

# Communal Area Policy

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## Communal Areas Policy

Responsible Officer	Group Director Housing
This policy is applicable to	Karbon Group
Approved by	Policy Owner
Date approved	16 <sup>th</sup> December 2025
Frequency of review	Every 5 years
Date of next review	December 2030
Implementation date	December 2025
Key related documents (policy, procedure, customer literature)	Estate Inspection Policy Estate Inspection procedures Equality and Diversity Policy Anti-Social Behaviour Policy Customer Service Standards Tenancy Agreements Community Investment Strategy Aids and Adaptations Policy Abandoned Properties Policy Fire Safety Policy Fire Safety Management Plan Service Charge Policy Pet Policy Mobility Vehicles Policy
Sources of best practice or guidance used in developing this policy	Neighbourhood Standard Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 Housing Act 2004 – Housing Health and Safety Rating System FIA and NFCC Code of Practice for the Provision of Premises Information Boxes in Residential Accommodation Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 Building Safety Act 2022 Fire Safety Act 2021 Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022

Version control			
Version number (see note 1)	2	Author of Policy	Kath Glen Housing Area Manager
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Document change history		
Version	Date	Changed sections

<b>Consultation</b>	
Consultation Group (if applicable)	Date of Consultation (if applicable)
Staff	November 2025
Union(s)	N/A
Residents	November 2025
Human Resources / Organisation Development	N/A
Health and Safety Working Group	N/A
Building Safety Working Group	November 2025

## **Policy statement**

Karbon Group recognises that managing estates and shared communal areas effectively is key to developing sustainable communities, sustaining tenancies and ensuring customer safety.

This policy applies to all properties owned or managed by Karbon Group and includes Leasehold properties and properties managed by managing agents.

This policy complies with the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) Standards.

## **Risk policy is designed to control**

This policy is designed to control a number of reputational and financial risks.

## **Key performance measures**

## **Definitions**

Managing agent includes companies contracted by Karbon Group to provide services on our behalf.

TORTs Notice - notice served on resident(s) to advise they need to collect their possessions within a given timescale or Karbon Group can remove and dispose of the items.

## **Abbreviations**

FIA	Fire Industry Association
FRA	Fire Risk Assessment
NFCC	National Fire Chiefs Council
RRFSO	Regulator Reform (Fire safety) Order 2005
RSH	Regulator of Social Housing

## **1.0 Purpose of policy**

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to outline Karbon Group's approach to the management of communal areas, with the aim of ensuring that residents can enjoy a safe, secure and well-maintained environment in which to live.

## **2.0 Objectives**

- To develop a consistent and proactive approach to the management of Karbon Group properties, estates and neighbourhoods.
- To manage the environment and common areas owned and/or managed by Karbon Group effectively.
- To ensure compliance with the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and other relevant fire/building safety legislation.
- To ensure that all tenants and leaseholders are aware of their respective responsibilities.
- To provide effective estate management including the management of internal and external communal areas.
- To meet all regulatory requirements.

## **3.0 Policy detail**

- 3.1 This Policy applies to:

- Communal areas within properties of 2 or more dwellings – passageways, entrance halls, staircases and shared external walkways as well as the communal areas within multi occupancy dwellings.
- Shared facilities within buildings e.g. bin stores or bin chutes, other storage facilities.
- Shared communal and social facilities e.g. communal lounges, kitchens or laundry facilities and guest rooms.
- External areas e.g. shared gardens, car parks and through routes, bike stores, bin stores, mobility vehicle storage and external walkways.

### **3.2 Fire Safety**

- 3.2.1 Karbon Group will ensure compliance with the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (RRFSO) and will undertake routine Fire Risk Assessments (FRA's) of all relevant accommodation we own, manage or occupy at frequencies set out within our Fire Safety Management Plan. Risks will be identified and appropriate measures introduced to minimise risk to life and property from fire.
- 3.2.2 Karbon Group will ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, that any equipment provided in connection with assuring fire safety (including fire alarms, smoke alarms, emergency lighting, fire precautions and fire fighting equipment) is maintained in effective working order and repaired, maintained and serviced to British Standards and in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations. Further detail is provided with our Fire Safety Management Plan.

