

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES POLICY

Version Number	V1
Date of Current Version	July 2025
Approved by / Date	Customer Services Committee / August 2025
Annual Review Date	July 2026
Full Review Date	July 2028

Executive Summary:

Our Environmental Services Policy sets out what we will do to maintain our internal and external communal areas within our buildings and neighbourhoods to help us meet our corporate priority of investing in our communal areas and shared spaces, and increasing customer satisfaction on the cleanliness and maintenance of communal areas.

This policy sets out our legal and regulatory duties in respect of cleaning and grounds maintenance, and what we will do to ensure we comply with them. The policy includes details of the programmes and regimes we will operate to achieve this, and the measures we will take to ensure these are delivered safely and in a timely manner. It also sets out how we will monitor delivery of the policy and of the work programmes.

Policy Grouping / Directorate	Customer & Communities	
Owner Name / Job Title	Dario Leone / Head of Repairs & Environmental Services	
Author Name / Job Title	Dario Leone / Head of Repairs & Environmental Services	
Reviewed by Policy Team	Date: 11 th February 2025	Name: Sarah Wilson
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 and Aims

- 1.1 As a landlord, Rochdale Boroughwide Housing (RBH) is responsible for the cleanliness and maintenance of the internal and external common areas and shared spaces of buildings and external areas on our estates and neighbourhoods which are in our ownership or management. This policy outlines our approach to keeping our shared spaces clean and well maintained, so they are safe and to an appropriate amenity standard for our customers to live in, and to comply with our legal and regulatory duties in this regard. We are a major provider of housing within the Rochdale Borough, and we recognise the key role we have in ensuring our neighbourhoods are clean, attractive, and safe for our customers and the wider community. This policy outlines our approach to cleaning and maintaining the shared common areas of our buildings and estates.
- 1.2 This policy is a document for all customers (including tenants, leaseholders and shared owners), partners and employees of RBH to provide clarity on our obligations and what we will do to comply with them. 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.
- 1.2 The overall aim of the policy is to ensure that the shared spaces and environments that our customer live in are safe and meeting their needs. It also aims:
- To ensure RBH has identified and is complying with all relevant legal duties in respect of our cleaning and maintenance of shared communal areas.
 - To set out and provide clarity on our approach to delivering and managing cleaning and grounds maintenance within our buildings and neighbourhoods.
 - To outline the service frequencies and key performance indicators we will deliver.
 - To set out how we will work with customers to recognise and respond to their needs, making reasonable adjustments as required.
 - To provide a framework for working in partnership with stakeholders and partners to deliver a well performing, value for money service.

2 Context

- 2.1 The **Health and Safety at Work Act 1974** and the **Housing Act 2004** set out overarching legal requirements in respect of keeping customers safe and about the condition of their homes and common areas associated with them. We must therefore keep clean and maintain the common areas of our buildings and neighbourhoods to keep them safe and do this work in a safe manner.
- 2.2 This policy will support RBH to comply with a number of **Consumer Standards**, in particular the Safety and Quality Standard; the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard; and the Neighbourhood and Community Standard. These standards require us to:
- Set timescales for the completion of maintenance in our communal areas, clearly communicate them to tenants and take appropriate steps to deliver them.

- Ensure the delivery of repairs and maintenance to communal areas is informed by the needs of tenants and provides value for money.
- Work co-operatively with customers, other landlords and relevant organisations to contribute to the upkeep and safety of shared spaces

3 Values

3.1 The policy fits with the mutual values of RBH:

Putting People First: We listen with empathy, respond with compassion, and make it easy for our customers to access our services and for our colleagues to deliver our services. We work collaboratively with customers to improve our repairs and maintenance services and forge a sense of trust.

Doing What We Say: We earn trust through honesty, integrity, caring and keeping our promises. We take responsibility for the delivery of a cost-effective, customer focussed responsive communal cleaning and grounds maintenance service, which provides customers with clarity about when we will deliver those services.

Working As One: We embrace our mutuality and work together to deliver great outcomes for the people living in our homes and communities. We actively listen to our customers, with empathy and respect, and deliver services in a way that meets needs.

Delivering Quality: We invest wisely in our people and make it easy for them to deliver services and create places that our customers are proud to call home. This policy provides clarity about the standards our customers can expect.

Open & Transparent: We are curious, embrace diverse ways of thinking and seek feedback to help us improve. We give RBH members and customers a say in the way we run our service, using customer feedback to inform improvement activity.

4 Policy Statement

4.1 We acknowledge and accept our legal and regulatory responsibilities under the legislation outlined in Section 2, and all other duties set out in relevant legislation. We take responsibility for meeting our cleaning and grounds maintenance obligations as detailed in the relevant tenancy, licence or lease agreement for each of our homes.

