Respect and Housing Management

Using Good Neighbour Agreements: Emerging Lessons from Research

Practice Note
Respect and Housing Management – Using Good Neighbour Agreements: Emerging Lessons from Research

Practice Note
On 5th May 2006 the responsibilities of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) transferred to the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG)

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About this practice note

Respect cannot be achieved by Government alone and ultimately every citizen has a responsibility to behave in a respectful way and to support the community around them in doing the same.

(Respect Action Plan, 2006)

Reflecting current policy concerns around anti-social behaviour, there is growing interest in schemes such as Good Neighbour Agreements that aim to promote positive behaviour in communities and extend the range of tools to address anti-social behaviour that are already in place.

This practice note is intended to provide guidance for social landlords and other agencies who wish to develop Good Neighbour Agreements. It is based on research conducted by the Centre for Housing Policy at the University of York for the then Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and the Home Office on *The Use of Good Neighbour Agreements to Promote Positive Behaviour in Communities*¹.

The research involved a survey of social landlords including: local authorities, Arms Length Management Organisations and Registered Social Landlords; focus groups involving representatives of national organisations and practitioners and tenant representatives; and twenty in depth telephone interviews with landlords across England who were operating or had considered introducing good neighbour agreements. The research found:

- Almost half of the 221 landlord organisations who responded to the survey operated some sort of Good Neighbour Agreement and nearly a fifth of respondents were considering developing a scheme.

- It was clear that there is no single model of a Good Neighbour Agreement and landlords employed a variety of schemes. The motivations behind, and operation of agreements also differed, however, overall the most important drivers were the promotion of positive behaviour and the reinforcement of community values.

- Respondents stressed the need to address local concerns and to engage with tenants and local residents. Although complaints about nuisance behaviour tended to increase with the introduction of Good Neighbour Agreements, this reflected tenants’ and residents’ increased expectations and confidence that complaints would be dealt with.

¹ The full report is available at http://www.york.ac.uk/inst/chp/research.htm
• Overall the research suggested that Good Neighbour Agreements can be an effective tool in promoting positive behaviour. However, Good Neighbour Agreements do not operate in isolation and they are always used as part of a wider multi-pronged anti-social behaviour strategy.

*It’s another tool – one that gives the community ownership. It is their document or agreement not the council telling them what to do, but it does show that the local authority is trying to deal with the concerns people have. It is not a panacea but it sends a clear message out to people who are inconsiderate and perhaps anti-social that they have to ‘buck up’.*

(Housing provider)

The research was not intended to evaluate the effectiveness of Good Neighbour Agreements but to gain some understanding of how these agreements are being used and developed. The key practice points presented here are based on the experiences of practitioners who have used such schemes. The practice note addresses the following key issues:

1. **What are Good Neighbour Agreements and what are they used for?**
2. **How wide should coverage of Good Neighbour Agreements be?**
3. **How are Good Neighbour Agreements developed, promoted and used?**
4. **How are Good Neighbour Agreements monitored and evaluated?**
5. **What are the benefits and challenges of Good Neighbour Agreements?**

Examples are provided to illustrate the development, content and use of different models of Good Neighbour Agreements. Shorter examples and summaries are presented in the text, and more detailed examples and contact details are provided in the Appendix to this practice note. The note also contains a series of practice checklists with a list of questions that may be helpful for organisations to consider if they are setting up a Good Neighbour Agreement.
1. What are Good Neighbour Agreements and what are they used for?

Good Neighbour Agreements are usually voluntary agreements between landlords and their tenants but can also be used by other agencies and organisations, for example, Community Safety Partnerships and local residents. Several Scottish local authorities introduced Good Neighbour Agreements in the late 1990s to back up clauses in their tenancy agreements and to highlight what is expected of tenants as good neighbours.

As noted above, the generic term Good Neighbour Agreements covers a range of interventions with different names. For clarity the term Good Neighbour Agreement will be used throughout this guide. Example 1 provides a list of some of the alternative names used by landlords, or anti-social behaviour or community safety teams, to describe agreements designed to promote positive behaviour.

Example 1: Different names for Good Neighbour Agreements

- Estate Agreement
- Good Neighbour Declaration
- Good Community Code
- Community Pledge
- Tenant Code
- Tenant Charter
- Neighbourhood Agreement
- Mediated Community Agreement
- Community Statement of Acceptable Resident Behaviour
- Community Promise
- Residents’ Charter
Good Neighbour Agreements can be used for different purposes and in different ways. The overarching aim, however, is to promote positive behaviour. In addition, Good Neighbour Agreements:

- seek to give a clear indication that there is a commitment from the landlord and other local agencies to tackling anti-social behaviour;
- seek to engage local residents and to encourage them to share some of the responsibility for tackling nuisance behaviour and promoting positive behaviour;
- are used in conjunction with a range of other enforcement and preventative measures to address anti-social behaviour, including Anti-Social Behaviour Orders and Injunctions; Acceptable Behaviour Contracts and Parenting Contracts; starter tenancies and local letting policies; refurbishment and improvement; as well as diversionary activities for children and young people.

Good Neighbour Agreements can be quite simple and outline a number of positive behaviours such as those shown in Example 2.

**Example 2: Positive behaviours**

- Be a good neighbour
- Take pride in my home
- Respect other people’s property
- Look out for my neighbours
- Take care of the environment
- Be part of the community

Good Neighbour Agreements can also be more prescriptive. They list specific behaviours that are considered anti-social, and make clear what actions will be taken by the landlord and/or other agencies. These often reiterate the tenancy agreement or list particular behaviour that local residents find anti-social. Other agreements are more detailed and list behaviours that are considered anti-social as well as positive behaviours and what it means to be a good neighbour.
Good Neighbour Agreements can be used to do one or more of the following:

- reinforce the tenancy agreement;
- reassure tenants and residents that local concerns around anti-social nuisance behaviour will be addressed;
- present a statement of ‘desirable’ or positive forms of behaviour to promote a greater sense of neighbourliness;
- promote a set of shared community standards and expectations around behaviour, also highlighting the rights and responsibilities of tenants, residents, landlords and other service providers;
- contribute to wider anti-social behaviour strategies or community regeneration initiatives.

