

# Safety in communal areas

## What this guide is about

This guide explains what you need to do to help keep communal areas safe for everyone.

## Who is this guide for

For people who live in a Progress Housing Group home.

## Bitesize summary

- The law says that we must make sure that our buildings and communal areas meet fire safety requirements
- You must not store personal items in communal areas. These could contribute to a fire or prevent people from leaving a building safely in the event of a fire
- Our caretaker service may be able to help you to remove large items.

**As your landlord, we have legal responsibilities for the property in which you live. This includes making sure any communal areas meet fire and safety regulations.**

## Communal areas

Communal areas are those to which everyone has access, including the entrance lobbies, landings, corridors,

stairwells, meter cupboards, lifts, open walkways, external pathways, and balconies.

## Keeping communal areas clear

The law says that we must make sure that our buildings and communal areas meet fire safety requirements. This means that if there was a fire, there must be nothing in the communal areas of your block of flats or scheme that could:

- Prevent people from escaping from the building
- Stop the fire services from carrying out their duties
- Give off toxic smoke and gas when burning
- Explode due to high temperatures (e.g. glass)
- Cause the fire to spread more quickly.

We want communal areas to feel like home too and we understand that people want to make communal areas welcoming and attractive. However, your safety and the safety of others is our utmost priority. Therefore, we have some rules about the use of the communal areas to keep everyone safe, particularly in the event of a fire:

- You can't store your possessions in the communal areas

- You can't leave any unwanted goods in the communal areas
- You can't display decorative items in the communal areas.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- Pushchairs
- Bicycles/motorbikes/mopeds
- Doormats
- Children's toys
- Artificial/live plants
- Decorative furniture, i.e. bookcases/tables
- Shoes, boots and trainers, including racks
- Electrical equipment
- Flammable liquids
- Mobility scooters
- Any other decorative items
- Washing lines/racks
- Items of furniture and goods waiting for disposal.

## **Putting up pictures**

In some instances, we may agree to a properly framed picture secured to the wall safely; however, only under the following conditions:

- Written permission is sought from, and agreed by, us
- Consultation is carried out with all tenants
- It does not cause an obstruction

- The size/amount is suitable for the area
- The picture can be removed at any time if requested.

## **Items left in the communal area**

We will aim to identify to whom the item(s) belong so we can request their removal; however, we may remove the item(s) immediately.

We may place the item(s) in the communal bin store area if there is one; however, if the item is still in the bin store area on the next inspection, it will be disposed of. If the issue continues, we may recharge the cost of the removal and tipping to the person who owned it or take action against a tenancy.

## **Safety**

There are plenty of steps you can take to minimise the risk for yourself and others and keep everyone safe.

### **Keep fire doors closed**

These usually form part of the fire protection of the building for both tenants and leaseholders. No alterations or replacement of doors should be made without our written consent. DO NOT interfere with or remove any door closer provided on a door. Also, DO NOT prop open any doors.

### **Be a safe and considerate smoker**

We operate a NO SMOKING Policy in all communal areas, which MUST be adhered to. This includes the use of e-cigarettes.

## **Fireproof your balcony**

If you have a balcony, any stored items such as furniture and decorative items must be fireproof. Storing or using barbecues, including disposables, fuel containers, patio heaters and gas bottles on your balcony is not allowed as they create a serious fire risk.

## **Dispose of your rubbish responsibly**

Please note that it is a breach of your tenancy/lease to dump rubbish. If rubbish is proven to have been left by you or your visitor, you will be charged for its removal.

## **Make sure any mobility aids, including scooters, are stored safely**

If you have a mobility aid currently stored in the communal area, please contact your housing officer urgently so we can discuss suitable storage solutions away from the communal area that do not create a fire safety risk.

## **Mind the gap!**

To try and prevent the spread of fire between flats, such as from gaps created by pipework, a fire-resistant sealant or similar is used to fill the gap. If you notice any gaps in your flat, please report this to us and we can arrange to have them fire-stopped.

## **Keep up-to-date with product recalls**

Occasionally, electrical white goods, such as fridge freezers and tumble dryers, are recalled by manufacturers because of a problem that could create a fire risk. You can find out if your white goods have been recalled and/

or register them for future reference at [www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/product-recalls/](http://www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/product-recalls/)

## **Regularly test your smoke alarm and carbon monoxide alarm**

Smoke and carbon monoxide alarms save lives by providing early warning and extra time for you to escape if there is a fire or a carbon monoxide leak.

It is very important that you test both alarms once a month to check that they are in good working order and to keep everyone safe.

## **Other ways we can help**

If you have any concerns about fire safety in your block or scheme, please contact us. We also have lots of useful information about fire safety on our website.

### **You may also be interested in**

- How to test your smoke alarm and carbon monoxide alarm
- Your annual gas check
- How we keep you home safe: asbestos, legionella, fire, electrical, and lifting equipment.

## Get in touch

The quickest way to get in touch is online at [www.progressgroup.org.uk](http://www.progressgroup.org.uk) by:

- Logging into your online tenant account
- Emailing us
- Live chat – available Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm.

You can also:

- Call us on 0333 320 4555
- Visit or write to us - Sumner House, 21 King Street, Leyland, Lancashire, PR25 2LW.

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## Report or track a repair or check your rent balance

You can pay your rent, check your rent balance and report or track a non-emergency repair online 24/7.

Log in or sign up for your online tenant account at [www.progressgroup.org.uk](http://www.progressgroup.org.uk)

## Complaints and compliments

Your feedback is very important to us and helps us to improve our services. If you want to tell us that we have been doing something well or are unhappy about something, please tell us using the contact details on the left.

Our Complaints Policy and process follow the standards set out in the Housing Ombudsmen's Complaint Handling Code. You can read more on our website or let us know if you would like a leaflet.

## Information in another format or language

This leaflet is available in the following formats:

- EasyRead
- Audio
- Large print
- Braille
- Other languages.

More information is available at [www.progressgroup.org.uk/access](http://www.progressgroup.org.uk/access)