

Cernach Housing Association

Estate Management Policy



1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Cernach Housing Association is committed to providing good quality affordable housing and to manage the property owned and factored by the Association to the highest possible standard within existing financial constraints.
- 1.2 Estate Management is a vital part of housing management and a particularly important service from the tenants viewpoint, yet there is no accepted definition of what tasks it covers. The Chartered Institute of Housing uses the term in its widest sense to refer to property management and services to tenants, leaseholders and sharing owners which aim to enable residents to have quiet enjoyment of their homes and a decent, safe and secure environment. Estate Management is not just about looking after buildings and the physical environment, but also involves providing or arranging necessary advice and support to tenants, and involves working with other agencies to achieve decent living conditions. Tenancy management also comes under the heading of estate management and is best described as intervention action necessary to ensure tenants and residents are aware of their responsibilities in relation to their property and their neighbours.
- 1.3 Maintenance of the properties and the common areas in our ownership is the responsibility of the Association. Estate management therefore is seen as a fundamental aspect of this service. Ground maintenance and the many other day-to-day tasks that go into looking after the estate are all important in creating and maintaining a clean, attractive and safe estate. Although taking good care of our area is primarily the Associations responsibility, some services that impact on estate management, such as refuse collection, close lighting and street lighting are not within the Associations direct control. The Association will endeavour to foster good working relationships with City Council to ensure that their departments provide a good quality service in our area. A multi agency approach to estate management is required particularly with a high profile for the police and community wardens. This policy places a strong emphasis on a proactive and supportive approach to estate management.
- 1.4 For the Association this means having the responsibility to inspect and maintain its housing, the common areas of that housing, the surrounding environment within the curtilage of the buildings and any land within the Associations ownership.

- 1.5 For tenants it means compliance with their responsibilities for maintaining in good order their surrounding environment, as well as their own individual property, and in doing so respect the rights of their neighbours and the surrounding community, as laid down in their Tenancy Agreement.
- 1.6 This policy cross relates to the Neighbour Disputes Policy, Racial harassment Policy, pet policy, and anti social policy as these are tenancy related, and compliance with the tenancy agreement.
- 1.7 The aforementioned policies and procedures govern how the staff should deal with nuisance problems caused by the behaviour of residents and their guests and for responding to customers' complaints about problems such as:
- General domestic noise, foul language, DIY activity
 - Noise from amplified music
 - Late night parties
 - Car repairs in the street, abandoned cars
 - Nuisance caused by animals
 - Racial, sexual and other forms of harassment
 - Violence
 - Drug dealing

2. LEGISLATIVE & REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

- 2.1 This Policy meets The Scottish Social Housing Charter Outcome No. 6: Estate Management, anti-social behaviour, neighbour nuisance and tenancy disputes. Social landlords working in partnership with other agencies, help to ensure that:
- “Tenants and other customers live in well-maintained neighbourhoods where they feel safe”.

3. HOUSING MANAGEMENT - SETTING STANDARDS

- 3.1 A clean and tidy estate means a lot to residents. Well maintained trees, shrubs, grassed areas and other forms of soft landscaping, keeping on top of graffiti, rubbish and litter not only achieves an attractive and safe environment, but also proves to residents that the Association takes a pride in their estate.

Whilst the maintenance officer is responsible for monitoring the Performance of the Landscape Maintenance Contractor the Housing Officer has a role to play in monitoring the condition of the landscape common areas and taking prompt action to remedy the situation by alerting the Maintenance officer immediately any instances of suspected non conformance of the Contractor becomes apparent.

- 3.2 It is the Associations responsibility therefore to ensure that the appearance and cleanliness of each property on the estate is maintained to as high a standard as possible, and that Conditions of Tenancy and Deeds of Conditions are adhered to. An attractive well cared for estate is only possible if residents also take responsibility for looking after it. Partnership and co-operation with residents is of paramount importance. To achieve consistently high standards it is essential that there is close co-operation between tenants, owners and staff.
- 3.3 Residents therefore have their part to play in ensuring the estate is kept at its best. Tenants have certain responsibilities under the tenancy agreement to take care of their homes and estate and they can contribute ideas, views and experiences to help with service planning and delivery.
- 3.4 Housing staff should give guidance to tenants about how to use the bins, and plastic sacks for refuse disposal. Guidance should also be given on ways of disposing garden waste and bulky household items such as refrigerators and furniture.
- 3.5 Housing staff should make no less than twice weekly inspections of the communal bin store areas to ensure that they are kept tidy and clear of rubbish and take appropriate intervention action if found to be unsatisfactory.
- 3.6 Housing staff should identify tenants who neglect their garden, investigate the reasons for this, and enforce tenancy conditions or arrange practical advice and assistance where appropriate for tenants who are infirm or disabled. This could include referral to the Council garden service or landscape contractor to provide service at direct cost to the tenant.

