



HOUSING STRATEGY

Policy for use of communal areas by sheltered housing residents



LONDON BOROUGH OF
HARROW

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1. Introduction

This policy outlines the use of the communal lounges and applies to council tenants and anyone that visits council tenants who live in the London Borough of Harrow (LBH) sheltered housing scheme for older people. We understand the importance of socialising and the prevention of loneliness, especially for those in their later years of life. Therefore, we do our best to make sure our communal lounges are used in a way that benefits residents who live in our sheltered housing schemes for older people. We strongly encourage residents to lead on group activities which can be held in the communal lounges.

2. Purpose

Our aim is to ensure the safe use of Sheltered communal lounges and for sheltered housing residents to feel safe, supported, and secure in their homes whilst the lounge is in use.

Secondly, we want to encourage the use of communal lounges so that they serve as a social space where residents can gather, interact, and engage in various activities.

In order to keep residents safe, we must ensure that communal lounges are being used responsibly and safely, whilst respecting the views of residents living there and doing this in an open and transparent way. To help achieve this, we carried out consultation in all the schemes in summer 2025 and have arrived at a set of key guidelines around the use of the communal lounge area.

This policy provides a framework for how sheltered communal lounges will be managed and what is expected of residents, lounge users and prospective lounge users.

3. Communal lounge

London Borough of Harrow has 17 sheltered housing schemes for older people, all of which have a communal lounge. This is a space that can be used by all residents living in that scheme and 'invited' residents from other sheltered schemes such as for shared festival celebrations.

In addition, the council may occasionally use communal lounges to conduct official council business. Examples include hosting meetings such as Residents' Board, conducting training sessions or hosting a council event such as Week of Action. Council business may or may not include residents.

The Scheme Co-ordinator has the final decision if there are two competing requests from residents to hold an event on the same day. Generally, the decision will be made on a first come, first served basis. Scheduled activities for residents that take place in the communal lounge will take priority over any personal events, unless the residents within the scheme agree otherwise.

Our communal lounges have variable capacity to hold people depending on the scheme and signage is in place to show the capacity. Lounges can be used to socialise or to engage in activities like a knitting club, board games and keep fit sessions. Everyone is welcome to take part. If you think there are activities you

would enjoy that are not available, you can discuss this with your Scheme Co-ordinator. We encourage residents to arrange these activities themselves. Please contact the Scheme Co-ordinator if you require any support.

The communal lounge is managed by the Scheme Co-ordinator and should not be used inappropriately. The London Borough of Harrow has to the right to decline requests if we feel the request falls outside of the remits of this policy.

Below are some examples of what the communal lounges should not be used for:

Communal lounges should not be used for:

- External/public meetings- residents are not permitted to use the communal lounge to hold meetings for external bodies unless agreed by London Borough of Harrow officials
- Holding parties and events for family members for example grandchildren/ family members birthdays, christenings, and weddings
- An area to store personal items such as (but not limited to) furniture, walkers, wheelchairs (subject to a risk assessment) pots and plants. If any items left in the communal area pose a safety risk, immediate action will be taken to remove the risk. This could mean that items are removed and disposed of
- An area to leave external visitors unsupervised. You should always be with your visitors whilst they are in the communal areas.

Communal lounges should be used for:

With the Scheme Co-ordinator's approval communal lounges can be used for:

- Family visits, (all visitors using the communal lounge should be in the company of the resident whom they are visiting)
- Coffee mornings
- Approved events such as celebrations, bearing in mind that all events will be open for all residents living there to take part
- Group activities (for example, exercise classes) subject to the maximum capacity
- Training
- Gathering with other residents.
- Assistance dogs are allowed in the communal lounge as long as they are on the lead.

4. Social gatherings

If a resident would like to use the communal lounge for a social gathering such as a birthday or any other social event, the tenant will need to contact the Scheme Co-ordinator to make a formal request. At least 2 weeks' notice must be given prior to the event. This will be at least 4 weeks if you are also inviting non-residents.

Please note that other residents **cannot be** excluded from attending the event and the Scheme Co-ordinator will publicise the event to ensure that residents know who is hosting the event and when it is taking place. The Scheme Co-ordinator will also complete a Request Form (Appendix A) based on the information provided and will

conduct a Risk Assessment (Appendix B). Based on the outcome of the Risk Assessment, a manager will make a discretionary decision on whether the event can go ahead. We must ensure that we do not exceed capacity and that health and safety issues are explained to the host prior to the event. Requests will be declined if guest numbers pose a health and safety risk.

