



Fire Safety Policies and Procedures

FS12

Communal Areas Policy

May 2018

Version: 1.3

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Nottingham City Homes Communal Areas Policy				
Issuing officer	Ian Rabett	Authorised by	Fire Safety Group	
First Issue date	04 July 2013	Revision number & date	1.3	16 May 2018
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COMMUNAL AREAS POLICY

1.0 Scope and definition

- 1.1 This policy applies to all properties, other than work places, that are managed by Nottingham City Homes and have communal areas, including communal corridors and stairwells. The policy is based on national guidance endorsed by the National Fire Chief's Council.
- 1.2 A 'communal area' is a facility, room or circulation route which can be used by more than one household living within or near the property. This includes dead end corridors, balconies or stairwells that are typically only used by one household, but which are connected to others in such a way that smoke would travel throughout shared areas in the event of a fire.
- 1.3 Restricted areas such as caretaker rooms, caretaker store cupboards, utility switch rooms, refuse rooms and plant rooms are not accessible to residents and are not classed as communal areas for the purposes of this policy.
- 1.4 'Communal rooms' are rooms that contain facilities for the use of all the residents of a building, or which are made available to local residents or groups. Examples include shared lounges, kitchens, refuse chute rooms, lobbies, balconies and laundries.
- 1.5 'Communal corridors' and 'communal stairwells' are corridors or covered walkways and enclosed stairwells which allow access to more than one dwelling.
- 1.6 'We', 'our' and 'us' mean Nottingham City Homes. 'You' and 'your' mean any authorised user of communal areas, including tenants or leaseholders and their visitors.
- 1.7 Please note that this policy does not cover mobility scooters, which are addressed separately in our [Mobility Scooter Storage and Use policy](#)

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 Our vision is to create homes and places where people want to live. We understand that people want to live somewhere that feels like home. However, placing items in communal areas can create fire safety risks especially if large or flammable items are placed in fire escape routes.
- 2.2 Furthermore, what may appear homely and tasteful to one person may not appear so to another; and if everyone placed items in the communal areas they could become crowded and mismatched. Although the main purpose of this policy is to reduce fire risk in shared buildings, it is also designed to

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prevent residents from using communal areas as extensions of the living areas included within their tenancy or lease.

2.3 Nottingham City Homes will therefore adopt an approach to managing communal areas which both complies with current legislation and creates a pleasant environment for residents and their visitors.

3.0 What your tenancy agreement says

3.1 Your tenancy agreement states that you must not:

- use electricity from a supply that is not in your own home.
- store or use dangerous, flammable or explosive liquids, gases or tools in any communal area.
- store motorcycles or mini-motorcycles in any communal area.
- do anything which causes a health and / or safety risk to yourself or others.
- leave items in communal areas where they might cause danger or nuisance to others.

3.2 Your tenancy agreement also states that, if you do any of the things listed above, we may:

- write to you to ask you comply with the clause, and / or
- take legal proceedings to get possession of your home, or obtain a demotion order (if appropriate), and / or action to force you to carry out the tenancy clause and to put things right, and / or
- charge you for the reasonable costs for any work we have to carry out and the legal costs arising out of any action.

3.3 If you are a leaseholder, your lease agreement will include the following clause or one that is similar:

- “the lessee shall keep all access ways forming part of the premises (over which the lessee has rights) clear, open and unobstructed and will not hinder or obstruct the other users of those access ways”.

4.0 What the law says

4.1 Fire safety law states that we must:

- take such general fire precautions as may reasonably be required to ensure that communal areas are safe, and
- ensure that routes to emergency exits and the exits themselves are kept clear at all times.

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5.0 Our policy

- 5.1 We (Nottingham City Homes) will make sure that communal areas under our control are kept clear of items that create an unacceptable fire risk or obstruction, so that users of these facilities are kept safe.
- 5.2 We may place furniture, decorations or articles for the benefit and use of residents and visitors in communal areas. Where we do so, we shall ensure that they meet current fire safety regulations and are maintained in good condition.
- 5.3 You must not store, or provide for general use, any item of soft furniture or furnishing, any gas or liquefied petroleum gas cylinder or appliance, any petrol powered vehicle or equipment, or any electrical, heating, cooking, or washing appliance in any communal room. You may not keep, store, fit or display any personal item, notice or decoration in any communal corridor or stairwell, save for a door mat directly outside your own accommodation as detailed at paragraph 6.7, or a personal item as detailed at paragraph 6.8, regardless of whether or not it might cause a fire risk or obstruction.
- 5.4 Residents and users of buildings containing communal areas and corridors are requested to help us keep them safe and pleasant to use by complying with all reasonable requests by our representatives to remove items that are not permitted by this policy.

