

MOBILITY SCOOTER POLICY

Introduction

Dacorum Borough Council (DBC) recognises that a number of its tenants/leaseholders may wish to own a mobility scooter to allow them to be fully mobile and live independently.

Due to an ageing population and the increase in the availability of mobility scooters it is important that a policy is put in place to ensure scooter users understand what is required of them while living in council owned properties.

There have been a number of fires caused by mobility scooters that have been reported in the press. All mobility scooter users, Housing staff and Councillors need to be aware of the potential risks involved. As a landlord, DBC has a duty to ensure residents comply with all the requirements placed on them by the council relating to the storage and use of their mobility scooters.

The aim of this policy is to protect the safety of all residents, visitors, staff and contractors in DBC Housing premises whilst not restricting a person's independence.

General

To comply with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, DBC carries out Fire Risk Assessments at Sheltered Housing Schemes and general needs blocks. The increasing presence of mobility scooters in DBC buildings has become apparent and requires management. Appendix 2 details the classes and regulations that apply to these vehicles.

Fire Risk

Government fire safety recommendations state that escape routes must not be compromised by items that could act as a source of ignition or trip hazard. DBC has adopted a "zero tolerance" approach and has implemented a clear landings policy and procedure to manage this effectively. Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service and DBC's fire safety consultant, Safety Solutions (Northampton) Ltd have advised that mobility scooter storage and charging should not be permitted in escape routes. The fire service has the right to issue enforcement notices if these conditions are not met.

When mobility scooters are stored and charged in sterile areas this places an unacceptable risk to occupiers, visitors, staff and contractors. Mobility scooters present a potential source of ignition and increased fire loading. If involved in fire they can release large amounts of highly toxic smoke and gases. A fire in a mobility scooter could affect the means of escape and place an unacceptable risk to all occupiers within the building. The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 would expect such risks to be mitigated. Therefore storage of scooters is prohibited in communal areas of properties owned by DBC.

Number:	DBC	Title:			
Owner:					Last Review

Before Purchasing a Mobility Scooter

None of DBC's existing council housing stock has been designed or adapted to accommodate the safe storage, charging and use of mobility scooters. Storage inside tenants/leaseholders dwellings may not be advisable, particularly where space is limited and the scooter obstructs safe evacuation from the property in an emergency.

Existing residents who owned a scooter before this policy was introduced –

Residents who already owned a scooter before the introduction of this policy will be able to use storage facilities in supported housing schemes where available. However, they must undergo an annual proficiency test and their scooter must be annually serviced. Although there is no provision for scooter storage in general needs properties, DBC will work with these residents to find alternative suitable storage, particularly if the scooter is being stored in a communal area. Residents in general needs properties must undergo the same proficiency test and servicing arrangements as those in supported housing.

Existing residents wishing to transfer –

If existing residents wish to transfer to alternative accommodation, DBC will advise them where to go for an Occupational Therapist's (OT) assessment. This must be carried out before a scooter is brought to a scheme or block of flats and will cost the resident up to £40. This involves a proficiency test to ensure the user can drive a scooter safely and must be repeated annually with the servicing of the scooter. This ensures residents they are still able to drive the scooter safely. Scooter users must provide copies of their service and assessment documents to the council on request.

- **Supported Housing Schemes:** If the assessment indicates a genuine need for a scooter, the request will be referred to the Supported Housing Officer (SHO) who will check if storage is available. The SHO will manage a waiting list with places to be allocated on a first come first served basis. When a scheme has no further storage capacity, no more requests will be granted until another space becomes available. If a resident wishes to pass their scooter on to another resident, this should be brought to the attention of the SHO who can ensure the space is allocated fairly. This process is explained in the Procedure – managing scooter spaces within Supported Housing.
- **General needs properties:** If the assessment indicates a genuine need for a scooter, the request will be directed to the Aids and Adaptations Surveyors. This process is explained in the Procedure for identifying safe storage locations for mobility scooters.

Potential tenants – As with existing tenants all home seeker applicants must have an assessment and proficiency test by an organisation specified by DBC before they buy a scooter.

- **Supported Housing Schemes:** Housing Options will liaise with the SHO to establish whether a suitable storage space is available. Where no space is available, the applicant will be advised that the scheme or property is not suitable. This process is explained in the procedure for allocating property to mobility scooter owners.