- 3.2.3 Karbon Group will ensure that appropriate signage is provided in communal areas including relevant fire action notices. This will include provision of wayfinding signage in our high-rise residential buildings at a minimum to assist fire and rescue crews with orientation in the event of a fire.
- 3.2.4 Karbon Group will hold information within the communal areas in line with relevant legislation and guidance to support the management of the building, ensuring residents safety and provide necessary information in the event of an evacuation of the building. This information is held securely within a fire box.
- 3.2.5 The 2025 Fire Safety Regulations places a duty on building managers for high risk buildings to address concerns about fire safety for their most vulnerable residents. To ensure that Karbon Group complies with these requirements we will:
- Discuss the support needs with vulnerable residents in high risk buildings
  - Carry out a risk assessment with residents
  - Develop a support plan to assist residents
  - Share relevant information with the fire service to support residents in the event of a fire
  - These plans will be reviewed on a regular basis

### 3.3 Internal communal areas

- 3.3.1 Internal communal areas, even those immediately adjacent to a resident's property, are not an extension of an individual's property and residents should not use these areas for their personal effects or have exclusive use particularly where access to the communal facilities/areas is required by other residents
- 3.3.2 All internal communal areas e.g. connecting corridors, landings, stairwells, lobbies, meeting rooms, or common rooms must be kept entirely free from obstruction. Even temporary obstructions pose a risk of fire and injury and can cause inconvenience including loss of accessibility for residents and visitors.
- 3.3.3 Common obstructions in internal communal areas include but are not limited to:
- rubbish
  - items awaiting disposal
  - furnishings such as mats and flowerpots
  - Bikes, motorised cycles, scooters and mobility scooters
  - Prams or pushchairs
- 3.3.4 Personal effects such as photo frames and pictures should not be placed in communal areas and if they are, residents will be asked to remove them immediately.
- 3.3.5 Electrical supplies or sockets in communal areas are for use by authorised Karbon Group staff and contractors only. Residents and visitors must not use these sockets at any time. Enforcement action will be taken for any residents using electrical sockets or supply in the communal areas.

- 3.3.6 Communal laundry rooms are provided in some Karbon Group properties. Laundry rooms should be used for washing and drying clothes only. They must not be used for storage. Rubbish such as empty washing powder boxes must be removed from the laundry room and disposed of in refuse bins.
- 3.3.7 Petrol, and another other flammable liquids must not be stored in any internal or external communal areas or in residents' flats.
- 3.4 Sheltered and extra care schemes
- 3.4.1 Karbon Group adopts a managed use approach to risk in communal areas in sheltered and extra care schemes.
- 3.4.2 Seating, curtains and soft furnishings are allowed in communal areas and corridors in sheltered and extra care schemes provided that:
- They do not pose a fire risk
  - Furniture complies with relevant fire safety legislation
  - It does not reduce the effective width of corridors to less than 1050 mm
- 3.5 External communal areas
- 3.5.1 We refer to green spaces between our homes across our stock (where grass and flower beds are not attached to any individual home and is maintained by our grounds maintenance teams) as 'open plan'. Residents must not fence in or erect any structure such as sheds or greenhouses on these open plan communal areas. Karbon Group will not give consent for residents to erect fencing or any structures on these areas.
- 3.5.2 We do recognise that some residents have been given permission for fencing and other structures on open plan areas prior to Karbon Group being formed in April 2017. Karbon Group has taken the decision that any existing fences and planting can remain in place for the duration of the individual customer's tenancy, but, when that tenancy comes to an end, the enclosed area will be returned to its original condition as open plan land.
- 3.5.3 Residents can display pots and hanging baskets but, to enable us to maintain the grounds effectively, they must be limited to the immediate area outside each home. Any pots or hanging baskets must not hinder or obstruct our contractors in carrying out their tasks. Karbon Group will not be responsible for any damage caused to these items.
- 3.6 Refuse disposal
- 3.6.1 Refuse and recycling bins must be stored in the designated areas and away from the building. Bins should not be put out for collection too early and should be returned to the storage area as soon as possible after collection to prevent an obstruction or fire risk
- 3.6.2 Bin stores and storages areas must be kept clear and free of litter, large items e.g. furniture, white goods and large amounts of cardboard.

