



Places to live. Space to grow.

Access Policy

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1 Introduction: the purpose of this policy

- 1.1 This policy outlines our approach to gaining access to our residents' homes to carry out the necessary landlord services to ensure homes are safe, healthy and free from hazards that could cause harm.
- 1.2 It sets out the legal framework within which we manage our responsibilities, ensuring our homes are inspected, maintained and improved.
- 1.3 We recognise that effective communication and engagement is pivotal to gaining access and therefore we will ensure our communication around access is:
 - Timely - we will give notice of our intentions where possible.
 - Transparent-we will provide an explanation of our requirements and expectations.
 - Tailored to residents' requirements.
 - In an appropriate tone and manner that listens and responds to residents' concerns but is clear about access rights.
- 1.4 This policy applies to our residents' homes and all communal areas of residential buildings including furniture and appliances provided and/or managed by us, except for KEHFA (Kent Extra Homes for All) accommodation.

2 Policy Statement

- 2.1 We aim to provide homes and build communities that residents are proud to live in, with support to sustain a successful tenancy and manage life changes. Accessing our residents' homes to carry out repairs, safety checks, inspections and improvements is a key part of providing safe homes, for our residents and neighbouring properties, and avoiding enforcement action against tenancies. Allowing access is a condition in our tenancy agreements.
- 2.2 We will always try to gain access through mutual agreement and work collaboratively with residents to ensure they understand and meet access requirements.
- 2.3 We will ensure we arrange access for repairs, inspections and improvements needed for the following reasons:
 - The structure and exterior of the property (including drains, gutters and external pipes).
 - The installations in the property for the supply of water, gas and electricity.
 - The installations for sanitation (basins, sinks and baths).
 - The installations for property safety including sprinklers, door entry, warden call, assisted toilets, domestic auto doors, gates and barriers.

- The installations for heating the property and providing hot water.
- To carry out and provide a valid Energy Performance Certificate (EPC).
- To carry out decarbonisation works to the internal and external of the property or building.
- To carry out and provide a valid Gas Safety Certificate at the start of the tenancy and within 28 days of each annual gas safety check (if there is a gas safety installation).
- To ensure all properties have a working smoke alarm on every floor used as living accommodation and a carbon monoxide alarm in all rooms using solid fuels – such as coal fire or wood burning stove.
- To ensure an EICR (Electrical Installation Condition Report) is completed at least every five years by a competent person.
- To ensure that access is given when needed for Fire Risk Assessments and Fire Door Inspections
- To ensure the property is free from damp and mould by tackling repairs to the structure and exterior and make sure the property is adequately ventilated.
- To install smart thermostats as required.
- To ensure the home is free from trip and fall hazards by ensuring safety rails are installed and stairs are in good repair.
- To ensure access to the property is well lit in communal spaces.
- To ensure the property has an adequate water supply and drinking water is supplied from the mains.
- To ensure the property is free from structural defects including the roof, floors, walls and ceilings.
- To ensure capital components are maintained or renewed on a lifecycle basis including kitchens, bathrooms, windows, doors, roofs, cyclical decorations etc.
- To carry out a stock condition survey to assess the life expectancy of capital components along with the general structure.
- To ensure the property is safe and compliant to remedy any Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) failures and other regulatory breaches.

Note This list above is not exhaustive

- 2.4 Residents must ensure access is granted to us and relevant workers to enable repairs or inspections to be carried out. We will give our residents at least 48 hours' notice requesting access at a reasonable time.
- 2.5 We will attempt all reasonable methods of arranging access to ensure homes receive sufficient investment and services.
- 2.6 Where access attempts are unsuccessful, we will try to understand why residents cannot or will not provide access and try to work with them to find a solution to ensure that works are completed.
- 2.7 We recognise that in certain situations residents may struggle to allow access (e.g. Domestic Abuse, bereavement, illness). We will be flexible in the delivery of the required services where appropriate.
- 2.8 We will ensure our actions are proportionate to balance the safety of our residents and upkeep of their homes with their right to privacy and the peaceful enjoyment of their home. We will make all reasonable enquiries to establish any extenuating circumstances or vulnerabilities and tailor our approach as appropriate.
- 2.9 Refusing access, after all reasonable engagement has been attempted, including three attempts at visiting, will be considered a breach of tenancy. In such cases, we may pursue legal action which may include injunctions or tenancy enforcement to gain access.
- 2.10 For annual gas safety checks, if after three attempts access has not been granted and the annual service date has passed, we will consider capping the gas supply externally. We will only cap following a risk assessment and with approval from an Executive Director. The gas supply will be uncapped and the service restored once the gas safety check is complete.
- 2.11 We differentiate between routine, planned and emergency access. Emergency access will always be prioritised based on risk to safety and may require forced access with no or limited notice.

3 Forced access

- 3.1 We respect the privacy of residents and their right not to be disturbed unnecessarily or at inconvenient times. However, in some circumstances, it may be necessary for us to gain entry to a property to ensure safety and/or compliance with legal obligations.
- 3.2 We are committed to gaining access in a way that is proportionate, risk-informed and resident-aware. Forced access will only be considered when all reasonable and tailored engagement approaches have been exhausted and there is a serious health, safety or legal compliance risk.
- 3.3 A risk assessment that includes consideration of any known vulnerabilities or support requirements will always be carried out if we are considering forced access.

