

The use and management of community facilities at stations

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1 Summary

1.1 This policy outlines the procedure to be adopted for the use of community facilities on newly built stations funded under the private finance initiative (PFI) and for any such spaces in use on any other future or existing stations. The policy focuses on two key areas:

- The appropriate use of the facilities.
- The practical arrangements for use of facilities by community groups;

2 Related and referenced policies

2.1 The following policies and documents are related to, or referenced in, this policy:

- Policy number 011 – Security for London Fire Brigade premises;
- Policy number 295 – Procedure for visits to LFB premises;
- Policy number 505 – Safety of visitors to LFB premises procedure;
- Policy number 509 – Fire safety on LFB premises;
- Policy number 625 – Inventories of non-operational equipment;
- Policy number 673 – Risk assessment procedure;
- Policy number 605 – Records management strategy;
- Policy number 351 – Data Protection and Privacy;
- Policy number 425 – Contact with media and online communications.

3 Introduction

3.1 Community facilities at fire stations aim to support the increasingly important fire prevention work and partnership initiatives undertaken by the LFB.

3.2 Fire stations with purpose built community areas present an open and welcoming face to the public, with a clearly identified and signed entrance for the public allowing visitors' access into a secure reception area. This area will not be staffed but will provide secure access to the community facility.

3.3 This policy is not intended to be exhaustive and specific circumstances or situations may arise that it does not currently address. Effective communication between borough commanders (BC) and station commander (SC) should help spread knowledge about how best to address the practical challenges that may arise in management of the facilities.

4 The purpose of the facility

4.1 The facility will be available for a wide range of local community groups and for a variety of activities, not necessarily linked to community safety. By promoting its use among a wide range of community groups it is intended to further spread the LFB's community safety message in local communities. In order to be accessible to all each facility has been designed in line with the Equality Act 2010.

4.2 The facility is suitable for use by London Fire Brigade (LFB) staff as well as community groups. The LFB wants to encourage local people, community groups and partner agencies to regularly use the facilities, however it is recognised that station staff may also wish to use the facility for training or briefing sessions.

4.3 To enable greater access there is no charge for the use of the facilities.

5 Facility specification for purpose built community facilities

- 5.1 The community area is separate and secure from the operational areas of the fire station, with only designated LFB staff being able to gain access between the operational area and the community area. Approved groups are able to use their swipe cards and gain access to the community areas whether the station is occupied by LFB staff or not.
- 5.2 Where the community facility is located on a floor other than the ground floor of the station, secure stairs and a lift will be included to enable access to the facility.
- 5.3 Each PFI fire station community facility will consist of a meeting area, a kitchenette, a store room and toilet facilities with an area totalling approximately 64m². Other existing community areas may vary.
- 5.4 The meeting area itself is designed to be flexible in its use and may be able to accommodate groups of up to 30 people depending on the activity being undertaken. Examples of different arrangements include 'round table' meetings, audience style events, events with a single speaker or the use of the audio visual (AV) equipment.
- 5.5 A small storage room will be available to house tables and chairs when not being used in the meeting area and would also be of sufficient size to store other relevant items such as cleaning materials. This storage room is only for equipment provided by the LFB and not for storage use by groups.
- 5.6 Some facilities include a kitchenette for the preparation of hot drinks and snacks and also have washing up and food storage facilities. Hot water will be provided by either a mains still boiler or a kettle. Basic cleaning equipment and materials will be provided so that groups can clean the area before leaving. Toilet facilities, including accessible toilet facilities, will be available. In line with security requirements these will be separate from the toilets used by operational staff.
- 5.7 AV equipment and information and communications technology (ICT) will be available to support community groups and LFB staff in their use of the facility. Equipment will include a ceiling-fixed projector with data points so that a group can use the projector with their own computer laptop. There will be a fat client available to enable groups to use their dongles and LFB staff can also access their LFB account this way. Given that there is a potential for theft or damage, such equipment will be made as secure as possible.
- 5.8 Any problems with the equipment provided or the infrastructure within the facilities should be reported to the station commander by the group's responsible person. This can be by phone during office hours or by entering the details in the log book if out of hours.
- 5.9 In order that the facility serves in helping to publicise the fire safety message, fire safety posters should be placed around the facility and advice leaflets should be available. Good quality accessible display frames and leaflet display stands will be provided for this. The station commander or other nominated station staff must be responsible for keeping the stock of material relevant and up to date.
- 5.10 Where possible an accessible parking space will be provided. The availability of a space will depend on the specific premises specifications.