Reinforcing the tenancy agreement

Example 3 shows a Good Neighbour Agreement primarily intended to reinforce a tenancy agreement. By emphasising the elements of the tenancy agreement that address anti-social behaviour, it aims to give a clear message to tenants about what is expected of them at the point when they are moving into their new home. Agreements of this type tend to be prescriptive about behaviours. Some use the formal language of tenancy agreements. Others deliberately use less formal language to ensure clarity. They also highlight the possible actions landlords can take if tenants break the terms of their tenancy agreement. This example also briefly outlines what people can do to be good neighbours.

“Ours is fairly general and we aren’t asking them to comply with anything they’re not already being asked to comply with in the tenancy agreement. We are not raising things to a new level but reinforcing the conditions that we consider to be very important.”

(Housing provider)

Landlords using this type of agreement often ask new tenants to sign them at the beginning of their tenancy. The intention is to ensure that new tenants understand from the very beginning of their tenancy what types of behaviour are considered anti-social and what the consequences of anti-social behaviour will be.
Example 3: Good Neighbour Agreement intended to reinforce tenancy agreement

Good Neighbour Agreement – for all tenants

Anti-social behaviour causes distress for people who want to live peacefully in their homes and neighbourhoods. [Landlord] is committed to dealing quickly and firmly with those who behave in a way which threatens the peace and security of local residents.

Being a Good Neighbour

[Landlord] expects all its tenants to treat others living in their neighbourhood fairly, and in a way that they would like to be treated themselves. We believe that by being a good neighbour you will be helping us to stop nuisance and anti-social behaviour on our estates and in your local community.

About this agreement

As a [landlord] tenant, you must sign this agreement to show that you understand what ‘anti-social’ behaviour is, and that you will not behave badly towards your neighbours or others in the community. You will also be confirming that if you do so, you will be breaking the terms of the Tenancy Agreement which you signed with us, and in some cases, this can eventually lead to you being evicted from your home, or have other action taken against you.

What is Anti-Social Behaviour?

Anti-social behaviour comes in many forms, from serious acts of violence, harassment or threats of violence directed to one person or others, to general nuisance. The following list contains a number of examples of types of behaviour which we consider ‘anti-social’. And as such, will not be tolerated.

- Aggressive and threatening language and behaviour.
- Actual violence against people and property.
- Hate behaviour against certain people or groups of people because they are perceived to be ‘different’, for example because of their race, colour or lifestyle.
- Using or selling drugs or other illegal substances.
- Loud noise, especially late at night, for example by playing music loudly.
- Allowing pets to make excessive noise, or to be a danger to others.
- Vandalising property which is not owned by you, including graffiti.
- Dumping rubbish and litter, in your gardens or around area in which you live.
- Parking vehicles inconsiderately, or abandoning vehicles, or keeping untaxed vehicles in street.
- Carrying out domestic violence.
- Being intolerant of other peoples’ lifestyles.
- Being a general nuisance in the community.
Example 3: Good Neighbour Agreement intended to reinforce tenancy agreement (continued)

What can you do to be a good neighbour?
There are many things you can do to help prevent nuisance and anti-social behaviour. Some examples are listed below:

Accept that everyone is different and be tolerant of the lifestyles of others.

If you feel that someone is acting unreasonably, and you do not feel threatened, speak to them first before making a complaint to [landlord]. It is likely that they did not even realise they were causing a nuisance.

In cases of genuine nuisance and/or anti-social behaviour, you must contact [landlord] and tell us what the problem is so that we can sort it out quickly for the benefit of you and the whole community.

Where you have made a complaint, work with [landlord] to sort the problem out, by keeping to the actions agreed with [landlord] during the cause of the investigation process.

Full details of how to make a complaint are contained in landlords leaflet “tackling Anti Social behaviour”. The leaflet is available from all [landlords] offices and Neighbourhood/Street Wardens and Estate Offices.

Your agreement with [landlord]
Now that you understand what being a ‘good neighbour’ is, you must sign this agreement. If you have any more questions ask them now!

I/we agree that whilst I am a tenant of [landlord], I will do everything I can to be ‘a good neighbour’, and will not behave in any way which may be considered ‘anti-social’.

I/we understand that if any member of the household, or visitors to the home acting a way which can be considered as being anti-social, [landlord] will take action for breach of tenancy agreement. Eventually this can lead to legal action and/or the repossession of my/our home.

Signed/dated/witnessed

Luminos Housing Group
Contact: Mark.Rebane@luminus.org.uk
Addressing local concerns around nuisance and disorder

Good Neighbour Agreements can also be used to address very local concerns about behaviours that cause disruption and disturbance. These types of agreement tend to highlight certain behaviours and local problems, for example, car parking, abandoned vehicles, playing football on the road, dogs and dog fouling, rubbish/scrap and bonfires, and the range of actions that might be taken by different agencies in response. Example 4 is an agreement developed in response to residents’ demands. It shows the topics covered in a multi-tenure agreement, developed by a Neighbourhood Safety Team made up of local residents, the local council and the police. It provides examples of anti-social behaviour, highlights not only the actions that the local authority could take against their tenants who are behaving badly, but also the actions that can be taken by the police and local authority against individuals who are behaving badly regardless of their tenure. It asks residents to assist in combating anti-social behaviour, and provides contact details for different agencies.

Example 4: Good Neighbour Agreement for a Multi Tenure Area Developed with Neighbourhood Safety Team

Introduction
The Good Neighbour Agreement is a voluntary agreement setting out acceptable standards of behaviour endorsed and agreed by the residents of [place].

Most people live in a peaceful and reasonable way and are unlikely to knowingly cause offence or disruption to those living around them. Unfortunately there are often a small number of people who in different ways cause nuisance problems in their neighbourhood. Members of the Neighbourhood Safety Team (NeST) have supported this agreement, as they believe it is a positive step towards local people working together for a better community.

This agreement sets out:

What activity can be classed as unacceptable, anti social or nuisance behaviour.

How you can report and how this agreement will be enforced.

When action can be taken and legal options for the Council.

What you can do to help.

Useful contact numbers.
Example 4: Good Neighbour Agreement for a Multi Tenure Area
Developed with Neighbourhood Safety Team (continued)

Unacceptable behaviour or nuisance is enforced by legal powers held by the Council and/or Police depending on what kind of nuisance it is.

