

Visitors and Guest Room Policy

Originator:	Policy and Strategy Team
Executive Management Team Approval Date:	December 2021
Review date:	December 2024

1	Introduction
1.1	The Policy has been developed to clearly outline One Vision Housing (OVH) procedures covering visitors and the use of the guest rooms within Retirement Living Schemes.
1.2	OVH recognises the importance of customers being able to have a visitor or visitors to their home. However, OVH also has a responsibility to ensure that customers comply with their tenancy and that any actions of their visitors, which breach their tenancy are dealt with as described in the individual tenancies and related policies.
1.3	<p>The application of this Policy ensures compliance with the outcomes of the Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England, adopted by the Regulator for Social Housing (RSH) as outlined below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Registered providers shall ensure effective governance arrangements that deliver their aims, objectives and intended outcomes for customers and potential customers in an effective, transparent and accountable manner. Governance arrangements shall ensure they: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adhere to all relevant legislation Comply with their governing documents and all regulatory requirements Are accountable to customers, the regulator and relevant stakeholders Safeguard taxpayers' interests and the reputation of the sector Have an effective risk management and internal controls assurance Framework Registered providers shall offer tenancies or terms of occupation which are compatible with the purpose of the accommodation, the needs of individual households, the sustainability of the community, and the efficient use of their housing stock. They shall meet all applicable statutory and legal requirements in relation to the form and use of tenancy agreements or terms of occupation.
1.4	Access and Communication
1.4.1	OVH is committed to ensuring that our services are accessible to everyone. OVH will seek alternative methods of access and service delivery where barriers, perceived or real may exist, that may make it difficult for people to work for us or use our services.

1.5	Equality, Diversity and Human Rights
1.5.1	OVH is committed to ensuring that no person or group of persons will be treated less favourably than another person or group of persons and will carry out our duty with positive regard for the following core strands of equality; Age, Disability, Gender, Race, Gender Identity / Expression, Sexual Orientation, Religion and/or Belief, Civil Partnership and Marriage, Pregnancy and Maternity.
1.5.2	OVH also recognise that some people experience disadvantage due to their socio economic circumstances, employment status, class, appearance, responsibility for dependants, unrelated criminal activities, being HIV positive or with AIDS, or any other matter which causes a person to be treated with injustice.
1.5.3	OVH will also ensure that all services and actions are delivered within the context of current Human Rights legislation. OVH will endeavour to ensure its staff and others with whom it works, will adhere to the central principles of the Human Rights Act (1998).
1.6	<p>This Policy should be read in conjunction with the following;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OVH Allocations Policy • OVH Tenancy Transfer, Succession and Mutual Exchange Policy • OVH Demand Incentive Policy • OVH Starter Tenancy Policy • OVH Shared Ownership and Sales Management Policy • OVH Rent Setting Policy • Sub-Regional Choice Based Letting Policy
2	Statement of Intent
2.1	OVH will comply with all relevant legislation, regulation and contractual obligations in determining and confirming the right of customers to have visitors to their home, and where applicable, to the communal areas of their home.
2.2	OVH will take all reasonable and practical steps to ensure customers are able to invite visitors to their home and to the communal areas of schemes, where applicable.
2.3	<p>OVH will maintain confidentiality in all information relating to individuals and their visitors and will only share information according to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any joint working or information sharing protocols developed as part of effective assessment and service provision • When information comes to light that indicates the safety of individuals or communities may be at risk • In line with existing OVH Safeguarding Policies and relevant UK Data Protection legislation
2.4	OVH will respect the rights of individuals to make their own decisions and will factor in this approach of empowerment and creation of independence. This is particularly important in allowing people to choose their own friends and visitors.

