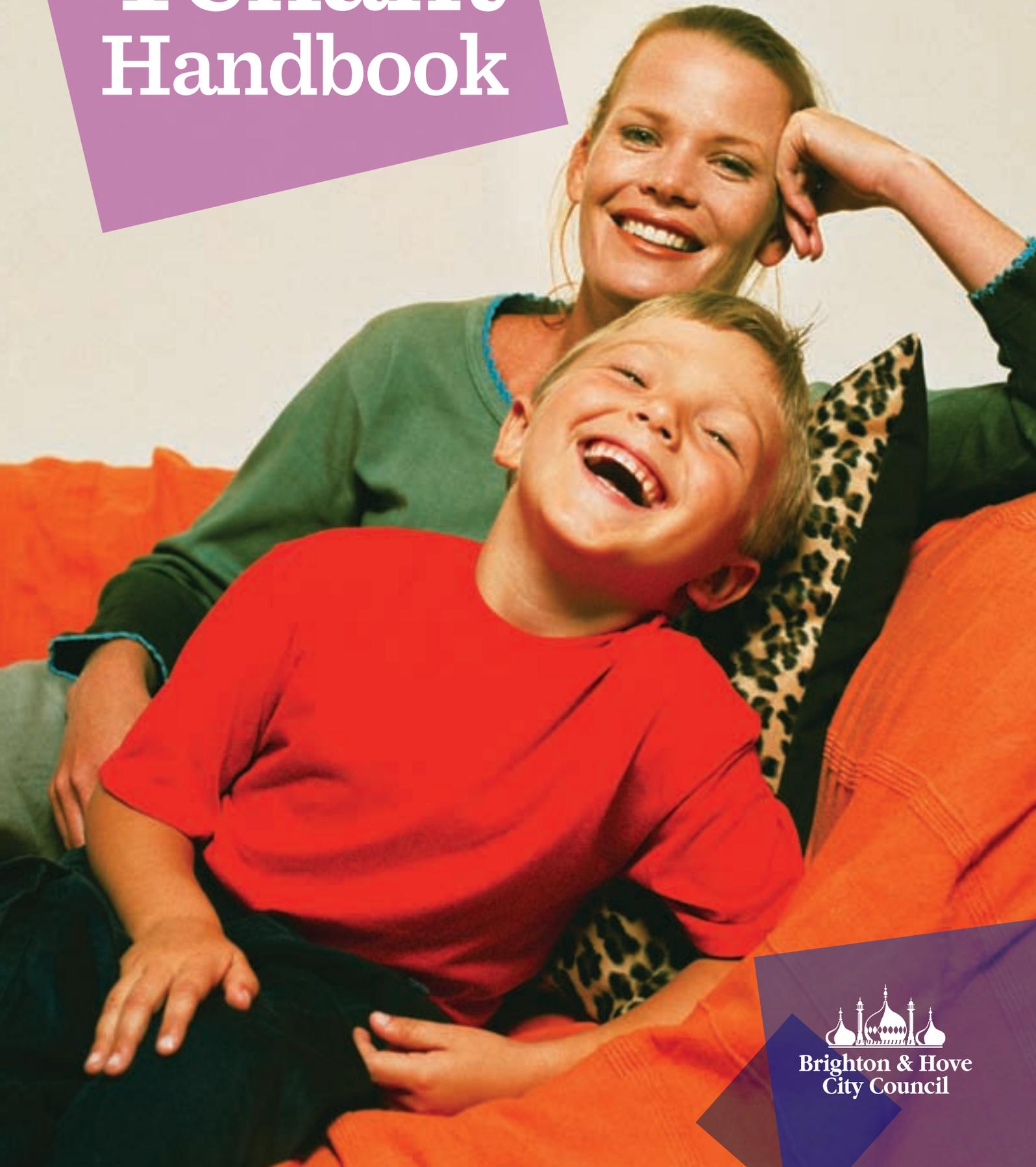


# Tenant Handbook

Your guide to being a tenant  
of Brighton & Hove City Council



Brighton & Hove  
City Council



# Welcome

This is your tenant handbook. It has been put together by elected tenant representatives and staff to give you information and guidance on your tenancy with Brighton & Hove City Council.

