

Tenants Handbook

A guide to living in your Stori home.

We want you to be happy in your home; we also want to be a good landlord. This handbook sets out what we expect from you and what service standards you should receive from us.

The service standards that we have developed have been agreed with our tenants and staff. We will work hard to achieve these standards and to improve our services to you.

If you feel we have failed to meet these standards, please tell us. We will monitor how we are delivering these services and tell you how we are performing. Please see Complaints and Customer Care section in this handbook.

How to use this Handbook

This Handbook supports your Tenancy Agreement. You should keep your Agreement in a safe place. The Handbook is a guide and provides contacts for further information.

Our Pledge

We believe that all individuals, couples and families who require accommodation and support to live well should experience a service we would be happy for our own friends and families to access and receive.

Our Mission

To “build opportunities for people to live well” through regaining their independence and self-worth through feeling safe, personally developing and connecting with their families.

Our Commitment

We value all our customers and you can expect fair treatment from all our staff regardless of:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

We will not tolerate discrimination of any kind. We actively encourage you to report any incident to us. Most of our offices have wheelchair access and disabled parking. We will use plain language in all our letters and leaflets. All our information is available bilingually and a Welsh speaker is always available to deal with your enquiry. If you write to us in Welsh, we will reply in Welsh. We will provide information in alternative formats, for example in large print or other languages on request.

We will take into account the needs of all the diverse group of people we serve by tailoring our services to meet individual needs. Interpretation and translation services can be provided for those whose first language is not Welsh or English.

Your Tenancy Agreement

The tenancy agreement for Supported Housing is a legal agreement between you and us. It sets out the terms and conditions for you and us whilst you are living in your home. It is an important document so you should read it carefully and keep it safe. Supported accommodation is temporary and is intended as a transitional home for you.

When you sign your tenancy agreement you are agreeing to, and legally bound by all the terms and conditions listed in it.

Your Responsibilities Include

- Paying your rent and service charges
- Looking after your home
- Being a good neighbour
- Being a responsible householder
- Engaging with support workers
- Allowing access for repairs and maintenance

Your tenancy is granted on the provision that you need support from us and continue to engage with us throughout this time.

Changes to your Tenancy

We understand that sometimes there might be changes to your household. Please tell us immediately if there are any changes.

Pets

You do not have permission to keep a pet except under exceptional circumstances where written permission from the Operations Manager must be given.

Succession

You do not have the right for anyone to take over your tenancy if you die.

Confidentiality

We abide by the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation 2018 and as such all information we keep on file about you is confidential. We will not give out any information about you or your household that is confidential unless you have given us written permission to do so. The only exceptions are:

- Housing Benefit or Council Tax departments to assist in your claim.
- Police if they are investigating a crime.
- Social Services if there is a serious risk to someone such as a child.
- Contractors in order to carry out work.

You are entitled to have access to the personal data we hold about you, within one month of a written request made, if:

- You can provide evidence of identity.
- Information from or concerning other people is removed from the record.

Visit our website to see more about the data we collect, why we collect it and how we protect your data and your rights.

Repairs and Maintenance

Both you and us as your landlord have repair obligations. Before you started your tenancy, your home was inspected to check that it was safe and that installations were in good working order. We rely on you to report repairs and to give us reasonable access to allow the repair to be made.

Our Repair Obligations

As your landlord we have a legal duty to carry out certain repairs to your home when they are needed. We are responsible for ensuring the exterior and overall structure of your home is well maintained. This may include:

- The roof, outside walls, external doors, window frames, window sills, window catches sash cords and including all necessary external painting and decoration.
- Internal walls, skirting boards, doors and door jambs, door frames, hinges, locks, thresholds, letter boxes, door handles, floors (including floor covering in kitchens and bathrooms) and ceilings including plasterwork (but not including painting and decorating).

We are also responsible for ensuring that installations for the supply of water, gas, sanitation, hot water and heating are well maintained. This may include:

- Basins, sinks, baths, toilets, flushing systems, waste pipes and showers.
- Electric wiring, gas and water pipes, taps.
- Water and space heaters, fireplaces and fitted fires.
- Sockets and light fittings.