Tenants and residents of [place] are responsible for the behaviour of every person (including children) living in or visiting the home. This includes responsibility for their behaviour in the home, on surrounding land, in communal areas (stairs, lifts, landings, entrance halls, paving, shared gardens, parking areas) and in the local neighbourhood.

If your neighbours are causing problems for you, you are not alone. Neighbour problems cover a range of issues from annoying incidents such as playing music too loudly, to serious incidents such as racial and sexual harassment and threats of violence.

If you or your neighbours are council tenants, you may wish to contact the Council’s Housing Services who can provide you with help and advice on how best to tackle nuisance problems.

1. Leaflets are available from Housing Services on:
   - Complaints concerning neighbours
   - Dealing with harassment

   Alternatively you can telephone Housing Services on XXXXXX and ask to speak to the Housing Assistant for your area or you can call in to [Office] and speak to someone in person. Appointments can be made in advance to ensure you see the right member of staff.

   Other agencies may also be able to give you support and advice depending on your problem. If you are not sure who to speak to or where to find information you need, try contacting Safer [Place] Shop on [Address], telephone [number]. Useful telephone numbers can be found on page x.

2. What is unacceptable behaviour?
   - Noise
   - Environment/pets
   - Behaviour/harassment
   - Vandalism and nuisance
   - General
Example 4: Good Neighbour Agreement for a Multi Tenure Area
Developed with Neighbourhood Safety Team (continued)

3. How do you report?
Contacts for the Community Shop, the Safer [Town] Shop, support agencies such as Victim Support, etc

4. How will this agreement be enforced?
Introductory tenancies
Actions to be taken by the Council and Police
Complaints

5. When can action be taken?
Advice on reporting incidents
Harassment
Malicious phone calls
Noise
Cars/parking
Abandoned vehicles
Rubbish, scrap and bonfires
Garden/hedges
Dogs and dog fouling
Graffiti
Playing football on the road
Illegal activity

6. Legal Options
Anti-social Behaviour Orders
Other Orders
Injunctions
Possession orders
Example 4: Good Neighbour Agreement for a Multi Tenure Area
Developed with Neighbourhood Safety Team (continued)

7. What you can do to help?
The aim of this agreement is to help and support local people to take action against anti social behaviour and environmental nuisance.

By reading this booklet you have already taken an important step towards taking action to look after your area.

As a resident of [Place] you can support your neighbourhood by living and behaving in a reasonable and responsible way.

By each individual undertaking to report for example, fly topping, abandoned vehicles, missed refuse etc. to the Council for action or notifying the police of illegal activity, you can make a difference.

We would welcome residents of [Place] to show their support by completing and returning the card enclosed with the booklet.

8. Useful contacts
Local Beat Officers
Crimestoppers
Council Services
Borough Council
Neighbourhood Watch
Victim Support
Parks Advice
[Place] Racial Equality Council
The Samaritans
Druglink

NB. This is a summary of a much longer and detailed document.

Contact: Mark Walker
Swindon BC
MWalker@swindon.gov.uk
Setting out desirable forms of behaviour and promoting ‘neighbourliness’

Good Neighbour Agreements can also be used to set out the types of positive behaviour that residents should aspire too. This reflects a view that it is better to promote good behaviour and a sense of community and acknowledge that the majority of tenants and residents are eager to have a quiet and peaceful life. Good Neighbour Agreements that focus only on undesirable behaviour might suggest that all tenants and residents engage in anti-social behaviour and can thus create a potentially stigmatising impression that anti-social behaviour is rife in a particular place. Example 5 shows an agreement of this type.

Example 5: Community Promise - Estate based agreement

The Community promise is designed to help make sure that all residents are committed to making the apartments safe, secure and happy place in which to live. We all have our own ideas of what a perfect neighbourhood would be like and this promise is intended to help ensure these are realised and that residents can live in a stable community. If we all treat each other with respect we can achieve that.

As a member of the [estate] community, my promise is to make sure that my family, my visitors and I will do our bit to help create the stable community and pleasant environment that all residents are signing up to. With this commitment from everyone we can then all live securely and peacefully in our homes free from criminal activity, harassment and un-neighbourly behaviour.

I will be a good neighbour and treat my fellow residents with respect and courtesy at all times.

I want to be proud of my home and neighbourhood and in signing this document commit to playing my part in the success and future of [estate] and all who live there.

(signed by all members of the household over age 14)

Contact: Nick Sedgwick
Leicester HA
Nick.Sedgwick@lha_asra.org.uk
Promoting shared community standards and expectations

Example 6 shows an estate-based agreement that has been developed following extensive community consultation. This agreement, which tenants and all members of the households are invited to sign, sets out clearly the reciprocal rights and responsibilities of tenants and the landlord, states the rights of tenants to have a peaceful and safe place to live and highlights and details how tenants can contribute to and support their community. It also notes positive actions that individuals can take, as well as outlining the importance of tolerance within the community. This is a lengthy and detailed agreement and is set out more fully in the Appendix. Briefly, the agreement covers the following:

Example 6: An Estate-based Good Neighbour Agreement

The aim of the agreement and residents’ rights to a peaceful life.

The landlord’s responsibilities and commitment to dealing with nuisance behaviour:
- to state clearly what is unacceptable behaviour;
- to prevent and tackle nuisance behaviour;
- to respond appropriately and effectively to complaints;

How complaints will be dealt with, including legal action:
- how residents will be informed about the progress of any actions;
- that complaints will be reviewed regularly;

Resident’s responsibilities:
- to respect others and behave in a tolerant and neighbourly way;
- to abide by the tenancy agreement and the law;
- to help ensure that the estate is a good place to live;
- to take responsibility of their own behaviour and that of their children and visitors.

Contact: Anthony Millinship
Lambeth Housing
amillinship@lambeth.gov.uk
Contributing to wider anti-social behaviour strategies and community regeneration initiatives

Whether agreements are intended to reinforce tenancy agreements or promote shared community standards, they are often part of wider Anti-Social Behaviour Strategies involving different agencies, for example: local police, fire service, Education, Social Services, Youth Offending Teams, Safer Neighbourhood Groups, and Anti-Social Behaviour Teams. Many agreements have been put into place following regeneration or refurbishment of estates, or neighbourhoods, such as Example 5. Here the intention is to create a “new culture”, and promote new expectations and patterns of behaviour among tenants and residents. In these circumstances Good Neighbour Agreements are often introduced and used in conjunction with local lettings policies, starter tenancies, and revisions to tenancy agreements. Often other ‘hard’ security measures have also been installed, for example restricted access to blocks of flats or provision of on-site caretakers.

