



Accent

# Good Neighbourhood Management Policy

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ACCENTGROUP.ORG

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Purpose: This policy provides information for customer, colleagues and partners about how we approach neighbourhood issues which are not antisocial behaviour but still require a landlord response. This includes how we manage our estates to ensure they are maintained to a high standard.

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# 1. Introduction

We want our customers to live on estates and in neighborhoods that are safe, secure and well-maintained. Where we refer to an estate, it may mean houses with shared communal areas or a block (or blocks) of flats or a mixture of both.

This policy will provide a clear framework for dealing sensitively and proportionally with behaviours, that are NOT Antisocial Behaviour (ASB), and therefore unlikely to be a tenancy breach, that may require a different response from us as a landlord.

Where the behaviour is NOT ASB, and therefore, unlikely to be a tenancy breach we will not seek to apportion blame, nor will we be likely to consider any of our legal tools which are available to use in ASB cases.

Although some behaviours are not ASB they can still cause a great deal of upset and frustration to customers, creating tensions between neighbours and wider communities. Whilst we may be limited in our responses, this policy is designed to lead to better outcomes and set out how we may be able to assist.

## 2. References

Accent Documents:

- Tenancy Agreements, leases, transfers
- Antisocial behaviour and Hate Crime Policy
- Antisocial behaviour and Hate Crime Procedure
- Noise App user guidance
- Safeguarding Policy
- Allocation and Lettings Policy and Procedure
- Tenancy Policy
- Estate Management Procedure
- Estate Management Guidance
- Customer and Building Safety Policy
- Customer Engagement Policy
- Responsive Repairs and Voids Policy
- Complaints and Compensation Policy
- Customer Income and Arrears Policy
- CCTV Policy
- Repairs policy
- Customer Engagement Policy

Legal / Regulatory requirements:

- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
- Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Act 2020
- Housing Act 1996
- Housing and Regeneration Act 2008
- Building Safety Act 2022
- Regulatory Consumer Standards:
  - The Safety and Quality Homes Standard

- The Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard
- The Neighbourhood and Community Standard

This policy is based on the recommendations made in the Housing Ombudsman Spotlight Report 'Time to be Heard.'

### 3. Our Approach

#### Good Neighbourhood Management

The definition of ASB is subjective based on how an experience makes a person feel. Every person has different tolerances, expectations and perceptions when deciding a behaviour is or is not appropriate. This means that some people will see certain behaviour as 'antisocial' even if the behaviour may be considered reasonable.

Some behaviour may impact a customer but there is no intention by the other customer to offend / cause harm or upset, and therefore may not be considered as unreasonable. Examples of behaviour which we do not consider to be ASB include but are not limited to:

- Parking disagreements (if the other driver is parking in accordance with all contractual/legal requirements)
- Cooking smells
- Cultural differences
- 'Dirty looks'
- The positioning of refuse bins
- Personal dislikes
- Personal relationship breakdowns
- Children falling out with each other.
- Isolated incidents of loud music
- General household or living noise (babies crying, children playing, people talking and walking in their homes, closing doors and windows, vacuuming, and using white goods, DIY, working from home in a computer-based role)
- Isolated incidents of loud shouting and arguing
- Motorbike/car engines starting/running

How we can help:

We will ensure customers have the information they need to manage neighbourhood issues (including their communication with their neighbours) and where required, know how to inform us regarding an escalation of the issue. This information is available on our website.

We will fund mediation services where communication has broken down between customers.

There may be times where we refer to and consult partner agencies, with permission, to share information and identify the best possible support and guidance.

**Triage Reports** - We will triage reports to ensure our team members, partners and customers understand how a decision is reached about whether a matter should be dealt

with under our antisocial behaviour and hate crime policy or the Good Neighbourhood Management Policy. This will ensure that low level issues causing neighbourhood friction are dealt with in line with the appropriate policy.

**Managing customers' expectations** - At an early stage we will manage any unreasonable expectations by making residents aware of actions we as a landlord are able to take, and those actions that we are not able to take and what options residents may have in those situations.

**Terminology** - This policy will not identify 'perpetrators' and 'victims', we may refer to the parties as 'Household 1' and 'Household 2'. The purpose of our approach is to build relationships between customers.

**Request case review** - Customers may appeal at any stage if they believe that their report is being handled under the incorrect policy. If customers disagree with the review decision, they will be informed about our complaint's procedure.

**Customer co-operation** - The purpose of this policy is to develop and strengthen relationships between customers who live in close proximity to each other. Where customers refuse a reasonable request, we may not be able to assist any further. Where this is the case, it will be clearly communicated to the customer concerned and any alternative options available to them.

