

Why communal safety matters

Communal areas are shared spaces – places we all use and rely on, especially in an emergency. That's why we have a clear duty to keep them free from fire risk, obstructions, and hazards.

This includes:

- Corridors, landings, and stairwells.
- Shared lounges and kitchens.
- Mobility scooter stores.
- Laundry rooms.
- Foyers and entrance halls.
- Scheme gardens.

We're required by law to follow fire safety legislation and health and safety standards – and we take this responsibility seriously. But safety also depends on everyone doing their part.

What we do

Carry out regular **health and safety inspections** of all shared areas.

- Respond promptly to any concerns or risks.
- Arrange for removal of unsafe items if necessary.
- Maintain signage, lighting and safety equipment.
- Work with residents to ensure guidance is understood and followed.

Why some items aren't allowed

Items in shared areas – even small or temporary ones – can cause danger by:

- Blocking exits or reducing space for emergency evacuation.
- Increasing the risk of fire or helping fire to spread.
- Causing trip hazards.
- Obstructing emergency teams (especially in smoke-filled conditions).

We understand the intention may be to personalise a space, but safety must always come first.

Examples of items that must not be left in shared areas include:

- Plants or vases.
- Pictures, ornaments, or furniture.
- Mobility scooters or walking frames (unless in designated stores).
- Rubbish bags or household items.
- Pushchairs, bikes, or shopping trolleys.
- Electrical items (including extension leads or charging equipment).

Making communal areas welcoming – and safe

We do want communal areas to feel pleasant and well looked after. Where schemes have secure shared lounges, gardens or noticeboards, we'll work with residents to:

- Inform our interior design decoration concepts.
- Identify safe ways to personalise areas.
- Create inclusive, accessible spaces for everyone to enjoy.

Talk to your Housing or Extra Care Manager if you have suggestions – we'll always listen and work with you to make sure safety comes first.

If we find an item in a communal area

If we find an item that isn't allowed:

- We'll leave a **warning notice** asking for it to be removed.
- If it's not removed, we may dispose of it or store it for a short time.
- If the item poses a **serious risk**, we may remove it straight away.
- Repeat breaches may result in charges or tenancy enforcement.

If you're unsure whether something is allowed – just ask. We're happy to clarify.

People, Places, Partnerships in practice

Keeping communal areas safe is a shared responsibility.

- For **people**, it protects lives and ensures everyone can evacuate safely if needed.
- On the **places** we manage, it helps maintain clean, accessible, and compliant environments.
- Through **partnerships** between residents, our team and the Fire and Rescue Service, we can prevent accidents and reduce risks for everyone who lives or works in our schemes.

Thank you for helping us keep communal spaces safe and welcoming for all.