

Open Access Balconies & Walkways, Fire Safety Guidance

“Open Access” balconies are best described as the communal spaces designed for accessing flats from a lobby or stairwell. These are a shared commodity but with the fundamental design of being a walkway which is open to the environment but usually with a covering or the covering of the floor above to enclose it.

Communal open balconies are less of a fire risk by nature of them being outside to the elements and this exposure to the environment meaning any fire will not necessarily create significant smoke issues for other residents or impairing the means of escape.

Clarion has a zero tolerance approach to the storage of items in enclosed common areas of flats which form the means of escape, however we feel it appropriate to adopt a ‘managed approach’ to the “Open Access” Balconies as the risk is perceived to be lower.

Clarion’s policy is that the items stored or displayed on the open balconies should not endanger others or restrict access or impair the means of escape.

This is difficult to quantify for every scenario and situation; however, common sense and risk evaluation of this should be used by the Housing Teams to make that decision

The guidance below is to assist in that decision making process and risk evaluation and to give some assurance of their decisions being correct. If in doubt please contact a member of the Fire Safety team

Fire Safety Considerations

Access Routes

- All access routes in the communal areas of open balconies, including walkways and pathways must be kept clear and sterile at all times.
- The minimum width for safe access and egress is 900mm so this should be ideally maintained.
- Any properties that have access requirements for persons using wheelchairs, mobility scooters or walking aids will need to be considered carefully so that adequate width is provided for both access and means of escape.

Barbecues

- Barbecues are not allowed to be used in the communal areas of open balconies under any circumstances. Nor are they permitted on private balconies!

Alterations to the Communal Area & Shared Access Routes

- Residents must not make alterations to communal areas by installing items such as fencing, trellis or gates which block access / egress or section off parcels of communal areas belonging to Clarion.
- Residents are not permitted to fit any additional security devices and locks to existing doors in the communal areas restricting access or limiting access

Combustible Items & Flammable Material

- The shared routes must be free from all flammable materials and items. Residents must not store combustible or flammable items on any shared or private balconies.

Electrical Equipment

- Live electrical equipment must not be used or stored in the communal areas of open balconies or private balconies.
- (This includes fridges, freezers, tumble dryers and washing machines)

Mobility Scooters, Prams, Buggies & Bicycles

- All devices/equipment must be stored and charged within the residents own home or in provided designated charging stations, stores, garages or sheds where provided.
- No charging is permitted on open balconies or communal areas.

Smoking

- Smoking is not allowed in any enclosed part of the communal areas of open balconies.
- This will include covered walkways, stairs and hallways, enclosed balconies, building under-crofts and car park areas.
- Smoking in open areas is permitted, however Residents should use ash trays, buckets of sand or water and dispose of smoking materials responsibly to minimise risk.

External Furniture

- A limited amount of external furniture is acceptable in the communal areas of open balconies as long as the criteria detailed above is met in terms of combustibility and maintenance of the 900mm access routes. (Small chair/stool) All other external furniture must be stored away within the residents' property when not in use.

Planting & Small Bushes/Shrubs

- If placed on a suitable surface with drainage, plants may be located adjacent to the external wall of a residents' property as long as:
- 900mm is maintained on the access routes Foliage from plants must be no higher than 1.2m
- Hanging baskets project no further than 300mm and the bracket must have no section lower than 2.0m (The basket may hang lower)
- Any planters should not overhang pathways and if installed must be secured by ties to prevent accident knocking
- No pots or equivalent are placed on window sills or ledges

Clarion reserves the right, after undertaking a Risk Assessment, to allow limited

planters in demarcated areas in the communal areas of open balconies.

However, in all cases these will not extend to a depth of more than 450mm

Enforcement

Where a significant fire risk is noted by a Resident or a Housing Officer and the risk is immediate and/or it is high risk, Clarion will take the appropriate action.

Where a breach of this guidance is noted, and the threat posed is not immediate and/or it is medium to low risk, Clarion will write to the Resident, informing them of the breach and giving the Resident 28 days to remedy the situation

If an item is required to be removed to remedy a breach, a TORT notice may also be placed on the item. If the resident has not taken the appropriate action after 28 days, Clarion will remedy the breach, e.g. by removing items.

Policy Control Information

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| Policy owner | Bob Read, Fire Safety Compliance Manager |
| Policy author | Bob Read, Fire Safety Compliance Manager |
| Approved by | David Gould, Group Fire Safety Assurance Manager |
| Published externally? | No |

Version History

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| Approval | David Gould, Group Fire Safety Assurance Manager | | |
| Policy Author | Bob Read, Fire Safety Compliance Manager | | |

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