# Mobility Aids Policy

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| **Regulation and Legislation** | This policy links to the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005; the Equality Act 2010 and the Regulator of Social Housing Neighbourhood and Community standard |
| **Supporting documents** | Heath and Safety Policy; Mobility Aids Procedure |
| **Scope** | This policy outlines the key principles around the storage and charging of motorised scooters and other mobility aids in communal areas. |
| Reference to "Orbit" means Orbit Group which consists of Orbit Group Limited, Orbit Housing Association Limited, Orbit Homes (2020) Limited, Orbit Treasury Limited and Orbit Capital Plc. | |

## 1. Introduction

1.1 Orbit understands the value that mobility aids (motorised scooters1, wheelchairs, walking frames, walking sticks, etc.) can bring to the lives of some customers by maintaining and increasing their independence. [1] Based on feedback from customers we have used the word motorised scooter throughout – this encompasses motorised/mobility scooters, wheelchairs, etc

1.2 Where possible dedicated scooter storage facilities will be provided in sheltered and extra care schemes, but this is subject to the practical constraints of the individual sites. Customers are expected to store other mobility aids within their accommodation; wheelchairs, walking frames, and so on cannot be left or stored in hallways or under stairs.

The provision of dedicated motorised scooter storage does not apply to existing Private Retirement Leasehold schemes and customers. Scooter storage will only been considered if the leases allow for improvement works and subject to consultation with all other Leaseholders.

1.3 Landlords have to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people when requested. We recognise our obligation to make reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010 where a disabled person is placed at a substantial disadvantage in the enjoyment of their homes, compared to those who are not disabled. However, landlords do not have to remove or alter physical features of the premises; features arising from the design or construction of the premises are to be treated as a physical feature.

1.4 Orbit has a duty to comply with the law relating to fire safety. The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 applies and covers general fire precautions and fire safety duties which are required to protect people in case of a fire. The order requires that where necessary fire precautions should be put in place to the extent that is reasonable and practical.

1.5 One of the requirements under the Order is that fire risk assessments, focusing on the safety of occupants and visitors to the building, be carried out. Risk assessments have identified motorised scooters as a possible fire hazard when stored in escape routes within communal areas.

## 2. Policy Statement

**Definition**

2.1 A mobility aid is a device designed to assist walking or otherwise improve the mobility of people with mobility impairment. Mobility aids can include motorised scooters, wheelchairs, walking frames, crutches, walking sticks; items included under the term mobility aids can also include stairlifts – stairlifts are covered in Orbit's Aids and Adaptations Policy.

2.2 This policy refers specifically to the use and safe storage of mobility aids, but particularly motorised scooters due to the specific issues and risks relating to their storage and use.

2.3 Motorised scooters and powered wheelchairs come in 2 categories:

- 'class 2 invalid carriages' - these cannot be used on the road (except where there is no pavement) and have a maximum speed of 4mph
- 'class 3 invalid carriages' - these can be used on the road, and have a maximum speed of 4mph off the road, and 8mph on the road

**Policy**

2.4 In all Orbit properties, if a customer wishes to store and charge a motorised scooter in a communal area or designated "scooter room", then they must first apply for permission in writing, complete the customer agreement and have received written confirmation back that this permission has been granted in line with Orbit's Mobility Aids Procedure.

2.5 In Independent Living schemes, permission is given for the storage and charging of motorised scooters in communal areas, subject to demand, on the assumption that the scooter will be used on a regular basis. If the scooter is not used for 28 days (unless due to hospitalisation or ill health which is not expected to continue or other factors such as adverse weather conditions) Orbit reserves the right to withdraw permission and the space be allocated to another customer who can make better use of the storage facility.

2.6 Where properties do not have designated scooter storage/charging areas Orbit will not house new customers with or requiring motorised scooters at that scheme, unless they are prepared and able to safely store/charge the scooter in their own property. If the needs of an existing customer change and they may need a motorised scooter then the Independent Living and Property Management teams will support the customer to look at options, which may include considering alternative housing more suitable for their requirements.

