
NEIGHBOURHOOD MANAGEMENT POLICY

Introduction

Sutton Housing Society (SHS) has a Neighbourhood Management policy to set out how we work with residents and local partners to ensure we provide good quality homes, in a safe and well-maintained environment.

“Neighbourhood Management” focusses on:

- Pro-active management of the properties and the surrounding environment and communal areas, ensuring safe and well-maintained homes and communities
- Issues relating to the tenancy agreement, in particular addressing breaches of the agreement
- Ensuring residents are aware of their responsibilities.

What is a “neighbourhood”?

The definition of “neighbourhood” can vary hugely from being one defined area of an estate to a whole street/area. For SHS purposes, we define a neighbourhood as an area where we have a strong presence in terms of the number of homes that we own, manage and maintain. Therefore, our defined neighbourhoods are:

- Bridges Court, Worcester Park
- Cloverdale Court, Wallington
- Dorothy Pettingell House, Sutton
- Furlong Close, Hackbridge
- Griffiths Close, Worcester Park
- Harding House, Wallington
- Kent Court, Hackbridge
- Killburns Mill, Wallington
- Lancelot House, Carshalton
- Margaret House, Sutton
- Nairn Court, Wallington
- Norman House, Sutton
- Old Brewery House, Wallington
- Peppermint Court, Wallington
- Robertson House and Mary Court, Sutton
- Ronald House, Sutton
- Thomas House, Sutton
- Trickett House, Sutton
- Wandle Valley Estate, Mitcham

What you can expect from SHS

SHS carries out a regular programme of site / estate walkabouts and regular inspections. Some of our inspections are necessary for SHS to comply with health and safety requirements, whilst others relate to involving residents in SHS services, influencing the works carried out and setting/ensuring standards are maintained.

Walkabouts

Our regular walkabouts with residents (quarterly or six-monthly depending on the scheme) are designed to identify and respond to visual issues around the site/estate and to ensure we address any health and safety related issues. SHS encourages residents to participate in the estate walkabouts, which are advertised at the schemes. Participation by residents is entirely voluntary and actively encouraged by SHS.

As we carry out the walkabout, your Housing Manager (HM) and / or the Property Compliance Officer (PCO) will make a note of any issues relating to matters providing a negative impact on the appearance of the neighbourhood e.g. untidy gardens, messy communal areas, abandoned vehicles, issues with bin stores etc. Your HM will also be looking for any trip or slip hazards.

Fire safety and our residents' safety within our buildings is paramount and therefore SHS takes a "black and white" approach to internal communal area. (These are areas within a block of flats in which residents have a right to use in common with other occupants and visitors). These areas will be routinely checked by your HM and the PCO.

Any items placed, stored, or left in a shared communal area are a hazard that may prevent Fire Services entering the building as well as people leaving safely in the event of a fire or other emergency evacuation. These items may also pose a source of ignition for a fire themselves. We adopt a zero-tolerance approach to any breach of this policy that may cause a risk or hazard in any part of our buildings.

SHS is responsible for these communal areas and must ensure that they are safe and free of hazards. The storage of possessions, rubbish or unwanted items in communal areas is strictly prohibited.

Shared areas such as stairways, landings and hallways must be kept completely clear of all items such as prams, pushchairs, bicycles, children's toys, plant stands, furniture, door mats (in our general needs accommodation) and rubbish or other such obstacles that may prevent clear access.

We do allow door mats within our older people's accommodation as the individual flat entrance doors face onto internal carpeted hallways. The door mats must be in good condition, rubber backed (and therefore do not move easily) and fit in the door recess.

Should SHS discover any of these items in the communal areas, we will immediately commence actions to remove the items. This may involve recharging the appropriate resident for costs incurred in removing items. Should this be a regular issue with a particular resident, SHS will consider enforcement action to remedy the situation.

A summary of the walkabout is shared with residents. Your HM will report any issue of concern following the walkabout and review these at the next walkabout to ensure they have been addressed.

Fire alarm tests

SHS aims to carry out weekly fire alarm testing in its neighbourhoods where fire alarms are in place – primarily in our accommodation designated for older people. There are regular “slots” for this test to be carried out. Occasionally it’s necessary to change the day; when this happens, we will endeavour to advise residents in advance so that they are not unduly alarmed by hearing the fire alarm on a different day.

We will also carry out annual fire drills at these sites. We keep a record of the fire drills and when they are carried out. SHS employees will address any areas of concern with residents following the fire drill.