We will carry out repairs as quickly as possible and within agreed response times. The length of time to complete an individual repair will depend on:

- The type of repair required – emergency, urgent or routine.
- How quickly contractors are able to gain access to your home.
- Availability of any parts required to complete the repair.

All day to day repairs requested are categorized as Emergency, Urgent or Standard using guidance from Welsh Government. We aim to carry out repairs in the target response time. Priority will always be given to the most urgent repair request.

Emergency Repairs: Emergency repairs are those that need to be carried out to avoid serious danger to health and safety or where a failure to carry out the repair could cause extensive damage to buildings and property. Emergency repairs should be attended to within four hours and made safe and completed within five working days.

Urgent Repairs: Urgent repairs are those that may affect the comfort of tenants and may cause damage to the property if not carried out urgently. Urgent repairs should be carried out in five working days.

Standard Repairs: Standard repairs are repairs that are not urgent although they may cause inconvenience to tenants. Standard repairs should be completed in twenty eight days.

The following are serviced.

- Smoke alarms annually in shared housing.
- Gas appliances and heating systems annually.
- Five yearly electrical installations.
- Water quality for legionella annually in shared housing.

We have a legal duty to ensure these vital checks are carried out and you **MUST** ensure that our contractors are able to gain access to your home.

Failure to allow access for servicing is a breach of your tenancy and will lead to the Association commencing legal action against you.

For a proportion of repairs completed, we will ask your opinion on the quality of the work carried out and the approach of the contractors who deal with your repair. Your responses enable us to ensure that our maintenance service meets your expectations and provides good value for money.

Contact Numbers for Reporting Repairs

01267 235555 during office hours.

08700 130025 for the out of hours team.

If you think you can smell gas leave the house immediately and phone the Emergency Gas number 0800 111 999. If you are at home and can do so safely, turn off the gas supply. The gas mains tap should be beside your gas meter.

Your Repair Obligations

Although we are your landlord we are not responsible for all repairs. Certain repairs are your responsibility and include

- Keeping the interior of the premises and the fixtures and fittings in property in good repair and clean condition at all times.
- Internal decoration and minor cracking of plasterwork.

- Electric plugs and fuses.
- Sink, bath plugs and chains.
- Toilet seats.
- Blocked toilets, internal waste pipes and blocked traps and gullies.
- Washing lines and rotary driers.
- Replacement of door keys, locks, catches and hinges.
- Any other items stolen, damaged or neglected.

You must make all reasonable arrangements to prevent damage to your property from fire, frost, burst water pipes or blocked drains. We rely on you to report repairs promptly and to give access to our contractors so that repairs can be completed within our agreed timescales.

Questions and Answers

Q. Will staff have to visit before doing a repair?

A. Yes, if measurements are needed or the work is complicated. You can help by given as much accurate information as possible. Every contractor should carry an identification card. Please ask to see this before giving access to your home.

Q. Will I ever be charged for repairs?

A. Yes, if the repair arises from damage, neglect or misuse; for example if you lose your house keys and require a replacement or if you break fixtures or fittings.

Q. I was out when the contractor called. What should I do?

A. You should call your support worker immediately and let them know so that they can rebook an appointment. You may be charged for this missed appointment if you haven't given enough notice to staff.

Planned Maintenance

We have a program of internal and external modernisation of kitchens, bathrooms, installation of central heating, replacement of electrical wiring, roofs, doors and windows. We also have a program for cyclical painting.

Helping with Disabilities

Sometimes your needs change and we may be able to carry out adaptations to enable you to continue to enjoy your home. Adaptations are considered following a referral from an Occupational Therapist, Social Services or the Hospital. Stori will consider all requests for aids and adaptations. Minor works will be undertaken as part of our service to you. However, major work will require an application to the Welsh Government for funding. It is not always possible to adapt a property because of the way they were originally designed or because of the substantial costs involved. In these cases rehousing may be more appropriate. We can provide advice on a wide range of housing options and help you to decide on the one which is most suitable to your needs.

