Teachers Housing Association

POLICY TITLE:	NEIGHBOURHOOD MANAGEMENT POLICY		
BUSINESS AREA:	HOUSING MANAGEMENT		
APPROVAL DATE:	March 2025		
APPROVED BY:	SMT		
VERSION:	1	**RENEWAL DATE:**	March 2028

LEGISLATION AND REGULATION	The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) Neighbourhood and Community Standard, the Safety and Quality Standard and the Tenancy Standard The Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 The Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 The Housing Act 1988 Data Protection Act 2018/GDPR
SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS	Anti-social Behaviour Policy Anti-social Behaviour Procedures Safeguarding Policy Income Collection Policy
SCOPE	This Policy applies to all general needs and supported housing properties.

1. PURPOSE

1.1 Teachers Housing Association (THA) is committed to supporting residents to feel safe and happy in their homes. We want them to be proud of their homes and communities and understand the importance of keeping neighbourhoods clean, safe and well maintained.

1.2 This Policy aims to set out how will manage our shared areas and issues that are not deemed to be anti-social behaviour (ASB) or a tenancy breach. This is behaviour that may ‘disturb, annoy or upset’, but does not cause ‘harassment, alarm or distress’ which is dealt with under the ASB Policy.

1.3 This could mean taking action against a deliberate act or providing support either as a landlord or with another agency to those that may be causing

issues. Such reports should be continually assessed against the definitions set out in the ASB Policy.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 This Policy sets out our approach to promoting social and environmental issues in the areas where we provide social housing. Through proactive management, tenancy enforcement and planned preventative measures we will work with residents and other agencies to maintain high standards in our neighbourhoods.

2.2 This Policy will look at several areas in more detail:

- Shared and communal areas
- Neighbour nuisance
- Non-statutory noise nuisance
- Pets
- Garages
- Abandoned properties / subletting
- Tenancy sustainment

3. POLICY STATEMENT

3.1 Shared and Communal Areas

3.1.1 Social landlords must take all reasonable steps to ensure the health and safety of tenants in their homes and associated communal areas and identify and meet all related legal requirements.

3.1.2 We will work with tenants, other landlords and relevant organisations to take all reasonable steps to ensure the safety of our shared spaces. We expect residents to keep external areas tidy, not to store items in shared spaces and to report communal issues quickly.

3.1.3 We will carry out regular inspections of our blocks and estates to ensure they are being maintained to a standard we are happy with. We will aim to inspect communal areas at least four times each year to ensure we are satisfied with the external appearance, cleanliness, external and communal repairs and general visual health and safety checks. We are happy for residents to come along to planned inspections.

3.1.4 Inspections will cover a range of issues, including:

- Monitoring the level of communal repairs
- Incidents of ASB and/or crime, including fly-tipping
- Vandalism, graffiti and damage to property
- Any issues with estate and/or block upkeep
- Block specific relevant maintenance requirements
- Fire risk and other building safety risks

3.1.5 If a concern is identified a more detailed inspection may need to be arranged to understand and address the specific issues. Progress since the last

inspection will be recorded and new actions reported and raised with the appropriate teams and/or contractors for action.

3.1.6 Many problems such as dumping rubbish, fly tipping, dog fouling graffiti and broken door entry systems are costly to tackle and are often caused by a minority of tenants and their households / visitors. We will seek to identify those who cause problems in communal areas and take appropriate action against them.

3.1.7 To maintain the standards in shared areas we require the involvement and support of all residents. All residents contribute to services through their rent and/or service charge and we will look to identity those causing problems in communal areas to recover from them any costs we may incur due to their actions.

3.1.8 We can only take responsibility for areas / land we own or manage. We will advise residents to report issues we are not responsible for directly to the relevant organisation, such as the Police, Environmental Health or other local agencies.

3.1.9 Our tenancy and lease agreements set out the responsibilities of residents for maintaining the condition of their home, communal areas, gardens and balconies.

3.1.10 Residents have a responsibility to prevent and treat pests that are attributable to their lifestyle or actions. This would include not disposing of waste food correctly which then attracts insects and mice. If an infestation occurs in a communal area, we will take steps to eradicate the infestation and prevent it from reoccurring.

3.1.11 We will maintain all shrubs, hedges and trees that are in communal areas and are our responsibility in-line with horticultural good practice to maintain pleasant surroundings and to prevent nuisance, such as blocked access ways, damage to buildings and restrictions of lights and signage.

3.2 Neighbour Nuisance

3.2.1 This Policy covers neighbour issues that are not categorised as ASB as defined in the Anti-social Behaviour Policy. Neighbour nuisance includes, but is not limited to:

- Untidy gardens / balconies
- Minor vehicle repairs
- Inconsiderate parking
- Cooking smells
- Smoking
- Cats fouling in communal areas
- People looking/staring at each other
- Escalated disputes between neighbours

3.2.2 We will work with residents to resolve issues of neighbour nuisance, providing advice on how to speak to their neighbour and if there are any actions that could be taken and the threshold for taking such action, as well as offering mediation.

