



HONEYCOMB
GROUP

Noise Policy

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Who's this for?	The Honeycomb Group – Staffs Housing; Concrete; Glow
Version control – document status/implementation date	Final V.1 To be implemented October 2024
Consultation with stakeholders – please list	Leadership Group; Head of Homelessness and Complex Needs; Head of Domestic Violence & Abuse Services; ASB Specialist; Customer Assurance Group; Executive Team
Data Protection Assessment (by DPO) & date	Completed 20 September 2024
Equality Impact Assessment	Completed 18 September 2024
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Last revised/updated	This is a new policy to support the noise procedure and ASB & hate crime policy.
Review required	3 years from approval date
Owner (Executive Lead)	Executive Director of Operations
Approved by Executive Team	24 September 2024
Approved by Customer Services Committee	23 October 2024 (virtual approval)

1. Policy statement

This policy is in place to support our customers and staff regarding noise reports, where this is not anti-social behaviour (ASB).

We recognise that complaints in relation to household noise or non-deliberate noise should not automatically be labelled as ASB, and as an organisation we would not treat this as such when approaching the customer causing the noise.

This policy applies to our Honeycomb Group (HG) customers, other persons causing a nuisance in neighbourhoods where we own properties; and visitors to our neighbourhoods where this interferes with our neighbourhoods and communities.

Complaints about the way we manage our response to noise reports are dealt with through our complaints policy.

It is important that neighbours understand and tolerate the different lifestyle of others, so long as their lifestyle is reasonable. People have a right to enjoy their homes and are entitled to go about their daily lives without having concerns that complaints will be made against them. Whilst we recognise that some day-to-day noise might be heard by a neighbour, we will not classify low level day to day living noise, which is not excessive or unreasonable as ASB,

We will take positive action wherever possible, using a range of measures (including the Noise App, Noise monitor) to deal with noise reports to ensure that our customers enjoy their right to the quiet enjoyment of their tenancy and feel safe and secure in their homes and communities.

We will work in partnership with property service team, environmental health, social services and other agencies to take appropriate action to tackle noise reports that are caused by anyone living or visiting customers' homes.

In developing the noise policy, we have, and will continue to consult with customers.

We recognise that customers living in accommodation need to be particularly mindful and respectful of the noise made within shared spaces.

2. Background

The policy supports the delivery of our strategic objective to meet our legal and regulatory requirements.

Following the publication of the Housing Ombudsman's report 'Spotlight on Noise Complaints - Time to be heard' this policy is in place to support staff dealing with cases of noise where this is not 'ASB' (anti-social behaviour).

Whilst preparing and reviewing this policy, we follow the guidance issued by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) and the Neighbourhood and Community Standard 2024. The standard requires Honeycomb Group to engage with other relevant parties so that our customers can live in safe, well-maintained neighbourhoods and feel safe in their homes.

The Equality Act 2010 is important when we seek to resolve noise nuisance as it provides a legal framework to protect the rights of individuals and advance equality of opportunity for all.

We are mindful of our duties under the Equality Act 2010, and we work in full compliance with our Equality & Diversity policy in order to provide a fair, accessible and transparent service.

We shall also comply with the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

Finally, our tenancy, lease agreements, and licence agreements set out our expectations about how our customers should live in their homes.

3. Our approach

Our approach is that we will:

- Comply with legal, regulatory, and contractual requirements.
- Communicate clearly with our customers to explain the triage process for noise nuisance and our approach, so they understand what they can expect from us and what we expect from them.
- Support customers as much as possible but strongly encourage customers to resolve their own matters with their neighbours where it is safe and appropriate do so, while being clear about the circumstances in which we may take action and how we will proceed where that is the case.
- Ensure customers can easily and safely report incidents and are kept proactively informed about our response to those reports and progress in dealing with noise reports.
- Complete a risk assessment with the customer to ensure any vulnerabilities are signposted to the relevant agencies.
- Aim to resolve cases promptly using the full range of methods and legal powers available to us.
- Work in partnership with other agencies to prevent and tackle noise nuisance.
- Provide appropriate support to victims and witnesses, including referrals to support services.
- Use resources available to improve sound insulation to help alleviate noise issues in our customers' homes.
- Be professionally curious about reports of noise nuisance, including the consideration that it may be the result of abuse occurring in the property.

4. Investing in our homes to help prevent noise

Staffs Housing have an investment programme that includes window and door replacements. When specifications are put together, they are done with noise in mind, and to ensure we consider noise with all new investments to our properties.

When a property is vacant (void), floor coverings are reviewed in our homes, and if a noise issue is noted, we will then seek to resolve the issue, for example, floor coverings, and /or window replacements.

When developing new sites, we always look at the environmental factors, such as neighbouring properties and industry. We will actively avoid industrial noise potential and any roads that may pose an increased noise issue.

When working towards net zero standards for our existing, purchased or newly constructed homes, different types of insulation materials will be considered primarily for energy efficiency purposes, and also for acoustic properties to help reduce noise in the home.

When a property is empty, an EPC (energy performance certificate) is

reviewed to see what improvements we can make, and we will also review EPC ratings as part of our stock condition surveys (for properties owned by the Group).

