



Safety in Communal Areas Policy (Housing)

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1 Accessibility of Document

Our aim is to make our services easy to use and accessible for everyone

We will take steps to make any reasonable adjustments needed for you to contact us, access our policies, or any requests to provide responses in other formats.

Depending on the individual's needs, these might include:

- Using larger print, or a specific colour contrast
- Giving more time than usual to provide information or comments on a complaint
- Using the telephone rather than written communication
- Communicating with a person through their representative or advocate
- Arranging a single point of contact
- Having an 'easy read' version of the document

If you would like to contact us about reasonable adjustments or alternative formats, please email edi@dacorum.gov.uk or call us on **01442 228000**

If you prefer to write to us, send your letter to:

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team
Dacorum Borough Council
The Forum, Marlowes, Hemel Hempstead
Hertfordshire
HP1 1DN

You can find information on Advocacy support here:

<https://www.dacorum.gov.uk/home/do-it-online/contact-us/advocacy-support>

2 What is the goal of the policy?

The aims of the policy are to

- Ensure communal areas are clear for safe access for emergency services in the event of an emergency
- Ensure communal areas can be used safely to evacuate in the event of an emergency;
- Ensure the health and safety of tenants, leaseholders, staff and visitors when in a communal area
- Allow cleaning service staff to carry out their job effectively, supporting the maintenance of communal areas
- Allow communal areas to be used in the best possible way for the benefit of tenants, leaseholders, staff and visitors

3 Legislation

The legislation listed below will be taken into consideration when implementing this policy:

- The Fire Safety (England) Act 2021
- Building Safety Act 2022
- The Building Regulations 2000 Approved Document B (Fire Safety)
- Housing Act 2004
- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- The Building Regulations 2010
- Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Fire Safety in Specialised Housing – National Fire Chiefs Council Guidance
- Fire Safety in Purpose Built Blocks of Flats – Local Government Association
- Social Housing Regulation Act 2023 (Consumer Standards)

4 Supporting Policies or Procedures

This policy links to and should be read in conjunction with the following policies and strategies:

- Corporate Health & Safety Policy
- Tenancy Agreement
- Fire Safety Policy
- Building Safety Policy
- Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
- Handling Tenants Goods Policy
- Rent and Other Charges Policy
- Clear Landings Process

5 EDI Statement

The Council is committed to promoting equality of opportunity. The Council has procedures in place to ensure that all individuals are treated fairly and without unlawful discrimination.

6 Policy Statement

6.1 Introduction

Dacorum Borough Council (DBC) is committed to ensuring that all communal areas in our blocks of flats are well-kept, meet all regulatory requirements and are a safe place for residents, staff and contractors.

DBC defines communal areas as parts of a block of flats, street or estate that tenants have a right to use in common with other tenants and for which we, as the landlord and freeholder, are responsible. For the purpose of this policy a communal area will be defined as, but not limited to, the following:

- Entrances and communal landings
- Shared stairways and areas underneath
- Communal lounges in supported schemes
- Communal cupboards i.e. utility cupboards
- Internal drying areas
- Loft spaces

These areas must not be used for the storage of possessions by residents at any time.

6.2 Commitments

- We will take a zero tolerance approach to ensuring communal areas are kept safe and clear
- We will be proactive in ensuring communal areas are clear and will take action against residents where necessary
- We will ensure that repairs and planned maintenance are carried out in communal areas promptly and with minimal inconvenience to residents
- We will take action against individuals who risk the health and safety of themselves or other people in communal areas
- We expect residents to take responsibility for keeping communal areas clear

6.3 Zero Tolerance Approach

DBC's Housing Service is committed to ensuring the health and safety of everyone who lives in, works in or visits any of our properties. As a landlord, we have a responsibility to ensure that internal/enclosed communal areas are kept clear and accessible so that residents can exit the building quickly and safely in the event of an emergency, as well as allowing emergency services easy and uninhibited access if required. To achieve this, we require our

residents to keep internal/enclosed communal areas clear and take a zero tolerance approach when enforcing this.

Our Tenancy and Leasehold Agreements state that communal areas do not form part of an individual's tenancy and that communal areas may not be used for additional storage. There is an expectation that anyone living in our properties is required to keep communal areas clear. This includes roof spaces and lofts as highlighted in the [Tenants Handbook](#)

This zero tolerance approach is to prevent fire hazards, allow us to carry out essential repairs and maintenance, and help to keep our residents' homes safe and enjoyable places to live.

6.4 Taking action to keep residents safe

DBC Compliance Officers regularly inspect our blocks of flats and will take action whenever they become aware that items have been left in communal areas. In line with our 'clear landings' approach, action will be as follows:

- Items believed to be of value will be removed and kept in safe storage for one calendar month;
- Items believed to be of zero value and unidentifiable will be treated as waste and removed;
- Fly-tipped items and dumped rubbish will be reported for removal and safe disposal.

In line with our Rent and Other Charges Policy, a charge may be issued for any item removed from a communal area where the owner can be identified. The Council cannot be held responsible for the damage, loss or theft of items left in communal areas.

6.5 Repairs and maintenance

To ensure that communal areas can be used safely by anyone accessing them, we will ensure that regular repairs and maintenance are carried out as required. This includes a scheduled cleaning service.

The majority of our communal areas are cleaned on a periodic basis. In the case of window cleaning, the council are only responsible for windows in communal areas.

The Housing Cleaning Service and Housing Management Team will report repairs they identify in communal areas. Tenants and Leaseholders are also responsible for reporting communal area repairs via our [website](#) or by calling **0800 018 6050**. These repairs will then be carried out within the timescales set out in our [Repairs Handbook](#).

6.6 Use of communal areas

In line with our Anti-Social Behaviour Policy, we expect residents using communal areas to show consideration for their neighbours and keep noise disturbance to a minimum, particularly at unsocial hours. Use of barbeques and building of campfires are not permitted

in communal areas. Smoking and/or vaping is not allowed within any internal communal areas or within 10 metres of any doors or windows.

Residents cannot store or charge any electrical appliance or vehicle (including mobility scooters and e-scooters) within communal areas or within 4 metres of the building

As a landlord, we will tackle unacceptable behaviour in communal areas by taking action against any breaches of tenancy or leases. In more severe cases, we may inform the emergency services.

7 Roles and Responsibilities

Operational responsibility for DBC's Housing Service adherence to this policy lies with the Assistant Director for Housing. Overall accountability lies with the Chief Executive of Dacorum Borough Council, deputised by the Strategic Director, Housing and Property Services.

Responsibility for carrying out building inspections and ensuring compliance with this policy falls to the Lead Officer (Fire Safety) and Compliance Officers. The Head of Safe Homes oversees and holds accountability for this.

All employees of DBC have a responsibility to, where safe and possible to do so, reduce, remove and/or report hazards that present a risk of fire occurring.

Residents are responsible for ensuring communal areas are clear of all items at all times. All waste should be disposed of in the correct allocated bin. If a resident identifies an item in a communal area that requires removing this should be reported to the Council via compliance@dacorum.gov.uk

Residents can arrange collection of bulky items by the Council via [Bulky Items](#). Please ensure items for collection are not left in the communal areas.