

BALCONIES FIRE SAFETY POLICY

Version	Status	Date of issue
1	Final	April 2025

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1. Equality

- 1.1. In line with the Equality Act 2010, we will ensure that no tenant is treated less favourably on the grounds of gender, ethnicity, age, religion, sexuality or any other protected characteristic.
- 1.2. Some decisions involving tenants may also be subject to individual equalities impact assessments (EqIAs). This is particularly common in cases involving enforcement, repossessions and prosecutions.

2. Aims and Scope

Aims

- 2.1. This policy outlines the fire safety measures and responsibilities for balconies in residential buildings. It aims to ensure the safety of residents and prevent fire incidents on balconies.

Scope

- 2.2. This policy applies to all residential buildings with balconies managed by the Council. It covers the responsibilities of residents, the Council, and other stakeholders in maintaining fire safety on balconies.
- 2.3. It applies to all residents of Council-owned blocks, whether Council tenants, non-secure tenants placed in temporary accommodation in Council properties, resident leaseholders, or private tenants of non-resident leaseholders.
- 2.4. Balcony fires can start easily, with ignition sources such as cigarettes or embers being blown to lower or adjacent balconies by wind. Fires that start on balconies can also spread quickly, with the wind both providing oxygen to fuel the fire and blowing embers to neighbouring balconies.

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3. Responsibilities of residents

- 3.1. Residents must keep balconies free of clutter in order to avoid creating a fire risk due to the build-up of flammable and combustible items. In particular, tenants must not store any of the following on balconies:
- Bags and/or boxes of refuse
 - E-bikes and e-scooters or batteries for e-bikes and e-scooters
 - Mobility scooters
 - White goods, whether functioning or awaiting disposal
 - Cables, sockets or electrical goods
 - Gas canisters, fuel or petrol
 - Paints, oils or paint thinners
 - Mattresses or upholstered furniture
 - Dead or dried plants or plant material
- 3.2. Furniture stored on balconies should have a metal or thick timber frame. Combustible furniture, including plastic-framed or upholstered furniture should not be kept on balconies.
- 3.3. Enclosing, curtaining or screening off of balconies is not permitted. Structures including sheds, tents or gazebos are not permitted on balconies.
- 3.4. Balconies must not be modified, including changing the walls, railings or enclosure without prior permission from the Council's Housing Directorate and Building Regulations.
- 3.5. Residents must not smoke on balconies. Embers from cigarettes or incompletely extinguished cigarettes being thrown from balconies are a leading cause of balcony fires. Cigarette butts must never be thrown from balconies.
- 3.6. The use of BBQs, patio heaters, firepits or camping stoves on balconies is prohibited.
- 3.7. Residents must report any fire hazards or maintenance issues related to balconies to the Council immediately. Residents must also grant access to the Council to inspect or remedy any potential hazards when given notice by officers.
- 3.8. Clotheslines should not overhang balcony railings and hanging clothes should be placed as close to balcony doors as possible.
- 3.9. Plants on balconies should be kept watered, as dry plant material can be highly combustible in dry weather conditions. Plant pots should not be placed on ledges or any other area where they might fall and cause an accident.

4. Responsibilities of the Council

- 4.1. The Council will conduct regular inspections of balconies to ensure compliance with the above responsibilities. Officers will ask to see balconies as part of the tenancy audit and will check during block inspections.

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- 4.2. If items that are not permitted are being stored or used on balconies, officers will ask the resident to remove them. Continued non-compliance with section 3 will result in formal enforcement action being taken, which may include eviction.
- 4.3. Where the unsafe storage of items on balconies is the result of a Council tenant hoarding, or the tenant is unable to manage their belonging, they will be referred to the Council's Independent Living Team for assistance.
- 4.4. Where unsafe storage of items on balconies is due to a private tenant of a non-resident leaseholder, the leaseholder will be notified and expected to work with the tenant to remove unsafe items.
- 4.5. The Council will provide residents with information on balcony fire safety annually, which will include any changes or updates.

Responsibilities of Other Stakeholders

- 4.6. Council staff and contractors working on balconies must adhere to fire safety regulations and ensure that their activities do not pose a fire risk

5. Key risks and leads

- 5.1. This policy is managed and overseen by the Housing Liaison Team. This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains effective and up-to-date with current fire safety regulations
- 5.2. For more information and advice around fire safety, please contact the Fire Safety Team by emailing BuildingSafetyTeam@newham.gov.uk

6. Appeals and complaints

- 6.1. Appeals and complaints will be dealt with through the Council's complaints procedure.

7. Data protection

- 7.1. The delivery of this policy must be consistent with the Council's policy on managing personal data. More information on the Council's approach to this issue is available on the following link: <https://www.newham.gov.uk/contact-information/processing-personal-data-privacy-notice>

8. Context – Legal and Regulatory Framework

- 8.1. This policy gives consideration to the following national legislation and guidance:
 - Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

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- Fire Safety Act 2021
- Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022.
- Building Safety Act 2022

8.2. This policy should be read in conjunction with a number of other London Borough of Newham policies, including:

- Vulnerable Tenants Policy
- Hoarding and Self Neglect Policy
- Fire Safety Policy
- Fire Risk Assessment Policy

9. Policy author

Name	Role	Service area and directorate
Emma Brunskill-Powell	Housing Strategy Manager	Housing Strategy and Partnerships

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APPENDIX – POLICY RECORD

Policy approval process	Cabinet Accountability Portfolio Meeting The policy was approved on: 22 nd April 2025
Record of changes to the policy	N/A
Risk management	N/A
Equality impact assessment (EQIA)	N/A
Data protection impact assessment (DPIA)	N/A
Next review date for the policy	April 2026

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