The handbook explains your rights and your responsibilities, as well as the council's responsibilities as your landlord. It also gives details of the housing services the council provides for you.

This handbook is only a guide to our services and aims to answer the general queries you may have about your home and tenancy.

Over time, our services and policies may change and not be reflected here, but we will keep you up to date through our website ([www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/council-housing](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/council-housing)) and the Homing In newsletter.

Please let us know if you or a member of your household would like any part of the book explained, or put on CD or tape, or produced in large print. If you need to have any of our documents translated, please contact your housing office.

We would like to express our thanks to the tenant representatives involved for all the hard work they put into compiling this handbook. They spent many hours making sure it was easy to read and understand and as useful as possible to you.

# Contents

## Customer care

Contacting us	4
Our priorities	4
Customer Service Standards	4
Service Standards	4
Complaints	4
Equalities	5
Data Protection	5
Freedom of information	6

## Your rights

Types of tenancies	8
Rights	9

## Resident involvement

Resident involvement in Brighton & Hove	12
How you can get involved	12
Estate Development Budget	13

## Your rent & other charges

How to pay your rent	16
What to do if you have rent arrears	17
The support we can provide	18

## Repairs & improvements

Tenant and landlord responsibilities	20
Reporting a repair	20
Tenant alterations and improvements	21
Rechargeable repairs	22
Looking after your home	23
Keeping safe in your home	24
Fire safety	25

## Living in your home

Moving in	28
Going away from your home	28
Running a business from your home	29
Keeping your estates clean and tidy	29
Sustainability and energy efficiency	30
Pest control	30

## Being a good neighbour

Being a good neighbour	32
Neighbourhood Agreements	32
Anti-social behaviour	32
Harassment	34
Violence	35
Pets and animals	36
Communal areas	37
Parking	37
Gardens	38

## Ending your tenancy

Ending your tenancy	40
Ending a tenancy following the death of a tenant	40
Moving options	41

## Supporting independence

Sheltered housing service	44
Tenancy support	44
Adaptations	45
Help with gardening & decorating	45

## Useful contacts & index

Useful contacts	48
Index	50

# 1

# Customer care



## Contacting us

You can contact us in a number of ways including through our offices, by telephone, by letter, email or through the council's website.

Details of our housing offices, Repairs Helpdesk and other useful telephone numbers are in the useful contacts section at the back of this handbook. Useful email and website addresses have also been included throughout the handbook.

Our housing offices have a number of facilities, including a free telephone to put you in touch with other council services and internet access to browse the council's website. All housing offices have private interview rooms, are wheelchair accessible and have hearing loops available.

Brighton & Hove City Council's website address is [www.brighton-hove.gov.uk](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk). You will find basic information and contact details for all the council services there, including a section on housing. If you are a regular internet user you will find the website contains a lot of the information you need and provides a way of contacting services, councillors and officers about issues that affect you and your neighbourhood. Free internet access is also available in the city's libraries.

## Our priorities

We are committed to improving our service. Our plan for managing and maintaining council housing has been developed with residents, and has the overall objective of achieving excellent housing management services for council tenants and leaseholders in Brighton & Hove. Our priorities are to:

- improve services to an excellent standard, with residents at the heart of everything we do
- improve the quality and sustainability of our homes and neighbourhoods
- deliver value for money services and maintain a sustainable 30 year business plan
- make best use of our housing stock to address housing need
- ensure that social housing provides a platform for reducing inequality and creating opportunity

## Customer Service Standards

We aim to deliver excellent customer service by putting our customers at the centre of everything we do and recognising the diverse needs of the communities they belong to.

We have developed a customer charter which explains what you can expect from Brighton & Hove City Council.

