

Safety in your building

1 August 2023

Cumnor House, Helmi House, Lidcote House,
Robsart Street,
Stockwell,
SW9

Dear residents,

Balconies closed now for your safety

There has been a change in your access to your balcony – please read on to ensure you understand why balconies are closed until further notice.

No access to balconies as balcony panels removed

We need to remove balcony end panels to be able to fit new fire barriers and cladding panels. That means balconies are no longer secure for you to access. Health and safety is our number one priority and we must keep all residents safe, even though we recognise this will inconvenience and disappoint you.

We cannot have anyone accessing balconies, when the end balcony panel is removed, as they are not safe, and so we have made the difficult but essential decision to secure doors closed to stop access with a mechanical restraint. Some doors are already secured, and we will be going through all balconies over the next week to secure the remaining doors. Please do not use your balcony even if the mechanical restraint has not yet been put in place.

Can I still open my windows?

Yes, you are welcome to open your windows during evenings and weekends. You may also choose to keep them open during the workdays when remediation is going on, but please be aware you may be affected by noise and dust.

Are all balconies being closed from now?

Yes, all balconies need to be closed as panels are being removed from all of them while we are remediating. That means residents on the lower floors will have restricted access for longer than those higher up. We sincerely apologise for this, but we must ensure all residents are kept safe. We aren't able to replace balcony end panels during the work and there's no alternative to closing balconies.

When will balconies be accessible again?

We need to secure all doors now and remove balcony end panels so we can carry out further remediation. We'll rotate between the blocks which will hopefully be more efficient. Estimated dates for the balconies to reopen are included in the table, based on everything going smoothly and no problems being encountered during the remediation. Even when balconies are accessible again, you will still not be able to use them during the workday until the project is completed.

What if I need to access the balcony in an emergency?

The balcony is not a recognised escape route or a place of safety during an incident. In the event of a fire in your flat, exit through the front door, go down the stairs and exit to a place of safety through the main entrance of the block.



Network Homes

The Hive
22 Wembley Park Boulevard
Wembley
HA9 0HP

www.networkhomes.org.uk

customerservice@
networkhomes.org.uk
0300 373 3000

A summary of this letter

All balconies will be secured closed until further notice for health and safety reasons.

This is a necessary action to keep residents safe while panels have been removed to carry out remediation work. Resident safety is our number one priority and so we cannot have residents accessing balconies while panels are removed.

Windows can be opened evenings and weekends, and you can make the choice during the workday. However, you may be affected by dust and noise.

A reminder

Your building's fire strategy is **stay put**, so you should stay in your home unless you are directly affected by smoke, heat or fire, or are told to evacuate by the fire brigade. The building does not have a communal alarm.

Level	Balcony reopen estimated date
7	August
6	August
5	September
4	September
3	October
2	October
1	October
0	November

What is the timeline for the remaining balcony related remediation?

The below is the current estimate, based on no further issues being discovered:

- **May – July:** Strip cladding
- **June – August:** Install sub-grid, insulation and cavity barriers
- **July – November:** Install new cladding panels. We hope to move between blocks when refitting the panels, so that we can start removing the scaffold level by level.
- **August – December:** Remove scaffold starting from top of building.
- **December:** Providing there are no further issues discovered, we are still on track to have all scaffold removed and complete works by December 2023.

What is the process for balcony works and access?

The typical process is as follows:

- The balcony door will be mechanically restrained to prevent it from being opened as the balcony is no longer safe.
- Higgins will remove the balcony end panel to facilitate the repair and replacement of the external wall elements.
- A notice will be fixed to your patio door that the door is out of use, with information regarding the estimated date for the balcony to reopen.
- Once complete, the notice and restraint will be removed and Higgins' RLO will advise that you can use your balcony again on evenings and weekend while the rest of the work is finished.

Why has our access to balconies changed?

We initially told you at the webinar that you wouldn't be able to use your balconies during working hours while the remediation was taking place. This was to keep you safe while operatives and materials were on the scaffolding.

The balcony end panel needs to be removed to allow enough clearance for us to refit the new cladding panels without damaging them and to ensure they are fitted to the manufacturer's guidelines. And due to this additional step, we had no alternative but to close the balconies for your safety. I'd like to thank you for your understanding in this essential safety matter.

Further support

If you need further support, you can:

- Go to the London Fire Brigade's website, which is offering a free online tool which guides you through a fire risk assessment of your home (home visits are available for more vulnerable residents): <https://www.london-fire.gov.uk/safety/the-home/home-fire-safety/>
- Visit our website where we have a building safety section with lots of information and frequently asked questions: <https://www.networkhomes.org.uk/buildingandfiresafety/>
- If you need mental health support, the resident led End Our Cladding Scandal group has shared several resources: <https://endourcladdingscandal.org/get-support/mental-health-support/>
- View resources which may help: <https://www.networkhomes.org.uk/buildingsafetyresources/>
- Check our document library for your building's letters and documents – it takes a little while to load: <https://www.networkhomes.org.uk/robsart1buildingsafety/>
- Get in touch with us on customerservice@networkhomes.org.uk if you have any questions.

Kind regards

Raj Gandecha

Head of Resident Management (Building Safety)