

Neighbourhood and community policy – version 1

Date approved for use: 21st October 2020

Scope

- 1.1 This policy is a Dimensions Group policy. This means it applies to all its subsidiaries as listed [here](#).
- 1.2 The Group Audit and Risk Committee has approved this policy on behalf of the Dimensions Group Board.
- 1.3 To go straight to the policy content click on the hyperlink section title below or go to the page:

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Policy statement

- 2.1 The Regulator of Social Housing's [Neighbourhood and Community Standard](#) requires that:
 - *'Registered providers shall keep the neighbourhood and communal areas associated with the homes that they own clean and safe. They shall work in partnership with their tenants and other providers and public bodies where it is effective to do so.'*
 - *Registered providers shall co-operate with relevant partners to help promote social, environmental and economic wellbeing in the areas where they own properties*

- *Registered providers shall work in partnership with other agencies to prevent and tackle anti-social behaviour in the neighbourhoods where they own homes.’*

2.2 This policy is concerned with setting out how Dimensions will:

- Maintain and improve the neighbourhoods and communal areas associated with its homes
- Identify and publish the role Dimensions is able to play within the areas where it has properties
- Co-operate with local partnership arrangements and strategic housing functions of local authorities where Dimensions is able to assist them in achieving their objectives.

2.3 Dimensions’ approach to anti-social behaviour is addressed in our [Anti-social behaviour and harassment policy](#).

The impact of not implementing this policy

3.1 The content of this policy statement responds directly to the Regulator of Social Housing’s [Neighbourhood and Community Standard](#). Failure to implement and adhere to its requirements, therefore, could cause diminishment in the quality of Dimensions’ homes and services, difficulty for colleagues and people Dimensions supports and reputational damage. This failure could also cause the Regulator of Social Housing to take action against Dimensions.

3.2 Not adhering to this policy may impact our other regulators. That’s:

- the person’s local authority (LA)
- in England, the Care Quality Commission (CQC)
- in Wales, the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)
- the Charities Commission (CC)
- Health and Safety Executive (HSE)
- the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)

Policy content

Maintaining and improving the neighbourhoods and communal areas associated with Dimensions’ homes

- 4.1 Connecting people it supports to their neighbourhoods is core to Dimensions' Mission and Values and so it will take all necessary action to encourage and foster wider community engagement.
- 4.2 For many people we support, who do not enjoy high levels of independence and mobility, their home, its communal areas (in shared living) and the immediate neighbourhood represents their 'community'. It is therefore of the utmost importance that these areas are well maintained, comfortable and designed and decorated in accordance with tenants' wishes, as far as is possible. This aligns to Dimensions' ongoing belief in the personalisation of environments to promote wellbeing.
- 4.3 Tenants are given the opportunity to discuss the communal areas as part of Dimensions' Tenants' Forums. Tenants will also be consulted about the quality of their home and its communal parts through the visits of Regional Housing Advisers, both in virtual and physical form.
- 4.4 Regional Asset Management Panels will solicit information from colleagues who work in Operations, seeking information about homes that need further adaptation or investment to heighten the level of comfort or suitability.
- 4.5 Further, Housing Quality Checkers, employed by Dimensions as experts by experience, will assess the quality of communal areas and consult with tenants as to their satisfaction during their visits to Dimensions' homes.
- 4.6 Where tenants pay a service charge to cover the cost of maintaining communal spaces, they will be consulted on decisions as to décor and choice of items – for example furniture.
- 4.7 Tenants will be consulted upon their aspirations for the appearance and use of communal spaces, including quiet time and space for recreational activities.
- 4.8 Where contractors or local service providers are employed to deliver service-chargeable works (for example, gardening or cleaning), tenants will be consulted on the quality and choice available. In this way tenants can be involved in driving value for money in services.
- 4.9 Where shared use of spaces can lead to incompatibility arising from complex support needs or dispute, a register of issues is kept and creativity, including mediation, negotiation and (in some cases) alternative accommodation, used to resolve them. In cases of anti-social behaviour, the terms of Dimensions' [Anti-social behaviour and harassment policy](#) applies.

Identifying and publishing the roles that Dimensions is able to play within the areas that it has properties

- 5.1 Dimensions is committed to fulfilling its role in supporting communities and neighbourhoods where it can have an influence. With a generally very small presence in communities this can be a challenge.
- 5.2 A core area in which Dimensions colleagues fulfil a neighbourhood role is that of social inclusion and the related problem of tackling anti-social behaviour. Some Dimensions tenants, because of their support needs, can be more vulnerable than others to incidents of hate crime, bullying and/or harassment. Where Dimensions is fulfilling its aim of supporting people with behaviours that challenge within a community, Support Workers and Regional Housing Advisers have a critical role to play in supporting tenants needs to be understood. Colleagues will mediate between tenants and non-tenants, advocating on behalf of tenants and taking all necessary steps to protect them from anti-social behaviour or, in circumstances where a tenant is a perpetrator, to enforce acceptable behaviours or find alternative solutions.
- 5.3 Dimensions' [Anti-social behaviour and harassment policy](#) discusses Dimensions' approach and commitments in depth.
- 5.4 To make the roles and responsibilities of colleagues clear, Regional Housing Advisers take responsibility for engaging with tenants through visitation, information sharing with Support Workers and referral of issues that require their input. The Housing Team is expected to be the *centre of excellence* for Dimensions in all matters pertaining to housing and neighbourhoods.
- 5.5 Regional Housing Advisers conduct sign-ups for new tenancies and use this opportunity to introduce themselves and explain what they can do to support tenants – making helpful distinction between the landlord role and the role of the Support Worker. It is Dimensions' explicit policy that teams are *operations-led*, using their expertise and effort to ensure that Support Workers and other operational colleagues are enabled to dedicate their time to delivering personalised, active support. Housing colleagues are expected to reach out to tenants and colleagues to offer their expertise in ensuring that the landlord function is expedited in a supportive way.

