

Harassment Policy

1	Statement of intent
1.1	Stevenage Homes Limited's (SHL) key strategic objective is to develop communities people are proud of, be inclusive and work together with integrity and respect. SHL intends to work with its partners to tackle the causes of all forms of harassment.
2	Policy Statement
2.1	This policy covers SHL's approach to dealing with incidents and the causes of racial harassment, hate crimes or homophobic harassment and will be handled in the manner described in this policy.
2.2	SHL values racial equality and social justice and absolutely condemns all forms of harassment and intimidation. SHL recognises the effects of harassment on the victim's quality of life and will make use of the available resources to eliminate it. SHL will deal with harassment seriously and as a priority, endeavour to ensure tenants are not subjected to harassment and work towards developing the confidence of all sections of the community.
3	Implementation
3.1	<p>Definition of Harassment</p> <p>A person subjects another to harassment where he or she engages in unwanted and unwarranted conduct which has the purpose or effect of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • violating that other's dignity, or • creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that other. <p>Harassment may involve repeated forms of unwanted and unwarranted behaviour, but a one-off incident can also amount to harassment. Acts of harassment may be unlawful. Harassment on grounds of sex, race, religion, disability, sexual orientation or age may amount to unlawful discrimination. Harassment may also breach other legislation and may in some circumstances be a criminal offence e.g. under the provisions of the Protection from Harassment Act 1997.</p>
3.2	Definition of Racial Harassment

<p>3.3</p> <p>3.4</p> <p>3.5</p> <p>3.6</p>	<p>SHL has adopted the following definitions from the Macpherson Inquiry whereby: “A racist incident is any incident that is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person”.</p> <p>Definition of Hate Crime</p> <p>Crime in which the victim was intentionally selected because of the victims' actual or perceived race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or disability.</p> <p>Definition of Harassment due to sexual orientation</p> <p>Harassment due to sexual orientation is defined as behaviour that is hostile towards gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender people. The effect is to offend, to humiliate or to cause injury to the dignity or physical or psychological integrity of a person or a group of people, or to subject a person or a group of people to a detrimental environment, or to detrimental working or living or educational conditions, or to compromise the rights of the person or the people.</p> <p>Victim centred approach and recording of incidents</p> <p>In adopting a victim-centred approach to reports of harassment, SHL will ensure that all incidents are investigated urgently and that support is offered to any individual who is genuinely under threat. After full investigation, it may be determined that the harassment is not racially motivated, a hate crime or homophobic, the incident will be recorded appropriately. To assess the effectiveness of this approach, monitoring information will be kept on the number of incidents reported, the number that were agreed as racial, hate or homophobic following investigation and details of further action taken in relation to these incidents.</p> <p>Objectives</p> <p>In implementing the above policy, SHL’s overall objectives are to;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure that incidents are reported, accurately recorded and monitored • take appropriate legal action against perpetrators • prevent further harassment and ensure that actual or potential perpetrators are aware of the consequences of harassment • take a victim centred approach when dealing with cases of harassment • encourage a multi-agency approach to casework • ensure that victims and witnesses are; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Believed and taken seriously ➢ Dealt with sympathetically ➢ Supported and advised appropriately, particularly vulnerable people
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Kept informed ➤ Helped to find an effective solution to stop the harassment ➤ Empowered <p>3.7 Working in partnership. SHL works in partnership with the wider community through a number of public, private and voluntary bodies to tackle harassment and provide swift enforcement. These include Stevenage Borough Council, The Stevenage Partnership, Stevenage Community Safety Partnership, the ‘Virtual’ ASB Team, Police and Police Community Support Officers, North Herts and Stevenage Hate Crime Group.</p> <p>3.8 Protection of staff. Protection of staff is of paramount importance to SHL and we believe that our employees should be able to carry out their responsibilities without fear or intimidation or abuse from others. It is for this reason that any risk to staff from implementation of SHL policies and procedures should be assessed and managed, especially when dealing with emotive and potentially dangerous incidents requiring investigation.</p> <p>3.9 Legislation and best practice. SHL works through the legal framework as set out in legislation to tackle harassment. SHL is mindful of its obligations and responsibilities when dealing with harassment incidents and works proactively to review operating procedures and strategies in light of best practice.</p>
<p>4</p>	<p>Responsibility</p>
<p>4.1</p> <p>4.2</p> <p>4.3</p> <p>4.4</p> <p>4.5</p>	<p>SHL Board. The SHL Board provides the strategic lead in setting the policy and direction of how SHL deal with harassment. The Board agrees the strategy and policy and monitors performance.</p> <p>Chief Executive Officer. Ultimate responsibility for tackling harassment rests with the Chief Executive Officer.</p> <p>Organisational responsibility. It is a corporate responsibility of all staff, Board Members, agents and contractors to report and assist in tackling harassment.</p> <p>The Director of Housing Management. Has overall responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of this policy and for links with and proactive approaches with external partners and organisations. The Director also has responsibility for ensuring the annual plans and reviews of dealing with harassment are completed every year to ensure the service remains responsive to customer needs and best practice.</p> <p>The Tenancy Services Manager. Has responsibility for ensuring that staff within their team are aware of this harassment policy and the associated</p>