4 Approach

- 4.1 We will take all reasonable steps to gain access with the agreement of residents before forcing access. This will include as appropriate, tailored communications to meet the needs and communications preferences of residents, home visits, flexibility on appointment times and gaining an understanding of concerns residents have on allowing access.
- 4.2 Where the resident has failed to engage or give access after these attempts, or if circumstances dictate that action should be taken sooner, we may force entry to the property. Each case will be assessed on the individual circumstances and in accordance with relevant tenancy agreement, risk and any internal procedure in place.
- 4.3 We will liaise with the appropriate external organisations, such as social services or the police, in advance of forced access in cases where a potential risk has been identified, or where there is a concern for welfare. These risks include the health, safety and wellbeing of our residents, surrounding residents, staff, contractors or animals inside the property.
- 4.4 Any request for forced access must be reviewed by an Executive Director. A Risk Assessment must be completed for all cases presented for review.
- 4.5 Where circumstances allow, we will provide at least 24 hours' notice to the resident of forced access. In emergencies, particularly where there are immediate health and safety or welfare concerns, we may need to shorten the overall notice process.
- 4.6 If a property is found to be unsecured, we may take immediate action to protect it and its contents, treating this as an emergency repair. Any photographic or video evidence gathered whilst gaining access or securing the property will be handled in accordance with our Data Protection and Retention Policy.
- 4.7 In instances where forced access is agreed we will aim to ensure the forced access is undertaken using the most cost-effective means, and that any damage is minimised. We will make every effort to communicate with the resident to ensure they can access their home if we have secured their home or changed locks. We reserve the right to re-charge the resident for any costs associated with the enforcement of a forced access.

5 Roles and responsibilities

- 5.1 The Executive Director of Housing and Neighbourhoods has overall responsibility for this policy.
- 5.2 The Executive Director of Assets and Property is responsible for the delivery of the property repairs, property management, property improvements and property safety policies and procedures relating to the management of our properties.
- 5.3 Neighbourhoods Housing Officers, Supported Housing Officers or Scheme Managers, (depending of the type of accommodation) are responsible for progressing any legal or tenancy action.

- 5.4 All staff are responsible for ensuring they follow safe working practices and use Lone working devices as appropriate. Staff should always be aware of their surroundings and conduct dynamic risk assessments. Unacceptable behaviour towards staff will be dealt with under our Unacceptable Behaviour Policy.

6 Review

- 6.1 We will carry out a review of this policy every three years or sooner subject to legal, regulatory changes or if internal changes require it.
- 6.2 The review process will include consultation with residents in accordance with our defined approach to engagement.

7 Regulation and legislation

- 7.1 The Regulator for Social Housing Safety and Quality Standard 2024 states that:
- *'When acting as landlords, registered providers must take all reasonable steps to ensure the health and safety of tenants in their homes and associated communal areas.'*
 - *'Registered providers must provide an effective, efficient and timely repairs, maintenance and planned improvements service for the homes and communal areas for which they are responsible.'*

8 Reporting

- 8.1 We will report quarterly to the Executive Team and Communities and Housing Committee on no access cases.

9 Consultation

- 9.1 We have consulted with the Resident Scrutiny Panel, Resident Influencers, and a cross-section of residents, and have incorporated their feedback.
- 9.2 The policy has also been reviewed by the Communities and Housing Committee as part of our governance process.

10 Communication

- 10.1 This policy will be published on the intranet for staff and made available on our website to ensure transparency for residents.

11 Appendices

Related legislation

- [**The Landlord and Tenant Act 1985**](#)
Establishes the landlord's duty to maintain the structure and essential services of a property. Supports access for repairs and inspections.

- **The Environmental Protection Act 1990 (EPA)**

Enables action where access is required to resolve environmental health issues such as damp or mould.

- **The Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018**

Requires homes to be free from serious hazards. Access is needed to inspect and carry out necessary remedial work.

- **The Housing Act 2004**

Introduces the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). Supports access for inspections and hazard mitigation.

- **The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (HASAW)**

Protects staff, contractors and residents. Access ensures works can be completed in a safe environment.

- **Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998 (LOLER)**

Applies to installed lifts or mobility aids. Access is required for inspections and servicing.

- **Equality Act 2010**

Ensures reasonable adjustments are considered when arranging access, especially for residents with disabilities.

- **Electricity at Work Regulations 1989**

Requires safe electrical installations. Supports access for Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) inspections and remedial works.

- **Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998**

Mandates annual gas safety checks. Landlords must access homes to comply.

- **The Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012**

Requires the identification and management of asbestos risks. Access is needed for surveys and control measures.

- **The Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015 (CDM)**

Covers safety responsibilities for planned improvement works. Access is required for assessments and compliance.

- **The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH)**

Applies to substances used during maintenance. Access ensures safe application and protection.

- **The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999**

Supports the duty to assess and manage risk during works. Access may be required to ensure safe conditions.

- **The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR)**

Requires investigation and reporting of safety incidents. Access supports compliance and risk reduction.

- **Work at Height Regulations 2005**

Relevant where external works involve ladders or platforms. Access arrangements must ensure safe working environments.

- **Building Safety Act 2022**

Applies to landlords managing high-rise or higher-risk residential buildings. Provides a legal basis for entry to complete Building Safety Case duties, inspections or remedial works.