

Estate Services Standard

*‘Delivering a Decent Home on a
Decent Estate’*

June 2024



HILLINGDON
LONDON

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1. Introduction

The Council's Estate Services Policy recognises that the effective management and maintenance of the shared areas of its housing estates is both an essential and integral part of the overall housing management function. Tenants and leaseholders rightly see the shared areas of their estates as an extension of their homes and in this context expect to see standards delivered which benefit all residents and ensure our estates are attractive, well-maintained, safe and secure places to live.

The Council aims to provide a range of proactive and reactive services linked to the internal and external shared areas of estates as part of its management and maintenance offer. As reflected in the Estate Services Policy, the Council, in conjunction with residents and partners has adopted an Estate Services Standard. This standard is one of the key sets of measures shared with residents as part of monitoring and performance management across estates.

By working towards the outcomes expected by the Regulator of Social Housing and engaging with tenants and leaseholders about what matters to them, the Council aims to work towards achieving the Estate Services Standard and in turn a '*Decent Home on a Decent Estate*'.

2. Aims and Scope

The Estate Services Standard adopts a visual standard for assessing whether the shared areas of estates are being maintained to an acceptable standard. The overarching aim of the standard is to support the management, delivery and monitoring of core shared area services which are consistent in quality, are value for money and which maintain shared areas to a recognised acceptable standard. Core shared area services in this context include cleaning, caretaking and grounds maintenance. This focus does not detract from the fact that shared areas must be safe for all residents and visitors to use and enjoy.

3. Resident and Community Engagement

This document sets out what standards you can expect from the shared areas in and around your home in the context of cleaning, caretaking and grounds maintenance. A group of residents have approved these standards. Those providers who are in receipt of Housing Revenue Account funding, will carry out works to the shared areas of estates to meet these agreed standards.

4. Standards, Monitoring and Performance

Service providers, directly employed by the Council or on contract to the Council, will:

- Work to the highest standards of professional competence, courtesy and customer care using a professional and appropriately skilled workforce
- Show consideration towards residents at all times and not use any loud machinery outside regular working hours

- Have identification and wear the Council's or company's uniform at all times
- Arrive promptly with the correct materials, tools and equipment
- Comply with all Health and Safety Regulations as specified under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974

Any shared internal or external shared areas will need to be kept to a certain standard, all year round. The focus of the visual standard is not on an 'input specification' i.e. how many times a hedge line or grass should be cut. The visual standard is an 'output specification' i.e. the expectation is that the hedge line or grass is cut and maintained to meet the standard throughout the year.

This standard will be checked by service providers themselves (as part of their own approach to quality assurance), by staff from the Neighbourhood Management Team and by residents as part of a joint monitoring approach.

The purpose of the visual standard is to judge standards of cleaning, caretaking and grounds maintenance. Elements such as stairs, walls, windows and lifts that are nearing the end of their life cycle may not respond to cleaning and maintenance as well as new elements would. Therefore, where a service provider cleans ageing elements of buildings to the highest standards, it should not be penalised. Reasonable consideration must be given to the condition of the property.

The visual standard is split into two sections; Cleaning / Caretaking & Estate Amenities and Grounds Maintenance. Within these two sections there are 26 'elements', each element being an area found on a housing estates e.g. playground, stairwell or bin area or a task normally undertaken by an estate services provider e.g. corridor floor cleaning, litter control or grass cutting. The full list of elements in the visual standard is set out in **Appendix 1 – Visual Standard Elements**.

Each element has 4 pictures which indicate a condition or standard for that task or area. These standards are graded A (excellent), B (satisfactory), C (poor) and D (unacceptable / service failure). Each condition or standard carries a score of 4 (A standard) down to 1 (unacceptable / service failure).

The general expectation is that services will be delivered to not less than a grade A or B standard. With the passage of time areas or elements will deteriorate. The general expectation is that the service provider will be back on the estate and delivering the service before or by the time the area or element reaches grade C. It is not acceptable for any area or element to deteriorate to grade D. See **Appendix 2 – sample pictorial standards for caretaking, estate amenities and grounds maintenance**.