3.2.3 We will consider taking action against inconsiderate neighbours where appropriate in-line with our Anti-social Behaviour Policy.

3.3 Non-statutory Noise Nuisance

3.3.1 Definitions of ASB can mean that low level noise nuisance is not always dealt with appropriately and the seriousness of the effect on the household(s) experiencing the noise are not fully considered.

3.3.2 The Housing Ombudsman found that noise can be a significant driver for complaint and resident dissatisfaction, and that landlords should take an approach that is fair and reasonable and recognise that not all noise can be dealt with as ASB and to deal with such cases seriously, sensitively and proportionately.

3.3.3 When a noise complaint is received and deemed to be general household or low-level noise it will not be dealt with as ASB. In these circumstances we are not often able to take any formal action against the tenant of the property the noise is emanating from. This type of noise could include:

- Infrequent and occasional noise of disturbances, such as one-off celebrations
- Children playing / babies crying
- Noise from domestic appliances (e.g. washing machines, vacuum cleaners)
- Kitchen appliances such as food processors
- Occasional DIY during the day
- People talking or other general household noise (e.g. walking across a floor, flushing toilets, talking)
- Tv or music at a reasonable volume and time
- Moving furniture
- Occasional noise made by a tenant or a household member who has a protected characteristic (e.g. a mental health condition or physical disability)

3.3.4 Some noise should be dealt with as ASB from the initial report. This type of noise would include:

- Regular amplified music or noise from an audio device
- Noise from DIY activities at an unreasonable hour or length of time
- Persistent dog barking

3.3.5 Noise levels are not set in Law and the assessment of what is acceptable can be subjective. Loud noise in a block of flats will cause considerably more disturbance than in a detached house. Generally if a noise is causing a nuisance, then it should be treated as a nuisance.

3.3.6 Environmental Health Officers (EHO) are qualified and trained to assess whether a noise is likely to be a statutory noise. They can also take legal action against the person(s) causing a statutory noise. Reports of statutory noise nuisance should be referred to the local EHO, this includes noise from:

- Premises including gardens (i.e. loud music or barking dogs)

- Vehicles, machinery or equipment in the street (i.e. music from car stereos)

3.3.7 The definition of what causes a nuisance can be personal and we must remain impartial as what is a nuisance to one person will not be to another. Avoid advising someone reporting a neighbour that we will take action without sufficient investigation.

3.3.8 We will aim to make a decision on whether the noise is 'reasonable' quickly. The longer such complaints are allowed to go on, the more difficult they are to resolve. As well has considering the noise we will also consider whether:

- We have received complaints about the noise from more than one household
- The noise has been reported before
- Similar complaints have been made against other residents in the same block
- There has been a recent change in the household

3.4 Pets

3.4.1 THA recognise the benefit that living with a pet can bring and allow pets in all properties that permit them. Tenants will need our written permission to have a pet and should do so before they get a cat or a dog.

3.4.2 Permission is not needed for pets that live in a small cage, or a small aquarium or vivarium. We will never give our permission for the following:

- Dangerous dogs
- Livestock
- Wild animals
- Pets for commercial breeding

3.4.3 Permission will be revoked for pets that cause a nuisance, especially through barking or fouling, or if the pet attacks anyone or another animal. We expect dogs to be kept in a secure environment and must always be on a lead when in a public or shared area.

3.4.4 All pets must be cared for in accordance with the Animal Welfare Act, which means they must be responsibly looked after and protected from suffering. All cats and dogs must be micro-chipped, vaccinated and regularly treated for fleas and worms.

3.5 Garages

3.5.1 THA will hold a waiting list for applicants wishing to rent a garage. Applicants must be over 18 years and not owe any monies to THA. Priority will be given to existing tenants with a registered disability, then existing tenants and then those with no existing relationship with THA.

3.5.2 Garages are let on a monthly licence and all payments must be paid in advance with any arrears resulting in the licence being terminated. Garage licences are not transferrable and may be terminated if the licensee no longer holds a tenancy with THA.

3.5.3 Garages must only be used for parking a vehicle and THA will not accept any liability for any items stored in a garage. Garages must be returned clear and free from belongings and rubbish. A charge will be made for clearing the garage if required.

3.6 Abandoned Properties / subletting

3.6.1 THA aims to make best use of its homes and ensure they are occupied by the right people. All reports of abandoned properties and cases of sub-letting will be fully investigated. We may undertake tenancy audits as part of our aim to prevent tenancy fraud.

3.6.2 We will encourage residents to report suspected cases of abandonment and sub-letting and assess each report on their individual circumstances, including the availability of evidence to support the case when considering what action to take.

3.7 Tenancy Sustainment

3.7.1 All new tenants will receive a comprehensive induction / sign up to ensure they are aware of the rights and responsibilities. They will receive regular contact throughout the first 12 months of their tenancy as a means of support and assessment of adhering to their tenancy conditions.

