



# Communal and Estate Services Review

RESIDENT SCRUTINY GROUP

JULY 2023 - MARCH 2024

Resident Scrutiny Group Review – Communal & Estate Services  
July 2024 - March 2024

## Introduction

Following the annual Resident Scrutiny Group (RSG) resident survey in February 2023, Communal and Estate services was ranked by our residents as one of the top three priorities for the year. Therefore, it was agreed that this would be reviewed in this year's review schedule.

The RSG acknowledges that during this review the partnership with Silva Housing was approved and the review below has been carried out using data and investigations from Abri, future RSG reviews will include all areas of the Abri group.

The project group discussed the approach for this topic, and it was agreed that there would need to be an initial discussion to understand the topic further and how best to proceed. Following this the group chose areas to focus on for this review.

It was acknowledged that at the start of the review Abri were in discussions with Silva housing and with a potential partnership there may be the need to re-review in the future.

The project group would like to note that due to various changes and unexpected circumstances there was a pause in the progress of the review which delayed submission.

*Please note that this review relates to Abri, rather than the Abri Group following the partnership with Silva Housing in October 2023.*

## Approach

A variety of methods were used to ensure that both data and feedback from residents and staff were utilised to provide a balanced and holistic approach for this review.

A session was held with the Group Housing Partnership Manager and Grounds & Estates Senior Operations Manager to discuss the topic and ask any questions to the team the findings from this can be found below.

The group reviewed the Flats and Communal Areas – Items Procedure, Neighbourhood Policy and Your Estate Standards documents. These were insightful to gain understanding of the works that are carried out in the communal areas of Abri communities. Results from a ground maintenance survey that was sent out for 'West' residents was shared and reviewed, it was positive to see from the results that the overall satisfaction at the time of the survey was 39.6%, though the group note that throughout the review the geography and data gathering may have changed these results. From the results it was noted that the frequency and disposal of grass cuttings, frequency of hedge, tree, and shrub pruning, and weed control are all identified by customers as areas for improvement.

All review recommendations will have the sponsorship of the Executive Director for Operations they will have overall responsibility of the actions and ensure they are being delivered by the assigned delivery officer. The project group will continue to work closely with Abri during the implementation phase to review delivery progress and support if necessary, continuing the voice of the resident throughout the process.

### Findings and Recommendations

#### **Estate Standards**

The new estate standards and policy were approved by Abri during the process of this review. The group were given the opportunity to review this during this process and from this it was agreed that using the phrase 'Estate Walkabout' was more suitable and inline with Abri's tone of voice for residents.

It was clear from feedback and discussions that our communal areas really important to residents and that standards should be kept and adhered to. The group noted from personal experiences that rubbish, animal fouling and fly tipping were some of the areas that caused the most dissatisfaction for them and their immediate communities/neighbours.

From the initial discussion and subsequent sign off of the standard and policy the group acknowledged that there would be a period of time needed to implement and train members of staff on the changes. The project group agreed these changes seemed positive and that they would like to review progress in the coming months. (CE0723.1)

The project group were keen to attend an estate walkabout, however this was not possible during the investigation stage of the review. The project group understood this, however felt that this was a very important part of the review, gaining an understanding of how these walkabouts will be carried out, the process for Abri colleagues and how this impacts the residents who live there. The RSG recommends to invite RSG members to estate walkabouts following implementation to review effectiveness. (CE0723.2)

#### **Communication**

The group discussed communication for residents for both reporting of issues and from Abri regarding the works carried out and charges. Within the discussion the group discussed ease of understanding and the purpose of the estate standards document.

The document was clear with an easy to follow guide to the standards across our communities for communal areas both internally and externally. It was felt this document would be beneficial to residents however there were some thoughts raised regarding the ability to report and contact Abri especially for vulnerable or non-digital customers. Having copies available or on display in internal communal areas could be beneficial for residents as a reminder on the standards (e.g. not leaving rubbish in walkways or stairwells) and as a way to easily see a number or contact details on how to report the specific issue. The document referenced residents being able to contact their independent living partner directly for concerns within their scheme the group discussed the benefit of having these specific details on display in communal areas for them to contact or report. The RSG recommends the consideration of having estate standards on display in communal areas with the inclusion of specific independent living partner details for independent living schemes. (CE0723.3 & CE0723.4)

The group felt that there was not enough communication between Abri and residents regarding the services that would be carried out across the year especially regarding services carried out outside (grass cutting, hedge trimming etc). The estate standards document, although covered some estimated timelines and FAQ's didn't cover all questions that could arise. The RSG recommends reviewing timelines and FAQs and providing residents with a specific communication giving details in relations to the groundworks carried out throughout the year. (CE0723.5)

The ability to report issues regarding communal areas was a relatively new function to MyAbri, in one of the sessions members accessed the portal to review the process. Although this function was there, members commented on this was not the easiest process. It was felt that improvements could be made by making this more visible as an option with more defined/accurate options to report. The RSG recommends that Abri consider reviewing the functionality for reporting communal issues – ensuring that there is a focus on ease of use for the resident and accuracy of issues to report. (CE0723.6)

**Recommendations**

Action Reference	Recommended Action	Delivery Officer	Assigned Executive Director	Target Delivery Date
CE0723.1	The project group to meet with group housing partnership manager & grounds and estates operations manager following implementation and roll out of the standards and policy	Group Housing Partnership Manager	Executive Director – Operations	July 2024
CE0723.2	Invite RSG members to estate walkabouts to review effectiveness	Group Housing Partnership Manager	Executive Director – Operations	June 2024
CE0723.3	Review future noticeboard information to ensure the inclusion of the new Estate Standards	Group Housing Partnership Manager	Executive Director – Operations	July 2024
CE0723.4	As above with the inclusion of specific independent living partner contact details on	Operations Manager - Independent Living	Executive Director – Operations	July 2024
CE0723.5	Consider reviewing the timelines and FAQs in relation to ground maintenance carried out throughout the year to create a specific communication for residents	Grounds & Estates Senior Operations Manager	Executive Director – Operations	July 2024
CE0723.6	Abri consider reviewing the functionality for reporting communal issues – ensuring that there is a focus on ease of use for the resident and accuracy of issues to report.	Grounds & Estates Senior Operations Manager and Group Housing Partnership Manager	Executive Director – Operations	July 2025
<i>Prior to submission the project group have worked closely with Abri to ensure that these recommendations are achievable and within scope.</i>				

**Conclusion**

Overall, Abri’s approach to communal and estate services is a positive one, the delivery of the estate walkabouts will be welcomed by our communities and the RSG look forward to being able to take part in one. There is an opportunity to improve some of the process, delivery and communication all of which the RSG believe to improve the service and resident journey when raising concerns. The RSG recognise and acknowledge that many changes were carried out throughout the whole process and welcome working with Abri in the future to help develop or implement the recommendations.