

Estate Management

2021

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1. Policy statement

- 1.1 West of Scotland Housing Association Limited (WSHA) views estate management as a vital part of the Housing Management function
- 1.2 Effective estate management ensures that customers enjoy a peaceful, secure, safe, clean and tidy environment.
- 1.3 Customers are at the heart of WSHA's estate management services and are actively encouraged to be involved in the setting, monitoring and measurement of estate standards. In setting and monitoring standards for estate management, regard is given to value for money and the most effective use of resources.
- 1.4 WSHA adopts a preventative approach to estate management recognising that prompt action must always be taken to ensure estates are not subject to deterioration. Where relevant, WSHA works in partnership with other organisations to ensure issues are addressed correctly and in a timely manner.
- 1.5 WSHA's mission is to build affordable homes and sustainable communities where people choose to live. This policy supports the mission by ensuring that the housing stock and the surrounding environment that WSHA is responsible for (WSHA-owned land) is managed and maintained effectively to the highest possible standard.
- 1.6 In line with our Green Strategy, WSHA will challenge itself in terms of estate management to do more to "improve the health and wellbeing of our...communities by raising awareness and changing behaviours in respect of the climate emergency, and by offering opportunities to positively contribute to the environment." This will include reviewing procurement of our estate services when contracts are due for renewal, and delivery of estate services in a way that is better for the environment and our communities.
- 1.7 Below are the policy commitments in relation to estate management, ensuring customers:
 - live in well managed and well maintained housing, in an environment that is attractive, safe and secure, free from nuisance, annoyance, intimidation and harassment;
 - are made aware of and accept their responsibilities in relation to the upkeep of their property, gardens and the surrounding environment;
 - are made aware of our responsibilities in relation to estate management;
 - are satisfied with the estate management service provided by WSHA;
 - are given opportunities to influence and participate in decision making relating to estate management; and
 - are aware that WSHA endeavours to reduce the time it takes to re-let a property by aiming to manage attractive and well maintained estates where people want to live;

- are aware that WSHA will meet its legal duties, obligations and responsibilities and that WSHA will ensure tenants also fulfil their tenancy obligations.
- This policy and associated procedure are applicable to the housing management services delivered by WSHA to general needs, sheltered, amenity, factored and mid-market rent customers.

2. Roles and responsibilities

- 2.1 The Director of Housing & Community Services is responsible for ensuring the overall adoption of, and adherence to, this policy and its associated procedures relevant to their operation.
- 2.2 All relevant Managers and Team Leaders are responsible for ensuring that effective training is provided to all staff, and that this is applied consistently throughout all areas of operation.
- 2.3 All staff working within WSHA are responsible for ensuring adherence to this policy.
- 2.4 The Housing Officers, Estates Officer and Technical Officers will be the lead officers for implementation of the policy and associated procedures. The Housing Manager, with the assistance of the Team Leaders, will support and oversee all environmental services in their area of management.
- 2.5 Guidance is reflected under the relevant processes to ensure that all staff can access information in an easy and timely manner.

3. References and sources

- 3.1 The following legislation and other documents are relevant to the content of this policy and may be referred to for further information and context:
- [Abolition of Feudal Tenure \(Scotland\) Act 2000](#) and [Tenements \(Scotland\) Act 2004](#): carry out maintenance to common parts and open spaces in order that the said common parts and open spaces are fit for use by the tenant and other occupiers.
 - Antisocial Behaviour and Harassment - Scotland Policy and Procedure
 - [Civic Government \(Scotland\) Act 1982](#): describes the process for dealing with lost or abandoned property.
 - [Equality Act 2010](#)
 - Fire Safety Policy
 - [Mobility Scooter Guidance](#)
 - [Scottish Social Housing Charter](#) Outcome 6: Estate management, anti-social behaviour, neighbour nuisance and tenancy disputes which encourages Registered Social Landlords to take steps to ensure that tenants and other customers live in well maintained neighbourhoods where they feel safe

- Lone Working Policy
- Tenancy Management Policy
- WSHA/Westscot Living Tenancy Agreements
- WSHA Green Strategy.