4. HOUSING MANAGEMENT STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES - MAINTAINING STANDARDS

- 4.1 Cernach Housing Association believes that a lot can be done to prevent problems arising by ensuring that tenants are fully aware of their obligations as tenants.
- 4.2 The basis of the Tenancy Agreement is that tenants have specific responsibilities, which are made clear to them at the commencement of their tenancy.

This will be done in a number of ways:

4.2.1 New Tenants

- (a) Tell people at an accompanied viewing and again at time of signing for their tenancy what their specific responsibilities are in relation to close cleaning, gardens etc
- (b) New tenants will be issued with a tenancy agreement that is written in plain English.
- (c) Tenants will also be given a Good Neighbour Management Agreement for signing and adopted as a Codicil to the Tenancy Agreement.
- (d) They will also be given a Tenants Handbook which will give more detailed information about their tenancy, what is expected of them and what they can expect from their neighbours
- (e) The Housing Officer will carry out a new tenant/sharing owner visit once the tenant/sharing owner has moved into the property and explain in detail their responsibilities. This is an opportunity for the Housing Officer to identify and deal with any problems being experienced. These visits must be carried out within six weeks of date of entry, during which the Housing Officer will reiterate responsibilities, encourage membership of the Association and answer and note any other points requiring clarification. The settling in visit will be recorded and filed in the tenants house file
- (f) All new tenants will be issued with a leaflet outlining their communal responsibilities.

4.2.2 General

The Housing Officer should note and act upon problems and issues through actively listening to tenants' complaints and concerns about issues that affect the quality of life locally. The key approaches to effective estate management are housing led but also need input from other agencies such as the Police and Council service Departments.

This will be done in a number of ways:

- (a) dealing promptly and efficiently with relatively minor problems that have the potential for escalation such as litter within a close.
- (b) Taking early action to deal with graffiti.
- (c) Co-operation with partners including community police and community wardens on addressing crime related issues such as vandalism, and car abandonment
- (d) Participate in the anti social forum to agree common approach to deal with perpetrators with cross boundary problems
- (e) The use of newsletters to highlight landlord and tenant responsibilities, incidents and remedial action taken/proposed
- (f) Garden competition to encourage tenants to make improvements.

4.2.3 Property Inspection - Internal

- (a) All tenants will be visited at home by the Housing Officer every five years. This will be done, jointly with the Maintenance Officer when carrying out the stock condition survey to individual properties every five years. If a house is found to be in a poor condition internally action will be taken in an effort to remedy the problem.

Where a poor standard of cleanliness is revealed which is likely to cause deterioration in the condition of the property action will be taken to ensure that the tenant complies with the terms of their tenancy agreement.

There would then be a regular inspection until the problem was resolved. Where appropriate, other agencies will be informed of the position. In cases where there is no improvement, and the Association has adequate grounds, action will be taken to remedy the situation. This may include an action for eviction.

- (b) Any damage to a property or to the fixtures and fittings which is caused by carelessness, neglect or vandalism must be remedied by the tenant at their expense. If necessary the Association will carry out the work and invoice the tenant accordingly.
- (c) Housing and maintenance staff should, during routine Housing Management or Maintenance visits, identify tenants who fail to take reasonable care of the property and/or fail to keep the property in a reasonable standard of internal decoration and cleanliness.

4.2.4 Estate Management Visits

- (a) All common closes and backcourts, and common gardens, and private gardens will be inspected on a weekly basis by the Housing Officer. A record of inspection will be kept. Where a problem is identified, prompt action will be taken to remedy the situation. Additional time will be allocated to visiting property where it is evident that tenants are not complying with the terms and conditions of their tenancy.
- (b) Proper records of all action taken will be kept i.e. inspections, rotas, letters and photographs. Consideration will be given to reproducing photographs in Newsletter to highlight problems and praise good gardens.

