

RUNNYMEDE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Communal Area Policy

Review due: June 2029

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This policy applies to the management of all internal and external communal areas in Council-owned blocks of flats and Independent Retirement Living (IRL) schemes.
- 1.2 A communal area is any internal or external area that is a shared space within a property or housing estate.

2. Aim

- 2.1 The aim of this policy is to:
 - Ensure the health and safety of residents, staff and visitors when in a communal area
 - Minimise the risk of items causing obstruction
 - Ensure safe evacuation in the event of an emergency
 - Provide guidance in relation to the use of communal areas
- 2.2 This policy provides a framework for how communal areas will be managed and what is expected from tenants, leaseholders, their household members and their visitors.

3. Scope, Definition and Legislation

3.1 This policy seeks to comply with the following legislation:

- Fire Safety Act 2021
- Building Safety Act 2022
- Housing Act 2004
- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Torts (Interference with Goods) 1977
- Building Regulations 2010
- Equality Act 2010

3.2 Communal areas are those parts of a house, block of flats, street or estate which tenants and leaseholders have a right to use in common with other tenants and leaseholders and for which the Council is responsible for maintaining. This includes but is not limited to:

- Communal hallways
- Lounges
- Communal kitchens
- Communal libraries, conservatories, hair dressing spaces
- Laundries
- Bin stores
- Shared stairways, lifts, doors, windows, balconies and access paths
- Shared gardens
- Parking areas
- Communal walkways and grassed areas
- Garage areas

3.3 The following are not communal areas as access to them is restricted:

- Loft spaces
- Service cupboards such as electrical equipment, meter cupboards and fire cupboards
- Cleaning stores and equipment rooms

3.4 **A TORTs notice** is a legal document which can be served to the owner of an item left abandoned on private land. The Torts (Interference with Goods) Act 1977 allows landlords to sell or dispose of goods, if reasonable efforts to trace the owner fail. A risk-based approach will be followed to determine timeframes for removal of items and possible storage.

3.5 **A statutory off-road notification (SORN)** is when you take a vehicle off the road and stop taxing and insuring it.

4. Internal Communal Areas

- 4.1 Communal areas are not an extension of individual properties. For safety reasons, the Council operates a 'zero tolerance', which means no residents items should be left or stored in any internal communal areas, unless written permission has been provided by the Council. Common items found but not restricted to:
- Patio heaters and barbecues
 - Motorcycles, mopeds and petrol driven equipment
 - Mobility scooters, wheelchairs, walking frames
 - Any recycling or waste
 - Clothes, shoes and clothes drying equipment
 - Any electrical equipment including extension leads and festive lights
 - Gardening equipment
 - Festive decorations including Christmas and Halloween decorations and Christmas trees
 - Prams, buggies, bicycles and scooters
 - Children's toys
 - Any items of furniture for example, chairs, tables, storage units and mattresses
 - Door mats, carpets, rugs and runners
 - Plant pots, plants and artificial flowers
 - Paint, flammable liquids, and other items which could be a fire hazard or an obstruction to an escape route
- 4.2 Residents and their households and visitors must not cause a nuisance in communal areas.
- 4.3 Animals must be kept under control when in communal areas, which includes dogs on a lead, and any animal foul including spraying is cleaned up.
- 4.4 Residents, their household members and their visitors are not permitted to smoke or vape within the internal communal areas or to participate in any criminal activity.
- 4.5 Where appropriate the Council will give written notice, to the owner of an item(s) left in a communal area. If not removed within the required timescale the Council will remove the item(s) and the owner may be charged for its disposal.
- 4.6 If items left in a communal area pose a risk that the Council consider significant, we may take immediate action to remove them without notification.
- 4.7 Residents are not permitted to charge / power any personal items from communal supplies.

- 4.8 Tenancy / Leasehold enforcement action or other appropriate legal action which could include prosecution and or fixed penalty notice may be taken to enforce the health and safety of communal areas.
- 4.9 Residents have a responsibility to report to the Council items left in communal areas, especially if causing a nuisance or hazard.
- 4.10 Mobility scooters and other mobility aids must not be stored or charged in communal areas due to the associated fire and safety risks. For residents who require a mobility scooter or other mobility aids, due to a disability, the Council will review possible alternative arrangements, such as but not limited to storage facilities. This will be on a case-by-case basis and the options available.

