Estate Inspections

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You are advised that a printed version may not be the latest available version. The latest version, which supersedes all previous versions, is available on the Brighter Places Policy Index Sheet. Those to whom this policy applies, are responsible for familiarising themselves with the latest version and for always complying with the policy requirements.

Should colleagues require any reasonable adjustment to allow for engagement with this document please contact the policy lead

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1. Policy Statement / Purpose

Brighter Places is committed to maintaining well-kept communal areas in all our areas of operation and in our schemes and on estates.

This policy explains how we will ensure that we inspect and monitor those areas, ensuring that Health and Safety is observed and communal areas are maintained to a good standard.

It sets out how Brighter Places will address issues when they are seen, the expected frequency of visits and how we inspect internal and external communal spaces.

Our internal spaces include but are not limited to communal lounges, kitchens, hallways, stairwells and toilets.

Our external areas include but are not limited to gardens, pathways, car parks and garages, bin stores and meter cupboards.

Inspections will include review and action issues that arise from

- Cleaning and ground maintenance services
- Dealing with communal areas with no contract in place for cleaning and/or grounds maintenance
- Communal area repairs
- Meter readings
- Signage and lighting
- Deliberate or accidental damage in communal spaces
- Ensuring communal spaces and fire exits are kept clear
- Checks for insurance claims
- Items left by anyone that require removal
- Fire Risk Actions and
- Any other Health and Safety works
- Goods left in communal areas (and managing TORT notices)

We know that well managed estates reduce anti-social behaviour and improve our customer satisfaction.

We use the terminology of ‘customer’ in this policy to refer to our tenants, shared owners, leaseholders and visitors to our properties and residents who access our communal areas.

This policy refers to general needs tenancies and does not include Milestones Trust, Rackfield House or other accommodation where we own the property and third-party support is provided by another supplier.

Estate Inspections will be carried out across all our stock and areas where we operate and include checks on internal and external communal areas in flats or near to houses and other accommodation. We will also routinely check garage sites and any other areas owned and managed by Brighter Places.

We will carry out estate inspections in blocks managed by a management company where we have properties. We will pass any concerns to the Management Company to resolve.

2. Commitment

Our commitment is to inspect our communal areas on a regular rolling basis, ensuring that they are maintained to our agreed standards.

We aim to be at all our sites regularly, with visits being prioritised using a RAG rated system.

Housing Officers (HO's) will action works identified from estate inspections, and where customers are involved in an inspection we will update our them on our actions. This can include customers attending inspections, as well as our e-news and newsletter articles and website information.

We will work with our partners and other areas of the business sat Brighter Places in providing services to maintain these areas, as well as our customers to shape our delivery.

3. Linked Documents

- Clear Communal Spaces Policy
- Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
- Complaints and Customer Feedback Policy
- Health & Safety Policy
- Fire Safety Procedure
- Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Policy
- Safeguarding Adults Policy
- Safeguarding Children Policy
- Tree Safety Policy & Procedure
- CCTV Policy
- Chargeable Repairs Policy
- Tenancy Fraud Policy
- Neighbourhood Strategy (under review 2025)
- Pet Permissions Policy
- Lock Change Procedural Note for Housing Officers
- Tenancy Agreements

4. Legal and Regulatory Compliance

- Health and Safety Act 1974

- Regulator Consumer Standards
    - Safety and Quality Standard
    - Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard
    - Neighbourhood and Community Standard
    - Tenancy Standard
- Equality Act 2010
- Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)

5. Policy Detail

An estate inspection is the inspection of the internal and external communal parts, facilities and grounds of an estate comprising blocks of flats or a mixture of flats, and or houses usually built on land managed by Brighter Places.

We have some leasehold properties that form part of Freeholds that we do not own, and in these instances, we inspect our properties and communal areas and will liaise with any relevant partners such as the Management Agency.

5.1 Health and Safety

Housing Officers (HO's) will ensure that they take reasonable care when on site, by wearing appropriate clothing and footwear that means they can comfortably walk around internal and external communal areas without putting themselves or our customers at any risk.

The Fast Fields App that captures our Estate Inspection data includes the ability to review all these areas and make notes on works identified and actioned.

5.2 Estate Inspection Frequency and RAG ratings

Estate inspection frequency differs depending on the site specifics and their condition.

They are actioned as follows for general issues being raised.

