



ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES POLICY

Version Number	V1.
Date of Current Version	July 2024.
Approved by / Date	TBC.
Annual Review Date	August 2025.
Full Review Date	August 2027.

Executive Summary:
<p>Our Environmental Services Policy sets out the approach to works carried out by the Neighbourhood Environment Team (NET) and approved Contractors, within Rochdale Boroughwide Housing (RBH) estates and communal areas.</p> <p>This policy details all workstreams covered within the NET Service.</p>

Policy Grouping/Directorate(s)	Customer & Communities	
Author Name / Job Title	Dario Leone (Head of Repairs & Environmental Services)	
EIA Completed	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Publication	Intranet <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Website <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Notes:		

1 Introduction

- 1.1 As a major provider of housing within the Rochdale Borough, we recognise the key role we have in ensuring our neighbourhoods are clean, attractive, and safe for our customers and the wider community.
- 1.2 This policy sets out Rochdale Boroughwide Housing's (RBH) approach to works carried out by the Neighbourhood Environment Team (NET) and approved Contractors, within Rochdale Boroughwide Housing (RBH) estates and communal areas.
- 1.3 This policy has been designed as a document for all customers (including tenants, leaseholders, freeholders and shared owners) and employees of RBH and is available for all to view. Throughout this policy an RBH customer is a tenant or anyone with an RBH account, where service-charge payments are made for the NET Service.

2 Context

- 2.1 Registered providers must work co-operatively with tenants, other landlords and relevant organisations to contribute to the upkeep and safety of shared spaces.

Registered providers must understand and fulfil their maintenance responsibilities in respect of communal areas.

Registered providers must ensure that the safety of tenants is considered in the design and delivery of landlord services and take reasonable steps to mitigate any identified risks to tenants.

Registered providers must ensure that all required actions arising from legally required health and safety assessments are carried out within appropriate timescales.

For more details on the 2024/25 Consumer Standards, please follow the below link <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/consumer-standards-code-of-practice>

- 2.2 To ensure customers thrive in our Neighbourhoods, RBH aim to;
 - Provide services that meet our customers' needs and priorities.
 - Ensure services are efficient, effective and provide excellent value for money.
 - Ensure that all required actions arising from legally required health and safety assessments are carried out within appropriate timescales.

3 Aims & Objectives

- 3.1 This policy is designed to ensure that:
 - Everyone understands RBH's approach to environmental works within our neighbourhoods.
 - RBH continues to work in line with customer expectations, regulatory requirements and corporate objectives.

3.2 The key aims of this policy are to:

- Outline all services carried out by NET and approved Contractors, within RBH Neighbourhoods.
- Outline key performance indicators and frequencies, to be adhered to.
- Work with customers to recognise and respond to their needs, making reasonable adjustments as required.
- Work in partnership with respective stakeholders to ensure a high performing, value for money service.

4 Policy Statement

4.1 This policy covers the following workstreams:

4.2 Caretaking/Cleaning

Our Caretaking Team carry out works to all communal spaces, internally and externally, throughout the borough. The teams work on a rota system, visiting all sites on a fortnightly cycle.

There are also Static Caretaking Teams, working permanently on our high-rise and deck-access communal areas.

We carry out fire safety and basic security checks in communal areas daily.

We carry out fire safety checks on dry risers and cabinets, extinguishers, self-closing doors, bin chute hopper seals and individual flat doors.

4.3 Grounds Maintenance

Our Grounds Maintenance Team provide grass cutting, weed spraying, hedge cutting and shrub pruning throughout the year within our neighbourhoods, on all RBH owned land.

Our grass cutting service operates from March to October – we aim to ensure all areas obtain 14 cuts per annum, at regular intervals, weather permitting.

Our winter work operates from November to February.

Throughout the year, all soil and hard surfaces shall be clear of litter, debris and any weed growth will have been removed or treated with chemical weed killers following each scheduled visit.

Summer schedule: March to October

Shrub beds shall present an attractive amenity, allowing development of the plants in keeping with the type, shape, size and aspect of the bed.

Plants next to other features (e.g. pathways, windows etc.) will be pruned to ensure public safety and avoid obstruction.

All grass areas will be cleared of rubbish before grass cutting commences.

All grass areas, including edges and surrounding obstacles will be cut to produce a pleasing appearance with an even finish and height, with no areas being left uncut.

