

Neighbourhood and Community Policy

Date Issued: 03/06/2026	Version: 1
Owner: Customer Experience	Next Scheduled Review:03/06/2029

1. Scope

- 1.1 This policy sets out Flint Housing’s approach to managing communal areas and neighbourhoods.
- 1.2 This policy applies to neighbourhoods where Flint Housing owns and manages properties and is directly responsible for communal areas. It also covers shared spaces linked to our properties where a third party owns or controls the area, where Flint Housing has obligations, rights or influence through its role as landlord, leaseholder, shared owner landlord, freeholder or under management arrangements.
- 1.3 For the purposes of this policy, any reference to Flint Housing or “our” or “we” shall be relevant to all its associated entities and administered, if applicable, by its Management Provider(s) or other third-party block manager.

2. Aims and Objectives

- 2.1 This policy explains how we will keep our neighbourhoods and communal areas clean, safe and well managed, creating places residents can be proud of while supporting quality of life, value for money, and wider social and environmental outcomes.
 - 2.2 Our neighbourhoods can be defined as estates, groups of properties with shared external or internal areas, or adhoc roads or pockets of land that we are responsible for. We recognise that our neighbourhoods are diverse and so our approach to neighbourhood management reflects the local and individual requirements of our properties, communal areas, and associated land in a particular area.
 - 2.3 We will work in partnership with our tenants, local agencies, and partners to provide safe environments, to prevent and manage anti-social behaviour and to promote community engagement to deliver sustainable communities.
 - 2.4 Our policy addresses those aspects of neighbourhood management that are specific to the local areas in which we own properties.
 - 2.5 Where Flint Housing owns or directly controls communal areas, we will be responsible for setting service level agreements, arranging services, monitoring performance and taking action to address issues in line with this policy. This includes, where applicable, appointing contractors or managing agents, specifying service requirements and responding directly to issues affecting those areas.
 - 2.6 Where communal areas are owned or controlled by a third party and Flint Housing’s interest is that of a leaseholder or similar stakeholder, our role will usually be to monitor standards, raise concerns, challenge poor performance where appropriate, and work with the relevant freeholder, head landlord, managing agent, or other responsible body to seek resolution. In these circumstances, Flint Housing may not be able to instruct works directly or determine service standards separately, but we will seek to advocate for residents and use any rights available to us under leases, contracts or other management arrangements.
 - 2.7 This policy has been written having regard to Flint Housing’s vision and mission and in line with the regulatory standards and in particular, the Neighbourhood and Community Standard. In applying this policy, we will seek to be clear with residents about the role Flint Housing plays in promoting social, environmental and economic wellbeing in the areas where we provide social housing, and how that role will be delivered in practice.
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3. Key terms and definitions

- 3.1 **Grounds maintenance** of communal areas can be described as the cutting and maintenance of grassed areas, the maintenance of shrubs, hedges, bushes and weed control of all hard and soft areas.
- 3.2 **Estate/block:** A block of flats or a collection of houses with shared external (estate) and/or internal (block) areas.
- 3.3 **CCTV** (closed circuit television): A television system used for surveillance and/or monitoring of internal or external communal areas.
- 3.4 **Communal areas:** spaces shared by more than one property such as landings, hallways, gardens, bin or cycle store and garage blocks.

4. Policy

Key Principles

- 4.1 We aim to create neighbourhoods that residents and the wider community can be proud of, with services delivered in line with relevant legal, regulatory and health and safety requirements, as well as local maintenance needs and agreed standards.
- To ensure we have clear standards so that residents know what to expect from our service.
 - To ensure our services deliver value for money.
 - To maintain a regular, visible presence e.g. property inspections.
 - To ensure we comply with all Health & Safety requirements.
 - To encourage residents to take responsibility for their environment and neighbourhood.
 - To take a robust approach to environmental crime which includes fly-tipping, abandoned cars and dog mess.
 - To take tenants' views into account when shaping neighbourhood services and to communicate clearly how residents can report issues, what they can expect from us and how we will keep them informed of the service provided and how/if it affects them.

Grounds Maintenance

- 4.2 Where applicable, we will work alongside tenants and leaseholders to deliver a grounds maintenance service to an agreed standard by engaging third party estate managers that will ensure that borders and shrub areas are looked after according to the plant species and are weed and litter free, that grassed areas are cut as appropriate during the different seasons and hard landscaped areas are free of debris.