Number:	DBC	Title:				
Owner:						Last Review

- **General needs properties:** These applications must also be assessed. This process is explained in the procedure for allocating property to mobility scooter owners. Home seeker applicants owning a scooter will not be offered flats above ground floor. Scooters are not permitted within lifts due to the increased fire risk and damage caused to the lift mechanism. Tenants with scooters need to be aware of this when bidding for properties online.

Right to refuse requests

DBC has defined which of its' Supported Housing Schemes have the potential for scooter storage and those which do not (see Appendix 1). If an application is made at a scheme that has been defined unsuitable for scooters, the request will be declined. It will also be declined if any existing storage facility is full.

Requests will be refused if a scooter cannot be located safely and may cause a risk to its owner or other residents. DBC reserves the right to enforce this policy and remove any scooter that is brought into its premises without permission.

Tenants must be fit and able to use a mobility scooter and control it safely. The ability of a tenant to get either on or off a mobility scooter must be achieved without assistance from DBC staff. Should the health of the scooter owner deteriorate and affect their ability to operate it safely, DBC reserves the right to remove the scooter. DBC may claim against a tenant for any damage caused by to its property by the use of their scooter.

Maintenance

Scooter owners must ensure their scooters are serviced annually. This service will ensure the scooter is safe and in good working order. Evidence of this should be provided on request.

Implementation

Once the policy has been implemented it will apply to all future requests from tenants/leaseholders that do not already own a scooter. Those tenants/leaseholders who currently own a scooter and/or have undergone adaptations to their property will not require a retrospective OT assessment unless there is a safety issue with their existing storage arrangements.

Number:	DBC	Title:			
Owner:					Last Review

Appendix 1

SCHEME	Is the scheme suitable for someone with a mobility scooter?	Comments
Bede Court	Yes	In individual gardens
Betty Patterson House	Yes	Only one space available at the moment
Chapel Street	No	Not suitable
Christopher Court	Yes	No facilities currently
Compass Point	Yes	No facilities currently
Cranford	Yes	Garage will be converted by Autumn 2013
Douglas Gardens / Lagley House	Yes	Some charging sheds available but limited
The Driftway	Yes	No facilities currently
Dudley House	Yes	No facilities currently
Elizabeth House	Yes	No facilities currently
Emma Rothschild Court	Yes	No facilities currently
Evelyn Sharp House	Yes	Garage will be converted by Autumn 2013
Florence Longman House	Yes	No facilities currently
Gilbert Burnet House	Yes	Limited space available
Gravel Lane / The Rowans	Yes	Bungalows only as they have a garden
Grovehill	No	Not suitable
Holly Tree Court	No	Not suitable
Leys Road	No	Not suitable
Mayflower Avenue	Yes	No facilities currently
Oaklawn	Yes	No facilities currently
Old House Road	Yes	Bungalows only as they have a garden
Phyllis Courtnage House	Yes	No facilities currently
Pond Close	Yes	Some facilities subject to availability
Rice Close	Yes	7 Spaces available in new storage
Saturn Way	Yes	No facilities currently
Southernwood Close	Yes	Bungalows only as there is a large shed
Sursham Court	No	Not suitable for MS
Two Beeches	Yes	Garage will be converted by end of summer 2013
Varney Road	Yes	No facilities currently
William Crook House	Yes	Some facilities subject to availability
Willow Edge	Yes	Some facilities subject to availability

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Appendix 2

Powered scooters are defined as “invalid carriages” under the Use of Invalid Carriages on Highways regulations 1988. Before purchasing a mobility scooter from a reputable supplier, users should undergo training on the usage and control of the scooter. This should be provided by the company selling the scooter. Regulations separate these vehicles into three classes:

- **Class 1** – this policy does not include manual or electrically powered wheelchairs;
- **Class 2** - machines designed for use on the pavement, travelling at a speed of up to 4mph. They may also be used on the road to cross from one pavement to another or where no pavement is available.
- **Class 3** – applies to machines that can be used both on the pavement where, like class 2 vehicles, they are limited to 4mph and on the road where they can travel at up to 8mph. These vehicles are required by law to be registered with the DVLA for road use. These vehicles will be licensed in the disabled taxation class and must display a nil duty tax disc. Class 3 vehicles can only be used by a disabled person aged 14 or over. Users must have insurance and be registered with the DVLA if their vehicle is in class 3.

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