



Neighbourhood facilities and communal areas policy

Valid from January 2025

1. Introduction

1.1 This policy provides guidance on how Futures will strive to make sure all internal and external communal areas and neighbourhood facilities are managed effectively.

The policy aims to make sure areas are protected from hazards, obstructions, and damage to make sure the health and safety of all the community and its visitors.

It includes the maintenance of the estates and making necessary improvements to the overall environment enhancing the public open spaces

The overarching aim of this policy aligns with Our Homes Strategy - To provide well maintained, safe and secure homes and communities for our customers to live in

In addition, the policy aligns with the requirements of the new Regulatory Standard Compliance for Safety and Quality and Neighbourhood and Community.

This will make sure any communal areas owned by Futures are clean, safe, attractive, and well managed.

1.2 This policy applies to:

- Communal areas within properties - passageways, entrance halls and staircases
- Where there are shared facilities within buildings e.g. bin stores or bin chutes, other storage facilities
- Where there are shared communal and social facilities e.g. communal lounges, kitchens or laundry facilities and guest rooms
- All external areas e.g. shared gardens, public open spaces and through routes

Where services are provided a service charge is applied to the tenancy. For further details please see our Service Charge Policy.

1.3 The operation of this policy complies with all relevant legislation and any regulatory framework for housing as detailed within the new Regulatory Standard Compliance Framework for Safety and Quality and Neighbourhoods and Communities detailed as follows:

- **Safety & Quality Standards: Health & Safety** - When acting as landlords, registered providers must take all reasonable steps to make sure the health and safety of tenants in their homes and associated communal areas.
- **Repairs, Maintenance & Planned Improvements** - Registered providers must provide an effective, efficient and timely repairs, maintenance and planned improvements service for the homes and communal areas for which they are responsible.
- **Neighbourhoods & Community Standard: Safety of Shared Spaces.** Registered providers must work co-operatively with tenants, other landlords and relevant

organisations to take all reasonable steps to make sure the safety of shared spaces.

- Understanding and Responding to Diverse Needs of the Community Registered providers shall treat the views and needs of all customers and those using the facilities and communal areas covered in this policy with fairness and respect and in conjunction with Futures's Equity and Diversity Policy.

2. Statement of intent

2.1 The management and control of communal areas and public open spaces will be reviewed quarterly to make sure compliance with relevant legislation and the new requirements within the Consumer Standards relating to communal spaces.

2.2 We will provide guidance on our website for customers detailing responsibilities on the use and management of the neighbourhoods.

2.3 We will make sure Health, Safety and Environmental regulations are adhered to and monitoring implemented to make sure compliance, all which meets the requirements within our Health, Safety and Environment Policy.

3. Policy

3.1 Grounds maintenance and external areas

External areas including public open spaces, communal gardens, parking areas and hedges will be inspected on a regular basis by our Grounds Maintenance Team.

Each area has a clearly defined annual schedule of maintenance for grass and hedge cuts in addition to any other identified works requiring attention.

There will be an annual survey carried out of all trees that fall within Futures boundaries and a report completed to monitor the condition of trees.

Communal areas will include those within Futures's Independent Living Schemes.

Where car parking exists for residents only this will be maintained accordingly making sure paved and tarmacked areas are kept in good repair. These areas will also be available for employees and contractors of Futures to use whilst carrying out their duties, with due care given to avoiding blocking any access routes.

3.2 External areas

Where an external seating or community garden exist, there will be encouragement for communities to make good use of these areas and to enjoy their outdoor space with plants or small garden items which enhance the area. Permission will be required, detailed in Section 3.4.

Although where the community are encouraged to use their communal outdoor space it is also important for Futures to balance this with the health and safety management of making sure good access to buildings is maintained.

3.3 Community centres, public open spaces and internal communal areas

All of our internal areas, which can include community centres, communal kitchens, laundries, communal toilets, lounge areas and guest bedrooms, will be cleaned:

- Weekly by procured external contracted cleaning services for Independent Living Schemes and some communal flat areas
- Daily by contracted cleaners on our Supported Housing Schemes
- Rota basis by our Grounds Maintenance teams for community centres.

Inspections/Maintenance will be done for:

- Fire Safety – including risk assessments, fire doors and other equipment
- Legionella Testing and Water Hygiene – water testing across all of our independent living schemes and community centres
- Asbestos Checks – where necessary
- Gas and Electrical appliances and systems
- Play Areas – making sure equipment is safe to use
- Stairwells – free from obstruction
- Communal hallways and Landings - free from obstruction.
- Lifts

Stairwells and Internal Communal areas are not an extension of an individual's property and must not be used to store prohibited personal items, and no individual has exclusive use of these areas. These areas must be kept clear of prohibited items and free of obstructions in case of fire.

Personal effects and common obstructions that are prohibited include (but not limited to):

- Household, recycling, garden waste items or other goods awaiting disposal
- Furnishings such as garden chairs or sideboards
- Bicycles – including motorized scooters and cycles
- Mobility Scooters*
- Pushchairs, Prams and Shopping Trolleys
- Toys of any kind
- Shoes including wellington boots and other such footwear
- Clothing hung on coat hangers which are not standard fitted items

*Mobility scooters must not be stored and/or charged in any communal area unless prior written agreement has been received from Futures. Further reference to Powered Mobility Aids can be found within our Health, Safety and Environment Policy.

