

Report for: Cabinet

Date of Meeting:	7 October 2025
Subject:	MID DEVON HOUSING (MDH) MOBILITY SCOOTER IN FLATS POLICY
Cabinet Member:	Cllr Jane Lock Cabinet Member for Housing, Assets and Property Services
Responsible Officer:	Simon Newcombe – Head of Housing and Health
Exempt:	None
Wards Affected:	All
Enclosures:	Annex A - Mobility Scooter in Flats Policy Annex B - Equality Impact Assessment

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendation(s)

The use of mobility aids, such as powered wheelchairs and mobility scooters is growing rapidly, enabling many individuals to maintain independence and improve quality of life.

MDH is committed to equality and inclusion and recognises the vital role these aids play in helping residents engage in daily activities and community life. These aids significantly contribute to resident wellbeing. However, they are typically not medically prescribed devices subject to relevant standards and safety controls but are more likely to be classified as lifestyle devices that are not necessarily manufactured and maintained in accordance with recognised standards. This, and the inherent risk of having relatively large batteries stored and charged inside our properties increases fire risks.

MDH has a statutory responsibility to uphold high standards of health and safety across its estates. In fulfilling this duty, MDH is required to ensure that the use of mobility vehicles within flats and communal areas complies with all relevant legal and safety requirements.

This policy sets out the conditions under which tenants and their visitors may use, store, and charge mobility scooters and powered wheelchairs within MDH flats and communal areas.

Recommendation(s):

That Cabinet recommends to Council to adopt the Mobility Scooter in Flats Policy and Equality Impact Assessment contained in Annexes A and B respectively as recommended by the Homes Policy Development Group.

Section 2 – Report

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) has issued safety guidance for mobility scooters, noting both their benefits and associated fire risks. The guidance addresses the safe storage, charging, and use of these devices in residential properties. Further local guidance has been published by Devon and Somerset Fire & Rescue Service.
- 1.2 The increased prevalence of both mobility scooter and of flats within the MDH stock with lifts that facilitate mobility scooters on all floors, notably with regard to the new accommodation at St Georges Court, means that we are required to have a new policy on the safe use of mobility scooters.
- 1.3 It is of overriding important that all our tenants are safe in our homes. As such, that we comply with all relevant safety legislation including the mitigation and management of fire risks and meet the wider requirements of the statutory Safety and Quality Standard (consumer standard).
- 1.4 The proposed policy (Annex A) outlines the responsibilities of Council tenants in flats. It sets clear rules regarding the use, storage, and charging of mobility scooters in flats and communal areas including the requirement to obtain written permission from the Council before use or acquisition.
- 1.5 Tenants are not permitted to store or charge mobility scooters in communal areas for fire safety and wider safe evacuation reasons.
- 1.6 The policy also covers related powered wheelchairs.
- 1.7 The policy does not apply to homes that are not blocks of flats. This is due to reduced risks within fully self-contained properties without communal areas and wider evacuation considerations across multiple floors. Nonetheless, all tenants with a mobility scooter will be encouraged to consider information within the policy with regard to safe storage, charging, testing and insurance.
- 1.8 The policy does not cover e-scooters and e-bikes. These typically contain different lithium batteries. Further research and policy development work is required to understand the potential fire risks from these devices further where different equality considerations may be also be relevant. As part of our existing clear communal areas policy regarding the management of flats, e-scooters and e-bikes and any other bulky or potentially hazardous items are not permitted in communal areas.

2 Mobility scooters in flats and related considerations

- 2.1 The permission process ensures that:
- Storage and charging are done safely
 - Appropriate contents insurance is held for personal protection
 - Users are fully aware of the policy and agree to comply with its terms
 - Devices undergo regular Portable Appliance Testing (PAT)
- 2.2 Tenants will not be granted permission to store or charge mobility scooters in flats above the ground floor. This is due to safety concerns in moving the scooter to upper floor via stairs or lifts.
- 2.3 Permission will also be refused where, for example, there is no safe storage arrangement in the tenant's home and no alternative safe storage and charging space can be provided or a major physical alteration to the premises is required, which the Council believes to be unreasonable in terms of the structural limitations of the building(s) and/or disruption to other service users.
- 2.4 Due to safety concerns, the Council reserves the right to revoke permission at any time should a tenant/leaseholder breach the policy. Devices must then be removed immediately and possibly permanently.
- 2.5 The introduction communal mobility scooters storage areas has been investigated during the development of this policy. However, this has proven to be both impractical, potentially unsafe and cost-prohibition due to the following requirements:
- Single scooter storage solutions only – placing multiple scooters (and therefore several batteries) adjacent to each other creates a significant additional fire risks
 - High infrastructure requirements – power for charging meeting external charging standards, standalone/fully sealed/weatherproof/ventilated units with initial capital costs and on-going revenue implications for maintenance, creation of new accessibility access points and security provisions
 - Prohibitions on internal shared facilities within communal areas and underground car park areas or under-crofts, the latter being a specific issue at our St Georges Court property
- 2.6 The Council has never provided bespoke, specific facilities for the storage of mobility scooters within its stock including bungalows and other units specifically held for older persons/low mobility tenants use.