6.0 Articles in communal areas

General

- 6.1 Any furniture and soft furnishings, electrical and heating appliances, plants, pictures, noticeboards or any other fixture, fitting or decoration (including Christmas trees and decorations) in any communal room, lobby, stair or corridor will be provided and maintained by us, in consultation with residents. Where we provide such items, we will ensure that they are safe to use, comply with any necessary fire safety or other relevant legislation and, in the case of electrical or gas appliances, are regularly serviced and tested.
- 6.2 You may make use of facilities provided in communal areas by us for a specific purpose. For example, you may keep books on a bookshelf in a communal lounge and crockery in a cupboard in a communal kitchen, or dry clothes on airing lines in a communal laundry.

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Communal rooms

- 6.3 You must not store, or provide for general use, any item of soft furniture or furnishing, any gas or liquefied petroleum gas cylinder or appliance, any petrol powered vehicle or equipment, or any electrical, heating, cooking, or washing appliance in any communal room.
- 6.4 You must not place any large or flammable waste item in any communal area, including refuse chute rooms. If you have large items of waste that cannot fit in a waste chute, they should be taken into the bin store and placed in the appropriate bin. If you have bulky waste such as old settees or mattresses that you cannot dispose of yourself, you should contact the City Council to arrange disposal. If you are in any doubt, you should contact your housing patch manager for assistance.

Communal corridors and stairwells

- 6.5 Communal corridors and stairwells usually form part of fire protected escape routes for people living in or using the building and its facilities. Even where they do not form part of a fire protected escape route, communal corridors and stairwells must be kept clear of obstructions at all times in order to ensure the convenience and safety of people using them, including firefighters in the event of a fire.
- 6.6 No electrical item whatsoever may be kept in a communal corridor or stairwell, or plugged into a power supply located in a communal corridor or stairwell. Corridor radiators must also not be used to dry laundry.
- 6.7 You may keep a door mat immediately outside the front entrance to your flat, provided that it is an actual door mat (not an off-cut from a carpet or a rug), and is not so large or placed in a position so as to cause a tripping hazard.
- 6.8 Some of our independent living schemes have been designed with noticeboards or alcoves where residents may place a picture or personal item in order to help them to find their way around the building. Residents living within these buildings may use this feature for this specific purpose only, provided that pictures or items placed for this purpose are not offensive and do not create additional fire or safety risks.
- 6.9 You must not place any of your other personal possessions in a communal corridor or stairwell.
- 6.10 For the avoidance of doubt, you may not keep, store, fit or display any personal item, notice or decoration in any communal corridor or stairwell, save for a door mat directly outside your own accommodation as detailed at paragraph 6.7, or a personal item as detailed at paragraph 6.8, regardless of whether or not it might cause a fire risk or obstruction.

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7.0 What we will do if you do not follow this policy

7.1 Where, in our opinion, there has been a breach of this policy, our representative will take the following action:

- 1) Attempt to identify the person(s) who have left an item in the communal area.
- 2) Where somebody is identified as being responsible for the item, make verbal arrangements for it to be removed or disposed of as the case may be. If nobody can be identified as being responsible for the item, we will remove it from the communal area and await contact from the owner.
- 3) Write formally to the owner of the item if the verbal agreement is not kept, laying out our proposed action under your tenancy (or other) agreement.
- 4) If you continue to disregard this policy, take the action outlined in the letter referred to above. This action may include disposal of the item, a recharge for any costs incurred, or other action permitted by your tenancy (or other) agreement.

7.2 The above steps will be taken in sequence, and no further action will be taken once the matter has been resolved. We reserve the right, however, to immediately remove any item that is causing an immediate and significant risk.

8.0 Removal of items

8.1 We reserve the right to remove any items which are not permitted to be kept or charged within a communal area following the procedure outlined above.

8.2 Any items that we remove will be stored by us for a reasonable time before being disposed of. We may recharge for any cost incurred by us during the removal, storage or disposal of such items.

8.3 We will always attempt to recharge residents who abandon refuse or waste items in communal areas for any costs that we incur during the removal or disposal of such items.

9.0 What you should do if there is a problem

9.1 If you are for any reason unable to comply with this policy, need assistance in order to comply with it, or are of the opinion that you have been unfairly treated by the application of this policy in your building, you should in the first instance contact your housing patch manager or local housing office.

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