

5 Living in flats



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Living in flats

If you live in one of our high or low rise blocks you can expect to receive the same level of excellent service as our other customers. However, we understand that your environment is different from other estates we manage and we have tailored our services to reflect these differences.

Alterations to your flat/communal area

If you want to undertake any alterations to your flat or communal areas you must have written permission from your housing manager. This is because we need to make sure the changes will not compromise any fire safety measures within our blocks. If you have already made any alterations please let us know, including changes to doors, windows, walls and ceilings.

If you wish to install cable or satellite television within your flat you must contact your housing manager. Your supplier must get our permission before undertaking the work as poor installation could have fire safety implications. For more information see the section 'cable TV and satellite dishes' in this section of the handbook.

Cable television and satellite dishes

We have put an agreement in place with Virgin, and are looking at extending to other cable/satellite providers, for instance Sky, BT, etc. Basically these companies must not install equipment into a tenant or leaseholder's property until they have a letter providing permission from Dudley Council's housing services. This agreement binds the company to agreed set of working practices and standards to ensure that the integrity of our buildings is not breached. The installation of cabling can cause disruption to any fire-stopping measures within the block.

If you wish to install cable or satellite television within your flat you must contact your housing manager. Your supplier must get our permission before undertaking the installation as poor installation could have fire safety implications. For more information see the section 'cable TV and satellite dishes' in this section of the handbook.

There is a limit to the number of satellite dishes which can be installed onto any property. There are other reasons we may not grant permission for high and low rise flats. For example, where the work to install the satellite dish will compromise the fire safety of the block, where the dish may result in additional maintenance costs to the authority, or where there is a communal aerial installed.

In most cases flats will be restricted to using the communal facilities provided.

Balconies

If you have a balcony do not use it for BBQs or let fireworks off from it as these actions pose a fire risk. Items must not be thrown from balconies.

You should also take care whenever on the balcony and never climb on railings. Particular care should be taken with children.

Communal areas

Residents need to keep communal areas free from anything which may be an obstacle, a tripping hazard, or combustible. These items include fixtures (e.g. rugs and curtains), fittings (e.g. tumble dryers) and personal belongings. We carry out regular inspections of our blocks and if we notice anything stored in communal areas which needs to be removed we will contact the appropriate residents, advising them of timescales for removal.

Items which must not be stored (or left at any time) in communal areas including electric self-powered mobility scooters, bikes, motorbikes, prams, pushchairs, wheelchairs, etc. If in doubt, before storing any items in the storage sheds. Check with your housing managers first - if you have access to one.

No items can be in communal areas without the express permission of your housing manager.

For your safety we will ensure that these areas are clear of hazards. We will take enforcement action against persistent offenders.

You must keep the communal areas free from litter.

Concierge

In designated blocks our concierge work between 6pm and 2am patrolling the blocks and responding to any issues you bring to their attention.

Door entry system/security

Many of our blocks are fitted with a door entry security system operated by a plastic fob or key.

Please ensure the main entrance doors are securely closed every time you use them and don't let people in you don't know or aren't expecting.

We request that you do not prop entry doors open as these are automatic doors, which could be damaged by such actions.

If you lose your key fob or key please let us know as soon as possible and we will arrange for a replacement. You can also arrange to have additional fobs for your family members. You will be charged for new/lost key fobs. When your tenancy ends all keys and fobs must be returned.

Estate assistants

Your estate assistants are there to help keep your blocks clean, tidy and in good repair. It is also your responsibility to help to keep your block clean and tidy by disposing of any rubbish you accumulate properly and not storing items in the communal areas.

Fire safety

Your safety is very important to us, and we have both a legal and civil responsibility to make sure you are safe in our blocks. We have a fire safety policy in place specifically for flatted estates. This policy, together with informative leaflets and advice, is available to view at www.dudley.gov.uk/housing, or by speaking to your housing manager. You can also view an informative video on our website which shows what to do in the event of a fire. This video is available in various language options.

In the event of a fire we need to ensure there is no risk of any obstacles blocking exits and walkways.

We suggest everyone living in a flatted estate has a fire emergency plan in place, to ensure everyone within their property knows what to do.

If you live in a high rise block and there is a fire, you should remain in your flat if it is safe to do so, unless the fire is within your, or your neighbour's property, or advised by the fire service to leave. This is the policy endorsed by Dudley Council and the fire service.

If you live in a low rise flat and there is a fire you should leave your property - if it is safe to do so. Always call 999 in the event of a fire.

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must not install equipment into a tenant's or leaseholder's property until they have a letter providing permission from Dudley Council's housing services. This agreement binds the company to agreed set of working practices and standards to ensure that the integrity of our buildings is not breached. The installation of cabling can cause disruption to any fire-stopping measures within the block.

If you wish to install cable or satellite television within your flat you must contact your housing manager. Your supplier must get our permission before undertaking the work as poor installation could have fire safety implications. For more information see the section 'cable TV and satellite dishes' in this section of the handbook.

Gas cookers

All new gas appliances installed within your property must be CE marked and suitable for use in multi-occupancy buildings.

All new gas cookers must have a flame supervision device (FSD) fitted to each burner - this is a safety feature which cuts off the gas supply if the flame goes out.

If you have purchased a second hand gas cooker, it should only be installed where the manufacturer's instructions are available.

