

HOUSING OMBUDSMAN:

Spotlight on Noise Complaints - Time to be Heard

Self-Assessment Form: Accent Housing

This self-assessment has been completed by Robert Bloom, Director of Housing Services.



We meet the requirement



We do not meet the requirement

The icons below are used to show where we meet or do not meet the Housing Ombudsman's recommendations.

	Requirement	Comply?	Comments	Comments	Who?	When?
Decent Homes						
1	The Decent Homes standard should be revised to fully reflect the causes that can result in residents experiencing noise nuisance. By focusing exclusively on external noise, and primarily noise from vehicles or factories, it does not reflect modern living for most residents		We are compliant with the current Decent Homes Standard and any Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) noise hazards. We ensure that noise transference is considered when replacing kitchen and bathroom flooring within flats. The Accent voids standard specifies requirements for 1st floor flats and above to minimise noise transference.			
Net Zero						
2	Landlords should consider their net zero plans for insulation to ensure that the thermal insulation activity planned will also provide noise insulation and will not make any existing noise transference issues worse		Planned Works Considerate contractor scheme for contractors to start on site including timings. Reboarding plaster work is higher grade to minimise noise. Extractor fans are considered to minimise noise. Noise transference is considered in any retrofit upgrade works. Generally insulation will improve the noise transference elements, so consideration will be given if/when mechanical heating or ventilation is installed with internal ducting and how this will impact noise. Retrofit projects are carried out to strict PAS 2035 standards.			

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Net Zero						
2			New Build We follow the guidance in the Building Regulations 2010 Approved Document E 'Resistance to Passage of Sound'. This covers protection of sound from other parts of the building and other buildings, protection against sound within a dwelling and reverberation in the common internal parts of buildings such as flats. Voids and Repairs Any properties at EPC D or below rating are referred to the Sustainability Team to upgrade insulation.			
Void Standard						
3	Landlords should update their void standard to ensure that: - carpets are not removed unless they are in a poor state of repair - hard flooring is removed when there have been reports of noise linked to the property - properties have adequate insulation from transference noise and; - anti-vibration mats are fitted into the washing machine space as standard. If landlords assess the condition of the carpets as good, they should ask the prospective tenant if they wish to keep them and if so, to sign a liability waiver		Current practice: - Carpets are left at void and fitted to bedrooms if none present. - Hard flooring is removed in during void works at the request of Housing Partner and/or surveyor. - Our properties meet the noise insulation standards from the period they were built. - Anti-vibration mats are not currently part of the void specification but will be considered for future voids.			

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Good Neighbourhood Management Policy						
4	Landlords should have a proactive good neighbourhood management policy, distinct to the ASB policy, with a clear suite of options for maintaining good neighbourhood relationships and a matrix for assessing which option is the most appropriate. These options should include mediation, information sharing and community building events and, where appropriate, dedicated staffing. This will ensure that low level issues of neighbour friction are dealt with at the appropriate levels and not inappropriately handled as potential ASB. Landlords should engage residents in the development of the good neighbourhood management policy, including residents who have recently raised a formal complaint with the landlord, to assure themselves that it reflects the expectations of residents and will be effective		We have a Good Neighbourhood Management Policy which is stand alone to our ASB Policy. This covers the key areas as set out in the recommendation. On the website, we provide a range of options for information relating to good neighbourhood management including noise. When the policy is reviewed, we will involve customers look to include the matrix as recommended. We are due to launch our Customer Charter which covers the ASB standards. We have implemented REACT case management software for ASB. We have a number of information sharing agreements in place. These are primarily built around Police and Local Authority-led problem solving and safeguarding initiatives. Mediation arrangements are in place. We have a Community Engagement and Inclusion Team to embed customer engagement and promote community development and sustainability.	When the Good Neighbourhood Management Policy is reviewed, we will involve customers in this process and will seek to include the matrix as recommended.	Director of Housing Services	31 March 2027