Practice Checklist 1 – Getting Started

If you are thinking about setting up a Good Neighbour Agreement, you should consider the following questions:

- What are you trying to achieve?
- What types of behaviour do you want to address?
- Who are the key players?
- Can you involve other stakeholders?
- How would an agreement fit in with wider ASB strategy?
2. How wide should coverage of Good Neighbour Agreements be?

Good Neighbour Agreements can be used to cover small areas, e.g. particular streets or small estates, large estates or the whole of a landlord’s stock. They are most often used by landlords for their own tenants but some Good Neighbour Agreements are used in mixed tenure areas and have included tenants of other social landlords and/or residents from the owner-occupied and private rented sector. In one area local businesses have also been involved in agreements. In some cases, Good Neighbour Agreements have been piloted in one locality before being rolled out to cover a much wider area.

The area of coverage of any Good Neighbour Agreement depends on local concerns and issues and the views of the landlord and tenants, for example, where problems are very specific and localised then the agreement should reflect this. On the other hand, where concerns and issues are more generalised and widespread then generic agreements covering a wider area may be more appropriate. However, specific local agreements that address local issues are thought to have additional benefits over more generic agreements.

“I think we take a view that it [area where agreement is going to be introduced] does need to be an area with a strong community feel and an identity and an area where there are issues to address. We don’t want to use it too widely as it would lose its impact and becomes just another piece of paper.”

(Housing provider)
3. How are Good Neighbour Agreements developed, promoted and used?

Developing Good Neighbour Agreements

There are two main approaches to setting up Good Neighbour Agreements:

- Top down’ management led approaches.
- Community consultation.

Top down approaches

These types of approaches seem to be used most frequently where the agreement is intended to reinforce a tenancy agreement (as Example 3). The Good Neighbour Agreement is drawn up by a landlord organisation. The content closely mirrors the tenancy agreement, although it may be helpful to simplify the language for the purposes of clarity. Although tenants’ representatives are often involved, and comment on the proposed agreement, there does not appear to be much evidence of extensive tenant or resident consultation. These agreements are often stock-wide agreements. New tenants sign the good neighbour agreement when they sign their tenancy agreement, but without extensive community involvement it can be difficult to get existing tenants to sign.

Community consultation

Some agreements cover small groups of tenants or residents, perhaps just people living on one or two streets, or on a small estate. Where the agreement is intended to be locally focused, and to reflect community concerns, it is considered important to consult with local tenants and residents regarding their views on setting up an agreement.

“We’ve got these set principles by which people should abide by if they live on the estate. You try and give the representatives and tenants themselves the responsibility of choosing those principles, so they have ownership of scheme so rather than it’s just given to them. The way we looked at it was that we already had the tenancy agreement, sort of landlord/tenant contract thing, this was more to try and break down the barriers between tenants and get them thinking along the same lines and respecting each other and points of view.”

(Housing provider).
Many landlords use their existing Tenants’ Forums or Panels as a starting point for developing a Good Neighbour Agreement. Tenants’ groups can be asked whether or not they support the idea, and what they think the agreement should contain. Tenant representatives can take the idea forward to local meetings, and if there is sufficient support, further consultation can take place. Examples 7 and 8 provide some of the steps taken in developing a Good Neighbour Agreement with the community.

Example 7: Developing an estate based agreement

- Crime Reduction Team (CRT) members always attend Tenants’ Group Meetings.
- Crime Reduction Team suggests the idea of an agreement to Tenants’ Group.
- Tenants Group takes the idea back to tenants for discussion.
- Letter sent to all tenants inviting them to comment on the idea and attend open meetings.
- Open meetings for all tenants to take the idea forward and identify particular concerns.
- Content of agreement is developed by the community to reflect community concerns.
- Launch of agreement at a community party.

Example 8: Setting up a street-based agreement

- Take opportunity to introduce an agreement if there are a number of requests from a particular street or area for changes or improvements, for example, installing alley gates, or complaints about anti-social behaviour.
- Send leaflets and letters to everyone in the area to tell them about requests and/or complaints and ask everyone for their views.
- Set up meeting with local residents to discuss their concerns and what should be done to bring about changes.
- Agree with local tenants or residents that the landlord or local authority will do certain things – if tenants or residents agree to ensure that the improvements are maintained, and sign up to a Good Neighbour Agreement.
Some Good Neighbour Agreements seek to include children and young people by inviting them to sign the general agreement. The following is an example of an agreement which is specifically concerned with the behaviour of children and young people (Example 9). It seeks to involve young people and to promote responsibility and tolerance among all residents.

**Example 9: Foxhills Road Neighbourhood Agreement**

This is an agreement between residents, including young people, in Foxhills Road that they should keep to the following rules of behaviour and conduct.

In signing this agreement there is no implication or admission that any individual has committed any of these actions.

**Adults without children**

**Respect young people**

Not to swear or use any other form of verbal abuse against other residents, especially young people

Be tolerant and understanding about children’s need to play near to home

Not to complain unnecessarily about young people’s activities

Return balls when asked by child/children

Ensure that visitors and relatives conduct themselves in accordance with this agreement

**Parents**

**Respect other residents**

Not to swear or use any other form of verbal abuse in the street against other residents

Be tolerant and understanding of other residents’ need for periods of peace and quiet

Not to encourage young people to harass or intimidate other residents

Possibly look at providing soft balls for children to play in the street

To establish whether parents can organise to take groups of children to nearby open spaces to play
Agreements that the research identified as being aimed at children were exclusively based upon rewards or incentives, with outings and sports activities given in return for the children’s own community or neighbourhood involvement as in Example 10.

Example 9: Foxhills Road Neighbourhood Agreement *(continued)*

**Young People**

Respect older residents

Not to swear or use any other form of verbal abuse toward other residents

Be tolerant and understanding of other residents’ need for periods of peace and quiet

Not to enter adults’ gardens without politely asking permission

Use soft balls in the street

Not to damage cars, hedges, fences etc.

I,........................................................................................agree that

from...........................................................................

