



Tenancy and Estate Management Policy

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Sandwell Homes recognises that effective tenancy and estate management is a vital part of housing management service provision to tenants and residents of Sandwell.

1.2 To put this in context, during 2003 the Deputy Prime Minister emphasised the need to build sustainable communities in which people want to live.

This policy aims to address key tenancy and estate management issues that Sandwell Homes believes play a major role in creating sustainable communities.

1.3 Sandwell Homes is committed to ensure that all services provided are accessible and delivered to all tenants and residents without prejudice and in an anti-discriminatory manner.

1.4 This policy confirms Sandwell Homes commitment to giving tenants and residents quiet enjoyment of their homes in a safe and secure environment that they can take pride in.

1.5 It is recognised that tenancy and estate management is not purely about looking after buildings and the physical environment, it is also about providing and arranging advice, support and assistance to those tenants and residents who need it. Sandwell Homes, therefore, has defined tenancy and estate management as:

"Property management and services which aim to sustain communities through giving tenants and residents quiet enjoyment of their homes in a safe and secure environment"

1.6 Sandwell Homes will work with other agencies to deliver and fulfil the aim of providing decent living conditions and contribute towards building and supporting sustainable communities.

1.7 Sandwell Homes will ensure that quality services are provided that give value for money. Customer satisfaction will be of the highest priority in the delivery of this service.

1.8 Tenancy and Estate Management, therefore, covers a diverse range of issues, which include:

- Providing advice and assistance on tenancy matters, e.g. joint tenancies, succession, mutual exchange and other assignments:
- Providing support and assistance to all tenants but particularly, to new and vulnerable tenants:
- Providing advice and assistance to all tenants regarding their rights and responsibilities contained within their Tenancy Agreement:
- Enforcing tenancy conditions:
- Monitoring empty properties:
- Regular inspections and management of communal areas to ensure that safety and security is not compromised:
- Providing advice and assistance to tenants and residents and involving them in the provision of services which enhance the local community, for example: initiatives to reduce crime and improve the physical environment:
- The management and up-keep of the physical environment on housing estates, in co-operation with other agencies such as the Council and other statutory agencies to ensure that a satisfactory standard is maintained:

1.9 This policy is supported by a range of related policies, strategies, procedures and good practice guides that are in place or being developed. These include:

- Best Value Performance Plan . (SMBC)
- Equality Policy . (SMBC)
- Anti Harassment Policy . (Sandwell Homes)
- Anti-Social Behaviour Policy . (SMBC)
- Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy . (SMBC)
- Environmental Policy for Sandwell Council . (SMBC)
- Community Strategy . (SMBC)
- Community Plan . (SMBC)

- Supporting People Strategy . (SMBC)
- Community Care Policy . (Sandwell Homes)
- Sandwell Anti-Poverty Strategy . (SMBC)
- Homelessness Strategy . (SMBC)
- Income Management Policy . (Sandwell Homes)
- Choice Based Lettings Policy . (SMBC)
- Tenancy Agreement . (SMBC)
- Tenancy Handbook . (Sandwell Homes)
- Community Involvement Strategy . (SMBC)
- Tenants Compact . (SMBC)
- Tenant Involvement Strategy . (Sandwell Homes)
- Tenants Participation Compact . (SMBC)
- Local Compacts (6 Towns) . (Sandwell Homes)

2.0 **Aims and Objectives**

2.1 This policy aims to provide information on how Sandwell Homes will contribute to the well being of tenants and residents within their local communities.

2.2 The key objectives are:

- To contribute to the Council's priority to make the borough cleaner, tidier and safer:
- To improve the feeling of safety to communities and reduce incidents of crime and anti-social behaviour:
- Support housing investment and regeneration of the borough's physical form:
- Continually seek and utilise additional funding sources and partnership working to achieve outcomes that benefit the wider community:
- Support people's aspirations and improve the quality of life for people living on council-owned estates:
- Increase demand for housing in Sandwell:
- Increase satisfaction with the overall housing service:
- Provide a housing service that is: proactive, sensitive, efficient, responsive, flexible, accountable and fair:

