CQD CLEANING SERVICES LTD

Communal Area Cleaning Checklist for Block Managers

A practical working document for block managers, managing agents, RMCs, housing associations and freeholders who are specifying, reviewing or replacing communal cleaning.

Walk the building	Area-by-area inspection prompts with frequency notes
Write the specification	What a usable written scope has to contain
Ask the right questions	What to put to a contractor before you appoint
Expect evidence	Reporting, sign-off and service charge records
Know the limits	Bin stores, fire doors, COSHH and safe access

CQD Cleaning Services Ltd · Trading since 2012 · Triple ISO certified · BICSc member · CHAS accredited

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Commercial premises only. A practical working checklist, not an official standard or a statement of law.

How to use this checklist

Communal cleaning goes wrong quietly. A hallway that is 80 per cent right looks acceptable at a glance and unacceptable to a resident who walks through it twice a day. The purpose of this document is to make the standard visible before anyone is appointed, so that conversations about money, frequency and quality are about the same set of facts.

Work through it in this order:

- Walk the building with Part 1 in hand. Note what exists, not what you remember.
- Turn the notes into a written specification using the structure in Part 2.
- Put the questions in Part 3 to every contractor you shortlist, and compare the answers side by side.
- Agree what evidence you will receive and how often, using Part 4.
- Check the specific points on bin stores, fire doors and safe access in Parts 5 to 7.
- Complete the blank area table in Part 8 for each building and keep it with the specification.

Who this is for

Block managers, managing agents responsible for a portfolio, resident management companies, housing associations managing shared blocks, and freeholders of buildings with communal parts. It assumes you are accountable for shared space rather than the inside of a leaseholder’s flat.

What it does not cover

Cleaning inside individual dwellings, end-of-tenancy work, grounds maintenance, window cleaning above ground-floor level and any building fabric repair. Those are separate scopes and should be specified separately, even where the same contractor bids for them.

A note on the word “communal”

It covers everything residents and visitors share: entrance lobbies, stairwells, corridors, lift cars and lobbies, bin stores, communal glazing at low level, noticeboards, door furniture and external approaches included in the scope. If a space is used by more than one household, it is communal, and it belongs in the specification.

> **One rule that saves arguments later**
> If an area is not written down, it will not be cleaned. If it is written down but the frequency is vague, it will be cleaned less often than you expect. Every line of the specification needs an area, a task and a frequency.

Part 1 · Walk the building

Do this on a normal weekday, not on a quiet Sunday. You are looking for the state of the building under real use, and for the specific details that decide how long a visit actually takes.

Area	What to look at	Frequency prompt
Entrance and lobby	Matting condition and whether it is sized for the footfall, thresholds, internal glass and door push plates, letterbox and intercom area, noticeboard, floor finish transitions where tile meets carpet.	Usually daily or several times a week in a block of 15 or more units. Matting that is undersized shows up as dirty flooring five metres inside the door.
Stairwells	Tread edges and nosings, handrails and balustrades, landings, corners and skirting, paint condition, whether the stair is carpeted, vinyl or stone.	Weekly in low-rise, more often where the stair is the only route. Nosing wear is the first visible sign of a tired stair.
Corridors	Floor finish, thresholds at flat doors, wall scuffing height, radiator tops and pipe boxing, pipework and cable trays that collect dust.	Weekly as a baseline; daily where a corridor serves a bin chute or refuse route.
Lifts and lift lobbies	Car floor, door tracks, call buttons, mirrors, handrails, lobby flooring and the mat inside the car.	Daily where lifts carry refuse or heavy traffic; tracks collect grit and mark the car floor.
Communal glazing and doors	Internal screens, entrance doors, glazed fire doors at low level, any ground-floor windows in scope.	Weekly for fingerprints, periodic for frames and tracks.
Bin stores and refuse areas	Floor, walls, container exteriors and lids, chute outlet, spill staining, drainage, odour, ventilation, lighting, and whether the store is internal or external.	At least weekly, and separately from internal cleaning equipment. See Part 5.
External approaches	Steps, porches, paths, bike stores, courtyards, gullies and drains within the boundary of the agreed scope.	Weekly sweeping in leaf fall, more often where trees overhang.
Concierge, residents' lounge or shared kitchen	Whether the space is staffed, who uses it, what equipment is provided, and what is genuinely communal cleaning rather than a resident's own mess.	Agree separately. These areas rarely fit a standard block routine.

Record while you walk: floor finishes, the number of floors and cores, how many fire doors sit on the cleaning route, where the water and power are, where the bin store is relative to the entrance, and how a cleaner gets in at 06:30 on a Monday. Those five facts decide most of the cost.

Part 2 · Write the specification

A specification is not a brochure. It is the document you will point at when the standard slips, so write it in a way that a stranger could pick up and follow.

The nine things it must contain

1. Premises and access

Full address, building name, number of blocks, floors and cores, entry method (fob, key safe, concierge), alarm and out-of-hours contact, and where equipment can be stored.

