



# Safety in Communal Areas Policy

Last reviewed July 2019

# 1.0 Safety in Communal Areas Policy overview

This policy is managed and adhered to by the housing service. This policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure alignment with government legislation, guidance and good practice.

## Contents

### 1.0 Policy overview

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Aim(s) of the policy
- 1.3 Links to the Council's corporate aims
- 1.4 Equality and diversity
- 1.5 Policy statement

### 2.0 Safety and communal areas policy detail

- 2.1 Zero tolerance approach
- 2.2 Taking action to keep residents safe
- 2.3 Repairs and maintenance
- 2.4 Use of communal areas

### 3.0 Links to other corporate strategies and policies

### 4.0 Legislation

## 1.1 Introduction

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

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. These include:

- Entrances;
- Communal landings;
- Communal lounges in supported schemes;
- The roof and gutters on a block of flats;
- Shared stairways, balconies and access paths; and
- Shared gardens parking areas.

For the purpose of this policy, loft spaces in blocks of flats and cupboards in communal areas are also included. They are not, however, to be used for the storage of possessions or accessed by tenants at any time.

## 1.2 Aim(s) of the policy:

The aims of this policy are to;

- 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;
- Ensure all repairs and maintenance can be safely carried out in communal areas;
- Allow communal areas to be used in the best possible way for the benefit of tenants, leaseholders, staff and visitors; and
- Ensure communal areas can be used safely to evacuate in the event of an emergency.

## 1.3 Links to Council's corporate aims:

This policy supports the council's corporate priorities which are set out in ['Delivering for Dacorum – Corporate Plan 2015-2020'](#).

## 1.4 Equality and diversity

The council is committed to promoting equality of opportunity in housing services and has procedures in place to ensure that all Applicants, Tenants and Leaseholders are treated fairly and without unlawful discrimination.

## 1.5 Policy Statement(s)

We will take a zero tolerance approach to ensuring communal areas are kept safe and clear (see 2.1).

We will be proactive in ensuring communal areas are clear and will take action against residents where necessary (see 2.2).

We will ensure that repairs and planned maintenance are carried out in communal areas promptly and with minimal inconvenience to residents (see 2.3).

When possible, we will take opportunities to improve communal areas to make them more convenient and enjoyable for residents (see 2.3)

We will take action against individuals who risk the health and safety of themselves or other people in communal areas (see 2.4)

# 2.0 Safety in Communal Areas

## Policy detail

### 2.1) Zero tolerance approach

DBC 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 ask our residents to keep internal/enclosed communal areas clear and take a zero tolerance approach to 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.

### 2.2) Taking action to keep residents safe

Our Neighbourhood Support Officers regularly inspect our estates and properties 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;
- Fly-tipped items and dumped rubbish will be reported for removal and safe disposal; and
- Any litter or broken glass (including items in waste and recycling areas that have not been disposed of correctly) will be reported for clearance and safe disposal.

In line with our Recharge Policy, a charge will 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.

### 2.3) 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, except in supported housing schemes where we also clean windows of tenants' homes.

The housing cleaning service and neighbourhood teams will report repairs they identify in communal areas. Tenants and Leaseholders are also asked to report 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](#).

We recognise that attractive, clean communal areas promote a sense of pride and well-being for the residents of our blocks. Our programme of estate improvements provides refurbished drying areas, bin stores, communal gardens and in some cases additional parking for residents to use. We also ensure that, wherever possible, communal areas are well lit so residents can feel safe when accessing them.

### 2.4) Use of communal areas

We understand that there may be occasions where residents would like to make use of communal areas around their home and we acknowledge that residents' different lifestyles may sometimes lead to conflict.

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.

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.

## 3.0

### Links to other corporate documents

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

- Tenancy Agreement
- Fire Safety Policy
- Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
- Handling Tenants Goods Policy
- Recharge Policy

## 4.0

### Legislation

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

- Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982
- 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