



EKAYA HOUSING ASSOCIATION

Communal Area Management Policy

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This policy sets out how Ekaya Housing Association (Ekaya) aims to ensure that all Internal and external communal areas are managed effectively and are kept free from obstructions or hazards to protect the health and safety of all residents and other users of the buildings.
- 1.2. Ekaya has a responsibility to ensure all communal areas are accessible and free from hazards so that residents can exit the building safely and as quickly as possible in the event of an emergency.
- 1.3. This will also allow emergency services easy access to the property or person in need of assistance.
- 1.4. This policy provides a framework for how communal areas will be managed and what is expected from residents. **A zero-tolerance** approach will be used when it comes to enforcing this policy.

2. Objectives

- 2.1. The objectives of this policy are to maintain safe and clean shared areas by:
 - Setting a clear, consistent approach to managing shared areas, taking account of local needs and the type of shared areas that are present.
 - Setting a service standard for the level of tolerance to the presence of belongings in shared areas will ensure Ekaya meets its obligations related to compliance with relevant legislation including fire safety and accessibility requirements.
 - Explaining how personal and unauthorised belongings in shared areas will be removed, including general timescales.
 - Explaining how we will communicate the approach taken in shared areas clearly and transparently to customers who use them.
 - To reduce the risk of fire or other safety hazards in shared areas by controlling the presence of sources of ignition and combustible materials and exit route obstructions.

3. Aims

This policy aims to:

- Ensure the health and safety of all when in a communal area.

- Ensure that communal areas are kept clear so that residents can be safely evacuated in the event of an emergency.
- Ensure that all internal and external communal areas are managed effectively and kept free from obstructions or hazards.
- Provide clear advice to residents to minimise the risks of items causing an obstruction to access routes in the event of an emergency.
- Outline the steps that will be taken if items are found within either internal or external communal areas.

4. Definitions

- 4.1. For this policy, a “shared area” is any area owned by Ekaya which is not within the confines of a customer’s property or for their sole use, and to which customers can access.
- 4.2. Shared areas include corridors, landings, lifts, stairwells, meter cupboards, intake cupboard basements, bin stores, external common gardens, open walkways and communal balconies, communal lounges, entrances to buildings and car parking areas.

5. Legal Framework

- 5.1. The policy will have due regard to local policies and procedures as well as national legislation, which include the following, but the list is not exhaustive:
- Fire Safety Act 2021
 - Building Safety Act 2022
 - Housing Act 1985 as amended
 - Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
 - Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
 - The Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022
 - Torts (Interference with Goods) 1977
 - Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014

6. Approach to Shared Areas

- 6.1. Ekaya's approach to shared areas will be managed with a zero-tolerance approach. This means that no belongings are allowed within communal areas under any circumstances.

6.2. Shared areas, even those adjacent to a resident's property, are not an extension of their property and therefore should not be used for personal effects or storage of any kind.

6.3. Ekaya Housing residents are expected to keep all shared areas both internal and external safe.

- If using shared areas, customers are expected to clear away all personal belongings and effects after use and store them within their homes.
- Rubbish must be disposed of correctly and use the correct refuse facilities and designated areas.
- Obstructions to any fire equipment including smoke alarms, fire doors and exit routes are not permitted.
- In all circumstances, front doors must not be compromised by drill, tack, or screws – this could compromise the integrity of fire safety doors.

7. Use of Communal Areas

7.1. Use of Communal areas, even those immediately adjacent to a resident's property, is not an extension of an individual's property.

7.2. As such residents should not use these areas for their personal effects or have exclusive use particularly where access to communal facilities/areas is required by other residents.

8. Personal Items in Communal Areas

8.1. Ekaya will operate a 'zero tolerance' approach to any items stored in any internal or external communal areas. Residents and their visitors must ensure that they keep all communal areas free from their personal belongings.

8.2. Items may include but are not limited to rubbish and items awaiting disposal, furnishings such as mats and flowerpots, bicycles, tricycles, pushchairs, footwear, motorised cycles, scooters and mobility scooters. This ensures that we reduce any health, safety and fire hazards and are free of combustible materials, ignition sources and obstructions.

8.3. Smoking is not permitted within internal communal areas / shared facilities.

9. Shared Gardens

- 9.1. Shared Garden areas provide opportunities for residents to become involved in the community in which they live, and Ekaya will take a common-sense approach to balance health and safety with the opportunity for residents to enjoy outdoor areas.
- 9.2. Ekaya does not allow play equipment to be used in any communal areas, for example:
- Trampolines (caged or uncaged)
 - Swings
 - Climbing frames
 - Playhouses
 - Large Paddling pools
 - Inflatable equipment, such as bouncy castles
 - Barbecues grills
- 9.3. Barbecues are not permitted in any shared areas (both internal and external shared areas).
- 9.4. Large play equipment must not be left in shared garden areas when not in use (such as trampolines, swings, climbing frames, paddling pools or inflatable play equipment such as bouncy castles).
- 9.5. Paddling pools and any other play equipment involving water must be emptied and removed from the shared areas when not in use.
- 9.6. All play equipment must be removed from shared garden areas when not in use. If items are not stored for any reason, and not in use, then these items will be removed.

