
Policy reference	PO-E-024-H
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ESTATE MANAGEMENT POLICY

Approved	21 April 2021
Published	22 April 2021
Effective	21 April 2021
Review	Triennial

Summary

This Policy encompasses estate management activity and is specific to land and property that is owned by Longhurst Group. Estate management refers to the effective management of the environment around our homes and any common areas to ensure that the neighbourhood is an attractive, well-maintained and safe and secure place to live.

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PART TWO

Policy

Intent

The overall aim of this Policy is to provide an effective and efficient estate management service that enables customers to have quiet enjoyment of their homes in a safe and secure environment that supports both sustainability and growth.

Principles

The Group will provide an effective estate management service that meets the requirements of the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) Consumer Neighbourhood and Community Standard and the criteria below;

- Ensure there is consistency across the Group, whilst recognising local variations;
- Reflect the communities we work in and ensure that these communities are sustainable, safe and secure;
- To develop a pro-active approach to the management of our properties, estates and neighbourhoods;
- To manage the environment around our properties and common areas effectively;
- Ensure that we are clear and transparent in respect of customers understanding their rights and responsibilities and vice-versa;
- Take a proactive approach to ensure that no individual or group is discriminated against or treated differently as a direct or indirect result of our approach to Estate Management.

Scope

This policy applies to all parts of the Longhurst Group ('the Group').

This policy applies to all customers who hold a tenancy with the Group.

Policy Details

Scheme / Estate Inspections

Longhurst Group will inspect its schemes and localities on a regular basis which is informed by business intelligence and customer insight to ensure we allocate resources within our localities appropriately.

We will work with partners and key stakeholders, such as the Police and Local Authorities as well as customers to inspect target areas and engage with the local community to obtain feedback on the neighbourhood as a whole and any issues they may wish to discuss.

Our Housing Officers and Neighbourhood Impact Assistants provide a regular presence within our localities and identify any environmental and property based issues that require attention; liaising with the appropriate team within the Group to resolve as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Communal Areas

Longhurst Group Tenancy Agreements distinguish what the customer is responsible for and what is the responsibility of the business.

Longhurst Group will ensure that repairs to door entry systems, lighting, fencing, removal of graffiti, etc are completed within the relevant timeframes along with compliance testing where applicable in accordance with our repairs contractor service level agreements.

Longhurst Group operate a zero-tolerance approach to customers storing items in communal areas.

Grounds Maintenance

Customers are responsible for maintaining their gardens in line with the conditions set out in the tenancy agreement. If gardens are not maintained to a reasonable standard, we will work with the customer to understand the reason for this and advise what needs to be done and by when to resolve the situation. Should there be no improvement, following warnings given to the customer, we may commence appropriate legal action against the tenant which could include seeking possession of their home due to the breach of the tenancy agreement. Alternatively depending on the circumstances, we may make arrangements for the Grounds Maintenance contractor to complete the necessary work and the customer will be recharged.

Using customer insight, we will ensure that our systems are updated and colleagues aware of any customers that may require assistance in maintaining their garden. Longhurst Group will work with the Grounds Maintenance contractor to place these homes on a schedule to be maintained in line with equality requirements.

In line with our Grounds Maintenance contractor and service level agreements we will ensure that communal gardens/grassed areas are maintained in line with the contract agreed, inspected for adherence to contract and customers asked for their feedback.

Private homeowners are fully responsible for their own gardens. If an owner neglects to maintain their garden to the point that it is causing a nuisance, the Council's Environmental Health Section will be notified and may take statutory steps to abate the nuisance if necessary.

Fly tipping / Waste Management

Customers must dispose of any rubbish or other refuse in the proper way so that it doesn't create a nuisance. This means not overfilling any bin or put non-recyclable items in recycling bins. Failure to dispose of rubbish correctly means that we may seek to recharge the customer for putting this right.

Customers must make sure that drains and waste pipes are not blocked with unsuitable materials, for example, nappies, sanitary protection and wipes.

