

Fire Safety in Communal Areas Policy

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1. Aims of Policy

This policy explains Lambeth's approach towards the management of communal areas within and around residential blocks to ensure that fire safety is not compromised.

2. Who is this policy for?

Housing Officers and residents involved in estate & block management.

3. Policy Statements

General Statements

- 3.1. Residents may use communal areas provided they do not create a fire risk or impact negatively on other residents.
- 3.2. We require residents to make sure that rubbish and unwanted items are properly disposed of and any rubbish or recycling is placed in the designated area on the agreed day of collection. Vulnerable residents should seek assistance where needed for the collection of unwanted rubbish.
- 3.3. We will conduct monthly safety hazard assessments to check that communal areas are safe. This includes the identification of any required communal repairs.
- 3.4. The approach taken depends on the level of risk.

Zero Tolerance

- 3.5. For properties in blocks with six or more storeys, or that only have a single means of escape, there is zero tolerance to all items left in communal areas. It is essential that all escape routes are kept entirely clear of items of furniture, buggies, mobility scooters, plants, clothes drying facilities, rubbish, bicycles etc.
- 3.6. Combustible items, including white goods and mobility scooters, left in blocks with a zero-tolerance approach can be removed by the council immediately and put into storage or disposed of. For other items residents will be given 24 hours' notice before being removed.
- 3.7. Zero-tolerance blocks will be prioritized for 'greening' projects which improve the local environment, in recognition of the fact that pot plants and other items are not allowed.
- 3.8. Where possible, the council will examine options to provide alternative storage options, particularly for the charging and storage of mobility scooters. For example, there may be options to convert pram sheds, bin areas or redundant drying areas and outside the front door entry.

Managed Approach

- 3.9. The council will take a 'managed approach' for properties with fewer than six storeys and where there are multiple means of escape. Unlike the zero tolerance approach, some items are allowed in communal spaces.
- 3.10. In operating a 'managed approach' consideration will be given to whether the communal areas are open or enclosed. Open areas present less of a risk.
- 3.11. There is a limited list of items below which are generally allowed under a managed approach. Any item not on the list below, cannot be left in a communal space under any circumstances. Items must be flame retardant and meet fire safety regulations. These will be checked during the monthly safety hazard assessments.

- Pram or Buggy
- Picture Frames on the wall
- Door Mat
- Mobility Scooters (only with express written permission. Please see the 'Mobility Scooter Policy' for further details)
- Pot plants (only at the dead end of corridors)

3.12. Areas under a 'managed approach' will be moved to zero tolerance if that is recommended following a safety hazard assessment. With the exception of flammable items will be removed without notice.

External Communal Areas

3.13. There will be a zero-tolerance approach to external garden sheds in block grounds without approval. Where sheds are already approved then the resident must now also be able to demonstrate it is constructed of substantially non-combustible materials and not used as a sleeping accommodation.

3.14. We require residents to not cause or allow fire exits, or routes, from the property or in any communal area, to be blocked or obstructed, or otherwise create a health and safety risk.

4. Legislation / Links to other docs

- The regulatory reforms order of 2005 – Enforcing authority, fire rescue authority.
- The Housing Act 2004 – Ministry of housing and local government and HHSRS.
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/34/contents>
- The Health and safety at work act 1974.
- The Building Regulations 2010; Approved documents.
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/2214/contents/made>
- https://www.london-fire.gov.uk/media/3642/gn_84_fire-in-communal-areas-information-for-external-partners.pdf