4. Equalities

4.1 We will not unfairly discriminate against any person within the protected characteristic groups as contained within the Equality Act 2010. To ensure equal access to the information contained in this policy for all, we are happy to provide copies in Braille, in larger print, translated into other languages or on tape to you or anybody that you know upon request and where practicable.

4.2 WSHA will seek to ensure that tenancies are managed in a manner that is fair to all sections of the community regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.

4.3 As with all Association policies and practices, the Association will adhere to Outcome 1 of the Scottish Social Housing Charter (Equalities):

‘Social Landlords perform in 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’.

5. Consultation

5.1 The Tenant Advisory Group and Tenant Scrutiny Panel were consulted on the proposed changes to this Policy and no further recommendations for changes were received.

6. Monitoring and compliance

6.1 This policy will be monitored on a regular basis to ensure that the content remains compliant with legislation and reflects best practice. Audits may take place if commissioned by the Director of Housing & Community Services to ensure there is consistent practice and adoption of the policy principles.

6.2 Period of review

6.2.1 Until a new policy is formally adopted this document will remain in force and operational.

6.2.2 This policy will be reviewed in accordance with the policy review programme agreed by CMT.

6.2.3 If there are significant changes to legislation or regulation or there are found to be deficiencies or failures in this policy, as a result of complaints or findings

from any independent organisations, the Director of Housing & Community Services will initiate an immediate review.

- 6.2.4 Where appropriate, key stakeholders such as tenants and interested parties will be consulted as part of any review of this policy.

7. Approval

- 7.1 This policy is approved by WSHA Board.

8. Estate Management

8.1 General

- 8.1.1 The Association will ensure that tenancy obligations in relation to estate management are clearly noted in its tenancy agreements and that time is taken at the sign-up and new tenant visit to highlight the importance to the new tenant of adhering to the tenancy agreement, respecting others and looking after their property and the external environment.
- 8.1.2 Where issues are identified that relate to a tenant breaching the conditions of their tenancy, appropriate action must be taken in accordance with the Tenancy Management Policy, Anti-social Behaviour Policy or in accordance with the relevant tenancy agreement. Tenants should receive a written warning or a visit to ensure that the issue is understood and that they are aware of the action they need to take to rectify the issue.
- 8.1.3 Where estate management issues relate to persistent behaviour that causes nuisance or annoyance to tenants, the Housing Officer should follow the Antisocial Behaviour Policy. Where issues such as vandalism and graffiti are considered to be hate crime incidents, these should be reported to the Police.
- 8.1.4 In addition to maintenance contracts and/or work completed by external contractors and agencies, staff will carry out estate inspections to ensure housing stock and surrounding environments are kept clean, tidy and safe. Regular inspections of estates and communal spaces within housing stock will be completed by field staff and can include home visits for tenancy matters, repair inspections, tenant meetings, officer surgeries and annual estate inspections. These can take place with or without customers.
- 8.1.5 If issues are identified during an inspection, these must be recorded, and follow-up actions scheduled. Actions must be completed within a reasonable timescale depending on the nature and severity of the issue and before any re-inspection is due.

8.2 Partnership Working

- 8.2.1 To manage estates effectively, the Housing Officer/Estates Officer will work in partnership with relevant internal teams such as the Asset/Property Team and

external agencies such as Police Scotland and Local Authorities. Specific details on how WSHA will deal with issues and the scope of responsibilities is set out in the Estate Management Procedure which includes:

- vandalism and graffiti;
- fly tipping or dumped rubbish and litter;
- pets;
- abandoned, untaxed, and un-roadworthy vehicles and parking;
- signage;
- bin stores;
- landscaping and gardening and damaged trees;
- the exterior of buildings;
- maintenance of paths and stairwells;
- play areas and ball games - misuse or damage;
- boundary queries;
- lost or stolen keys/fobs;
- security of schemes and properties;
- infestations and
- fire safety including storing goods in communal areas.

