



TUNTUM HOUSING ASSOCIATION

DOCUMENT CONTROL	
Policy name:	Communal Areas Policy
Version:	1
Author:	Nkosana Mthimkhulu, Housing Services Manager
Approved By	15 March 2023 Customer Experience Committee (CEC)
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Date of next review:	15 March 2026
Customer facing:	Yes

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The policy sets out how Tuntum 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 tenants and other users of the buildings.
- 1.2 Fire safety in communal areas is addressed explicitly in our complementary procedure, 'Fire Safety in Communal Areas'.

2. Policy Statement and Aims

- 2.1 Tuntum has a duty of care to ensure that residents and visitors can safely use the properties they live in or access. This extends to taking all reasonable steps to mitigate any risks associated with communal areas and facilities.
- 2.2 This policy aims to ensure that Tuntum properties are safe to live in, are assessed/inspected regularly for risk, and provide statutory assurance standards are complied with.
- 2.3 This policy also explains how Tuntum's commitment to health and safety and keeping residents safe from harm is met.
- 2.4 Another objective of this policy is to ensure The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 legislation is adhered to, in that communal areas should be managed so that residents and visitors can exit safely and without delay in emergencies.

3. Legislation or Regulatory Requirements

- 3.1 Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- 3.2 Building Regulation 2010
- 3.3 Building Act 1984
- 3.4 Housing Act 2004

4. Scope

- 4.1 This policy applies to tenants, those living with tenants, residents and leaseholders of Tuntum and their visitors. Tenants, residents and leaseholders will be held responsible for any breaches of this policy by their visitors or those living with them.

5. Definitions

- 5.1.1 A communal area is any area that is not within the confines of the tenant's property. Such areas include corridors, stairways, landings, lobbies, communal lounges, meter cupboards, external gardens and bin stores, bin chute rooms, entrances to the building, garages and parking areas.
- 5.1.2 Throughout this document, the term resident or residents includes tenants and leaseholders.
- 5.1.3 Communal areas, even those adjacent to a resident's property, are not an extension of the demised property, i.e. their home. As such, residents should not use these areas to store their personal effects or leave items they no longer require, including refuse.
- 5.1.4 Residents do not have exclusive use of communal areas. In particular, access to communal areas and facilities will be required by other residents, Tuntum staff and those who need to enter for work or to provide services to those who live in the building, e.g. contractors. Visitors to residents will also require access.
- 5.1.5 For safety reasons, Tuntum has adopted a 'zero-tolerance approach' to cluttering communal areas, which means that no resident items are allowed to be placed in communal areas except for door mats described in section 5.3 below.

5.2 Escape routes must be kept clear and safe to use

- 5.2.1 Soft furnishings or combustible items must not be placed, stored or left in communal areas. If they are set on fire or catch fire, they will give off toxic fumes and can be a hazard in the event of an evacuation.
- 5.2.2 Artificial plants must not be placed, displayed or left in communal areas, as well as being a trip hazard; they also give off toxic fumes if set on fire.
- 5.2.3 Pictures or notice boards may be hung on walls but must be securely fixed. It is not permitted to hang pictures on a string. Permission must be sought from Specialist Housing/Housing Management Team before affixing any item to a communal wall.
- 5.2.4 It is not permitted to store furniture, rubbish, electric scooters, bicycles, boxes or other such articles in communal areas.
- 5.2.5 No shopping trolleys must be left in the communal areas.
- 5.2.6 Fire exits must be kept clear at all times.
- 5.2.7 Any damage or vandalism to fire exit doors must be reported to asset management immediately.
- 5.2.8 Only electrical equipment provided by Tuntum may be used in communal areas, and these items will be Portable Appliance Tested (PAT) annually.
- 5.2.9 Charging electric scooters or any other devices or running trailing wires in communal areas other than areas specially designated for this purpose is not permitted.
- 5.2.10 Fire doors must not be propped or wedged open or left open. These fire doors are designed to stop the spread of smoke and fire. Faulty doors or closers must be reported to asset management.
- 5.2.11 Doors linked to a fire alarm system will be open and automatically closed when the fire alarm is triggered. These must not be obstructed.
- 5.2.12 Refuse collection points should be kept as clear as possible. All rubbish is to be deposited inside the appropriate bins. Bulk items are not allowed at any time, and the local authority refuse department should be contacted to remove these items. A fee may apply to this collection which is the resident's responsibility to pay.

5.3 **Doormats**

- 5.3.1 Tuntum prefers to see sterile corridors, but we appreciate that residents may want a doormat. We will allow a thin, rubber-backed, non-slip doormat (maximum size 60 cm x 40 cm) – examples are displayed on your notice board.
- 5.3.2 All non-conforming mats will be removed as they present a trip hazard in the event of an emergency.

5.4 **Fire risk assessments**

- 5.4.1 Tuntum carries out Fire Risk Assessments of the communal areas every two or three years depending on the nature of the building.
- 5.4.2 The Fire Authority may also carry out periodic inspections of the communal areas to assess fire safety compliance.