2. Areas in scope

Each area listed by name, floor by floor. Areas deliberately excluded are listed too, so exclusion is a decision rather than an omission.

3. Tasks per area

Written as instructions: vacuum edges and open floor, damp mop, wipe handrails and balustrades, clean door furniture and push plates, spot-clean internal glass. Avoid the word “clean” on its own.

4. Frequency

Per area, per task. “Lobbies daily, stairwells twice weekly, bin store weekly, communal glazing monthly” is usable; “regular communal cleaning” is not.

5. Visit pattern and hours

Days and time windows, and how the contractor behaves if a visit has to move. Include whether residents will see the cleaner, and what happens during holiday periods.

6. Products and equipment

Product families used per surface, colour-coding discipline between washrooms and general areas, and confirmation that COSHH assessments are held and available.

7. Staff and supervision

Who attends, whether they are directly employed or subcontracted, vetting and identification, who supervises, and who the named contact is for the building.

8. Reporting and review

What evidence arrives after each visit, what arrives monthly, who receives it, and when a formal review happens. See Part 4.

9. Commercial terms and exit

Fixed monthly price and what it covers, invoicing, notice period on both sides, what happens at handover, and how a change of scope is priced.

Service charge presentation

Where communal cleaning is recovered through service charges, leaseholders are entitled to see that the cost is reasonable and the work happened. A specification that names areas and frequencies, supported by dated visit records and a monthly summary, is far easier to defend than a single invoice line described as “cleaning”. Keep the specification with the budget papers and keep the monthly summaries with the accounts.

Part 3 · Ask a contractor

Ask the same questions of every contractor, in writing, and record the answers in one place. The quality of the answers matters more than the price, and inconsistencies between two answers from the same company are worth noting.

- Who will actually attend this building, and are they directly employed or subcontracted?
- Will the same people come each visit, and who covers absence? What happens if nobody turns up?
- How do you check the standard, how often, and can I see an example report?
- What evidence will I receive after each visit, and in what format?
- How do you handle a complaint, and what is the response time?
- Which products will you use on stone, vinyl, timber and matting, and where are the COSHH assessments held?
- How do you brief staff on fire doors and on not obstructing escape routes?
- How do you separate bin store work from internal cleaning, in equipment and in sequence?
- What is included in the monthly price, and what is charged extra?
- What notice do I need to give, and what happens at the end of the arrangement?
- Are you insured for commercial cleaning, and can I see the certificate?
- Which certifications do you hold, and what do they cover?

Reading the answers

A contractor who can describe the building back to you, name the areas that will be hardest and explain how they will staff a 06:30 start has probably done this before. A contractor who answers every question with a promise and no detail is describing an intention, not a service. Ask for a sample report and a sample specification with the pricing; if neither exists, the standard will be whatever the individual cleaner decides on the day.

What “fully insured” should mean

Employers’ liability and public liability cover are the two you will be asked about. Ask for the certificate and check that the policy is current and that the activity described matches cleaning rather than something adjacent to it. Do not accept a verbal assurance, and note the renewal date so it does not quietly lapse.

Certifications and what they signal

ISO 9001 points to a documented quality management system. ISO 14001 points to environmental management, which is relevant to chemical use and waste. ISO 45001 points to health and safety management. BICSc membership indicates engagement with professional cleaning standards and training. CHAS accreditation indicates a health and safety assessment of the contractor. None of them guarantees a clean stairwell, but together they indicate a contractor that documents what it does, which is what you need when something goes wrong.

Part 4 · Evidence and reporting

Agree the evidence before the first visit, not after the first complaint. What follows is a reasonable expectation for a block of any size; scale it to the building rather than dropping it.

What	Why it matters	How often
Photo-verified visit record	Shows the agreed areas were attended, not just that an invoice was raised.	After each visit
Dated visit log	Answers the question “did anyone come last Tuesday?” without a phone call.	After each visit
Issue or defect note	Records a broken light, a damaged door closer or a spill that needs the freeholder.	When found, same day
Monthly summary	Visits completed, tasks carried out, issues raised and closed. Suitable for service charge records.	Monthly
Supervisor check or audit	A second pair of eyes against the written specification, with a score or a signed sheet.	Periodically, agreed in advance
Annual or periodic review	Scope, frequency and price revisited against how the building is actually used.	Annually, or at renewal

How to review a report in two minutes

- Check the date and time against the schedule, not against the invoice.
- Check the photographs show the areas that are hardest, not the areas that are easiest.
- Check whether the same two or three photographs recur; repetition suggests a template rather than a visit.
- Read the issue notes. A report with no issues ever recorded is either a very easy building or an unchecked one.

Keeping records for service charges

Store the specification, the monthly summaries and any issue notes together, in date order, for the same period as your accounts. If a leaseholder asks what the communal cleaning charge bought, that file is the answer. It also makes the annual budget conversation quicker, because you can see what was actually done against what was specified.

Part 5 · Bin stores and refuse areas

The bin store is the most common source of complaint in a residential block and the most common gap in a cleaning specification. Treat it as its own area with its own equipment and its own frequency.