	Green rated **No concerns/ actions**	**Amber rated** **Some minor concerns / actions**	**Red rated** **Major concerns / actions**
Internal and/or external areas managed by BP	3 monthly	2 monthly	Monthly
Internal and/or external areas managed by a Mgt Co.	6 monthly	3 monthly	Monthly

To note: A Health and Safety concern or outstanding Fire Risk action raised from an Estate inspection will automatically place the location into Red Rated cases requiring a minimum of monthly visits to check progress – if H & S actions are raised from another areas of the business for example from an FRA reports; these actions will require an initial visit within 5 working days.

5.2.1 Other external areas

We aim to visit all other communal spaces as a minimum of once every 12 months.

We RAG rate each Estate Inspection dependant on the amount of outstanding work needed to maintain it to a good standard.

Appropriate actions identified during estate inspections will vary dependent upon the nature of the incident, and the HO will receive training to be able to clearly identify and action all areas of work.

All Health and Safety reports will be actioned within 1 working day, and other reports actioned within 5 working days wherever possible.

At the current time Fast Fields does not enable is to add in any reference numbers retrospectively to Estate Inspection reports. HO's will raise repairs direct with Ian Williams or via the Brighter Places Repairs team. Compliance issues will be raised with the Compliance team.

All messages both internal or external will be confirmed via email to ensure an audit trail.

Whilst on site, the HO will routinely check the following:

Internal communal areas

- Hallways
- Stairwells
- Lifts
- Lounge
- Toilets
- Other internal communal facilities
- Left items (fly-tipped or otherwise)
- Lighting
- Other communal repairs
- Electric bikes or scooters – anything left in the communal areas for removal
- Communal doors and door entry systems (security issues)
- Fire alarm panels and fire systems
- Meter Cupboards
- Condition of carpets / floor covering / stair nosing
- General cleaning and cleanliness
- Health and Safety concerns
- Tenancy Fraud / other ASB
- Fire door integrity
- Clear Fire Exits

• Clear communal areas • Notice Boards
External communal areas (includes garage sites, houses on estates and car parks) • Gardens • Garden furniture • Patios • Walkways/pavements and paths • Trees • Washing lines • Paddling Pools • Fly tipping or other left items • External Lighting (including immediate street lighting) • General Grounds Maintenance (Gardening) • Gates • General Health and Safety concerns • Blocking of exits or doorways • Drain covers • Manholes • External freestanding walls (for example around a garden) • Fencing where we responsibility for the boundary and the fence – we may report a concern to the owner if it is not in our ownership • External freestanding walls (for example around a garden) where we own the wall – we may report a concern to the owner if it is not in our ownership • TV aerials • Communal doors • Any other items of note • Bike sheds • Bin sheds • Doors and condition of the garages • Ensure easy access to garages • Doors and condition of the estate • Abandoned cars • Possible tenancy fraud cases • Gates and general condition of car parks • Ensure accessibility of car park • General condition of tenant's homes and gardens • Any other items of note

5.3 Managing Estate Inspections

HO's are responsible for recording estate inspection information using our Fast Field App on mobile phones or tablets.

The information is collated internally and allows us to monitor estate inspections and identify areas that require improvement, report repairs and address Health & Safety issues.

Having regular inspections allows us to build our relationships with our customers and for the customer to shape delivery for planned works.

Estate inspections assist us to:

- Ensure the safety of our customers, property and wider community
- Identify Health and Safety and/or repair issues and action appropriate remedies
- Ensure the grounds, home and our customers remain safe.
- Ensure that customers understand and fulfil their responsibilities as outlined in their tenancy agreements.
- Empower and support our customers to sustain their tenancies.
- Act to reduce tenancy fraud, cuckooing and any other anti-social behaviour when concerns are identified.
- Identify and report any Safeguarding or Domestic Abuse concerns
- Ensure that appropriate action is taken to enforce the terms of the tenancy agreement whenever necessary.
- Monitor our Grounds Maintenance & Cleaning contracts including waste removal and fly-tipping.
- Liaise with customers to ascertain if we can add properties not already included in our grounds and cleaning contract for communal areas to maintain the area and/or improve the area
- Uphold our ‘Clear Communal Areas’ policy.
- Work with customers who wish to attend inspections to jointly agree actions and delivery in areas.

5.4 Undertaking Estate Inspections

5.4.1 Customer Engagement

HO’s will engage with their customers to invite them to attend inspections when they are carried out.

We will do this by creating awareness articles in newsletters and we encourage customers to contact their HO if they would like to be invited to their next estate inspection. We will utilise our notice boards where we can.

5.4.2 Standards for internal and external communal areas

The tenancy agreement sets out the responsibility of our customers who are tenants to keep their communal areas clean and clear of goods and behave in a tenant like manner.

