



# NEIGHBOURHOOD MANAGEMENT POLICY

MAY 2023

## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 Mid Devon Housing (MDH) is part of Mid Devon District Council (the Council). It is responsible for the Council's housing stock including the maintenance, management and letting of its properties and estates.
- 1.2 This policy sets out MDH's approach to managing our estates with the help of our tenants and residents to keep our neighbourhoods clean, safe and secure and where people want to live.
- 1.3 MDH will work in partnership with our tenants and other stakeholders and public bodies where it is effective to do so.
- 1.4 This is an update to the Neighbourhood Management Policy V3 which was adopted in 2018.

## 2 Legal Framework and Context

- 2.1 Under the Neighbourhood and Community Standard, The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) requires all registered providers to publish a policy setting out, how in consultation with their tenants, they will maintain and improve the neighbourhoods associated with their homes.
- 2.2 The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 has received Royal Assent. This will impact the regulatory framework for social housing and introduces a new proactive, consumer regulation regime focussed on meeting the needs of tenants. One aim of the legislation and regime is to ensure that providers of social housing, such as the Council, keep its properties and estates safe and clean.
- 2.3 These new standards are there to ensure people feel safe and secure in their homes, can get problems fixed before they spiral out of control, and see exactly how well their landlord is performing, giving tenants a stronger voice. Of the seven chapters within the Act, several are particularly relevant to the aims of this policy:
  - To be safe in your home (Chapter 1)
  - To know how your landlord is performing (Chapter 2)
  - To have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly (Chapter 3)
  - To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in (Chapter 6)

2.4 As part of the new consumer regulation regime, from April 2023, the RSH introduced a series of 22 mandatory Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) creating a new system for assessing how well social housing landlords in England are doing at providing good quality homes and services. These measures include those applicable directly to building safety as well as those based on tenant perception surveys; setting out tenants views on our performance which will include responsible neighbourhood management.

2.5 The TSM measures under responsible neighbourhood management include:

- TP10: Satisfaction that the landlord keeps communal areas clean and well maintained
- TP11: Satisfaction that the landlord makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods
- TP12: Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling anti-social behaviour
- NM01: Anti-social behaviour cases relative to the size of the landlord

### 3 Policy Aims and Objectives

#### Aims

3.1 Within the legal framework and context set out in Section 2, this policy aims to ensure that tenants have quiet enjoyment of their homes, which are in a safe, clean and secure environment, and that they can take pride in.

#### Objectives

3.2 Overall, in order to meet the aims of this policy, the policy objectives are:

- We conduct regular neighbourhood inspections of communal areas and ensure that they are well maintained, tidy and free from graffiti
- We will work in partnership with the Police and other services to help keep our estates free from anti-social behaviour (ASB), harassment and hate crime
- We will conduct fire risk assessments in blocks of flats to identify and address fire risks
- We will ensure communal areas are well maintained
- Grounds maintenance work is carried out to the required standard
- Residents are aware of their responsibilities, both in relation to their property and neighbourhood
- We will consult with our tenants to identify improvements and work together to address local priorities

- We will identify areas that need improvements and undertake measures to resolve them
- We will promote tenant involvement opportunities, activities and events to help develop and support vibrant communities

## 4 Permissions

- 4.1 Tenants must seek permission if they wish to install hanging structures such as hanging baskets or bird feeders in communal areas, especially those in blocks of flats. These must be positioned in such a way as to avoid damage to the structure of the building and so not to cause a nuisance or annoyance to others. An example would be hanging baskets when watered causing a slip hazard or the possibility of people walking beneath them getting wet.

## 5 Keys

- 5.1 Additional keys for main entry doors in blocks of flats will not be provided to tenants; although replacement keys may be available in appropriate circumstances. If replacement keys are required, any costs relating to this will be recharged to the tenant. At your request we can provide a key safe on the exterior of the building for those whose carers require access, a key can be stored here to allow them to access the block. This is to ensure that security is maintained. For the same reason, communal key codes in blocks where there is a door entry system will only be given to employees and contractors to enable them to carry out their duties.

