South Wight Housing Association

Part of Southern Housing Group

Residents' Handbook

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 South Wight Housing Association
- You and your home
- 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.

Our housing management teams are responsible for:

- managing the homes in your area
- monitoring the work done by cleaning and gardening contractors.
- working with you and other local agencies to resolve problems and find ways to improve the quality of life in your neighbourhood.

If you live in sheltered housing, your point of contact will normally be your scheme manager.

Don't forget our **Service Centre staff** are also available at the end of a phone to deal with your queries.

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. If it is a small scheme, we may inspect twice a year.

We invite residents to join us at these inspections, so that you can point out anything 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 and ask to be put in contact with the housing management team.

Neighbourhood agreements

At some of our schemes, we can have neighbourhood agreements, drawn up by residents with support from staff.

Neighbourhood agreements set out the services we will provide locally and the standards we will meet. They focus on what you tell us is most important to you. They often include a small list of improvements to shared areas that we have agreed to complete if funding is available.

Neighbourhood agreements run for a year and are then updated to reflect residents' new priorities.

Scheme standards

Our service promises

We promise:

- to continue to work to improve the standards and efficiency of your local services
- to involve you in monitoring and improving services locally.

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 have provided 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 4) 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 (see page 18).

What we expect of you

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 allow residents to keep dogs or cats in properties without their own enclosed garden. We also have schemes where residents have voted not to allow dogs.

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.

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.

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 your neighbour and need to sort things out, call the Service Centre and ask to be put in touch with the housing management team.

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, as long as people from every community are genuinely welcome to take part.

> For more details about the support you can get for your community group or residents' association, call the Service Centre and ask for the Community Involvement Worker.

If you decide to set up a residents' association, call the Service Centre and ask to be put in contact with SWHA's Community Involvement Worker. 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.

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

- help to hire a community hall near your scheme
- help when communicating with non-English speakers
- administrative support
- help to produce a newsletter
- training courses.

Community life

What role does South Wight HA 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.

Involving you in our work

Estate inspections and drawing up agreements (see pages 4-5) are two important ways we use to involve individuals and groups of residents to help us improve local services.

We may also hold local meetings or focus groups to find out about life at your scheme, or to discuss plans to improve it.

Supporting your activities

We offer support to your local community groups and residents' associations (see page 11).

Anti-social behaviour

In this section:

- What counts as anti-social behaviour.
- What steps you and we can take to solve the problem.
- How we work to prevent anti-social behaviour.
- Racial harassment.
- Domestic violence.
- Abandoned vehicles.
- Noise.

What can be done about anti-social behaviour?

Our policy is to:

- 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.

To report a nuisance case, you should phone, email or write to the tenancy 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 the housing management team.

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.

For high risk cases, including allegations of serious criminal activity, the use of violence, serious damage to property, racial harassment, homophobic harassment, domestic violence and offensive graffiti, we will contact you within 24 hours.

For low or medium risk cases, we will contact you within our normal timescales for responding to a letter or phone call. We will acknowledge that we have heard from you, tell you whether we think your case is medium or low risk, explain what steps we plan to take and by when.

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
- hate crime
- domestic violence
- dumping rubbish or abandoning cars
- animals not being kept under control.

Anti-social behaviour

As a guide, we will treat it as a medium risk case, where you have alleged less serious criminal activity, verbal abuse, high level noise nuisance and intimidating behaviour. We will treat it as a low risk case if you report disputes or simple breaches of tenancy conditions such as pet nuisance.

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, youth offending team and social services, including having cases conferences, 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 a court 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.

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.

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.

At some estates, we can work 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 lifestyles.

Estate agreements often include measures designed to reduce anti-social behaviour.

Anti-social behaviour

Racial harassment

Racial harassment 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 racial harassment, 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.

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.

For a copy of our full policy, or to report domestic violence in confidence, call the Service Centre.

Anti-social behaviour

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.

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.

Anti-social behaviour

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.

Our service promises

We promise:

- to assess all the nuisance problems you report
- to support you to deal with low level anti-social behaviour
- to take firm but proportionate action in more serious cases
- to support victims, including providing interpreters and female interviewers
- to refer victims to agencies such as Victim Support
- to work with agencies such as the police, the local authority and youth services, in serious cases
- to take perpetrators to court and, where appropriate, to evict them.

Useful notes

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

Local council

Local police station

Housing Benefit Department

Citizens' Advice Bureau

Environmental Health Department

Housing Advice Centre

Council Tax Department

Useful notes

Useful notes

Useful notes

Phone us on **0300 303 1772**, 8am to 8pm, Monday to Friday (calls are generally charged at local rates)

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

Email us at **service.centre@shgroup.org.uk** or **service.income@shgroup.org.uk** or **swha.repairs@shgroup.org.uk** (but please phone instead if the matter is urgent)

In an emergency, call the Service Centre during opening hours. When the Service Centre is closed, phone Wightcare on **01983 821 030**

Visit our website at **www.shgroup.org.uk**

For help with translations or if a large type, Braille or audio summary would be useful, please contact the Service Centre.

Arabic
لمساعدتك في الترجمة يرجى الاتصال بمركز الخدمة على هاتف 0300 303 1771.

Bengali
অনুবাদ সাহায্য পেতে হলে সার্ভিস সেন্টারে 0300 303 1682 নম্বরে ফোন করুন ।

French
Si vous souhaitez recevoir de l'aide avec vos traductions, appelez le 0300 303 1771.

Somali
Wixii ah caawimo turjumaan ka soo wac Xarunta Adeegga telefoonka 0300 303 1771.

Spanish
Si necesita que le ayudemos con alguna traducción, llámenos al 0300 303 1771.

Turkish
Tercüme konusunda yardım için 0300 303 1683 'den Hizmet Merkezi'ni arayın.

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