**Vulnerabilities and support needs** - At all stages we will consider the support needs of the customers involved. We also recognise that sometimes personal circumstances may affect a customer's tolerance, perception or ability to cope with certain situations. When we recognise that this could be a contributory factor, we will work with our partners to identify suitable support.

**Physical measures to reduce noise transference** - We recognise that noise can transfer between properties due to poor sound insulation and thin walls and this may have a high impact on customers. In these circumstances we will consider options for reducing the noise and if any remedial works/improvements are needed to the property.

**Property inspections** - We may inspect properties to establish whether any outstanding repair issues are contributing to noise transference. We are unable to commit to sound proofing properties built or converted before 2003 to Part E of the Building Regulations. However, we will consider funding measures to reduce noise transference when all other options have been exhausted and the harm being caused is extremely high.

**Void Standard** - We will not remove carpets unless they are in poor condition, or the incoming customer has requested their removal. We will usually remove hard and laminate flooring. We will install anti-vibration mats into the washing machine space as standard in flats above ground floor.

**Hard Flooring** - All our tenancy conditions require customers to request permission where they would like to make alterations including installation of hard flooring in their home.

**New Builds** - We will ensure that flats above the ground floor do not have hardwood or laminate flooring where possible.

## Estate Management

Accent is committed to ensuring that estates and associated communal areas are well maintained and provide a safe place that people can enjoy and take pride in. We do this through the delivery of effective estate management.

Estate Management is a vital part of housing management and is an important service that we provide on behalf of customers. We use the term Estate Management in the widest sense to refer to property management and services provided to tenants and leaseholders (customers) which aim to enable them to have quiet enjoyment of their homes and a decent, safe and secure environment.

To effectively manage our estates and neighborhoods, we carry out estate inspections. In addition to estate inspections customers may be invited to an 'Estate Walkabout' where we seek feedback on the area that they live.

To achieve consistent standards on our estates, it is essential that Accent work in collaboration and have positive relationships with customers. Customers have an important role to play in ensuring that the estate and surrounding communities are maintained to a good standard and must fulfill their obligations that are set in their tenancy/lease or transfer agreement. This will include maintaining their own property and if the use of communal areas applies, ensuring appropriate use of refuse bins and being responsible for disposal of bulky items. Customers will be responsible for following any recycling protocols that are set by the local authority.

## General Principles

Accent will ensure that:

- We provide a range of engagement opportunities for our customers to provide feedback on the service they have received.
- We consistently manage contractor performance. When issues are identified, these will be addressed in a timely manner.
- We formally review the performance of all contractors monthly.
- We develop an estate action plan for estates which we consider to be performing below our expected standards.
- We will procure services that offer customers value for money and maximise opportunity for social value.
- We work with local agencies where applicable to ensure estate management services are delivered.
- We enforce terms of tenancy agreements and any deed of covenants in a fair and transparent approach.

## Estate Management Services

Our Accent colleagues and those appointed on our behalf will ensure that these standards are maintained by inspecting periodically as set out in point 4.

Communal Cleaning	We will maintain the cleanliness of internal communal areas in buildings that we own or manage in line with Accents specification.
Window Cleaning	We will carry out window cleaning internally and externally to communal windows in line with Accents specification standards.
Grounds Maintenance	<p>We will maintain all hard and soft environmental and landscaped areas, including roads, car parks and play areas within our ownership or responsibility in line with Accents specification standards.</p> <p>We will not maintain roads and footpaths that have been “adopted” by the local authority as this is their responsibility.</p> <p>It is not our responsibility to and therefore we will not maintain private or individual gardens. This will be the responsibility of the customers as detailed in their agreement. Where private or individual gardens have not been maintained by our customers, the necessary steps will be taken as per the terms of the agreement.</p>
Tree Management	<p>Trees in your garden are your responsibility. This applies even if you have not planted the tree yourself. In exceptional circumstances, we will support residents where trees are dead, dangerous, or causing damage to property, but you may need to pay.</p> <p>Trees in communal areas will not normally be pruned or felled due to problems with shade, falling leaves or fruit, pollen, bird droppings or obstruction of views. However, if the tree poses a health and safety risk, we will investigate. Leaves will be collected when the grounds maintenance contractors attend. They will try to collect as much as reasonably possible each time that they visit. Should leaves fall in-between visits, no additional visits will be made for further collections.</p> <p>All trees in communal areas are professionally surveyed and any work needed to maintain them will be scheduled in.</p> <p>Any problems with trees which are not on Accent land should be reported to your local authority.</p>



