

**This factsheet provides a summary of the legal and regulatory responsibilities we have as your landlord and the actions we take to ensure the safety of everybody who lives in or visits your scheme. It also sets out the supporting role you play in helping us to meet this important responsibility.**

### What is a communal area?

Internal communal areas are those which everyone has access to, including the entrance lobbies, landings, corridors, stairwells, meter cupboards and rooms, lifts, open walkways, shared balconies, mobility scooter stores and external communal areas such as the entrance to the scheme, pathways, carpark, and landscaped areas.

### How do we make your scheme safe?

To ensure we meet our legal and regulatory health and safety responsibilities; we undertake checks and give information to help you stay safe in your home. This includes:

#### Fire safety.

- Completing a **fire risk assessment** once every 2 years (extra care housing) and once every 3 years (housing for older people with shared internal areas), including carrying out an annual review of the completed risk assessment.
- Communicating a summary of the **fire risk assessment** and the importance of fire doors in preventing the spread of fire.
- Weekly testing of the communal **smoke and fire detection equipment**, including checking that fire doors close and all routes are unobstructed.
- Monthly testing and annual duration/drain testing of the **emergency lighting system** installation.
- Quarterly servicing of the **fire alarm panel and system**.
- Testing and servicing any additional safety measures provided in your scheme such as **sprinkler system, lightning protection system, smoke ventilation and dry risers**.
- Annual testing of **individual apartment doors** (where this opens onto a communal corridor) and all **communal fire doors**.
- Quarterly checking important fire information is on display at appropriate locations throughout your scheme and ensuring emergency signage is in place.
- Quarterly checking of notice boards for up-to-date health and safety information and ensuring important safety information is placed in the red fire box for use by the fire and rescue service.
- Providing you with a copy of the **fire action notice** on the start of your tenancy, and following any changes, so that you understand what to do in the event of a fire.

### Electrical safety

- Carrying out five yearly **Electrical Installation Condition Reports** of communal areas.
- Completing annual, or 6-monthly, **portable appliance testing** of communal appliances.

### Gas safety

- Carrying out annual **gas safety check** (including service) of communal gas appliances.

### Water safety (Legionnaires Disease)

- Completing a biennial review of your scheme's **Legionella risk assessment**.
- Carrying out weekly flushing of all communal taps.
- Completing monthly temperature checks on specific parts of the communal water system.

### Lift safety

- Arranging six monthly LOLER inspection testing and thorough examination of lifting equipment and lifting accessories, this includes lifts, stair lifts and bath hoists.
- Arranging quarterly servicing of lifts and stair lifts (the lift at Brick Kiln Place is serviced monthly).

### General safety

- Completing quarterly inspections of internal and external communal areas including checking that all signage is in place and to check for slip, trip hazards.

### Why do communal areas need to be kept clear?

We have a legal responsibility to ensure the building and communal areas meet fire safety requirements and are free from slip, trip hazards. This includes making sure there are effective fire evacuation arrangements and good housekeeping standards in all communal areas of your scheme. This means that if there is a fire, there must be nothing in these areas that could:

- Prevent people escaping from the building.
- Create a trip hazard when trying to evacuate in an emergency, especially as visibility is likely to be poor.
- Stop the fire services from carrying out their duties.
- Give off toxic smoke and gas when burning (e.g. mobility scooters, e-bikes).
- Explode due to high temperatures (e.g. glass).
- Cause the fire to spread more quickly or make evacuation difficult.

### Why am I asked to refrain from placing items in communal areas?

We provide soft furnishings, furniture, and decorative items to make the communal areas more comfortable for our residents. The items that we provide are all tested for fire retardant quality and are placed to ensure that they do not block escape routes.

Because we must keep escape routes clear and to avoid any unnecessary fire load, we ask residents to not leave any personal items in the communal areas. Examples include:

- Footwear such as shoes, boots, or any rack for housing footwear.
- Mobility scooters, walkers, mobility aids, e-bikes, e-scooters, and bicycles.
- Decorative furniture such as bookcases or tables.
- Electrical equipment including the use of extension cables.
- Flammable liquids.
- Washing, including lines or racks or any draped over stairwell banisters.
- Items of furniture or rubbish waiting to be disposed of.
- Other decorative items such as ornaments, plants and pots, wall hangings and pictures; and/or
- Plants or pots.

