

Note:- One of ARMA's key roles is to provide its members with technical support. However, from time to time, technical or other issues arise where guidance for lessees as well as their property manager is deemed appropriate. Such guidance is contained in these Lessee Advisory Notes (LANs) which ARMA members can copy and distribute to their clients and lessees as appropriate.

Living in a leasehold flat can be just as pleasant as in a house if neighbours respect the need to consider each other when living side by side or on top of each other and sharing communal facilities. Moving from a house to a flat may also be a culture shock so here are some tips on how to be a great leaseholder.

- 1. Water leaks** - water leaks are the most common cause of damage and insurance claims in blocks of flats. If going away for more than 48 hours then turn off the water at the stopcock in your flat. Many managing agents will ask you for the contact details of an emergency keyholder just in case there is a leak whilst you are away. Please cooperate and make sure a neighbour knows how to contact you.
- 2. Fire safety** - do not store petrol, calor gas or paraffin heaters in your flat or on balconies. Do not light barbecues on a balcony.
- 3. Fire evacuations** - do not block landings and hallways with bicycles, prams, toys or rubbish sacks. They are dangerous in case of a fire and a trip hazard even if there is no fire.
- 4. Refuse** - put your rubbish in the refuse bins or chutes provided. Do not dump large items for others to dispose of; ring your local council. Ensure you comply with any recycling arrangements.
- 5. Security** - always make sure the main door to the block is locked. Do not let anyone in through a door entry system or a locked communal entry door if you do not know them.
- 6. Pets** - there will usually be restrictions in your leases about pets and normally you will need to get permission from the landlord or management company.
- 7. Satellite dishes and cable TV** - Most leases do not allow the fitting of dishes by leaseholders. Ask your agent about whether a communal dish is possible. Cable TV to a block will need cables to be routed through communal areas so you will need to ask for permission.
- 8. Insurance** - the building will be insured by your landlord but you should insure your own contents. Do make sure your contents cover includes cover if a leak from your flat damages the contents of your neighbour's flats because you will be liable. If you will be away from your flat for more than 30 days and the flat will be empty it is normal that your agent will have to inform the insurers. Please let the agent know. If you do not it is likely any claim for damage to your flat will be disallowed.
- 9. Gas servicing** - if you have a gas boiler in your flat do get it serviced annually by a Gas Safe registered engineer. If there is a problem it will not just affect you.
- 10. Service charges** - pay them on time and so maintain the cash flow needed to provide the services and repairs that you and your neighbours want, lease permitting.
- 11. Loft space** - do not assume that you own or have the right of access to any loft space over your flat. Ask your agent first.
- 12. Alterations and improvements** - most leases will require the landlord's permission except for minor changes. Do ask for permission. Failure to do so will lead to complications and delays if you decide to sell.
- 13. Noise** - is the number one cause of neighbour disputes. Be sensitive and let your neighbours know if there will be unusual noise from say DIY or workmen in your flat. {Refer to ARMA's LAN06 Noise on www.arma.org.uk.}
- 14. Wooden floors** - are one of the biggest gripes of leaseholders because they transmit sound so easily. Carpets and/or rugs are the neighbourly floor covering choice in any flat and are likely to be required by your lease.
- 15. Subletting** - you will normally need to obtain permission from your landlord first. Whether you do or do not, provide your landlord with your or your lettings agent's contact details, the name and contact of who is the tenant and a copy of your tenancy agreement. Remember you are responsible for the tenant's behaviour so make sure he/she is aware of what is expected in your block, particularly under the terms of your lease.
- 16. Keep important information** - keep things like service charge and ground rent demands, annual accounts, budgets and consultation notices. This will help you and save you money if you decide to sell.

17. **Get involved** - if your block is run by a leaseholder's company then you can help by getting involved. Volunteers for directors are always wanted.
18. **Neighbour disputes** - if you have a problem with a neighbour over noise or other anti-social behaviour try and solve it between yourselves. Landlords have very little power to take action for anti-social behaviour. Get to know your neighbours so you have a basis to resolve things if problems do arise later. {Refer to ARMA's LAN12 Anti-Social Behaviour on www.arma.org.uk.}
19. **Meter readings** - make sure you have your meters read when you buy and sell the flat. And the communal meter cupboards must not be used for storage; that would be a major fire risk.
20. **Electrical safety**- if the wiring in your flat is more than 10 years old have a test carried out by a qualified electrician. A lot of fires are caused by electrical faults.
21. **Parking** - if spaces are allocated park in the space(s) allocated, not in a neighbour's spaces; and let your visitors know of the rules about parking before they visit so they do not upset your neighbours.

AND FINALLY..... make sure you understand how the leasehold system works by going to www.arma.org.uk and viewing 'Living in Leasehold Flats – a guide to how it works, your rights and responsibilities'.

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Whilst every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in this Lessee Advisory Note, it must be emphasised that because the Association has no control over the precise circumstances in which it will be used, the Association, its officers, employees and members can accept no liability arising out of its use, whether by members of the Association or otherwise. The Lessee Advisory Note is of a general nature only and makes no attempt to state or conform to legal requirements; compliance with these must be the individual user's own responsibility and therefore it may be appropriate to seek independent advice.