If you own a gas cooker which doesn't have an FSD fitted don't worry - you do not have to replace your cooker. We will record on the Landlord's Gas Safety Record that it is non compliant to current standards and we will inform you verbally.

Please be advised that all gas works must be carried out by a GAS SAFE registered installer.

Laminate flooring

You need permission from your housing manager to fit laminate flooring.

- There may be noise implications which affect your neighbours
- If laying, use the non-adhesive (interlocking type) as this is easier to remove
- You are responsible for the uplift and refitting as the consequence of any necessary repairs

As you live in a flat, we ask you to pay particular care to your neighbours and those who live beneath your property, when using laminate flooring.

If you install laminate flooring and it is later found to be causing noise disruption - we have the right to withdraw our permission. You will be responsible for the removal of the laminate flooring.

If you install laminate flooring without permission you may be asked to remove it.

Lifts

In the event of a fire (or fire alarm) you must not use the lifts.

If there is a problem with the lift breaking down you must not call the fire brigade. This applies even if someone is trapped within the lift.

You must telephone the Repairs Management Centre on **0300 555 8283**, or speak to your estate assistant, and they will arrange for an engineer to visit as soon as possible.

For those who are trapped in the lifts, in most of our blocks there is a lift alarm button which once pressed will alert the council's call centre and we will call-out our lift contractor. Where there is no alarm button, a ringing alarm will draw attention.

We have service standards in place with our lift engineers which means they should answer all call-outs quickly and efficiently to reduce inconvenience to you.

Please do not drop litter in lifts as this is both unsightly and causes a risk.

Mobility scooters

If you are considering using an electric, self-powered mobility scooter you must speak to your housing manager first. This is to get permission so you can agree a location for it to be stored and charged.

If you have a scooter you must store it within your property (or an agreed location), charge it correctly and get it regularly maintained. You must not store scooters within communal areas.

When you charge your scooter you must do so safely within your property and not in communal areas. Electrical leads must not be trailed out of your property via letterboxes, etc.

Pigeons

Please do not feed the pigeons!

Pigeons carry potentially infectious diseases, create mess, attract other pests and damage buildings/structures.

Anyone who is found to be encouraging pigeons by feeding them may be subject to action against their tenancy or licence agreement.

If you see any pigeons nesting on balconies or in communal areas please let us know.

Recycling

Dudley Council is committed to recycling wherever possible.

You can have recycling bags for the blocks' recycling containers or use your own suitable bag. If you need some recycling bags call Dudley Council Plus on **0300 555 2345** to request some.

You must take your recycling to your communal recycling site and place each item in the appropriate container. We collect glass, paper and card, plastic bottles, tins and cans at most sites. For information on recycling please visit **www.dudley.gov.uk** (search recycling).

Those living in low rise accommodation receive a kerbside recycling collection service. See 'Your home and estate' for more information.

Repairs

In some high rise blocks there are phones situated in the lobby area which are a direct line to the Repairs Management Centre.

For more details about how to report repairs refer to the handbook 'Welcome to your new home'.

Rubbish chutes

It is important you use the chutes correctly and that no rubbish is stored around them as this is a fire hazard.

The chutes should be used between the hours of 8am and 8pm to help keep noise to a minimum.

Small bags should be used to dispose of rubbish. You must not throw away larger items down the chute as they could cause a blockage. Please break up cardboard boxes i.e. pizza boxes.

If you are throwing breakable items away please wrap in newspaper to prevent injury.

If the refuse chute is blocked or rubbish has been left, please contact us on **0300 555 8283** and we will arrange for it to be cleared.

Rubbish and refuse collection on flatted estates

Rubbish incorrectly stored within blocks pose a fire hazard and should not be left within communal areas. Rubbish must be stored correctly in the bin area and put out in a timely manner on collection days.

If not stored correctly within the bin areas rubbish can be a fire and health hazard, as well as looking unsightly. You are responsible for placing your rubbish out for collection.

If you live in a block where the rubbish is collected from the front of the building every week, please ensure you take your rubbish to the collection point at the appropriate time - otherwise it will not be collected. Rubbish is collected from the kerbside and not from the bin storage area.

If your flat uses a large communal bin please ensure that all rubbish is placed there in time for the collection and bagged appropriately. Rubbish must be placed within the bin and not in the surrounding area. Rubbish around the bin prevents it from being emptied.

Action may be taken against anyone who does not dispose of rubbish correctly and against anyone who fly tips.

For more information about rubbish collection refer to the section 'Your home and estate'.

Smoking

There is a no smoking policy within our blocks.

It is against the law for anyone to smoke in the internal communal/common areas of the block (including lifts) and anyone who does so can be prosecuted. Of course you can smoke within your own flat.

Storing hazardous materials

You should not store hazardous materials within your property or communal areas, including bottled gas, paraffin, petrol or other dangerous materials.

These are not allowed within our blocks.

For information

Dudley Council's website

www.dudley.gov.uk includes a wealth of information about all council services and events taking place in the borough.

If you require any assistance with regards to the tenants' handbook or would like to request an interpreter, large print version, or audio tape, please contact Dudley Council Plus on **0300 555 2345**.

The photos used in this publication are for illustrative purposes only. All information included in this handbook was correct at the time of printing.

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Approved  by tenants