



South Tyneside Council's  
Housing Company

# Good Neighbourhood Management (GNM) Policy

**March 2024**

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## **1. Policy Statement and Definition**

### **Policy Statement**

- 1.1 South Tyneside Council and South Tyneside Homes are committed to providing safe and sustainable communities for our customers. We have designed a policy with customers to identify, respond to and effectively manage reports of non-statutory noise within customers' homes.
- 1.2 We will treat all reports of non-statutory noise seriously, ensuring we understand any customer vulnerabilities and recognise these may impact on their wellbeing and quality of life if not responded to and managed in an effective way.
- 1.3 The Housing Ombudsman spotlight report on noise (October 2022) highlighted the seriousness of dealing effectively with reports of non-statutory noise, following a high number of customer complaints that some landlords did not act appropriately to deal with.
- 1.4 We recognise the importance of addressing the problems non-statutory noise can cause and the importance of ensuring we have adequate and appropriate measures in place to tackle and reduce these issues. This policy has been developed to specifically address the problems with non-statutory noise reports and ensures proactive interventions, sets out the approach to investigate reports, the actions considered appropriate in different circumstances, effective communication, and support to our customers.

## **2. Aims and objectives**

- 2.1 This policy aims to assist in the management of non-statutory noise reports, so we be able to:
  - Have a robust process in place to manage our approach to non-statutory noise reports, which is separate to our Anti Social Behaviour policy and how we will manage any reports relating to this.
  - Ensure that customers are treated in a fair, respectful, empathetic, and consistent way.
  - Comply with legislative and regulatory requirements and good practice.
  - Focus on working in partnership with customers ensuring that all reports are taken seriously, and appropriate action is taken to manage them.
  - Undertake effective investigations and implement all reasonable interventions to resolve reports relating to non-statutory noise.
  - Ensure customers have access to and are provided with comprehensive advice and guidance on what is non statutory noise and what is not.
  - Work in collaboration with internal and external partners to explore all appropriate measures and interventions, using these effectively to support customers and resolve reports of non-statutory noise.
  - Ensure the service provided is accessible to all so everyone can easily report non statutory noise.
  - Provide effective assurance to customers and stakeholders on the management of reports relating to non-statutory noise.

### **3. Scope of policy**

3.1 The scope of this policy covers how we will work with council tenants to investigate, manage, and resolve reports of non-statutory noise, this includes:

- Identifying what issues are non-statutory noise and what is not.
- Identifying South Tyneside Homes responsibilities for dealing with non-statutory noise reports.
- Identifying the tenants' responsibilities for dealing with non-statutory noise reports.
- Offering guidance, advice, and assistance throughout the process to all customers living in a council property.
- Tenancy Agreement

### **4. Legislation and regulation**

4.1 South Tyneside Homes comply with relevant legislation and regulation, on behalf of South Tyneside Council:

- The Housing Act 1985
- The Homes (Fit for Human Habitation) Act 2018
- The Landlord and Tenant Act Section 11 – Repairs and Maintenance
- The Housing Act 2004 – Housing Health and Safety Rating
- Environmental Protection Act 1990
- Defective premises Act 1972
- Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023
- The Home Standard
- The Decent Homes Standard

#### **4.2 Related Policies and Procedures**

- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Improvement and Alterations Policy
- Repairs and Maintenance Policy
- Tenancy Agreement

### **5 Examples of statutory and non statutory noise**

5.1 Statutory noise is a noise coming from a property which is occurring on a frequent basis and for an unreasonable amount of time, which substantially interferes in the use or enjoyment of a person's home, or other premises, and injures, or is likely to injure a person's health, for example:

- Noise from premises or from vehicles, equipment, or machinery in the street.
- Artificial light from premises
- Smoke from premises
- Accumulation or deposits on premises (for example piles of rubbish)

## 5.2 Examples of non statutory noise may include:

- DIY being carried out over a short period of time
- Smoke or noise coming from fireworks or a bonfire
- An odour or smell coming from a domestic property
- Noise from children playing in their garden
- Non excessive noise from a neighbouring property such as talking, noise from a television, footsteps, which may be heard due to poor or substandard sound installation between properties

## 6 Roles and responsibilities

### Our Responsibilities

6.1 Following a report of non-statutory noise from a customer, we will offer immediate advice until the Housing Officer makes contact. We will triage the call to assess if the customer is vulnerable and the impact or risk this may have on their wellbeing. Contacts will be carried out in a timely manner and at a mutually convenient time. We will:

