

# You and your neighbourhood

Helping to make community life work



- Tackling anti-social behaviour
- Taking part in community life
- How we manage your scheme
- Areas you share with your neighbours
- How we work locally with residents

# You and your neighbourhood

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## Also part of the Residents' Handbook:

- You and your household
- You and your home
- You and Southern Housing Group
- You and your rent



# Scheme standards

## In this section:

We manage your scheme by:

- using local and office-based staff
- carrying out regular inspections and asking you to take part
- agreeing with residents the services you want and what we need to do to keep improving them.

## *How do you manage the scheme I live at?*

### Frontline staff

To look after your scheme and keep standards improving, we have a number of frontline staff.

Your **resident services team** is responsible for:

- managing the homes in your area
- managing any caretaking staff employed at your scheme
- monitoring the work done by cleaning and gardening contractors
- working with you and other local agencies to resolve problems.

**In-house repairs staff** call at your scheme to monitor the work of our repairs contractors.

**Caretaking staff** at our larger schemes keep shared areas and gardens clean and tidy, are on hand to notice when repairs are needed or problems are developing, and are increasingly taking on minor repairs.

# Scheme standards



Staff from the **Social and Economic Regeneration Department** (see page 14) work with you locally to find ways to improve the quality of life in your neighbourhood.

**Service Centre staff** are available by phone or email to deal with your queries.

## Our service standards

**When it comes to cleaning and gardening services, we will:**

- offer you a review meeting or survey every year to talk to you and check our performance and your satisfaction with our services
- display the work schedules in shared (communal) areas where we can
- carry out a series of customer service inspections three times a year (a group of trained residents will carry out random inspections and tell us what they find)
- get rid of offensive graffiti within one working day of being told about it, and
- remove illegally dumped rubbish within one working day of being told about it.

# Scheme standards



## Estate inspections

We carry out regular estate inspections, using a checklist designed to show whether standards are improving. If yours is a large scheme, we may inspect as often as once a month.

We invite residents to join us at these inspections, so that you can point out any defects you have noticed and monitor our progress in sorting them out. It also gives you the chance to give us your suggestions for the scheme and to tell us about any problems.

To find out about estate inspections at your scheme, call the Service Centre.

## Our service standards

### To keep standards high, we will:

- inspect where you live at times we agree with you (monthly, or every three or six months)
- with you, set an annual minimum average score for where you live on issues such as cleanliness and appearance (where we do not achieve this score we will set up an estate action plan and send you a copy of it)
- publish planned inspection dates every six months
- encourage you to get involved with the inspections and offer you a choice of times for inspections and at least one evening inspection a year, and
- tell you the results of the inspection, and the score, within five working days (if you are involved in the inspection).

# What we expect of you



## In this section:

We expect you to:

- treat the areas you share with other residents with respect
- store rubbish carefully and considerately, using the facilities provided
- park and use vehicles responsibly, keeping to the rules that are set out for your scheme
- ask us before you keep a pet, and make sure you don't let your pets become a nuisance.

## *What do you expect of me?*

### Areas you share

We are responsible for the upkeep of the areas you share with your neighbours, including gardens and stairways. But you have a part to play too.

We ask you to keep common areas clean and tidy, and not to drop litter. You must not block shared areas with prams, bikes or similar items, because common areas may be an escape route if there is a fire or other emergency. We don't normally allow you to keep gas cylinders on the premises, but if you have them for medical use we may give permission, providing you don't leave them in shared areas.

If we provide a play area, we will keep it as safe as possible, but you are responsible for your children's behaviour and their safety. You are also responsible for making sure your children do not cause any damage in and around the scheme.



# What we expect of you

## Getting rid of rubbish

Communal bins and bin stores are for bagged rubbish only, not bulky items. If you don't have communal bins at your scheme, you should use the bags or wheelie bins supplied by your local council. Don't leave sacks outside until the night before they are collected. Always keep rubbish properly sealed up, to prevent birds or animals getting at it. And if your rubbish bags are torn, clear any mess as quickly as possible.

Don't leave bulky items of rubbish around the scheme. They can be dangerous as well as creating an eyesore. Call your local council to find out if they offer a collection service for large items.

