

Keeping Communal Areas Safe



What are communal areas?

Communal areas are those which everyone can use outside of individual homes, including entrance lobbies, corridors, stairwells, landings, bin stores, meter cupboards, lifts, open walkways and external pathways.

Lofts and roof spaces in flats are not communal areas and cannot be used for any storage or accessed except by CHS or its contractors (even if there is a hatch inside your home).

Why do we need rules for communal areas?

We understand that you will want to make communal areas welcoming and attractive, however they also need to be kept safe for everyone. Some items kept in communal areas may contribute to spreading a fire or prevent safe movement in the event of a fire or other emergency.

If there was a fire, there must be nothing in these areas that could:

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| 🔥 Prevent or slow down people escaping from the building | 🔥 Explode due to high temperatures e.g. glass |
| 🔥 Give off toxic smoke and gas when burning | 🔥 Cause fire to spread more quickly |
| | 🔥 Stop the fire services doing their job |

CHS has a legal responsibility to make sure these areas are safe for everyone, and we regularly monitor them. We have set out below what can be kept in communal areas as they can be safely managed. Anything else cannot be kept in these areas (this list is not exhaustive but provides guidance).

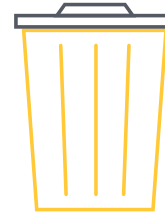
What can be kept in communal areas?

A doormat, unless it creates a trip hazard e.g. due to curled up edges

What cannot be kept in communal areas?

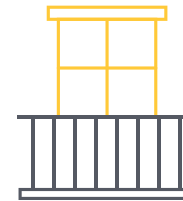
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| • Pushchairs | • Toys | • Shoe racks |
| • Bicycles, motorbikes or mopeds | • Furniture e.g. bookshelf, table | • Decorative items e.g. fairy lights, festive decorations |
| • Mobility scooters or other mobility aids | • Electrical equipment | • Washing racks |
| • E-scooters/e-bikes (or put on charge) | • Items waiting to be disposed of | • Plants |
| | • Boxes | |

Smoking is also forbidden in communal areas, indoors or outdoors.



What will happen if unsafe items are left in communal areas?

We will try to identify who the items belong to and ask the responsible individual for their removal, unless it's very high-risk in which case we may remove them immediately. If the items are not moved in the timescale we request, then we will arrange to remove them and we may recharge the cost of removal to the person who owned the items or take tenancy action.



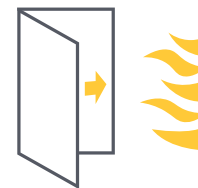
Balconies

Balconies may be used by one dwelling only, however our approach to communal spaces includes balconies as they are outside of the home and can directly affect your neighbours. Therefore, nothing stored on your balcony can be combustible / flammable (e.g. cardboard, wood, fabrics – anything that would burn). Barbecues, fuel containers and gas bottles are not permitted.



Mobility Aids

You may need a mobility scooter to get out and about, however you cannot store it or charge it in communal areas. If you are thinking of getting a mobility scooter, please contact your Housing Officer first so we can discuss solutions with you. Even if you can store it inside your home, you will need to take advice to ensure the charging arrangements are safe.



Fire Doors and Compartments

Every flat in our buildings has a fire door designed to protect you. There may also be fire doors outside your flat which must not be left open as they prevent fire spreading through the building. If they are designed to be open much of the time and have an automatic closer, this must not be interfered with. If you notice any damage to fire doors or the seal around them (which expands in a fire) then please let CHS know by reporting it as a repair.



Advice

At CHS, we prioritise listening to and caring for our tenants. If you have any concerns about storage of items around your home, or to ask if you can place a particular item in a communal area, please contact your Housing Officer.

If you have any concerns about fire safety, please contact our Customer Service team and ask to speak to our Property Services team.

You can also seek advice from Cambridgeshire Fire & Rescue Service (01480 444500 or www.cambsfire.gov.uk).