All grass clippings will be removed from hard surfaces and paths only.

Winter schedule: November to February

All plants will receive appropriate pruning to prevent an increase in height and spread, apart from allowing the development of a maturing planting scheme.

Pruning will be sufficient to allow growth between visits.

All edges next to hard surfaces will be tidied following the outline of the relevant hard surface.

4.4 Biodiversity

Our aim is to increase the amount of wildflower and trees in our neighbourhoods, to support increased biodiversity and reduce our carbon footprint when maintaining our outdoor areas.

Where wildflower areas have been created, we will mow a two-metre strip around the outside of all areas as well as through the middle for the public to use at their leisure.

By making these changes, we hope wildflower and wildlife, such as bees and other insects that depend on them, will thrive.

RBH is committed to making our neighbourhood's great places to live and improving the biodiversity of green spaces are among our priorities. All nature friendly zones help deliver on these aims.

4.5 Tree Maintenance

RBH own approximately 12,000 trees across our neighbourhoods.

We are committed to providing a healthy and abundant tree stock. We see our tree stock as an asset as they contribute to our health and wellbeing by absorbing carbon monoxide, providing shade, and reducing airborne pollutants.

A careful balance is required between maintaining trees in the right places to provide the benefits that trees offer, whilst minimising any risk of harm.

Our tree maintenance programme aims to:

- Maintain a healthy tree stock with a diverse age and class to make full use of the environmental, social, and economic benefits this brings.
- Fulfil our statutory duty of care and corporate objectives on health and safety through engaging in proactive and proportionate tree risk management.
- Set transparent systems and strategies to address customers' requests and enquiries about trees and focus on finding solutions to deal with tree problems.

Our tree stock is surveyed on a rolling 3-year programme, so we are continually updating the directory of trees in our neighbourhoods, including exact location, species and current condition.

To ensure best practice, we have begun tagging each inspected tree, to help our colleagues and customers when reporting any concerns.

All tree maintenance works are carried out by an approved arboriculture team, who provide a 24-hour emergency call out service.

We carry out works to trees which fall under the following categories only:

- Dead, dying, diseased or dangerous trees or branches, that are likely to cause injury.
- Trees causing or likely to cause considerable damage to property, including subsidence.
- Works to alleviate severe shading or another nuisance.
- Trees obstructing the highway or public footpaths.

Trees will not be pruned or felled due to the issues below:

- Problems with mobile phone signal or TV and internet reception.
- Obstruction of views, including shade.
- Pollen, leaves or bird droppings.

4.6 Play areas

RBH aim to ensure that play opportunities are created that allow children and young people to explore, experience, and affect their environment within safe settings, free from unacceptable levels of risk. *A list of all RBH owned play areas can be found on our website.*

There is no specific legislation on play safety. However, the key legislation is:

- The Health & Safety at Work Act 1974.
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Act 1992.
- Occupiers Liability Act 1957.
- 1984 Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

Standards and Safety Guidelines are not a legal requirement but are good professional working practice.

EN1176 is the European Standard which continues to be adhered to. The standard is not retrospective and provides advice on design layout and the inspection of playground equipment.

Contained within the guidance are the following key recommendations:

- That if the equipment is not safe, access by the public should be prevented.
- The equipment must be inspected and maintained.
- An inspection record should be maintained for 21 years.

RBH has a duty to take actions to ensure the safety of members of the public who may be affected by the facilities provided. It is governed by the test of “reasonable practicability.” In other words, it is reasonable to correct major hazards; it is unreasonable to spend considerable resources on minor faults where risk is negligible and potential injury very minor.

Our Caretaking team attend each play area on a fortnightly basis to carry out a visual check, remove litter, report damage and remove any hazards.

Our approved contractor completes a documented audit every 6 weeks. We also undertake an annual survey, carried out by a specialist independent contractor.

Any equipment reported as unsafe or damaged will be de-commissioned within 2 working days of being reported. This may include removing the damaged item, or installing barriers and signage to isolate the equipment.

We ensure our playground surfaces have at least 12 inches of wood chip, sand or pea gravel and that any matting surfaces are made of safety-tested rubber or rubber-like material.

Adequate signage is installed at all RBH play area sites and checks included within our testing regime.

4.7 Independent Living Schemes Cleaning:

RBH carry out cleaning to communal areas of our Independent Living Schemes.