The void standard will include the following:

- Carpets are not removed unless they are in a poor condition and the prospective tenant is asked if they wish to keep them and if so, to sign a liability waiver (the new customer will sign to take responsibility and replace in the future).
- Hard flooring will be removed when there have been reports of noise linked to the property.
- Properties have adequate insulation from transference noise.
- Anti-vibration mats are fitted into the washing machine space when there have been reports of noise linked to the property.
- In cases where there are no carpets, then we can signpost customers, where appropriate, to seek funding for carpets and rugs.

5. Neighbourhood management

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Neighbourhood Management Policy and the ASB, Hate Crime & Hate Incidents Policy, and the Allocations & Lettings Policy and any house rules for charity customers based in shared accommodation.

We use a triage method to identify whether a noise report should be handled under the ASB policy or the noise policy.

We have range of options for maintaining good neighbourhood relationships including:

- Mediation
- Information sharing
- Community events
- Noise app
- Noise monitoring equipment
- Specialist staff to assist and support
- On site staff at our extra care schemes
- A range of practitioners supporting our most vulnerable customer cohort (Charity only)

All housing applications are assessed, considering any previous issues raised by outgoing customers around noise.

Staffs Housing properties are let in accordance with the allocations & lettings policy, considering any local lettings policies.

Across the Group we work with other agencies, including the police and environmental health, when responding to noise reports, as relevant.

We provide information to customers on our website, at sign up, and when requested, about being a good neighbour and general advice about minimising noise.

6. Receiving reports of noise nuisance

For noise reports, all cases are triaged at the initial contact and opened as a noise case, or anti-social behaviour case, depending on the circumstance, considering if this is an external, a household, property issue or any noise not caused by a customer.

For Staffs Housing, a case will be opened for all noise reports on our management system. During the investigation if the noise is a deliberate act, we will then open an ASB Case and the case will follow the ASB and Hate Crime policy, or if domestic abuse decided then a domestic abuse case will be recorded. For Glow and Concrete, all noise cases will be logged on existing case notes.

People can report noise nuisance to us in a number of different ways. This includes by email, telephone, letter or through our website or staff. Reports can be made to any member of staff during normal working hours.

The Neighbourhoods teams will acknowledge all noise reports within our target timescales. These are:

- Level 1 within 24 hours
- Level 2 within five days
- Level 3 within seven days.

All cases are triaged at the point of contact with the customer once spoken to by a Neighbourhood Officer.

We will keep customers informed about how the case is progressing, be transparent and manage customer expectations.

For Concrete and Glow customers, they will be updated directly face to face.

7. Assessing the risk, support needs and vulnerability

When we receive a report of noise, we will assess the impact the noise is having on the individual, and whether they are vulnerable and have any support needs. We may also use risk assessments to help us understand the impact in more detail to help with support needs.

For Concrete and Glow customers, staff will review the customer risk assessments of all parties involved before taking a view on action to ensure that the needs and vulnerabilities of each individual are taken into account. If needed, Concrete and Glow staff will liaise closely with other support agencies.

8. How we will take action?

We will take balanced and timely action to deal with the noise nuisance.

The action will be proportionate based on the level of severity, impact and frequency of the noise and the evidence available to support the case.

We will consider the needs of each household member for all involved, or others within a scheme for our Concrete and Glow customers. This includes the household of the complainant and the alleged perpetrator. We may then make referrals to appropriate support agencies as required. We will regularly review the proportionality of our actions as we seek a resolution to the noise.

9. Taking action

We anticipate most customers to be able to solve their own problems with their neighbours, but if they cannot, we may take action on their behalf.

There is a variety of actions we may take to resolve noise. This action may be preventative, non-legal, or legal. Sometimes a single action may be taken, and sometimes several actions or other measures may be taken.

A named member of the team will keep customers informed at regular intervals about the action being taken, including the next steps to deal with the noise. We will agree the frequency of those updates with the customer.

10. Domestic abuse

Staffs Housing works in partnership with DAHA (Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance) and all Group staff receive training from our DA specialist brand, Glow, to ensure they are equipped to spot the signs of domestic abuse and respond appropriately.

We will track cases of DA to ensure that we are responding effectively to the needs of DA victims. When DA is the reason for complaints about the tenant by neighbours this will be handled sensitively to ensure the victim survivor feels supported and receives advice and assistance.

It is important that victim survivors of DA are not disproportionately affected by reports of noise, when the perpetrator of the domestic abuse is responsible,

We are also committed to ensuring that perpetrators of domestic abuse are tackled suitably for the protection of the victim survivors, and we will use the tools available to us to enforce action against any perpetrators who hold a tenancy with us.

11. Staff training

We will provide regular training, both for our customer-facing staff who may receive reports of noise and for staff responsible for managing noise cases.

12. Improving our services

We will regularly monitor the progress of noise cases. We will conduct satisfaction surveys when we close reports and analyse the data to look at any learning and service improvements.

13. Data protection and confidentiality

We will comply with the collection, storage, access to, provision of and disclosure of data in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018.

14. Related documents

- Noise procedure
- Anti-Social Behaviour Hate Crime & Hate Incidents Policy
- Anti-Social Behaviour Hate Crime & Hate Incidents Procedure
- Neighbourhood Management Policy
- Domestic Abuse Policy
- Better Together Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Allocations & Lettings Policy
- Safeguarding for adults Policy
- Safeguarding for children Policy
- Vulnerability and reasonable adjustments Policy

15. Review

This policy shall be reviewed every three years, and a review may be required earlier if there is a legislative or regulatory requirement or significant change.

October 2024