The Neighbourhood Management Team will take the lead on a range of identified matters relating to unacceptable Standards / Service failures on estates. Central to this will be taking a lead and coordinating role in the development and delivery of time-limited 'Action Plans' to ensure the Estate Services Standard is met and barriers to sustaining standards are removed. Matters which the Neighbourhood Management Team lead on could include:

- Persistent service failures linked to cleaning and caretaking standards

- Persistent failures linked to grounds maintenance standards
- Persistent failures linked to disrepair and safety related matters on shared areas
- Combinations of service failures which impact upon overall standards
- Where presenting service failures linked to caretaking and grounds maintenance may be re-occurring or seasonal in nature and require solutions to 'break the cycle'.
- Multifaceted estate services problems where deployment of solutions is unlikely to involve actions by just one partner or team. Where these include anti-social behaviour and enviro-crime centred on shared areas, the Anti-Social Behaviour & Localities Team will lead on the 'Action Plan' with support from other Teams and Service providers

Where necessary and appropriate, the Neighbourhood Management Team will work with the Community Engagement Team to better understand resident perceptions and expectations as part of designing and delivering resolutions.

Though 'special interest groups', the development of 'Resident Inspectors', the Council's website, our e-newsletter and the annual report, the Council will work with residents to agree and bring forward meaningful and timely monitoring and performance information which can include but not be limited to:

- Satisfaction that the landlord keeps communal areas clean and well maintained
- Satisfaction that the landlord makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods
- Satisfaction that the landlord keeps tenants informed about things that matter to them
- Satisfaction that the landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them
- Completion of programmed inspections against the published schedule
- Estate Inspection outcomes [by element] against the Estate Services Standard
- Number of 'Action Plans' triggered, underway and completed by the Neighbourhood Management Team where the standard of estates is assessed as unacceptable / service failure across a material number of elements over two successive planned inspections

5. Training

The Council, in its capacity as landlord, recognises that staff are the key resource in ensuring our estates are safe and meet the Estate Services Standard all year round. In this context it is important that staff have the knowledge, confidence and skills to identify poor performance and take appropriate remedial action to ensure standards are met and or the barriers to achieving standards are addressed. This dedicated resource is the Neighbourhood Management Team but extends to staff groups who are not directly responsible for the Estate Services but nonetheless visit properties on our estates on a regular basis and therefore have a real opportunity to contribute to identifying issues proactively, ensuring they are appropriately reported and raising standards.

All staff who visit our estates will receive training on estate services issues, including fire safety awareness and identifying a range of potential hazards, to enable and support them in making an effective contribution to achieving the Estate Services Standard.

6. Equality and Diversity

The Council is committed to fairness and the principles of diversity and inclusion. Our aim is to ensure that our Standards, Policies and operational Procedures do not create an unfair disadvantage for anyone, either directly or indirectly. We are committed to:

- Consulting and engaging with residents, advocates, community organisations and forums by listening to their views, taking notice of the issues they raise and recognising their contribution to the achievement of the Estate Services Standard and wider Neighbourhood Management.
- Meeting the needs and choice of people from all backgrounds.
- Ensuring that our Services and Standards are relevant, responsive and sensitive to the needs of our existing and future residents.
- Ensuring that all sections of the community in which we operate have equal access to our services.

7. Accessibility

We will ensure that tenants' needs are considered when implementing this Standard to ensure that they are treated fairly. We will make appropriate arrangements to ensure that customers with distinct communication needs are not unreasonably and disproportionately affected. This could involve providing communications in alternative languages or formats or providing interpretation or transcription as appropriate. We will also ensure that any necessary and appropriate reasonable adjustments are made to meet the needs of any specific tenant in the context of achieving the Estate Services Standard.

8. Related Policies and Links to Further Information

- Estate Services Policy
- Tree Strategy 2023
- Practice Note – Storage of items on internal shared areas
- Consumer Standard: Neighbourhood & Community
- Consumer Standard: Safety & Quality
- Consumer Standard: Transparency, Influence and Accountability

9. Behaviours, Competencies and Professional Standards

The Council, in its capacity as landlord, recognises that staff are the key resource in ensuring effective estate services and the achievement of the Estate Services Standard. The delivery of training to staff groups involved in the provision and management of Estate Services goes beyond ensuring that they have the knowledge and competence to deliver their roles.