Co-operating with local partnership arrangements, including strategic housing functions of local authorities where Dimensions is able to assist them in achieving their objectives

- 6.1 Dimensions takes its role as a partner in local government seriously and takes every opportunity to support councils in expediting their duties.

- 6.2 Dimensions' core business of supporting people to live in their communities means that it is dependent upon strong partnership arrangements with over 80 councils – as the people it supports and, therefore, its tenants predominantly come to Dimensions through referral panels.
- 6.3 Dimensions' Housing Brokers help identify accommodation for people that Dimensions will (or, in some cases, already do) support to support the strategic housing function. Where brokers are successful, housing applicants are successfully rehoused and existent tenants transferred to other suitable accommodation.
- 6.4 Dimensions' related policies ([Anti-social behaviour and harassment](#), [Eviction](#) and [Rent arrears](#)) are clear on the need to sustain tenancies, avoid homelessness and make suitable adaptation to ensure that homes are suitable for its tenants through the duration of their tenancy.
- 6.5 Dimensions' [Tenure](#) and [Referrals, allocations and new services](#) policies have specific regard to the allocations policies of the local authority areas in which Dimensions works.
- 6.6 Dimensions are committed to working in partnership with other local stakeholders to develop and recycle housing assets. These partnerships will be with other providers of social housing, as well as the local authorities. Dimensions will use its resources to develop and refurbish accommodation with regard to local plans and housing strategies, consulting councils on their aims. Dimensions will offer unused assets to local authorities to retain them in the local stock for a social purpose. Dimensions will use social housing grant, both new and recycled, to support local housing priorities that support the needs of people with a learning disability and/or autism.
- 6.7 In matters of anti-social behaviour, crime and sub-criminal behaviour, Dimensions will work with Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships to reduce disorder and support community safety. Dimensions will create and deliver national and local campaigns that support crime and disorder reduction – especially in the arena of hate crime against disabled people.
- 6.8 Where possible, Dimensions will deliver wider social value to local authority partners in both formal contractual arrangements and informal partnerships. Dimensions will work to deliver health outcomes and employment opportunities for people with a learning disability and/or autism that will enhance wellbeing and reduce pressure upon local authority resources.

- 6.9 As detailed in its 'Care of the Environment' policy, Dimensions' colleagues are expected to
- create conditions and opportunities for the people we support and the organisation to act responsibly and sustainably
 - help create opportunities for people to get involved in caring for their environment
 - ensure a clear, planned and thoughtful approach is taken for the benefit of everyone and the environment.
- 6.10 With this in mind, Dimensions expects colleagues to have regard to local green and environment policies held by local authorities and to work in partnership to support green initiatives, thus assisting local authorities and partnerships in their objectives.

Relevant legislation, guidance & related policies & templates

Legislation

- 7.1 Data Protection Act 2018
- 7.2 General Data protection regulations (2016/679 EU)
- 7.3 The Equality Act 2010
- 7.3 [Regulator of Social Housing – Neighbourhood and Community Standard](#)

Guidance

- 8.1 Not applicable

Group policies

- 9.1 Anti-social behaviour and harassment
- 9.2 Building maintenance
- 9.3 Tenure
- 9.4 Referrals, allocations and new services
- 9.5 Eviction
- 9.6 Rent arrears
- 9.7 Care of the environment

Related procedures, decision flowcharts, forms and so on

- 10.1 Housing Quality Checkers Monitoring Form
- 10.2 Regional Housing Adviser home visit form

Equality statement

- 11.1 This policy promotes equality, diversity and human rights by stating Dimensions' clear commitment to social inclusion and the creation of social value in partnership with its tenants and local strategic partnerships.
- 11.2 We promote equality, diversity and human rights by treating all people we support and employ equally and fairly whatever their:
 - age
 - disability
 - gender reassignment
 - marriage and civil partnership
 - pregnancy and maternity
 - race
 - religion or belief
 - sex
 - sexual orientation
- 11.3 The equality impact analysis (EIA) is in the intranet's Document library. You can link to it from here: [Neighbourhood and community standards policy – version 1 - Initial equality impact analysis](#).

Data protection statement

- 12.1 This policy involves handling personal data. So when you carry out any procedures this policy describes, you should also think about what our Data handling and protection policy says.
- 12.2 Our Data handling and protection policy is our promise to handle personal data correctly under the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). It tells you how to keep that promise. It balances everyone's rights to data privacy with the work we do.

Review

- 13.1 We will review this policy three years from its original publication. But if changes in legislation, regulation or best practice mean we need to, we will review sooner.
- 13.2 If the changes are big, we will equality impact analyse (EIA) the policy again and send out to consultation in line with our Policy development and consultation policy.
- 13.3 For smaller changes, we will update this same version. We will record this in the Version control section below.

Glossary

- 14.1 This section is blank and has been included for comparison only.

Term	Definition

People & groups involved in writing & approving this policy

Policy owner:	Tim Handcock, Interim Director of Housing
Policy author/reviewer:	Chris Woodhead, Group Director Housing & Business Development
People & groups consulted:	Group Audit and Risk Committee; Diversity Matters; National Colleague Forum Policy Subgroup; Altair Ltd

Version control

Version number	Approved date:	Communication date:	Summary of minor changes
I	21st October 2020	21st October 2020	New policy

Next review due: October 2023