



City of London Housing Service

**Fire Safety Protocol
Communal Areas in Residential Buildings**

1. Equal Opportunities

The City of London Corporation operates an Equality & Diversity policy and this applies to all aspects of its services. We will ensure that no resident or service user is treated less favourably on the grounds of age, race, religion or belief, disability, sex, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, pregnancy or maternity, marriage or civil partnership status. This protocol and all related information can be made available in different formats and languages on request.

2. Aims

We are committed to providing safe homes for our residents.

The aims of this protocol are:

- To allow the landlord to carry out its obligations regarding the communal areas.
- To limit the 'allowable items' in communal areas in order to reduce both the risk and severity of fires, by controlling combustible materials.
- To remove the risk of items causing an obstruction to access or exit routes in the event of an emergency.
- To inform residents what steps will be taken where an item is inappropriately located or stored.
- To continue to allow residents to make their communal areas welcoming and encourage a sense of pride and value to the building while maintaining a safe environment.

3. Legislative and regulatory framework

- The Furniture and Furnishings (Fire Safety) Regulations 1988 (as amended in 1989, 1993 and 2010)
- Building Regulations 2010
- Housing Act 2004
- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (FSO)

There is an overlap between the Housing Act and the FSO. The Housing Act applies to the common parts and the flats themselves; common parts also fall within the scope of the FSO

This protocol has been developed with regard to the London Fire Brigade's general good practice and where relevant, specific advice provided on the occasion of visits to our estates.

4. Scope of the protocol

The protocol applies to the City of London Housing Service's owned and managed residential properties on 12 social housing estates.

5. Access

All access routes including stairs, hallways, walkways and pathways in communal areas are to be kept clear at all times. The minimum width is 900mm. Where an access route is physically wider than 900mm, a clear width of 1200mm wide is required to enable access for persons using wheelchairs, mobility scooters or equivalent.

6. Doors

The front entrance door to each property is owned by the City of London Corporation. Residents must not alter the door without permission, this includes replacing the door or adding further security measures such as metal gates.

7. Alterations to Communal Areas

Residents may not make alterations to communal areas. Including, but not limited to actions such as propping a door open or installing items such as fencing.

8. Alterations to Shared Access Routes

The design of some properties incorporates an emergency exit route, for example across the balconies or through a wooden panel. Where these emergency exit routes are shared between properties, residents must ensure these routes are maintained, they must be kept free from obstruction and additional security measures such as locks must not be added onto them.

9. Items in Communal Areas

The City reserves the right to remove any items left/ disposed of in the communal areas without limitation should they be causing a fire risk or block access/exit routes. The list below sets out some common items that may be affected by this protocol, however, it is not exhaustive.

i. Highly Flammable Items

Highly flammable items including, but not limited to candles, tea lights, religious candles, lanterns, wick lights 'shrines' or equivalent are not permitted in communal areas.

ii. Plants and Trees

If placed on suitable surface, plants may be located adjacent to the external wall of a residents' property if they wish. The plants and containers they are stored in must not extend to a depth greater than 450mm. Foliage from plants must extend no higher than 1200mm. Trellises or climbing plants above the height of 1200mm are not permitted.

Trees in planters are not to exceed a height of 2100mm with a diameter of no more than 600mm. Planters for trees must be of a diameter of no more than 400mm.

Hanging baskets brackets are to project no further than 300mm and the bracket must have no section lower than 1975mm from the floor. The basket may hang lower.

Planters on railings must be securely affixed and not hang externally over railing.

No flower pots or equivalent are to be placed on window sills or ledges.

The City of London reserves the right, after undertaking a risk assessment to allow limited planters in demarcated areas designated by CoL staff. These will not extend to a depth of more than 450mm.

iii. Furniture

Depending on layout of an area, including ensuring the 900mm minimum width of any access routes is maintained at all points; some furniture may be used in the communal areas however it must be stored away within the residents' property when not in use.

Tenants with individual balconies may leave small quantities of patio or garden furniture outside. If any soft furnishings are used, they must comply with The Furniture and Furnishings (Fire Safety) Regulations 1988 (as amended in 1989, 1993 and 2010) which set levels of fire resistance for domestic upholstered furniture, furnishings and other products containing upholstery. No other items are to be stored on the balconies.

iv. Mobility Scooters, Prams, Buggies and Bicycles

All devices must be stored within the resident's home wherever possible. They may also be placed in designated sheds or garages where these are available and suitable for this use.

If they must be stored within the communal area, they are not allowed to be stored in the escape routes from the premises or block access through the communal access routes.

If the mobility scooter or equivalent device is required to be charged within a communal area, the charging location must not block access routes, the power lead must not create a trip hazard and a Residual Current Device (RCD) must be used.

v. Doormats

It is acceptable to place a single door mat outside each flat entrance door to assist people in protecting the inside of their property. The mat may only be placed directly in front of the door. Mats may not be placed at the top of stairs or cause a tripping hazard.

The mat must have a non-slip backing material, be in good condition and free from curling edges. A maximum size; the width of the door x 450mm (18in) depth (i.e. projecting into the communal area) is permitted. The placement of rugs, runners, carpet off cuts and carpet tiles within communal areas is not acceptable. Example below:



10. Barbeques

Barbeques are not permitted on balconies or communal walkways within residential buildings. Where appropriate risk assessments and insurance provisions are in place, events may be held which include barbeques in communal areas such as gardens or podiums.

11. Smoking in Communal Areas

It is illegal to smoke in all public enclosed or substantially enclosed areas. On estates this legislation extends to communal areas such as stairs, hallways, walkways, balconies, building under crofts, car parks and car park areas.

12. Risk Assessments

Fire Risk Assessments are carried out in every block, every year. Where there is a relevant change during the year, a further Risk Assessment will be carried out.

13. Enforcement Action

Where a breach of this protocol is noted, and the threat posed is immediate and/or it is high risk, the Estate Team will immediately remedy the breach.

Where a breach of this protocol is noted, and the threat posed is not immediate and/or it is medium to low risk, the Estate Team will write to the resident (where known), informing them of the breach, and giving the resident 7 days to remedy the situation. If an item is required to be removed to remedy a breach, a notice may also be placed on the item.

If the resident has not taken the appropriate action after 7 days, the Estate Team will remedy the breach, e.g. by removing inappropriately located items.

If remedying a breach involves removing any item, the Estate Team will store it elsewhere if it is safe to do so, or dispose of it where necessary. The resident, if known, will be informed regarding the action that has been taken and how they may retrieve their possessions.

If the Estate Team cannot remedy the breach, legal action will be undertaken in accordance with the applicable tenancy agreement or lease.

14. Exceptions

If any resident requests an exception to this protocol, the Estate Manager will consult with the City's Fire Safety Advisor and the Head of Estates. They may also carry out an additional Risk Assessment, or seek information from the London Fire Brigade before confirming the decision in writing.

15. Monitoring the protocol

Adherence with this protocol will be monitored by each Estate Manager and enforcement action taken as necessary.

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