Trees

- 4.3 Where applicable, we will actively manage our existing tree population, ensuring that sector best practice guidelines and legislation are followed at all times.
- 4.4 Where we identify that a tree is dead, diseased or dangerous, we will carry out work to ensure that it poses no risk to the public or property. We aim to maintain a healthy tree population so we will not carry out work for aesthetic or light restriction reasons only.
- 4.5 On occasions we may have to remove an established tree, but we will not do this unnecessarily. We will try to replace the tree, so our tree management approach is sustainable.
- 4.6 We may inspect and undertake works to trees in tenant's gardens where they pose a possible health and safety risk or are damaging the property. Generally, the maintenance of trees in tenants' gardens is the responsibility of the tenant and this is specified in the tenancy agreement.
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Cleaning in communal areas

- 4.7 We will ensure that the communal areas of our schemes, blocks, estates and neighbourhoods are clean and safe and will engage with relevant parties to achieve this. We also expect our tenants and other residents to play their part in keeping their neighbourhoods clean by disposing of unwanted items responsibly. Where Flint Housing is directly responsible for the communal area, we will arrange or deliver the relevant service. Where a third party owns or manages the communal area, we will report concerns and seek action from the responsible provider, however the delivery of the service may sit outside Flint Housing's direct control.
- 4.8 Cleaning can be described as keeping internal and external communal areas swept, mopped and free from litter and graffiti.
- 4.9 In cases where we are responsible for the upkeep of the communal areas, we will often use a contractor to deliver a cleaning service for us but in some neighbourhoods, we understand that tenants may wish to deliver the service themselves. In such cases, we will work with communities who chose to deliver the service themselves and consult before introducing a contractual service. However, there may be times where we choose to impose such a service even if the majority are not in favour, for instance if the standard is regularly below agreed expectations.
- 4.10 Where a direct cleaning contract is in place, we will work alongside tenants to design a specification that delivers a service to an agreed standard at all times.
- 4.11 We will encourage tenants to play an active role in monitoring the quality of service delivered and provide feedback to Flint directly or our housing management provider(s).
- 4.12 We expect dog owners to act responsibly by removing dog waste for appropriate private disposal or placing it in dog waste bins if provided. We will ensure that dog waste bins that we own are emptied regularly.

Environmental crime including fly tipping

- 4.13 We take a robust approach to environmental crime, and we will work in partnership with local enforcement agencies, which could include legal action against those committing such crimes on our land, for example fly tipping. We take such issues seriously and will ensure these are dealt with quickly.
- 4.14 If we are able to establish who is responsible, the person will be asked to remove the items. If they do not do so within the timescale we have given them, we will arrange for the removal of the items and recharge those concerned for the whole cost of this service. Where these recharges are not paid, the resident concerned will be pursued for the costs. We will also take legal action where appropriate.

Play areas

- 4.15 Where we own play areas, we will ensure that they are safe to use, properly inspected and fit for purpose. We are responsible for providing, inspecting and maintaining safe play equipment and surfaces. To help keep children safe, parents and guardians are responsible for supervising children and for their behaviour while using play areas.
- 4.16 Our play areas and equipment are designed and installed in compliance with statutory requirements, legislation and design standards.
- 4.17 We will carry out or nominate an independent suitably qualified body to regularly inspect and risk-assess play areas and equipment that we own according to the relevant legislation.
- 4.18 We will ensure that all play area equipment is maintained in the appropriate condition using a combination of planned preventive maintenance and responsive repairs.

Parking

- 4.19 Our tenancy agreements have specific clauses related to parking which tenants must adhere to.
- 4.20 All vehicles within our property boundaries must be taxed, insured and have a MOT. We consider vehicles parked within our property boundaries that do not meet these requirements to
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be causing a nuisance. We will take action to remove them in accordance with our procedures and permit other authorised bodies such as the police or DVLA to do likewise.