## 6 Neighbourhood Walkabouts

- 6.1 Tenants, councillors (both District and Parish) and other agencies such as the Police are welcome to join neighbourhood officers when an estate in their area is inspected to raise any concerns and share ideas for improvement. A schedule of neighbourhood walkabouts is available on our website.

- 6.2 Neighbourhood walkabouts enable neighbourhood officers to identify issues surrounding the following (this is not an exhaustive list):

- Breaches of tenancy
- Grounds maintenance issues, including hedges, trees and boundaries, and grassed/planted areas
- Repairs
- A build-up of domestic waste that has not been appropriately disposed of
- Items in your garden which are not in line with your tenancy agreement
- Items in your garden that impact the look of an estate
- Any health and safety issues; for example, any deterioration to pathways that could be trip hazards, gas canisters, tyres, vehicle parts, anything that should not be in a garden whereby the garden looks untidy or unkempt
- Communal areas – internal and external

- Car parks and garages
- Security issues, including fencing/ boundaries, security doors
- Tenancy issues, including property condition, property improvements, untidy gardens, pets
- ASB, including graffiti/vandalism, drugs, abandoned cars, fly-tipping

## 7 Communal Inspections

- 7.1 MDH are committed to undertaking regular communal inspections and will proactively address any concerns raised during these inspections.
- 7.2 The frequency of these inspections will be locally determined and will be undertaken more frequently in neighbourhoods where there have been more reported issues, for example ASB.
- 7.3 Communal inspections have one aim, to ensure the safety of all residents living within a block who share a communal space. Inspections and walkabouts will be done in partnership with tenants, internal colleagues, such as our maintenance team, Councillors and other external agencies such as the Police.

## 8 Vandalism and Graffiti

- 8.1 Acts of vandalism to MDH property or land will be repaired as quickly as possible. Offensive/racist graffiti will be removed within 24 hours, all other graffiti will be removed within a reasonable timescale.
- 8.2 Any vandalism on MDH property will be reported and dealt with within our repair priorities. Any vandalism which is a Health and Safety risk will be dealt as an emergency as per our repair priorities.
- 8.3 MDH will investigate all acts of vandalism and graffiti and appropriate action will be taken against all known perpetrators of vandalism.

## 9 Litter and Fly Tipping

- 9.1 MDH will take reports of fly tipping seriously and ensure that it is dealt with quickly and efficiently.
- 9.2 MDH will investigate all instances of fly tipping on MDH property. MDH will request that the responsible person remove the items within a reasonable timescale. If these items are not removed, MDH will arrange for the removal of these items and a recharge will be raised to the responsible person to cover the cost of this service.

- 9.3 Reports of fly-tipping that is not on MDH property will be reported to and dealt by the Street Scene Service.
- 9.4 MDH will investigate fly tipping incidents and appropriate action will be taken against all known perpetrators.

## 10 Anti-Social Behaviour and Neighbour Disputes

- 10.1 ASB can have a significant impact and MDH is committed to delivering a non-judgemental, balanced service. For more information on how MDH tackles ASB, please view the ASB Policy and Procedures.
- 10.2 Where the behaviour does not constitute ASB, you will be told why your complaint does not classify as an ASB complaint and advice will be given to enable self-resolution.
- 10.3 We expect a reasonable level of tolerance between neighbours and will make fair evaluations on whether a complaint of ASB is reasonable. An important part of creating sustainable communities is the recognition and acceptance by MDH tenants that the initial responsibility to resolve concerns with others lies with them. Therefore, we may be able to provide advice, but we will not investigate the following concerns:
- A tenant going about their daily activities in their home – for example, playing with children, loud footfall, moving of furniture, babies/children crying, television noise, occasional loud music, toilets being flushed (this is not an exhaustive list)
  - Noise occurring at different times due to different working patterns or one off parties
  - Concerns which do not breach the tenancy agreement, for example, people staring, smoking or cooking odours, or clashes due to lifestyle or cultural differences
  - Concerns which involve residents not being pleasant to each other, but are not serious enough to justify our involvement
  - Boundary disputes
  - Inconsiderate parking
- 10.4 It is important to be tolerant of other people's lifestyles and to be understanding of these possible differences. Behaviour that results from different lifestyles, or which would not be considered unreasonable by most people is not ASB. Examples of this might include (this is not an exhaustive list):

