



Places to live. Space to grow.

Communal Lounge Usage Policy

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Summary

1 Purpose of this policy

The purpose of this policy is to provide clear guidance on the usage of our communal lounges and spaces, which applies to West Kent tenants, and anyone that visits the schemes.

Through this Policy, West Kent will strive to balance the requirements of legislation and guidance with maximising the opportunities for residents to enjoy these spaces and ensure a consistent approach across all buildings.

This policy covers any residential buildings that have communal facilities for example extra care schemes, 55+ schemes, or supported accommodation.

2 Policy Statement

The purpose of the policy is to provide clear guidance on the usage of our communal lounges and spaces, promoting tenant responsibility.

Aims and Objectives

- Safe use of communal lounges, and any other communal areas.
- Communal lounges are used in the best way to benefit all tenants, staff and visitors.
- Communal lounges can be safely evacuated in the event of an emergency.

3 Legal Definitions and Requirements

This policy considers the below legislation and guidance:

- The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- Furniture and Furnishings (fire Safety) Regulations 1988
- The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014
- The Housing Act 2014
- West Kent's Mobility Scooter Policy 2025

4 Communal Lounge

West Kent has independent living schemes across the county of Kent. Most schemes have a communal lounge, or sub lounge, which can be used by all residents. Hereafter the term "communal Lounge" used within this policy refers to all shared community spaces.

Communal lounges are managed by the Scheme Manager or Neighbourhood housing Officer. Permission for items to be placed into the communal lounges must be granted by the Scheme Manager, Neighbourhood Housing Officer, or management.

Tenants own items should not be stored in these areas.

The following are classed as permissible items that can be in communal lounges but not limited to:

- Festive lights subject to installation and testing agreed and completed by West Kent.

- Festive decorations subject to installation agreement by West Kent.
- Furnishings to be installed by West Kent. No furniture to be gifted or donated for communal lounges.
- Walkers, mobility scooters and wheelchairs in use by residents.
- For kettles/microwaves or any other electrical appliance permission is required by the Scheme Manager, Neighbourhood Housing Officer, or Management

West Kent will take appropriate action to address any items found to be in breach of this Policy.

West Kent will consider:

- Whether the item poses an immediate health and safety risk to residents, visitors or staff.
- Whether ownership can be reasonably determined and if further investigations is required.

Items that present an immediate danger or significant increase the risk of fire, may be removed without prior notice. This may include, but not limited to:

- Motorbikes/scooters
- Lawnmowers or other petrol-powered gardening equipment.
- BBQs
- Hazardous chemicals, gas containers or flammable liquid.

Communal lounges can be used with a Scheme Managers, Neighbourhood Housing Officer or management's approval for (not an exhaustive list)

- Family visits
- Coffee mornings
- Tenant led social occasions.
- Approved events
- Selling of appropriate items
- Physical fitness sessions
- Arts & Crafts.

The communal lounge cannot be booked out by tenants and will always remain open to all residents. The Scheme Manager, Neighbourhood Housing Officer or Management reserves the right to decline any request for use that the deem inappropriate or would likely cause a disturbance or nuisance to others.

4.1 Condition of use of communal rooms.

To ensure safety, comfort, and enjoyment of all residents, the following conditions apply to the use of communal areas:

- No smoking throughout the building
- A risk assessment needs to be completed by the lead person/tenant (support can be given) and approved by the Scheme Manager, Neighbourhood Officer or Management.
- For any tenant lead activities all agree to take full responsibility for the safety of others, to take notice of the fire exits and fire extinguishers.
- Tenants to ensure that the number of people attending any one event does not exceed the maximum recommended for that scheme. West Kent will use a Fire Safety Occupancy Calculator to determine and guide the capacity for any events.
- No animals allowed in the communal lounges except for Guide dogs and Support dogs that have been approved.
- Food and Drink provision are the responsibility of the user.
- Use of the kitchen and kitchenware are permitted, any breakages will be charged for, and users are responsible for cleaning after use. If this does not take place, a recharge will be made to cover the cost of clearing up, or replacements.
- All individuals using the communal facilities are to keep the external area accessible for Emergency Vehicles
- All pull-cords that are located within the communal areas are for emergency use only.
- Ensure all doors and windows are closed and locked, and that lights are switched off after use.
- All events will normally be required to end by 11.00pm, the Scheme Manager or Neighbourhood Officer responsible for the scheme will confirm these times which will vary from scheme to scheme.
- West Kent will not accept responsibility for any damage or loss of property

5. Pets in communal lounge/spaces

Pets are not permitted in the communal lounge/space of a scheme/block unless considered a working pet. Please see West Kent's has a Pet Policy.