A managed use approach will be adopted to allow for a small number of defined personal items to be stored within communal areas to enable common areas to be made homely and benefit customers with restricted mobility. The personal items are limited to control fire load and to limit ignition sources and obstructions in line with the building's Fire Risk Assessment.

Personal items that are permitted include:

- Small door mat (providing this is not a trip hazard)
- Pot plants and stand
- Small framed pictures fixed on walls
- Non-powered walking aid if unable to keep inside property i.e. elderly or those with a disability (not creating an obstruction of escape route)

Regular inspections and monitoring will take place make sure the policy is being complied with, including stairways, entrances/lobbies, corridors, balconies and chute rooms. It will also apply to plant rooms, landlords' stores, riser cupboards, lounges and other communal rooms.

We reserve the right to remove the managed use approach and implement a Zero Tolerance Policy to restrict the storage of all items, where the policy is not adhered to or upon instruction of the Fire Risk Assessment.

Annual gas and electrical testing of all electrical items will take place across all properties with internal communal area e.g. Independent Living Schemes, blocks of flats, community centres, single homeless sites.

Home surveys will be carried out as per the Asset Management Programme and will include individual flats and the communal areas of the building such as loft spaces, aerials, boundary fencing, garage sites, car parks and pathways and any works required will be prioritised and incorporated into a work programme.

Additionally, the Communities Team will carry out planned estate walkabouts with relevant agencies to identify any issues which need to be addressed for example, fly tipping hotspots, or areas subject to vandalism or willful damage and graffiti.

Information, reports and monitoring on Estate Walkabouts will be shared with the community and on Futures's website.

3.3 Prevention or responding to damage and/or misuse of areas

As a result of inspections or adhoc checks any issues identified will be reported to the relevant teams to make sure appropriate action is taken, for example, damage or graffiti will be forwarded to the Grounds Maintenance teams for remedial works.

Where abandoned vehicles are identified, these are vehicles that are not taxed, SORN or found to be in a road worthy condition, action will be taken to remove the vehicles in

partnership with the Local Authority and in conjunction with Futures's ASB Procedures.

Where reports of damage or misuse is highlighted as a regular occurrence these will be classed as 'hotspot' areas and appropriate action will be undertaken by the Communities Team in accordance with the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.

Where hotspot areas are apparent action will be taken to 'design out' these issues, through projects such as 'Public Realm' working with the community affected and other partner agencies and Local Authorities.

3.4 Permissions

Customers of Futures can request permission to make alterations or enhancements (e.g. create seating areas) to their homes and communal garden areas.

Permissions are submitted to the Asset Management Team and are considered on a case-by-case basis in conjunction with the Permissions Policy and Procedures.

Futures will seek to approve requests as follows:

- The proposed alterations or enhancements have been risk assessed and do not pose an obstruction or hazard or cause for any other health and safety concerns
- The requested alteration would not be considered offensive to any other person or persons and the majority of the community it affects are in agreement with the proposal

Futures reserves the right to reject any proposal it does not deem fit for purpose or where it is felt that not all the community affected will benefit from the proposed alteration or enhancement.

3.5 Excluded items

Futures will not give permission for the following (list not exhaustive):

- Any items that are combustible or pose a significant fire risk. However, consideration may be given to allow BBQ's where coals are required and where the BBQ is kept away from any building or trees/hedges etc.
- Any items that prevent or limits the use of the shared facilities or open spaces by other members of the immediate community.
- Any items that cause obstruction and reduces access to main walkways, door entries/exits, bin stores or any other means of access.
- Any items that may cause nuisance to others living in the immediate vicinity as per the terms and conditions of our tenancy agreements.
- Any items which exclude others from participating.

All requests for permissions will be considered on fair and consistent basis.

4. Implementation of this policy

The Communities Team are primarily responsible for making sure communal areas and the estates managed by Futures are cared for with the support of other teams within the business.

Any enforcement action required will be managed by the Communities Team.

The Housing Support Schemes are the responsibility of the Support Services Lead and any such enforcement action for damage or misuse will be managed by the support team.

5. Review of policy

This policy will be reviewed every three years from the date of co-executive's approval, or at any time regulation or legislation changes.

Neighbourhood facilities and communal areas policy document control							
Valid from	Valid to	Version	Status	Author	Owner	Approval	Description of change
Jan 2021	Jan 2024	5	Final	Head of N'hoods	Head of N'hoods	Group Co-Exec	Reviewed & Rewritten
April 2024	April 2027	6	Review	Director of Housing	Director of Housing	Group Co-Exec	Reviewed and aligned with new standards
Jan 2025	Jan 2028	7	Final	Housing Ops Manager	Director of Housing	Co Exec	Reviewed and aligned with Fire Safety in Purpose Build Blocks of Flats guidance
Distribution/confidentiality:				Customers and team members			
Other relevant documents:				Other Policies and Strategies that relate to this one: Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy Complaints Policy and Procedure Customer and Community Engagement Strategy Customer Experience Strategy (Corporate Plan) Homes Strategy (Corporate Plan) RSH Consumer Standards Compliance Sustainability Strategy **Green Space Strategy** Health & Safety Policy			