



Mobility Scooters



A guide to scooters
in communal living



Before purchasing a mobility scooter you will need to talk to us to get permission.

Self powered mobility scooters and electric wheelchairs 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 these vehicles before you buy one so that you can make an informed decision. This leaflet refers to scooters but applies to all such powered vehicles.

Our flats were not designed and built with mobility scooters in mind and therefore do not have the capability to easily adapt to this new demand for their use and storage.

This problem is being experienced nationally - not just in North Devon Homes. We are asking customers to consider the storage and safety aspects when buying and owning a mobility scooter.

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

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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 us to get advice and we suggest you contact the Disabled Living Foundation to find out what best suits your needs.

Conditions have been put in place by North Devon Homes to improve the safety of all residents (and their visitors) living in our accommodation. These conditions have been developed in response to legal requirements, advice from the fire service, and ease of evacuation in the case of a fire, plus the general health, safety and welfare of our customers.

Fire authorities and safety specialists all have concerns about the safety of mobility scooters when stored and/or charged in communal areas.

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 - this is payable yearly and 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 liability 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 purchasing scooters which are small enough to get through the residents' doorway. 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. This is a fire hazard since the battery and scooter are both easily flammable. Trailing cables also pose a tripping hazard should residents need to evacuate the block.

Separating the battery from the scooter can reduce the risk of fire. Ensure you buy a model where this is possible.

Make sure that storage does not impede your escape route to the exit and other areas of the building.

You should not charge your scooter overnight as there is a greater risk to yourself and other occupants.

Electrical sockets used for charging the scooter should be suitable for the charging to take place.

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 without permission is breaking tenancy conditions and action will be taken.

Scooters being charged are at risk of ignition and should never be left unattended.

We will be able to advise you as to whether North Devon Homes can help with storage - however any facilities will be let on a first come first served basis. Facilities provided by the landlord will be charged at a reasonable rate.

If customers want to make any structural changes to their property to allow access, they must discuss this with us first and gain written permission.

Scooters and tenancy/lease conditions

The **tenancy conditions** state you must:

- Co-operate with North Devon Homes 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 – both 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 us 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 Neighbourhood Officer and asked to remove them. We will take enforcement action if such goods are not removed.
- If you have a scooter you must store it 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 us.
- You must not store any kind of inflammable or combustible 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), 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 expect you to 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.

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 or inappropriate storage or charging 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

Q1. I am interested in buying a mobility scooter, can I?

A. You must get permission from your landlord first. North Devon Homes encourages its tenants to be independent and mobility scooters can be a very good aid. Where we can we will give permission, however, your scooter must be stored within your property and not cause a hazard/risk.

Q2. Do I need permission before I buy my scooter?

A. Yes, if you live in a flat permission should be sought from North Devon Homes.

Q3. I'm interested in buying a scooter, where can I get help and advice?

A. 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.

Q4. Where should I store my scooter?

A. Scooters should be stored within your property in a room with a smoke detector and a closable door. If you cannot gain access have a chat with us. Retailers now sell smaller and collapsible models to make storage easier for you.

Q5. Where should I charge my scooter?

A. You should charge your scooter within your property. Do not use extension wires into communal areas. Do not use supplies in communal areas.

Q6. Why are North Devon Homes being strict about scooter storage and charging?

A. We want to make sure all of our residents, their visitors and our employees are safe within our blocks and scooters can pose a major 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 emit toxic gases and fumes when on fire. We also have a legal responsibility.

Q7. Can I drive my mobility scooter in the block?

A. 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 with your scooter you may be charged or a claim made to your insurers.

Q8. Do I need insurance?

A. We expect residents to hold insurance for their mobility scooters. The insurance must cover third party claims in the event of the scooter causing damage or injury.

**If you have any questions or need any further information,
please contact us - don't forget you will need our permission to
store and charge a mobility scooter on our property.**



**North Devon Homes Ltd
Westacott Road, Whiddon Valley, Barnstaple EX32 8TA**

Telephone: 01271 312500 • Fax: 01271 377810 • enquiries@ndh-ltd.co.uk