- Lifestyle clashes
- Children playing or youths innocently congregating
- Ball games
- Parking disputes
- One off party
- Reasonable living noise such as lawn mowing, household DIY, hoovering, toilets flushing, doors banging, noise from household appliances or moving around in top floor apartments

10.5 Ways in which residents may be able to prevent low level complaints being made against them may include:

- Informing your neighbours if you are going to be having a one off event
- Not to remove carpets from upper floor flats so that noise transfers to lower down properties
- Consider the use of appliance mats if you are running washing machines etc. overnight
- Telling your neighbours if your shift patterns have changed so they can be understanding of your needs
- Be considerate of your neighbours
- Do not carry out repairs or other works late at night or at other unsociable hours
- Do not play music, TV or instruments too loudly
- Keep dogs and other pets under control
- Be aware of where your children are playing, who is supervising them and what they are doing

10.6 If residents are not able to resolve their differences themselves they should contact MDH where a neighbourhood officer may be able to offer mediation or other solutions in order to resolve the dispute. In this instance you will be kept informed of the progress of your dispute and what actions have been agreed to mitigate a repeat of the incident.

## 11 VEHICLES AND PARKING

11.1 You must not park any vehicle which is untaxed, un-roadworthy or not insured at your property or on any other Council-owned land.

- 11.2 Any vehicle parked on a drive or on a garden where there is no dropped kerb, and without evidence of a request to Devon County Council to drop the kerb, will be expected to be removed immediately until a dropped kerb is in place. We will also need to ensure that you have appropriate permission from the Council for the installation of a drive. You are prohibited from parking a car on a garden that has not had a hard standing installed without consent from MDH.
- 11.3 MDH will work with our tenants and residents to reduce irresponsible parking and parking-disputes.

## 12 TREE MANAGEMENT

- 12.1 MDH have a rolling maintenance plan to reduce avoidable risks relating to trees on land owned by the Council. Works to trees outside the works programme will only be undertaken when there has been an identified risk or hazard, such as it is:
- a) Unsafe
  - b) Obstructing public footpaths or roads
  - c) Proven to be damaging property
- 12.2 Where any trees or shrubs, which are in tenants' gardens are causing a nuisance/annoyance or are dangerous, we may give tenants written notice asking that they remove or cut back the trees within certain timescales. If this is not done MDH may enter the property to carry out the works and the tenant may be liable for reasonable costs in carrying out any such works.



12.3 If tenants want to plant a tree on their property they must obtain written consent from MDH before undertaking the planting (in fact it may be wise to get written consent before purchasing the tree).

## 13 CCTV AND CAMERA DOORBELLS

13.1 MDH will consider proposals to install CCTV or camera doorbells where appropriate to do so. Please refer to MDH's CCTV Policy for more information on this.

## 14 INFESTATIONS OF PESTS AND VERMIN

14.1 Pests or vermin that pose an immediate danger to a person or property will be investigated and dealt with appropriately via the responsive repairs team.

## 15 CLEANING

15.1 MDH will ensure that communal areas are clean and safe. There is an expectation that tenants, leaseholders and other residents play their part in keeping their neighbourhoods clean and tidy.

## 16 GARDENS

16.1 The responsibility of garden maintenance lies with the tenant. Where a tenant fails to maintain their garden, MDH will take appropriate action (which may result in a recharge to the tenant).

16.2 MDH will work with our tenants to encourage them to keep their gardens tidy and well-maintained.

16.3 You are responsible for notifying us if there is a good reason you are unable to look after your garden or arranging for someone to look after it on your behalf.