I will keep to the above code of conduct.

Contact: owen.mcmillan@dudley.gov.uk
Example 10: An incentive scheme aimed at young people

Aims

- Maintain high expectations of young people
- Recognise positive potential in all individuals
- Recognise diversity in ability
- Encourage affirmation of individuals and hope for communities
- Maintain commitment and maximum impact and minimum resources
- Work with small groups and simple ideas.

Content

To assist housing associations, local authorities and other community groups like faith communities to work with children to overcome unmet needs in their life by providing incentives to improve life skills and a sense of serving the community. Schemes vary throughout the Network but are based upon young people between ages 11-18 earning points by performing work in the community such as gardening projects. These points can be exchanged for trips out by the young people involved.

Contact: Kate King
Dreamscheme,
K.King@can-online.org.uk
Promoting Good Neighbour Agreements and engaging tenants and residents

Whichever approach was adopted in developing Good Neighbour Agreements (either top down or through community consultation) it was clearly important to promote the agreements once they were set up, to make local residents aware of the agreement, and to encourage tenants and residents to get involved. Landlords and other stakeholders employed a variety of strategies to promote agreements including:

- Launch parties or celebrations for local residents.
- Using local landlord forums to promote shared agreements.
- Using local tenants and residents’ forums to promote agreements.
- Features in tenants’ and residents’ newsletters.
- Local media coverage.

Practice Checklist 2 – When developing agreements it is important to:

- Listen to local concerns. Tenants and residents may not always share the same concerns as landlord organisations.
- Be realistic about what can be achieved.
- Be clear about what the landlord/agencies can do.
- Set out what is unacceptable behaviour – taking account of the views of the community.
- Set out what is desirable or positive behaviour.
- Be clear with tenants and residents about actions that can be taken to combat particular behaviours.
- Be clear about how complaints can be made and where the responsibility lies – for example with the landlord, police, local authority, or residents and tenants.
- Demonstrate landlord or local authority’s commitment to the process by carrying out improvements or agreed actions.
- Set out how residents and tenants can support the agreement.
- Set out how complaints will be dealt with and how agencies will respond to residents’ complaints or reports of incidents.
- Leaflets produced by landlord promoting agreements.
- Individual visits by housing officers or members of tenants’ and residents’ forums to introduce and explain the agreement.
- Involving support workers to help vulnerable people understand and adhere to agreements.
- Introducing the agreements during routine visits to the housing office (e.g. to pay rent).
- Incentive and reward schemes.
- Linking agreements to improvements e.g. refurbishment or clean up campaigns.
- Signing new tenants and residents up to the agreements.

The following example (11) is of a leaflet used to promote a Good Neighbour Agreement in a mixed tenure new build estate delivered by a partnership of the local authority, housing association and house builder.

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**Example 11: Leaflet Promoting Good Community Code to New Tenants and Residents**

**Mandale Park Regeneration Scheme**

Mandale Park is a regeneration scheme which is being delivered by Stockton Council in Partnership with Haslam Homes, Barratt Homes and Nomad Housing Group. The local community will benefit from the construction of high quality homes for private sale, rent and shared ownership.

As a new resident of Mandale Park the Partnership would like to wish you every success in your new home.

The partnership supports all residents of the estate in the promotion of a positive, caring and safe environment in which to live. It hopes that all residents will sign up to the Good Community Code ensuring that no members of your household or visitors to your property cause harassment, alarm or distress to others and that you will contribute to a sense of community spirit that values diversity and promotes the well-being of others.

Contact: Marilyn.Davies@stockton.gov.uk
The following example (12) is a Good Neighbour Agreement which combines a tenant charter and a rewards scheme which provides an incentive for tenants to sign up.

**Example 12: Rewards and Tenant Charter Scheme**

**Aim of the Scheme**
Primarily as a thank you to tenants for continuing to be valued customers.

**Conditions**
Tenants must have 6 weeks clear rent account or stick to arrears repayment agreement for 12 weeks.

Tenants have to sign the Residents' Charter to be a member.

**Rewards and incentives**
Competitions to win week long holidays in RSL owned holiday home in Bournemouth.

Access to weekend breaks in winter in holiday cottage.

‘Countdown’ discount card.

There are no preferential repairs at this stage but there are plans to introduce these.

**Content of Charter**
Tenants are asked to agree that:

All residents should enjoy a good quality of life and respect their neighbours.

All residents will respect their own property and keep their garden and home in reasonable condition.

All residents should not do anything to damage their neighbours’ property.

All residents will exercise responsibility for their children and visitors.

Residents will exercise respect and support for minority groups within the community.

All residents will respect communal areas and facilities in the community.

All residents will take responsibility for the actions of their pets in the community.

Drug dealing, crime and prostitution will not be tolerated in this community.

**Signed :**
**Name :**
**Date :**

Elmbridge HT
Contact: Jane Searle
JSearl@ElmbridgeHousing.org.uk
It is important to invest some time and resources into the design and production of agreements and associated literature. Professionally produced, accessible and attractive documents were thought to help present the agreement as something both valued and taken seriously by the landlord.

Good Neighbour Agreements are usually voluntary agreements and this is seen as one of their strengths because tenants and residents choose to become involved. The agreements do not contain any provisions for enforcement, although some landlords require a new tenant to sign up before giving them a tenancy and it would be possible to make compliance with the GNA a condition of the tenancy agreement. In practice, behaviour which breaches the GNA will, in many cases be a breach of the tenancy agreement so that landlords can take appropriate action. This might include seeking support for individuals and/or families or, where necessary, enforcement action. Similarly, if the behaviour constitutes a criminal offence the offender can be prosecuted.

While signing is often a purely symbolic gesture it is thought to add weight to the agreement and to demonstrate the tenant’s commitment to being a good neighbour.

“Signing is a powerful thing, putting someone’s name to it or not. There is something quite strong in that.”

(Housing provider)

Although landlords aspire to getting all their tenants to sign a GNA, this was not always realistic or practical, especially when the agreement covered a large area and many properties. In some cases GNAs are signed by tenant and resident representatives on behalf of existing residents. In some cases landlords rely on the support of tenant groups to promote the scheme amongst their neighbours. In some areas existing and new tenants were keen to sign up to the agreement because they were aware that their neighbours had done so and they wanted to present themselves as good neighbours. Some respondents felt that as long as there was general support for the agreement among existing residents then it was less important that every household signed up to, or actively demonstrated their willingness to abide by, GNAs. Some landlords felt that an unwillingness to sign up to agreements might indicate a problem. In these cases landlords sometimes chose to investigate the background of households unable, or unwilling, to sign up to GNAs, and sought to identify any previous history of anti-social behaviour and/or unmet support needs that might have to be addressed.