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Good Neighbourhood Management Policy						
5	Landlords should have a triage methodology for identifying whether a noise report should be handled under the ASB policy or the good neighbourhood management policy. This should include a recognition that the time the noise occurred has a bearing on whether the noise is anti-social in nature. Landlords should provide training on this triage methodology, including regular refresher training and whenever there is staff change		We have created guidance for colleagues and customers. We provide training on the REACT software that we use, which states when a one off noise complaint is raised, this is handled as per our Good Neighbourhood Management Policy, whilst persistent noise complaints are passed to Housing Services and handled as per our ASB Policy. We have an ASB Best Practice group.			
6	Landlords should give consideration to separating the role responsible for collecting rent from the role handling noise reports to avoid any perception of a conflict of interest and a concern that the resident might get a different service on their noise report than they might do otherwise if they are in arrears		We have generic patch management roles for our Housing Partners. We have considered the recommendation and have made the decision to continue with the generic role. We continually review our patch sizes so that Housing Partners are able to provide holistic support and advice to our customers. Housing Partners are the main point of contact for customers and deal with issues from start to finish, promoting fluidity for customers and ensuring accountability on patch for colleagues.			
7	Landlords should review the job descriptions of public-facing roles to ensure that the handling of reports under the good neighbourhood management policy is recognised as part of their housing service provision duties		All job descriptions were reviewed in 2025. The Housing Partner job description contains reference to elements covered in the Good Neighbourhood Management Policy.			

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Good Neighbourhood Management Policy						
8	Landlords have demonstrated the benefits of staff being present on some estates to provide early intervention where noise is reported. However, these resources are often limited and targeted at hotspots. Landlords should review its presence on estates and the data and information that prioritises intervention, to support an effective good neighbourhood strategy		We actively request and monitor that colleagues are visible in our communities.			
ASB Policy						
9	ASB policy timescales should be realistic and achievable. Adherence to timescales should form part of governance reporting		Our policy does detail some timings on handling ASB but is not explicitly clear. We are reviewing our ASB policy currently and will pay particular attention to commitments on timings. These will also be reflected in our service standards. We have recently commenced reporting on acknowledging ASB as per our policy commitments.	Consider adding timescales when reviewing policy. IF added ensure we report against and consider Power BI reporting to be developed specifically to confirm adherence to timescales	Director of Housing Services and Head of Data	31 March 2027

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ASB Policy						
10	Where options for action are included in an ASB policy, there should be clearly set out thresholds when they will be considered and/or when they might be considered inappropriate		We have risk scoring on the level of ASB on how to deal with this. We make decisions on how to deal with ASB based on evidence and legal requirements, as well as the customer's personal circumstances. Our ASB policy sets out the options available for dealing with the issue. We work with stakeholders and audit our cases to ensure that decisions are taken at the right time, providing controls.			
11	ASB policies should be realistic and practicable. Landlords should review their existing policy for whether it is routinely complied with or whether it is inherently unworkable, particularly in regard to the frequency of updates to residents, the number of stages and the likely outcomes. Landlords should engage residents in the review of the ASB policy, including residents who have recently raised a formal complaint with the landlord, to assure themselves that it reflects the expectations of residents and will be effective		Our ASB and Hate Crime Policy was reviewed in 2025 to ensure it remained realistic and practicable, it is currently under review again. Reviews of the policy will involve customers as part of our EIA approach. We work with stakeholders and audit our cases to ensure that decisions are taken at the right time, providing controls.	Prepare for the introduction of STAIRs to identify information that we should routinely make publicly available and how we will respond to specific requests	Business Assurance Team	01 October 2026

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Allocations Policy						
12	All applications for housing should be assessed for the impact on the existing community and not just those considered to be sensitive		The Allocations and Lettings Policy has been reviewed. The impact on existing communities is considered where we have any information regarding a prospective customer's background where the Local Authority provide the detail. We check applicants' tenancy history and seek landlord references (where available) prior to an offer of tenancy. Information sharing is agreed within local authority nominations agreements			
13	When considering housing applications from families or households with multiple occupants, consideration should be given to the suitability of allocating properties above ground floor, where previous reports of noise nuisance (whether upheld or not) have been made and whether any mitigations can be made to the home		Local Authorities hold the waiting list in many of our areas of operation. If properties meet the applicant's household needs, then we will allocate based on size of property. Housing Partners speak to Lettings where there have been previous issues and a sensitive let is required.			

