

A Guide for Residents in Multi-Storey Flats



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Introduction

This booklet has been produced by the Housing Executive to provide guidelines for residents living in multi-storey flats.

Every attempt has been made to include as much information and advice as possible but if you need more specific advice please contact your local district office, refer to your Tenants Handbook or our website www.nihe.gov.uk

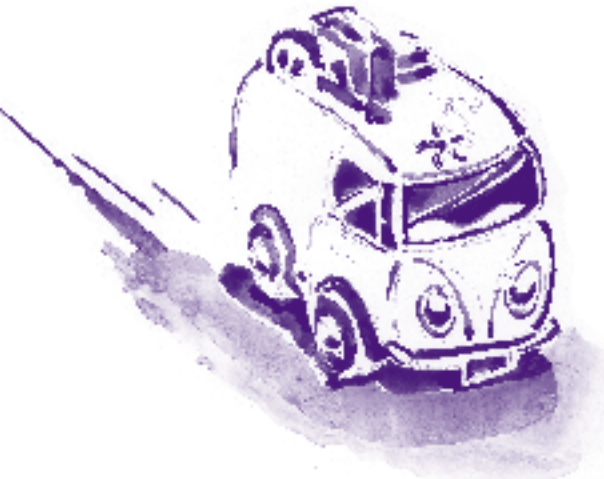
Your local Residents Association may also be able to help.



Moving in checklist

Don't forget to change your address with:

- The Social Security Agency (JSA, Incapacity Benefit, Retirement Pension, DLA etc)
- Your Employer
- Northern Ireland Electricity
- British Telecom
- Banks/Building Societies
- Your Doctor/Dentist/Hospital
- Insurance Companies
- Catalogue Companies
- TV Rental Company/TV Licensing Authority
- DVLO (Driver and Vehicle Licensing Office)
- And have your post redirected by the Post Office



Living in Flats

When you become a resident of your multi-storey flat, you become responsible for ensuring that your actions do not disrupt the quiet enjoyment or peace of other residents. This section provides guidelines and advice about living in multi-storey flats.

Caretaker Service

Where a multi-storey block has a caretaker service, the following tasks will be carried out on behalf of residents;

- Keeping clean the main communal areas of the block.
- Reporting repairs when they are needed to the communal areas.
- Dealing with emergencies.

Cleaning of Communal Areas

Responsibility for cleaning communal areas varies;

- Your caretaker is responsible for cleaning all areas except communal landings and chute room landings.
- Residents are responsible for keeping their own landing in clean order. The residents on your floor may have a cleaning rota which you are encouraged to participate in.

Please keep staircases and other areas clean and tidy and dispose of litter properly.



Concierge Service and Security

In some multi-storey blocks the Housing Executive operates a 24-hour concierge service for residents.

The duties carried out by concierge staff are similar to those of caretakers, as listed previously, but will also include:

- Providing a comprehensive reception service.
- Carrying out regular security patrols.
- Operating CCTV and managing access to blocks.

Depending on local arrangements, blocks, and perhaps their surrounding areas, are totally enclosed, and a concierge control station is located at the centre of the site to act as a reception area to the flats.

A door entry system is provided in each flat, linked to the concierge centre, and access for visitors to the flats is only granted by either residents or the concierge staff.

Depending on the security system in operation, residents will have direct access to and from their homes either by way of a key fob or a personal key. The District Office will advise of the system used in each block.

To maintain security you should:

- Make sure that the entrance door is locked behind you.
- Only allow access if you are certain the visitor is genuine.
- Never leave the entrance or back door propped open.

If you notice any faults with your door entry system, contact your Customer Service Unit by telephoning 08448 920 900.

We will repair broken door entry systems within 4 working days.

Lifts

Smoking is not permitted in the lifts or communal areas.



If your lift is not working properly, or if you hear the alarm ringing, you should report it to your caretaker, concierge staff, Customer Service Unit or Lift Provider. Where a concierge service is not provided and someone is trapped inside and there is no one available you should ring the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service or the Housing Executive's Emergency Services: 08448 920 901.

We will repair broken lifts within 24-hours during weekdays. At weekends, if one lift is still working, the second lift will not be repaired until the following Monday.

Noise and Nuisance

Living in a flat means that you are in close proximity to your neighbours. Noise can penetrate easily between floors and walls - especially at night.

Residents are expected to exercise respect and tolerance towards their neighbours and keep noise from music systems, radios, televisions, and any other audible appliances, at reasonable levels - especially at night.

Please refrain from shouting and slamming doors - especially at night.

If you are a tenant, you will have signed an agreement that you will not cause nuisance or annoyance and that you will be responsible for the behaviour of your guests and visitors.