Reducing Mould

In the right conditions, mould can multiply and grow in your home. All types of mould need moisture to grow. Mould is naturally in our environment and floats through the air as spores. The spores can

come into your home and land on clothes furniture and surfaces. Spores need moisture to grow. So any excess moisture (such as condensation) in your home will allow it to grow. Condensation is the water droplets that form when warm moist air comes into contact with a surface that is a lower temperature than the air in the room – like a window pane.

What You Can do

Let warm moist air out:

- Open the window.
- Leave the trickle vents open on your window.
- Keep an extractor fan switched on (usually in kitchens or bathrooms).
- Keep the bathroom door closed when showering and your kitchen door closed when cooking.
- Dry clothes outside whenever possible – putting clothes on radiators gives off a lot of moisture.
- Keep furniture from resting on walls. They can trap warm moist air against cold surfaces.
- Leave heating on the longer at room temperature 18 – 22 degrees. This is more cost effective than turning your heating on for short bursts.
- Wipe away any moisture that's gathered on windows.

If you do get mould, you can use a fungicidal treatment or spray available in most supermarkets and DIY stores. Word of warning, don't use bleach or washing up liquid, it doesn't work and can make it worse.

Waste and Recycling

It's easy to recycle and it really does make a difference. Recycling stops tonnes of rubbish being buried in landfill releasing harmful greenhouse gases.

Please dispose of your rubbish carefully, as litter and untidy bin areas are a nuisance to your neighbours and a potential health hazard attracting pests and vermin (rats, mice and pigeons etc.). Fly tipping is a criminal offence and includes anything from general household waste, for example, fridges, sofas, mattresses and garden waste. If you need to dispose any large items such as a fridge, freezer, wardrobe or washing machine, speak to your support worker or housing officer.

Remember to only put out your rubbish and recycling on the day it is collected. For further information, including checking your collection dates, ordering a new or replacement bin please contact your local council.

Your Rent

Rent is the amount you pay to us for your home. It is a condition of your tenancy that rent is paid weekly in advance. Rent is due each Monday but we do allow you to pay fortnightly if the rent is paid by the due date or monthly in advance. The Association is committed to taking firm and fair action against tenants who are in arrears. A breakdown of your current rent and service charge amount can be found in your tenancy agreement.

Service Charges

Some of our properties receive services which are payable as service charges. Examples of service for which a charge is made may include:

- Heating and lighting of communal areas.
- Grounds maintenance and gardening.
- Maintenance and repairs of fire equipment and door entry systems.
- Maintenance and upgrade of TV aerials.

If any of these or other service charge costs are provided with your accommodation your gross rent will include a service charge. The service charge is calculated based on costs actually incurred during the previous twelve months and includes a provision for expected increases.

Reviewing your Rent

At the beginning of your tenancy we tell you how much your rent is in your tenancy agreement. We normally review your rent once a year in April. We will never change your rent without telling you at least two months in advance. We will provide a breakdown of how the service charge has been calculated with your annual rent increase letter.

What your Rent is Spent On

We are careful when deciding how to use the rent you pay. Your rent is for:

- Repairs to your home and planned maintenance such as replacing windows and putting in new kitchens.
- The housing management service we provide.

In Financial Difficulties?

It is important that you contact us as soon as possible if you are having any difficulty in paying your rent. We may be able to help you by providing advice and support with your financial issues. Don't be afraid to talk to us. Our staff will try to reach an agreement with you to clear the account. We can also refer you to independent advice agencies for specialist help. We will also try to make contact as often as possible. Our arrears procedure is:

- To write you on at least three occasions about rent arrears.
- To arrange a face-to-face meeting.
- To issue a Notice for not keeping to the tenancy agreement.
- To get a Court Order for Possession.
- To get an order from Court for a Warrant for Eviction.
- To take back the property.