When making a request, we will need the following information for the Request Form:

- Date of the event
- What sort of gathering are you having
- Roughly how many people will be attending
- Start and end time
- If you are inviting people from outside the scheme such as family and friends
- If you are providing food
- If you require use of the kitchen
- If there will be music
- If any of the guests have any needs or vulnerabilities that we need to be aware of.

If a resident would like to hold a large event that falls outside of the specified remits within this policy, we recommend considering hiring a community hall which is available for longer hours, including after normal working hours and weekends. Staff will not be required to be on site. [Information on LBH community hall hire](#)

5. Staff

Staff will **not be** required to be on site during the event being held in the communal lounge, but will be responsible for explaining the following information to the tenant who is hosting the event:

- Health and safety procedures
- Hosting tenant is responsible for their guests' behaviour in line with secure tenancy conditions. [Secure tenancy conditions 2013.](#)
- Rules and regulations, such as no smoking and no use of alcohol within the internal building and external communal areas.
- Fire prevention such as no candles, smoking, fireworks as well as any other fire preventions around use of kitchen
- Directions to communal toilets and ensuring that these are maintained before and after the event.
- Host responsibilities such as (but not limited to) clearing any rubbish created by your event once it is over and leaving the communal kitchen in a clean condition.

6. Fire safety

In case of a fire residents and guests should gather at the nearest Fire Assembly point, which will be pointed out to the respective tenant holding the event and their guests by staff. There will be clear signage displayed within the scheme so that

visitors are aware. Staff should also explain fire prevention such as no candles, smoking, fireworks as well as any other fire preventions around use of kitchen.

7. Roles and responsibilities

Council responsibilities

- We will make sure that the building and communal lounge is safe and clean for use
- We will ensure that your booking is documented
- Risk Assessment will be carried out by a Scheme Co-ordinator
- Scheme Co-ordinator will let residents know that an event is taking place as well as who is hosting it
- We will inform Careline about the event and ensure that they are aware of this policy
- The Scheme Co-ordinator will log any reported incidents on Evotix Assure immediately and seek further advice from their manager. [Evotix Assure](#)

Tenant responsibilities

- The hosting tenant must give at least 2 weeks' notice prior to their gathering. This will be 4 weeks if also inviting non-residents
- All visitors/guests will need to sign in and out on the day
- Fire regulations require that all exits must be kept clear of any obstructions
- Fire doors must always remain closed when not in use
- No smoking is allowed within the internal communal areas by you or your guests; this includes the use of E-cigarettes
- No consumption of alcoholic beverages is allowed in communal areas by tenants or their guests
- Anyone attending the event shall not cause any nuisance or annoyance to the residents of the scheme or adjoining properties or cause damage to our property or surrounding properties
- During the event if music is played, the volume must be maintained at a level which will not cause a nuisance to residents within the scheme and the surrounding community
- The event must finish no later than 7.00pm
- The lounge and kitchen area, if used, must be left clean and all visitors must vacate the building by 8.00pm.
- Any incidents must be reported to the Scheme Co-ordinator as soon as possible
- No unauthorised items should be brought into the lounge
- Tenants must ensure that when people leave the scheme during or after the event, they do so in a quiet and reasonable manner
- Children should be accompanied at all times by an appropriate adult
- At the end of the event, you must remove all of your own equipment and rubbish such as (but not limited to) crockery, plastic cups, food waste, decorations, and wrappings. All rubbish and waste shall be taken away and disposed of
- Any tenant found to be breaching the terms of this policy may be refused the right to hold any further events and further tenancy actions may be brought

against them. Please see section “G” page 13 of tenancy conditions. [Secure tenancy conditions 2013](#)

8. Monitoring and performance management

This policy will be reviewed as and when required in accordance with any changes to legislation and latest examples of best practice. Review of this policy will be undertaken in consultation with staff, the Residents’ Board, and any other relevant stakeholders.

9. References / other relevant policies

Legislation that applies to this policy:

- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- Equality Act 2010
- The Housing Act 2004
- Building Regulations 2000, 2010
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Furniture and Furnishings (Fire Safety) Regulations 1988
- [Secure tenancy conditions 2013](#)

10. Appendix A – Communal lounge booking request form

[Communal Lounge Booking Form](#)

11. Appendix B – Communal lounge Risk Assessment

A Risk Assessment must be carried out by the Scheme Co-ordinator before any approved event or gathering takes place within the communal lounge. Please complete the Risk Assessment via the following link [Evotix Assure](#). For help and guidance with completing the risk assessment, please click the following link or ask your manager for support. 