines
- Noise made by a tenant or household member that has a protected characteristic eg : Mental Health Condition or Disability

2.3 The Council will publish information on ASB and neighbourhood issues that include tips and hints on how to manage relations. We will work with communities to build community cohesion. We will ensure that residents have the information they need to manage neighbourhood issues (including their communication with neighbours) and where needed, know how to inform The London Borough of Hillingdon's Housing Management Service regarding escalation of issues, support needed or any incident of ASB. We will provide additional tools and advice to support residents when needed and encourage and support residents to communicate

positively with their neighbours and understand which behaviours are considered reasonable. We will consult with residents to find solutions to behaviours which are impacting several residents.

- 2.4 Given that the central purpose of this policy is to build relationships between parties, it is unlikely that the Council will be able to assist the person making the report to remain anonymous. There may be times when staff cannot guarantee confidentiality, even when a resident request it. This could include situations where staff identify a safeguarding concern, or where a criminal offence has taken place.
- 2.5 The Council may not always be able to assist with a situation that is dealt with under this Policy as a single agency. There will be times when STAFF may work with partner agencies to share information and identify the best possible support and guidance which can be offered to parties. The Council will always share, store and dispose of information in line with legislation and local information sharing agreements.
- 2.6 The Council will keep a record of any properties where an investigation has concluded that the noise is occurring because of the nature of the property and not the person occupying it.
- 2.7 All allocations will be carefully considered for the impact on the existing community.
- 2.8 This Policy is based on the recommendations made in the Housing Ombudsman Spotlight Report 'Time to be Heard.'

Implementation

- 2.9 All teams within the Housing Management Service will be made aware of this policy.
- 2.10 Team members will be provided with refresher training every year.
- 2.11 Changes to this policy and any associated procedures will be communicated to all staff in the Housing Management Service.
- 2.12 All staff across Housing Management will be required to read this policy, and to confirm that they have read and understood it.

3. Areas of Responsibility / Key Action and Processes

Responsibility

- 3.1 The Head of Housing Management is responsible for ensuring the policy is adhered to and will ensure there is also a Good Neighbourhood Management procedure in place.
- 3.2 The Head of Housing Management is responsible for ensuring that any relevant agencies are informed about our Good Neighbourhood Management procedure.
- 3.3 All team members are responsible for adhering to this policy.
- 3.4 All team members are responsible for promoting the tools provided to support good neighbour relations.
- 3.5 All team members are responsible for feeding back any improvements that could be made to this Policy.
- 3.6 The Housing Management Service and our customers are responsible for feeding back any improvements that can be made to any associated procedures or problems they have encountered whilst implementing it.

Key Actions

- 3.6 **Making Reports** – We will provide accessible and inclusive methods for residents to report neighbourhood management issues and residents will be responded to in line with our service standards. If any timescales are not met, they will be communicated to the complainant including the reasons why.
- 3.7 **Triaging Reports** – We will triage reports to ensure partners and residents understand how a decision is reached about whether a matter should be dealt with under the ASB or the Good Neighbourhood Management Policy. This will ensure that low level issues causing neighbourhood friction are dealt with at the appropriate level and not inappropriately handled as ASB.
- 3.8 **Managing residents' expectations** – At an early stage we will challenge any unreasonable expectations and we will not create unrealistic expectations.
- 3.9 **Terminology** – Given that we do not work to identify who the 'perpetrator' is and who the 'victim' is we refer to the parties as 'Resident 1' – the person who makes contact with us in the 1st instance and 'Resident 2' – the other person involved. Or we may refer to them as 'Household 1' and

‘Household 2’ if more than 1 person is involved from an individual property. The purpose of our approach is to build relationships, so residents’ names are used to assist with this.

- 3.10 **Evidence** – We will provide accessible and inclusive methods for residents to gather evidence.
- 3.11 **Thorough investigations** – We will agree an action plan with the resident who initially raised the issue and thoroughly investigate without making any assumptions. If it becomes clear during an investigation that a case should be investigated under our ASB Policy, we will inform both parties in writing and agree to a new action plan.
- 3.12 **Request case review** - ‘Resident 1’ may appeal at any stage if they believe that their report is being handled under the incorrect Policy. If a complainant disagrees with the review decision, they will be informed about our complaint’s procedure and the ASB Case Review (Community Trigger).
- 3.13 **Resident co-operation** – As the purpose of this Policy is to develop and strengthen relationships between people who live near to each other, we need the co-operation and support from the parties involved to improve situations. Where parties refuse to a reasonable request, we may not be able to assist any further. Where this is the case, it will be clearly communicated to the party concerned.
- 3.14 **Vulnerabilities and support needs** – At all stages the Council will consider the support needs of the parties involved and recognise that sometimes personal circumstances may affect a person’s tolerance, perception, or ability to cope with certain situations. Where the Council recognises that this could be a contributory factor, it will work to identify suitable referrals and support.
- 3.15 **Physical measures to reduce noise transference** –The Council recognises that noise can transfer between properties due to poor levels of sound insulation and this may have a disproportional impact on Resident A, even though Resident B is not undertaking unreasonable activities and is not at fault. In these circumstances the Council will work with Resident B to consider options for reducing the noise and will consider if any remedial works / improvements are appropriate.
- 3.16 **Property inspections** –The Council will inspect properties to establish whether any outstanding repair issues may be contributing to noise transference. The Council is unable to commit to sound proofing properties built or converted before 2003 to Part E of the Building Regulations. However, it will consider funding measures to reduce noise

transference when all other options have been exhausted and the harm being caused is assessed as being 'high'. When programmes of work are delivered for works including like thermal insulation for example, the Council will endeavour to ensure these works do not make noise transference issues worse.