- 3.6.3 Wheeled bins must not obstruct exit routes, doorways, meter cupboards or be placed directly under windows. In addition, wheeled bins should not be stored in a way that poses a fire risk.
- 3.6.4 Rubbish or unwanted furniture or household items must not be left outside of flat doors or in communal areas. Bulky waste collection must be arranged with the relevant local authority in advance and left out on the day of collection. Failure to do so may result in Karbon Group removing the item and recharging the resident who left the items for removing it.
- 3.7 Bicycles, scooters and motorbikes
- 3.7.1 Bicycles must be stored in bike racks or bike stores where provided. If there are no bike stores or racks provided they should be stored in the resident's property.
- 3.7.2 Karbon Group will advise residents that they will need to remove any bike or scooter left in communal areas and ask that they be stored more appropriately.
- 3.7.3 Motorbikes are not permitted in communal areas or inside resident's flats.
- 3.8 Permissions
- 3.8.1 If a resident wants to carry out any alterations or place items such as hanging baskets, planters or furnishings within a communal area they must obtain written permission before doing so.
- 3.8.2 Karbon Group may grant permission provided that:
- The alteration or the item which is to be placed in the communal area has been risk assessed and does not create an obstruction or pose a risk or hazard to residents or visitors
  - It does not pose a fire risk
  - The alteration or item is not considered to be offensive to anyone
  - Karbon Group will not give permission for any alteration, changes or additions that would affect the listed building status
- 3.8.3 Any associated costs will be met by the resident and will be their responsibility to maintain. In addition the resident will be responsible for removing any additional items or alterations. Failure to do so will result in Karbon removing the item(s) and may recharge the resident for this.
- 3.8.4 Permission may be granted for garden furniture to be installed in communal gardens provided that it is available for use by all residents.
- 3.8.5 Permission for alteration or installation of items may be revoked at any time if the alterations or installations pose a risk or creates an obstruction for other residents or following complaints from other residents.
- 3.8.6 The following items will not be allowed at any time:

- Anything which is combustible or poses a fire risk.
- Anything which prevents or significantly limits the use of shared facilities by other residents.
- Anything which obstructs rubbish collection areas.
- Anything which obstructs stairwells, fire escapes and through routes.
- Anything which may be construed as offensive to staff or other residents.
- Barbeques, fire pits and chimineas are not permitted in communal gardens, yards or any other communal areas.

### 3.9 Maintenance of communal areas

3.9.1 Karbon Group will maintain the condition of all furniture and other items it provides for residents' use in communal areas (e.g. furniture in communal lounges) and reserves the right to remove any furniture or other items belonging to residents which may cause an obstruction or fire hazard.

3.9.2 Residents should be able to access all areas of their homes including communal areas and facilities within the block or scheme where they live. Where accessibility issues are identified either by a resident or during the course of a property or scheme inspection, this will be remedied as quickly as possible.

### 3.10 Mobility Scooters, eBikes and eScooters

3.10.1 Mobility scooters, eBikes and eScooters must not be stored or charged in the communal corridors or communal areas unless permission has been given in writing to do so. Where permission has been granted they should be stored in a way that does not cause an obstruction or fire hazard. These types of vehicles introduce a considerable fire and obstruction hazard within these areas. For more information see Mobility Vehicle policy.

### 3.11 Service Charges

3.11.1 Where Karbon Group provides one or more services to communal or shared areas including our wider estates, for example cleaning or grounds maintenance, it will apply a service charge to residents in line with the relevant tenancy agreement or lease.

### 3.12 Potential Enforcement Action

3.12.1 Where an issue, risk or hazard has been identified as a result of actions by a resident(s), Karbon Group will work with the individual(s) and, if appropriate with relevant agencies to resolve the issue in the first instance.