2.7 No mobility aids should be stored in communal areas, including stairwells, corridors, and walkways.

2.8 Currently Orbit does not levy an additional charge on the owners of motorised scooters for the costs of the storage and charging facilities; Orbit reserves the right to review this and introduce a charge in the future at any time.

2.9 Any motorised scooters stored and charged in a communal space must be serviced and maintained regularly and have a Portable Appliance Test (PAT test) as part of their service to ensure that the charging equipment is in good condition. It is the owner's responsibility to make sure a PAT test is conducted at least once every two years. For customers in Independent Living schemes this will be arranged for them by the scheme manager. If any equipment fails the PAT test the equipment should be removed from the communal area. It will be the scooter owner's responsibility to repair/replace the damaged item before it can be used again.

2.10 Insurance is not legally required for motorised scooters. However, where a customer wishes to use a motorised scooter in the grounds of or within any Orbit property they must obtain appropriate insurance cover including:

- Public liability insurance, covering accidental damage to a third party and property
- Some policies also cover additional losses from fire, theft and damage.

Orbit will not accept liability for any claims arising from the use of motorised scooters.

2.11 If there is a very strong indication that the ongoing use and/or storage of the motorised scooter in the scheme poses a serious risk to the user, other customers, staff or visitors, or to the property then Orbit reserve the right to ask that a motorised scooter is removed from the premises in less than 28 days, and possibly in as little as 24 hours.

2.12 Customers have the right of appeal against any decisions made in the process and procedures of safely managing the presence of motorised scooters

2.13 Unless written permission has been granted by Orbit no vehicle is to be stored, used or charged in any Orbit property. Written permission will be subject to the findings of a risk assessment.

## 3. Roles and Responsibilities

3.1

| Role | Responsibility |
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| **Scheme Officer, Property Manager** | To ensure insurance documents are obtained and PAT testing has been carried out prior to any permission or licence being granted |
| **IL Scheme Officer** | To arrange PAT testing for customers as necessary. |

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| **Scheme Manager, Regional Property Manager** | To ensure the above checks are carried out |
| **Empty Homes and Lettings team** | To ensure new customers are aware of the policy and any requests for mobility aids are processed in line with the supporting procedure |
| **IL or PM Head of Service** | To ensure the policy is followed |
| **Head of Health and Safety** | Monitoring and managing any risks; ensuring annual scheme checks undertaken by the Health and safety team sample check for accurate records on customers with mobility aids |

## 4. Performance Controls and Business Risk

4.1 Overall compliance with this policy will be monitored by the Health and Safety team to ensure any risks are managed. This will include checking records and relevant permissions when completing annual scheme reviews.

Local scheme compliance will be monitored by Independent Living and Property Management teams in line with the supporting Mobility Aids Procedure.

4.2 Orbit will carry out a fundamental review of this policy every three years or sooner subject to legal, regulatory changes or if internal changes require it.

## 5. Essential information

5.1 All Orbit policies and procedures are developed in line with our approach to the following, data protection statement, equality diversity and inclusion (EDI) approach, complaints and customer care policy and our regulatory and legal obligations to ensure we deliver services in a lawful manner and treat people equally and fairly. Orbit's privacy policy can be accessed on our website www.orbitcustomerhub.org.uk/publications/policies/

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| **EA** | Equality Analysis was completed and is available to view. |
| **DPIA** | A DPIA was completed against the supporting procedure and is available to view. |
| **Consultation** | **Internal:** Health and Safety; Independent Living; Property Management; Customer Safety; Lettings |
| | **External:** |
| **Applies to** | Business wide |

## Document control

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## Revision History

| Version Number | Date | Comments / Reason for revision |
|---|---|---|
| v1.0 | June 2018 | New policy |
| v2.0 | June 2022 | Full three-year review. Minor amends:<br>2.4 – customer agreement added<br>2.6 – Property Management team added<br>2.9 – PAT testing updated for IL customers |
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