- 4.21 We do not permit SORN to apply to vehicles that are untaxed or not insured within our property boundaries, including car parks. This does not apply to a driveway which is part of an individual property. Cars in gardens that are eyesores or appear abandoned are not permitted and we will take further action as appropriate if this occurs.
- 4.22 We may have some areas where we have installed barriers, gates or bollards to restrict parking. Although we recognise that for some individuals this can make access more difficult, for example if they have several visitors during the day or have mobility difficulties, we will balance the needs of the individual against those of the wider community.
- 4.23 We will consult before introducing any parking service that will involve additional charges for residents. However, there may be times where we choose to impose such a service even if the majority are not in favour, for instance if the parking is a safety issue, if our facilities are being regularly abused and we need to secure them, or the resources we are using to manage the complaints and issues mean it is a financial/resource drain on us.
- 4.24 We do not designate communal parking spaces to individual residents; all our communal spaces are available to all our tenants and their visitors, although those marked for blue badge holders are only available for those who are eligible.
- 4.25 We will not normally intervene in parking disputes between residents unless someone is in breach of their tenancy due to the way they are using parking facilities, the way they are behaving towards other residents (e.g. where their actions are serious enough as to cause alarm and distress to others) or they are abusing facilities due to multiple vehicle ownership.

Communal repairs including lighting

- 4.26 All Flint Housing staff and contractors working in our neighbourhoods are expected to report communal repairs and other issues they identify, particularly where there is a health and safety risk. In addition to planned services, we will respond to reported issues affecting communal areas and the wider neighbourhood, including repairs, fly-tipping, graffiti and similar concerns. Issues presenting an immediate risk, obstruction or health hazard will be prioritised and we will aim to respond within one working day.
- 4.27 Depending on the development, we or an unconnected third party may be responsible for security lighting and other external lighting on some of our estates. We will maintain the lighting we are responsible for and will replace bulbs and fixtures as appropriate. We will report defective lighting on our estates to the relevant party where we are not responsible. The same distinction applies more broadly to communal repairs: where Flint Housing is responsible for the communal area, we will arrange works directly; where a third party is responsible, we will raise the matter with them and seek resolution, and timescales and delivery may depend on that third party's obligations and response.
- 4.28 Our neighbourhoods may in future include a variety of features including service roads, footpaths, riverbanks and bridges. When our staff are in these areas, they will investigate any problems they find in relation to issues such as fly-tipping, abandoned cars and the parking of caravans and trailers without permission. Their condition will be examined to determine whether they are safe, stable and in good repair.

External Structures including satellite dishes

- 4.29 Tenants should always seek the prior consent from us before making any alterations to a property, including, but not limited to, erecting any garages, greenhouses, sheds, satellite dishes, CCTV cameras or any other external structures. All requests must comply with planning or other statutory regulations applicable and the tenancy or lease agreement.
 - 4.30 We will take into account the nature of the alteration, the impact on the property, the appearance of the area and its effect on neighbours in assessing the request.
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- 4.31 Express permission is required prior to any breaches of the building structure for the installation of cabling etc. Retaining the building integrity and ensuring resident safety is our number one priority.

Signage

- 4.32 We will ensure that signage on our estates is clear, necessary, appropriate and well maintained.
- 4.33 We will ensure that health and safety and other mandatory signage is present where required.
- 4.34 We will avoid unnecessary signage and will remove outdated and obsolete signage. We will generally not put up signage such as 'no ball games' as this is not enforceable and we support outdoor activities for young people.

Snow/leaf clearance

- 4.35 In winter months we are unable to prevent a build-up of leaves but will look to ensure that any build-up does not pose a slip hazard on pathways.
- 4.36 We are generally unable to grit and clear snowfalls/ice from our neighbourhoods as this would not be practical nor affordable. Residents are responsible for gritting or clearing snow on any sole or shared pavements to their properties.
- 4.37 We will ensure that grit bins, if provided, are replenished so that grit is available for our tenants and leaseholders to use.
- 4.38 We will work with the local authority to encourage regular replenishment of grit bins on the public highway in neighbourhoods where we manage properties.