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Allocations Policy						
14	New tenancy agreements for flats above ground floor should include clauses that hard flooring is not permitted		Our tenancy agreements do not include this, while we recognise the intention behind this – particularly in managing noise transfer and maintaining neighbour relations – we do not consider it appropriate to apply a blanket restriction across all upper-floor properties requirement and we do not feel that this is appropriate. Where noise transmission is causing concern, we support customers to access appropriate flooring via local agencies. We have established processes for dealing with noise issues.			
Multi-Agency Relationships						
15	Landlords will often need to work with other agencies, including the police and environmental health, when responding to noise reports, however the strength of those relationships are inconsistent. Landlords should consider the service level agreements they have in place with different bodies and their effectiveness, and whether roles and responsibilities are clear		We work with partner agencies, primarily through joint arrangements such as Problem-Solving Groups (PSGs) and similar joint working groups.			

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Data, Record Keeping and Information Sharing						
16	Local Authorities should ensure that information shared relating to an applicant's suitability for a vacant home is substantial enough to support any requirements relating to sensitive lettings. Sharing information with housing associations to inform allocations is a lawful basis for processing data. If it is not possible to provide direct access to a housing register to facilitate this, an appropriate download of relevant data should be provided to housing associations		We work in partnership with Local Authorities, this is written into nominations agreements and Choice Based Lettings arrangements			
17	Databases should align noise reports to both the person the report has been made against and the address the report has been made against. Where the investigation of the report concludes that it is the nature of the address, rather than the person occupying it, that is the reason the noise is occurring, this should be captured on the databases to ensure that the noise report is aligned to the causation		ASB cases are linked to the victim, perpetrator and asset. We record cases through REACT, including if it is due to individual needs.	Develop methodology for analysing data around missed appointments	Director of Assets and Compliance	June 2026
18	Landlords should consider their current approach to retaining the evidence of noise that a resident submits and satisfy themselves it is sufficiently accurate and robust to ensure that they cannot lose the evidence provided. Due regard should be given to the requirements of GDPR for the retention and processing of data		Records are kept for the life of the tenancy and archived when the tenancy ends. Currently all recordings are stored on M Files – manually – Noise App. We are reviewing our data storing and processing processes (RoPA).			

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Respect						
19	Landlords should ensure the tone of communication does not result in perceptions of bias against, or being dismissive of, the resident reporting noise		We have a suite of standard letters, the tone used within them should be fair. Some letters and processes are being reviewed through specific projects.	Develop a suite of standard letters for Housing Services.	Director of Housing Services	01 July 2027
20	Landlords should begin preparing for the Access to Information Scheme and communicate this to staff in emphasising the need for professional courtesy and respect for residents in internal and external communication		We are awaiting final details on the Social Tenant Access to Information Requirement (STAIRs) scheme, expected over the next few months before it applies from 1 October 2026. We have a project group in place with actions set as part of this to ensure compliance.			
Starting the Tenancy						
21	Landlords should provide information leaflets on 'how to be a good neighbour' as standard with the new tenancy induction pack, especially on estates where there have been ASB issues previously or where sensitive lettings policies are in place		The Good Neighbourhood Policy and any supporting documentation is available to customers via the website. We are working on a new tenant handbook which will cover information about how to be a good neighbour. This will be provided to customers at the start of their tenancy.	Develop new tenant handbook	Director of Housing Services	31 August 2026