How do Good Neighbour Agreements work?

Good Neighbour Agreements are always part of a wider anti-social behaviour strategy and they cannot work in isolation. Although Good Neighbour Agreements are primarily intended to be a preventative tool, they – like many other interventions – work as part of a multi-pronged approach to anti-social behaviour which includes prevention, early intervention and enforcement.
Good Neighbour Agreements are thought to work because:

- They make clear what is considered to be unacceptable behaviour.
- They promote positive behaviour which appeals to residents and tenants.
- They strengthen a community’s desire and ability to deal with nuisance and anti-social behaviour.
- They set realistic aims and objectives about what they can achieve and how this can be done.
- They can trigger support where people are having problems adhering to the agreement.
- They can be backed up with other measures ranging from informal warnings to enforcement procedures.

Where Good Neighbour Agreements are voluntary, they clearly have no legal status but if individuals are breaking the terms of their tenancy agreement then landlords can take appropriate action (see above). This might include seeking support for individuals and/or families or, where necessary, enforcement action. Similarly, if the behaviour is criminal then legal action can be taken.

**Practice Checklist 3 – Promoting and Operating a Good Neighbour Scheme**

- How will you encourage tenants/residents to join the scheme?
- What will happen if tenants/residents decline to join the scheme?
- How will you monitor if tenants/residents are sticking to the agreement?
- What will happen if people break the terms of the agreement?
- What resources are in place to support vulnerable people to understand and adhere to the agreement?
- Have you made it available in languages and formats appropriate for other groups, such as minority ethnic groups and visually impaired people, for example.
4. How are Good Neighbour Agreements monitored and evaluated?

Good Neighbour Agreements are a developing type of practice. There is no standard toolbox of measures that can be used to indicate whether they are successful or not. It is also difficult to identify precisely the difference that Good Neighbour Agreements make because, like most anti-social behaviour tools, they are used in conjunction with a range of other measures. It should also be noted that it is easier to monitor and evaluate very specific local agreements where improvements are more obvious, but more difficult to monitor agreements that are generic, or cover a wider resident or tenant group. Nevertheless, respondents suggested a number of different ways to monitor the effectiveness of agreements, for example:

- Encouraging tenants and residents to report incidents of anti-social behaviour.
- Monitoring number of complaints about incidents of anti-social behaviour over time to identify any changes in numbers of reported incidents or types of incidents.
- Monitoring the number of voids, and number of applications for housing in a particular area to identify any changes in demand for properties.
- Undertaking resident/tenant surveys to measure whether people’s perceptions of crime and neighbourhood safety, have improved over time.
- Using Community Safety Officers, Neighbourhood Wardens, and estate caretakers, and sometimes tenants or residents representatives to report incidents of anti-social behaviour.
- Collating data about incidents of anti-social behaviour to identify patterns and timing of incidents to allow a co-ordinated approach to tackling ‘black-spots’.
- Sharing information about patterns of anti-social behaviour with other agencies to facilitate the development of inter-agency strategies and approaches to combating anti-social behaviour.
Practice checklist 4 – Monitoring and evaluation

- What do you think will change as a consequence of the agreement being in place?
- How will you measure these changes?
- Will you collect data specifically for measuring these changes?
- Will you share your data with other agencies?
- What routinely collected data might be helpful?
- How will you collect this?
- How will you provide feedback to residents and how often?
- How often will you revisit/review the GNA?
- If you are to going to develop another scheme, what would you do differently?
5. What are the benefits and challenges of Good Neighbour Agreements?

Good Neighbour Agreements are relatively new interventions and there is a lack of hard evidence about their impact. However, landlords operating agreements believed that there had been positive changes and benefits for the landlord, local residents, businesses and the community.

“It’s helping us to sell estates, people say it is really good, especially the second estate [where the agreement was introduced] as that was the one that had a really bad reputation.”

(Housing provider)

The actual process of negotiating a Good Neighbour Agreement with tenants or residents is thought to be of great value in itself. It empowers communities to develop their own standards and promote their expectations of behaviour in the place where they live.

“It has completely changed the area...we’ve empowered them [residents] and they’re really proud of the area now.”

(Housing provider)

“For sure, it has met expectations, the problems the estate had haven’t returned.”

(Housing provider)

Similarly the process of setting up a Good Neighbour Agreement is thought to encourage people to come together, and can help develop a greater sense of community, which can then lead to other positive community initiatives. A Good Neighbour Agreement can also encourage greater communication between landlords and their tenants, and can create a better understanding of their mutual rights and responsibilities.

Organisations may have different priorities from those of resident and tenant groups and different views on how their objectives might be achieved. For example, tenants and residents often want quick and tough action to be taken against the perpetrators of anti-social behaviour. In some cases such actions will be justified and tenants and residents have a right to expect the landlord and other agencies to act. However, Good Neighbour Agreements and the process of development of these agreements can provide opportunities to involve tenants in the development of alternative non-enforcement approaches, where appropriate, which can help to nip problems in the bud. They can also be a means to achieve greater tolerance and understanding.
What are the benefits and challenges of Good Neighbour Agreements?

“A lot of the principle for people living on estates is looking out for the vulnerable, the elderly, not complaining about their lifestyles, unless it is causing a nuisance, it is about respecting their problems and trying to help them.”

(Housing provider)

A Good Neighbour Agreement that sets out a landlord’s responsibilities regarding anti-social behaviour, for example, cleaning graffiti, responding to complaints, taking action against nuisance behaviours can be a way of making landlords accountable to their tenants. This in turn can help increase tenants’ and residents’ confidence to become involved with agreements and work together to tackle anti-social behaviour.

“Tenants had approached the council because they were at their wits end. First of all, we closed crack houses, then we did repairs to the security doors and then the residents were prepared to sit down and listen because until they saw that we were willing to do something to help,.....then we throw that back at them and said, ‘How much do you care about your estate? Let’s see you work with one another, let’s see you being proud of your estate’, and they took up the challenge.”

