



Communal Areas Policy

1.0 Purpose and Scope

The policy outlines Notting Hill Genesis's (NHG) position to management of communal areas, including our zero-tolerance approach to storage of items in common parts of residential properties. The policy supports the requirements of the Health and Safety Policy, Fire Safety Policy and the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (RRFSO). The policy applies to all residential premises that we directly control or manage, regardless of tenure.

2.0 Definitions

For the purposes of this policy the following definitions are used:

Communal storage

This is where there is storage of combustible and non-combustible items in the common areas of blocks (including car parks) and properties such as in hallways, in front of flat entrance doors, in riser cupboards and in other areas not under the demise of the resident.

Staffed and alarmed premises

These are premises which are staffed on a regular basis and incorporate fire detection and alarm systems. Premises which have been identified as meeting this requirement typically are:

- Sheltered Housing Schemes
- Supported Housing Schemes
- Key Worker
- Areas monitored by a 24/7 Concierge Services (such as a reception area or gymnasium)

Tort Notice

The Torts (Interference with Goods) Act 1977 allows landlords to serve a notice to remove and dispose of abandoned goods.

3.0 Communal areas

NHG operates a zero tolerance on communal storage except in designated storage areas such as bikes in bike stores. This means that residents are not permitted to store any items in the common areas, the only exception being door mats that must remain flat and of a reasonable size and not curling up to become a trip hazard.

There are further exceptions to this policy within Sheltered and Supported Housing where a small number of items will be accepted due to the premises being staff managed as well as items provided by NHG in the common areas of other blocks.

This is discussed in more detail in the Communal Storage Procedure.

4.0 Open and private balconies

Under no circumstances are barbecue items or appliances allowed in any balcony area as they are a major fire risk. For the safety of the household and neighbors, residents are not permitted to store ignition sources, flammable liquids and/or gas canisters on their balcony. Within open balconies (with communal walkways) the area must be left clear with no storage of anything apart from door mats as discussed.

More details about what is not permitted is included within the Fire Safety Policy.

5.0 Staff and Alarmed Premises

Within premises which are staffed on a regular basis and incorporate a fire alarm system, it has been agreed that a managed use approach may be adopted. This means that some additional storage could be allowed. This is typically for the properties and blocks that have been designed for people aged 55 and over.

6.0 Mobility Scooters

Mobility scooters are banned from being stored and charged in the communal areas. Any residents found in breach of the policy will have to remove the mobility scooter immediately.

If the property does not have space, or an area which can reasonably be converted to be used as a mobility scooter charging and storing area (subject to approval from a Fire Surveyor) then the property may no longer be suitable for the resident and alternative properties may need to be looked into as part of a transfer.

NHG is committed to supporting independent living unless we are prevented by legal contracts such as legal ownership restrictions where the absolute ownership or management is not with NHG's remit common on S106 agreements. Where our powers are limited we are committed to working with and influencing the appropriate third party freeholder, head lessor or managing agent appropriately. We will work within the requirements of the Equality Act (EA) and the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order (RRFSO). For the purposes of this policy the requirements of the RRFSO shall supersede those of the EA in all cases where the risk of fire or harm to people is significantly increased as a consequence of permitting storage of mobility items. Residents should be made aware that though NHG supports independent living they have no rights to store mobility scooters within the common parts. Where we don't manage the common areas but this is done by a third party, we will work with them to ensure the right processes are followed and people notified.

Further information on mobility scooters is discussed in the supporting procedure.

7.0 NHG Supplied Items

NHG may provide a range of furniture, equipment and decorative items as deemed appropriate as long as there is no fire risk and is safe to do so.

Within NHG buildings additional items may be made available within communal lounges and kitchens as required to maintain an effective community and homely environment. Similarly, NHG may provide pre-approved items in 24/7 Concierge staffed reception areas, entrance lobbies and gymnasiums.

8.0 Monitoring of Communal Areas

Local officers and staff attending any premises are responsible for checking common areas (including car parks) to make sure there is no breach of the zero-tolerance policy.

The Fire Risk Assessors will monitor common areas and storage in common areas as part of the 1-3 year cycle for the assessment. As part of health and safety inspections where appropriate, the Health and Safety team, will also check for communal storage as part of the inspection. Building Safety Managers will also check communal areas as part of their building audits in high-risk buildings (7 stories and 18 metres or above). Staff managing the buildings and who have the relationship with the residents can also check areas as part of estate inspection and annual and general visits to residents.

We remove items which we deem dangerous or posing a risk. This would include e-bikes and e-scooters which are not allowed to be stored or charged in the communal areas and are a fire risk.

Within external outside common areas, storage of combustible material, will be limited to garden furniture where it has been provided by NHG.

Rubbish should be stored within designated areas, ideally in a purpose-built store, pending collection and disposal, and not dumped in non-designated areas. Paths and other defined access routes, some of which may be designated as emergency access routes, must be kept clear of obstructions.

For all other properties (not including Sheltered and Supported Housing) there will be zero tolerance of storage in the garden area unless the furniture has been provided by NHG or its managing agent.

9.0 Removal of Items Stored in the Communal Areas

Where a block operates a stay put policy NHG staff are to follow the process for removal of items found in the common areas by evoking the TORT process on the items found.

Where a block operates a full evacuation strategy (simultaneous evacuation) based on an alarmed system, Business areas will ensure a permanent notice is put up to advise residents that items found in the communal areas will be removed immediately as they are in the escape route and can be considered as dangerous items as the escape route needs to be clear at all times.

Where a site has a current waking watch on site but with no communal alarm system then the rules on items in the communal areas will be the same as with a block with an alarm system on site and a full evacuation strategy and items are to be removed immediately.

10.0 Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed every three years in an agreed policy review programme unless there are significant changes to legislation or regulation or deficiencies or where there are changes to best practice identified. If this occurs an immediate review will be initiated.

11.0 Our approach

We have not conducted a full diversity impact assessment. We recognise that the policy may have an impact on people with a disability or mobility problem however the health and safety of all residents is the overriding concern. There are no privacy impacts to this policy.

Document control

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