

# Estate Management, Estate and Home Inspection

## Policy

**This is not a Tenancy Management policy but it does touch on areas covered under it.**

### **1.0 Policy Statement**

- To create and maintain well-managed environments in which each tenant can enjoy their home and surroundings in peace and without undue disturbance from others.
- To identify health and safety and repair issues and action appropriate remedies.
- To ensure that tenants, staff and the local Tenant Panel representatives understand and fulfil their responsibilities as outlined in the tenancy agreement.
- To provide a system to allow breaches of the tenancy agreement to be reported and actioned.
- To empower and support tenants to sustain their tenancies.
- To ensure Papworth Trust makes best use of its housing stock and estates
- To actively reduce tenancy fraud
- To ensure that appropriate action is taken to enforce the terms of the tenancy agreement whenever necessary.

### **2.0 Estate Management**

- 2.1 Inspections of estates, part estates or streets are carried out as part of an Estate Inspections process defined in S3 of this policy and by S106 grounds work schedule and the Papworth Trust tree management program
- 2.2 Inspections will take place as per S2.1 or at times assessed as appropriate by Papworth Trust
- 2.3 Appropriate action for Estate Management concerns will vary dependent upon the nature of the incident
- 2.4 Housing management staff will as much as possible carry out visits and speak to residents face to face to deal with complaints.
- 2.5 All concerns relating to or arising from Estate Inspections will be treated in a professional manner and appropriate action taken. The action may take the form of
  - (a) Noting the concern with no action required

- (b) House visit/interview
- (c) Letter supporting house visit
- (d) Removal of items (bulk etc.)
- (e) Involving other appropriate agencies
- (f) Tenant/Resident Meetings
- (g) Issue warning letters
- (h) Legal action

Concerns which amount to complaints will follow the Papworth Trust Complaints Policy and process.

2.6 In terms of the individual Estate Management problems, Papworth Trust will apply the following action points:

(a) Communal area cleaning – Where Papworth Trust arranges for regular basic cleaning of the communal spaces should tenants or their visitors/carers/support staff misuse the areas or cause a need for increased cleaning Papworth Trust will recharge the cost of the extra cleaning to the relevant tenant.

Where Papworth Trust do not arrange cleaning and it is the agreed responsibility of tenant(s) or support staff then Papworth Trust expects areas to be kept clean and tidy and safe. If this is not being done despite request being made then Papworth Trust reserve the right to do the work in default and recharge the cost to the relevant tenant(s). Refer to S6 of this document.

(b) Refuse and Litter – Tenants can obtain information from the housing team regarding the disposal of household refuse and bulk items. Papworth Trust may impose a charge or financial penalty on tenants/leaseholders for the removal of any waste item(s) disposed by any tenant/leaseholder other than by use of the bins provided or any bulk or other item(s) deposited anywhere, at any time, other than at the agreed collection point and date, where Papworth Trust have removed the item(s) from the site of disposal. Where the particular tenant/leaseholder cannot be identified whether by admittance of the act or through notification and confirmation by other tenants/leaseholders then Papworth Trust will recharge the cost via service charges to all tenants/leaseholders.

(c) Entry system doors – Security is all persons responsibility. Where common front controlled entry door latches automatically lock it is the duty of every resident to ensure doors are kept closed at all times. Failure to adhere to this will be addressed by a visit by the Housing Officer initially.

(d) Satellite Dishes - Any satellite dish sited inappropriately will be removed and the costs recharged to the tenant or leaseholder.

(e) Pest Control – Papworth Trust will respond to cases of vermin and pest infestation within its stock in a prompt and appropriate manner and will consult with the relevant agencies such as Environmental Health on the tenants behalf. If the problem occurs within the tenant's property, the tenant will be directed, where possible, to contact Environmental Health or advised to contact private contractor. This will allow the tenant to make arrangements for access to their home.

