



Safety in communal areas.

This factsheet provides a summary of the responsibilities we have as your landlord to ensure we meet fire and safety regulations and sets out what we expect from our residents to ensure the safety of everybody who lives or visits your scheme.

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, balconies and some external communal areas such as the entrance to the building and pathways.

What do we do to make your scheme safe?

As part of our Health and Safety policy, we undertake checks and give residents information to help them stay safe in their home. This includes:

- 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 test of the emergency lighting system installation;
- quarterly servicing of the fire alarm panel and system by an external contractor;
- testing and servicing as required any additional safety measures provided in your scheme such as sprinkler and lightning protection systems, fire extinguishers etc.;
- ensuring notice boards are kept up to date with evacuation arrangements and information is placed in a prominent position within the scheme for the emergency services to access (a red fire box in most cases);
- displaying Fire Action Notices at appropriate locations throughout your scheme and ensuring emergency signage is in place;
- issuing all new residents with a Fire Action Notice which gives details about evacuation and fire safety and provide a 'Fire Safety at Home' Booklet;
- introducing Scheme Champions where we engage with an appointed resident in each scheme regarding any health and safety issues. The Scheme Champions can feed back information to us and we can also feed information back to schemes via this contact.

Why do communal areas need to be kept clear?

We have a legal obligation to ensure the building and communal areas within it meet fire safety requirements. 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);
- explode due to high temperatures (e.g. glass);
- cause the fire to spread more quickly or make evacuation difficult.

Why am I not permitted to put items in communal areas?

We provide some 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 so as to ensure that they do not block escape routes.

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

- footwear such as shoes, boots etc. or any rack for housing footwear;
- mobility scooters, walkers, mobility aids, bicycles etc.;
- 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;
- any plants or pots.

We also recognise that storing of items in communal areas, including within external areas, can also prevent our contactors 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 the communal gardens.

Am I permitted 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 either 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 owner of the item for its disposal. If we are unable to identify the owner 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, as this may allow smoke to escape 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 uses 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.

Compartmentalisation: In order to try and prevent the 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.

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/

If you have any concerns about safety or need any advice about information within this factsheet, please contact our property & maintenance or housing team on 01522 514444