16.4 You must obtain written consent from us before you or members of your Household do any of the following:

- Place, build or erect any greenhouse, garage, shed, patio, decking, aviary, fencing, conservatory, pigeon-loft, fishpond, pool or similar structure in your garden or a communal area or anywhere in/or on Council property;
- Place, build or erect any gate or barrier across a communal path;
- Replace or erect fencing. Any fencing, with written consent, should be no higher than one metre at the front or two metres at the back of your property;
- Make changes to boundary walls, outbuildings or hard surfaces.

## 17 GARDEN FENCES

17.1 Garden fences are mostly the responsibility of the tenant to maintain. Where there is a dispute between two neighbours regarding the responsibility for a fence or hedge, MDH will provide a boundary plan to confirm responsibility.

17.2 Where a garden fence is the responsibility of MDH it will be maintained by us.

## 18 FIRES AND BBQ'S

18.1 Bonfires and/ or mini fires on communal land, owned and managed by MDH will not be permitted. Disposable BBQ's are not permitted to be used in communal areas.

## 19 GRASSED AREAS AND COMMUNAL LAND

19.1 Grassed areas located on communal land on an estate are provided as an amenity for the benefit of all tenants. Therefore, tenants should seek permission regarding the use of external communal areas if there is a proposal to establish a gardening club, or to create a wildlife garden, or to run a community social event, for example.

19.2 It should be noted that public liability insurance may be required in relation to a community social event if it is organised by private individuals and not MDH. MDH cannot be held liable for any damage or injuries which may occur at such an event which has been organised by private individuals. Anyone planning such an event is advised to seek advice from their neighbourhood officer before requesting permission.

19.3 MDH may consider allowing a charity to hold an event on communal land but a written agreement will be required indemnifying the Council in the event of any claims for damage or injury. Decisions made regarding such events will take account of all relevant factors and MDH will require sight of all relevant insurance and other documents in these circumstances before permission is granted.

19.4 Individual tenants will not be permitted to erect their own sheds in communal areas. Should storage be an issue, tenants should seek advice from the neighbourhood team.

19.5 MDH is required to consult all residents affected regarding a major change in the use of the communal area. We will make the final decision if there is any dispute regarding the use of communal space where agreement cannot be reached locally. Any such decisions will take into account legal obligations, policy, local feedback and any other considerations which may be relevant.

## 20 COMPLAINTS AND FEEDBACK

20.1 We try to get things right the first time and when we do, we would love you to let us know. It's great for us to receive positive comments or feedback, so if you wish to complement our staff for doing a great job, we would love to hear from you.

20.2 If things do go wrong the Council is committed to:

- Dealing with complaints and comments quickly and effectively; and
- Using complaints, comments and compliments to review and improve our services.

20.3 When you contact us to tell us you are dissatisfied with the service we have provided, we will offer you the choice to have an informal conversation to see if we can put things right quickly, without the need for a formal investigation.

20.4 The Housing Ombudsman Service advises that a complaint is defined as:

*'an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents'.*

20.5 Where a tenant considers that the Council has given a poor service or has got something wrong, they may tell a member of staff in the first instance. This does not need to be treated as a formal complaint (unless the complainant asks us to do so) and may be resolved 'there and then' by way of an apology or plan of action. Any comments provided will be used to take appropriate action, or give information.

20.6 If a tenant does not want to do this or is unhappy with the response, they may make a formal complaint (stage 1), which can be escalated to stage 2 if they are still not satisfied with the response. If having been through stages 1 and 2 they are still not satisfied, the tenant may contact the Housing Ombudsman Service.

20.7 MDH's complaints procedure is detailed on the Council website: [Feedback and Complaints](#)

## 21 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

21.1 MDH completes an equality impact assessment each time we develop or review a policy, procedure or service. The assessment is to help us ensure our decision making is fair and does not present any barriers or disadvantage to customers from any protected group (including disability) under the Equality Act 2010.

## 22 REVIEW AND VERSION CONTROL

22.1 MDH will review this policy every 4 years and as required to address legislative or regulatory changes, best practice or operational issues.

22.2 This policy was produced in 2023 and is version 4

22.3 This policy was adopted by Cabinet on xxxx