We also recognise that storing of items in communal areas, including within external areas, can also prevent our contractors from cleaning these areas effectively and our grounds team from carrying out their grass cutting and maintenance duties. For this reason, we also ask that you do not place your own garden ornaments or personal items in communal gardens.

### Am I allowed to leave anything in the communal area?

We do allow a personalised rubber backed doormat to be placed outside of your apartment door providing it does not create a trip hazard along the escape route for yourself, other residents, or the emergency services who may attend an incident.

### What will happen if items are left in communal areas, other than the items allowed?

We will remove the item immediately. If we know who it belongs to, we will speak to the resident or leave a card for the resident. We will store the item for a maximum of 14 days after which time it will be disposed of. We will also charge the resident for its disposal. If we are unable to identify the owner of the item, the cost of clearance will be included in the scheme's service charge expenditure.

### Additional safety advice

**Individual apartment entrance doors:** These form part of the fire protection of the building for both residents and visitors to the scheme. No alterations or replacement of doors should be made without written permission from us. Please do not interfere with or remove any door closer that is provided to the doors, or prop open any fire doors. Please do not restrict the door from closing, (i.e. through the thickness of your carpet) or prop it open as this will allow smoke to escape from or enter your apartment in the event of a fire.

**Rubbish:** Please do not dump any rubbish or leave any rubbish in communal shared areas, please only use the bins provided for disposal of rubbish.

**Smoking:** It is illegal to smoke in any internal communal areas within the scheme. This includes the use of e-cigarettes. Whilst residents may smoke in their own apartments, we may ask residents not to do so if (i) their smoking becomes an issue to other residents (i.e. where the odour or particles from smoking in the home spreads to the communal areas which could affect those with breathing difficulties) and/or (ii) we consider that the smoke is causing damage to the fabric of the building and associated furnishings.

We would ask all residents to be considerate when smoking in their own homes and ensure that homes are well ventilated by opening windows, or alternatively smoke outside the building away from doors and windows in a designated smoking area. We will recharge for any damage caused by nicotine stains. This could include replacing UPVC window or door frames if the nicotine cannot be removed.

**Compartmentalisation:** To prevent the rapid spread of fire between apartments, such as from gaps created by pipework, a fire-resistant sealant or similar is used to fill the gap. If you notice gaps in your apartment or failure of sealants, please report them to our Property & Maintenance team so we can arrange for the necessary 'fire stopping' work to be done.

**Mobility scooters:** Residents commonly use mobility scooters and powered wheelchairs. However, they do present fire safety concerns associated with their storage and charging. Please contact us before purchasing a mobility scooter or electric wheelchair and refer to our QP34 Mobility Scooters and Electric Wheelchairs policy for more guidance on their safe use within our schemes.

**E- bikes and e-scooters** are becoming increasingly popular. Most are powered by lithium-ion batteries. The use of these batteries in a wide range of household products is becoming increasingly common. It is important, when charging e-bikes and e-scooters, you do so safely to avoid a risk of a fire starting and putting you and your neighbours at risk from fire.

With an increased use of e-bikes and e-scooters, comes a corresponding fire safety concern associated with their charging and storage. The use of these products is expected to continue to rise. The National Fire Chief Council has issued guidance on the safe storage and charging, [click here for details](#). Please contact us before purchasing an e-bike or e-scooter as our permission is required before storing or charging in your home or communal part of your scheme.

**Electrical goods:** Occasionally electrical goods such as fridge freezers and tumble driers are recalled by manufacturers because of a problem that could create a fire risk. You can find out if any of your electrical goods have been recalled and/or register them for future reference at: [www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/product-recalls/](http://www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/product-recalls/)

**If you have any concerns about safety or need any advice about information within this fact sheet, please contact our property & maintenance team at [repairs@lacehousing.org](mailto:repairs@lacehousing.org)**