The Council is committed to ensuring that all social housing staff have the skills, knowledge, experience and behaviours they need to deliver good-quality, professional services to tenants and leaseholders. The desired effects include an improved service to residents, with staff better equipped to manage risks to tenants' wellbeing, health and safety. Success will be indicated through reductions in complaints upheld specifically regarding poor service or poor complaint handling; and in the long term we expect that staff with the required level of skills, knowledge, experience and behaviours will contribute to an increase in tenant satisfaction scores. This includes perceptions associated with our management of shared areas, the contribution we make to neighbourhoods, our approach to handling anti-social behaviour and perceptions that homes are safe.

10. Reviewing our Standard

To ensure that this Standard continues to reflect the current objectives and practice in respect of Estate Services, it will be reviewed every three years unless amendment is prompted by a change in legislation, Regulatory requirements, monitoring and reporting, or feedback from residents reveals that a change in the Standard is required sooner.

Governance			
Effective from:	11/06/2024	Review Date:	11/06/2027
Procedure Owner:	Head of Housing Management		
Procedure Author:	Head of Housing Management		
Approved by:	Landlord Board		
Version Number:	1.01		

Appendix 1 – Visual Standard Elements

Element 1	Car parks
Element 2	Garages & garage areas
Element 3	Paths, roadways & courtyards
Element 4	Play areas & seating areas
Element 5	Litter removal from grassed areas & shrubs
Element 6	Graffiti removal
Element 7	Security of tank and meter rooms
Element 8	Rubbish chutes
Element 9	Cleanliness of windows
Element 10	Cleanliness of ledges & window cills
Element 11	Cleanliness of light fittings & working Condition
Element 12	Sweeping & washing of stairs, landings, entrance halls & lobbies. Washing down of tiles and painted walls.
Element 13	Entrance halls and lobbies
Element 14	Handrails, ledges and banister rails
Element 15a	Lifts – floors
Element 15b	Lifts doors, panels and frames
Element 16	Cleanliness of walls in communal areas
Element 17	Bin chambers
Element 18	Communal bin areas & drying areas
Element 19	Security and tidiness of intake rooms and dry stores
Element 20	Fly tipping
Element 21	Estate Signage & Notice Boards
Element 22	Recycling facilities
Element 23	Grounds Maintenance – grassed areas
Element 24	Grounds Maintenance – weed clearance
Element 25	Grounds Maintenance – shrub bed & hedge Maintenance
Element 26	Grounds Maintenance – tree management

Appendix 2 – sample pictorial standards for caretaking, estate amenities and grounds maintenance.

Play and seating areas for hazards such as broken glass, sharps and faulty or damaged equipment

Grade **A (Scores 4)**

“All Clear”

A typical example of such **A** grade conditions below:



These **play and seating areas** are typically very good, no leaves, no litter and no sharp objects. All play equipment shall be in working order with no broken seats, safety rails etc. There should also be some seating areas, with the seats in a good condition, within the play area.



Grade B (Scores 3)

“Satisfactory”

A typical example of such B grade conditions below:



These **play and seating areas** typically have no more litter than one would expect as the days wears on.

Investigation as to the cleaning frequency and cycle will determine if the level of litter or detritus is acceptable.



Grade C (Scores 2)

“Poor”

A typical example of such C grade conditions below:



These **play and seating areas** are typically with high and with an unacceptable build-up of litter e.g. litter/tin cans, newspaper, old leaves etc.

There may also be slight damage to the play equipment and/or the seating within the play area.



Grade D (Scores 1)

“Very Poor”

A typical example of such D grade conditions below:



These **play and seating areas** are totally unacceptable, with excessive amount of litter or hazardous conditions are found (e.g. broken glasses or sharp objects).

Any serious damage to play equipment should also result in an immediate service failure and the award of a ‘D’ score. The host organisation shall immediately be informed of any such damaged play equipment.



NOTE.

A distinction should be applied between “hazardous litter or disrepair” and “unsightly – but not dangerous litter or disrepair”. The first would indicate that the playground or play area has broken equipment, broken glass, sharps or razor blades which would result in an immediate fail and what may be “unsightly or aged disrepair” such as leaves and a daily/weekly build-up of litter which would result in a score of B or C in this element.
Care should be taken with the scoring of this element.

Removal of litter and leaves from grass area and shrub beds

Grade A (Scores 4)

“All Clear”

A typical example of such A grade conditions below:



The **grass area and shrub beds** are typically in very good condition, there is no evidence of litter, no build-up of old leaves or grass cuttings and no sharp objects such as needles or broken glass.