(f) Pets – As per the tenancy agreement tenants should request permission for all pets. Papworth Trust will deal with pet issues where the animal is causing a nuisance either within the house or common property. Permission for a pet can be rescinded at any time. In relation to dog fouling, all residents are bound by the local laws 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.

(g) Children and Visitors – Papworth Trust will deal with issues relating to children/visitors damaging Papworth Trust property or causing a disturbance within their own home or the common areas by reference to appropriate policy.

The tenants/leaseholder is responsible for the visitors they allow into their home and action may be taken against the tenant/leaseholder if those visitors create a nuisance.

Where children are a source of annoyance to tenants/leaseholders (e.g. playing football in the street), tenants/leaseholders should contact the local police to lodge their complaint. Papworth Trust will then liaise with the police should further action be required, in accordance with the appropriate policy.

(h) Security – Papworth Trust will provide tenants with advice about home security and contents insurance, liaise with or direct to the appropriate agencies to ensure that street and communal lighting is maintained and in good working order.

(i) Houses in Multiple Occupancy (HMO) - Where Papworth Trust suspects that a property is being used as a House in Multiple Occupancy (HMO), initial enquiries will be made; thereafter the appropriate agency/team shall be contacted to investigate.

(j) Neighbour Disputes -In non-serious neighbour disputes, Papworth Trust will normally encourage both residents to try and resolve the problem themselves without the formal involvement of Papworth Trust. Advice on mediation is available from Papworth Trust. In more serious cases of neighbour disputes, reference will be made to appropriate policy.

(k) Noise Level - Infrequent complaints in relation to noise levels will be dealt with by Papworth Trust. Tenants/Leaseholders should always report excess noise levels to the police in order that the Papworth Trust can request a report of the incident. In the case of persistent excessive and nuisance noise levels, this will be dealt with under the relevant policy.

(l) Vandalism – Papworth Trust will take firm action against tenants who are found to be responsible for vandalism within the house, grounds or common areas of any property where Papworth Trust has responsibility. In the first instance, all forms of vandalism should be reported to the local police. Where Papworth Trust has proof, repairs resulting from acts of vandalism will be recharged to the perpetrator, this may involve a written statement from the tenant/leaseholder who reported the vandalism.

(m) Graffiti - Graffiti increases a sense of fear of crime and detracts from the aesthetic appearance of our neighbourhood. All forms of graffiti will be removed within 5 working days, dependent upon resources and recharged as appropriate. *Multi Agency Approach* - Our intention is to identify who wrote the graffiti by liaising with the Schools, Police, and most importantly other tenants. If we can identify those responsible, we aim to carry out a home visit with the tenant and offending person in attendance. The purpose of the visit is to get an assurance that the graffiti will stop and promote the values of community ownership and respect for the neighbourhood. If the person responsible does not live within our stock we will seek to organise a home visit through the most appropriate local agency/body. In the event that a person is persistently writing graffiti we may explore other legal remedies.

(n) Drug Related Issues – Papworth Trust will contact Environmental Health to uplift discarded needles and syringes within 1 working day. Drugs and solvent misuse are dealt with in accordance with the relevant policy.

(o) Harassment -In all instances the police should be contacted where harassment of any nature takes place. Papworth Trust will then liaise with the police to seek guidance in appropriate circumstances.

(p) Abandonment - Where a tenant has absconded appropriate action will be taken to repossess the house. Any furniture will be removed and the property will be made secure. **Refer to Abandonment procedure – Appendix A**

