

electric, self powered

mobility scooters



A high and low rise living guide

Introduction

Before purchasing a mobility scooter you need to talk to your housing manager to get permission.

Self powered mobility scooters have become very popular as they help people to retain their mobility and independence. We wanted to make sure you have the facts about purchasing and maintaining a scooter before you buy one so that you can make an informed decision.

Our flats were not designed and built with mobility scooters* in mind and therefore do not have the capability to adapt to this new demand for their use and storage. This problem is being experienced nationally - not just in our borough. We are asking residents to consider storage and safety when buying and owning a scooter.

The Disabled Living Foundation provide free and independent advice about scooters* through their helpline on 0845 130 9177, email their helpline@dlf.org.uk, or visit their website www.dlf.org.uk, where fact sheets are available. We recommend any scooter be small enough to fit through the door of your property and easily stored.

Are you considering buying a self powered mobility scooter*?

If yes, you must consider the responsibilities of your tenancy/lease before committing yourself. You must speak to your housing manager to get advice and suggest you contact the Disabled Living Foundation to find out what best suits your needs.

Conditions have been put in place by Dudley Council to ensure the safety of all residents (and their visitors) living in our blocks. These conditions have been developed due to legal requirements, advice from the fire service, ease of evacuation in the case of a fire, plus the general health, safety and welfare of our residents.

Fire authorities, safety specialists as well as the council, have concerns about the safety of mobility scooters*, when stored and/or charged in communal areas of flatted estates.

You must consider how you plan to store your scooter as it cannot be kept in any communal areas, how you will maintain its battery charge and its general up keep.

Mobility scooters* help to retain independence but you should consider the financial implications you will be taking on board if you buy one:

- They are expensive to buy. If you purchase a used scooter make sure that it has been fully serviced and is fit for purchase. If possible get a warranty. They are expensive to fix
- You should purchase insurance cover and this is payable yearly. This insurance cover will help you pay any third party claims you may be liable for in the future
- Your contents insurance may increase, but it is important you inform your insurer as the scooter should be covered
- Scooters* should be regularly maintained and serviced by a qualified engineer to ensure they are safe to use and not a threat due to faulty parts
- The battery needs to be charged regularly to keep it running. This will have an impact upon your energy bills

Storage and charging

Mobility scooters* must not be stored in communal areas - including escape routes, corridors, stairs, etc as they present an obstruction hazard.

It is important communal areas are kept clear from obstructions which may hinder evacuation of the block and rescue operations by the emergency services. We have found that some residents have been storing their scooters* outside their homes on hallways/landings or stairwells and using extension wires to recharge batteries - this is dangerous. These actions cause obstructions in the communal areas, blocking escape routes.

We recommend scooters* which are small enough to get through the residents' doorway be purchased. These should be stored and charged within properties in a safe manner, in a room with a door and a smoke detector. It is not safe to keep them in communal areas as they are combustible and emit toxic fumes when on fire.

If you purchase a scooter you must ensure that it is an electric or manual version. Petrol, gas, etc, versions are not permitted within our blocks (also other non electric appliances with combustible fuel are not allowed).

Electric scooters* have to be charged from a mains supply using a battery charger which is supplied with the unit. These should be charged within the resident's property and not in communal areas or via extension wires into communal areas, as this is a fire hazard as the battery and scooter are both easily flammable. Trailing cables also poses a tripping hazard should residents need to evacuate the block.

Ideally you should have your electrical supply equipment and leads PAT tested to ensure their fitness for use. You will be responsible for this.

Anyone found using the landlord's energy supply are breaking tenancy conditions and action will be taken.

Charging scooters* unattended are at risk of ignition. You should not leave them unattended when charging.

Your housing manager will be able to advise you as to whether housing services can help with storage - however any facilities will be let on a first come first served basis.

If residents want to make any structural changes to their property to allow access, they must discuss with their housing manager first and gain written permission.

Scooters* and tenancy/lease conditions

The **tenancy conditions** state you must:

- co-operate with the council and your neighbours to keep any communal areas clean, tidy, secure and clear of obstruction
- keep such areas clear to provide an escape route and easy access for the fire service
- not keep scooters* in communal areas as they are a fire hazard as they are highly flammable and a trip hazard

Within your **leasehold conditions** there are conditions which you must adhere to and which we could take enforcement action if they are breached:

- You must not make structural changes, including to doors, windows and walls. If you are considering making any changes you must speak to the housing manager first and gain written consent
- This is particularly important if you wish to remove/change fire doors, including your front door entrance

General

- Before purchasing a mobility scooter* you need to talk to your housing manager to get permission
- You must not obstruct any communal areas (including landings, stairwells, entrance halls, etc) with any fixtures, fittings or personal belongings
- If you have installed any personal items in communal areas you will be contacted by the housing manager and asked to remove them within 14 days
- If you have a scooter you must store and charge it within your property - if they are left in communal areas they are an obstacle. If you are unable to get it into your flat please speak to the housing manager
- You must not store any kind of inflammable or combustible materials within your property or associated buildings
- If scooters* are used, or stored, inappropriately within our blocks we will investigate and will take enforcement action to ensure they are removed
- By law (Regulatory Reform - Fire Safety - Order 2005), enforced by the Fire Service, we have to make sure that everyone within our blocks (residents, visitors, employees) are safe and free from risk of injury as much as possible. Regular risk assessments are carried out

Insurance

If you own a scooter we recommend you take out insurance cover as you are liable to pay compensation or third party claims if you have an accident, or cause injury or damage. We have setup a very competitive insurance scheme - telephone 01384 815051 for details.

You should also inform your insurance company for your property insurance as the premium on your contents insurance may change.

If any damage should result as a consequence of mal-use/inappropriate storage/personal image we will recover any costs incurred through the owner's insurance company. If there is no insurance cover then charges will be made via the rechargeable repairs policy.

Common questions about mobility scooters*

- 1 I am interested in buying a mobility scooter, can I? Yes you can but you must get permission from your housing manager first. Dudley Council encourages its tenants to be independent and mobility scooters* can be a very good aid. However, your scooter must be stored within your property and not cause a hazard/risk.
- 2 Do I need permission before I buy my scooter? Yes. If you live in a flat permission should be sought from your housing manager
- 3 I'm interested in buying a scooter, where I can get help and advice? The Disabled Living Foundation provide free and independent advice about scooters* through their helpline on 0845 130 9177, or on their website www.dlf.org.uk, where fact sheets are available
- 4 Where should I store my scooter? Scooters* should be stored within your property in a room with a smoke detector and with a closable door. If you cannot gain access have a chat with housing manager. Retailers now sell smaller and collapsible models to make storage easier for you

- 5 Where should I charge my scooter? You should charge your scooter within your property. Do not use extension wires into communal areas. Do not use supplies in communal areas
- 6 Why are Dudley Council being strict about scooter storage and charging? We want to make sure all of our residents, their visitors and our employees are safe within our blocks and scooters* can pose a fire hazard. If they are left in communal areas they can be a tripping hazard, and block escape routes. They are also highly combustible and omit toxic gases and fumes when on fire. We also have a legal responsibility
- 7 Can I drive my mobility scooter in the block? Yes you can, but you must drive it with care and attention, and be mindful of other people. If you cause any damage in the block by your scooter you may be charged or a claim made to your insurers
- 8 Do I need insurance? We strongly recommend that you insure your mobility scooter*

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