Refuse	<p><b>Communal Bins</b></p> <p>Local authorities are responsible for refuse disposal. We will work with the local authority, to ensure appropriate facilities for the disposal of refuse are provided and that these facilities are properly maintained.</p> <p>Customers are responsible for ensuring that their rubbish is disposed of safely, tidily, and securely wrapped, and for making arrangement for the disposal of large items and garden refuse. Customers are responsible for following any recycling protocols that are in place.</p> <p><b>Fly tipping</b></p> <p>Any items left in internal or external communal areas causing a fire and/or health and safety risk will be removed within 48 hours of the order being given to a contractor and re-charged where applicable. Non urgent fly tipping will be removed within 7 days.</p> <p>We will investigate cases of fly tipping and liaise with the local authority to take immediate action on inappropriate disposal of bulky items and/or the dumping of rubbish and/or litter.</p> <p>In instances where fly tipping is removed and the culprits have not been identified, Accent will recover the cost of providing this service via service charges.</p>
Pest Control	<p>Customers have a responsibility to keep their property in a good and clean condition to prevent infestation of rodents, insects etc.</p> <p>We will respond promptly to reports of vermin and pest infestation in common areas of buildings within our responsibility and will offer advice and assistance to eradicate the problem within customers' homes. However, pests in customers' homes are their responsibility and should contact their local authority who may charge for the service.</p>
CCTV	<p>Some of our blocks/estates have CCTV in place. Accent will recover all reasonable costs via service charges for providing this service. CCTV is not monitored; it is only viewed when needed.</p>

	<p>If CCTV is to be installed or replaced, Accent will consult with customers regarding the CCTV requirement.</p> <p>CCTV may be used on occasion to aid investigations of anti-social behaviour and/or criminal behaviour. The use of CCTV evidence in such circumstances will be in line with legislation and regulation. Please refer to our CCTV policy.</p>
Communal Repairs	As part of an estate inspection, we will raise any required repairs. Customers should also report repairs as and when these are identified. Accent will complete repairs in line with the repairs policy.
Car Parking and Garages	<p>We are responsible for the maintenance of communal parking areas (where car parking spaces are not demised) and the external maintenance of garages in our ownership.</p> <p>If customers have their own parking space, they are responsible for maintaining it and keeping it in a clean, tidy and safe condition. Parking areas and spaces should not be used for extensive car maintenance. If customers have one of our garages, they are responsible for its internal maintenance.</p> <p>Our written permission is required before commercial vehicles, trailers, caravans or boats can be parked in parking spaces, or in gardens.</p> <p>Abandoned or untaxed vehicles on Accent land will be reported to the police and the local authority and removed where appropriate.</p>
Fire Safety	See Customer & Building Safety Policy and Fire Safety Policy/Procedures
Health & Safety	See Customer & Building Safety Policy

*\*Where communal areas are maintained by an external management company, they will inspect communal areas on a regular basis.*

*\*Accent will recover the cost of providing these services, via the service charge.*

## Estate Inspections

Accent colleagues will inspect our estates as set out below and grade them using the following classification:

- Gold rated schemes will require 3 inspections each year (every 4 months)

- Silver rated schemes will require 6 inspection each year (every 2 months)
- Bronze rates schemes will require 12 inspections each year (every month)

The grading of our estates could change based on the issues identified at the inspection. Accent colleagues will carry out estate inspections and provide satisfaction ratings for varying aspects of the estate.

Where there are fewer than eight Accent owned/managed properties, Accent will only have one inspection per year, (unless there are any significant remedial actions identified).

Our independent living, extra care and leasehold for older people schemes will be inspected monthly by an Accent colleague and an annual estate inspection will be carried out. (This will be more frequent if significant issues are identified).

### Estate Walkabout and Customer Engagement

We are committed to providing opportunities for our customers to work alongside us to improve customer satisfaction in relation to estate services and to provide feedback regarding their neighborhood. We will engage with our customers in accordance with our Customer Engagement Policy. Estate walkabouts are considered to be a form of grass roots engagement.

We will endeavor to invite customers to a minimum of one estate walkabout per year where estate services are provided by Accent. Customers will be informed of when estate walkabouts are taking place and will be invited accordingly.

We will capture and record customer and colleague feedback regarding the neighbourhood and use it to determine whether any follow up action is required.

### Customer Satisfaction

We will collect and record feedback from customers regarding estate services and use it to determine whether any follow up action is required. Feedback will be provided to customers in real time on scheme visits (where we are able to do so), via quarterly newsletters and our website.

We will also use data from the annual Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) to look at satisfaction trends and consider customer feedback when developing estate action plans.

## 4. Exceptions

There may be certain circumstances under which the terms of this policy may be reconsidered. Colleagues should be mindful of customer vulnerabilities and their specific needs. Extenuating circumstances will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and exceptions may be applied that require empathy and flexibility, to ensure that customers are treated fairly, compassionately and with respect.