(Housing provider)

The introduction of Good Neighbour Agreements can also provide an opportunity to identify tenants with unmet support needs, for example at the start of a tenancy.

“Regarding marginal or vulnerable tenants....we’ve had one or two people who said ‘I’m happy to sign up for it but I’ve got these issues in my life and I’m getting support to help me deal with it’, but it’s helped people tell us about problems and pick up support agencies that we haven’t always known about.”

(Housing provider)

Good Neighbour Agreements can be used across tenures. Although it can be difficult to address anti-social behaviour in owner-occupied areas, and there are relatively few examples of multi-tenure Good Neighbour Agreements, such agreements have been developed (see examples 4 and 9). For example, agreements have been developed in two Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder Areas where housing developers, social landlords and private landlords have worked in partnership to promote agreements.

Challenges

There are a number of challenges to setting up and operating Good Neighbour Agreements. Issues that should be considered and how these might be addressed are discussed below.

Community consultation and engagement is seen to be one of the major benefits of the process of developing a Good Neighbour Agreement. However, this is not always easy and it can be a slow process. It can take time and effort to gain the trust

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(see http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1155621)
and confidence of tenants and residents and to help them understand and have faith in Good Neighbour Agreements. It may also take staff time if they will be expected, alongside active tenants association members, to conduct door-knocking exercises to sign up existing tenants. However, appropriate targeting of agreements will ensure efficient use of staff resources.

One way in which landlords can seek to gain confidence and engage tenants and residents is by demonstrating their commitment by taking action prior to the introduction of agreements. As noted above, this might include linking the agreement to improvements on estates, clean up campaigns or, for example, the installation of security measures such as alley gates. In some cases enforcement action is necessary in order to reassure tenants and residents that the landlord is serious about improving the area.

“If you have an estate with a lot of problems the tenants want to see action, they want them [nuisance tenants] out and you have to do that first, get their confidence, get them on your side, then they are more likely to sign something like this, otherwise they’ll think, ‘Why should I do that? That’s your job’.”

(Housing provider)

Agreements, particularly agreements that are developed by local communities, will need to be revised periodically to reflect changes in the community, changing tenant concerns and local issues. This is important if the agreement is to continue to be appropriate to local needs and be perceived as valuable and meaningful.

One major challenge raised by respondents was the inclusion of people with support needs in Good Neighbour Agreements. There were two main concerns:

- That people with support needs might not understand the terms of the agreement.
- That some people might behave in a manner perceived as anti-social because of, for example, a mental health problem, a personality disorder or substance misuse problem.

In some areas Support Workers attached to Anti-Social Behaviour Teams work with people who are at risk of losing their tenancy because of problematic behaviours.

It is important that support workers know what is expected of their clients and clients understand the Good Neighbour Agreement and know where to go to seek help. Good Neighbour Agreements can also be used to promote tolerance and understanding of people who exhibit behaviours that might be perceived as anti-social or strange.

3 Work has been commissioned to examine how housing practitioners can work with both victims, witnesses and perpetrators of anti-social behaviour and racial harassment with support needs. The guidance will be disseminated on the Home Office Together We Can website (see http://communities.homeoffice.gov.uk/civil/together-we-can/ and www.raceactionnet.co.uk
Further Information

Department of Communities and Local Government  www.communities.gov.uk
Home Office  www.homeoffice.gov.uk/
Respect  www.respect.gov.uk
Together  www.together.gov.uk
Social Landlords Crime and Nuisance Group  www.slcng.org.uk
Chartered Institute of Housing  www.cih.org
Housemark  www.housemark.co.uk
Housing Quality Network  www.hqnetwork.org.uk
Example 6:
Good Neighbour Declaration
Estate-based Good Neighbour Agreement

Aims
“Being a good neighbour- your right to a quiet life. [Estate] is a good place to live, but the actions of a selfish minority can often spoil life for everyone. We will make a united stand against anyone who does not respect their neighbours, their environment, their homes or the law. This community will succeed if we all work together”

The Landlord’s Responsibilities
As the landlord we will:

• Do all we can to prevent problems from happening in the first place.

• State clearly what is and what is not reasonable behaviour to anyone who wants to move to the estate.

• Not tolerate crime, nuisance, or anti-social behaviour.

• Not tolerate harassment of any kind.

• Not tolerate wilful damage, neglect, or vandalism anywhere on the estate.

• Meet our legal responsibilities set out in every tenancy agreement.

• Help you, the residents, keep to the tenancy conditions so homes and gardens are well cared for and other rules are followed.

• Work with each other and with the police and take whatever action is necessary against rule-breakers. This may include court orders or eviction.

• Deal with reports sensitively, appropriately and as confidentially as possible.

• Take all complaints of anti-social behaviour seriously and deal with them in the best way possible.

• Help and encourage you, as residents, to sort out problems between yourselves.

• Check regularly to make sure that complaints are being handled quickly and effectively.

• Deal with the whole problem, not part of it. For example, sometimes entire families can cause nuisance. We will do this by working with other agencies like the police, social services, and schools.
Example 6:
Good Neighbour Declaration
Estate-based Good Neighbour Agreement (continued)

• Make sure we all know what is going on. We will keep records of any complaints and problems, including things like untidy gardens and vandalism.

• Review complaints regularly. Situations change and problems are resolved. We will review all current complaint reports at least every three months. We will contact the complainant to ask if we can still help, or if the problem has been resolved. This is part of our commitment to good customer care.

How we will deal with your nuisance complaints
We, the landlord, will respond to neighbour disputes within five working days. If there is serious crime or anti-social behaviour we will act more quickly as necessary.

When you make a report to us your housing officer will write down the details with you. In this way, every case will have a ‘case file’.

As the landlord we will
• Write down what you tell us.

• Ask you to keep a written record of any further disruption in an ‘incident diary’.

• Agree and action plan with you about what needs to happen next and give you a copy to keep. The action plan may include actions for you, the resident. For example, we may agree that you will speak to the parents, contact the police or keep a diary.

• Make sure that you are clear about what action we will take next, and that you agree to this action.

• Take varying levels of action on a case-to-case basis. What will not vary is our commitment to help resolve the situation.

• Help you sort out things like noise, car parking disputes or problems with children.