Fly tipping is illegal and not permitted under any circumstance; any customer that is reported and convicted of fly tipping on our estates will result in us commencing with appropriate legal action against them, which could include seeking possession of their home.

Fire Safety

Fire safety is of paramount important for Longhurst Group. Regular Fire Safety Inspections are undertaken across our schemes and communal areas with any issues logged through our case management system and addressed by the appropriate team within the business. Failure by any customer to comply with recommended tenancy enforcement action within a specified timescale may result in us commencing with legal action which could include seeking possession of their home.

We recognise that hoarding forms part of a fire risk as well as a general health and safety risk; our separate hoarding policy covers this in more detail. All tenants are advised that the following is not acceptable as part of the tenancy agreement in respect of fire safety;

Storing so many items in the home that they:

- Affect our ability to access and service appliances;
- Prevent easy access to doors or windows;

- Cause a hazard (for example, the storage of excessive amounts of material that may constitute a fire hazard);
- Use the loft space for storing items.

For safety reasons the following must not be stored in the home:

- paraffin or mobile gas heaters;
- any dangerous or flammable materials, or equipment that uses these. This includes bottled gas;
- socket extension plugs that are used to overload sockets. This also includes socket extension cables.

Needles / Sharps

Longhurst Group colleagues will not collect or dispose of needles and sharps.

Should we identify any needles or sharps in our localities when undertaking a scheduled inspection or out during general visits we will contact the Local Authority Environment Health service either via the telephone or website to arrange for collection. Should any sharps / needles be discovered in our communal areas, private car parks, etc then we will notify our contractors who will arrange safe disposal.

Should we receive notification from a customer via face to face, electronic or other digital media asking us to remove needles or sharps, we will report these through to Environmental Health and advise the customer of our actions.

Vehicles and Parking

Customers must not park a vehicle anywhere on else on the property or anywhere else within the locality, except on a properly constructed 'hardstanding' (a driveway or paved area intended for parking), appropriate roadway/highway or other designated parking area. Permission must be sought prior to crossing any land, including pathways, grass verges and common land.

Caravans, motor homes, boats, trailers or large or high sided commercial vehicles must not be parked on the garden, driveway, paved area around our home or on any communal parking areas without our prior agreement in writing.

Our customers and anyone they may be responsible for must not park anywhere that could create an obstruction or nuisance, for example, parking in other designated parking spaces or bays.

Customers, or anyone they are responsible for, must not carry out any vehicle repairs at the property or on any other land owned by Longhurst Group other than ordinary routine maintenance of vehicles that belong to members of that household. Engine oil or any similar substance is prohibited to be poured down any drains or over any road or other surface.

Customers, or anyone they may be responsible for, must not park an illegal, untaxed or un-roadworthy vehicle on any land owned by Longhurst Group. We will remove any such vehicle after having given notice of our intention to do so in line with the Removal & Disposal of Vehicles Regulations 1986 made under the Refuse Disposal (Amenity) Act 1978 to remove vehicles abandoned in the open air. In instances where the owner is not found, the matter will be referred to the Local Council's Environmental Health Section in order to arrange removal in accordance with the Refuse Disposal (Amenity) Act 1978.

Managing Snow and Ice

It is not reasonable or practicable in all cases to provide snow and ice clearance for all land under the Group's ownership. The premise risk assessment will be used to determine control measures for our property types and will take into account the tenure type, the vulnerability of our client group, the layout of the premises and any previous accidents/incidents.

The premise risk assessment will enable our properties to be grouped into risk categories; high, medium or low.

High - This category may include care homes and offices.

Medium - This category may include housing for older persons, sheltered schemes & leasehold schemes.

Low - This category may include general needs premises and HMOs (House of Multiple Occupation).