If you are a leaseholder, there will be a similar clause in your lease. Your neighbours, whether tenants or lease holders, will be subject to the same condition.

If your neighbours are causing difficulties, talking to them may well resolve the matter. If you do not wish to talk to your neighbours about the problem or you can't resolve it, contact your local District Office and the Housing Executive will speak to your neighbour on your behalf. If the problem persists, we may ask some one else, who is independent, to talk to you and your neighbour. We will try all reasonable means to help resolve your dispute with your neighbour. If that does not work, we may have to use legal remedies.



Pets

The keeping of most pets in high rise flats is strictly prohibited. You cannot keep any pets unless your District Manager has given you written permission.

Refuse Disposal

Refuse chutes are provided to make life more convenient for you. You should make sure that refuse chutes, and surrounding areas, are left/kept in a clean and tidy state. In order to keep the environment clean, you should wrap wet or damp waste before putting it down the chute and, where possible, residents should only use the refuse chutes at reasonable hours to minimise noise problems.

If you have an old, or unwanted, item of furniture, or any bulky article that is too big to go into the chute, eg carpets, timber you should contact your local District/Borough Council, who may operate a free collection of certain items.



You must never allow anything to be dropped or thrown from windows.

Parking and Garages

(only applicable where these facilities are available)

At some multi-storey blocks car parking is provided, or the Housing Executive has garages to let nearby. Parking motorcycles inside the blocks is strictly forbidden.

Where appropriate, please keep the car park clean and tidy, and dispose of rubbish properly.

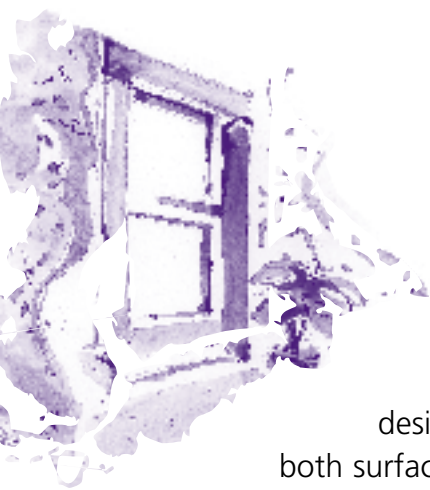
If available, and you would like to rent a garage, you should contact your local District Office for details. There is usually a waiting list for garages.

In all circumstances parking outside the communal front door and rear fire exit is prohibited, as this may cause problems for emergency services or refuse collection.

TV Aerials and Satellite Dishes

Each multi-storey block has a communal TV aerial installed. Should you find any faults, please report them to your local Customer Service Unit, but first check that the fault is not with your television set.

Mounting satellite dishes onto the structure of the multi-storey block is prohibited.



Window Cleaning

Your flat is fitted with hinged windows, designed to allow both surfaces to be cleaned from the inside. To do this, unlock the window handle, open the frame towards you, and clean from inside your flat. Close the window and lock the frame.

Please refrain from drying clothes out of the window.

Insurance

The Housing Executive is responsible for the structure of your home. However, living in close proximity to your neighbours can mean that at any time, through no fault of your own, clothing and personal effects could be damaged by fire, flood or burst pipes. Minor accidents, such as accidental breakages, can also happen.

If you are not properly insured you will almost certainly have to pay the cost of replacing your household goods and possessions. We would strongly recommend that you arrange for insurance of the contents of your home so that you will be protected against accidental damage, loss, or theft. You can arrange contents insurance through your Bank, Building Society, or Insurance Agent. Alternatively, ask your local District Office for the Supporting Communities NI (SCNI) leaflet on Home Insurance.

Fire Safety

These guidelines have been developed in conjunction with the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS).

Residents should keep this leaflet in a suitable place where it can quickly be referred to for guidance in the event of an outbreak of fire.

General Evacuation Policy

The decision to initiate a full evacuation will be made by the NIFRS when they attend the incident and assess the seriousness of the fire.

Fire Safety Generally

If there is a fire in your flat the flames and the smoke will be kept in the space where the fire starts for some time - as long as the doors are kept closed.

On every floor of your high rise block there is a rising main outlet. This means that, in the event of a fire, there is a supply of water near every flat, so that the NIFRS can act quickly and easily to prevent the fire spreading any further.

Dry Riser Mains

The rising mains are in well ventilated spaces to help firemen to do their job and help people to safety. Under no circumstances should these dry risers be tampered with or damaged. These mains are inspected by the NIFRS. Damage could potentially put lives at risk.

How to Prevent Fires

Don't leave children alone

If there are young children in the dwelling, even if only for a visit, do not leave them on their own where heaters or cookers are being used. Keep matches out of reach.