- 3.17 **Void Standard** –The Council will not remove carpets unless they are in poor condition, or the incoming tenant has requested their removal. The Council will remove hard and laminate flooring and install anti-vibration mats into the washing machine space as standard in flats above ground floor.
- 3.18 **Flooring** – All tenancy conditions prohibit tenants from installing laminate flooring if they live in a property with other homes situated below. Tenants who breach this condition of tenancy will be requested to remove the laminate flooring and replace with carpets.
- 3.19 **New Builds** –The Council will ensure that flats above the ground floor do not have hardwood or laminate flooring where possible. When assessing affordable housing to purchase from developers the Council does consider whether the layout and grouping of properties is suitable and sensible. If the development team are unsure, they will consult with colleagues in the property and housing teams for feedback before committing to a scheme.

4. Monitoring and Performance

This policy will be reviewed in line with changes in working practices, best practice, or regulatory requirements.

5. Training

The Council, in its capacity as landlord, recognises that staff are the key resource in ensuring effective responses to unneighbourly conduct. In this context it is important that staff have the knowledge, confidence, and skills to identify issues and take appropriate action. This resource extends to staff groups who are not directly responsible for the delivery of Housing Management Services but nonetheless visit Council properties on a regular basis and therefore have a real opportunity to contribute to identifying issues and responding appropriately.

All staff who visit tenants will receive training on Good Neighbourhood Management to enable and support them in making an effective contribution by putting their knowledge and skills into practice.

6. Equality and Diversity

The Council is committed to fairness and the principles of diversity and inclusion. Our aim is to ensure that our Policies and operational Procedures do not create an unfair disadvantage for anyone, either directly or indirectly. We are committed to:

- Consulting and engaging with residents, advocates, community organisations and forums by listening to their views, taking notice of the issues they raise and recognising their contribution to the delivery of Housing Management Services. This includes our responses to all forms of ASB and unneighbourly conduct.
- Meeting the needs and choice of people from all backgrounds.
- Ensuring that our Services are relevant, responsive and sensitive to the needs of our existing and future residents.
- Ensuring that all sections of the community in which we operate have equal access to our services.

7. Accessibility

We will ensure that tenants' needs are considered when implementing this Policy to ensure that they are treated fairly. We will make appropriate arrangements to ensure that customers with distinct communication needs are not unreasonably and disproportionately affected. This could involve providing communications in alternative languages or formats or providing interpretation or transcription as appropriate.

8. Data Protection and Information Exchange

We will comply with our obligations under relevant data protection legislation and regulations. We will process and store personal information securely.

There are some circumstances in which we are required by law to disclose information given to us. We will normally discuss this with the party giving us the information, but this may not always be possible.

9. Reviewing our Policy

To ensure that this Policy continues to reflect the current objectives and practice in respect of responding to unneighbourly conduct, it will be reviewed every three years unless amendment is prompted by a change in legislation, Regulatory requirements, monitoring and reporting, or feedback from residents reveals that a change in Policy is required sooner.

10. Related Policies and Links to Further Information

List of documents, associated policies and publications:

- Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
- Housing Ombudsman Spotlight Report 'Time to be Heard.'
- Tenant & Leaseholder Engagement Strategy
- Housing Management Offer to residents living in Council owned high rise accommodation.

- Repair responsibility statement <https://www.hillingdon.gov.uk/non-emergencyrepairs>
- Fire Safety Policy
- Building Safety Policy
- The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- Estate Services Standard
- Tree Strategy 2023
- Practice Note – Storage of items on internal shared areas
- Consumer Standard: Neighbourhood & Community
- Consumer Standard: Safety & Quality
- Consumer Standard: Transparency, Influence and Accountability

11. Behaviours, Competencies & Professional Standards

The Council, in its capacity as landlord, recognises that staff are the key resource in ensuring effective Housing Management Services. The delivery of training to staff groups involved in the provision and management of Housing Management Services goes beyond ensuring that they have the knowledge and competence to deliver their roles.

The Council is committed to ensuring that all social housing staff have the skills, knowledge, experience and behaviours they need to deliver good-quality, professional services to tenants and leaseholders. The desired effects include an improved service to residents, with staff better equipped to manage risks to tenants' wellbeing, health and safety. Success will be indicated through reductions in complaints upheld specifically regarding poor service or poor complaint handling; and in the long term we expect that staff with the required level of skills, knowledge, experience and behaviours will contribute to an increase in tenant satisfaction scores. This includes perceptions associated with our approach to handling anti-social behaviour and unneighbourly conduct.

Governance			
Effective from:	11/06/2024	Review Date:	11/06/2027
Policy Owner:	Head of Housing Management		
Policy Author:	Housing Manager – Housing Management Services		
Approved by:	Cllr Lavery – Cabinet Member for Residents' Services		
Version Number:	1.01		