	<p>procedure and how SHL handle such cases.</p> <p>4.6 The Tenancy Enforcement Officer. Are responsible for managing harassment cases and are responsible for leading and coordinating enforcement action and resolving complainants' issues. The Tenancy Enforcement Officers also works with partner organisations to share information and work on complex multi-agency cases.</p> <p>4.8 Tenancy Assistant (ASB). Tenancy Assistant (ASB) records all harassment activity by type and location to provide statistics for case monitoring and formulation of action plans, targets and regeneration and investment decisions.</p>
5	Consultation
5.1	Involving, empowering and reassuring residents is key to SHL's policy on harassment. SHL involves residents in setting its objectives through the established tenant fora and through regular consultation with residents.
5.2	SHL will publicise high profile cases, campaigns and activities related to tackling harassment, through the local media and our own publications. SHL will also publicise enforcement tools available and means of reporting harassment so that residents know how to tackle problems and feel confident that action can be taken.
5.3	SHL works with residents with diverse needs and will ensure that no resident is unduly excluded from involvement, advice and information. Information is provided in a range of languages and formats, at accessible locations, available on request and displayed on SHL's website. SHL will work with residents who are experiencing racial harassment in a way that best suits their needs.
6	Review
6.1	The Director of Housing Management is responsible for the implementation of this policy and review in line with the corporate review process which is scheduled for formal review as part of the corporate review process.
6.2	SHL will review its policy regularly in light of changes to legislation, regulatory guidance, best practice and customer and partner feedback. SHL will complete an annual diagnostic check to ensure the policy and procedure continues to reflect principles of best practice.

7	Delegated Authorities
7.1	Overall responsibility rests with the SHL Board and the Delivery and Implementation Committee (D&I) is the responsible committee.
7.2	Delegation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Formulation and monitoring of policy and procedures: D&I ➤ Amendments to policy: D&I ➤ Implementation of policy: Director of Housing Management ➤ Monitoring of implementation: Director of Housing Management subject to 6 monthly monitoring by D&I
7.3	As this is a customer facing policy, it will be agreed by Stevenage Borough Council.
8	Associated Documents
8.1	Internal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anti Social Behaviour Statement of Procedure • Summary of ASB Policy and Procedure for residents • Domestic violence policy and procedure • Customer Service standards for ASB, harassment • Equality and Diversity Strategy • The tenancy agreement
8.2	External: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Race Relations Act 1976 • Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 • The Housing Act 1985 & 1996 • Public Order Act 1986 • Malicious Communications Act 1988 • Protection from Harassment Act 1997 • The Human Rights Act 1998 • Crime & Disorder Act 1998 • Commission for Racial Equality – tackling Racial Harassment. Code of practice for social landlords