



PEAKS & PLAINS
Housing Trust

The Trust

COMMUNAL SPACES POLICY

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DRAFT



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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This policy sets out the Trust's approach to managing and maintaining internal and external communal areas across our estates. We are committed to delivering safe, clean, inclusive and well-maintained shared spaces, recognising that how we manage these areas has a direct impact on the quality of life, safety and wellbeing of our customers.
- 1.2. We acknowledge that communal spaces are not only functional but also provide opportunities for social interaction and community cohesion. This policy therefore adopts a balanced and proportionate approach, ensuring compliance with health and safety obligations while supporting residents to make appropriate use of shared spaces.

2. SCOPE

- 2.1. The aim of this policy is to outline how the Trust will:
 - Ensure communal areas are safe, accessible and well maintained
 - Enable appropriate and responsible use of shared spaces by residents
 - Clearly define acceptable and unacceptable use of communal spaces
 - Work in partnership with customers to manage and improve shared environments
 - Meet the requirements of the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH)
 - Provide value for money in estate and communal area management
- 2.2. This policy applies to:
 - Tenants, leaseholders and shared owners
 - Visitors and contractors
 - All internal and external communal areas within Trust-managed properties

Communal areas include (but are not limited to):

- Corridors, stairwells and entrances
- Communal lounges, kitchens and facilities
- Bin stores, laundries and shared service areas
- Gardens, walkways, parking and external spaces

3. LEGAL & REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

- 3.1. The Trust will manage communal spaces in accordance with all relevant legislation and regulatory standards, including:
 - Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
 - Housing Act 2004
 - Health & Safety at Work Act 1974
 - Building Safety Act 2022
 - Equality Act 2010

- Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022

In line with the Regulator of Social Housing – Neighbourhood and Community Standard, the Trust will:

- Take reasonable steps to ensure the safety of communal and shared spaces
- Engage with residents in managing neighbourhoods
- Work with partners to support safe, well-maintained communities

3.2 Definitions

3.2.1 Communal Areas

Any part of a building or estate not included within a resident's home and intended for shared use (e.g. corridors, stairways, entrances, gardens, and shared facilities).

Shared Spaces

Areas used collectively by residents, including both internal and external communal areas.

Obstruction

Any item or activity that restricts access, impedes movement, or prevents safe evacuation in the event of an emergency.

Acceptable Use

Use of communal areas that is reasonable, does not pose a safety risk, and does not cause nuisance or inconvenience to others.

Prohibited Items

Items not permitted in communal areas due to safety or management concerns, including (but not limited to) furniture, waste, and personal belongings left in shared access routes.

TORT Notice

A legal notice issued under the *Torts (Interference with Goods) Act 1977*, informing an individual that items left on Trust property without permission must be removed within a specified timeframe, after which they may be removed, stored or disposed of.

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

Conduct that causes nuisance, annoyance, harassment, alarm or distress to others, including misuse of communal areas.

4. OUR POLICY

4.1. Safe and Well-Maintained Spaces

- 4.1.1.
 - The Trust will ensure that all communal areas are:
 - Free from hazards, obstructions and fire risks
 - Clean, well lit and maintained in a good state of repair
 - Suitable for safe access and emergency evacuation
 - We will conduct regular inspections and take prompt action where issues are identified.

4.2. Balanced Use of Communal Spaces

- 4.2.1. We recognise that communal areas contribute to residents' wellbeing and community life.

The Trust will:

- Support reasonable and proportionate use of communal spaces
- Avoid unnecessarily restrictive approaches where risks can be managed
- Consider different needs across schemes (e.g. general needs vs over 55's housing)

4.3. **Acceptable Use**

4.3.1. Residents may:

- Use communal lounges, gardens and shared spaces appropriately
- Access shared facilities as intended
- Participate in community activities where agreed

Usage of communal spaces must not:

- Obstruct escape routes or access areas
- Create fire, safety or health risks
- Cause nuisance, damage or anti-social behaviour

4.4. **Prohibited and Restricted Use**

- 4.4.1.
- Unless expressly authorised, the following are not permitted:
 - Storage of personal belongings in corridors or stairways
 - Dumping or storing rubbish outside designated areas
 - Blocking entrances, exits or fire escape routes
 - Use of communal areas for hazardous or commercial activities
 - Items commonly restricted include:
 - Furniture and large household items
 - Bicycles, scooters, prams (unless designated storage provided)
 - Flammable materials or equipment
 - A risk-based approach will be applied where appropriate, particularly in schemes designed for shared community use.