4.2 Cleaning

4.2.1 We will carry out cleaning works to all shared communal spaces, internally and externally, at a minimum of a fortnightly cycle.

4.2.3 We will keep the cleaning frequency for our buildings under periodic review and will undertake more frequent cleaning in buildings which have greater numbers of occupants and / or higher levels of risk, for example in our Independent Living Schemes and our high-rise buildings.

4.3 Grounds Maintenance

4.3.1 We will deliver a grounds maintenance service to the common areas of our neighbourhoods which are in our ownership. This will include regular visits to

carry out grass cutting, weed spraying, hedge cutting and shrub pruning throughout the year.

4.3.2 During these visits, all soil and hard surfaces shall be cleared of litter and debris. Weed growth will be removed or treated with chemical weed killers during each scheduled visit.

4.3.3 We will operate a grass cutting service from late March to October of each year. We aim to provide 14 cuts of all common grassed areas during this cutting season, at regular intervals, weather permitting.

4.3.4 We will deliver a winter work programme between November and February.

4.3.5 **Summer schedule: late 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.
- Grassed areas will be cleared of rubbish before grass cutting commences.
- All grassed areas, including edges and surrounding obstacles will be cut to produce a pleasing appearance with an even finish and height.
- Grass clippings will be removed from hard surfaces and paths only.

4.3.6 **Winter schedule: November to February**

- 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

4.4.1 We aim to support increased biodiversity in appropriate locations and reduce our carbon footprint when maintaining our outdoor areas.

4.4.2 We will consider requests for wildflower areas to be created and take account of the character and location of the land, and any current and potential future use. Where we create a wildflower area, we will maintain this by mowing a strip around the outside and may also mow a strip through the middle to facilitate customer use.

4.5 Tree Maintenance

4.5.1 RBH own approximately 12,000 trees across our neighbourhoods, and we will maintain them to be healthy and safe.

4.5.2 Our tree maintenance programme will aim to:

- Maintain a healthy tree stock with a diverse age and class.

- Fulfil our statutory duty of care and corporate objectives on health and safety.
- 4.5.3 We will deliver a rolling 3-year programme of tree surveys, to continually update our directory of trees, including exact location, species and current condition.
- 4.5.4 All tree maintenance works will be carried out by an approved arboriculture team, and we will operate a 24-hour emergency call out service. Tree works will be categorised to high, medium and low risk and works completed as appropriate;
 - Emergency work will be inspected within 24 hours and completed within 48hours.
 - High risk work will be completed within 6months of identification, unless advised it is required sooner.
 - Medium risk work will be completed within 18months of identification.
 - Low risk work will only be completed, once it meets any of the below requirements.
- 4.5.5 We will only carry out works to trees for the following reasons:
 - 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.

4.6 Play Areas

- 4.6.1 We will maintain the play areas and equipment within our ownership to ensure they meet our general duty of care for the safety of members of the public and customers who may use them. We will do this in accordance with the test of “reasonable practicability” and relevant safety standards. We will therefore correct major hazards and other foreseeable risks but will not spend considerable resources on minor faults where there is a negligible risk.
- 4.6.7 We will visit each play area on a fortnightly basis and carry out a visual check; remove litter and hazards; and identify and arrange for the repair of any damage.
- 4.6.8 We will undertake a documented audit every six weeks. We will also undertake an annual survey, and this will be carried out by a specialist independent contractor.
- 4.6.9 Any equipment which is identified or reported as being unsafe or damaged will be de-commissioned within two working days of being reported. This may include removing the damaged item or installing barriers and signage to take the equipment out of use.
- 4.6.10 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.

- 4.6.11 We will maintain adequate signage at all RBH play area sites and check this as part of our inspection regime.

4.7 Independent Living Schemes Cleaning

- 4.7.1 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.

4.8 Pest Control

- 4.8.1 RBH provides a service for the treatment of various pest infestations inside our customers' homes where these have been caused by defects which have allowed pests to gain entry to the home. This will include infestations inside the home of rodents, pests (squirrels, pigeons and bats) and cockroaches. If bees or wasps are causing damage to your property or the communal area of our building, we will provide a treatment.
- 4.8.2 We will aim to respond within five working days of the issue being reported, to arrange an initial inspection and agree a treatment plan, which ordinarily consists of three visits over a six-week period. We will undertake additional visits where this is necessary to treat an ongoing investigation.