- Undertake an investigation of the report relating to suspected non-statutory noise.
- Support the customer to complete a Victim Risk Assessment (VRAM) to identify any vulnerabilities and determine the level of support required.
- Timescales for the initial response to complaints of non-statutory noise will follow those included in the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy; 24 hours for customers who are highly vulnerable and 72 working hours for those who are less vulnerable.
- Establish the cause and deliver an effective, solutions-based approach to deal with the cause of the problem not just the symptom and wherever possible, fixing the problem first time.
- Inform the customer of the findings of the investigations following their initial contact. This may include identifying the possible causes, recommending effective solutions including informal and formal interventions, and the estimated timescales to implement these, keeping the customer updated throughout the process from inception to resolution.
- Our staff will take appropriate action within reasonable timescales in accordance with the processes and procedures, dependent on the severity and urgency of the problem and on the complexity of interventions required.
- Undertake any reasonable improvement works required to assist in the management and control of non-statutory noise. This may include but is

not limited to issues relating to noise transference, providing anti-vibration mats and other best practice.

- Maintain regular contact with customers to check that the interventions and remedies suggested are effective.
- Work with internal and external partners to provide support and effective interventions to respond to reports of non-statutory noise, this includes but is not limited to making relevant referrals to our partners to safeguard our customers.
- Escalate any cases which require enforcement action to our Community Safety and Tenancy Enforcement Team. Enforcement action will only be taken as a last resort when all other interventions have been exhausted.
- Use our discretion within policies and processes to leave good standard flooring in our void properties wherever possible and consider the allocation of the property in a sensitive way following any reports of non-statutory noise.
- In some cases, it may be necessary to re-house a family on a permanent basis if for example a medical professional advises that this is the most suitable option.
- Ensure that all employees have an awareness of the policy and receive adequate training to enable them to report issues of non-statutory noise to support our customers.
- Ensure that our housing staff and technical staff are trained and competent in the diagnosis and management of non-statutory noise reports.
- Use a robust case management system to log, monitor and review cases relating to non-statutory noise. Using the data to identify any trends, map any areas of concerns to develop a targeted approach and shape our future investment programmes.
- New tenancies will be given an Introductory/Starter tenancy, which will be monitored to ensure that it has been successful and there are no issues to prevent it transferring to a secure tenancy.

## **7 Customer responsibilities**

- 7.1 It is the customer's responsibility to report any issues relating to non-statutory noise in a timely manner and provide relevant evidence to support the investigation.
- 7.2 Customers will be encouraged to engage in formal and informal interventions to successfully resolve reports of non-statutory noise including home visits, mediation, completion of diary sheets and the use of noise monitoring equipment such as the Noise App.
- 7.3 It is the customer's responsibility to comply to the conditions in their tenancy agreement to reduce or resolve any reports of non-statutory noise.

## **8 Guidance for customers**

8.1 Customers can help reduce issues which can lead to reports of non-statutory noise by:

- Ensuring all rooms within your home have a suitable floor covering, hardwood or laminate flooring should not be used in communal flats.
- Report any repairs required in your home, particularly relating to any holes in your property or gaps in the windows and doors.
- Show consideration towards your neighbours in relation to non-statutory noise and the impact this may have.
- Following all advice and guidance issued by us on how to manage and reduce non statutory noise.

8.2 We recognise that customers may experience some financial challenges in relation to non-statutory noise issues, we will make referrals to our Welfare Support Team to provide advice, support, and assistance where there is poverty, debt, or welfare concerns.

## **9 Complaints**

9.1 Any customer not satisfied with our approach in assessing and managing their report of non-statutory noise can make a formal complaint. If the customer is dissatisfied with actions and decisions made under this policy, it will be dealt with under our Customer Complaints Policy.

## **10 Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion**

10.1 South Tyneside Homes is committed to welcoming and valuing diversity, promoting equality of opportunity, and tackling unlawful discrimination in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

10.2 In delivering this Policy, we will have regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty to ensure that no individual is discriminated against based on their sex, sexual orientation, marital status, pregnancy and maternity, gender reassignment, race, religion, belief, disability, or age.

10.3 This policy aligns to our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and is subject to an Equality Impact Assessment

## **11 Performance, monitoring, and review**

- 11.1 We will monitor the number of non-statutory noise related reports we receive, and the remedies put in place to resolve the issues through our performance and assurance framework.
- 11.2 This policy will be reviewed every three years to ensure it remains fit for purpose, unless an earlier review is required due to regulatory, statutory, or other requirements.

## **12 South Tyneside Homes transfer to South Tyneside Council**

- 12.1 At the point of the transfer of all Housing Services back under South Tyneside Council control, this policy will then be adopted by South Tyneside Council and all complaints of not-statutory noise will be managed by Council employees in the same way.