Paying Rent Arrears

We will try to come to an affordable arrangement with you to pay off your debt, based on the information you tell us about your circumstances. It is very important that you keep to any arrangements that you have made with us, or contact us if you are struggling to meet your payments. You are also responsible for ensuring any information that is required by Housing Benefit or Universal Credit is given to them. If we cannot come to an arrangement to sort out the rent problem, you could be evicted from your home.

Good Reasons not to get into Arrears

Being in rent arrears can:

- Prevent you from transferring or being rehoused by Stori or any other social housing provider.
- Affect your ability to get credit in the future if you are subject to a court order.
- Result in you losing your home.

Did you Know?

- You are responsible for paying your rent even if you receive housing benefit or universal credit.
- Applying for housing benefit is your responsibility; not the responsibility of your landlord, but our staff will help you.
- You are responsible for the rent until the date your tenancy ends which may not necessarily be the date you leave the property.
- If you leave your property before your tenancy ends, are not living at the property or have not yet moved into a new property, housing benefit will not normally pay your rent.

Managing Money

Making sure that you manage your money is an important part of running your home. It can be difficult to juggle your finances to pay all the bills, especially if you are on a low income. Our support staff can help you with this.

Visit www.moneysavingexpert.com for free advice about ways to save money and get better deals with all your daily costs and out goings.

Budgeting

When it comes to budgeting, it often helps to write down all of your monthly outgoings to get a clear picture of your financial situation.

Budgeting helps you to:

- Keep a track of your money.
- Shows you where your money is going.
- See where you can make savings.
- Save a little money each week or month.

To make a budget

- Make a list of all your income from wages, benefits, tax credits, maintenance or any other source.
- Check you are getting all the benefits and tax credits you are entitled to.
- Make a list of all your outgoings.

You should consider saving some of your left over money, as this will give you a buffer to fall back on if you are faced with unexpected costs. It also lets you save for something you want rather than buy it on credit. You may find it easier and cheaper to pay most of your bills on direct debit or standing order. Please use the 'Useful Resources' section in the back of this handbook. If you require any further support and advice on budgeting, please speak to your support worker or housing officer.

Council Tax

We do not collect Council Tax. You should notify the Council immediately who will advise you how much is payable. You could qualify for help with Council Tax payments. Please visit www.gov.wales/council-tax for further information on Council Tax.

Credit Union

Credit Unions are cooperative organisations in your community who specialise in savings and loans from as little as £100. Please go to www.citizensadvice.org.uk or go to your local Citizens Advice Bureau to find more information on your nearest Credit Union.

Money Lenders

If you are worried about a money lender in your area or being threatened by a money lender you can report them to the Wales Illegal Money Lending Unit which operates a 24 hour confidential helpline on 0300 123 3311 or email wimlu-srs@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk.

Five Money Tips to Get You Started

1. Keep a spending diary for one month to get an accurate idea of how much you spend on different things. Make sure you keep a track of every penny.
2. Look at uswitch.com for cheaper energy bills but don't get locked into a deal which will become more expensive in the future!
3. If you have any spare money, put it into a credit union or savings account for when you want to spend it.
4. Use turn2us.org.uk to make sure you are getting the right benefits.
5. If you have debts or arrears, make sure you communicate with the companies or organisations you owe money to, or get someone to talk to them for you. Its best to keep them updated.

Housing Benefit

You could get Housing Benefit to help you pay your rent if you're on a low income. Housing Benefit can pay part or all of your rent. Housing Benefit can pay for part or all of your rent. How much you get depends on your income and circumstances and the level of housing related support you receive from us. You can apply for Housing Benefit whether you're unemployed or working. You may also be able to get help with your rent if your benefits stop.

If you are eligible benefit is paid directly to your rent account reducing the amount of rent you pay. The benefit amount varies according to circumstances and the rules set out by Government. If you haven't already done so and want to complete an application form and provide proof of identification, income and savings.