4.4.2. **Inspections and Estate Management**

The Trust will:

- Carry out regular estate inspections and safety checks
- Engage residents through estate walkabouts where required
- Work with contractors and partners to maintain standards
- Develop action plans where issues are identified
- This policy should be read alongside the Trust's Estate Management Policy.

4.4.3. **Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)**

Misuse of communal areas may constitute ASB.

The Trust will:

- Take early, proportionate action to resolve issues
- Work with residents and partners to prevent escalation
- Use enforcement measures where necessary
- This policy should be read alongside the Trust's Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.

- 4.4.4. The Trust have in place neighbourhood plans that provides local in-depth information whilst ensuring a robust overarching specification and management structure. Customers have been involved in creating these plans and are in place to scrutinise, review and aid the Trust in improving services locally and across the entire portfolio.

4.5. **TORT Notices**

- 4.5.1. Where items are left in communal areas in breach of this policy, the Trust may issue a TORT notice under the *Torts (Interference with Goods) Act 1977*.

A TORT notice:

- Advises that items have been left on Trust property without permission
- Gives a reasonable timeframe for removal
- Confirms that items may be removed, stored or disposed of if not collected

If items are not removed within the stated period, the Trust may:

- Remove and dispose of them where appropriate
- Recharge any associated costs to the resident
- In cases where items pose an immediate safety risk, the Trust may remove them without notice

The use of TORT notices will always be proportionate, transparent and in accordance with legal requirements, ensuring residents are treated fairly while prioritising safety.

5. **EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION**

- 5.1. An EIA (Equality Impact Assessment) has been approved by the Executive Management Team. This assessment is available upon request.
- 5.2 This policy will be followed in conjunction with the Trust's Equality and Diversity policy. We will ensure that all persons will be able to enjoy the use of our communal areas and green spaces, and will make reasonable adjustments to our approach to ensure that this happens.

6. **RESPONSIBILITIES**

6.1. **Executive Team**

- 6.1.1. The Executive Team have overall responsibility for approving and ensuring this policy is adhered to.

6.2. **Head of Neighbourhood**

- 6.2.1. The Head of Neighbourhoods has responsibility for ensuring the aim and scope of this policy is being adhered to.

6.3. **~~Estates Manager??~~**

- 6.3.1. The ~~Estates Manager~~ has responsibility for delivering this policy across the Trust portfolio.

6.4. **All staff & customers**

- 6.4.1. All staff and customers have the responsibility for reporting any concerns or health and safety failures within the Trust's communal spaces.

7. **MONITORING AND REPORTING**

- 7.1. The Trust will monitor performance through:
- Routine inspections and compliance checks
 - Contractor performance reviews
 - Customer satisfaction measures (TSMs)
 - Complaints and feedback analysis
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- 7.2. We will record customer satisfaction with Estate Management performance and report this detail to the Executive Leadership Team and Performance Management Group through KPI production.
- 7.3 The Head of Customer Services and ~~Estates Manager~~ will deliver an annual performance report to Board.

8. **CONSULTATION**

- 8.1. The Trusts Challenge Group, AMT (All Managers Team) and SMT (Senior Management Team) have been consulted about this policy.
- 8.1.1. The Challenge Group have aided in the creation of this policy and minutes of consultation can be found within the Challenge Group records.

9. **REVIEW**

- 9.1. The Communal Spaces policy will be reviewed every 2 years or earlier where:
- Legislative or regulatory changes occur
 - Service delivery changes significantly
 - Feedback indicates a need for revision

ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

- Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
- Fire Safety Policy
- Tenancy Agreements
- Health & Safety Policy
- Estate Management Policy
- TORT notice

POLICY INFORMATION

Policy Name:	Communal Spaces Policy
Status:	Draft
Approved by:	TBC
Drafted By:	Maintenance Manager Contracts
Date approved:	
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