2.5	In all situations there will be an assumption of capacity unless circumstances or information indicate otherwise (defined by the Mental Capacity Act 2005 as being <i>unable to make a decision for him / herself</i> because of an impairment of or a functioning of the mind or brain when professional advice will be sought and an advocate used as appropriate).
2.6	In such instances any visitors believed to be placing the customer or others at risk will be discussed with the individual or relevant agencies in line with the agreed Housing Action Plan, safety plan or safeguarding and risk assessment approach.
3	Policy
3.1	Any customer may invite a visitor or visitors to their home. The actions of visitors and responsibility of customers for their visitors is as described in individual tenancies and related policies.
3.2	In Retirement Housing Schemes, where there is communal space, visitors are welcome to sit with customers in the communal space and have refreshments. Visitor's maybe involved in events as appropriate with the general agreement to this principle by the majority of customers in the scheme.
3.3	The relatives or friends of staff members should not visit the scheme and are therefore not covered by this Policy.
3.4	Visitors must adhere to the expectations of the customer's tenancy agreement by behaving courteously, legally and with consideration and respect for others. It is the OVH customer's responsibility to make sure that their visitors behave appropriately. Any concerns over the behaviour of visitors should be discussed with the Independent Living Officer (ILO) in the first instance.
3.5	Visitors are welcome to stay over occasionally although, customers cannot allow anyone to move into their property without seeking the consent of the organisation. If customers wish visitors to become permanent members of their household, this must be discussed first with the ILO or Neighbourhood Services Officer (NSO).
3.6	Visitors causing disturbance, upset or carrying out acts of anti-social behaviour, harassment, hate crimes, violence or any other illegal activity in or around OVH property or in the local area may be subject to action by OVH to prohibit such activities. Customers may be subject to legal action if their visitors cause nuisance or disturbance to others or act in any way that breaches the tenancy agreement or our policies relating to anti-social or other unacceptable behaviour.
3.7	In Retirement Housing Schemes, customers may book the guest room for a small fee to allow visitors to stay for a few days. A stay of more than one week should be discussed first with the ILO.
3.8	In cases of illness or where relatives may have travelled significant distances for a visit, a longer stay may be granted (in which case this should be discussed at booking with the ILO), this would usually be agreed unless a prior booking exists. Decisions on the length of stay permitted in guest rooms will be taken on a case-by-case basis and will be at the ILO's discretion.

3.9	Professional visitors (e.g. carers) are expected to behave with the same level of courtesy as other invited visitors.
3.10	Children visiting must be subject to supervision at all times in the communal areas of Retirement Housing Schemes and in any communal space such as gardens, corridors, lifts in all properties. At no point will OVH staff be responsible for visiting children. OVH staff will not bring their own children to schemes. Children (those aged 18 or under) may not occupy the guest rooms in Retirement Housing Schemes unless accompanied by an adult.
3.11	People visiting with the intention of selling anything (clothes, safety devices, kitchenware etc.) or canvassers for political or other groups should only be admitted by prior appointment with the ILO and only to see customers who have requested / agreed to such a visit.
3.12	Visitors organised by OVH such as those training customers, leading group activities in communal space etc. are also expected to observe professional standards of behaviour and may not bring children or other individuals not connected with the service being delivered to the scheme.
3.13	Confidential information about customers must only be shared with visitors in line with OVH's policies.
3.14	Risk assessments (including those completed under Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements - MAPPA protocols) will be undertaken if a Schedule 1 person (anyone convicted of an offence listed in schedule 1 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1993) or other serious offender is rehoused to ensure visitors do not place other customers, their visitors, staff, or communities at risk.
3.15	Agency staff, who may not be known to all customers, will be provided with access to buildings and OVH identification to ensure they are not seen as visitors and do not have to trouble customers for access.
3.16	Information relating to access for visitors when the ILO is offsite at Retirement Housing Scheme will be shared as appropriate with the third-party agency providing lifeline services on OVH's behalf and any particular instructions relating to this will be identified in the Housing Action Plan e.g. individuals who are not welcome who may try to get access via the access panel at scheme entrances.
3.17	There is a strict No Smoking Policy in place within the guest room and all communal areas
3.18	The charge of £15.00 per night has been set following a local benchmarking exercise. Any monies realised from the use of the room will be ring fenced into a budget for renewal and replacement of the guest room equipment. The charge will be reviewed on an annual basis.
4	Implementation
4.1	The Visitors and Guest Room Policy exists to confirm OVH's position on visitors for good practice. The Policy is governed by the tenancy agreement as this has greater legal standing.
4.2	This Policy and its contents will be made available to customers and their visitors in a range of ways such as through display on notice boards and OVH website.