Universal Credit

Universal Credit is a benefit that combines some welfare and housing benefits. You can only make a claim online and when you make a claim then you must include the details of your rent in the claim. You might also need to attend an interview at your local Job Centre Plus. You'll get your first payment around six weeks after applying online if your application is successful.

Universal Credit will be paid monthly directly to you. You must then pay your rent from this money. If you do not wish to receive your rent payment direct, speak to us and we may be able to apply for an Alternative Payment Arrangement for you. Further details about Universal Credit can be found on www.gov.uk/universal-credit. If you need help making your claim online, call the helpline.

Universal Credit Helpline: 0800 328 9344 or 0800 328 5644

Changes of Circumstances (Housing Benefit or Universal Credit)

You must report all changes in circumstances immediately as you may receive too much or too little benefit. If you are paid too much benefit you will have to pay it back. Let your support worker or housing officer know of any changes in your circumstances immediately.

Behaviour and Conduct

You are responsible for your behaviour at all times on your premises and on your estate. You are responsible for your family, other people living at your property or any one visiting your property.

Nuisance or Anti-Social Behaviour

Problems caused by nuisance and disputes are often called anti-social behaviour. We rely on you to help us by ensuring that you do not create any form of nuisance to others but also by reporting any anti-social behaviour to us and other relevant agencies. Anti-social behaviour can be caused in many ways, for example:

- Noise nuisance.
- Verbal abuse/harassment/intimidation/threatening behaviour.
- Domestic abuse.
- Drugs/substance misuse/drug dealing.
- Vandalism.
- Litter/fly tipping/rubbish.
- Graffiti.
- Racist behaviour.
- Thoughtless parking.

The Police can be contacted on 101 for non emergencies. You can also contact your local Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) by going to www.ourbobby.com where you will find their contact details.

Please be Realistic

You may be annoyed with somebody's behaviour but that does not mean it is anti-social. For example; a one off party, children playing in the street, pets straying across the garden or household noise such as a baby crying or the flushing of toilets are not acts of anti-social behaviour.

Work with Us

We aim to deal with anti-social behaviour but we also need you to realise that anti-social behaviour is the responsibility of everyone who lives in the community and that working together can make for a long term solution.

Neighbours Causing a Nuisance

We would expect tenants to discuss their disagreement between themselves and come to an amicable solution to their problem before the Association begins an investigation. If you feel that you are unable to speak to your neighbour, you should report the issue to us as soon as possible so that we can work to resolve the situation. When you report an incident of anti-social behaviour it helps if you can provide as much information as possible so that we can work to resolve the situation.

When you report an incident of anti-social behaviour it helps if you can provide as much information as possible, such as dates, times and the people involved. In some cases we may ask you to keep a log of recurring incidents to help our investigation.

Anti-social behaviour can be reported in a number of ways. Tel: 01267 225555

Email: customerservices@storicymru.org.uk

www.storicymru.org.uk

Post or in person: Stori Housing Association, Head Office, Stephens Way, Pensarn, Carmarthen, SA31 2BG.

In emergency situations call 999.

Domestic Abuse

As a responsible landlord, the Association will not tolerate domestic abuse occurring in any of our stock. If you and your family are in immediate danger, you can phone the police on 999 and they will always respond. For further support please contact your support worker or housing officer.

Hate Crime

A hate crime is an offence where the offender has chosen a victim specifically because of the type of person they think they are or seen to be. This could be because of a person's:

- Disability
- Race
- Faith
- Gender identity
- Sexual orientation.

Hate crime could include property damage, threats, theft, verbal abuse, assault, harassment and online abuse. Welsh Government funds the National Hate Crime Report and Support Centre, where you can receive free and independent support from Victim Support Cymru.

Living in Flats

If you live in a flat, we ask you to consider the needs of your neighbours, just as we expect your neighbours to consider your needs. Please help us to take care of shared areas such as hallways and stairs, bin areas and gardens.

Please remember:

- To keep communal areas clean and tidy.
- Not to create too much noise, especially at night or early in the morning.
- Not to cause a nuisance to other neighbours.