4.2.5 Gardens

- (a) Landscape areas and grassed areas designated as communal will be the responsibility of the Association. A contractor will be employed to cut the grass, and tidy these areas fortnightly during the growing season. A de littering service is undertaken of the common landscaped areas during the winter months.

- (b) Where a property has its own garden the resident will be responsible for maintaining that area to a satisfactory standard i.e. grass cut regularly and free of litter and other debris.

If a garden is unsatisfactory due to infirmity or disability the Association will attempt to place tenant on the local authority assistance scheme.

- (c) Where gardens, closes, backcourts, balconies, floral displays, window boxes etc are being maintained to an exceptionally high standard, the Housing Officer will issue an acknowledgement letter thanking tenants for their efforts.
- (d) The Association has an annual garden competition and 1st and 2nd prizes are offered throughout the three Housing Management patches as well as a trophy for the overall winner. The best Balcony and Runner up are also recognised. The Housing Officer should promote the garden competition and the tenant loyalty scheme as an incentive to encourage tenants to look after the garden.

4.2.6 Backcourts

- (a) Glasgow City Council's cleansing Department is responsible for removal of domestic refuse and bulk uplift and provide a de-littering service of bin storage areas and hard areas in back courts of flatted properties.
- (b) This does not absolve the residents from their responsibilities in terms of ensuring that the backcourt and bin stores are kept in a tidy condition.

4.2.7 Pets

- (a) The main responsibility for keeping and controlling pets lies with the tenant. All tenants must have written permission to keep a pet(s) (maximum of two pets) and permission will not be withheld unreasonably. Full information on the keeping of pets and the pet register is outlined in the Association's Pet Policy.

5. REMITS AND DELEGATED AUTHORITY

- 5.1 The Housing Officers are responsible for conducting estate management visits, investigations, interviews, record keeping and reporting on all estate management issues.
- 5.2 A Notice of proceedings may be issued by the Housing Officer when authorised to do so by the Housing Services Manager.
- 5.3 The Use of Legal Action should be avoided in relation to estate management as far as possible however where a tenant is in breach of their tenancy agreement and **all** other action has been tried and failed court action can be considered. Court action must be approved by the Housing Services Manager and if seeking eviction action this must be authorised by the Committee.

6. COMPLAINTS

- 6.1 The Association will ensure that prompt and appropriate action will be taken to deal with estate management problems arising either from the weekly inspections or from tenant complaints.
- 6.2 All complaints will be recorded and dealt with in accordance with the neighbour disputes policy unless it is a complaint about the service, then it will be dealt with in accordance with the Complaints Handling Policy and Procedure.

7. RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT

- 7.1 The opinion of local residents on estate management issues will be sought on a regular basis. The main method for seeking comments will be through the tenant consultation register, focus groups, newsletters, the Residents Panel, office questionnaires and property inspections. Newsletters are issued quarterly to all residents and this will assist in raising tenants' awareness of the Association's policies and objectives.

8. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

- 8.1 The Association's Equality and Diversity policy, which was approved by the Committee in April 2012 following community consultation, outlines our commitment to promote a zero tolerance to unfair treatment or discrimination to any person or group of persons, particularly on the basis of any of the protected characteristics¹. This includes ensuring that everyone has equal access to information and services and, to this end, the Association will make available a copy of this document in a range of alternative formats including large print, translated into another language or by data transferred to voice.
- 8.2 We are also aware of the potential for policies to inadvertently discriminate against an individual or group of individuals. To help tackle this and ensure that it does not occur, best practice suggests that organisations carry out Equality Impact Assessments to help identify any part of a policy that may be discriminatory so that this can be addressed (please see section 6 of the Equality and Diversity Policy for more information).
- 8.3 In line with section 6.3 of the Equality and Diversity Policy, the Association will apply a screening process based on that recommended by the Equality and Human Rights Commission to ascertain whether each policy requires an Impact Assessment to be carried out. The screening process was applied to this policy and it was decided that an impact assessment is required (refer to Appendix 3).

9. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 9.1 The Association, in implementing this policy seeks to ensure that where a problem is identified prompt action will be taken to remedy the situation. The Association will ensure that good practice in relation to estate management is adopted and encouraged at all times. It is vitally important that the high amenity of the area is maintained and tenancy breaches dealt with swiftly and appropriately to ensure the Associations Housing Stock remains desirable and that people are happy to remain in the area. Failure to do this would result in the Associations housing stock or pockets of the housing stock becoming difficult to let and the consequential rent loss due to voids.

¹ The Equality Act 2010 identifies the "protected characteristics" as age, disability, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, gender, gender reassignment and sexual orientation.

10. POLICY REPORTING AND POLICY REVIEW

- 10.1 The Property Management Committee shall receive a report monthly from the Housing Officers outlining action taken on estate management issues.
- 10.2 The Management Committee shall review this policy no less than every three years and the success of this policy will be measured against the following outputs and outcomes.

OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES
Bi annual satisfaction surveys	High levels of tenant satisfaction with estate management
Weekly inspection report on estate management visits	Breaches of tenancies identified and corrective action taken promptly
A proactive and supportive approach taken to estate management	Heightened awareness of tenants responsibilities and maximum number of satisfactory gardens, tidy common areas and a safe and pleasant environment for tenants.

APPENDIX ONE

TENANTS AND OWNERS COMMUNAL RESPONSIBILITIES - STANDARDS

- (a) Stairs and landings should be washed once a week and swept as often as necessary. All tenements have a stair cleaning service although this does not absolve the tenants from the responsibility for sweeping and cleaning the stairs and landing in the interim period.
- (b) Stair walls and windows should be washed once a fortnight.
- (c) Where there are two tenants or more on each floor communal cleaning should be carried out on a rota basis.
- (d) Where only one tenant is on the landing then this tenant is responsible for sweeping every week.
- (e) Bin stores and back courts should be cleaned on a weekly rota basis, unless tenants have individual bin stores then tenants should clean their own bin store weekly. The Association employ Glasgow City Council service for backcourt maintenance, although this does not absolve the tenants from the responsibility for keeping the backcourt and the bin store tidy.
- (f) The front entrance path should be swept on a rota basis.
- (g) Bin bags should not be left in close and should be deposited in wheelie bins at all times.
- (h) Any rubbish/mess created by members of a tenant's household or visitors should be cleaned up immediately.
- (i) Dogs/cats are not to use the close as a toilet. If this happens the tenant responsible for the pet must clear up the mess immediately.
- (j) Tenants must make use of the City Council facility to uplift furniture/electrical goods and not dump these/store these in back courts and open spaces.
- (k) Gardens must be maintained to an acceptable standard i.e./ grass cut regularly and kept free of litter and other debris.
- (l) Should a tenant's wheelie bin go missing or be vandalised, the tenant may be charged for the cost of replacement, if they have not acted responsibly by taking the bin back in after emptying.

Cernach Housing Association Estate Management Policy



APPENDIX 2

	Front Garden				Rear Garden			
	Poor	Sat	Garden Comp?	Comments	Poor	Sat	Garden Comp?	Comments
Week 1								
Week 2								
Week 3								
Week 4								
Week 5 (if applicable)								

	Front Garden				Rear Garden			
	Poor	Sat	Garden Comp?	Comments	Poor	Sat	Garden Comp?	Comments
Week 1								
Week 2								
Week 3								
Week 4								
Week 5 (if applicable)								

	Front Garden				Rear Garden			
	Poor	Sat	Garden Comp?	Comments	Poor	Sat	Garden Comp?	Comments
Week 1								
Week 2								
Week 3								
Week 4								
Week 5 (if applicable)								

**Cernach Housing Association
Estate Management Policy (Cont'd)**



	Ground Floor Landing			1 st Floor Landing			2 nd Floor Landing			Front Common Area			Rear Common Area			Bin Store		
	Poor	Sat	Comments	Poor	Sat	Comments	Poor	Sat	Comments	Poor	Sat	Comments	Poor	Sat	Comments	Poor	Sat	Comments
Week 1																		
Week 2																		
Week 3																		
Week 4																		
Week 5 (if applicable)																		

