

Housing Services Policies & Procedures



Good Neighbourhood Management Policy

1.	Policy objectives
1.1	Watford Community Housing ('WCH') is committed to supporting our customers so they feel safe and happy in their homes, by ensuring that the communities where they live are safe and welcoming. At WCH, our aim is to foster good relations between our customers and to raise awareness, understanding and compromise between our customers.
1.2	The aim of this policy is to educate our customers on what incidences are deliberate Anti-Social Behaviours or not, to provide them with the tools to manage these incidences and to empower them to resolve these incidences. Our aim is to encourage our customers to build good relationships with their neighbours and within the wider community and to reduce tensions that may occur.
1.3	This Policy details the approach that WCH will take should our customers experience upset or frustration resulting from a person's behaviour or actions that are not deemed to be Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) or a tenancy breach. This policy is designed to run along-side our Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.
1.4	<p>The deciding factor of whether a person's behaviour falls under the Good Neighbourhood Management Policy or the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy is whether the behaviour is deliberate or intended to cause annoyance, alarm or distress.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where there is no deliberate intention, the incident will be handled firstly through the Good Neighbourhood Management Policy. • Where there is no deliberate intention, but the behaviour lasts longer than 30 minutes at a time for more than 5 days in a row, this will be handled through the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy. • Where there is deliberate intention, the incident will be handled through the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
1.5	WCH recognises that reported behaviour can change in terms of severity and that something initially assessed as falling under the Good Neighbourhood Management Policy can evolve into Anti-Social Behaviour. We will continually reassess our cases each time a report is received, making sure that all cases are correctly handled under the correct policy.

2.	Contractual, Legislative, or regulatory requirement
2.1	<p><u>Contractual:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenancy agreement • Lease • Licence to Occupy <p><u>Legislative:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anti -Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 • Children’s Act 2004 • Crime and Disorder Act 1998 • Care Act 2014 • Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 • Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 • Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 • Environmental Protection Act 1990 • Equality Act 2010 • General Data Protection Regulation 2018 & Data Protection Act 2018 • Housing Act 1988 • Human Rights Act 1998 • Noise Act 1996 • Protection From Harassment Act 1997 • Protection of Children Act 1978
2.2	<u>Regulatory:</u>
2.2.1	RSH Governance and Financial Viability Standard 2015 (2.1): “Registered providers shall adopt and comply with an appropriate code of governance.”
2.2.2	National Housing Federation Code of Governance (2020)
2.2.3	On the 24 th October 2022 the Housing Ombudsman published a report “Time to be Heard” that particularly focused on how noise complaints are managed by landlords. The outcome of the report called for a fresh way of thinking where landlords manage non-statutory noise complaints differently to avoid neighbourhood disputes and to manage expectations. A key aspect of the report recommended that landlord develop a Good Neighbourhood Management Policy, which lead WCH to develop this policy.
3.	Scope and definitions
3.1	<u>Scope</u>
3.1.1	This Policy applies to the WCH Group, including its subsidiary and joint venture companies, shared owners, market rent tenants and leaseholders. It affects our customers and members of their household.
3.1.2	For incidences that fall under this policy, we will not label someone as an “alleged perpetrator” or “victim”, nor will we be likely to consider using any of our legal tools which are available to use in ASB cases, such as Community Protection Warnings and Notices, Injunctions or Possession Orders. For cases that fall within this policy, we will use the terms: Customer(s) 1 and Customer(s) 2.
3.2	<u>Definitions</u>
3.2.1	The following (non-exhaustive) list of behaviours and actions fall under the Good Neighbourhood Management Policy:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking • Smoking • Boundaries • Dogs Barking • Cats in gardens • Fences • Untidy Gardens • Cooking smells • Babies crying • Placement of bins • Children playing ball games/bikes • Use of trampolines • People looking/staring at each other • Littering • Working from home • General living noise (flushing toilets, closing doors, talking) • One – off celebrations • Occasional noise made by a tenant or their household member who has protected characteristics, e.g. a mental health condition or physical disability
3.2.2	The Noise App – a method by which a complainant can record incidences of noise on their mobile phone and to share with their Officer. The Officer will then triage the noise complaint and decide whether this will fall under the Good Neighbourhood Management Policy or the ASB Policy.
3.2.3	Dear Neighbour Card – a template that customers can print off and use to inform a neighbour that they are making a noise that is causing them disturbance or upset.
3.2.4	ASB Toolkit – information available to all customers on the WCH website where they can identify what to do when they experience a problem in or around their home.
3.2.5	<u>Reminder of Policy Objective</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where there is no deliberate intention, the incident will be handled through the Good Neighbourhood Management Policy. • Where there is no deliberate intention, but the behaviour lasts longer than 30 minutes at a time for more than 5 days in a row, this will be handled through the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy. • Where there is deliberate intention, the incident will be handled through the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.
4.	Roles and responsibilities
4.1	Contact Centre Staff: is responsible for logging reports of noise or incidents that have caused a customer upset or frustration via the CRM system.
4.2	The Officer: is responsible for triaging reports made by our customers to decide if they fall under the Good Neighbourhood Management Policy or the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy. They are responsible for managing cases and providing information and support to our customers