- Not to keep dangerous substances.
- If your flat has a door entry system, please make sure the door is locked behind you.
- Please look after your keys and don't let others use your key.
- To report any faults or repairs to communal areas. For example, communal doors, door entry systems and communal lighting.

Behaviour Towards Staff

Staff are available to help and advise you. We are committed to customer care but we are also committed to ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of our staff. It is a condition of your tenancy that you do not threaten or abuse our staff physically or verbally. This includes bad language and being under the influence of drugs or alcohol when we are trying to support you.

Complaints and Customer Care

The Association strives to provide high quality services. When things go wrong we need to know so that we can take steps to put it right. We regard the handling of complaints as part of our policy of looking after you and treating you properly. We are committed to an equal opportunity policy and we want to make all our services available on a fair and equal basis.

The Association and its staff will:

- Be friendly and listen to you with respect.
- Apologise when things go wrong.
- Whenever we can we will meet with you in private.
- Give the same standard of service wherever you live.
- Aim to keep appointments. If we cannot do so we will keep you informed.

Complaints – What to Expect

- We aim to acknowledge complaints within five working days
- We aim to resolve a stage 1 complaint within fourteen working days
- We aim to resolve a stage 2 complaint within twenty eight working days
- If we do something wrong we will write to you and offer a solution.

A complaint is not:

- An initial request for a service.
- An appeal against a properly made decision.

Compensation

In certain circumstances, tenants may be eligible to receive compensation. This applies in cases where we have failed to maintain a satisfactory standard of service or facilities. If you are unable to use the whole of your accommodation due to a defect, or are deprived of certain essential services or facilities for an unacceptable length of time you may be entitled to compensation. These services include hot/cold water, electricity, lighting, cooking or sanitation. You are not entitled to compensation from the Association where the fault is the responsibility of your utility company.

Your tenancy agreement obliges you to allow access to staff and contractors of the association to inspect the property and carry out any repairs. If you breach these conditions you will not be eligible

for compensation for any resulting loss of facilities or services. If you owe us money e.g. rent arrears, court costs or other outstanding charges we will deduct any compensation due to you from this amount.

Compliments

We would also like to receive positive feedback when things go well.

- In person.
- By phone 01267 225555.
- In writing at Stori Head Office, Stephens Way, Pensarn, Carmarthen SA31 1BG.
- Email: customerservices@storicymu.org.uk

Copies of the complaint policy and complaint form can be found on our website.

Equality and Diversity

Our commitment to you:

We are committed to ensuring and promoting equality of opportunity for all irrespective of ability. Discrimination in any form will not be tolerated on any grounds including sex, race, ethnic origin, religion, marital status, sexual orientation, physical or learning disability, age gender or any other unjustifiable criteria.

We are committed to developing an organisational culture that values the contributions of each individual. We provide housing and housing services to reflect the diversity of the communities we serve.

Consultation and Involvement

We actively encourage tenant consultation and involvement. This involves telling you about anything that affects your home and giving you opportunities to express your views and opinions. We have developed a range of methods for you to get involved:

Regional Annual Events – Each year we review the approach we take towards involving tenants and the impact it has had. The event looks at what we have achieved and what is important in the coming year.

Tenants Participation Strategy – The strategy is an important part of developing the way we involve tenants and setting targets and an action plan.

Scheme and house meetings – Regular weekly meetings for the tenants of shared houses and housing schemes where you can discuss with us any concerns and ideas for where you live. The meetings are also used to review the tenant participation strategy.

Health Safety and Wellbeing

We have a legal duty of care to protect the Health, Safety and Wellbeing of all our tenants. In an emergency, we may have to force entry without advanced warning, for example to repair a burst pipe in an upstairs flat or to deal with a fire or a gas leak. If this happens, we will arrange for your property

to be made secure. If the locks have to be changed we will leave a note explaining how to get the new keys.

