

Policy title:	Management of Fire Risks in Communal Areas.		
Scope:	Group-wide		
Policy owner:	Head of Neighbourhoods		
Approver:	Senior Management Team		
Date:	November 2025	Review Due Date:	November 2028

1. PURPOSE

1.1 Aspire Housing makes it clear when it rents or sells a property what land the customer or owner is responsible for. In properties such as flats, communal facilities are often present and the upkeep, cleanliness, and sensible use are important for the safety and enjoyment of all customers that live in the surrounding area. The policy provides a framework for how communal areas will be managed and what is expected from customers.

2. SCOPE OF POLICY

2.1 The **Management of Communal Areas Policy** outlines the approach Aspire Housing takes to manage **enclosed communal areas** and the **immediate surrounding areas** of blocks of flats and group premises.

2.2 The policy applies to:

- Customers of Aspire Housing
- Leaseholders and Shared Owners
- Anyone living with or visiting a customer, leaseholder, shared owner.

It covers both:

- General housing properties
- Enclosed Schemes

2.3 This policy applies to all communal internal and external areas, such as:

- Entrance halls and corridors
- Landings
- Stairwells
- Communal lounges
- Communal kitchens
- Communal bathrooms
- Balconies and access paths
- Communal gardens
- Communal parking areas
- Bin stores

- Communal drying areas
- Any communal cupboard or loft space

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 To ensure the health and safety of customers, leaseholders, colleagues, and visitors when in a communal area.
- 3.2 To promote the appropriate and beneficial use of communal areas for all customers, visitors and colleagues.
- 3.3 To outline the measures, Aspire Housing may take to monitor, manage and control the use of communal areas.
- 3.4 To ensure communal areas can be safely evacuated and accessed by emergency services during an emergency.
- 3.5 To provide clear guidance to customers on how to minimise risks, particularly by avoiding the obstruction of access routes.
- 3.6 To enable cleaning colleagues, where present, to perform their duties effectively, supporting the cleanliness and upkeep of communal areas.
- 3.7 To facilitate safe and efficient access for maintenance colleagues, ensuring continued safety and the proper upkeep of the buildings.

4. CONTROL OF ENCLOSED COMMUNAL AREAS AND AREAS THAT IMMEDIATELY SURROUND

- 4.1 Aspire Housing is committed to ensuring the health and safety of all individuals who live in, work in or visit its properties. As a responsible landlord, Aspire Housing must ensure that internal/enclosed communal areas always remain clear and accessible. This is essential to enable individuals to exit the building quickly and safely in the event of an emergency and to allow emergency services to gain unhindered access to the building or any individual in need.
- 4.2 To support this objective, Aspire Housing requires all customers to keep internal/enclosed communal areas – as well as the immediate areas surrounding entrances and exits – free from obstructions or items that:
 - May accelerate the spread of fire
 - Could hinder safe evacuation
 - May prevent safe access for emergency responders

Aspire Housing operates a **zero-tolerance approach** to the enforcement of this policy.

4.3 Tenancy and leasehold agreements clearly define the land and property included in each let or sale. Areas not designated as part of a customer or leaseholder's home must not be used for storage or any other personal use. This includes communal spaces and, where applicable, roof spaces. All customers are expected to adhere to this requirement by keeping these areas clear at all times.

4.4 This approach is designed to:

- Minimise fire-related risks and hazards
- Enable Aspire Housing to maintain communal areas effectively
- Support the creation of safe, secure and pleasant living environments for all customers

4.5 Permissible and non-permissible items.

The list of non-permissible items includes but is not limited to:

- Potential ignition sources such as rubbish bags, cardboard boxes or recycling
- Combustible materials such as garden furniture, artificial plants, plastic ornaments
- Electrical items, including battery operated lights
- Door mats, rugs or decorative items
- Prams, pushchairs and toys
- Bicycles and scooters, including electric type
- Washing lines, wall mounted or strung wall to wall
- Items which may result in escape routes being narrowed such as, items of furniture, ornaments, plant pots
- Any items on windowsills including plants
- Mobility Scooters unless stored in an appropriate storage facility.

Permissible Items

There are certain items or instances where items are permissible within the communal area. These are limited to the following:

- Notice boards installed, managed, and maintained by Aspire Housing
- Pictures/wall art (Enclosed Scheme corridors only) provided by Aspire Housing
- Purpose built structures/rooms e.g. bicycle storage area, mobility scooter store.

5.0 COMMUNAL LOUNGES OR ANY OTHER COMMUNAL ROOM WITHIN A COMMUNITY LIVING SCHEME

5.1 Aspire Housing manages a number of **Community Living Schemes** which includes shared rooms and facilities intended for the use and benefit of all customers within the scheme. Aspire Housing is responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of these communal areas, including any fixtures and fittings provided.

Customers must not store personal belongings in these shared spaces. The restrictions outlined in the **non-permissible items** list and other conditions detailed in **Section 4.2** apply fully to these areas.

5.2 Permissible Items

- Festive lights (within communal lounges) subject to installation and testing by Aspire Housing
- Festive decorations (within communal lounges) subject to installation and monitoring by Aspire Housing
- Soft furnishings (within communal lounges) which must be compliant to the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire Safety) Regulations 1988. No furniture to be gifted or donated for storage in communal lounges
- Electrical items (within communal lounges) which have been tested in compliance with Aspire Housing's portable appliance testing scheme
- Mobility Scooters – subject to the conditions.