For the properties which fall into the 'high' category, there will often be some need for snow/ice clearance within certain areas around the property. Where this is the case, separate procedures will be defined and should specify the conditions under which snow/ice clearance will be undertaken and the extent to which these procedures will cover. These procedures will be communicated by Property Services to the Group's contractor who will be responsible for undertaking the snow/ice clearance.

For properties which fall into the 'medium' category, there may be some need for snow/ice clearance within certain areas in which case the same approach as 'high' category properties will be adopted.

For properties which fall into the 'low' category, there may be no requirement to clear snow/ice.

Snow/ice conditions can be widespread, but very often can also be localised. The local Met Office or the BBC Local weather reports online may be used for forecasting ice and snow. If the forecast predicts snow or the temperature to fall to +1 degree Celsius or below, proactive operations to reduce the effects of ice/snow may be implemented.

Garages

Longhurst Group owns a number of garages and garage sites across its localities. Customers who wish to rent a garage must complete an application form and will then be placed on a waiting list should no garages be available to rent.

Garages are to be used to store vehicles. Longhurst Group will not be held responsible should personal items that have been stored in garages be damaged or stolen.

It is the responsibility of the customer to report any repairs that need attention to Longhurst Group in line with the tenancy agreement for the garage. Customers should not sub-let the garage under any circumstances; possession proceedings will commence should this be the case.

Any requests from customers to erect their own garage or construct a driveway must in the first instance, apply in writing to Longhurst Group. We will not unreasonably refuse permission. All tenants will be responsible for obtaining any necessary permission, such as planning permission or a building warrant from the Local Council which might be required for any development, including requests for dropped kerbs.

Running a Business

Customers are not permitted to run a business or trade from the home without first obtaining written permission from us. We will not refuse permission without good reason. For example, we may refuse consent if we consider that the business is likely to cause a nuisance to other people or damage to the home or any adjacent property. If we do give permission to run a business from the home and it causes a nuisance, we withhold the right to withdraw that permission. It is the responsibility of the tenant to ensure that they have all the necessary permits and consents in place, such as planning permission.

Graffiti

Longhurst Group aims to remove graffiti within 7 days from the date reported and offensive graffiti within 24 hours of being reported.

Use of CCTV

As a responsible landlord, employer and business, the Group wishes to protect the personal safety of its colleagues and customers, as well as that of members of the public. It also wishes to make communities and office spaces safe places to live and work.

To achieve these aims the Group recognises that CCTV can play an important role in preventing violence, crime and anti-social behaviour, as well as contributing to individual sense of safety and well-being. Where incidents do occur, CCTV is an important mechanism for assisting the Group to take prompt and clear action to deal with any instances of crime, violence other anti-social behaviour, and where necessary to support the Police to identify and apprehend offenders.

Where the Group has responsibility for managing vulnerable customers, and /or has reasonable ground to believe an individual is at risk of harm, CCTV may also be used to seek to protect the safety/ vital interests of individuals.

Refer to the CCTV Policy for comprehensive policy details.

Roles and Responsibilities

Legal responsibility for the Estate Management Policy is held jointly by:

- Longhurst Group Chief Executive; and
- Executive Director of Housing Services

Operational responsibility for the Estate Management Policy is held by the Director of Housing Services.

Procedural responsibility for the Estate Management Policy is held by the Head of Housing Services, Housing Manager and Housing Services Team Leaders.

Day-to-day responsibility for the Estate Management Policy is held by Team Leaders, Lettings Advisors, Neighbourhood Impact Assistants, ASB Advisors and Housing Officers.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

Each region will carry out audits to monitor compliance. Regular checks will also be completed by our auditors.

This policy will be reviewed every three years. In addition, it will be reviewed:

- following information suggesting that the policy is not effective;
- to reflect any service enhancements; and/or
- following the introduction of relevant new legislation, regulations or guidance.

Summary of Local Variations

There are no local variations in respect of the Estate Management Policy; this is to be applied consistently across all of our localities.

PART THREE

Appendices

- A. Policy Approval Control
- B. Policy Development Plan