



Window Restrictor Policy

Version 1

Approved by: Executive Team

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 This Policy outlines our approach to managing window restrictors as a way of preventing falls from height.

1.2 It applies to all homes and communal areas owned and managed by Optivo. This includes:

- General needs houses and flats/maisonettes
- Housing for older people, extra care and care homes
- Supported housing
- Student accommodation
- Keyworker accommodation.

It also extends to our offices.

This Policy does not apply to Shared Ownership schemes or schemes for outright sale. But will apply to the common areas of joint tenure schemes.

2.0 Aims

2.1 The Policy outlines:

- When we'll install window restrictors in our homes, communal areas, offices and commercial stock
- How we'll inspect and maintain window restrictors
- Resident responsibilities.

3.0 Legal Requirements

3.1 There is no specific legal requirement to fit restrictors to windows in our existing homes.

3.2 Accreditation Network UK (ANUK)/Unipol's National Code of Standards for Larger Developments for Student Accommodation *not managed and controlled by Educational Establishments* (2018) states:
Ground floor and upper storey windows accessible from ground level are of sound construction and fitted with a lockable system capable of being opened from the inside without the use of a key and (except where legislation forbids this) all windows above ground floor level should be fitted with stops to prevent over-opening.

3.2.1 Our Student sites are ANUK and UK code compliant with restrictors fitted at all levels.

3.3 Building Regulations require windows in new homes to be at least 800mm high to prevent falls. The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) considers windows with an opening lower than 1100mm above the floor an increased risk to children.

4.0 What we'll do

4.1 We will include window restrictors to all windows on or above the first floor¹:

- In all new homes
- In existing homes whenever we replace windows.

4.2 We will repair or replace any defective window restrictor when reported. We will consider recharging the cost of repair/replacement where the restrictor has been deliberately damaged.

4.3 We will consider requests to fit window restrictors to existing windows on or above the ground floor on a case by case basis. Where the window sill or bannister height is low, guarding may be more appropriate.

4.4 Where we fit window restrictors, we'll make sure residents are still able to open windows.

4.5 We will seek to address any risks to our staff and our residents and their children, posed by windows in our communal areas on or above the first floor, as part of our regular Health and Safety Inspections of General Needs/HOPs/Extra Care blocks. This may be by the addition of a window restrictor or guarding, whatever is most effective in reducing the risk. Window restrictors in our offices and commercial stock are checked and maintained as part of our inspection regimes with the minimum inspection being annual or whenever a dwelling becomes empty.

4.5.1 Any staff member may request the installation of a window restrictor or sill guard where they feel it would improve safety.

4.6 In communal areas of blocks (General Needs, HOPS, Extra Care and Commercial), we'll assess each window on or above the first floor as part of our external decorations programme. At that time, we'll apply the most effective measure to address both issues of safety and ventilation. Affected residents will be advised of safe use when the changes are made.

4.7 In recognition of the needs of residents moving into our retirement housing, care or extra care schemes, we will consider the value of fitting window restrictors to their home as part of the Needs and Risk assessment at the start of a tenancy, if not already fitted. This includes to ground-floor accommodation.

4.8 During inspection of empty homes, we'll:

- Inspect all windows restrictors (irrespective of who fitted them)
- Repair any defective window restrictors
- Install window restrictors on or above the first floor, where they are missing.

¹ or where there is a significant drop from the ground floor e.g. built into a slope, basement parking

5.0 Window Restrictors (the product)

5.1 Window restrictors should:

- Restrict the window opening to 100mm or less
- Be suitably robust to withstand foreseeable forces applied by an individual determined to open the window further
- Be sufficiently robust to withstand damage.

5.2 In a care home setting, where the client group is more at risk of injury from falls from height, we will ensure as we replace our windows, we install restrictors requiring a special tool or key to open the window fully. At the same time we will consider the impact of reduced natural ventilation on the ambient temperature.

6.0 Resident responsibilities

6.1 Residents are responsible for:

- Safety within their home
- Not removing or tampering with a window restrictor we install
- Reporting defective window restrictors in their home/block (i.e. the communal areas) to us promptly.

7.0 Review

7.1 We will review this Policy to address legislative, regulatory, best practice or operational issues.