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Existing Tenancies						
22	For existing tenancy agreements where hard flooring is only permitted with permission and/or with conditions (such as appropriate underlay or that permission will be rescinded if a noise report is made), if a noise report is made, those clauses should be inspected against and enforced		Our tenancy agreements do not include this requirement and we do not intend for this to be the case (see no. 14). Where noise transmission is causing concern, we support customers to access appropriate flooring via local agencies. We also have established processes for dealing with noise issues.			
23	For existing tenancies where carpets were removed and/or hard flooring is present, the landlord should signpost residents where appropriate to funding for carpets and rugs		We do this wherever we identify customers who require this support. Support is provided through agencies we work with and support is available through our Hardship Fund.			
Handling a Noise Report						
24	Landlords should assure themselves that it is clear to residents when and how to report noise nuisance to them, with a full range of accessible and inclusive options available for residents to report noise		The ASB toolkit on Accent's website includes how to report nuisance and how to access the NoiseApp. We will also cover this in the new tenant handbook. All means of reporting are acceptable.			

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Handling a Noise Report						
25	Residents must be clearly told if their noise report is being handled within the good neighbourhood management policy or is considered to be ASB		We have a Good Neighbourhood Management Policy. We let customers know when they report noise concerns whether we are taking any action or not, and whether this is via the Good Neighbourhood or ASB policy. Residents are told early on whether their noise report is considered as ASB or not.			
26	If landlords are aware there is going to be a delay in addressing a noise report and the timescales provided to the resident will not be met, explain this at the earliest available opportunity and provide revised timescales		Our Housing Partners are expected to update customers at the earliest opportunity of timescales and where changes may occur. We audit cases in the REACT software and we review complaints relating to noise complaints. REACT has triggers and tasks to keep cases on track.			
27	If a policy stipulates that certain options must be considered when responding to a noise report, it is essential for the landlord to demonstrate consideration of that option and this must be documented, even if the decision is not to use that option to enable the landlord to answer any subsequent complaint. The decision should be clearly communicated to the complainant including the reasons why		Our ASB policy states that a risk assessment must be completed for every case which dictates what we will do. We create an action plan where a case is deemed to be ASB. Some information on options available can be found in the ASB toolkit, including the use of the noise app.			

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Handling a Noise Report						
28	Noise recordings submitted by residents should always be listened to by the case handler to ensure robust investigations that are informed by a true understanding of the noise being reported		Customers reporting noise issues are supported to use the Noise App. Recordings are listened to and then allocated to the Housing Partner to be used as part of the investigation. This is audited.			
29	Landlords should review the current provision of staff training, supervision, guidance and support and whether this is conducive to ensuring high standard of customer care. Particular consideration should be given to how confident and equipped staff feel in having difficult conversations, including managing expectations and delivering unwelcome news		We provide training on the REACT software. We are reviewing the induction process for Housing Partners and training on ASB will cover this recommendation. We do provide all colleagues with Be Accent training, based on Mary Gober principles, which sets out customer service skills.	Develop an induction programme for Housing Partner.	Director of Housing Services	01 March 2027
30	Line managers should be aware of an individual's caseload and the significant decisions taken in those cases and, wherever possible, handover meetings should be conducted where the ownership of a noise report is transferred		Line managers are aware of the caseloads of their direct reports. Handover notes should be provided in cases of annual leave, however, all case management actions are recorded and are accessible to Housing Partners and Area Managers covering a colleague's case load. REACT as a system also supports this.			

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Handling a Noise Report						
31	Landlords should ensure that information is provided as standard to residents who make noise reports about their right to make a complaint if they are dissatisfied with the landlord's proposal for handling the situation or the actions taken by the landlord to address the situation		The complaints policy is available to all customers via the website, and copies are provided on request. We will be developing a suite of standard letters for Housing Services and as part of this, we will consider this recommendation.	Develop a suite of standard letters for Housing Services.	Director of Housing Services	01 July 2027
32	The member of staff who has been handling the noise report that is being complained about should never be allocated the complaint to investigate		Our complaints process requires all complaints to be investigated by the Resolutions Team, which ensures that any complaints are not investigated by the member of staff responsible for managing an anti-social behaviour case.			