8.3 Estate Budget & Service/Maintenance Charges

8.3.1 A dedicated budget is in place to fund estate services including, among other things - grounds maintenance, bulk uplifts, estate improvements and communal area cleaning. Housing Officers have a small budget which can meet a number of requirements including, in part, assistance to develop small scale environmental projects which fall out with other budget parameters.

8.3.2 Service/maintenance charges for Estates Services

8.3.3 A service/maintenance charge will be included in the rent/occupancy charge to cover the cost of the services noted above in accordance with the Rent & Service Charge Policy. Factored owners will be invoiced for their share of the costs.

8.4 Estate Inspections

8.4.1 The regularity of inspection to Association properties will vary in relation to their condition at last inspection, the assessment of condition being based on the general cleanliness, tidiness and state of repair of the common areas. All communal areas e.g. open spaces, will be inspected at least twice per year and all communal blocks inspected at least quarterly. In addition, any Association staff member who has reason to visit a property for whatever reason will effectively be inspecting it. Anything noted at such times will be recorded and appropriate action implemented.

8.5 Fire Safety & Communal Areas

8.5.1 The Estate Officer/Housing Officers/Technical Officers are the lead officers responsible for communal area fire safety checks as detailed in the following policies, procedures and guidance documents:

- Fire Safety Policy
- Fire Risk Assessments
- Fire Risk Assessments - Managed by Managing Agents.

8.5.2 Property/Asset Services will lead with compliance checks for example for emergency lighting, communal fire doors and communal fire alarms.

8.5.3 Where the Estates Officer/Housing Officers need to move items from communal areas because they are not tolerated and/or causing a fire risk, the following principles apply:

- The Officer must attempt to establish ownership of items first. This can be done verbally (for example through door-knocking) but in every instance, tenants must receive a written notice. The written notice must include a request that any items belonging to the tenant are removed to a safe space by a specific date or the tenant will risk losing them (either into dedicated storage where this is provided or inside the tenant's property).
- If ownership cannot be established, or items are not removed as requested, the Officer must clearly inform tenants in writing that the unclaimed/unmoved items will be removed and stored for up to one month before being regarded as 'abandoned goods' and disposed of. This communication must also include details of how tenants can retrieve their items if they claim ownership after the removal has taken place.
- The items will be stored for a reasonable period of time which is defined by WSHA as one month. No goods should be disposed of before this time period has passed.
- If one month has passed and items are not claimed within this period of time, they will be deemed abandoned and disposed of.

8.6 **Communal Cleaning**

8.6.1 Where contract services for communal cleaning are not provided, we will seek to ensure that local residents agree to and maintain the required areas. However, where agreement cannot be reached, we may arrange for the work to be carried out and the costs recovered.

8.6.2 The cleaning and maintenance of communal areas within the Association's estates is undertaken by a range of external contractors and internal staff and services (such as Sheltered Cleaners and support providers staff). The Housing/Estates Officer will regularly inspect these areas to ensure that services are being provided and are satisfactory. The Officer will take responsibility for taking forward actions to resolve concerns about performance or poor standards in communal areas.

8.6.3 For cleaning communal areas in our blocks/closes, the Association will appoint appropriately qualified contractors to maintain these areas and will monitor performance to ensure that they achieve the required standards and meet the KPIs associated with the contract. A contractor will be procured every 3-5 years for communal cleaning, or at more frequent intervals if the contractor is not performing and/or breaches their contract and the contract has to be terminated.

