



## INNISFREE HOUSING ASSOCIATION

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Management of Communal Areas Policy

# MANAGEMENT OF COMMUNAL AREAS POLICY

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Innisfree Housing Association (Innisfree) works with tenants to deliver the homes, services, and neighbourhoods we and our local communities want. Having a clean, safe, and well-maintained environment in which to live is important to our tenants and we recognise that the appearance of an estate or group of homes enhances a positive environment in which to live. Innisfree aim to make our homes and surrounding areas as attractive and well maintained as possible.
- 1.2 Our neighbourhoods are diverse and can be defined estates, blocks, singular or groups of homes with shared external or internal areas, with or without pockets of land and access roads.
- 1.3 The way that we manage our different estates, blocks and schemes will be influenced by their individual characteristics and management requirements.
- 1.4 This policy outlines the services we will provide, and the roles and responsibilities of residents in helping us to achieve these goals together.

## 2. LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

- 2.1 There is a significant raft of legislation and regulation that surround estate management. This policy sets out Innisfree's responsibilities to comply with the relevant legislation and associated regulatory guidance.
- 2.2 The list included relates to estate management but is not exhaustive:
  - 2.2.1 Regulatory:**  
Regulator of Social Housing Regulatory Framework:
    - (i) Neighbourhood and Community Standard (April 2012) – specific expectations 1.1, 1.2, 2.1 and 2.2):
      - 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.

- Registered providers shall co-operate with relevant partners to help promote social, environmental, and economic wellbeing in the areas where they own properties.
  - Registered providers shall consult with tenants in developing a published policy for maintaining and improving the neighbourhoods associated with their homes. This applies where the registered provider has a responsibility (either exclusively or in part) for the conditions of that neighbourhood. The Policy shall include any communal areas associated with the registered provider's homes.
  - Registered providers, having taken account of their presence and impact within the areas where they own properties, shall:
    - a) Identify and publish the roles they are able to play within the areas where they have properties;
    - b) Co-operate with local partnership arrangements and strategic housing functions of local authorities where they are able to assist them in achieving their objectives.
- (ii) Home Standard (April 2012) – 1.2(b):
- Registered providers shall meet all applicable statutory requirements that provide for the health and safety of the occupants in their homes

### **2.2.2 Legislative**

The Health & Safety Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (FSO) as amended by the Fire Safety Act 2022 requires landlords to carry out fire risk assessments in the common areas of Houses of Multiple Occupation, flats, maisonettes, and sheltered accommodation.

## **3. DEFINITIONS**

- 3.1 We define Estates as localities where we own and manage a significant number of properties.
- 3.2 We define Neighbourhoods as the immediate surroundings and environment of the area where our tenants live.

3.3 We define Communal Areas as areas of land (pavements, parking bays, grounds, etc.) or internal hallways, landings and stairwells, bin stores, etc. in blocks of flats or shared houses, owned or managed by Innisfree and which are for the shared use of our tenants.

3.4 We define Consortium Estates as those where more than one social landlord owns or manages properties on the estate.

## 4. STATEMENT OF INTENT

4.1 Innisfree as a social landlord must provide good quality housing services for our residents and prospective residents, and we pride ourselves in doing so.

4.2 While the appearance of individual homes can enhance or detract from the general environment, repairs, property standards and planned maintenance are covered under Innisfree's separate Responsive Repairs, Lettable Standards, and Planned Works policies and procedures.

4.3 We expect residents to keep their gardens and communal areas tidy, report communal repairs quickly and not to do anything that would adversely affect the environment that everyone shares and wants to enjoy. In return, Innisfree will:

- Ensure that our Housing team conduct regular estate inspections to check that they are well-maintained, tidy, and free from graffiti or fly tipping
- Regularly cut grassed areas and shrubbery
- Inspect internal communal areas regularly to ensure that they are clean, well-maintained, and free from tenant's personal belongings
- Regularly check and maintain shared facilities such as lifts and play areas to ensure they are safe and fit for purpose, as outlined in our Lift Maintenance and Responsive Repairs Policies.
- Work closely with residents to develop local resident engagement to support and develop active, vibrant communities
- Work closely with local Police and other services to help keep our estates free from antisocial behaviour, harassment and hate crime, as outlined in our Antisocial Behaviour, and Hate Crime policies

## 5. RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT

- 5.1 Residents' local knowledge and involvement in the estate inspection process is invaluable to Innisfree as it helps to lead towards a more sustained improvement in services and the local neighbourhood environment.
- 5.2 We will consult with and involve our residents about the services we provide to our estates and communal areas, so that we meet the needs of our residents. We encourage residents to have a key role by:
- Reporting any problems, complaints, or service failures to us
  - Being involved in estate inspections to help provide feedback and to monitor our cleaning and grounds maintenance services
  - Having their say about their local community areas through resident groups, surveys, and by any other means available to them
  - Providing feedback when consulted on specific issues
- 5.3 We encourage residents to share feedback with their Housing Officer on their estates and communal areas. Where areas of improvement are requested or recognised, Innisfree staff will take these into consideration and provide feedback.

