



## 1. Document Control Information

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## 2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline our expectations of co-op members and our structure for organising amongst members. Our aim for the co-operative is to provide a home that is safe, comfortable, and where all residents have an equal stake in their home. As we are also a community space, we want to foster an atmosphere of community and equitability between members and the people who utilise our public space. This policy is meant to help us achieve these aims.

## 3. Scope

This policy applies to anyone currently a member of Mara Co-op or anyone who is interested in becoming a member of Mara Co-op. It describes the ways we live and work together in the co-operative, and how we expect members to behave and align themselves within our co-op structure. The application of this policy is based on each individual's ability and needs. We understand that accessibility needs and life circumstances may keep an individual from fulfilling all aspects of this policy. Our expectation is that all members, regardless of their ability, simply agree with the principles of these policies and seek to act in alignment with them.

## 4. Definitions

*The Co-op / Mara Co-op* – Mara's Housing Co-operative Limited

*Member* – All those who have been accepted as full member by a General Meeting. This definition includes tenants and prospective tenants of The Co-op.

*Tenant* – Housed members of The Co-op. This means they live in the property and actively take part of the day-to-day at The Co-op. All aspects of this policy apply to tenants.

*Prospective Tenant* – A member who has been accepted into the Co-op but does not currently live in the property. Prospective tenants who are not housed at the Co-op property within two years must reapply for membership. Parts of this policy that are not tenant-specific are applicable to prospective tenants.

*Probationary Member* – All members who have been accepted as such by a General Meeting for a limited period of time not exceeding one year known as "probationary period". These individuals can be tenants or prospective tenants.

*Mara Community Space (MCS)* – The parts of the Co-op's building which is explicitly used as space open to the public.



*Community member* – All those who are not formal members of the Co-op but attend and make use of the MCS.

## **5. Policy**

### **5.1 Consensus-based decision-making**

In group meetings, all resolutions, developments, and decisions will come to agreement by consensus, unless it is impossible to do so (i.e. eviction procedure). This is to ensure that all ideas, opinions, and concerns are taken into account. It rejects side-taking, point scoring, or strategic manoeuvring, but instead leads members toward 'win-win' solutions that are, at a minimum, acceptable to all. Differences are used to build stronger and more creative decisions, and will not be ignored by a majority vote.

### **5.2 Code of ethical guidelines**

All members must agree to our Statement of Aims and Values and our MCS Secondary Rules and Ethical Policies and navigate their responsibilities with these in mind. All members must also agree to our Safer Spaces Policy. Egregious or recurring breach of our Safer Spaces Policy can become grounds for removal from the co-op and eviction.

### **5.3 Participation in property maintenance**

All members must play a role in keeping communal spaces clean. It is up to the current group of tenants to organise a cleaning schedule that works for everyone.

There are two formal roles held within the housing co-operative: Secretary and Treasurer. See our FCA Rules for further detail on these roles. While Secretary and Treasurer have legal obligations as defined by our FCA Rules, all members are expected to be involved and support the tasks required of both roles. This is to ensure all members are knowledgeable on their co-operative's legal responsibilities, to reduce the workload on two individuals, and to prevent the development of unnecessary hierarchies. This also creates a more flexible system in the case of the Secretary or Treasurer suddenly unable to fulfil their role's duties due to personal circumstances.

There are also delegate roles members are encouraged to take on. See our document outline of officer and delegate positions for more information. These positions within Mara Co-op are meant to support smooth maintenance of the property and involve taking on roles to ensure we meet our standards for the building's safety compliance. There are no term limits for delegates, but their posts are reviewed at every Annual General Meeting.

All members should, as they can, support improvement of the property. This can involve contributing to tasks like painting, moving furniture, or potentially more complicated tasks as they come. Members are expected to offer what skills and abilities they have to improve and develop the housing co-operative building.

All members should flag any serious or dangerous concerns about the building to the relevant delegate or the rest of the Co-op membership to deal with the issue as swiftly as possible.

All members should make themselves informed of compliance requirements for the building. Members can request training to be provided in order to meet compliance needs

### **5.4 Participation and support of the Mara Community Space**

All members must be active supporters of the MCS. This involves but is not limited to:

- Availability to host community groups



- Cleaning the space and 'closing up' after use
- Communicating with community members to organise & facilitate their use of the space (via email, social media, in person, etc.)
- Brainstorming ways to improve the community space

### **5.5 Transparency & accountability to members**

The co-operative strives to operate transparently. This means that our financial accounts can be easily reviewed by all members at any time when requested, but they will also be reported at least once per year at our Annual General Meeting.

Tenants and prospective tenants are encouraged to speak openly about their financial circumstances, so their rental cost can be priced accordingly. Rental prices are created based on room size and room facilities, while also taking into account current Local Housing Allowance rates, but we ultimately seek to provide housing at a rate that is affordable and reasonable. We are best equipped to negotiate rent price when we know what tenants can and cannot afford.

### **5.6 Authorised spending**

All members can make purchases for the property without general meeting approval if the expense is less than £20. They can claim back this expense with provided receipts.

Any expense costing the co-op more than £20 must be agreed on by general meeting and will be paid directly by Mara Co-op.

### **5.7 Children, Dependants, and Vulnerable People**

Children and vulnerable people are often treated as less-than-equal within our society – with their desires, aims, values, and opinions being seen as inherently lesser than others. We will all endeavour to ensure absolute equality within our spaces and be conscious of this inequality wherever it may arise.

All people are welcome to take up residence in Mara Co-op's premises, insofar as they are a member or the dependants of a member and the number of residents would not create an overcrowding issue.

We must seek to ensure that our space is welcoming and safe for all. As such, our safe spaces policy will always consider the potential impact on children, dependants, and vulnerable people.

Every individual's ability to contribute will be different, depending upon their personal characteristics and circumstances. As such, members must have an open and considerate conversation with new members and agree on what we should expect from those individuals in relation to our primary and secondary rules, and agree on how best to support them as an equal part of our collective space.

### **5.8 Pets**

Pets may be permitted as residents, subject to approval from current members and in accordance with your rights as a tenant. We understand that pets are valued and loved family members, and Mara Co-op seeks to welcome pets wherever possible.

### **5.9 General meetings**

Members are expected to attend and participate in our regular monthly co-op general meetings. If a member cannot attend, they are expected to follow up by reading shared



minutes, asking questions, etc. Co-op member meeting dates and times will be advertised on our shared calendar.

Every meeting must have a chair and minute taker. These roles should be taken on by every member on a rotational basis. The next meeting's chair and minute-taker is decided at the end of each meeting.

## **6. Related Documents**

The Fully Mutual & Common-Ownership Rules of Mara's Housing Co-operative Limited

MCS Secondary Rules and Ethical Policy

Safer Spaces Policy

Officer and Delegate Position Descriptions

Eviction Procedure

Mara Compliance Checklist

Statement of Values and Aims

## **7. History of Changes and Scheduled Reviews**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Version</b>	<b>Reason for Review</b>	<b>Changes Made</b>

**END OF POLICY**