3 Consultation and engagement

- 3.1 Tenants and Members of the Homes PDG were invited to comment on the draft policy between 21/07/25 -18/08/25.
- 3.2 One comment was received on Let's Talk Mid Devon *'If I can't have my mobility scooter at my flat, I won't be able to go out which will affect my mental health. I rely on it and not allowing people in flats to have mobility scooters should mean*

that that person should be moved to accommodation which is more suitable for keeping a scooter as this is the difference between some people's independence'. It was explained to the respondent that tenants residing in ground floor flats who wish to store and charge mobility scooters and powered wheelchairs in their flats may be permitted to do so, subject to MDH written approval. It was also explained that permission would not be given for mobility scooters above ground floor due to health and safety reasons. The tenant was invited to send over their details so that MDH could look into whether this applies to their property, however the tenant is yet to make contact.

- 3.3 Despite only one response to the consultation, it is important that tenants are fully aware of the new policy. To this end, should the policy be adopted, MDH will proactively signpost the policy on our webpages/Facebook pages and in the next tenant newsletter. Where relevant, particularly in relation to queries, service requests or complaints we will also ensure specific tenants or other stakeholders are also aware of the policy as required.
- 3.4 At point of allocation for all flats within the MDH stock, the allocations teams will specifically signpost this policy so any incoming tenants with mobility needs are aware of the policy terms in advance.

4 Safeguarding and vulnerable tenants

- 4.1 The policy may adversely affect older people and those with disabilities, especially if permission is denied. It could also indirectly affect carers, who may have to provide increased support. These concerns have been considered in the policy's development to ensure a balanced approach with regard to safety requirements.
- 4.2 Where arrangements cannot be made to accommodate a mobility scooter within the tenant's current home MDH will engage with the tenant to explore alternative arrangements. This may include:
- External single scooter, secure storage solutions (at the tenant's cost and where safe)
 - Access to adapted communal spaces (with risk mitigation)
 - Advice on home adaptations or alternative housing options.

5 Recommendation

- 5.1 It is therefore recommended that:

The Homes PDG recommends to Cabinet that Council adopt the Mobility Scooter in Flats Policy and Equality Impact Assessment contained in Annexes A and B respectively.

Financial Implications

None beyond those identified in the Equality Impact Assessment.

Legal Implications

As a registered provider of social housing, the Council must comply with the regulatory standards set by the Regulator of Social Housing. In particular, that we comply with all relevant safety legislation including the mitigation and management of fire risks and meet the wider requirements of the statutory Safety and Quality Standard (consumer standard).

This policy has been developed in close consideration with the latest The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) safety guidance for mobility scooters, noting both their benefits and associated fire risks.

Whilst mobility scooters are currently not directly regulated in the UK, the primary legislation relating to mobility scooters and fire safety includes the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

Wider relevant legislation and related MDH policies are set out in section 4 of the policy.

Risk Assessment

Denying permission for mobility devices may significantly reduce an individual's independence. To mitigate this, the Council will consider reasonable property alterations to facilitate device storage, subject to an Occupational Therapist's assessment or provide advice on home adaptations or alternative housing options.

Impact on Climate Change

None directly arising from this report.

Equalities Impact Assessment

An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed which considers the effect the policy may have on users of mobility scooters who live in our flats. Requests for a mobility scooter will not be unreasonably refused but where we are not able to grant permission we will provide advice on home adaptations or alternative housing options.

Relationship to Corporate Plan

We will work closely with our tenants to ensure they feel safe, secure and happy in their homes.

Section 3 – Statutory Officer sign-off/mandatory checks

Statutory Officer: Andrew Jarrett

Agreed by or on behalf of the Section 151 Officer

Date: 27.8.25

Statutory Officer: Maria de Leburne

Agreed on behalf of the Monitoring Officer

Date: 27.8.25

Chief Officer: Andrew Jarrett

Agreed by or on behalf of the Chief Executive/Corporate Director

Date: 27.8.25

Performance and risk: Steve Carr

Agreed on behalf of the Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager

Date: 21/08/2025

Cabinet member notified: Yes

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Simon Newcombe, Head of Housing and Health

Email: snewcombe@middevon.gov.uk

Telephone: 01884 255255

Background papers and information:

National Fire Chief Council (NFCC)

Mobility Scooter Guidance for Residential Buildings

https://nfcc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/09062018_NFCC_Mobility_Scooter_Guidance_Final.pdf

Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service

Fire safety for battery-powered mobility scooters and wheelchairs

<https://www.dsfire.gov.uk/safety/businesses/battery-powered-scooters-and-wheelchairs>