## 6. RESIDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

- 6.1 Innisfree encourages our residents to keep our estates and communal areas clean and well-maintained by reminding them of their responsibilities, and where necessary taking action to enforce the terms of their Tenancy Agreement.

### 6.2 Communal Areas

Residents are reminded to:

- Keep all internal communal areas clean and tidy
- Adhere to fire safety regulations not to store items such as mobility scooters, bicycles, prams etc. in communal areas, including stairwells and communal entrance ways.

- Not cause any obstruction or nuisance in a shared area
- Not dump or allow to be dumped, items of rubbish in internal or external communal areas. Such as general household rubbish, furniture, and white goods.

### 6.3 **Parking**

Residents are reminded to:

- Park considerately in parking areas on our estates
- Adhere to the parking restrictions in place for the specific parking areas
- Not to run or conduct any car repair or sales business from these parking areas or green areas on our estates

### 6.4 **Pets**

Residents are reminded to adhere to the terms of our Pets Policy by:

- Keeping their pets under control and remain on the lead whilst in a communal area
- Not allowing their pets to foul in or damage any communal areas

## 7. OTHER AGENCIES RESPONSIBILITIES

- 7.1 Where issues are identified or reported on estates that are not the responsibility of Innisfree, they will be noted, and residents will be advised to report the issue directly to the relevant organisation. For example, to the Police, Environmental Health, or the Local Authority.
- 7.2 Where the issues persist and they are detrimentally affecting our residents, we will try to work with the partner agencies concerned to improve the safety, security, or appearance of a wider area.

## 8. ESTATE INSPECTIONS

- 8.1 Innisfree manages and maintains our blocks, estates, and communal areas through regular estate inspections. The Housing Officer for the scheme will inspect the property every three months (quarterly) and will invite Innisfree residents living on the estate or in the building ahead of time so that they have the opportunity to actively participate in the inspection.
- 8.2 The Housing Officer will visit and formally inspect the estate and external communal areas to review the quality and standard of the estate. They will:
- Engage with residents and invite them to estate inspections so that they can raise any concerns or feedback
  - Encourage partnership working with external agencies as needed
  - Monitor the cleaning and grounds maintenance contracts
  - Check for any health and safety issues that need to be addressed
  - Report any necessary repairs to our Maintenance team or to other external agencies
  - Report any illegal fly tipping or abandoned vehicles to the Local Authority
  - Be proactive with enforcement of the terms of our Tenancy Agreements
- 8.3 When conducting an Estate Inspection, our Housing Officers use a grading system to ensure that we are consistent in our standards of assessment. Where a neighbourhood or estate is frequently assessed as unsatisfactory, we will consider taking a planned approach with specific actions for improvement to ensure that any additional services or facilities are costed, planned, and monitored.

## 9. COMMUNAL CLEANING AND GROUNDS MAINTENANCE

- 9.1 To ensure that shared and communal areas of our properties and estates are well maintained, Innisfree use contractors to provide a cleaning and grounds maintenance service for many of our estates.



- 9.2 On estates and in buildings that Innisfree own and manage, we have arranged a set schedule for cleaners to attend the building and clean the internal areas such as flooring, walls, stairwells, lifts, and bin areas. For schemes that we manage that have an outside space, we have arranged a set schedule for operatives to attend and maintain the grounds, undertaking tasks such as litter picking, grass cutting, hedge trimming, and tree cutting.
- 9.3 For estates that that are not managed by Innisfree, and where our homes are part of a consortium, the lead consortium landlord is often responsible for the cleaning and grounds maintenance of the properties there and will set the timings of their schedule.
- 9.4 Where Innisfree are not responsible for the cleaning or grounds maintenance of a property we manage, we remain responsible for ensuring that the cleaning and grounds maintenance service provided by the consortium lead is held to a reasonable standard. We will liaise with the consortium lead to resolve issues should they arise.
- 9.5 Innisfree advertise the frequency of our cleaning and grounds maintenance services on the notice boards inside the relevant communal areas of our schemes and estates. Residents are encouraged to report any feedback or concerns to their Housing Officer, whose contact details are provided on the notice boards.