8.7 **Fly Tipping & Bulk Uplift**

8.7.1 Where unpermitted items are left in or near bin stores or at external communal areas the Housing Officer will investigate and seek to identify the owner or culprit and secure removal under the terms of the tenancy conditions. The items will be removed if ownership cannot be identified. The Association's priority under these circumstances will be to ensure that the areas are kept safe and promote a safe and attractive environment. Where the facility exists, the Housing Officer will liaise with the local authority to have the items removed.

8.8 **Graffiti**

8.8.1 Offensive graffiti will be reported to the Police and will be removed as an emergency (within 1 working day). Non-offensive graffiti will also be reported to the Police and be removed within one week. Graffiti found on areas not belonging to the Association but impacting on our tenants will be reported immediately to the relevant owner or agency e.g. electrical junction boxes reported to the utility provider.

8.9 **Grounds Maintenance (including private gardens)**

8.9.1 WSHA will appoint appropriately qualified contractors to maintain general landscaped areas (and private gardens where applicable) and will monitor performance to ensure that they achieve the required standards and meet the KPIs associated with the contract. A contractor will be procured every 3-5 years for grounds maintenance services, or at more frequent intervals if the contractor is not performing and/or breaches their contract and the contract has to be terminated.

8.9.2 Maintenance of private gardens will normally be the tenant's responsibility. WSHA does however provide individual garden maintenance in some amenity and sheltered schemes (recharged as a service charge). The Housing Officer/Estates Officer will take action against those responsible for maintaining private gardens if they fail to do so, which will include issuing warnings then arranging for the garden to be tidied and the responsible party re-charged for the cost if they continue to fail to address the condition of the garden. Legal action will be considered for repeated failure to maintain private gardens.

8.10 **Trees**

8.10.1 Trees in private gardens will normally be the responsibility of the tenant. WSHA may arrange for a tree to be maintained if it becomes a danger to others or interferes with utilities (e.g. overhead cables).

8.10.2 Trees on communal ground owned by WSHA will be maintained by the Association and a periodic survey (usually a minimum of tri-annually) of relevant areas will be carried out to arrange a programme of tree maintenance.

8.11 **Snow and Ice**

8.11.1 The Association will not normally be responsible for managing snow and ice in our estates, except for amenity and sheltered housing. For areas which have been adopted such as roads, car parks and footpaths, the Association will request that the local authority provide grit bins and maintain these areas. In exceptional circumstances, the Association may consider the provision of grit bins or gritting to assist tenants address issues with snow and ice in and around communal areas of their home. This may be arranged after a risk assessment and agreement from tenant(s) to the addition of a service/maintenance charge to recover the cost of providing the service.

8.12 **Parking**

8.12.1 Where car parking is provided this is available to our residents on a “first come, first served” basis. The Association will consider the provision of a parking bay for use by disabled badge owners provided that the request is made in writing, that there is sufficient space for the bay and the provision is supported by residents.

8.12.2 The Housing Officer/Estates Officer will investigate reports of any abandoned/untaxed vehicles on the Association’s property or land or which is ‘parked in the open air’ on land owned by others but impacting on the quiet enjoyment of the area by our residents. Steps will be taken to identify and contact the owner of the vehicle and request its removal in conjunction with the local authority, Police and DVLA.

8.13 **Mobility Scooters**

8.13.1 The Association may permit residents to keep a motability scooter or buggy provided that they have obtained our written permission in advance, that the scooter or buggy can be stored within the residents’ home or in a secure location externally, and that it meets specified criteria. The Association retains the right to designate certain blocks or schemes to be “scooter or buggy free” where permission will not be granted under any circumstances. The Association will not permit the storage of scooters in an area that will cause a risk to residents.

8.14 **Infestations**

8.14.1 Where vermin or infestation is reported and found in our homes and common areas, the Technical Officer will arrange appropriate contractors to undertake remedial works. The Housing Officer will take responsibility for resolving an issue directly attributable to a tenant's living conditions or habits. This may involve other agencies (social work, GP, etc.) and actions to ensure compliance with the tenancy conditions.