6 Use of the facility by community groups

- 6.1 The facility is intended to be used by local not for profit organisations or groups that have a purpose in improving the life and environment of the local community. The facilities will be used for a wide range of activities, defined through this policy, but their use will contribute to connecting with local communities in order to support the LFB's community safety message.

- 6.2 Community groups that wish to use the facilities need to fulfil all of the following criteria:
- (a) Are charitable or non-profit-making;
 - (b) offer welfare, charitable, educational or recreational support to members of the local community;
 - (c) are working towards community cohesion and the improvement of the quality of local life for local residents;
 - (d) have aims and objectives that are in accordance with the Brigade's policy on equality and diversity;
 - (e) are not engaged in any activity which could bring the Brigade into disrepute and do not in any way conflict with the interests of the London Fire Commissioner, its members or personnel;
 - (f) do not use the premises for the promotion of religious or political activities or any other activity that could bring the Brigade into disrepute. It should be noted that it is the activity that is restricted rather than the nature of the group, so political and religious groups will be permitted to use the facilities for ancillary purposes, such as the running of youth groups.
- 6.3 The facility will be available for use from 1000 to 2200 hours, seven days a week. Consideration may be given to restricting these times on a local basis should this be necessary for any reason.

7 Management of the facility

Applying to use the facility

- 7.1 A community group applying to use the facility must nominate a responsible person to represent the group. The responsible person must complete a **Community Facilities at Stations – User Application Form** (Appendix 1) and **User Agreement** (Appendix 2) which can both be located via **File>BrigadeWideShare>Templates>Forms (stations)>General station forms**. These must be completed by the responsible person prior to using the facilities.
- 7.2 The decision to approve the use of the facility will be made by the local SC with agreement from the BC, who will already have established relationships with many local groups. Where little is known about a particular group the SC or BC may seek written or verbal references from other sources to help in making their decision. These sources may include recognised community leaders, the local authority, the Metropolitan Police and other LFB partners.
- 7.3 Upon receiving an application the SC or BC will examine it against the criteria laid out in 6.2. The decision to grant or deny approval should be made as soon as possible and a decision must be communicated in writing within 28 days.
- 7.4 The completed Application Form will be returned to the area support team to be kept securely for two years in line with the LFB's record management strategy and policy and Data Protection legislation. The form will be securely destroyed by the area support team when there is no longer a business need for it. Where a group's application is rejected or its use of a facility is terminated the group's information and reasons should be held by the area team to ensure they are not approved in the future and that precedents for rejection or removal are available.
- 7.5 Any community group wishing to use the facility must nominate at least one responsible person and a delegate to attend a Brigade managed induction that should include:
- Health and safety;
 - social media guidelines as per the policy;

- security and evacuation procedures at the station;
 - contact details for station commander;
 - contact details for emergency maintenance work.
- 7.6 Where an application is denied, full reasons must be given and care must be taken to avoid accusations of discrimination or inequality that may disadvantage any particular group. If there is any doubt or concern regarding this the Brigade's General Counsel department should be consulted.
- 7.7 Once a group has been approved to use the community facility they will be added to a list of authorised users kept by the area support team. Their status as an authorised group will remain unchanged provided the nature of their activity and use of the facility does not change and the terms and conditions of use continue to be adhered to.
- 7.8 The area support team will contact each group on an annual basis to confirm whether any details relating to the group have changed. However, the group must inform the area support team if there is a change of responsible person. If any details have changed the area support team will ask the group to complete a revised user agreement. If there have been no confirmed changes, the area support team should record this on the existing user application form.
- 7.9 An approved community group will be added to a list of authorised users who will not be vetted again providing the nature of their business does not change and there are no complaints made about the group's conduct on or off the Brigade's premises.