5.5 **Communal inspections**

- 5.5.1 Tuntum staff regularly inspect communal areas to ensure they are free from fire risks and obstructions.
- 5.5.2 We may write to residents where there are persistent issues of concern, following which a notice pursuant to the Torts (Interference with Goods) Act 1977 may be issued. Articles will be removed without notice where they are causing an obstruction and/or fire hazard. If identified, the owner of the item may be charged for the removal and disposal.
- 5.5.3 Where the owner has not been identified, Tuntum reserves the right to recover the charge incurred for the removal, storage and disposal from all residents through the service charge.

5.6 **Permissions**

- 5.6.1 If a resident requests permission to make an alteration or addition within a communal area, they should contact Asset Management by email at repairs@tuntum.co.uk or by telephoning 0115 916 6066.
- 5.6.2 Tuntum may approve requests that are fully risk assessed and do not pose an obstruction or hazard to other residents or visitors. Requests will only be approved in written or digital form.

5.7 **The following items and behaviours are not permitted at any time:**

- 5.7.1 Anything that is combustible or poses a fire risk.
- 5.7.2 Anything which prevents or significantly limits the use of shared facilities by other residents.
- 5.7.3 Anything which obstructs rubbish chutes or rubbish collection areas.
- 5.7.4 Anything which obstructs stairwells, fire escapes or through routes.
- 5.7.5 Anything that may be construed as offensive to staff or other residents.
- 5.7.6 Any temporary or permanent structure within garden areas without permission.
- 5.7.7 Permission will be granted for the use of BBQ's during supervised and organised events. In addition, the common area must be sufficiently large enough not to pose a risk and nuisance to other residents.

5.8 **Permission will not be granted for:**

- Trampolines.
- Temporary swimming pools.
- Children's play equipment, e.g. swings, slides, climbing frames.

- 5.9 **Residents will not be given permission to place, store or leave (even for short periods) in communal areas, items such as:**
- Bicycles, prams, pushchairs, motorcycles, mobility scooters, mopeds.
 - Flammable liquids and gases, washing, clothing, furniture, festive decorations.
 - Refuse, personal items, toys, gardening equipment or materials.
- 5.10 The relevant team will grant or decline decisions on permission and the outcome will be notified in writing within ten days of initial request.
- 5.10.1 Permission will not be given retrospectively.
- 5.11 **Smoking in communal areas**
- 5.11.1 Tuntum 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.
- 5.11.2 Residents may face legal penalties for breaching this policy.
- 5.11.3 Residents may smoke in their own homes, but where the front door leads out to a communal hallway, it must remain closed.
- 5.12 **Maintenance**
- 5.12.1 Staff from the Asset Management team, Housing Management team and Specialist Housing team will carry out regular building inspections and report to Asset Management any defects.
- 5.12.2 Where communal areas provide emergency lighting, smoke or heat detectors and electrical equipment, and/or sprinkler systems, servicing of these items will take place in accordance with Tuntum's cyclical programme and in compliance with any relevant legal or regulatory requirements.
- 5.12.3 Residents must report any communal area defects to Asset Management by email using repairs@tuntum.co.uk or by telephone on 0115 916 6066.
- 5.13 **Mobility scooters**
- 5.13.1 Mobility scooters are not allowed to be driven, nor have the batteries recharged within communal areas except in specially designated areas.
- 5.13.2 Where Tuntum provides purpose-built accommodation for mobility scooters, an appropriate Certificate of Insurance will be required to be produced before storage takes place.
- 6. Roles and Responsibilities**
- 6.1.1 The Specialist Housing, Housing Management and Asset Management teams are responsible for enforcing Tuntum's tenancy/leasehold/licence conditions and giving guidance and advice.
- 6.1.2 Residents will be expected to take responsibility for the area immediately outside their own home and to share responsibilities for any other communal area that residents may use.
- 6.1.3 Residents will be expected to keep communal areas that they use free from debris, rubbish and an accumulation of dirt and other materials.
- 7. Monitoring, including Audit and Review**
- 7.1 The Housing Services Manager will monitor how communal areas are managed within the provisions of this policy. We also ask customers how satisfied they are with the service we provide. This information is anonymised and reviewed by managers to improve the service in future. This policy will be reviewed every three years unless legislation, business or sector developments require further amendments. This will ensure that the policy continues to meet the stated objectives and take account of good practice developments.

8. Procedure

8.1 There is a Communal Areas Procedure as a separate internal document.

9. Equality Impact Assessment

9.1 This policy has been drafted in the context of Tuntum’s Equality and Diversity policy. We will ensure its application satisfies the needs of our diverse customers. We monitor the impact of our work and review our performance in line with the principles of our Equality and Diversity policy and the Equality Act 2010.

10. References

RELATED EXTERNAL DOCUMENTS	
Reference	Link to reference
Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005	The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
Building Regulation 2010	The Building Regulations 2010 (legislation.gov.uk)
Building Act 1984	Building Act 1984 (legislation.gov.uk)
Housing Act 2004	Housing Act 2004 (legislation.gov.uk)

RELATED INTERNAL DOCUMENTS	
Reference	
Fire Safety in Communal Areas Procedure	
Tenancy Agreement/Licence Agreement	
Fire Risk Assessments	
Equality and Diversity Policy	

11. Contacts

If you have any queries on this policy please contact Tuntum Housing Services Team.

Internal control not for publication:

Policy changes	
Policy version	Proposed changes
1	The whole policy has been redrafted.