If you have to leave large items out for the council to collect, only do so on collection day. If you have a local caretaker, let them know. If we have to dispose of bulky items, the costs are usually added to everyone's service charge, unless we can identify and take action against the people responsible.

## Recycling

We promote recycling wherever we can. Please use any recycling facilities based at your scheme or locally. If you want to investigate other recycling possibilities, let us know. Your estate inspection (see page 5) can be a good time to raise this issue.

If you have larger items that could be recycled, find out if you are near a recycling centre. The council may also make special local collections. For saleable items, consider donating them to a charity shop. Some charities may even collect some items. Look in your local paper or the phone book for details.

# What we expect of you



## Cars and parking

Take particular care when driving in residential areas. When you are driving on roads managed by us, you should drive at no more than walking pace. Be considerate, don't park on access roads or block other residents' driveways.

Parking restrictions vary from scheme to scheme. Keep to them or you risk having your vehicle clamped, or other action being taken. To find out about renting a parking space or getting a parking permit, call the Service Centre.

You should never park commercial vehicles or caravans in spaces for private cars, unless you have our written permission.

Parking bays, driveways and garages are only for parking permitted vehicles. Although you are allowed to service your car and make minor repairs which do not cause a nuisance, you should never carry out major work. You are not allowed to discharge petrol, oils and coolants, as this is a major risk to health and safety, a hazard to the environment and a nuisance to other residents. If you work on other people's vehicles this will be considered as running a business and we will take action against you.

If a vehicle is not roadworthy, or appears to have been abandoned at our scheme, we will get it removed.



# What we expect of you

## Our service standards

When it comes to parking, we will:

- speak with you before we introduce any local parking management arrangements, and
- put stickers on untaxed or abandoned vehicles and start taking steps to remove the vehicles within five working days of being told about them.

## Pets

To keep any pet, other than fish in small aquariums, hamsters and gerbils or small, caged birds, you must get our written permission first. We will ask you to sign an agreement about how you will keep your pet.

If we agreed to let you keep a pet when you first applied for a home with us, you must get our written permission before you replace it.

Some types of property are just not suitable for pets that need space and exercise, or that are likely to be noisy, so we may refuse our permission. For example, we don't normally allow residents to keep dogs or cats in flats. We also have schemes where residents have voted not to allow dogs.

However, some of our sheltered schemes do allow our older residents to keep cats or dogs in flats. This varies from scheme to scheme and there are always special conditions.

## What we expect of you



We don't allow pets that we think could be dangerous to other residents, or that could cause an infestation in our buildings, unless we are satisfied with the arrangements for keeping them.

You must make sure your pets don't cause damage at your scheme or a nuisance to your neighbours, or we will take back our permission to keep them. In serious cases, we may take action against you for breach of tenancy.



# Community life

## In this section:

You can play a part in community life by:

- being a good neighbour
- getting involved in local residents' groups and projects
- helping to organise or run local activities.

## *How can I play a part in community life?*

### **Being a good neighbour**

The most important way to play a part in community life is to be a good neighbour. Please be considerate to your neighbours and avoid disturbing them. Keep track of your children and make sure your visitors aren't causing a nuisance.

If you clash with a neighbour and need help to sort things out, call the Service Centre and ask to be put in touch with your resident services team. They may be able to refer you for mediation, bringing in an independent expert to help you resolve your differences.

If your behaviour, or that of someone else living with you or visiting, breaks your tenancy conditions, we will take action and, as a last resort, you could end up losing your home.

# Community life



## Residents' associations and community groups

At some of our schemes, residents work together to run social activities, community projects or to represent your views to us. We promote and support resident-led activities, providing people from every community are genuinely welcome to take part.

If you decide to set up a residents' association, call the Service Centre and ask to be put in contact with someone from the Resident Involvement team. They can offer you support to get things started. If you set up your association in the right way, we will recognise it formally and provide you with a set-up grant and a small annual budget towards your costs.

For more details about the support you can get for your community group or residents' association, go to our website to download a copy of the [Active Residents' Guide](#) or call the Service Centre for a copy.

