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21 WAYS TO BE A GREAT LEASEHOLDER

Much is said about, and comments made on, the way landlords and managing agents should conduct themselves in delivering management services to blocks of leasehold flats; services that enable lessees to enjoy their home and the community in which they live. But it is not just a one way street; leaseholders have to do their bit to achieve this enjoyment.

In any form of community there needs to be mutual cooperation and this becomes even more important where people are living in close proximity to each other as in long leasehold blocks of flats.

“Quite apart from understanding their legal rights and responsibilities of owning a leasehold flat in terms of their landlord, lessees also need to think of their social rights and responsibilities relating to their neighbours” comments Brett Williams, chairman of the Association of Residential Managing Agents (ARMA). “Research within our membership has highlighted at least 21 areas where friction can be caused between lessees or where action by lessees can make things run more smoothly for everyone.”

As a result of this research ARMA has produced a Lessee Advisory Note on ‘21 Ways to be a Great Leaseholder’ which is downloadable from the publications page on www.arma.org.uk or available by phoning 020 7978 2607.

WATER LEAKS, NOISE AND WOODEN FLOORS

The areas covered by the advisory note range from safety to subletting but it puts water leaks at the top of the list. These are the most common cause of damage and insurance claims in blocks of flats. If a lessee is going away for more than 48 hours then he/she should turn off the water at the stopcock in the flat. Many managing agents will ask for the contact details of an emergency keyholder just in case there is a leak whilst the lessee is away; lessees should cooperate and make sure a neighbour knows how to contact them. Most buildings insurance policies require regular inspections of empty property and failure to do this can prejudice a claim.

Noise is the number one cause of neighbour disputes. Lessees should be sensitive and let their neighbours know if there will be unusual noise from, say, DIY or workmen in the flat.

Wooden floors are another of the biggest gripes of leaseholders because they can transmit sound so easily. Carpets and/or rugs are the neighbourly floor covering choice in any flat and are likely to be required by the lease.

“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” concludes Williams.

NOTES TO EDITOR

1. Words: 455

2. About ARMA

Formed in 1991, ARMA is the only body in England and Wales to focus exclusively on matters relating to the block or estate management of long leasehold residential property. With over 225 corporate members managing in excess of 850,000 units in more than 34,000 blocks of flats or estates (at least 60% of which are lessee-controlled properties), the Association's founding principal aims are to represent its members and the interests of lessees, resident management companies and investor freeholders.

3. Attached: LAN 10: *21 Ways to be a great leaseholder*