### **3.0 Estate Inspections**

- 3.1 An estate inspection is an inspection of the exterior and communal parts, facilities and grounds of an estate comprising blocks of flats or a mixture of flats and houses built on land managed by Papworth Trust.
- 3.2 Estate inspection frequency will be determined by the Papworth Trust. Inspections will either be monthly/bi-monthly/quarterly/6-monthly or annually.
- 3.3 If tenancy, use of communal space, grounds or neighbourhood problems are identified during the inspections Papworth Trust reserves the right to increase the inspections in order to effectively manage and monitor the issues. This may mean that inspections take place more than once per week, even daily.
- 3.4 Frequency of inspections may change in line with problems identified, tenancy or neighbour changes or other reasons as determined by Papworth Trust
- 3.5 Inspections can take place at the request of tenants or their carers/support staff, another inspection cannot be requested within any scheme cycle
- 3.6 The local Tenant Panel representatives will be informed of the inspection date should they wish to attend or nominate an attendee.
- 3.7 If there is a complaint regarding a communal space or grounds an estate inspection may be one of the initial actions taken by Papworth Trust.
- 3.8 Repair, maintenance or actions (either for Papworth Trust or other persons) identified from estate inspections will be prioritised with health and safety, security or compliance related issues taking precedence. Service charge budgets, stock condition surveys, planned and cyclical works programs will be taken into account when planning any non-essential works or actions.

- 3.9 Any actions attributable to the tenants will be addressed with them by the relevant Housing Officer who will set timescales for completion as relevant to the action in question.
- 3.10 Any repairs, maintenance or groundwork attributable to the tenants or their support staff/carers will be rechargeable in line with the Rechargeable Repairs Policy.
- 3.11 The program for inspections for the forthcoming year will be communicated to the Tenant Panel at the beginning of the financial year.
- 3.12 Records of all inspections will be saved electronically and are listed as a component on the housing database.

#### **4.0 Home Inspections**

- 4.1 A Home Inspection is an inspection of the interior/exterior and grounds of an individual property owned or managed by Papworth Trust.
- 4.2 Home inspection frequency will be determined by Papworth Trust. Inspections will usually be annual or bi-annual and will form part of a rolling program.
- 4.3 If tenancy, grounds or neighbourhood problems are identified during the inspections Papworth Trust reserves the right to increase the inspections in order to effectively manage and monitor the issues. This may mean that inspections take place more than once per week.
- 4.4 Inspections can take place at the request of tenants, another inspection cannot be requested within any 6 month period
- 4.5 If there is a complaint regarding a property or its grounds a Home Inspection may be one of the actions taken by Papworth Trust
- 4.6 Repair, maintenance or actions (either for Papworth Trust or the tenant) identified from home inspections will be prioritised with health and safety, security or compliance related issues taking precedence. The Stock Condition Survey, Planned, Capital and Cyclical Works program will be taken into account when planning any non-essential works or actions.
- 4.7 Any actions attributable to the tenants will be addressed with them by the relevant Housing Officer who will set timescales for completion as relevant to the action in question
- 4.8 Any repairs, maintenance or groundwork attributable to the tenants will be rechargeable in line with the Rechargeable Repairs Policy.
- 4.9 Records of all inspections will be saved electronically and are listed as a component on the housing database

#### **5 Tenancy Audits**

- 5.1 A tenancy audit is a check of a tenant(s) circumstances and a review of how the tenancy has been conducted and likely sustainability of the tenancy going forward.
- 5.2 It will also include an inspection of the property condition as required
- 5.3 Tenancy audits will be conducted on an annual basis as a minimum, but this frequency may be increased where tenancy issues are identified. They will generally be completed by your Housing Officer

5.4 Any issues of tenancy fraud will be treated seriously and where appropriate eviction action will be taken

5.5 Where a tenant has a starter or a fixed term tenancy, the audit will form part of the tenancy review to consider whether a further tenancy should be granted

5.6 Any actions for the tenant will be confirmed in writing with required timescales and potential repercussion if not completed

5.7 It will be considered a breach of tenancy not to engage with a tenancy audit

5.8 Records of all audits will be saved electronically and are listed as a component on the housing database

## **6 Standards in internal and external communal areas/common spaces**

It is the responsibility of the tenants/leaseholders to look after communal/common spaces. A service charge is levied on tenants/leaseholders to cover the basic maintenance and repair works.