6 External Companies

In some instances, external companies may request to use the communal lounges within the schemes/blocks. In these instances, any requests need to go through the Scheme Manager, Neighbourhood Officer, or Management for approval.

Any external companies requesting to use the communal lounge/space must provide:

- Evidence of suitable insurance cover
- Ensure event is suitable to all West Kent's residents to attend.
- DBS checks (where appropriate)
- A risk assessment is carried out.

7. Responsibilities

Resident's responsibilities

- We ask that residents respect their scheme and carry out their responsibilities to keep the communal areas clean, safe and a happy place to live.
- Residents are generally responsible for:
- Adhering to the conditions of their tenancy or lease agreement.
- Being a considerate neighbour and not causing any disturbance within their property or communal areas. Being mindful of any activity which may cause noise, nuisance or any disturbance to their neighbours.
- Seeking the correct written permission for any requests from your Scheme Manager, Neighbourhood Housing Officer, or Management.
- Reporting any communal repairs promptly.
- Agreeing to local agreements regarding the use of communal lounges/rooms and facilities where available (e.g. communal laundry facilities)
- Allowing access for our contractors and staff.
- Reporting any anti-social behaviour or nuisance.
- Keeping communal areas clean, tidy and free from personal items.
- Disposing of rubbish correctly.
- Making sure the pet policy is always abided by.
- Abiding by the no smoking/vaping in all internal communal areas, being considerate of others when smoking in external areas and disposing of cigarette butts/vaping pods appropriately.

8. West Kent's responsibilities

As a landlord, West Kent is responsible for maintaining all communal areas we will:

- Ensure the communal areas are kept clear/tidy and accessible so residents can exit the building safely as possible in the event of an emergency.

- Ensure residents understand and keep internal communal areas and spaces around entrances and exits free from obstructions or items that could accelerate a fire. West Kent operates a zero tolerance on this matter.
- Carry out regular inspections on communal areas, act on any risks, repairs or potential hazards.
- Carry out Fire Risk Assessments (FRA's).

9 Regulation

This policy complies with the following regulations, which apply to the provision of health and safety and accessibility:

- The Fire Safety Act 2021
- The Housing Act 2004
- Building Safety Act 2022
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) (Amendment) Regulations 2025
- Equality Act 2010

10. Reporting

10.1 Compliance with this policy will be monitored through health and safety inspections, and by the relevant Team Manager.

10.2 [Enter details here]

10.3 [Enter details here]

11. Consultation

All policies, strategies and procedures should give proper consideration to the needs of diverse groups to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and access, and foster good relations between different groups in the community. The equality impact assessment form template can be located on Bettie.

The duty to notify residents will be assessed by conducting a residents' impact assessment, which can also be located on Bettie. This assessment is relevant if the policy/procedure poses a potential impact of on residents. The resident involvement team should be informed as soon as possible if residents will be affected by the policy being implemented or changed.

You can delete this section if you find that no consultation is needed.

4.2 [Enter details here]

4.3 [Enter details here]

4.4 [Enter details here]

12 Communication

This section covers how the policy is going to be published and communicated. It should state the primary audience (for example, staff or residents) —who needs to know and/or follow the policy and how the policy can be accessed by the relevant stakeholders.

12.1 [Enter details here]

12.2 [Enter details here]

12.3 [Enter details here]

[Enter content or delete as required]

Summary of key material/changes
(from section 11 onwards will need to be removed prior to publishing)

- First version

Related policies and supporting documents

List titles of any related or relevant policies. Use in-text links to the documents. Remove if not applicable.

1 [Enter related policies]

Document Name:	[Policy / Procedure Name]
Equality Impact Assessment:	[Brief summary of outcome/ Not applicable]
Equality Impact Assessment on Bettie:	[Yes/No]
Equality Impact Assessment on S Drive:	[Yes/No]
Resident Impact Assessment:	[Brief summary of outcome]
Policy Author:	[Enter Name]
Approved by:	[Enter Name]
Effective from:	[Enter Date]
Next Review Date:	[Enter Date]
Risk:	[Compliance / Regulatory / Finance / Legal]
Document Location:	[Enter Document Location]

POLICY SIGN-OFF

[This section should be removed for public facing policies which will be published on the West Kent website.]

All policies require Executive level sign off as a minimum. Further guidance on sign off is set out in the Guidance for Procedures and Policies, which can be located on Bettie and available from the Risk and Governance function.

- A current version of this procedure is available to all employees on (West Kent Intranet).

APPROVAL SIGNATURE:

JOB TITLE:

DATE:

Change History Record

Version	Date	Details of Change(s)	Approved By
V1.0	[Enter date]	Initial issue	[Enter Job Title]
V2.0	[Enter date]	[Enter details of change]	[Enter Job Title]