Grade B (Scores 3)

“Satisfactory”

A typical example of such B grade conditions below:



These **grassed areas and shrub beds** typically have no more evidence of litter, old leaves or grass cuttings than one would expect depending on the frequency of the litter clearance cycle. There should be no evidence of sharp objects such as needles or broken glass or no large build-up of leaves.



Grade C (Scores 2)

“Poor”

A typical example of such C grade conditions below:



These **grass areas and shrub beds** will typically have a higher build-up of litter, leaves, grass cuttings e.g. litter, tin cans, newspaper, old leaves, etc than would be deemed acceptable. There should still be no evidence of sharp objects such as needles or broken glass



Grade D (Scores 2)
"Very Poor"

A typical example of such D grade conditions below:



These **grass areas and shrub bed areas** are totally unacceptable and would constitute a service delivery failure. There would be evidence of excessive amount of litter, leaves, grass cuttings or hazardous conditions.

Any evidence of broken glass, needles or sharp objects will constitute a service failure and will attract an immediate 'D' score.



Chutes. General condition, evidence of blockages and cleanliness of external parts of hopper head and surrounding walls and flooring.

Grade A (Scores 4)

“All Clear”

A typical example of such A grade conditions below:



This **hopper head** is as clean as it can be and also the floor and walls around the hopper head are also very clean, and therefore, will be given “A” grade **if all chutes are found in same state.**



Grade B (Scores

3) "Satisfactory"

A typical example of such B grade conditions below:



This hopper head is not perfect, with maybe small bits of dirt present, but there is no rotten food and very little dirt on the outside.



Grade C (Scores 2)

“Poor”

A typical example of such C grade conditions below:



At least one **chute within this block** is much dirtier than it should be and access to it may also be blocked by rubbish in the surrounding area, making it difficult for the residents to use the chute.



All car parks/parking areas

Grade **A** (scores 4)

“All Clear”

A typical example of such **A** grade conditions below:



These **car park areas** have no litter or tree leaves, are well marked out and provide an acceptable and safe area for residents to park their cars.



Grade B (score 3)

“Satisfactory”

A typical example of such B grade conditions below:



During certain times in the year an amount of leaves within these **car park areas** could be seen as acceptable if they appear not to have been there very long (i.e. a small build up in October could be acceptable but in May it wouldn't). There may be a small amount of litter but investigation into when the most recent clean took place, would determine if it is acceptable. The white parking lines should be evident even if they are in need of a little attention.



Grade C (Scores 2)

“Poor”

A typical example of such C grade conditions below:



These **car park areas** typically have a higher build-up of litter e.g. litter/tin cans, newspaper, old leaves etc than could be deemed acceptable whatever the cleaning cycle may be.



Grade D (Scores 1)

“Service Failure”

A typical example of such D grade conditions below:



The cleanliness of the **car park** area is totally unacceptable and would be deemed a failure of service delivery. There will be excessive amounts of weeds, litter, leaves or hazardous materials (e.g. broken glasses sharp objects).



Element 12

The sweeping and washing of stairs and landings, the washing down of tiles and painted walls and the cleaning of handrails and ledges.

Grade **A** (Scores 4).

“Very good”

A typical example of such **A** grade conditions below:



There should be no dirt, dust, detritus or litter on the stairs and landings. Generally the handrails, bannisters etc should be in good condition and there should be evidence that they are swept and mopped regularly and are clean to the touch.



Grade B (Scores

3) "Satisfactory"

A typical example of such B grade conditions below:



The stairs and landings etc may not be in a condition that warrants an "A" score, but there is no dirt, dust, detritus or litter evident. The stairs should be generally clean to the touch and as clean as the cleaning cycle permits.



Grade C (Scores 2) “Poor”

A typical example of such C grade conditions below:



There may be evidence of dust or detritus along the edges of the stairs and in the corners landings etc. There will be little evidence of recent sweeping or mopping.