As well as help with costs, we can also offer:

- the use of any community hall at your scheme
- help when communicating with non-English speakers
- administrative support
- help to produce a newsletter
- training courses.



# Working with you

## In this section:

We work with your community by:

- agreeing with residents the services you want and how we can improve them
- providing advice and financial support for your activities
- joining with other organisations to run local projects.

## *What role does Southern Housing Group play?*

We work with residents in a range of ways to help boost community life, because we want your scheme to be somewhere where you actively want to live. For more details, download a copy of the **Active Residents' Guide** from our website, or call the Service Centre for a copy.

## **Involving you in our work**

We will involve you in our work locally by inviting you to join estate inspections. We may also hold local meetings or focus groups to find out about life at your scheme, or to discuss plans to improve it.

If you would like to meet with us to discuss your scheme and get involved in shaping and monitoring estate standards, contact your resident services team via the Service Centre.

For an up-to-date list of the ways you can currently get involved, go to our website to download **Getting involved**, our resident involvement menu – or call the Service Centre for a copy.

# Working with you



## Supporting your activities

We offer support to your community groups and residents' associations (see page 12). You can also apply for a small grant from our Social and Economic Regeneration Department (SERD), to help fund activities and events.

## Promoting resident activity

At some of our larger estates, we run large-scale community development projects, designed to start residents working together on a range of projects. Our aim is to support you to get schemes off the ground that you can keep going when our project comes to an end. Residents have gone on to run an impressive number of clubs and events.

## Improving your quality of life

SERD exists to improve the quality of life for individuals and communities. SERD's specialist staff work with residents in the neighbourhoods most affected by problems such as a low income, lack of skills, fear of crime and difficulty accessing services.

SERD works with a wide range of organisations and partners to help achieve its objectives.

SERD also has a grants programme that offers:

- **small grants** for residents of up to £2,000 for projects that help to improve community life, for example, by funding clubs or paying for fun days or day trips
- **small grants** of up to £5,000 for external providers of projects that benefit residents
- **large grants** of over £5,000 for larger projects being led by one of SERD's officers



# Working with you

- **Sir Ashley Bramall Memorial Fund awards** of up to £500 for residents who are studying. The award can cover course fees, study materials or childcare

For more information or an application pack phone the Grants Officer on **020 7324 1292** or email **[grants@shgroup.org.uk](mailto:grants@shgroup.org.uk)**

- **Sports Fund grants** towards the costs of getting actively involved in sport (for individuals or groups).

## SERD projects

SERD concentrates on developing or funding projects that:

- invest in young people
- help you manage your money and get access to affordable finance
- improve your access to education and training
- improve the external environment
- improve the quality of life for residents.

Working with our partners, we run regular summer schemes for children and young people at most of our larger estates. We also run arts and sports projects for young people, particularly in areas where anti-social behaviour can be a problem.

We work with a range of partners to widen your financial options and are supporting a number of credit unions, because they offer affordable banking and loans.

We have run or supported a number of projects that offer you job search support and the chance to boost your skills through training and education.

# Anti-social behaviour



## In this section:

- How to report anti-social behaviour.
- What steps you and we can take to solve the problem.
- How we prevent anti-social behaviour.
- Information on:
  - hate crime
  - domestic violence
  - abandoned vehicles
  - noise.

## *How do I report anti-social behaviour?*

To report anti-social behaviour, you should phone, email or write to the Resident Services team at the Service Centre, giving as much detail as you can. If they can't deal with your problem, they will pass on the details to your resident services manager or officer, or another member of staff.

We will:

- help you to tackle problems with anti-social behaviour
- take all reports seriously
- work with key partners, such as local authorities, the police and other social landlords
- keep everyone properly informed.

This section gives a summary of our policies and ways of handling anti-social behaviour. We can provide copies of our policy, procedures and strategy statements if you call the Service Centre. Our procedures are also available on our website.



# Anti-social behaviour

## When you report anti-social behaviour

We will begin by assessing your problem and deciding whether it is appropriate for us to become involved. If you are reporting incidents that are really personal disputes, or where children are playing innocently, we may decide not to get involved. When you live in close-knit communities, you need to be tolerant of others.

