



Neighbourhood Management Policy

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Policy developed by	Interim Head of Housing Services
Associated procedure	Neighbourhood Management Procedure

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Introduction

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This policy is concerned with the effective management of the neighbourhood environment around Connexus homes and shared communal areas to ensure that neighbourhoods are clean, safe, attractive and well maintained places to live.
- 1.2 It explains our approach to managing neighbourhoods; how we will involve local residents in neighbourhood planning and improvements; and engage in partnership working with other agencies concerned with the safety, security and appearance of the local estate environment.
- 1.3 This includes the planning, monitoring, management and delivery of services relating to but not limited to:
 - Gardens, open spaces and grassed areas
 - Communal pathways, roadways and parking areas.
 - Communal bin stores and drying areas
 - Playgrounds, play-parks and other communal facilities
 - Communal entrance doorways and windows
 - Communal stairs, hallways, passages and lifts
 - Communal services to flats; such as lighting, fire alarm systems, TV aerials, CCTV
 - Equipment.
 - Water courses, streams and culverts
- 1.4 Scope: The policy applies to the whole of the Group. This means Connexus Homes Limited, (ultimate parent) and all of its subsidiaries.

2. Problem to solve

- 2.1 Connexus recognises that there is a clear relationship between the quality of the local environment and residents overall quality of life.
- 2.2 Our vision for the neighbourhoods where we provide homes is that they are safe and well looked after areas with vibrant, diverse communities where our customers want to live.
- 2.3 This policy aims to:
 - Set out a pro-active and positive approach to neighbourhood management to ensure our estates remain great places to live.
 - Ensure the grounds and communal facilities we own are well managed and maintained.
 - Ensure customers are aware of their responsibilities.
 - Deliver effective partnership working occurs to respond to issues and engage in preventative work and local campaigns.

- We consult with local customers on estate improvements and initiatives in their local area.
- 2.4 To improve and maintain high standards on our estates we emphasise partnership working with local residents and other partners working in the neighbourhood.
 - 2.5 While Connexus aims to deliver high quality estate services, engaging with the community; having both the support and co-operation of local residents is critical to our success.
 - 2.6 Many environmental problems such the dumping of rubbish, fly tipping, dog fouling, graffiti and broken door entry systems are costly to tackle and yet are often caused by a minority of local residents and/ or their visitors. We rely on residents to report incidents.
 - 2.7 To maintain neighbourhood standards we need the involvement and support of local residents to act responsibly.
 - 2.8 Customers pay for services through their rent or service charge, so where we believe that residents' actions were the cause of problems we will try to identify the perpetrators and take appropriate legal action against them. This may include charging them for the costs we have incurred to clear up problems or instigate possession action to end their tenancy.
 - 2.9 We will also work with other agencies and partners as necessary to gather evidence to pursue perpetrators.
 - 2.10 We value residents' involvement in helping devise targeted action including neighbourhood improvement plans to tackle " hot-spot areas" intended to lead to a more sustained improvement in services and quality of the local environment.
 - 2.11 We believe that we can maintain high standards by proactive neighbourhood management, firm tenancy enforcement action and planned preventative measures.
 - 2.12 Where environmental ASB is blighting our neighbourhoods we will work with local customers, other agencies and interested parties to identify and plan a robust response to the issues together with preventative measures to tackle the root causes.
 - 2.13 We expect residents to keep their gardens tidy, report communal repairs quickly and not to do anything that would adversely affect the shared environment that everyone should benefit from and enjoy.
 - 2.14 In return we will:
 - Conduct regular neighbourhood inspections of communal areas and ensure that they are well maintained, tidy and free from graffiti.
 - Regularly cut grassed areas and shrubbery to a published standard.
 - Work closely with local Police and other services to help keep our estates free from anti-social behaviour, harassment and hate crime.
 - Inspect blocks of flats regularly to ensure that they are clean and well maintained and kept clear of rubbish.

- Conduct fire risk assessments in blocks of flats to identify and address fire risks.
- Regularly check and maintain shared facilities such as lifts, water tanks, play areas to make sure they are safe and fit for purpose
- Let empty homes quickly to help maintain the appearance of the area.
- Identify improvements and investment needs with local residents, and work together to develop neighbourhood plans to address those local priorities
- Work closely with local residents groups and customer forums to promote local customer involvement, activities and events to help develop and support vibrant communities.

3. Method/s

Estate Inspections

- 3.1 Regular inspections of estates are one of main ways that we can ensure that local neighbourhoods are being looked after and to quickly identify problems that need to be addressed.
- 3.2 The frequency of the inspections will be proportionate and determined for each locality based on a regular assessment of a range of factors, such as the:
- Type of properties including number of high rise blocks
 - Level of anti-social behaviour in the neighbourhood
 - Frequency and cost of services delivered
 - Numbers of complaints, reports of vandalism, and communal repairs needed
 - Condition of any communal facilities and reports of damage.
 - Poorly kept gardens
 - Exceptional events such as storm damage or heavy snow.
- 3.3 All estates with communal areas or facilities will be inspected no less than twice a year.
- 3.4 Where necessary this can be more frequent weeks where serious persistent issues are identified that are compromising the safety of residents, and/or the appearance of the estate.
- 3.5 Neighbourhoods where Connexus own no communal land or facilities will not have regular inspections but may still be inspected for management purposes.
- 3.6 Where a neighbourhood is assessed as unsatisfactory we will take a planned approach with specific actions for improvement are proposed and communicated to residents.