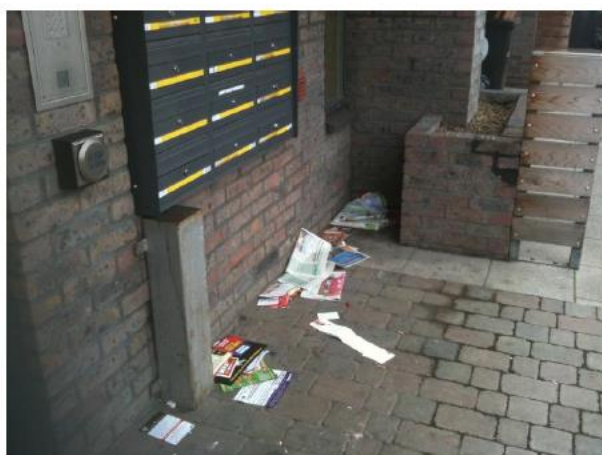
Grade D (Scores 1)

“Very Poor”

A typical example of such D grade conditions below:



The staircases and landings are generally very dirty in the corners and on steps. There will be evidence of alcohol bottles, excessive litter, advertising flyers and there may be evidence of drug use or other ASB activities.



Scoring note:-

It is when judging the cleanliness of the staircases, entrance halls and lobbies that we should be most aware of the age of the building and its internal furnishings etc.

A staircase that has been in constant use for 60/70 years may look old and worn out but is actually perfectly clean. There may be evidence of “staining” or water “shadows” but which no amount of scrubbing or mopping will remove and for which a lower score should not be awarded.

Again the “finger test” is perhaps the best way of deciding if a staircase, step facing or tread, bannister or floor is dirty and in need of attention.

Grounds Maintenance – the cutting and maintenance of all grassed areas

Grade A (Scores 4).

“Very good”

A typical example of such A grade conditions below:



The grassed areas look as though they have been recently cut and are well maintained, with little evidence of weeds and good quality grass. The edges of the grassed areas should be cut back to their original line and not spreading over pathways and flower and shrub beds.



Grade B (Scores 3)

“Good”

A typical example of such B grade conditions below:



The grassed areas are in need of some minor attention but are likely to be restored with routine maintenance or maybe more frequent cutting. The grass is reasonably well maintained and has little evidence of weeds. There should be evidence that an attempt has been made to cut the grassed areas back to their original line and they are not spreading over pathways and flower and shrub beds.

The example on the right below indicates where the grass has been cut but grass cuttings have not been collected and taken away. Care should be taken when assessing the quality of grass cutting when grass cuttings have been left on the ground.

The quality of grass under the grass cuttings will determine if this element is worth an A, B, C or D score. (See scoring note at the beginning of the Grounds Maintenance section.



Grade C (Scores 2)

“Poor”

A typical example of such C grade conditions below:



Grassed areas are overgrown, do not appear to have been cut as per the programme or to meet the service standards. The grass is generally in poor condition and needs to be cut back or trimmed. There may also be transgression of grass away from its original line, onto footpaths and into flower and shrub beds.



Grade D (Scores 1)

“Very poor”



The grassed areas appear to have not been attended to for some time e.g. growth of grass onto footpaths, and length of grass. The grassed areas are also of an unacceptable quality and although 'green' consist mainly of weeds.



Grounds Maintenance – shrub bed and hedge maintenance

Grade A (Scores 4)

“Very Good”

A typical example of such A grade conditions below



Shrub beds and hedges are well maintained, they have been attended to by annual maintenance, have been cut back and are attractive to the eye. There should be no shrubs or hedges that have overgrown footpaths, grassed areas and parking or seating areas.



Grade B (Scores 3)

“Good”

A typical example of such B grade conditions below



Shrub beds and hedges are generally well maintained, but there is evidence of both new and established growth that requires routine attention. Shrubs or hedges should not yet be overgrowing footpaths, grassed areas and parking or seating areas.



Grade C (Scores 2)

"In need of attention"

A typical example of such C grade conditions below



Shrubs or hedges are generally in need of some immediate attention. They are overdeveloped and look like annual maintenance has not been adequate and attention should be paid to them as soon as possible. Shrubs or hedges may have started to overgrow footpaths, grassed areas and parking or seating areas but are not making them impassable or constituting a hazard to residents.



Grade D (Scores 1)

“Very Poor”

A typical example of such D grade conditions below



There is evidence that in a number of areas shrub beds or hedges are overgrowing footpaths, grassed areas and parking or seating areas. Shrubs and hedges look to have not been attended to for a long period of time and have the potential to be a hazard or risk to residents. Shrubs and hedges in this condition would be considered a service failure and would require immediate attention.