## 10. REFUSE AND RECYCLING

- 10.1 Innisfree will work closely with Local Authorities to ensure that our estates and schemes have the appropriate facilities for disposing of rubbish and recycling.
- 10.2 We will take action wherever possible against those found to be dumping rubbish or fly tipping on our estates, including recharging them for the costs and providing evidence to support prosecution.

- 10.3 Where we identify schemes that have acute or long-term issues relating to refuse, recycling, dumped rubbish or fly-tipping and additional services or activities above our usual services are required, we will work with the local authority and consortium lead where applicable, to consider alternative or improved refuse and recycling facilities.

## 11. ILLEGAL DUMPING OF RUBBISH

- 11.1 Illegal dumping of rubbish, also known as fly tipping, is prevalent throughout the London boroughs and can be an environmental health issue.
- 11.2 Innisfree will work with Local Authorities to investigate incidents of fly tipping bulky items on Innisfree owned land.
- 11.3 We will work to remove fly tipping within 5 working days. If there is a significant risk to health and safety of residents, we will remove the rubbish within 2 working days of it being reported to us.
- 11.4 Innisfree are unable to remove fly tipping from land that does not belong to us, however we will contact the relevant agency to resolve the matter where we are able.
- 11.5 Residents are actively encouraged to report incidents of fly tipping to Innisfree and the relevant local authority, to help keep our estates and communal areas safe and clean.

## 12. VEHICLES AND PARKING

- 12.1 Abandoned vehicles and inconsiderate parking can impact on the appearance of an estate, can create health and safety issues, and can encourage antisocial behaviour.
- 12.2 We will work with residents and external agencies to reduce irresponsible parking, parking-related disputes, abandoned vehicles, and resolve access problems for emergency and service vehicles.

- 12.3 On certain estates we have appointed a managing agent to operate a parking scheme or parking maintenance to ensure the effective management and control of the parking spaces and facilities.
- 12.4 Through our Estate Inspections, we will inspect our estates and communal areas for abandoned vehicles at least every three months.
- 12.5 Innisfree will respond to a report of an abandoned vehicle on Innisfree owned land within 10 working days of it being noted or reported to us. We will work with the local authority and the Drivers and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) to identify owners of suspected abandoned vehicles and arrange for the vehicle to be removed. Residents are advised that the legal process for removing abandoned cars can be a lengthy process and is managed by the Local Authority.

### 13. PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT

- 13.1 Where Innisfree owns play equipment, we will ensure that it is safe to use, properly inspected and fit for purpose.
- 13.2 We will undertake regular inspections of play equipment as part of our estate inspections and through an external specialist, to assess whether the equipment is safe and structurally sound.

### 14. VANDALISM

- 14.1 Innisfree takes all reports of vandalism to our communal areas seriously. We take a positive approach to working with other agencies and groups to discourage acts of vandalism.
- 14.2 We aim to remove graffiti within 5 working days of it being reported to us or identified by Innisfree staff. If the graffiti is of a sexual, racial, or offensive nature we will remove it within 2 working days and report the matter to the Police where appropriate.
- 14.3 If we are able to identify the perpetrators of the graffiti, we may recharge them for the full cost of any works we have to carry out to make good any damage caused.

## 15. DATA SHARING

- 15.1 All information will be stored in our Housing Management systems. All case notes, case files, and personal information will be kept confidential in line with the Data Protection Act 2018. We will adhere to the Data Protection Act and comply with General Data Protection Regulation for Sharing Personal Information to ensure that we maintain confidentiality of all parties.
- 15.2 We will share information with third parties where we have an information sharing protocol in place, if there are safeguarding concerns, or we have a duty to do so for the purpose of crime prevention under the provisions of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, and the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018 (and any other relevant legislation) justify it.

## 16. EQUALITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION

- 16.1 We are committed to embedding the Equality Act 2010 into our Policies and Procedures. As part of this commitment, staff should facilitate reasonable adjustments and adapt our standard policies and procedures wherever possible, to ensure every individual can access our services.
- 16.2 To make an adjustment means to change work practices to avoid or correct the disadvantage to a person with a disability. This may include:
- Allowing more time than we would usually for someone to provide information that we needed.
  - Providing specialist equipment or additional support such as a sign language interpreter.

## 17. CONSULTATION AND REVIEWING THIS POLICY

- 17.1 Innisfree will consult with residents on this policy via our website and newsletter.
- 17.2 The policy will be reviewed every 3 years, or with any changes to regulation or legislation.



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