Asbestos

The Association takes the potential risks posed by asbestos very seriously, while recognising that if asbestos is not damaged or disturbed, it poses no risk to health. Everyone should take care when doing DIY around the home. If you come across any material you think may be asbestos, do not disturb it. The main danger to asbestos comes from breathing in the dust or fibres. Material containing asbestos are safe if left sealed and undisturbed and they should be left that way.

Anything you think might contain asbestos should be checked for damage. If you find damaged or broken material that may contain asbestos, then keep away from the area and ask your support worker for advice.

Fire Safety

General precautions:

- Do not use a chip pan as these are very dangerous and can cause a fire.
- Do not let children play with matches or lighters.
- Do not smoke in bed.
- Never leave a lit cigarette unattended.
- If your smoke detector breaks or no longer works, please let us know immediately.
- Keep fire doors free from obstruction and do not prop them open.
- Switch off electrical appliances at the end of the evening.
- Do not run flexes under carpets or rugs- an overheating wire may make the material catch fire.
- Do not overload sockets with adaptors. Use multi-plug socket blocks instead as these have additional protection in them to prevent overheating and blowing up.
- Always use the correctly rated fuse for an appliance.

Smoke Detectors

We will service your detectors and replace them when necessary but you are responsible for:

- Testing they are working correctly by weekly pressing the test button.
- Ensuring you and your family know what the alarm sounds like and what to do if they go off.
- Keeping the cover free from dust and dirt.

Gas

If you smell gas, check that you haven't left any gas appliances on, turn the supply off at the mains immediately and open a window. Do not switch on any lights or electrical items and do not strike a match as any sparks could cause an explosion. If you suspect a gas leak call 0800 111 999.

Electricity

If you receive an electric shock from any sockets or fittings turn the supply off at the mains and call us immediately.

If you have a complete power cut call your supplier and they can advise you what the problem is and give an estimate of when the power will be switched back on. If the electricity to a particular socket or series of sockets fails, this could be because the circuit breaker (trip switch) hasn't temporarily cut off the supply. To check this has happened:

- Unplug any appliance from the socket.
- Flick the trip switch back to on.
- Plug the appliances back in one by one.

If the power does not return or the switch keeps on "tripping" please contact us.

Water

If you have, a burst pipe turn off the supply at the stop cock and call us immediately.

Frost Precautions

When water freezes in cold weather, it can cause serious damage to water tanks, pipes, cisterns, sinks and basins as it expands. Sometimes this damage can only be seen when it thaws, and water pours through burst pipes or appliances. You should take the following precautions to protect your home and its contents during cold weather:

- Keep your home as warm as you can.
- Make sure that you know where to find the main water control tap or stop cock and how to turn it off. If it does not work properly, please report it to us.

If you have to leave your home empty for more than a week when the weather could there could be cold and there is a danger of a hard frost you should also:

- Drain all the water from the system by turning off the stop cock and running all the taps until the water stops. Make sure you do not leave running taps unattended in case the waste pipes are frozen and the water overflows.
- Flush the toilet and put salt in the pan.

When you return:

- Turn the stop cock on again and make sure the water flows properly from all the taps.
- Switch on your central heating. If you find that it does not heat up, turn off the system and notify us.

Water Hygiene

Keeping your water supply clean and free from contaminants, such as legionella bacteria, whilst very rare is still important. We recommend you take the following measures:

- Tell us if the boiler or hot water tanks are not working properly, particularly if the water is not coming out of the taps at a sufficient high temperature.
- Tell us if the cold water is still running warm after you have initially run off any water, which may have accumulated in the pipes.
- Tell us if there are problems, debris or discolouration in the water.
- Clean your shower head at least every six months, descale and disinfect it.
- If you only use your shower occasionally then flush it through by running for at least two minutes once a week. Be especially mindful if you go on holiday for more than a week.

Scalding Risk from Hot Water Systems.

The typical warning signs to look for when an immersion heater thermostat has failed are:

- Excessively hot water coming out of the hot water taps.
- Excessive noise or bubbling coming from the hot water taps.
- Hot water coming out of the cold water taps (because some storage systems also feed cold water into bathrooms).
- Steam and moisture in the roof space.