Estate Services

- 3.7 Connexus will provide a range of services either directly or through contractors. Services. These will differ for each neighbourhood depending on local factors.

Refuse and Recycling

- 3.8 We will work closely with local authorities to ensure that estates have the appropriate facilities for disposing of rubbish and recycling.
- 3.9 We will take action, wherever possible, against those found to be dumping rubbish or fly tipping on our estates, including recharging them for the costs and providing evidence to support prosecution.

Vehicles and Parking

- 3.10 We will work with residents and external agencies to reduce irresponsible parking, parking-related disputes, and abandoned vehicles and resolve access problems for emergency and service vehicles.
- 3.11 Connexus will not get involved in adjudicating or managing parking disputes between neighbours unless it is directly linked to the conduct of the tenancy, and can be shown to be breaching a condition of the tenancy.
- 3.12 We may appoint a reputable company to operate a parking scheme, or parking maintenance, in our neighbourhoods to ensure the effective management/control of parking spaces, facilities, gates or barriers.
- 3.13 Where residents want to keep a caravan on our estates they should seek our permission first as these can pose a problem where parking is limited or the caravan is a health and safety concern, or in our opinion has a detrimental impact on the appearance of the local area.
- 3.14 We will work with the Drivers and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) to identify owners of suspected abandoned vehicles and arrange for the vehicle to be removed, stored and disposed of if the owner does not respond after giving the required notice.
- 3.15 Where the owner of an abandoned vehicle is identified we may re-charge the costs for the removal, storage and disposal of the vehicle.

Playground Equipment

- 3.16 Where Connexus owns play equipment, we will ensure that it is safe to use, properly inspected and fit for purpose.
- 3.17 We will undertake regular inspections of play parks, play equipment as part of our estate inspections programme and assess whether the playground equipment is safe and structurally sound.

Estate Improvements

- 3.18 Estate improvements are planned works to the communal areas of estates intended to enhance the local environment. Connexus will make budgetary provision each year to fund a small programme of estate improvements.
- 3.19 Before making a decision about spending budgets on significant estate improvements we will work with local residents to consider their priorities, and keep will them informed on the timescale for progressing works.

- 3.20 We may occasionally consider funding in-curtilage parking on estates where there are issues, and may in partnership with the Council to provide drop kerbs for residents to then fit their own parking.
- 3.21 Where any proposed improvements would result in an additional service charge we will consult with all leaseholders and residents before any works are carried out which will cost any individual resident or leaseholder more than £250.

Managing Agents

- 3.22 'Where Connexus manages housing for other landlords or where more than one social landlord owns or manages properties on the estate we will formalise an agreement which sets out the responsibilities of each landlord.
- 3.23 Inspections will be agreed and carried out by representatives of the relevant landlords.
- 3.24 We will discuss any estate improvements with the other partner landlords to reach agreement and consult with residents before works are undertaken.

Other Agencies Responsibilities

- 3.25 Where issues are identified or reported on estates that are not the responsibility of Connexus they will be noted and residents will be advised to report the issue directly to the relevant organisation. For example to the Police, Environmental Health or the local authority highways agency.

4. Measurement

- 4.1 The outcomes from this policy, its related delivery costs and the impact on customers` service charges will be regularly reviewed to assess their value for money i.e. costs, quality and customer satisfaction.
- 4.2 We will monitor and assess the quality of the local neighbourhood environment through our estate inspections programme and customer feedback surveys. This will provide Connexus with assurance based on direct observation and customer insight and enable improvements to the services we provide.

Legislation

- 4.3 The key legislation relevant to the neighbourhood environment is:
- Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005
 - Environmental Protection Act 1990
 - Refuse Disposal (Amenity) Act 1978
 - The Removal, Storage and Disposal of Vehicles (Prescribed Sums and Charges) Regulations 2008
 - Law of Torts (Interference with Goods) Act 1977
 - Public Health Act 1936.
 - The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
 - Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003

- Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014

Key Policies and Documents

- 4.4
 - Neighbourhood Community Standard
 - Asset Management Strategy
 - Fire Safety Policy
 - Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) Policy
 - Grounds Maintenance and Watercourse Policy
 - Rechargeable Repairs Policy
 - Service Charge Payer Consultation Policy
 - Section 20 Procedures (leaseholders)
 - Customer Service Involvement Plan
 - ASB Policy
 - Hate Crime and Hate Incidents Policy