3.12.2 Where residents do not comply with reasonable requests to remove items which are causing an obstruction, fire hazard or health and safety concern from communal areas, Karbon Group may take enforcement action. Enforcement action may also be taken if a resident does not allow access to carry out essential work. Enforcement action could include but is not limited to:

- Injunction
- Tenancy enforcement action such as tenancy warning or notice
- Service of a TORT notice and removal of the item.
- Service of a building contravention notice for any building in scope of the Building Safety Act, 2022
- Any other legal remedy available to Karbon Homes

3.12.3 Where a TORT notice has been served and an item removed, the owner will have 28 days to collect their item before Karbon Group disposes of it permanently.

3.12.4 While Karbon Group will make all reasonable attempts to identify the owner of any items left in a communal area, if it is not possible to identify the owner the items will be removed and stored for 28 days. If it has still not been possible to identify the owner then the items will be disposed of.

3.12.5 Where there is an immediate and significant risk associated with an item remaining in a communal area, the item will be removed immediately.

## **4.0 Pets**

4.1 Permission will not be granted for residents to keep cats or dogs (except for assistance dogs) in properties where there are communal areas. Residents who need assistance dogs will still require permission in writing from Karbon Homes.

## **5.0 Resident involvement**

5.1 We will consult and work with residents to develop a residential engagement strategy for each of our high-rise residential buildings (i.e. at least 18m to top floor level or 7 or more storeys in height) which will be kept under review to promote meaningful engagement around building safety.

## **6.0 Customer Vulnerabilities**

6.1 This policy is applied in line with Our Approach To Vulnerability Policy. Everyone matters. We want people to be treated fairly, have equality of opportunities, freedom, respect, and access to our services. We will offer support, reasonable adjustments, and adaptations to remove barriers. We will discuss with our customers what is reasonable and appropriate. In delivering this service we may need to escalate a particular case – if we do then customer vulnerabilities will be considered as part of the decision-making process.

6.2 We will support people with vulnerabilities to deliver this service. We will work alongside external agencies such as social services, the police and fire services and other appropriate agencies to help and support people with vulnerabilities in the delivery of our services but also to ensure we meet our statutory and regulatory requirements as a social landlord. Details are provided in the appropriate areas in this policy. All our customer policies are available on the website.

## **7.0 Monitoring and Review**

- 7.1 This policy will be reviewed every 3 years unless there are any legislative or regulatory change or changes in best practice.

## **8.0 Equality and Diversity**

- 8.1 This policy is applied in line with Karbon's Equality and Diversity Policy and the associated legislation including the Public Sector Equality Duty and Equality Act 2010. At Karbon we aim to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity, foster good relations and define the nine protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.
- 8.2 However, we like to go even further. Beyond these protected characteristics we also take into consideration additional factors such as socio-economic status and language barriers which may also play a part. Our vision is for everyone to be treated fairly, have equality of opportunities, freedom, respect and access to our services.
- 8.3 To help us achieve this, we will work to improve accessibility for all, offering reasonable adjustments, adaptations and discussing ways that we can work to remove any barriers. A reasonable adjustment involves making a change to the way that we usually do things.
- 8.4 All of our customer policies and key information are made available on the Karbon Group website and My Karbon portal. These platforms have an easy to use assistive tool that supports accessibility to our information. This includes translation, audio, changes to the size of text, ruler and screen mask. We also aim to make our information and services more accessible by using Plain English in our communication and offering sign language and language interpreters where required.
- 8.5 We work together to look at options and agree what adjustments would be reasonable in your individual circumstances. If you would like to find out more, please get in touch with the team.

## **9.0 Data Protection and Privacy**

- 9.1 We have a clear policy on data protection and sharing data with other partners/third parties under the requirements of the UK General Data Protection Regulation, the Data Protection Act 2018 and other associated legislation. This is clearly set out in the Data Protection Policy for the Karbon Group which, along with its associated procedures, must be followed throughout the operation of this procedure.