Booking of the facility

Community groups

- 7.10 Bookings can be made by email, letter or telephone and must be recorded by the station commander as an event in the station diary. **(Station Diary>month view>filter button>click drop down arrow next to station activity>tick Community Room>new appointment>Community Room Booking)**. The station commander will confirm bookings either by email or letter. Copies or notes of any correspondence should be kept on file with the user application form for the group by the area support team.
- 7.11 Community facilities may from time to time be used for training or other meetings necessary for LFB staff. These activities will be prioritised alongside community use by the station commander or borough commander.
- 7.12 Groups that wish to use the community facility would normally be asked to make their bookings at least 28 days in advance so that the community area can be managed effectively and so that the SC or the BC can plan any events for station staff with reasonable notice. Bookings can be accepted at short notice as long as the correct application process is followed and the room is available. Local management may however vary this according to local circumstances and requirements. Only under unavoidable circumstances should a booking made by a community group be cancelled by local management, and every effort should be made to give as much notice as possible.
- 7.13 If necessary, the SC or BC will make a judgment on fair and equitable use of the facility so that no one group makes block bookings or monopolises the facility to the detriment of the needs of any other group. Bookings will be recorded so that occasional equalities assessments can be carried out.
- 7.14 The responsible person will be given access to the community area through the use of an electronic swipe card (or comparable system) that will allow entry into that area of the fire station only. Access must only be granted once both parties have signed the User Agreement and this

has been received by the SC or BC. The responsible person may on occasion delegate the use of the access swipe card to another nominated member of the group provided this other individual has also completed an induction, which can be arranged with the SC.

- 7.15 In the event of a card being lost the responsible person must inform the SC who must report this to the Property department as quickly as possible so that the card can be disabled and replaced.
- 7.16 An approved group must not pass on their access swipe card to any other group.
- 7.17 The behaviour and conduct of individuals visiting or attending the group is the responsibility of the responsible person and should be managed by them.

Responsible use of the facility

- 7.18 The responsible person for each community group will complete a log book supplied by the SC whenever they use the facility. When signing in there is an acknowledgment that the room is in an acceptable condition and when signing out the responsible person is confirming that the room has been left in good condition. Where the facility has not been left in an acceptable state, either by the previous group or the current group, this should be recorded in the log book. If the state of the room renders it unusable then the station commander should be contacted where possible and in line with their rota.
- 7.19 The log book should be checked by the station commander or someone delegated by the station commander on a minimum of a weekly basis. Any issues highlighted in the log book should be addressed by the station commander. The responsible person, or one of their designated delegates, must always be present when the facility is being used by their group.
- 7.20 An LFB cleaner will clean the room as directed by the station commander. This may vary on a local basis. As the community facility may be in use by a number of community groups throughout the day, groups must leave the facility in a clean and fit state for other groups to use. This forms part of the terms and conditions for use documented in the User Agreement.
- 7.21 If there is a building emergency out of hours visitors must call the Control Operational Resourcing and Event (CORE) team who will direct the call to the engineers. Property will supply signage with the necessary phone numbers which must be placed on the wall for visitors.

Appendix 1 - Community facilities at stations - User application form

User application form for community facilities



Station name		
Group		
Name of group		
Contact details	Phone	
	Email	
	Address	
Group purpose		
Group affiliation <small>(see section 8 of the terms and agreements)</small>		
Intended use of facilities		
Resources required <small>(see section 20 of the terms and conditions)</small>		
Frequency of use		
Proposed date(s) of use		
Responsible person		
Name of responsible person		
Position within group		
Contact details	Phone	
	Email	
	Address	
Print name		
Signed		
Date		

By signing the application form, the responsible person of the group understands the processes involved and what is expected in the use of the community facility and agrees to the terms and conditions for the use of the community facility as detailed under the User agreement. Also by completing and signing this form, you are giving consent for the information you provide to be processed by the London Fire Brigade for the purposes outlined in the user agreement. We will, in accordance with the Data Protection legislation, keep your details secure. The London Fire Brigade will seek consent from you for permission to disclose personal information if it is identified that you as an individual or group will benefit from data sharing. This information will be destroyed or deleted if no longer required for the purposes of the user agreement, upon request and in accordance with our retention schedules. . If you have any queries about data protection in relation to the information you are providing, contact infoaccess@london-fire.gov.uk.

Office use only:

<i>ID number</i>	
<i>Date received</i>	
<i>Received by</i>	
<i>BC</i>	
<i>Accept/decline</i>	
<i>Conditions</i>	

The Brigade is committed to using personal data in a responsible and transparent way. To find out more visit london-fire.gov.uk/privacy.