If you notice any of the above signs, please turn the immersion heater switch off and contact us immediately.

Our Insurance

Our insurance policy covers the structure of the property. We are also insured against injury and damage caused by our own negligence. If you feel you have a claim against us or our contractors, you must write to us stating why you are making a claim, the damage caused and the cost involved. We will pass it to our insurers for a decision.

Your Own Insurance

It is very important you arrange your own insurance to cover the contents of your home. The cost can be very low in comparison with the cost of replacing your contents. Most insurances cover fire, flood and theft. You should seek independent advice on the best policy to suit your needs.

Security

- Remember to take security measures by ensuring doors are locked and windows shut whenever you go out.
- Don't leave money or valuables in view.
- Ensure communal entrance doors are shut after use, never prop doors open.
- Don't let anyone in through a communal door. Tenants will have a key and their visitors should contact them directly.

For more information and advice on security of your home you can contact the Crime Prevention Officer on 101.

Energy Advice

When starting a tenancy you will be given an Energy Performance Certificate. This provides details about how energy efficient your home is, the likely running costs for heating and lighting and what other measures could be installed to make it more efficient. The certificate is valid for ten years. To view the Energy Performance Certificate for your home you can visit www.epcregister.com.

Top Tips

- Make sure you are using energy saving light bulbs.
- Turning down your thermostat by one degree can cut your fuel costs by 10%.
- Close your curtains at dusk to keep heat in.

- Wait until you have a full load before using the washing machine.
- Turn lights and other electrical items off when leaving a room.
- Don't leave the fridge door open for longer than necessary
- Don't leave your TV on 'standby'.
- Only boil the water you need in the kettle.
- Check with other energy suppliers whether you can get a better deal.

Ending Your Tenancy

The tenancy agreement that you signed when you were given the keys to the property is a legal contract, and all tenants must be given the keys to the property is a legal contract, and all tenants must give at least four weeks written notice to terminate their tenancy. You must provide your forwarding address, contact telephone number, email address, and the reason for your move. The Notice period will only begin from the date on which we receive your notice.

What Happens Once I Have Given Written Notice

When we have received your notice, your support worker or housing officer will:

- Confirm when the last date of your tenancy will be.
- Obtain any details from you that are outstanding.
- Arrange a convenient time to arrange an inspection of the property – it might be during your Notice period, so we would appreciate it if you could allow us access for the inspection.
- Let you know how much rent will need to be paid up to the end of the tenancy.

What Should I Do After I Have Terminated My Tenancy?

- Pay the rent that is due up until the end of the tenancy. This is the case regardless of whether or not you are still leaving there. You must pay off arrears, including rechargeable repairs, and rent which is due before you go.
- Apply for a dual award of Housing Benefit – If you receive Housing Benefit and you do not intend to live in the property right up until the last day of your tenancy, you will need to apply for a dual award of Housing Benefit so that they make payments on your old and new home. This type of award might not be granted in all cases. Your support worker can help you with this.
- Arrange with Royal Mail for your post to be redirected to your new address.
- Read your meters and inform your energy and water suppliers of the readings and the date of the last day of your tenancy.
- Label your keys and return them to your support worker or housing officer.

How Should I Leave My Property

- Empty – If you leave behind any belongings or rubbish, we will charge you for the disposal of it. The cost of this can be high as it involves contractor time, vehicle costs and dumping charges. Carpets and curtains may only be left with prior permission.
- Clean, tidy and good decorative order. If we are required to carry out any cleaning or decorative works on your property after you have left, we will recharge these works to you.
- Lawns and hedges must be cut and overgrown gardens cleared.

- Unauthorised or incomplete improvement works to the property or garden must be completed and agreed in writing before you leave.
- You will be charged for any damage to the property that is not due to “fair wear and tear” i.e. normal day to day use. If you are aware of any repairs that might be needed to your home please get these fixed before you leave.
- Safe and Secure – you must ensure all windows and doors are locked.