5. Communal Areas within Independent Retirement Living schemes

- 5.1 Communal areas within IRL schemes are primarily for the use and enjoyment of residents across the scheme. We want to encourage the use of communal lounges in IRL schemes so residents can gather, interact and engage in social activities. All activities should be in keeping with the residents of the schemes and be relevant for all residents.

Example of activities the lounges can be used for, but not limited to:

- Family visits, in the company of the resident they are visiting
- Approved events such as celebrations, wakes and birthday gatherings
- Group activities for example, exercise classes
- Residents' meetings with Council officers
- Gatherings with other residents, for example coffee mornings

All residents are welcome to access the communal lounges, even during events and activities. All activities should be requested and approved by the IRL management.

- 5.2 The Council will decline requests for inappropriate use of the lounges.
- 5.3 Residents and their guests must conduct themselves respectfully in communal lounges. Lounges should not be used by individuals who are intoxicated or under the influence of substances. Inappropriate behaviour by residents or their guests may result in enforcement of the tenancy agreement or lease.
- 5.4 All IRL schemes have a communal laundry with several washing machines and tumble dryers available for residents' use.
- 5.5 The laundries run on a 'first come, first served' basis, unless the scheme has a rota system in place. Local arrangements should be agreed by residents of the scheme.

6. External Communal Areas

- 6.1 Outside areas should be kept clear of personal items and waste. Wheelie bins should be stored in the appropriate bin storage areas or an area not likely to cause an obstruction.
- 6.2 Bulky waste should not be placed in the communal bin store areas and residents need to ensure such items are taken away and disposed of appropriately. If a resident is found to have fly tipped items in the bin store or in other communal areas they may be charged for removal of the item(s), fined and could be subject to tenancy agreement or lease enforcement action.
- 6.3 Barbecues and any cooking in the communal areas is prohibited.
- 6.4 Residents must park responsibly and in designated parking areas. If there is a 'resident only' scheme in operation, this must be adhered to.
- 6.5 Trailers, caravans, boats, motor homes, or large vehicles should not be left in communal areas where they can cause a nuisance, for example, parking spaces, communal grassed areas or verges, garage areas or shared garden areas.
- 6.6 If vehicle repairs are essential to enable movement of the vehicle in a short time limited period, the work must not cause an obstruction or unreasonable inconvenience, and the area must be left clean and tidy.
- 6.7 We do not permit residents to store vehicles on our land with a SORN declaration.
- 6.8 If a resident parks a vehicle with a SORN on our land, without written permission, we consider it to be unlicensed and may seek to remove it or take legal action, such as serving an injunction for a breach of tenancy.
- 6.9 Where we believe a vehicle is abandoned, we will undertake relevant checks to try to establish ownership and check to ensure one of the criteria are met. To be eligible for removal, the vehicle must meet several of the following criteria:
 - No road tax (Vehicle Excise Duty)
 - No MOT
 - No valid insurance
 - Has obvious signs of abandonment e.g., broken windows, flat tyres, general poor conditions
- 6.10 If the vehicle meets several of the above criteria appropriate action will be taken by the Council.

7. Consultation

- 7.1 The Tenant's Neighbourhood and Communities group was consulted, and their feedback has been incorporated into the policy.

8. Monitoring and performance management

- 8.1 We will monitor the actions taken under this policy to monitor its effectiveness and aim to review this policy in 3 years to ensure it reflects current legislation and latest examples of best practice.

9. Equalities Implications

- 9.1 An Equality Impact Assessment screening was carried out to assess whether this Policy complies with the Council's public sector equality duty. The screening found that this policy does not require a full impact assessment as the policy. Overall, this policy should have a positive impact as it provides clear guidance on the use of communal areas to ensure the safety for all using communal areas.

10. Related Documents

- Tenancy Agreement
- Antisocial Behaviour Policy
- Fire Risk Management Policy
- Balcony Safety Policy
- Recharge Policy
- CCTV Policy
- Mobility Scooter Policy
- Pet Policy

11. Version Control

Version Number	Date Amended	Comments	Date Approved	Author	Approved By
V1	February 24	Use of IRL Communal Lounges Policy	November 22	Luisa Cantore	Housing Committee
V2	January 26	Policy rewritten to include all communal areas (not just IRL schemes) and renamed	June 2026	Daniel Lloyd	Housing Committee