Appendix 2 - The use of community facilities at stations

User agreement – terms and conditions

Purpose

This user agreement, which details the terms and conditions of use ("the Agreement"), is to ensure that there is an agreed understanding between the London Fire Commissioner and the user as to the use of the Community facilities at fire stations. In particular that Community facilities are only accessed for authorised purposes, that health and safety are maintained and that the fire station is able to conduct its day to day activities without undue disruption. This must ensure that an open, safe, comfortable and effectively run environment is provided, which contributes towards meeting the objectives of the Community facilities.

Definitions

The following definitions are applied and given meaning in this agreement.

Applicant(s)	The person or persons who have applied to use the Community facility but have yet to be approved.
Approved group	Set of persons who have been approved to use the Community facilities in accordance with this Agreement.
Approved user(s)	The person or persons who have been approved to use the Community facilities in accordance with this Agreement and issued with access to the Community facility.
Area support team	The persons responsible for any administrative duties associated with the Community facility.
Borough commander	The person responsible for vetting the Approved user and Approved groups and who ultimately has authority over the Community facility.
Station commander	The person immediately responsible for the Station in which the Community facility is situated.
Community facility	The area designated for use by Approved users (including fire personnel).
Fire personnel	Persons employed by the Brigade who are approved to be on the Station.
Operational area	The area of the station reserved and designated for London Fire Brigade personnel only.
Station	The area designated for fire personnel including grounds and car parks.

Approval process

The Brigade has a strong focus on equality and will actively seek to encourage diversity of race, gender, disability, sexuality, sexual orientation, faith or religion, socio-economic backgrounds, caring responsibilities, marriage, pregnancy and age in use of the community facility.

A user application form must be completed and submitted to the applicable area support team. Details of this are contained in the application form at Appendix 2.

Approval for access and use of the Community facility will be decided by the relevant station commander or borough commander. The station commander will normally inform the Applicant of his or her decision on approval within 28 days of receipt of the completed application form.

To gain approval to use the Community facility the Applicant must satisfy all of the following criteria. The user/group must:

- Be charitable or non-profit making.
- Offer welfare, charitable, educational or recreational support to members of the local community.
- Work towards community cohesion and the improvement of the quality of local life for residents.
- Have aims and objectives that are in accordance with the Brigade's policy on equality and diversity.
- Not be engaged in any activity which could bring the Brigade into disrepute and in any way conflict with the interests of the London Fire Commissioner, its members or personnel.
- Not use the Community facility for the promotion of religious or political activities or any activity which could bring the Brigade into disrepute. It should be noted that it is the activity that is restricted rather than the nature of the group, so political and religious groups will be permitted to use the facilities for ancillary purposes such as the running of youth groups.

In approving access, the station commander or borough commander must take into account one or more of the following:

- (a) The intended use of the Community facility by the Applicant.
- (b) The frequency of use of the Community facility intended by the Applicant.
- (c) The vision or goals of the Applicant in relation to their use of the Community facility.
- (d) The position of the Applicant in the community.
- (e) Acceptance of diversity.
- (f) Anything else the station commander or borough commander deems appropriate in making a thoughtful decision.

If the circumstances relating to the approval of the Applicant as referred to above changes.

The application of these criteria applies to both the Applicant and any affiliate group or organisation the applicant may be a part of or linked to.

The Brigade may withdraw approval for the use of the Community facility at any time with immediate effect. Reasons for this revocation may include:

- (a) Illegal activity conducted on Brigade premises including but not restricted to:
 - The consumption of alcohol
 - The smoking of any substance
 - Gambling
 - The taking or distribution of drugs.
- (b) Failure to comply with the terms and conditions set out in this Agreement.
- (c) Withholding of information relevant to the approval process.
- (d) Any other reason the Brigade deems appropriate.

Access

Access cards will be issued to one person – the Approved user. Prior to using Community facilities, the Approved user must complete an induction course that will comprise health and safety, relevant contacts, evacuation and security procedures in relation to the Station.

The Approved user can delegate card use to another person within the Approved group but will maintain responsibility for the card and the group. The person to whom the card is delegated and any specified deputies must have completed the induction course. Each time an Approved group uses the Community facility a log book must be filled out by the Approved user registering the time of arrival and departure. In doing so, the Approved group confirms their access and the satisfactory condition of the Community facility, both on their arrival and on their departure. Should there be any issues with the condition of the facility, these should be recorded in the log book and the station commander should address them as soon as possible.

