

This leaflet provides information to help you live safely and comfortably at home and with your neighbours. It is also explains the parts of your tenancy agreement which affect what you can do in your home.

All of our tenants agree not to annoy or cause a nuisance or harassment to their neighbours. This is a condition of your tenancy agreement and applies equally to your family, anyone else in your home and any visitors.

Being good neighbours

Noise

Noise from neighbours can be a real nuisance, so please keep it to a minimum. Keep TVs, stereos, radios, pianos and similar items away from shared walls and keep the volume down, particularly late at night or early in the morning. Most people make allowances for occasional extra noise – for example a party or DIY improvements – but please be polite and tell your neighbours beforehand.

Pets

You do not normally need permission to keep fish or one or two small caged animals or birds – unless they are likely to cause a nuisance to your neighbours. You must get our permission, in writing, before keeping a dog, cat or any other pet. You must keep your pet under control. If it causes a nuisance we may insist you remove it from your home.

Running a business from your home

You must not run a business from your home without permission or display any business sign or advertisement. We will not allow any business which might inconvenience other tenants or damage the premises.

Shared parking

Some estates have shared parking bays. These are for all tenants. Please co-operate with others to make the best use of the spaces and do not block the access. You may park private cars or light vans, as long as they are taxed and roadworthy and do not cause a nuisance. We have the right to remove any vehicle or object which does not meet these conditions or appears to be abandoned or dangerous. You may do reasonable minor car repairs in the parking bays but we do not allow you to use spray equipment or power tools or use the parking areas for a vehicle repair business.

Shared gardens

We maintain the shared grounds but it is everyone's responsibility to prevent the gardens being spoiled by litter or dog or cat mess. If you would like to take care of the gardens, talk to your Housing Officer. If it can be arranged without disturbing other tenants or upsetting the balance of the gardens, we will be happy for you to do this.

Racial and other harassment

We want to make sure that all tenants feel safe and secure in their homes. Incidents of harassment are rare – but we treat them very seriously. Any tenant who harasses another tenant or member of their household, visitors or neighbours because of their sex, religion, disability, colour, race, ethnic or national origin, age, sexuality, marital status or appearance is breaking their tenancy agreement. This applies equally to people who live with you. We will not tolerate any interference with the peace and comfort of others. If necessary we will take action to evict the tenant responsible.

Examples of harassment include:

- violence or threats of violence;
- abusive or insulting words or behaviour;
- damage or threats of damage to property; and
- writing threatening, abusive or insulting graffiti.

If you carry out any form of harassment, you are breaking the terms of your tenancy agreement.

We will:

- respond promptly and sympathetically to a complaint or report of harassment;
- arrange an investigation within 24 hours;
- take fast and firm action against the people responsible; and
- give positive help and support to victims of harassment.

We will treat putting right any damage to property (including graffiti) as a priority. If you suffer harassment and want to transfer to another of our homes we will treat your application sympathetically. We will treat any incidents of harassment by staff as gross misconduct. If you are being harassed, or would like to see a copy of our harassment policy, please tell your Housing Officer.

We will not tolerate antisocial behaviour. If you think you are experiencing antisocial behaviour, please contact your Housing Officer.

If you think a crime is being committed, please contact the police. Dial 999 in an emergency or 101 if it is not an emergency. Or, you can report a suspected crime anonymously to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

Taking care of your home

Private gardens

If you have a private garden you are responsible for keeping it tidy. If you want to use it to park your car or trailer you must ask our permission first. You are not allowed to leave caravans or other large vehicles in your garden.

Household rubbish

You should wrap all rubbish before placing it in the bin or chute. If your rubbish will not fit down the chute, please put it in the paladin bin. Don't leave it beside the chute. Ask the local council for advice on getting rid of large items like old furniture, fridges or mattresses.

Making alterations to your home

Please see leaflet: *Improving and adapting your property.*

Infestations

If you find mice, rats, fleas, cockroaches or other pests in your home, you must arrange your own prevention and treatment. The Local Authority will often assist if you meet their criteria.

Drains

You are responsible for clearing any blockages you cause (see leaflet: *DIY suggestions*). Please do not flush nappies, sanitary towels, wipes and similar items down the toilet – they cause blockages, despite manufacturers' claims.

Frost precautions

Please take all reasonable precautions to prevent damage to pipes, cisterns, sinks and basins in wintry weather. Make sure you know where to find the main water stopcock in your property (label it if possible) and how to turn it off. If your stopcock does not work properly, please ask us to repair it. Make sure pipes and tanks have enough lagging. In cold weather keep your home as warm as you can. If you are leaving your home empty for more than a few days, set your heating controls to provide background heat or empty the water system as follows:

- Turn off the stopcock and turn on all the taps. Wait until the water stops running (in case the waste pipes are already frozen and basins flood).