3.7.2 It is important that residents adhere to all their tenancy conditions. This include the appearance of the property to be kept in good condition, tidy and free from rubbish and unwanted items. External areas such as gardens should be well maintained and not appear unkept. Balconies must be kept clear and tidy with no items overhanging or anything stored that may be a fire or safety hazard.

3.7.3 Hoarding can also pose a significant fire risk to both the people living in the hoarded property and those living nearby. It also increases the risk of pests and vermin infestation in both the property and neighbouring properties.

3.7.4 When we are made aware of a case of hoarding, we will work to engage the resident and use all available resources to develop a plan to manage and resolve the issues this may present.

3.7.5 Each case will be assessed individually taking into account the mental and physical wellbeing of the resident, their support network and the engagement of any external agencies that can assist in resolving the issue. Enforcement action will only be taken when all other reasonable avenues to resolve the issue have failed.

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4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 Housing Manager /Scheme Managers are responsible for recording incidents and deciding whether they fall under this Policy or the ASB Policy. They are responsible for managing cases and providing information and support to those reporting incidents.

4.2 The Operations Director is responsibility for providing guidance and advice to staff on matters covered in this Policy.

5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

5.1 THA are committed to treating everyone with fairness and respect. When dealing with the issues covered in this Policy we will comply with the principles of the THA Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

6. PERFORMANCE CONTROLS AND BUSINESS RISK

6.1 All staff must work collectively to ensure the safety of residents and the maintenance of properties and shared areas and be trained to recognise the sign of a risk to health and safety and report such risks immediately to the relevant team.

6.2 Personal or sensitive data will be processed in line with the Data Protection Act 2018/GDPR. Information will be shared with agencies such as the Police, the local authority and social services with the consent of those involved or where we are legally permitted.

7. MONITORING

7.1 THA will record incidents reported under this Policy which will be monitored until there is a resolution.

7.2 We will monitor our handling of reports made through this Policy by regular analysis of customer feedback and provide regular reports for the SMT.

8. REVIEW

8.1 The Housing Management Policy will be reviewed every 3 years or earlier in response to regulatory or legislative changes.

Solutions to Neighbour and Noise Nuisance

If residents are leaving items in communal areas, or not disposing of rubbish in the correct bins they should be visited and reminded of their tenancy conditions. This should be followed by a letter clearly setting out the terms of their tenancy and a possible recharge if costs have been incurred by THA.

If it cannot be established who is responsible a letter should be sent to all residents reminding them of their tenancy conditions and possible consequences if the issue continues.

If the matter is not rectified further action should be taken. This could be:

- Formal caution for breach of tenancy
- Service of a notice warning of court action
- Application for an injunction
- Service of a TORT notice and removal of any items if ownership cannot be established, though if there is a risk to fire safety the item(s) should be removed immediately and stored for 28 days to allow the owner to come forward
- Recharging the residents for any costs to THA due to their actions

In most cases of noise nuisance a light touch approach should be taken to avoid the matter escalating. If neighbours fall out it can take a long time (if ever) for them to put the matter behind them and can lead to further hostilities and involve other neighbours. It is also key to manage expectations on actions that can be taken from the start.

If the noise has not been deemed ASB but household noise this must be explained sensitively to the person making the complaint and the possible solutions that can be explored discussed. Solutions can include:

- Talking to their neighbour - this will ensure they are aware that it is disturbing them
- Meditation – this will enable both households to discuss the impact of the noise with an impartial negotiator to help them try and agree a way forward
- Noise quieting measures – this can range from something as simple as moving the source of the noise to better insulation
- Mutual neighbours agreement – both neighbour sign an agreement to reduce the impact on the household experiencing the disturbance (i.e. not put on their washing machine after 8 pm or before 7 am)

Normal household noise is not a breach of tenancy and our role is to make the household where the noise is coming from to realise the impact they are having on their neighbour. We must also work with the household complaining about the noise to try and increase their tolerance levels and follow practical measures to reduce the impact the noise is having on them. These might not always be appropriate but consider suggesting that they:

- Keep a radio or television on low within their home to distract from external noise
- Use headphones when listening to music or watching the tv

- Use earplugs if their sleep is being disturbed
- Keep their windows closed if the noise is coming from outside areas

We ask people to be tolerant of their neighbours. We may consider asking both parties if they are willing to go into each other's homes to hear the noise source from the other persons position. This may help develop a mutual understanding of the issue and lead to better relations between them.

Laminate or wooden flooring can cause huge problems for those living below. While we can advise that installation of such flooring could be a breach of tenancy or lease (if it is included in the agreement) and ask for the flooring to be changed, the household may not have the resources to do this even if they agreed to. We can request they try some practical measures to try and reduce the noise and the need for us to take action. This can include:

- Installing acoustic sound proofing underlay
- Covering the main areas of flooring with thick rugs
- Not wearing footwear with hard soles indoors