Daily checks and cleaning are carried out to:

- Reception areas and main entrance.
- Lounge areas.
- Kitchen and laundry rooms.
- Communal toilets.

In addition to this, all remaining tasks are carried out over the course of the working week, to ensure service standards are met:

- Communal bathrooms and shower rooms.
- Bin, store and scooter rooms.
- Communal corridors, stairs and lifts.
- Guest rooms.

4.8 Pest Control

RBH provides a service for the treatment of various pest infestations, on behalf of our customers.

Approved external contractors are used, who aim to contact our customer within 5 working days of being reported, to arrange an initial inspection and agree a treatment plan.

4.9 Fly Tipping

It is the responsibility of all customers and members of the public, to ensure waste is legally disposed of. All local Councils have a bulky item collection service for items such as sofas, fridges and washing machines.

RBH offer a service to our customers, to remove up to 5 bulky items for £20.

All fly tipping will be removed within 5 working days of being reported; fire hazards will be prioritised and removed within 1 working day of being reported. RBH will pro-actively challenge any persons found to be committing or contributing to fly-tipping and will take action accordingly.

4.10 Graffiti

RBH will pro-actively challenge any persons found responsible for graffiti within our Neighbourhoods and will take action accordingly.

RBH will remove all graffiti to any owned structures within our communities, working to the below service timescales:

- All offensive graffiti will be removed within 24 hours of being reported.
- All other requests will be removed within 5 working days of being reported.

4.11 Winter Gritting

RBH has a responsibility under the Occupiers Liability Act 1957 to take reasonable care to protect against foreseeable risks.

To do this, we prioritise areas for gritting and snow clearance that are deemed to be of the greatest risk to our customers. These areas are contained within the Extreme Weather Policy.

4.12 Learning and Development

All colleagues operating to this policy are provided with training upon joining RBH and additional refresher training as required. NET Management are responsible for the prompt delivery of this training.

It is essential colleagues maintain their knowledge, particularly around health & safety practices.

5 Service Charges

- 5.1 Service charges allocated to our customers reflect the annual costs of providing the services highlighted within this policy.
- 5.2 This is a variable Service Charge, which RBH Finance Team increase or decrease, according to costs incurred in the previous years' service delivered.
- 5.3 Each year the charges reflect current estimates based on the previous years' spend.
Please see RBH Rent and Service Charge Setting Policy for reference.

6 Complaints

- 6.1 We want to deliver good quality and fair services to all. If you are unhappy with our services and wish to complain, our policy explains the steps you can take. We will always approach complaints in a non-biased way and are committed to investigating everything fairly and consistently. All feedback is welcome and helps us to build better services for our customers.
- 6.2 Our approach follows The Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, March 2022 which sets out requirements to respond to complaints effectively and fairly. We acknowledge this enables us to respond to complaints quickly and provides data and learning to drive service improvements.
- 6.3 RBH colleagues are trained to welcome and handle complaints. These can be made by telephone, email, in person through appointments, through the RBH portal, through an electronic form on our website and on social media. *Please see RBH Complaints Policy for reference.*

7 Monitoring

- 7.1 The effectiveness of this policy will be monitored by:
 - Analysing customer feedback and complaints analysis, to inform service improvement.
 - Engagement sessions and consultation with customers.
 - Internal and external quality checks, to ensure service standards are met.
 - Internal and external audits, to ensure adherence to policy and procedures.

8 Review

- 8.1 All RBH strategies, policies, service standards and procedures are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they are 'fit for purpose' and comply with all relevant legislation and statutory regulations.
- 8.2 This policy will go through the full policy approval process every 3 years and will undergo a desktop review annually.

9 Links with other RBH Documents

9.1 This policy links to the following policies and documents:

- Complaints Policy.
- Reasonable Adjustments Policy.
- Rent and Service Charge Setting Policy.
- Extreme Weather Policy 2022.
- RBH Grounds Maintenance Service Standards V5.
- RBH Neighbourhood Caretaking Service Standards V2.
- RBH Website – NET Pages.

Rochdale Boroughwide Housing Limited is a charitable community benefit society.
FCA register number 31452R.

Registered Office: Unique Enterprise Centre, Belfield Road, Rochdale, OL16 2UP
Registered as a provider of social housing.
RSH register number: 4607