

NEIGHBOURHOOD INSPECTION AND CUSTOMER WALKABOUT POLICY

30 June 2022

Prepared by:	Jo Richardson
Date effective from:	30/06/2022
Policy approved by:	OMT
Review Date:	30/06/2025

EIA Required?	<input type="checkbox"/>
EIA Completed?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Revision number:	5
Lead officer:	Rebecca Cullen

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The overall aim of this policy is to make a real contribution to Stockport Homes' (SHG) wider strategic and housing objectives; helping to enhance community cohesion and enabling customers to have an opportunity to get involved in identifying and resolving issues within their local area.

1.2 The policy ensures that a proactive approach is taken, which in turn contributes to the improvement of the environment within which customers live.

1.3 Neighbourhood Inspections and Customer Walkabouts are defined as:

- **A Neighbourhood Inspection is an audit** of a particular site at a point in time, with actions taken to resolve any issues identified. A site is defined as a street, a block of flats, a garage site, or a sheltered scheme.
- **A Customer Walkabout is a pre-arranged inspection of a group** of sites within a neighbourhood which can be attended by customers and stakeholders (e.g. elected members, Stockport Council employees, partners, and Police).

2 STRATEGIC LINKS

2.1 This policy has the following strategic links:

- SHG's Eyes Wide Open Policy Statement
- ASB Strategy and Policy
- Greenspace Strategy
- Individual Garden Maintenance Policy
- Abandoned Vehicles Policy
- Pets Policy
- Difficult to let policy
- Fire Safety Policy
- Tenancy Contact Policy
- Squatting Policy
- Abandonment and Storing of Goods Policy
- Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk Policy
- Tree Policy
- SHG Building Safety Strategy
- Hoarding Policy
- Managing Tenancy Breaches Policy.

2.2 The 'Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England' sets out that Registered Providers shall 'keep the neighbourhood and communal areas associated with the homes that they own clean and safe. They shall work in partnership with their tenants and other providers and public bodies where it is

effective to do so'. Our policy is aligned with the revised consumer standards and directly contributes to the themes:

- Safety – Landlord's safety responsibilities including safety within the home and in communal areas.
- Quality - Quality of the home, communal spaces and services to tenants.
- Neighbourhoods - Landlords' role, working with other agencies to contribute to the wellbeing of neighbourhoods in which tenants live.

2.3 This Policy ensures that by undertaking regular neighbourhood inspections and customer walkabouts, SHG helps to improve the community and enables customers and stakeholders to have an opportunity to get involved in identifying and resolving issues within their local area. By involving customers ensures areas are well-kept and a place people want to live in. SHG will always raise issues with other agencies, such as the Council, in instances where issues identified are beyond SHG's responsibilities.

3 KEY FEATURES OF THE POLICY

Customer Walkabouts

3.1 **How?** Can be instigated either by an officer who arranges and advertises a date inviting customers and other stakeholders or by customers who can request a walkabout to look at a specific location or issue.

3.2 **Who?** Officers should invite customers and local Councillors to attend as well as stakeholders as appropriate, determined by any specific issues.

3.3 **When?** All NHOs (Neighbourhood Housing Officers)/ILO (Independent Living Officers) should pre-arrange one customer walkabout on their patch every month where there is the demand. Monthly walkabouts are to take place around the locality of all multi blocks.

3.4 **Where?** Pre-arranged walkabouts must focus on a specific street(s) or location. This should not be too large an area and should be easily walkable by customers of all ages and abilities. A monthly neighbourhood walkabout which incorporates the neighbourhoods around all the 22 multi-storey blocks will be arranged to capture and record any issues in those localities.

Neighbourhood Inspections

3.5 Officers will visit and inspect each site managed within their patch, the frequency of this will depend on the property type and location which is categorised as outlined below:

Multi-Storey Flats

- 3.5.1 For multi storey blocks (blocks of flats over three storeys), NHO's will complete a monthly Neighbourhood Inspection.
- 3.5.2 This combines a neighbourhood inspection and walkabout.

Low Rise Flats

- 3.5.3 A Neighbourhood Inspection will be completed a minimum of once every three months but more frequently if the area is graded as poor and until the issue is rectified.
- 3.5.4 NHO's also undertake health and safety inspections of low-rise communal areas and this provides an opportunity to identify and resolve any issues within the communal areas of blocks.

Sheltered Schemes

- 3.5.5 ILOs are required to record an inspection once a month.

60+ Stock

- 3.5.6 SHG's policy is that customers are contacted every month by Independent Living Assistants, (ILA's).

4 TEAM ROLES

4.1 **Caretaking** - The standards of the caretaking service in each of the blocks will be managed and monitored by the Environmental Services Operations Manager (ESOM) and Caretaking Team Leaders, this will include monthly inspections with all activities being recorded using 'Sweep Up'.

4.2 **Building Safety Team** - The Building Safety Officer, (BSO) complete routine inspections of multi-storey blocks to ensure fire safety compliance data is recorded as well as customer visits to ensure that activities which take place in the high-rise blocks will not impact on the safety of the buildings

- 4.2.1 The BSO will attend any joint neighbourhood inspection to highlight any issues so they can be collectively resolved.

5 COLLABORATIVE APPROACH

5.1 In line with Stockport Homes Eyes Wide Open Policy, it is everyone's responsibility to report any issues they see whilst they are in our neighbourhoods.

5.2 As well as NHO's/ILO's there are other teams who have a responsibility to identify and report issues and contribute to ensure SHG's stock is free from health and safety and communal areas are in good condition caretaking and building safety teams.

6 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

6.1 An equality impact assessment has been carried out that identified the need to improve the promotion of Customer Walkabouts. This has resulted in additional communication methods being used, such as the Customer Newsletter, various Social Media managed by SHG and the continuation of posters being placed within the blocks of flats.

6.2 In addition, to ensure accessibility and convenience for the customer and to maximise attendance, Customer Walkabouts are held in the morning afternoon or early evening (in the summer months).

7 OWNERSHIP, MONITORING & REVIEW

7.1 The Policy is owned by the Operations Directorate and will be monitored by the Operations Management Team.

7.2 The Policy will be reviewed in line with the Operations Management Policy and Procedure Review Schedule.