- Sweep and wash the floor, including corners and under containers where accessible.
- Clean container exteriors and lids; note that interiors are usually the waste contractor’s responsibility, so agree who does what in writing.
- Clear spillages and staining at the chute outlet and around the base of containers.
- Check the chute chamber if the building has one, and agree who accesses it.
- Keep a separate set of equipment for bin store work. A mop used in a bin store should never return to a lobby.
- Ventilate where possible and report persistent odour, standing water or drainage faults rather than masking them with product.
- Report fly-tipping, bulk waste and damage rather than absorbing it into the cleaning visit.

A weekly visit that includes the bin store floor, container exteriors and the area immediately outside the door prevents most of the complaints a block will ever receive about smell.

Part 6 · Fire doors and safe working

Cleaning staff move through escape routes constantly, so they are the people most likely to notice a problem and the people most able to cause one. Brief them explicitly, and put the brief in the specification.

- Fire doors are never propped, wedged or held open for convenience, including while equipment is carried through.
- Fire doors are never left unlatched after a visit. If a door is found unlatched, close it and report it.
- Door closers, hinges, intumescent strips and signage are cleaned around and never adjusted, removed or painted over.
- Escape routes, landings and final exits are kept clear of equipment, waste and stored items at all times.
- Anything that looks defective, damaged or obstructed is reported the same day rather than noted at the end of the month.
- Chemicals are used at the dilution on the COSHH assessment, in labelled containers, and never decanted into unmarked bottles.
- Wet floors are signed, and cleaning is sequenced so a route is never left wet across a main escape route without warning.
- Lone working arrangements, key handling and alarm codes are agreed in writing before the first visit.

None of this replaces the building’s own fire risk assessment or the duties of the responsible person. It is the practical, day-to-day behaviour that supports them.

Part 7 · Switching contractor without a gap

Most failures of a cleaning contract happen in the fortnight around a change of supplier: keys go missing, the bin store is missed for three weeks, nobody knows where the water is. Plan the handover as a small project.

Six weeks before

- Check the notice period and the date notice must be served to end on the date you want.
- Confirm who owns the equipment, the keys and the consumables currently in the building.
- Ask your current contractor directly whether any staff work only on your building, and take advice if that is the case.

Two weeks before

- Issue the written specification to the incoming contractor and walk the building together.
- Agree the first visit date, the visit window and who will be on site to let them in.
- Hand over keys, fobs, codes and the location of water and power, and record what was handed over.
- Tell residents what is changing and when, in one short notice.

First week

- Attend all or part of the first visit yourself, or ask for photographs from it.
- Check the bin store, the top landing and the entrance matting specifically; those are where a new routine shows.
- Confirm the reporting is arriving in the agreed format before you need it for a complaint.

On staff transfers

When cleaning arrangements change, the staff who currently clean the building may have rights that transfer with the work. Whether that applies depends on the facts of the particular change, including who employs them, how they are organised and what the new arrangement looks like. It is not a decision to take from a template. Take advice where relevant, and expect an incoming contractor to discuss the facts with you openly rather than promise that it will not arise.

Ending an arrangement well

Return or destroy keys and access devices, agree a final walk-round, and keep the last month’s report with your records. A clean exit protects you if the next supplier needs to be replaced.

Part 8 · Building area table

Complete one table per building. This is the document you hand to a contractor alongside the specification, and the one you check a quotation against.

Building: _____ Floors: _____ Cores: _____ Units: _____

Area	Task	Frequency	Notes / exclusions

Access and contacts

Entry method: _____ Alarm: _____ Key holder: _____

Out-of-hours contact: _____ Equipment store: _____

Where CQD fits

CQD Cleaning Services Ltd is a commercial cleaning contractor based in High Wycombe, working across the South East and Home Counties. We provide communal area and block cleaning for block managers, managing agents, housing associations, RMCs, freeholders and landlords, delivered by directly employed, DBS-checked teams under a written specification.

- Triple ISO certification: ISO 9001, ISO 14001 and ISO 45001.
- BICSc member and CHAS accredited, with insurance documentation available for agent and freeholder records.
- Photo-verified visit records and a monthly summary suitable for service charge records.
- Fire-door aware working practice, COSHH assessments and site-specific risk assessments and method statements.
- Fixed monthly pricing confirmed after a free communal area survey, with no long-term contract and 30 days' notice either way.
- Trading since 2012, with more than 500 businesses served.

Free communal area survey

We walk the building, record the areas, finishes, access and bin store arrangements, and agree the written specification before any price is confirmed. Call 01494 911001, email mark@cqdcleaningservices.com, or request a survey through the communal cleaning page on our website.

About this document
This checklist is general operational guidance prepared by CQD Cleaning Services Ltd for block managers and managing agents. It is not an official standard, not legal advice and does not replace the building's fire risk assessment, health and safety arrangements or any statutory duty owed by the responsible person. Complete it with your own building in mind.

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