If we agree that we do need to become involved, we will start by deciding whether the problem carries a high, medium or low risk.

If you report an anti-social behaviour incident that we think is high risk, we will contact you within 24 hours (this includes serious crime, violence, serious damage to property, hate crime and domestic violence).

If you report an anti-social behaviour incident that we think is medium risk, we will contact you within five working days (this includes less serious crime, verbal abuse, high-level noise nuisance and aggressive behaviour).

If you report an anti-social behaviour incident that we think is low risk, we will contact you within 10 working days (this includes disputes with neighbours, low-level noise nuisance, and other less serious offences).

### What counts as anti-social behaviour?

Nuisance can take many forms and be more or less serious. We would include:

- repeatedly making too much noise
- neighbour disputes which can't be resolved
- graffiti, vandalism and damage to property
- criminal behaviour
- dumping rubbish or abandoning cars
- animals not being kept under control.

# Anti-social behaviour



## How we will tackle the problem

Wherever possible, our aim will be to support you and your community to resolve the problem for yourselves. We will encourage you to sort out disputes with neighbours directly if it is safe to do so. Or we will encourage the use of mediation, bringing in an experienced, independent mediator to help you find a solution. If these approaches fail, we will put you in touch with other local agencies.

For more serious cases, or where someone is breaking their tenancy conditions, we will take firm but appropriate action. For example, we may:

- persuade a perpetrator to sign up to a voluntary acceptable behaviour contract
- get the parent of a perpetrator under the age of 10 to sign up to a parental control agreement
- involve other agencies such as environmental health, police, the youth offending team and social services, including having case discussions, to make use of their powers and take joint action
- consider demoting someone's tenancy for a year, making it easier to evict them
- apply to a court for an Anti-social Behaviour Order or an injunction
- go to court to take back someone's home
- publicise the action we have taken against someone, if we think it is appropriate to inform the wider community.



# Anti-social behaviour

We will not close a case unless:

- it has been satisfactorily resolved and the problem appears to have stopped
- there isn't enough evidence to support further action
- taking further action would be inappropriate or out of proportion to the problem.

## Our service standards

When tackling anti-social behaviour, we will:

- offer to agree and write down an action plan with you on all high-risk cases
- keep you up to date with your case at least every 10 days, unless we agree something different with you, and
- contact you when we close your case, and give you reasons for the decision and action we have taken.

## Preventing anti-social behaviour

We will work with you to look at the underlying causes of nuisance. For example, we can help look for solutions if young people are bored or if the layout of your estate is making a problem worse. Working to find positive answers is a good way of bringing people together.

# Anti-social behaviour



At a number of estates, we have worked with residents to draw up neighbourhood declarations, setting out acceptable standards of behaviour. Everyone is invited to sign the declaration. These declarations can be useful because they get people to think about what it takes to be a good neighbour, as well as encouraging people to be tolerant of each other's different lifestyles.

## Hate crime

Hate crime is a major breach of your tenancy agreement. We will always deal with cases urgently and in the strictest confidence.

If you are being victimised or you have suffered any attack or intimidation, call the Service Centre or speak to one of our staff immediately. They will be helpful, supportive and respectful of your wishes.

Sometimes we find it necessary to use closed circuit TV (CCTV) to gather evidence in a case. The cameras may not be visible, but we usually have general CCTV warning signs.

If you are the victim of hate crime, within 24 hours we will try to visit you for a detailed account of the incident, as well as sorting out any damage to property.

We will not hesitate to take action against anyone involved in carrying out the harassment and we will notify the police and help them with investigations.

To report hate crime in confidence, call the Service Centre. Our **Hate crime** leaflet is available on our website or from the Service Centre.



# Anti-social behaviour

## Domestic violence

We will not tolerate residents who harass, attack or abuse other members of their household in any way. We will offer support to anyone living in one of our homes who has been suffering this problem.

To report domestic violence in confidence, call the Service Centre. Our **Domestic violence** leaflet is available on our website or from the Service Centre.