	Ground Floor Landing			1 st Floor Landing			2 nd Floor Landing			Front Common Area			Rear Common Area			Bin Store		
	Poor	Sat	Comments	Poor	Sat	Comments	Poor	Sat	Comments	Poor	Sat	Comments	Poor	Sat	Comments	Poor	Sat	Comments
Week 1																		
Week 2																		
Week 3																		
Week 4																		
Week 5 (if applicable)																		

	Ground Floor Landing			1 st Floor Landing			2 nd Floor Landing			Front Common Area			Rear Common Area			Bin Store		
	Poor	Sat	Comments	Poor	Sat	Comments	Poor	Sat	Comments	Poor	Sat	Comments	Poor	Sat	Comments	Poor	Sat	Comments
Week 1																		
Week 2																		
Week 3																		
Week 4																		
Week 5 (if applicable)																		



The policy underpins all of the work that we do and is linked to all policies and policy initiatives

2. What do we already know about the diverse needs and/or experiences of our target audience?

Do we currently have information on:

Age	Yes	✓	No	
Disability	Yes	✓	No	
Marriage and Civil Partnership		✓		
Pregnancy and Maternity		✓		
Race	Yes	✓	No	
Religion and Belief	Yes		No	✓
Gender		✓		
Gender Reassignment	Yes		No	✓
Sexual Orientation	Yes		No	✓

Tenants and other residents

2.1 Whilst we require to update and broaden the information we have on tenants and other residents, we would expect all of the protected characteristics to be represented within this target audience. One of the main barriers to equality in service provision is likely to be inaccessibility. The policy outlines our commitment to addressing this and, further, it requires us to be proactive in seeking out and responding to all the communications and access needs that may exist.

2.2 The policy helps us ensure that we are providing services (which, in this context, includes addressing physical housing requirements) that are responsive to the requirements of all groups.

Owners who may participate in improvement schemes

2.3 As at 2.1 and 2.2, above.

People who live in the local area and housing applicants

2.4 As at 2.1 and 2.2, above.

Staff and Management Committee

- 2.5 The policy ensures that we observe equality and diversity issues in employment and in the recruitment of Management Committee members. The office and Committee areas are accessible and the policy allows information to be provided in any format that would make it possible for staff or Committee to better fulfill their roles.
- 2.6 All staff and Committee are made aware of theirs and the Association's rights and responsibilities in relation to equality and diversity and receive periodic training. They know about the Association's zero tolerance approach and are aware of how to raise any concerns.

Contractors and consultants and partner organisations

- 2.7 The policy requires the Association to observe equality and diversity issues in the procurement of consultants and contractors and our relationships with partner organisations.
- 2.8 Any contractors or consultants working for or representing the Association are made aware of our commitment to equality and diversity and are advised of our expectations in terms of how we require them to observe our policy at all times. Any consultants/contractors or anyone representing a partner organisation who feel they have been discriminated against are aware of how to raise these concerns.
- 2.9 The policy requires action to be taken against any consultants or contractors found to be in breach of our policy.
3. **What does the information we have tell us about how this policy might impact positively or negatively on the different groups within the target audience?**
- 3.1 We have some information on age, disability, gender and race/ethnicity but this mainly relates to tenants and housing applicants and requires to be updated regularly in order to remain accurate. We have not yet collected information on sexuality and religion/belief, but this is being introduced and, over time, we will begin to build up a picture of sexuality and religion/belief of our tenants and other stakeholders. This information will be analysed and we will consider setting targets by June 2014.

3.2 The Equality and Diversity Action Plan, which is due to be approved by the Management Committee in April 2012, will address in more detail what the impact may be on the different groups within our target audience.

4. Do we need to carry out a further Impact Assessment?

4.1 Yes, a further impact assessment will require to be carried out once the Equality and Diversity Action Plan has been agreed. The impact assessment will be presented to the Committee by the end of June 2012.

5. How will we monitor and evaluate this policy to measure progress?

5.1 Ongoing monitoring by staff and an annual written report Management Committee and annual revision of the Equality and Diversity Action Plan (any issues or concerns highlighted by the ongoing staff monitoring will be reported to the Committee via an exceptions report). We will also produce an article in the Annual Report which is sent to tenants and members.