3.0 Sandwell Homes' Commitment

3.1 Estate Management Issues:

- 3.1.1 Housing Officers will be responsible for maintaining a visible presence and inspecting their estates on a weekly, monthly and quarterly basis subject to local variations to identify issues such as: disrepair to council properties, overgrown / untidy gardens, damage to fencing, suspected abandoned properties, abandoned vehicles, fly-tipping, issues of health & safety and risk. Schedules of inspections and results will be displayed at the Neighbourhood office
- 3.1.2 Housing employees will be encouraged to identify schemes of work, following consultation with tenants and residents, which will improve safety and security on estates, help to reduce incidents of crime, enhance the general environment and contribute towards creating sustainable communities.
- 3.1.3 Sandwell Homes will ensure the safety of tenants and residents in high and low-rise flatted accommodation owned by Sandwell MBC, by carrying out regular inspections in compliance with current legislation and with Fire Authority requirements.
- 3.1.4 Additional security measures and reception facilities, at designated blocks of flats, will be provided by use of C.C.T.V (closed circuit television) and a concierge service to ensure the welfare and safety of tenants and their visitors.
- 3.1.5 Safety and security will also be addressed through local and borough tasking meeting.
- 3.1.6 Schedules of Janitorial and cleaning services provided to High/Low rise blocks will be displayed in communal entrances of flatted accommodation and good standards will be maintained in common areas such as: stairs, entrances, bin stores, drying areas, common pathways, garage sites, parking and grassed areas.
- 3.1.7 Grass, shrubs and trees on communal land managed by Sandwell Homes will be maintained on a regular basis and the required standards met in accordance with the service level agreement currently in place with the councils ground care services.
- 3.1.8 Advice and assistance regarding vermin / pest control will be provided to tenants and residents.

- 3.1.9 Sandwell Homes is committed to working with outside bodies and Tenant and Resident Associations in Sandwell, to identify improvements required, and prevent vandalism and crime on council-owned estates.
- 3.1.10 Incidents of vandalism and graffiti will be investigated and in cases where perpetrators are identified, appropriate action will be considered according to the nature and severity of the act. Racist graffiti will be removed as a matter of priority. Other graffiti will be dealt with according to set timescales. [\(See relevant service standards, attached to this policy as appendix 1\)](#)
- 3.1.11 Gardens in need of attention will be identified and dealt with by enforcing conditions of tenancy in accordance with existing procedures. Advice, support and assistance will be provided to tenants who are unable to maintain their gardens due to age or health problems.
- 3.1.12 Suspected abandoned properties will be identified, investigated and where necessary, brought back into use as quickly as possible.
- 3.1.13 Tenants and residents will be provided with appropriate advice and assistance to ensure household rubbish / waste is removed safely, efficiently and effectively.

3.2 Tenancy Issues:

- 3.2.1 Advice and assistance with respect to all tenancy related issues is available to tenants at any time during office hours, through our Neighbourhood Offices. Alternatively, home visits can be arranged.
- 3.2.2 At the offer and sign-up interview, housing officers will explain to all new tenants the Conditions of Tenancy and the consequences of a breach of the conditions.
- 3.2.3 New tenants will be visited within 2 weeks of their tenancy starting or sooner as identified within the offer interview, to establish how they are settling into their property and to provide advice, support and assistance where necessary through Neighbourhood Office based employees and Tenancy Support Officers. A follow-up visit will be carried out 3 months into the tenancy to identify whether further support is necessary.
- 3.2.4 Housing Officers will ensure that tenants understand their rights and responsibilities regarding their tenancy.

- 3.2.5 Sandwell Homes employees will act effectively when incidents of anti-social behaviour, all forms of harassment (Anti Harassment Policy) and other forms of nuisance occur. In the first instance, if the anti-social behaviour involves Sandwell Homes tenants, they will be encouraged to resolve the problem themselves or with the help of mediation. If this fails, or the anti-social behaviour is more complex or serious, legal action will be pursued. This may be in the form of using anti-social behaviour orders, injunctions, acceptable behaviour contracts, invoking powers to demote tenancies or action to re-possess the property. New legislation will be taken into account as and when applicable.
- 3.2.6 Sandwell Homes will ensure that all council-owned gas appliances in council-owned properties are serviced annually to conform to Health & Safety legislation and maintain safety of tenants.
- 3.2.7 Rechargeable repairs will be identified and persons responsible, charged for costs incurred.
- 3.2.8 Sandwell Homes will provide appropriate support to tenants and residents deemed vulnerable through the following: -
- **Housing Officers:** - will provide support and assistance, as far as possible, to tenants and residents who they feel are vulnerable but do not receive any support from other services / agencies, through personal contact to enable them to maintain their tenancy.
 - **Warden Service:** - provides daily contact with tenants who either, live in sheltered accommodation or have requested the service to ensure they receive adequate care and support to assist them to live independently for as long as they are able.
 - **Tenancy Support Officers:** - provide a housing related support service to Sandwell Homes tenants with identified support needs, enabling them to sustain their tenancy financially and in accordance with tenancy conditions and to encourage and facilitate their independence, quality of life, health and well-being.
 - **Community Alarms Service:** - offers a 24 hour, emergency response service to vulnerable people which includes victims of domestic violence who the Police have identified as at risk
 - **Interpreting & Translation Service:** - enables tenants and residents of Sandwell whose first language is not English, to access services

provided by Sandwell Homes easily and directly through improved communication methods.