Other health and safety inspections

SHS, and where appropriate, our contractors/insurers, carry out regular inspections of the following in SHS communal areas within our neighbourhoods:

- Asbestos
- Lifts
- Emergency lighting
- Gas boilers
- Dry risers
- Fire extinguishers
- SHS owned portable appliances including cookers, fridges etc.
- Telecare equipment
- Smoke detectors
- Water tanks

The frequencies of the inspections vary to comply with health and safety requirements.

Scheme meetings

Your HM will hold regular meetings at the Independent Housing for Older People schemes (these are the formerly called sheltered housing schemes). These meetings are sometimes referred to as “drop-ins” if there is no specific agenda. Some meetings are topic based and only residents interested in the topic may choose to attend the meeting. Where appropriate, a summary of the meeting is prepared and placed on the digital board for information. The frequency of these meetings may vary from scheme to scheme based on demand.

Grounds maintenance

Untidy gardens can have a negative impact on a neighbourhood. The SHS tenancy agreement requires residents to ensure they keep any allocated gardens maintained and in a tidy condition.

SHS has a designated contractor that is responsible for our communal gardens (albeit some areas of the garden individual residents prefer to maintain). The SHS employees check on a regular basis that the contract is complied with and will address any issues of concern directly with the relevant contractor. The Contractors Performance Review Group (made up of residents, SHS employees and contractor employees) meet every quarter to review performance over the previous three months; any outstanding issues of concern are discussed, and a way forward agreed.

SHS works with local organisations and with the council to increase aspects of biodiversity within our communal gardens such as installing bee boxes, native plants etc.

Cleaning

SHS has a cleaning contractor in place to ensure communal areas are clean and well maintained. Blocks of flats, on average, receive a weekly visit although one-off visits are arranged when necessary. At Wandle Valley, SHS contributes to the cost of maintaining the estate and works with the lead landlord, London & Quadrant, to maintain the communal areas.

Window cleaning

Window cleaning is carried out on a quarterly basis via a contractor. The Property Compliance Officer ensures that a notice is provided to residents advising of when the window cleaner is calling well in advance. The Property Compliance Officer then checks that the contract is complied with and addresses any concerns directly with the relevant contractor.

Communal areas

Residents living in buildings with communal areas are responsible for ensuring that they, their family and/or their visitors do not leave items in the communal areas, including rubbish and litter and that they do not cause any damage to these areas. Mobility scooters and bicycles must be left in designated bike and/or scooter store areas only or within a residents' own home.

Access to SHS buildings is via door entry systems. Everyone living in these buildings is responsible for ensuring the system is used correctly and that the entrance door is always shut, only allowing access to visitors to their home.

Fire risk assessments are carried out and all agreed recommendations actioned appropriately for each block of flats. SHS publishes its "resident friendly" fire risk assessments on the website. Should a resident require a copy of this, they can simply ask a member of the team, and this will be issued to them.

Mobility scooters

Any resident that wishes to obtain a mobility scooter must seek consent from their Housing Manager before making their purchase. There are health and safety implications in keeping a mobility scooter on the premises and the mobility scooter

owner must have insurance in place. Please read the Mobility Scooter policy on our website or request a copy from a member of our team.

Infestations to communal areas

Where an infestation of vermin, pests or insects is identified in communal areas, SHS will arrange for appropriate pest control visits to be carried out to deal with the issue effectively. SHS covers the cost of this pest control and will address any individual matters because of the infestation with residents directly.

For infestations within individual house or gardens, the tenant must advise the local authority or a pest control company directly as they would usually be responsible for covering the costs and rectifying any damage caused. If the infestation is found to come from an area of communal land within SHS ownership, SHS will be responsible for addressing the infestation and taking steps to prevent it from reoccurring.

Where required, SHS will work with the local authority to assist with any statutory nuisance arising from an infestation.

Parking

Residents must park in areas designated for parking; there are allocated resident/visitors parking bays provided at most sites. All vehicles must be roadworthy, taxed and insured if parked on SHS land.

The SHS Tenancy Agreement states “Not to block local roadways and other vehicular access, and to keep them, and car parking spaces, clear of un-roadworthy and or untaxed vehicles and other obstructions.

- (i) To park or leave taxed vehicles only in the car space designated for the tenant use by the society and that vehicles parked in unauthorised places may be removed. By signing this agreement you authorise the Society to remove any vehicles in breach of these conditions, or which reasonable appear to employees of the SHS to be abandoned or dangerous
- (ii) To obtain SHS’s written consent before parking or leaving any heavy goods vehicle, caravan, boat, skip or anything other than a private motor vehicle or motorbike.

With regard to vehicle maintenance, the tenancy agreement is clear that no works to any vehicles can be carried out on SHS land, except for minor repair, maintenance or servicing of the tenant’s own motor vehicle or motorbike and that this must not cause any nuisance.