## Noise nuisance

We will usually encourage you to discuss noise problems direct with your neighbour or through a mediator. Your neighbour may not be aware they are causing a nuisance.

If you are suffering from excessive and continuous noise, we will often ask you to contact your local environmental health officer. They have special powers and recording equipment that we do not have, so we try to work with them wherever possible. However, you should bear in mind that general household noises can't be the subject of legal action. These include the sound of footsteps, normal conversation, noise from children, low TV or music and occasional pet noise.

If you have good reason for thinking that a design or construction fault in your home might be making a noise problem worse, call the Service Centre. They will arrange for your problem to be investigated further.

# Anti-social behaviour



## Abandoned vehicles

Abandoned or unroadworthy vehicles are a nuisance. They are a danger to residents, especially children, and often attract crime.

Abandoned or unroadworthy vehicles include those that are:

- untaxed
- not moved for several weeks
- neglected or in poor condition.

We work with local authorities and the police to remove these vehicles. In some circumstances, they are allowed to remove them immediately. If your vehicle is removed by either the local authority or the police, you will need to contact them direct to make enquiries.

If we plan to dispose of a vehicle ourselves, we will put a prominent notice on it, warning that that it will be collected after a certain date. But we reserve the right to dispose of vehicles immediately if we believe they are an unacceptable risk to health and safety.

**This section** is intended for you to keep any other useful local information.

Local council

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Local police station

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Housing Benefit Department

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Citizens Advice Bureau

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Environmental Health Department

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Housing Advice Centre

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Council Tax Department

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Our Service Centre is open from 8am to 8pm, Monday to Friday.

If you live on the UK mainland, phone us on **0300 303 1771**

If you live on the Isle of Wight, phone us on **0300 303 1772**

Write to **Service Centre, Southern Housing Group, PO Box 643, Horsham RH12 1XJ**

Email [servicecentre@shgroup.org.uk](mailto:servicecentre@shgroup.org.uk) or [serviceincome@shgroup.org.uk](mailto:serviceincome@shgroup.org.uk) or [service.repairs@shgroup.org.uk](mailto:service.repairs@shgroup.org.uk) (but phone if the matter is urgent)

Visit our website at [www.shgroup.org.uk](http://www.shgroup.org.uk)

This leaflet contains important information about you and your neighbourhood. To request a copy in another language, in Braille or in audio format, or for more information, call 0300 303 1771.

### Arabic

تتضمن هذه النشرة معلومات مهمة حولك وحول الحي الذي تسكن فيه. لطلب نسخة باللغة العربية أو بطريقة بريدل أو بصيغة صوتية، أو للحصول على مزيد من المعلومات، اتصل برقم 0300 303 1771.

### Bengali

আপনার এবং আপনার পার্শ্ববর্তী এলাকা সম্পর্কে এই প্রচারপত্রে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ তথ্য রয়েছে। বাংলা, ব্রেইল-এ বা অডিও ফরম্যাট-এর একটি কপি পাওয়ার অনুরোধ করার জন্য অথবা আরো তথ্যের প্রয়োজন হলে আমাদের সার্ভিস সেন্টার-এ 0300 303 1682-এ ফোন করুন।

### French

Ce dépliant contient des informations importantes sur vous et votre quartier. Pour demander un exemplaire en français, en Braille ou au format audio, ou pour en savoir plus, appelez le 0300 303 1771.

### Somali

Macluumaad-sidahan waxaa ku jira war muhiim ah ee ku saabsan adiga iyo deriskaaga. Si aad u dalbatid nuqul Soomaali ah, farta-indhoolaha (Braille) ama nooc dhagaysi ah, ama war intaas ka badan, wac 0300 303 1771.

### Spanish

Este folleto contiene información importante sobre usted y su vecindario. Para solicitar una copia en español, en Braille o en formato de audio, o para más información, llame al 0300 303 1771.

### Turkish

Bu kitapçık siz ve mahalleniz hakkında önemli bilgiler içermektedir. Bu bilgileri Türkçe, Braille (kör alfabesi) veya sesli formatta talep etmek ya da daha fazla bilgi almak için 0300 303 1683 no.lu telefonu arayınız.