4.3	Any failure of customers to ensure visitors comply with the tenancy agreement and relevant policies will result in a discussion of the Policy and tenancy agreement by the ILO in the first instance and then, if necessary, by Independent Living Team Leaders / Manager. If appropriate, the assistance of the Community Safety Team will be sought. The responsibility for visitors to behave in a reasonable manner lies with the customers and not with OVH staff.
4.4	Although, customers in Retirement Housing Scheme may give keys to their own front door to visitors, OVH will only provide additional fobs in certain circumstances. The fobs must be purchased; OVH must be advised who will hold them and the reason for which they are being provided must be in response to the customer's needs. Providing additional fobs must not significantly increase risk to other service users who may share the communal entrance and areas.
4.5	Customers will regularly be reminded that they and their visitors should not allow access to unknown people (particularly in schemes with communal areas where giving access to strangers / those who claim to be other people's visitors risks the safety of all who live within the scheme).
4.6	ILOs will arrange the booking, collect, record and bank any related monies for guest room charges as per OVH's Policy. ILOs are responsible for reporting repairs, changing the bedding and preparing the room for use by guests. The cleaners (contracted by OVH) will clean the room ready for use.
4.7	Payment will be taken at the point of the visitors arriving with a receipt issued by the ILO.
4.8	The ILO will ensure that all health and safety information is clearly displayed, in particular fire procedures.
4.9	The guest room will be allocated on a first come first served basis, any decisions of allocation will be taken by the ILO.
4.10	Bookings may not normally be made more than three months in advance, unless there are extenuating circumstances.
4.11	The ILO has the right to refuse a booking, these circumstances must be reported to the Independent Living Manager at the earliest opportunity.
4.12	It is the responsibility of the Independent Living Manager to ensure this Policy and any supporting procedures are effectively implemented.
5	Performance
5.1	There is currently no performance measure linked directly to visitors. Any complaints or reports of anti-social behaviour by visitors will be recorded through usual channels and relevant performance monitored accordingly.
6	Consultation
6.1	All independent living staff have considered the contents of this Policy. The Tenancy Policy Review Group was also consulted about this Policy on the 3 rd December 2021.

7	Review			
7.1	The Policy will be reviewed every three years from the date of Executive Management Team’s (EMT) Approval or more quickly in response to changes in legislation / system audits that impact on OVH’s provisions of independent living services.			
8	Equality Impact Assessment			
8.1	Was a full Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) required?	No		
8.2	When was EIA conducted and by who?	The Independent Living Manager & Strategy and Policy and Strategy Manager in November 2021.		
8.3	Results of EIA	The EIA did not reveal any differential impact on any of the protected characteristics.		
9	Scheme of Delegation			
9.1	Responsible committee for approving and monitoring implementation of the Policy and any amendments to it	Executive Management Team		
9.2	Responsible officer for formulating Policy and reporting to committee on its effective implementation	Operations Director – Support Services		
9.3	Responsible officer for formulating, reviewing and monitoring implementation of procedures	Operations Director – Support Services		
10	Amendment Log			
Date of revision:		Reason for revision:	Consultation record:	Record of amendments:
22 October 2015		Policy due for review in ‘review schedule’	See Section 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Change of job titles throughout from ‘Supported Housing Officers’ to ‘Independent Living Officer’ to reflect staff restructureThe corporate aims have been updated to reflect the new OVH Corporate Strategy
16 October 2018		In line with the Review Schedule	See section 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Fees for booking a visitors guest room in OVH Retirement Housing Schemes has been increased from £10.00 to £15.00

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The term 'tenant' has been changed to 'customer' throughout the Policy • The whole Policy has been amended in line with current OVH business practices
21 st December 2021	In line with the Review Schedule	See section 6	There are no significant changes to the Policy in this review.