4.3	The Area Housing Manger/Senior Officer: is responsible for monitoring cases to ensure the correct advice, support and actions are being taken by the Officers to manage cases.
5. General Diversity and Inclusion Considerations	
5.1	We will act fairly and consistently in the application of this Policy and the service policies summarised at Appendix C and shall not discriminate against any person on the grounds of their age, race, ethnicity/nationality, gender, religion, sexual orientation, marital/civil partnership status, pregnancy status or disability
6. Monitoring the Effectiveness of this Policy	
6.1	This Policy will be monitored through quarterly reporting of all referrals made under the Good Neighbourhood Management category and numbers of active cases. The Assistant Director of Housing and the Housing Operations Manager will carry out monthly internal case reviews to assess any training needs among staff and lessons learned for future case-handling.
6.2	<p>Our success in achieving our objectives under this Policy will be measured in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of cases reported under the Good Neighbourhood Management Policy (including numbers, actions taken and outcomes) • The use of The Noise App by our customers • A reduction in the number of cases of anti-social behaviour • A reduction in Customer Complaints • Feedback from Housing Officers relating to time spent managing cases • An increase in customer satisfaction, (e.g. via feedback on where we have provided support) • Improved outcomes for vulnerable customers following involvement of internal or external support services • Effective use of the “Sensitive Let” UDC, placing the right customers in the right homes • A reduction in cases being referred to Environmental Health • A reduction in cases being referred to The Community Trigger • Quarterly meetings with the community safety partnership with a focus on improving our processes for our most vulnerable customers. <p>The Group Director of Customer Services, as the Executive Safeguarding Champion will consider any necessary changes or improvements to the Policy accordingly.</p>
7. Data Protection Considerations	
7.1	Section 115 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and the Data Protection Act 2018 allow agencies to disclose information for the detection or prevention of crime and ASB. These may be relevant legal grounds to rely on in sharing personal data regarding ASB. Alternatively, we may seek to rely on our regulatory duties to provide safe homes and communities under the RSH Neighbourhood and Community Standard. Where we are unable to rely on legal or regulatory grounds, we will need

	<p>the individual's express written consent (e.g. by email) to share personal information with a third party such as the police or local authority.</p> <p>In all cases we will only share personal information necessary in the case and in accordance with the Data Sharing Policy and Procedure. Further advice should be sought where necessary from a WCH Data Champion or the Company Secretary, Performance and Regulation Manager.</p>
8.	Related documents
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anti-Social Behaviour Policy and Procedure • Domestic Abuse Policy and Procedure • Vulnerable Customers Policy and Procedure • Responding to Customer Welfare Concerns Procedure • Safeguarding Children & Adults at Risk Policy & Procedure • Management of Communal Areas Procedure • Hoarding Policy and Procedure • Harassment and Hate Crime Policy and Procedure • Translation and Interpretation Policy and Procedure • Data Sharing Policy and Procedure • Voids Lettable Standard Policy • Mutual Exchange Policy and Procedure • Rightsizing Policy and Procedure
9.	Appendices
	<p>Appendix 1 – Dear Neighbour Card</p> <p>Appendix 2 – The Noise App Public Information Handout</p>
10.	Approval
	Approved by: EMT February 2024
	Date of approval: February 2024
	Review date: February 2029
	Policy 'owner': Assistant Director of Housing