There will be no ongoing charge for the hire or use of the community facility.

In the event that an access card is lost, the SC must be contacted as quickly as possible so that the existing card can be cancelled and replaced ensuring the security of the Community facility is not compromised. The hours of use of the Community facility are from 1000 hours to 2200 hours, seven days a week. The facility cannot be booked for use outside of these times. There may be days and times when the Community facility is made unavailable and this will be at the discretion of the Brigade.

Booking of the Community facility, by completing the booking form and signing the Agreement is essential. The overall timetable and booking of the Community facility will be controlled by the station commander. Time booked must incorporate enough time at the end of the booking to enable any necessary cleaning or rearrangement of the area. Groups must leave the area in a clean and orderly condition for the next user.

Swapping of times between Approved groups is permissible but the station commander must be advised at least 24 hours in advance and there must have been prior agreement between Approved users. If the user does not have a regular booking the swipe card can be disabled after use by Property via the station commander.

An Approved user or group offering use of the Community facility to an unauthorised or unapproved group is not permitted and may result in the Approved user/group having their use of the facility revoked and further bookings prevented.

The business of the Station takes precedence over any Approved user or group. Where possible, this business will be organised around the booking times of Approved groups. Where there is not possible, the station commander will advise the Approved user at the earliest convenience.

Facilities

The facilities provided in a Community facility may vary between locations and it is the user/group's responsibility to check that the facilities meet their requirements prior to submitting an application form. However, each Community facility will have, as a minimum:

- (a) A meeting room/area.
- (b) A kitchenette.
- (c) Toilet facilities.

The Community facility must be left in a clean, tidy and hygienic state. Basic equipment to achieve this will be provided and must be stored away when finished with.

The capacity of the Community facility will be advised by the station commander and displayed at or near the Community facility. This capacity must not be exceeded.

In the event of a maintenance problem relating to the Community facility the station commander must be contacted where possible and at other times the instructions for contact in a maintenance emergency are on the wall. The Approved user group should not attempt to resolve such issues themselves. The station commander will organise for the problem to be resolved.

Station

The activities of the approved user/group must not interfere with the day to day running of the station or any events that may be held at the station. Consideration must be given to:

- (a) Noise levels.
- (b) Safety of both Fire personnel and the users of the community facility.
- (c) Movement of persons on and around the station.
- (d) Picking up and dropping off of persons at the station.

Common law

This agreement does not override, alter or supersede common law.

Indemnity

The responsibility of all possessions taken to the Community facility lies with the user/group to which they belong. The Brigade takes no responsibility for loss and/or damage of any possessions.

Liability for any damage to Brigade property within the Community facility or the Station by person from an Approved group lies with the Approved user responsible for the approval group.

The Approved user/group shall indemnify the Brigade against all costs, liabilities and damages in respect of death or personal injury or loss or damage to any property caused by negligence of the approved user/group while acting under the provisions of this Agreement.

Other conditions

The BC may impose any other terms and conditions they consider necessary in ensuring the Community facility operates in conjunction with the purpose of this Agreement and in the best interests of the community and operation of the fire station. These additional terms and conditions will be recorded below where applicable.

[This will need to be signed by the parties.]

Signed

On behalf of the London Fire Commissioner

Signed.....

On behalf of [insert name of other party's organisation]

Document history

Assessments

An equality, sustainability or health, safety and welfare impact assessment and/or a risk assessment was last completed on:

EIA	10/01/24	SDIA	16/09/23	HSWIA	25/09/23	RA	NA
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Audit trail

Listed below is a brief audit trail, detailing amendments made to this policy/procedure.

Page/para nos.	Brief description of change	Date
Throughout	Links updated, pathway to station diary booking updated. Reviewed as current.	12/01/2024
Throughout	Reference to cancelled PN973 – togetherness policy removed as this policy has been cancelled.	10/04/2024
Throughout	Change to policy name and added protected characteristics.	27/03/2025
Page 6, para 7.21	Reference to the Resource Management Centre (RMC) replaced with Control Operational Resourcing and Event (CORE) Team.	24/07/2025

Subject list

You can find this policy under the following subjects.

Community facilities	Safety on appliances

Freedom of Information Act exemptions

This policy/procedure has been securely marked due to:

Considered by: (responsible work team)	FOIA exemption	Security marking classification