



### **IDD 034 - Communal Areas Fire Loading Policy (External)**

To prevent fires in communal areas, the quantity of combustible items stored within those areas must be controlled. This will reduce fuel for a fire and ensure escape routes are free from obstruction in the event of an evacuation.

#### **The following items must *not* be stored in communal areas**

- Chemicals, including paints, varnishes, brush cleaner, turpentine, petrol, oil, diesel, fertilisers, weed killer and cleaning fluids
- BBQs or BBQ fuel\*, i.e. fire lighters, charcoal or brickets
- Candles, tea lights, incense sticks, lighters and matches
- Furniture, upholstered furniture or fabrics – i.e. bookcases, tables, chairs, armchairs, curtains, net curtains and wall hangings
- Plastics – i.e. plastic garden furniture, children's toys or DIY materials
- Recycling and household waste – recycling boxes / bins are to be stored inside individual flats and put out on the day of collection or outside the building. Refuse should be disposed of directly into the bin room / chute, not left outside flat doors
- Petrol vehicles – mopeds, scooters, or any other fuelled vehicles must not be stored inside residents flat or in communal areas
- DIY materials – wood, timber, mastics, glues and adhesives
- Bicycles – must be stored in resident's hall or home or outside the building unless a designated facility is provided inside the block.

\*BBQ use is not permitted within communal spaces (corridors, staircases, roofs, walkways, balconies or communal spaces / gardens) those residents who have their own private garden may use a charcoal or wood-fuelled BBQ.

This is not an exhaustive list and Westminster City Council reserves the right to request immediate removal of any item deemed to pose a risk.

#### **The following items can be displayed or stored in communal areas**

- A purpose-made doormat - sections of carpet are not acceptable
- Wall hung, framed pictures – a small quantity (3 no within 2 metres of wall space) of glass-fronted pictures in wooden or metal frames in an enclosed corridor is acceptable. Canvas, paper or fabric based artwork is not permissible.
- Small pot plants – a small quantity of indoor plants in metal, clay or porcelain pots displayed on an internal window cill(s) or ledge is acceptable. Plants on stands, the floor or on shelves which jut out or obstruct circulation routes are not permitted (except on open balcony walkways where they do not pose an

obstruction to other building users and reduce the width of the walkway below 1200mm in width).

### **Mobility scooters / mobility aids in the communal areas**

All residents must apply for consent to store their mobility aid in communal areas. Consent is subject to risk assessment. It is not possible for us to permit residents to charge aids in communal areas.

### **Child's pram / buggy in communal areas**

If your block has a lift you must keep the pram/buggy in your flat. If your block does not have a lift and you live on an upper floor we will allow you to store the pram/buggy in the communal area as long as

- There is a designated store room which can be used
- It is not stored in the staircase or entrance lobby which is open to the staircase
- It can be collapsed and does not obstruct access / egress, corridor width or access to any fire precaution, door or service room.

Your estate team will confirm where pram / buggy storage is permitted.

### **Items that cannot be stored inside your home**

Residents must not store anywhere within the building (in their dwelling, designated store room / cupboard, garage or within communal areas)

- Contained gases, other than oxygen for medical gases\* (this includes BBQ gas i.e. Calor)

\*Where medical gases are in use, residents must inform their estate office, who will record the location of the user in the Local Emergency Plan.

### **How this policy is enforced**

Your local estate team carry out inspections every month and quarter. The Westminster City Council health and safety team also do inspections.

During inspection, we note any items stored in the communal areas and take a photograph to record the item's condition. We try and find the person who owns the items and ask for its removal.

If you are not at home, a letter will be left asking you to remove the item. If we cannot find the item's owner, the letter will be displayed next to or on the item.

You have 48 hours after our visit to remove the item or they will be collected and taken to storage.

Westminster City Council will record the condition of all items prior to removal. Items of value such as furniture and electrical goods will be protected to ensure they are not damaged while in storage.

In certain circumstances where residents persist in storing items in communal areas or in plant areas / service cupboards, Westminster City Council reserves the right, with written notice, to change this policy and remove items without providing 48 hours' notice.

If you are away on holiday or visiting family and the item is removed, the estate office will discuss individual cases. We recommend that residents ensure all items are within their home before going away to prevent items being removed.

### **Getting your items back**

The estate office will try to ensure that they identify the owner of all items removed from communal areas.

To retrieve your items from storage you must contact your local estate office. An administrative fee of £25 per item to cover the cost of storage will be payable. Residents may be asked for proof of purchase to reclaim items of value.

All items are kept in storage for a minimum of one calendar month from the date of their collection.

After one calendar month, Westminster City Council will either dispose of the items or may sell items of value to cover the cost of storage.

### **Other measures we take to prevent a fire in communal areas**

- Enforce a 'No Smoking Policy'. You can be fined up to £200 for breaching this policy
- Closely monitor and control maintenance and construction activities which may involve the use of naked flames (i.e. hot works)
- We do not permit the use of BBQ's or the burning of rubbish in communal areas of blocks, including communal open spaces.
- Carry out regular inspections and testing on all incoming mains services to ensure they do not pose an ignition risk
- Closely monitor arson incidences and where feasible make improvements to the block's security or management to prevent reoccurrence
- Install hardwired smoke detection in all tenanted homes
- Install hardwired detection in communal areas of blocks where necessary.

**If you need further information or advice about fire and gas safety in Westminster City Council properties, please call the Westminster City Council health and safety team on 020 7245 2276.**