This includes:

- To clear away any food or other debris.
- To always keep all exits and fire escapes clear
- Not to wedge or prop open any communal internal or external doors.
- Not to leave sharp objects in communal areas.
- Not to leave any items in internal communal areas. This includes Mobility Scooters or other electrically charged items such as e-bikes / e-scooters.
- Closing all external doors and windows after use and/or at night.
- Not leaving rubbish and clearing away litter
- Removing all personal belongings

Some of our older tenancy agreements may not include all these clauses but we have a duty to ensure our properties are safe and conform to current Health and Safety regulations so all blocks will use this standard.

Any actions attributable to our customers will be addressed with directly with them by the relevant HO who will set timescales for completion of necessary works.

5.5 Communal area cleaning and grounds maintenance - includes Tree Maintenance

Cleaning is undertaken on a regular scheduled basis in around three quarters of our internal communal spaces and grounds maintenance is undertaken at about half our external communal areas, (as at August 2025.) Customers who do not receive communal services are able to request inclusion of these services and HO's can include new schemes and areas into current delivery.

HO's will investigate with customers whether there is an ability to recharge the grounds and cleaning costs as part of the tenancy agreement, and whether all the tenants would wish for these services to be carried out by our contractor. Liaison with the Finance team for any adjustment to the costs for service charges as part of this delivery is required.

Any communal spaces that are misused by customers or their visitors which cause a need for increased cleaning will be recharged to the relevant customer, or to the block if the HO is unable to identify the individual person responsible.

Where we do not provide grounds maintenance and cleaning services in a specific communal area, we will work with our customers to ensure they take necessary steps to keep all areas to a good standard. This will include considering engaging

our own contractors to deliver services if the area is in poor condition and customers are unable or unwilling to undertake the works needed.

As part of our communal and grounds maintenance contract we check and maintain communal trees to ensure they are not a Health and Safety risk. Tree management is overseen by our Compliance Team and managed through our main grounds maintenance and cleaning contractor. Please refer to our Tree Policy.

5.6 Refuse and Litter – Bulky Items and Fly Tipping

It is our customers responsibility to make their own arrangements for collection and clearance of their household and bulky waste. Where this has not happened, Brighter Places can collect bulky items or other fly tipping using one of its contractors.

HO's will attempt to find out who has left any fly tipped items in communal areas and look to charge the customer of the associated costs for removal.

Where a specific customer cannot be identified, and the area is communal; charges will be applied to the block service charges, and in line with individual tenancy and ownership agreements.

Please refer to 7.0 for further information and Appendix 2 for waste collection frequencies and scope of emergency and routine collections.

5.7 Bin stores

Customers are responsible for keeping the bin store clean, free from litter and unwanted household items. Brighter Places will liaise with any other managing agent who has tenants using the stores as appropriate.

HO's may need to speak to customers about bin store management if there is repeated fly tipping and/or overloading or poor use of available bins. Extra clearance organised by the HO will be charged to individuals or the block as required.

HO's may also need to investigate extra security for bin stores in an attempt to keep access available to our customers only.

5.8 Door Entry Systems

Security is everyone's responsibility. Where common front door-controlled entry latches automatically lock, it is the duty of every customer to ensure doors are always kept closed.

HO's will ensure all doors are secure and lockable at inspection and communicate any concerns with customers.

Ongoing concerns that are raised due to misuse of communal doors, for example being broken to allow access to people to take drugs or sleep, should be raised with the HO's Housing Manager and the Asset team to ascertain what can be done to improve local security. This may also be raised as a Health and Safety concern dependant on the severity of the issues being managed.

5.9 Pest Control

Brighter Places will respond to reports of pest infestation within its stock in a prompt and appropriate manner and will consult with the relevant agencies such as Environmental Health where needed.

The reason for the vermin or pest infestation will determine the process followed. Brighter Places are responsible for the fabric of buildings, individual customers are responsible for internal infestations, unless the pests are accessing the building due to a building or fabric failure.

5.10 Pets

As per the tenancy agreement; customers in flats should request permission for all pets. We will not unreasonably withhold permission for animals in our accommodation. Permission for a pet can be rescinded at any time.

Brighter Places will deal with pet issues where the animal is causing a nuisance either within the house or common property by instigating an ASB case in Orchard.

Customers are bound by the local by-laws about dog fouling whereby a fine can be imposed on dog owners who allow their dog to foul in non-specified areas (e.g., pavements.)

In this situation, in the first instance, residents should contact their local police office or Environmental Health Department to report the incident.

Dangerous dogs should be reported to the ASB team. HO's will support the ASB Officer in their investigation.