• Help all sides sort out a problem, by talking to each other or by using an independent mediation service. This free service offers a trained volunteer who talks to both sides to agree a settlement. Contact us if you wish to be considered for referral.

• Interview everyone who has a complaint made against them, involving the resident or the parent where appropriate. We may require further evidence by talking to the police and neighbours.
Example 6: Good Neighbour Declaration
Estate-based Good Neighbour Agreement (continued)

- Take appropriate action, using the facts, ranging from a straightforward agreement that the problem will stop, a warning, or preparation for legal action. Serious cases will get priority.

- Contact you on a regular basis to update you on progress made. We also ask that you keep us informed of any further progress or developments.

- Encourage you to involve the police wherever necessary.

- Support anyone who feels threatened. Please feel free to talk to us about your fears, and we will do all that we can to help.

Legal Action

- We will not hesitate to use all the legal powers available to us. We are committed to supporting anyone who feels threatened or worried about the legal process.

- Taking someone to court, or taking his or her home away is a serious issue. The courts will always require evidence and will often require statements and witnesses.

- We will make sure that you have clear and realistic expectations of when legal action is appropriate; what type of legal action we should ask the court for; what this will involve for the complainant; and how long this is likely to take.

- We have clearly set out our commitment as the landlord in dealing with complaints and disputes. However, you, as residents, also have responsibilities, which are equally as important.

Residents Responsibilities

As residents we agree to

- Respect other people whatever their age, background or lifestyle. We must all tolerate and respect different lifestyles and be reasonable about how our lifestyle affects others. Everyone has an equal right to live peacefully.

- Behave well to each other inside and outside the home.

- Not break the tenancy conditions or the law.

- Help us make sure the [estate] stays a good place to live.

- Take responsibility for our own behaviour and that of our children, friends and visitors.

- Show tolerance and reasonableness.
Example 6:
Good Neighbour Declaration
Estate-based Good Neighbour Agreement (continued)

- Let children play. We must be tolerant and reasonable before complaining. If children harass or disturb others then complaints are justified. In this case, parents must be reasonable in their response.

- Do not drop litter, dump rubbish or allow properties to be vandalised with graffiti.

- Shut the lift doors always to ensure operation of the lift.

- Conduct of contractors should be reported.

I want to be a good neighbour
As a resident of [estate], I agree that looking after this estate is not just the landlord’s responsibility; what I do is also vital.

I want to live in an area which is clean, tidy, and safe, and where neighbours treat each other well.

I believe that this Good Neighbour Declaration sets the standards for both existing and new residents, as it lists:

- What we see as reasonable.

- What we will not tolerate.

This declaration will help us to:

- Have a sense of community spirit.

- Feel good about living on {estate}.

It focuses on five key issues:

- How we conduct ourselves.

- Crime prevention and community safety.

- Children, elderly and vulnerable in the community.

- Helping each other.

- Looking after the environment.
**Example 6:**
**Good Neighbour Declaration**
**Estate-based Good Neighbour Agreement (continued)**

This declaration is all about being good neighbours on [estate]. It encourages us as residents to talk to each other to sort problems out.

I agree with the [estate] Community Declaration and will sign it. If every resident signs the declaration, to say that they agree, that’s a massive commitment by us as the residents of [estate], and it strengthens the future of the estate.

**So what do I do now?**
Read the declaration over the page.

Sign up to the declaration.

**What we (the landlord) will do then**
We will send you a framed certificate.

**Remember** that this is your declaration, it is important for you and the future of [estate].

**Be proud, join us, and shape the future of [estate]**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>{estate} Community Declaration</strong></th>
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**Every member of your household can sign this declaration**

- will use reasonable language with my neighbours, other residents and visitors.

- I will not engage in behaviour that disturbs or offends my neighbours or other residents.

- I will make sure that my visitors do not damage the property of other residents or areas of this estate.

- I will not play loud music late at night, or at other times to the annoyance of my neighbours or other residents.

**Crime in the community**

- I will watch out for other people’s property and keep a look out generally to help make this estate a safe place to live.

- I will report all incidents of vandalism and graffiti that I see to the relevant people.

- I will ensure that security doors and gates are kept shut at all times.
Example 6:  
**Good Neighbour Declaration**  
Estate-based Good Neighbour Agreement (*continued*)

**Children, elderly and vulnerable in the community**
- Children shall show respect and be shown respect.
- If I see any child being bullied or abused I will not ignore it.
- I will ensure that my activities do not cause problems for others including children.
- I will look out for elderly and vulnerable neighbours and if I am concerned, I will contact the appropriate authorities.

**Helping the community**
- I will get along with my neighbours.
- I will keep the welfare of everyone on the estate in mind.
- I recognise that our housing staff and the police cannot do anything about problems that they do not know about. I will report issues of crime and anti-social behaviour that I have or I see to the relevant people.
- I want the best for [estate] in terms of being a good place to live for people of all ages.
- I will do as much as I am able to help initiatives taken on behalf of [estate] to be successful.

**Looking after the environment**
- I will not leave my rubbish anywhere other than in the bins provided. I will make sure that my rubbish is properly bagged and put in the refuse chambers.
- I will make sure that my balcony is clean, tidy and free from household clutter. I will make sure that my door and windows are also kept clean so that visitors to our estate can see that we care about where we live.
- I will not, or let any of my visitors, act in anyway that would harm the environment of our estate.
- I will follow the regulations on parking, as it is to the benefit of all residents and visitors to our estate.
Example 6:
Good Neighbour Declaration
Estate-based Good Neighbour Agreement (continued)

- I will keep my dog under control at all times. I will clean up after my dog. I will not let my dog bark to the annoyance of other residents.

- I will respect works done by residents in the green and planted area.

[estate] Community Declaration

The [estate] Good Neighbour Declaration sets the standards that we have agreed to as a community.

I agree with these standards and will abide by them.

Name

Signature

Date

(Please return to local housing office)

Be Proud, join us to shape the future of [estate]

4 easy steps
to a better community spirit [estate]

Let's

- Be proud of our homes.
- Help look after the appearance of the estate and surroundings.
- Show consideration to our neighbours.
- Develop a community spirit by starting with our own neighbours.

Contact: Anthony Millinship
Lambeth Housing
amillinship@lambeth.gov.uk