Don't smoke in bed

It is one of the most common causes of fire in the home. Always finish your last pipe or cigarette before you go into the bedroom and make sure that you put it out properly.

Bedtime checks

Switch off and unplug all electrical goods that do not need to be left on. Check ashtrays for burning cigarettes or pipes, and close windows and internal doors to prevent the spread of fire.

Chip pans

We recommend you use deep fat fryers but, if you have a chip pan, do not fill it more than one third full of fat and do not leave it without turning off the heat. If a chip pan catches fire, turn off the heat and cover the pan with a damp cloth or lid to smother the flames, and leave for half an hour. Do not try to move the pan or put the flame out with water, as you may be seriously injured.

Polystyrene Tiles

Do not use expanded polystyrene tiles - especially in the kitchen - as they are easy to ignite.

Liquid Petroleum Gas

The Housing Executive forbids residents to use or store liquid petroleum gas (Calor gas) in multi-storey flats. A gas explosion in a block of flats could cause a lot of harm to people and property.

Paraffin Heaters

The use of paraffin heaters is also forbidden. They are a fire risk and cause condensation.



Flammable substances are forbidden in multi-storey blocks.

Clothes and Decoration

Do not air clothes around or over convector heaters or cookers. Do not hang decorations around light fittings.

Communal Areas

Communal areas such as lifts, lobbies, corridors and staircases must not be obstructed with rubbish or cast-out furniture and belongings because:

- If there is a fire, the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service might be stopped from doing its job properly and residents might not be able to leave easily.
- These items are easy to set alight, to start fires in blocks of flats and may block your means of escape.

If you see any damaged fire equipment or anybody tampering with it, make sure you inform the caretaker, concierge or District Office.

Things To Remember

- Don't prop open, or block self-closing doors, or remove your internal fire doors or external fire door. Fire doors prevent smoke spreading.

A closed smoke door could save your life or somebody else's.

- If you have a relative or neighbour who is ill, confused, or forgetful, try to make sure they are not doing anything that might cause a fire.
- Close your kitchen or living room doors every night when going to bed and also when you are going out. In the event of a fire this will prevent it spreading.
- Don't block or cover ventilators.

What To Do If A Fire Breaks Out

In your own flat

If there is a fire in your flat, the flames and the smoke will be kept in the space where the fire starts for some time, as long as the doors are kept closed.

- Call the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service on the nearest telephone. Dial 999 (this service is free).
- Don't try to put the fire out yourself, unless you are sure it is safe. Leave the room at once and close the door.
- Alert everyone else in the flat that there is a fire.
- Leave the flat and when you are sure it is empty, close the front door.
- Don't use balconies that are not part of an escape route.
- Don't go back into the flat for any reason.
- If you have to leave the building:
 - Use the stairs.
 - DO NOT use the lifts.

In another flat next door or immediately below

Follow the above advice.



In another flat further away

If you consider it safe to stay in your flat close all windows and doors. If you have to leave the building, the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS) will advise and assist you.

- Close all the doors and windows. Use bedding etc. to close any gaps.
- Go to the window, make sure people know you are there and wait for the NIFRS.
- If the room becomes smoky, stay low. It is easier to breathe.
- Think about making your escape to a place of safety.
- If you have to leave the building:
 - Use the stairs.
 - DO NOT use the lifts.

Smoke/Heat Alarms

If you are a tenant your flat has Housing Executive installed smoke/heat alarms. If they are not working properly, report it immediately to your local District Office.

It is recommended that all non Housing Executive residents should have a smoke alarm installed.

In accordance with the NIFRS advice, make sure to test your smoke alarms every week by pressing the test button.

Note: The NIFRS will provide advice on fire safety in the home, free of charge.



Complaints

If you are not happy with the service you receive, you can complain.

You can do this by completing a complaint form or by putting your complaint in writing to the District Manager, who will look at your case and contact you regarding it.

The District Manager will investigate your complaint. Your complaint will be acknowledged within 3 working days and, where possible, a full written report will be posted to you within 15 working days of receiving your complaint. It may be necessary to contact you for more details or to invite you for an interview.

The Area Complaints Officer can also be contacted to informally discuss your complaint on: 08448 920 900.

What happens next?

If you are unhappy with the outcome of the District Manager's investigation you may then appeal to the Chief Executive, who will investigate and reply to you within the same time scale as the previous stage.

The Ombudsman

If after taking all these steps with the Housing Executive, you are still not satisfied, you can contact the Ombudsman.

The Ombudsman is totally independent from the Housing Executive and can be contacted at:

The Ombudsman, Freepost, Belfast BT1 6BR
Freephone: 0800 343424.

This booklet is available in alternative formats. Please contact your local district office.



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