5.11 Security – meter cupboards and other

HO's will check internal and external security whilst on inspection. This includes opening and closing internal and external communal doors, including meter cupboards, opening and closing communal windows and responding to concerns that have been raised by customers whilst on site. We do not allow storage of any goods in cupboards.

HO's will liaise with or direct to external agencies to ensure that street lighting, for example outside a main communal front door is maintained and in good working order. HO's will also attempt to check car park lighting and other lighting that is our responsibility.

Other reports of street lighting can be made to the local authority who have responsibility for maintaining street lighting.

5.12 Vandalism

Brighter Places will take firm action against customers who are found to be responsible for vandalism within the house, grounds or common areas of any property where Brighter Places has responsibility.

This can include visits, warning letters, injunction and/or other legal action depending on the severity and frequency of vandalism.

In the first instance, all forms of vandalism should be reported to the local police and set up on Orchard as an ASB case.

Where Brighter Places has proof this will be shared with the police, repairs resulting from acts of vandalism will be charged to the perpetrator, this may involve a written statement from the customer who reported the vandalism.

5.13 Graffiti

Graffiti can increase a sense of fear of crime for our customers and can detract from the appearance of neighbourhoods. Graffiti that is not part of a pre-agreed mural from local artists will be removed wherever feasible.

Dependent on the severity of the graffiti, HO's may use a multi-agency approach to identify who wrote the graffiti by liaising with schools, Police, and other tenants. If the HO can identify those responsible, we will investigate and take action to gain assurance that the graffiti will stop.

We aim to promote the values of community ownership and respect for the neighbourhood. If the person responsible does not live in one of our homes, we will investigate other remedies where possible. If a person is persistently writing graffiti, we may explore other legal remedies.

Removal of graffiti is by our grounds and cleaning contractor.

5.14 CCTV

We do not provide material from our CCTV capture to our customers. We will share it with the Police on request for crime detection.

We do not routinely consider installation of permanent CCTV to any of our blocks due to the limitation it has in capturing images that are actionable for reports of ASB.

5.15 Drug Related Issues

The HO will contact our cleaning and grounds contractor to remove discarded needles and syringes – this is deemed an emergency removal. See Appendix 2.

The HO will investigate to the best of their ability where and why the needles have been left in a communal area and may look at target hardening for individuals or further security work in the block or location if the needles are being left by non-residents.

Regardless of whether the needles or sharps have been left by customers, other residents or visitors, an ASB case must be raised, and the HO will support the ASB officer in investigation where needed.

HO's will work in partnership with the Police and other key agencies to address any ASB and illegal activity.

5.16 Abandonment (of a Tenancy)

Where a tenant is believed to have abandoned or left their property permanently, the HO will investigate the case and liaise with the local authority if there is any suspected fraudulent activity. Reports of Fraud are also sent to Brighter Places Governance Team by the relevant HO.

HO's must ensure that all areas of the business who may be affected by suspected fraud are fully informed, eg repairs and income management.

HO's will use the Abandonment Policy for further information and advice. They will raise a UDC to advise other areas of the business that we believe the property has bene abandoned and this is being investigated.

5.17 Repairs and Maintenance

Repair and general maintenance actions that are identified from estate inspections are usually raised by the HO's with the Repairs team or our contractors direct via email. Health and safety, security or compliance related issues are prioritised in line with our agreed terms with our contractors. See Appendix 2.

Service charge budgets, stock condition surveys, planned and cyclical works programs will be considered when planning any non-essential works or actions.

5.18 Lifts

We have a small number of blocks of flats that have communal lifts – the Compliance Team at Brighter Places ensure that the lifts are serviced and kept safe, and the Repairs team carry out any maintenance works required. HO's will inspect lifts on site and report any obvious issues.

6.0 Involving other agencies

Should the common parts deteriorate due to incidents of anti-social behaviour, Brighter Places will seek the assistance of the Police, and other agencies to help identify those responsible and take appropriate action to stop nuisance behaviour.

ASB cases will be logged and actioned by the ASB team with the support of the HO.

6.1 Management Agents

We have a number of blocks of flats where we are not the only landlord with property as part of the overall Freehold.

When HO's carry out their inspections, they will inform the relevant Management company of any areas that they are responsible for and ensure that issues that are not followed up by external companies are escalated.

Housing Managers and HO's aim to regularly meet with Managing Agents to review delivery and ensure that requests for work are actioned promptly.

7.0 Items left in communal spaces

The HO will record and act against any items that are left in communal areas.

Waste removal is usually by our Cleaning and Grounds Contractor. Details of categories and priorities are set out in appendix 2.