Trees

SHS has a plan of all trees on individual sites with a recommended maintenance programme. The programme is over 5 years with appropriate tree maintenance being carried out. SHS will also carry out works to trees in communal areas and individual SHS homes where they pose a health and safety risk to life or a building.

Resident associations

SHS is happy to work with resident led associations within any of our homes. Should residents wish to introduce a residents' association, they can meet with their HM who would be happy to discuss this with them. A formally recognised resident association will need to have an elected Chair and treasurer and be able to host meetings and publish minutes that are available to all residents within the scheme. SHS is happy to support resident associations and would be happy to attend meetings when invited to do so.

Anti-social behaviour (ASB)

SHS has an Anti-social behaviour policy in place and is pro-active in addressing any concerns raised quickly and effectively. This includes not only noise nuisance and anti-social behaviour but environmental crimes such as vandalism, dog fouling, fly tipping.

SHS can use "Good Neighbour Agreements" as a tool for tackling anti-social behaviour. This agreement underpins individual residents' commitment not to behave in an anti-social way towards neighbours. These can be introduced with residents at any time, particularly when experiencing nuisance. The Good Neighbour Agreement may also be introduced for new developments, when a new community is being created.

We are an active member of the Sutton Community Safety Partnership, attending relevant meetings and contributing as necessary. SHS is part of the London Borough of Sutton Information Sharing Protocol, ensuring we request and share information with partners (for example Social Services, the Police, the Local authority) to resolve/remedy issues appropriately. These would generally relate to safeguarding individuals, criminal activity and breaches of tenancy conditions.

Waste management

SHS is responsible for addressing issues relating to litter and fly tipping on our land and will arrange clearance as soon as possible. The cost of this is recovered via service charges unless a tenant is identified as being responsible.

All residents must take all reasonable care to ensure that their refuse is properly disposed of in line with the requirements of the London Borough of Sutton, using the appropriate bags and bins. SHS ensures that the bin store areas are regularly inspected and maintained.

If residents need to dispose of large items such as household items, they should make arrangements directly with the local authority or a private company, ensuring items are not left in communal areas.

SHS works with the local authority to promote and encourage recycling. SHS encourages the council to attend our sites and to carry out talks on recycling and other related initiatives.

Intensive housing management

To help to ensure SHS residents can remain living in their homes for as long and as independently as possible, SHS provides an intensive housing management (IHM) service at its Independent Housing for Older People sites and at two former supported housing sites. The services provided help to assist individual residents to maintain their tenancies and to remain independent in their homes, albeit with additional help and support from other parties. To find out more about this service, please speak to your HM or call 020 8642 1500.

Bad weather

SHS has a policy for employees to follow when there is a prolonged period of bad weather. We will do our best to ensure that the main walkways to our Independent Housing for Older People schemes are cleared and that we remove snow and minimise icy conditions. We will not generally clear snow or grit paths which provide access to a single property, as this is residents' responsibility.

However, individuals must take responsibility for themselves too and take care when out and about in snow and icy conditions.

SHS will plan in advance, where possible, for the clearance of walkway areas, but this will depend on the weather conditions and the ability of employees and contractors to get to sites.

Where flooding occurs that impacts on our residents and/or properties, we will liaise with residents and other agencies to minimise the impact as much as possible. Where it is necessary to decant residents due to flooding, SHS will follow its Emergency Planning policy and our Business Continuity Plan as appropriate.

Similarly, when excessively hot weather is expected, we will do our best to inform residents of the appropriate steps to take by advertising these on the digital boards and speaking directly with particularly vulnerable residents.

SHS has buildings insurance for its properties. However, residents are responsible for insuring their home contents and are encouraged to do so.

Partnership working

To properly ensure our neighbourhoods are safe and well maintained, SHS works in partnership with the London Borough of Sutton (social services, the Police, the council etc.) and with other landlords in the area such as London & Quadrant to ensure there is a pro-active approach to managing neighbourhoods and communities. We will also work with contractors and other local organisations.

Monitoring arrangements

The Operations Director has overall responsibility for ensuring that this policy is followed. On a day-to-day basis, the Housing Manager and the Asset Manager are responsible for ensuring issues are addressed appropriately and any issues of concern escalated to the Operations Director.

All employees visiting SHS sites are responsible for highlighting any issues of concern to the appropriate SHS team.

Equality, diversity and inclusion

SHS seeks to be genuinely inclusive in all aspects of our work. We are committed to supporting residents to access services that meet their needs and to provide safe and well-maintained homes. All individuals (employees, residents, guests) that take part in estate inspections or who attend meetings are asked to follow our corporate values (accountable, kind, personal, listen, enjoy what we do and bold), behaving politely and with respect.