Flush the toilet cistern to empty it and put salt down the toilet to help stop the water freezing. When you are back home, turn on the stopcock and check the taps are flowing freely. If your central-heating radiators are not getting hot, turn the system off and tell us. It would be wise to bleed any air out of your radiators with the appropriate key (which you can get from hardware shops).

Burst or leaking pipes

If pipes burst or leak, turn off the stopcock, turn on the taps to drain the water quickly, warn any other residents who may be affected and tell us immediately. For advice on temporary repairs see leaflet: *DIY suggestions*.

Avoiding damp

Condensation

Most complaints about damp turn out to be about condensation. When warm moist air (for example steam from a kettle, a hot bath or drying clothes) reaches a cold surface it 'condenses' back into water – making the surface damp. This can result in black mould – especially on certain types of decoration, for example woodchip wallpaper.

Ways to limit condensation

- When cooking, washing or drying clothes (and after a bath), keep the door closed to prevent steam spreading to other rooms and open a window and leave the fan running.
- Dry clothes outside if possible.
- Use lids on saucepans.
- Never use paraffin or liquid gas heaters. They give off a great deal of water vapour - and your tenancy agreement says you must not use them.
- Do not block up ventilating bricks and strips on your windows.
- Try to keep a constant low heat throughout your home.

If condensation problems continue, ask us for advice.

Damp courses

The damp-proof course in the brickwork stops damp rising from the ground. Please keep the soil level well below the damp-proof course and do not pile sand, earth or other materials against the walls. If you want to build steps above the damp-proof course you must consult us first.

Air bricks

Air bricks are inserted in the wall to allow ventilation and prevent condensation. It is very important to keep them clear.

Safety in your home

Locks and keys

Make sure you have a spare key and keep it in a safe place. It will be expensive for you if you have to break windows or force open your front door. If you want to fit, at your own expense, a strong lock such as a mortice lock, please ask us first. Extra locks become part of the fixtures and fittings of the property and you may not remove them at the end of your tenancy.

Ways to reduce the risk of burglary

Local police will be pleased to advise you on the security of your home.

Here are some tips.

- Never let anyone into your home without proof of their identity and business.
- Always close windows and lock doors before going out.
- Don't invite thieves by leaving curtains drawn in the day, leaving notes for callers, or leaving a garage door open.
- When you go on holiday cancel newspaper and milk deliveries. Give your holiday address to your neighbour, the police or us.
- Never leave cash or valuables around.
- Before you go to bed, lock doors and close any windows on the ground floor or near drainpipes or flat roofs.

Fire precautions

To reduce the risk of fire starting and spreading in your home:

Do:

- Make sure all electrical appliances have the correct fuse in the plug.
- Turn off appliances and devices when not at home in particular phone chargers.
- Close doors at night and report any damage to fire doors.
- Buy a fire extinguisher, fire blanket or smoke detector if there isn't one in your property.

Do not:

- Tamper with the self-closing mechanisms on fire doors, or wedge the door open. When shut, these doors restrict the spread of fire and smoke, giving you more time to escape.
- Use liquid gas or paraffin heaters – they can cause fire or explosions and are dangerous when children are around.
- Wire more than one electrical appliance into one plug, use adaptors or run an appliance from a light fitting.
- Run flex under carpets or lino – you will not realise when it becomes unsafe.
- Use electrical appliances in the bathroom other than a properly installed bathroom heater or electric shaver.

In case of fire in your property

- Leave the room where the fire is and get out straight away
- Close the door to the room behind you
- Tell everyone in your flat and get them to leave
- Close the flat entrance door behind you
- Do not stay behind to fight the fire
- Wait outside away from the building and call 999 or 112

Never use water on a fire involving electric apparatus, fat, oil or spirit.

Switch off the gas or electricity supply and smother the fire with a mat, woollen blanket, overcoat or fire blanket if you have one. If someone's clothing catches fire, roll them in a rug, blanket or overcoat. Hold minor burns under a cold running tap. If the burn is serious, cover with a clean dry cloth and call an ambulance.

Insuring your property

We insure the structure and fixtures of your home against fire, flood and burglary but this does not cover your personal possessions. We strongly recommend you insure the internal decorations and contents of your home. Insurance need not be expensive – any good insurance company will give a free quotation. Please ask us for details of My Home contents insurance, a special service especially for tenants.

Hard to read?

If you would like this document in another format, such as large print or a coloured background, or if you would like this or any of our leaflets translated into another language, please contact our office:

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