- *Engaging other agencies & community groups*: - Sandwell Homes will work with partner agencies and community groups such as: Social Inclusion, Education, Health Services, Environmental Agencies, Leisure Services, Voluntary Agencies and Community Groups to ensure we fulfil our aims and objectives.

4.0 Performance Management and Review

- 4.1 Sandwell Homes will work in partnership with other agencies and service providers to achieve sustainable communities through effective tenancy and estate management on council-owned estates.
- 4.2 Performance indicators will be developed and used to monitor our own performance as well as the performance of contractors who provide services for us. ([Relevant service standards are attached to this policy as appendix 1](#))
- 4.3 Complaints will be investigated, monitored and used to improve services where necessary.
- 4.4 Satisfaction surveys will be used to monitor and improve performance.
- 4.5 Good practice will be publicised and shared internally and externally to improve services by reviewing practices and procedures when necessary.
- 4.6 Sandwell Homes employees will receive appropriate training, information and guidance, as well as resources / equipment to enable them to deliver quality services.
- 4.7 Tenants and residents will be consulted whenever possible to ensure that the services provided, are services that are appropriate and needed and delivered to a high standard.

5.0 Request for Comments / Suggestions

- 5.1 Sandwell Homes welcomes comments and suggestions regarding this policy, which will be considered in future reviews.

Please send your comments and suggestions to: -

Surjit Singh

Sandwell Homes Limited
Sandwell Road
West Bromwich
B70 8TB

Tel: 0121 569 6381

E.mail: surjit_singh@sandwellhomes.org.uk

APPENDIX

Performance / Service Standards

Sandwell Homes have a range of performance / service standards relating to tenancy and estate management, which employees currently work to.

These standards are subject to review following consultation with service users:

- **General:** - No person/s should be waiting at reception for more than 5 minutes, however, an interview should take place within 15 minutes of the initial request, where possible.
- **Tenancy Management:** - New tenants should be visited within 2 weeks of their tenancy starting or sooner as identified at the offer interview, to establish how they are settling into their property.

A post tenancy visit shall be carried out, by appointment, at 3 months and 9 months or at a frequency identified at the offer interview or at subsequent visits

- **Neighbour Nuisance and Anti-Social Behaviour:** - Complaints should be acknowledged in writing within 3 working days (unless complaint received verbally).

The initial investigation of anti-social behaviour and any other associated interviews with relevant parties should be completed within 10 working days of receipt of complaint.

Notification of the outcome of investigation should be made to the complainant, in writing, within 10 working days.

- **Homelessness:** - A homeless interview will be arranged within 5 working days where we have reason to believe a person is homeless or threatened with homelessness within the next 28 days.

The applicant shall be notified of their homeless decision, in writing, within 33 working days of the presentation date.

- **Domestic Abuse:** - Where a person discloses that they are a victim of domestic abuse and they are in immediate danger, a homeless interview shall be arranged within 1 working day.

The applicant shall be notified of their homeless decision, in writing, within 33 working days of the presentation date.

For further guidance on supporting domestic abuse victims see Sandwell Homes Operations Division Domestic Abuse Policy 2008 (QP9.17).

- **Estate Inspections:** - All estates will be inspected on a weekly monthly and quarterly basis subject to local variation
- **Removal of Graffiti:** - Racist and obscene graffiti will be removed within 24 hours. Other graffiti will be removed within 10 working days.
- **Removal of Rubbish:** - Housing Officers will identify rubbish on their estates and arrange removal through Environment Direct or Facilities Management according to the type of rubbish, amount & location.
- **Garage Sites:** - Tenants of garages to be contacted and interviewed within 7 days of a breach in the Tenancy Conditions identified.
- **Stray Dogs, Horses & Fouling:** - Where a problem is identified, action should be commenced within 24 hours.
- **Abandoned Vehicles:** - When an abandoned vehicle is identified, action to be initiated within 24 hours.
- **Illegal Parking:** - Where illegal parking is identified, action should be initiated within 24 hours.

Policy reviewed July 2008