When an item has been left in a communal area, any member of the Brighter Places is able to place a TORT sticker on the item, ensuring the sticker is dated and signed.

Colleagues should refer to the Managing Communal Spaces Policy and the TORT Policy as to how to manage TORT items and subsequent removal.

8. Training Requirements

The Housing Team will have training on identifying Health and Safety issues during Estate inspections, how to record and action Estate Inspection work.

Training will be carried out by Housing Managers with the support of the Health and Safety Team.

This will be captured on Eloomi and reviewed with individual team members.

9. Monitoring and Review

The ongoing application and outcomes of this policy are monitored via 1 -2-1's and reporting from Fast Fields between Housing Managers and Officers.

The policy will be reviewed at least every 3 years.

10. Data Protection

Any personal data created or used in the application of this policy must be done so in line with the Brighter Places data protection policy and privacy notices.

11. Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Where required, reasonable adjustments will be considered to support colleagues to engage with this policy. Please speak to the policy owner for assistance.

12. Summary Roles and Responsibilities

Activities	Head of Hsg	Hsg Mgr	Exec	Hsg Officer	All Staff	HR
Owner of the policy	X					
Monitoring & review of the policy	X	X				
Approval of changes to the policy			X			
Responsible for policy implementation		X		X		X
Addressing issues in the implementation of the policy	X	X				
Version control of live policy	X	X				
Training of colleagues		X		X		X

Appendix 1

Tenant Actions and Timescales

HO's will contact the customer to advise them of what they need to do and include in the contact the timescale by which this should be completed. Contact should be in writing either by email or letter, and not just by phone or text.

Failure to action within agreed timescales will mean the HO can escalate punitive action. HO's will work with other partners and departments within Brighter Places to ensure that the relevant colleagues are kept up to date with actions (for example with fraud cases and income management.)

Action	Timescale
Concern of Tenancy Fraud or other fraudulent or possible illegal tenancy activity	Initial request for identification proof or similar from tenant - 1 to 5 working days dependant on the severity and type of case. Follow up and further action by HO to take a priority in workloads
Internal communal areas not cleaned – responsibility of the tenants	Initial request to complete - 10 working days Must include explanation from HO of what the customer needs to do to demonstrate compliance Contact to all customers in a block Timescales may need to be shortened if there are Health and Safety concerns
External communal areas not maintained – responsibility of the tenants	Initial request to complete within 28 working days Must include explanation from HO of what the customer needs to do to demonstrate compliance Contact all customers in a block Timescales may need to be shortened if there are Health and Safety concerns

Fly Tipping or Items left in communal areas	TORT using our current policy HO's to remove and dispose of any goods left in storage Health and Safety issues take priority for removal - HO may door knock all customers in a block if immediate removal is required as the items are deemed high risk.
Risk of Fire – for example battery bike or moped left in internal communal area	Immediate removal Health and Safety issues take priority for removal - HO may door knock all customers in a block if immediate removal is required as the items are deemed high risk HO may need advice from Cobb Warren / Housing Manager if a large and expensive item is in a communal areas such as a moped or mobility scooter
Communal Doors propped open	Customers contacted within 5 working days
Communal windows left open and insecure	Customers contacted within 5 working days
Other Health and Safety concern e.g. paddling pools left in communal garden	Customer contacted within 1 working day
Abandoned Vehicles	Once located – customer contacted within 10 working days

Appendix 2

Cleaning and Grounds Maintenance timescales

Category	Timescale for removal /action
Level 1 – Emergency - 2 hours Cleaning • Needles • Sharps • Serious Health and Safety concern - spills of noxious substances • Broken glass – significant amount or in an area that is accessible for customers and unable to block off • Carpet cleaning - spill or issue that stops the customers from accessing their home • Fly-tipping or left items Grounds Maintenance • Collapsed tree or growth causing serious Health and Safety concern	Within 2 working hours on a working day (Monday to Friday between 8am to 6pm excepting Bank Holidays)
Level 2 – Emergency – 24 hours Cleaning • Carpet cleaning - spill or issue that is a health and safety issue in communal areas • Serious Health and Safety concern - spills, slips and trip risk • Broken glass – lesser amount and/or glass can be blocked from customer accessibility • Fly tipping • Broken glass	Within 24 hours on a working day (Monday to Friday between 8am to 6pm excepting Bank Holidays)

Grounds Maintenance • Collapsed tree or green growth causing serious Health and Safety concern	
Level 3 - Routine Cleaning • Carpet cleaning - poor cleaning condition • Internal walls cleaning Grounds • Waste removal – general	Up to 20 working days (Monday to Friday excepting Bank Holidays)