10. Balconies

- 10.1. Although included within some properties, residents using their balconies should be free of fire hazards. The balconies should be kept clean and tidy and not cause any damage or nuisance such as when watering plants, smoking etc.
- 10.2. The following items are not permitted on balconies:
- Fairy lights
 - Barbeques
 - Fireworks
 - Combustible screening
 - Outdoor patio heater/ flame pit
 - White goods including fridges, washing machines etc.
 - Flammable items

11. Mobility Scooters

- 11.1. Mobility scooters are not allowed to be driven, nor have the batteries recharged within communal areas.

12. Smoking in communal areas

- 12.1. Ekaya maintains a strict no-smoking policy in all internal communal areas, which must be adhered to as per the Health Act 2006. There is signage in the communal areas reminding residents of this.
- 12.2. Residents may smoke in their own homes, but where the front door leads out to a communal hallway, it must remain closed.

13. Pets in communal spaces

- 13.1. Residents are responsible for any damage caused to their home or shared area by any animal kept in the home or visiting their property.
- 13.2. Dogs should not be left unattended for any length of time or allowed off their lead in a communal garden or communal areas of the building. It is the resident's responsibility to clean up after any animal kept in the home, premises or visiting their property.

14. Car park and garages

- 14.1. Car parks and garages are for parking vehicles or storage purposes for garages so long as residents do not store any of the following:
- petrol or other inflammable liquid, gas, or material
 - pets, animals, or livestock – whether living or not
 - Weapons, firearms, fireworks, or gunpowder
 - stolen goods or stolen vehicles
 - Alcohol and tobacco
 - illegal drugs or immoral activities
 - operate a business from the garage or rent out your parking bay.

15. Implementation

- 15.1. As part of Ekaya's commitment to fire safety within communal areas, we will make sure that all communal areas are inspected regularly. In considering whether a communal area is fire-safe, and taking into account Fire Risk Assessment recommendations, we will decide on actions appropriate to managing communal areas safely.

For example, this could include:

- New/additional fire safety signage
- Block letters reminding residents of their obligations
- Removal of combustible / non-allowable items.

15.2. To minimise the risk of trip hazards which in the event of a fire could impact evacuation these areas must be unobstructed– no items are to be stored/left in the communal areas.

15.3. Combustible items will be removed without notice. Such items include:

- Washing Machines/tumble dryers and other white goods
- Electric E- Scooters and the charging of E scooters
- Motorcycles
- LFG Gas tanks and cylinders
- Paints
- Any electrical equipment
- Items are stored in electric and intake cupboards.

15.4. Other combustible items will be issued with a 7-day TORTS removal notice enabling the resident to make alternative storage arrangements. Such items include:

- Bicycles/ tricycles
- Doormats
- Children's toys and play furniture
- Clothes/dryers
- Pictures
- Plants/flowerpots
- Pushchairs / Buggies/children's car seats
- Refuse bags
- Wooden furniture / upholstered seating
- Shopping Trolleys
- Shoes
- Gardening equipment
- Exercise equipment
- Rugs or runners
- Any other items identified as a fire hazard or an obstruction to an escape route.

16. Enforcement Action

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- 16.1. Ekaya Housing prioritises a commitment to provide safe and clean neighbourhoods and shared areas, and enforcement action is only pursued when all other options to resolve the issues are exhausted.
- 16.2. Where customers persist in inappropriately misusing or storing items in shared areas Ekaya Housing may be required to take enforcement action.
- 16.3. Before removing any item(s) Ekaya Housing will apply a 7day TORTS notice detailing the time frame in which we will arrange removal of the item(s).
- 16.4. Ekaya Housing will remove and dispose of any personal items that are inappropriately stored in shared areas by the TORTS (INTERFERENCE WITH GOODS) ACT 1977
- 16.5. Ekaya Housing will not be responsible for the loss of these items and under no circumstances will compensation be paid for items which have been disposed of by our policy & procedure. Other methods of enforcement action which Ekaya Housing may use could take the form of:
- Injunctions
 - Tenancy enforcement actions
- 16.6. Ekaya Housing reserves the right to recharge the resident(s) involved for any costs associated with removals or enforcement actions at any stage including if items are removed and the owners are identified after removal. Ekaya's Recharge Policy will apply in this instance.

17. POLICY APPROVAL

This policy will be reviewed once every three years except where there is a need to take account of any changes to legislation, regulation or good practice.

Approval Date:	April 2024
Approval By:	Policy & Performance Committee
Policy Owner:	Head of Operations
Consultation Completed:	April 2024
Next Review Date:	May 2027