Cleanliness and health and safety are the responsibility of all people and in communal/common areas the expectations of those who use them are:

- Wipe down tables and chairs that you have soiled
- Clear away any food or other debris
- Wash up items you have used
- Make sure lights/TV's/cookers and any other communal equipment and facilities are switched off when you leave
- Keep all exit and fire escapes clear
- Do not wedge open fire doors under any circumstances
- Do not leave sharp objects around
- Clear up spillages
- Do not use personal electrical equipment in communal spaces
- Close all external doors and windows after use and/or at night
- Clean the ovens/cookers/equipment if you have soiled it
- Clear away all litter
- Remove all personal belongings

Breach of these conditions will result in a visit from your Housing Officer initially.

6.1 Bin stores - Tenants and leaseholders are responsible for keeping the bin store clean, free from litter and unwanted household bulk. Papworth Trust will liaise with any other managing agent who has tenants using the stores as appropriate.

6.2 Garden maintenance - The standard of Garden Maintenance is set down in the Tenant handbook/Tenancy Agreement. It states that tenants must take reasonable care to keep their garden from becoming overgrown, untidy or causing a nuisance. Should tenants fail to maintain their gardens, photographic records will be collected. Continual failure to maintain their

garden may result in legal action to enforce the terms of the tenancy or Papworth Trust may carry out the work and recharge the tenant.

In communal areas Papworth Trust carries out grass and bush/hedge cutting and tree maintenance. This may not be to the same standard that tenants would like in their own private gardens. Tenants can request additional gardening services for communal areas but this would only be done at an extra charge in addition to the allocated service charges already levied.

- 6.3 Window Cleaning – Papworth Trust will clean windows annually for all communal areas. If the windows require additional cleaning due to heavy soiling this will be managed through the estate inspection process.

## 7. Involving Other Agencies

In certain cases the Papworth Trust will ask for the assistance of Environmental Health Services for example should a bin store continually fall below an acceptable standard. Environmental Health Services has the authority to request that occupiers of tenement properties regularly clean the common parts. They can impose fines if this is not carried out.

Should the common parts deteriorate due to incidents of anti-social behaviour, Papworth Trust will seek the assistance of the Police, and Social Services (where appropriate) and relevant CCTV operators to help identify those responsible and take appropriate action to stop nuisance behaviour.

Where we have evidence to suspect a property is being used to commit tenancy fraud or other illegal activity, we will share information and liaise with police, local authority and other partner and enforcement agencies.

## 8. Version tracker

| Version number | Date      | Comments/Reason for issue |
|----------------|-----------|---------------------------|
| 1.0            | Sept 2017 | New policy                |
|                |           |                           |
|                |           |                           |

## 9. Document Control

Author                      Senior Business Manager, Property Maintenance

Approvers Regional Operations Manager, Tenant Scrutiny Panel  
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***If you have any feedback or want to suggest corrections to this policy, please contact the Senior Business Manager Property Maintenance on 01480 357200.***

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## **Appendix A** **Abandonment Procedure**

All reasonable steps will be taken to ensure that a property has indeed been abandoned and such action will be recorded. If satisfied that the property has

indeed been abandoned, a Notice of Abandonment will be served by two Trust staff members.

Once a Notice of Abandonment has been served, the tenant has 28 days in which to contact Papworth Trust. At no time during these 28 days will Papworth Trust enter the property unless it is for security purposes or an emergency. If, at the end of the 28 day period, we believe the house to be abandoned, the property will be repossessed by serving another notice.

In the event that Papworth Trust takes possession and there are belongings in the house, Papworth Trust will store the items for a period of six months under the following conditions:

- The value of the items is greater than the cost of the store, plus any debts owed in relation to the tenancy.
- Papworth Trust will deliver items to the tenant(s) provided that they have paid for the storage and made arrangements for the delivery costs.
- Papworth Trust can dispose of any property if the tenant has not made arrangements for and paid for it's delivery within the six month period.

The tenant should notify Papworth Trust in writing that he / she wishes to retain the tenancy and that it will be used as a principle home. In such instances, the abandonment notice will cease. However, should Papworth Trust continue to believe that the tenant fails to use the property solely as their only or principle home, legal action may be taken.