



Places to live. Space to grow.

---

## Access Policy

---

DRAFT

## Contents

- 1 Introduction and policy purpose
- 2 Policy statement
- 3 Forced Access
- 4 Approach
- 5 Roles and Responsibilities
- 6 Review
- 7 Regulation
- 8 Reporting
- 9 Consultation
- 10 Communication

## **1 Introduction: the purpose of this policy**

- 1.1 This policy outlines our approach to gaining access to our customers' 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 improved, inspected, and maintained.
- 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 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 managed by us.

## **2 Policy Statement**

- 2.1 We want 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 and well maintained homes and avoiding action against tenancies.
- 2.2 We will ensure we arrange access for repairs, inspections and improvements needed to the following: *Note This list is not exhaustive*
  - 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 5 years by a competent person.
- To ensure that access is given when needed during 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 instal 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 carry out a stock condition survey to assess the lifecycle of capital components along with the general structure.
- To ensure capital components are maintained or renewed on a lifecycle basis including kitchens, bathrooms, windows, doors, roofs, cyclical decorations etc.
- To ensure the property is safe and compliant to remedy any HHSRS failures and other regulatory breaches.

2.3 Customers must ensure access is granted to us and relevant workers to enable repairs or inspections to be carried out. We will give our customers at least 48 hours' notice requesting access at a reasonable time of the day.

2.4 We will attempt all reasonable methods of arranging access to ensure our homes receive sufficient investment and services.

- 2.5 Where access attempts are unsuccessful, we will try to understand why customers cannot or will not provide access and work with them to find a solution to ensure that works are completed.
- 2.6 We recognise that in certain scenarios residents may struggle to allow access in some domestic situations (eg Domestic Abuse, bereavement). We will be flexible in the delivery of the required services where appropriate.
- 2.7 We will ensure our actions are proportionate to balance the safety of our residents 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.
- 2.8 If a customer refuses access, they may be in breach of their tenancy agreement and a court order may be pursued. We may also seek to force access, as set out in section 3 of this policy and in accordance with the relevant tenancy.

### **3 Forced Access**

- 3.1 We respect the privacy of our customers 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.

### **4 Approach**

- 4.1 We will take all reasonable steps to gain access with the agreement of residents before forcing access. We aim to have three separate attempts to obtain access by agreement of the resident, where circumstances allow.
- 4.2 Where the customer has failed to engage or give access after three attempts, or if circumstances dictate that action should be taken sooner, we may force entry to the property. Each case will be assessed on its own basis and in accordance with relevant tenancy agreement, risk and any internal procedure in place.
- 4.3 Where circumstances allow, we will provide at least 24 hours' notice 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.
- 4.4 We reserve the right to access any unsecured property to secure it, or its contents against vandalism or unauthorised entry. Such instances will be managed as an emergency repair.
- 4.5 We aim to ensure the forced access is undertaken using the most cost-effective means, and that any damage is minimised, as appropriate to the urgency of the situation.
- 4.6 We will liaise with the appropriate external organisations, such as social services or the police, in advance of forced access in all 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 tenant, occupants, surrounding residents, staff, contractors or animals inside the property.

- 4.7 Forced Access will be agreed by a Director. An Equality Impact and Risk Assessment complete for all cases presented for review.
- 4.8 We reserve the right to re-charge the customer for any costs associated with the enforcement of a forced access.

## **5 Roles and Responsibilities**

- 5.1 The Executive Director Property & Asset Management has overall responsibility for this policy and the delivery of the property repairs, property management, property improvements and property safety policies and procedures relating to the management of our properties.
- 5.2 The Neighbourhoods Team is responsible for progressing any tenancy/legal action relating to access.

## **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.

## **7 Regulation & 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'

And

'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'

- 7.2 This policy links to or considers:

- The Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
- The Environmental Protection Act 1990
- The Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018
- The Housing Act 2004
- The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- LOLER 1998
- Equality Act 2010
- Electricity at Work Regulations 1989
- Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998
- The Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012
- The Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015
- The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002

- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR)
- Work at Height Regulations 2005

## **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 and incorporated their feedback.
- 9.2 The policy has been reviewed by the Communities and Housing Committee.

## **10 Communication**

- 10.1 This policy will be published internally on the intranet and shared on the website to be transparent to residents.

---

## Summary of key material/changes

---

This is a new policy that

- sets out the framework within which we work to gain access to our properties to carry out statutory and mandatory landlord repairs, renewals/improvements or inspections.
- It provides clarity and transparency on our approach to gaining access to our residents' homes



### **Related policies and supporting documents**

- 1** Gas and Heating Policy
- 2** Electrical Safety Policy
- 3** Fire Safety Policy
- 4** Asbestos Policy
- 5** Water Safety Policy
- 6** Maintaining Your Home Standard
- 7** Recharge Policy (currently in draft)
- 8** Vulnerability Policy
- 9** Domestic Abuse Policy
- 10** Neighbourhood Management Policy

## POLICY SIGN-OFF

---

|  |                           |
|--|---------------------------|
| Document Name:                         | Access Policy             |
| Equality Impact Assessment:            | No impact                 |
| Equality Impact Assessment on Bettie:  | Yes                       |
| Equality Impact Assessment on S Drive: | No                        |
| Resident Impact Assessment:            | yes                       |
| Policy Author:                         | Audrey Williamson         |
| Approved by:                           | Sasha Harrison?           |
| Effective from:                        | ?                         |
| Next Review Date:                      | July 2028                 |
| Risk:                                  | Compliance and Regulatory |
| Document Location:                     | Bettie                    |

- A current version of this procedure is available to all employees on (West Kent Intranet).

### APPROVAL SIGNATURE:

JOB TITLE:

DATE:

### Change History Record

| Version | Date | Details of Change(s) | Approved By       |
|---------|------|----------------------|-------------------|
| V1.0    | ?    | Initial issue        | [Enter Job Title] |