4.9 Fly Tipping

- 4.9.1 It is the responsibility of all customers and members of the public to ensure waste is legally disposed of. Rochdale Borough Council operates a bulky item collection service for items such as sofas, fridges and washing machines and we will direct our customers to that service where they require such assistance.
- 4.9.2 We will remove fly tipping on our land within five working days of being reported; but fire hazards will be prioritised and removed within one working day the report. RBH will pro-actively challenge any persons found to be committing or contributing to fly-tipping, and this will include consideration of tenancy enforcement action against any customer who is causing fly tipping.

4.10 Graffiti

- 4.10.1 RBH will pro-actively challenge any persons found responsible for graffiti within our buildings or neighbourhoods, and this will include consideration of tenancy enforcement action against any customer who is responsible.
- 4.10.2 We will remove all graffiti to any common areas or structures within our ownership:
- Offensive graffiti will be removed within 24 hours of being reported.
 - All other graffiti will be removed within five working days of being reported.

4.11 Winter Gritting

- 4.11.1 We will operate a winter gritting service for common areas within our ownership to fulfil our general duty of care for the safety of members of the public and customers who may use them. We will do this in accordance with the test of “reasonable practicability” and relevant safety standards. We will operate a gritting plan, prioritising areas for gritting and snow clearance that are deemed to be of the greatest risk to our customers, taking account of factors including customer vulnerability and the number of users. We will activate the plan in the event of continuous, settling snow, which is forecast to last for more than four hours.
- 4.11.2 We will maintain grit bins in appropriate areas across our estates and keep these filled through the winter season.
- 4.11.3 In the event of an extended weather event, appropriate efforts will be made to keep an area safe for the duration, except where doing so may create additional risks to colleagues, or where efforts may prove futile due to the weather.
- 4.11.5 RBH will not accept responsibility for any injury sustained by any person not following cleared routes.

4.12 Training and Competency

- 4.12.1 We will provide appropriate training for all colleagues who deliver this policy, including induction training when commencing in their role and additional refresher training as required.
- 4.12.2 The training will include the skills and competency necessary to undertake the work safely and to the required service standards. It will include training on health and safety and on how to use the equipment correctly and safely.

4.13 Service Charges

- 4.13.1 We will recover the cost of providing the services outlined in this policy by issuing service charges to customers who receive the service or benefit directly from the services. The charges will reflect the annual costs of providing the services outlined within this policy.
- 4.13.2 We operate a variable Service Charging policy. Variable service charges are calculated annually based on the previous years’ cost of service, using the most up-to-date figures for budget setting purposes and estimates for some of the costs that RBH will not know. Further information is contained within the RBH Rent and Service Charge Setting Policy.

4.14 Customer Communications

- 4.14.1 We consider good communication essential in the effective delivery of our cleaning and grounds maintenance services, and we will undertake regular engagement and promotion of the services and support we deliver. This will encourage and support customers to report repairs and any concerns about the safety and quality of their common areas and neighbourhoods and help us to engage with vulnerable and hard to reach customers. We will share information clearly and transparently and will ensure that information is available to customers via regular publications and information on our website via regular

publications and information on our website via regular publications and information on our website.

5 Monitoring

- 5.1 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.
 - Regular quality checks, to ensure service standards are met.
 - Regular internal and external audits, to ensure adherence to policy and procedures.
- 5.2 We will monitor performance against the following indicators, and will set annual targets for each of these metrics as part of our annual business planning processes:
- Annual surveys on customer satisfaction with the communal cleaning or grounds maintenance service delivered.
 - Monthly tenant satisfaction surveys, to ensure that RBH keeps communal areas clean and well maintained (TSM:TP10).
- 5.3 We will publish our performance against key indicators on our website so customers have information about our current performance.

6 Review

- 6.1 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.
- 6.2 This policy will go through the full policy approval process every 3 years and will undergo a desktop review annually. This is to ensure that it is fit for purpose and complies with all relevant and statutory regulations.

7 Links with Other RBH Documents

- 7.1 This policy links to the following policies and strategies:
- Repairs and Maintenance Policy
 - Complaints Policy
 - Rent and Service Charge Setting Policy
- 7.2 The delivery of the policy is supported by the following:
- RBH Grounds Maintenance Service Standards
 - RBH Neighbourhood Caretaking Service Standards
 - RBH Website – NET Pages
 - RBH NET Gritting Routes

8 Inclusivity statement

- 8.1 We are dedicated to fostering an inclusive and equitable environment for all. We ensure that everyone is valued and respected. Our policies aim to be inclusive, and will comply with UK laws, including the Equality Act 2010, to create a diverse and supportive environment for people to thrive.
- 8.2 We understand not everyone absorbs information the same way. If you have any difficulty understanding or interpreting this document, please email people@rbh.org.uk or call Freephone 0800 027 7769. We will work with you to ensure your individual needs are met.