Property Inspections

- 4.39 Our housing management teams work within our neighbourhoods and, in addition to routine visits, may carry out programmed neighbourhood inspections. Where formal block or estate inspection programmes are in place, these will normally take place at least quarterly unless local circumstances or risk levels require more frequent visits.
- 4.40 We will publish our programme of inspections and encourage tenants and other local stakeholders to attend and participate.
- 4.41 We will also visit each of our blocks regularly on a risk assessed basis to identify and resolve any health and safety issues so that our neighbourhoods are a safe place to live.
- 4.42 Items must not be stored in communal areas. Where items are left in shared areas, including bin or cycle stores, we may remove them if they create a hazard, obstruct access or adversely affect the environment and recharge the responsible resident. Where pest activity is identified in communal areas, we will arrange appropriate treatment and may also carry out follow-on works to help prevent recurrence.

Security and Anti-social behaviour

- 4.43 We will work with residents to reduce crime, nuisance and anti-social behaviour on our estates. This includes working with relevant agencies to deter and tackle anti-social behaviour and hate incidents, making it easy for residents to report concerns, keeping residents informed about the progress of their case and taking prompt and proportionate action, having regard to the tools and legal powers available to us. We will support residents affected by anti-social behaviour, hate incidents or domestic abuse by responding appropriately within our role, working with partner agencies and signposting residents to specialist advice and support where needed. For further information on our approach to ASB, hate incidents and domestic abuse, please refer to the relevant policies.
- 4.44 We will work closely with local police safer neighbourhood teams, the fire service and other partners. Where there are high incidences of crime and anti-social behaviour, and where we can, we may install CCTV on estates – on a temporary or permanent basis – to combat disorder, gather evidence, reduce fear and bolster a sense of safety and accountability among affected residents. Our ASB policy has more details regarding our approach to safety and security in our neighbourhoods.
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Partnership working

- 4.45 We recognise that high quality sustainable neighbourhoods can only be achieved if organisations work together. We will work with local authorities, the police, other landlords and relevant partners, and where appropriate will contribute to local partnership arrangements and the strategic housing function of local authorities where this supports the wellbeing of our neighbourhoods and communities.
- 4.46 Unauthorised use of our land under the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994: Section 61 would allow the Police to move Travellers or trespassers off our land immediately.
- 4.47 We expect tenants and leaseholders to help us maintain high standards across our estates and communal areas. This includes keeping their own space tidy, disposing of household and bulky waste responsibly, reporting repairs, hazards or incidents affecting shared areas, and treating neighbours and the local environment with respect.
- 4.48 We will take the opportunity when it arises through development and regeneration to support good design so problems can be designed out where appropriate, in consultation with partners, tenants and the wider community.

5. Equality and diversity

- 5.1 Flint Housing is committed to ensuring that all services are accessible to all residents. We will ensure that our staff, or where applicable our housing management provider, communicate appropriately with residents and have access to the information needed to support delivery of this policy.
- 5.2 This policy will be applied fairly and with respect for all residents. We recognise our duty to advance equality of opportunity and to prevent discrimination or victimisation on the grounds of age, sex, sexual orientation, disability, race, religion or belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, and any other protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010.
- 5.3 We recognise that some protected groups may be disproportionately affected and will take reasonable steps in applying this policy to meet individual needs and comply with the Equality Act 2010. For example, we may:
 - 5.3.1 Tailor our response to individual circumstances;
 - 5.3.2 provide support to residents who may have difficulty understanding this policy;
 - 5.3.3 provide information, where reasonably requested, in other languages or accessible formats such as Braille, large print or audio; and
 - 5.3.4 ensure these arrangements are delivered by Flint Housing or, where applicable, by our housing management provider on our behalf.

6. Monitoring and continuous improvement

- 6.1 This policy will be reviewed every three years, unless legislative, regulatory or business changes require an earlier review, to ensure that it remains effective and reflects good practice.
- 6.2 Where required, we will consult residents before introducing or changing chargeable services or when considering requests for new or varied services. We will also use feedback from residents, complaints, inspections, performance information and partnership working to identify where neighbourhood services need to improve. We record inspections, actions and outcomes and review this information monthly with our housing management provider(s) or block manager, supported by relevant KPIs, so that we can monitor performance and drive service improvement.

7. Legislation and related policies

- 7.1 This policy should be read alongside the RSH Neighbourhood and Community Standard and Flint Housing's wider policy framework, including relevant policies on antisocial behaviour to include abandoned vehicles, domestic abuse, complaints, resident engagement, ASB, parking, repairs, maintenance and service charges. Appropriate guidance and oversight will be put in place to support effective implementation.