6.0 COMMUNAL GARDENS, PATHS, PARKING AREAS AND OTHER SURROUNDS

6.1 External areas must be kept clear of personal items unless the land is explicitly let or sold with the property. Items such as wheelie bins must be stored in designated bin storage areas or in locations that do not cause obstruction or nuisance to other customers. Bins should be placed at least 5 metres from the building, unless there is a clearly marked, fire-safe area specifically built for bin storage.

6.2 Aspire Housing car parks are intended for use by customers and their visitors on a **first-come first-served** basis. Customers are expected to park **responsibly** to ensure the enjoyment and fair use of the space by all. Parking must not obstruct access or egress, especially for **emergency services vehicles**. The tenancy agreement provides further guidance on appropriate use of parking spaces.

6.3 **Barbecues or any form of open fire** are strictly **prohibited** in communal garden areas.

6.4 **Smoking in enclosed communal areas** is **prohibited by law**. When smoking or vaping in external communal areas, customers must be respectful of others and maintain a **reasonable distance from doors and windows** to avoid nuisance to fellow customers. All cigarette ends must be fully extinguished and disposed of responsibly.

7.0 CHECKING COMMUNAL AREAS AND COMMUNAL AREA INSPECTIONS

7.1 All Aspire Housing colleagues are expected to remain vigilant and proactive in identifying any issues related to repairs, maintenance, or health and safety within Aspire Housing-managed properties.

7.2 Communal areas will be **regularly inspected** by members of the **Neighbourhood Team** to ensure they remain safe, well-maintained, and enjoyable spaces for

customers. These inspections may also form part of the scheduled activities involving customers, such as **Communal Area Customer Assessments**.

- 7.3** Aspire Housing will also arrange **the inspection of communal areas** specifically for the purpose of carrying out **Fire Risk Assessments**, in line with regulatory requirements and best practice.

8.0 TAKING ACTION WHEN ITEMS FOUND IN COMMUNAL AREAS

- 8.1** Aspire Housing will act proportionately when items are found in communal areas, depending on the level of risk they pose.

In deciding action, we will consider:

- the level of health and safety risk (immediate, significant or lower level).
- whether ownership can be established.
- Any potential liability arising from removal without consent.

8.2 Immediate Risk

Items that pose an immediate and danger (e.g. explosive, flammable, or hazardous) will be removed at once, without notice.

Examples: petrol, thinners, gas cylinders, motorbikes or scooters containing fuel.

- Such items may be stored temporarily if valuable but will only be returned once all associated costs are paid in full.

8.3 Significant Risk (24 hours)

Items presenting a **serious but non-immediate risk** will be labelled with a **24-hour removal notice**. If not removed within this timeframe, Aspire Housing will remove them.

Examples: e-scooters, large electrical equipment.

8.4 Lower – Level Risk (7 Days)

Items causing a **minor obstruction or lower-level hazards** will be labelled with a **7-day removal notice**. If not removed, Aspire Housing will take them away.

Examples: bicycles, pushchairs, personal furniture or belongings left in corridors/doorways.

If any clarity is required, the Building Safety Team will be consulted.

- 8.5 Appendix 1** outlines the **step-by-step actions** Aspire Housing will take in response to items found in communal areas, based on the level of risk and other relevant factors.

The **tenancy agreement** includes conditions relating to communal areas.

Section B.2: Your Obligation (Use of premises) which clearly states that customers must not store items that pose a health and safety risk in communal areas.

Section J.7: Your Obligation (Dwelling and community responsibilities) Which makes note of the correct storage of motorised mobility scooters.

Section J.14: Your Obligation (Dwelling and community responsibilities) which clearly states that customers and visitors must comply with fire regulations in communal areas.

Where there is a **persistent or serious breach** of these conditions, Aspire Housing will consider taking **enforcement action** in line with its tenancy enforcement procedures.

9.0 COMMUNICATION

9.1 It is important to remind customers that communal areas must be kept free from obstructions and hazards. Aspire Housing will share this message through a range of methods, including signage, newsletters and social media platforms. We will also support national initiatives that help raise awareness of this issue.

9.2 Appendices Overview

- **Appendix 2:** A fire hazard sticker is to be applied at the time a hazard is first identified. This sticker will request that the item(s) be removed with **24 hours** for an item posing **significant risk** or **7 days** for an item causing a **minor obstruction or deemed a lower-level hazard**
- **Appendix 3:** The Initial 7-day letter is to be sent as soon as possible after the item(s) are noted in the communal area. This letter provides a 7-day timeframe for the removal of the items.
- **Appendix 4:** A TORT notice is to be affixed to the item(s) after the initial 7-day period has passed advised that the items will be disposed after 7 days.
- **Appendix 5:** A TORT accompanying letter is to be sent directly to the identified customer or to all customers within the block where the ownership of the item(s) cannot be verified. This letter is used to communicate the issue and the next steps regarding the unclaimed items

10.0 RELATED POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES

Related Documents and Considerations

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following Aspire Housing documents:

- Tenancy Agreement
- Leasehold Agreement
- Fire Safety Policy

11.0 EQUALITY, DIVERSION AND INCLUSION

An equality impact assessment has been conducted for this policy. This policy has been reviewed in line with Aspire Housing's **Equality and Diversity Policy**, and no additional provisions have been identified as necessary.