For a copy of our standards, please contact your housing office or go to [www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/council-housing](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/council-housing)

## Service Standards

Our service standards ensure that everyone receives the same standard of service and allow us to measure our performance, so that we can keep improving the services we deliver to you. Each team has worked with residents to develop service standards for their area of work to make sure that you receive a consistently high quality service from us. Our performance against these standards can be seen in the performance reports available on our website.

For copies of our service charters, please contact your housing office or go to [www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/council-housing](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/council-housing)

## Complaints

### Who do I contact if I wish to raise an issue?

We always try to get things right first time but appreciate that this doesn't always happen. As a first step, it is often best to contact the person who dealt with your enquiry. They will know most about the matter and it may be possible to sort out the problem straight away. If you are not satisfied with our first response, we have a complaints procedure you can follow.

### Complaints procedure

Our complaints procedure helps us make sure your complaint is handled efficiently and in a fair way. Our 'Complaints, Comments & Compliments' booklet explains the procedure and includes a complaints form you can complete. You can hand it in or post it free of

charge, or you can complete an on-line form at [www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/complaints](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/complaints).

You can also make your complaint by telephone or authorise someone to act on your behalf.

Copies of the 'Complaints, Comments & Compliments' booklet are available from your housing office, the council's Complaints Team, or from the council website.

### **What action can I expect?**

If, following an investigation, we find that we are in the wrong, we will apologise in writing and will do everything we can to put things right. We will also take action to make sure the same problem does not happen again to you or any other tenant. If your complaint is about one of our policies, we may decide to review the policy to see whether changes are needed.

### **Who else can I approach?**

You can contact your local councillor or Member of Parliament, who can talk to us on your behalf about the issues causing you concern.

If you have a complaint against Brighton & Hove City Council and have been through our formal complaints process but are not satisfied, you can contact the Local Government Ombudsman. The ombudsman is an independent organisation which may investigate the matter further. See the useful contacts section for details.

### **When we get it right**

We would also like to know if you are pleased with us. Our staff take pride in their work, so it means a lot to us when someone tells us that we got it right. This helps us to find out which parts of our service work well.

## **Equalities**

We aim to make sure that our services are relevant, responsive and sensitive to the needs of our existing and future customers, and that all sections of the community have equal access to those services. We test our services and policies to make sure we are meeting residents' needs.

Brighton & Hove City Council has an equalities and inclusion policy to ensure all tenants are treated fairly and have access to our housing services regardless of race, colour, gender, nationality, religion, age, mental illness, disability, sexuality or for any other reason. Go to [www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/equalities](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/equalities) for further information.

We can provide information in a range of formats including audio tape, CD, large print and Braille. We can also translate into different languages or arrange interpreters. Please contact your housing office to discuss your individual needs.

## **Data Protection**

The information we hold about you will be used for housing management purposes. We may use it for other council purposes where the law permits us. We may also share this information with other bodies who administer public funds to prevent or detect crime and to protect public funds in other ways as permitted by law. The council is registered under the Data Protection Act 1998 for these purposes. We will not disclose information about you to anyone, unless the law permits us to.

We adhere to the Data Protection Act 1998 to ensure that the information we hold about you is secure. The information you provide will be treated confidentially at all times. Security safeguards apply to both manual and computerised held data and only relevant staff can access your information.

For further information please contact the council's Data Protection Officer, Hove Town Hall, Norton Road, Hove, BN3 4AH or call 01273 291207.

## Freedom of information

The law gives you a right to know or have access to certain information held by public authorities such as councils. This right is set out in the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

You can ask for information by emailing [freedomofinformation@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:freedomofinformation@brighton-hove.gov.uk) or write to: Freedom of Information Team, Hove Town Hall, Norton Road, Hove, BN3 4AH.

For further information on the act, please call the team on 01273 291207.

# 2

Your  
rights

## Your rights



This section gives a brief description of your main rights as set out in housing laws. For more detailed information please speak to a member of staff at your housing office.

## Types of tenancies

### Introductory tenancies

The introductory tenancy is for a trial period of one year. During that time, tenants must show that they are responsible enough to keep their home and can keep to the conditions set out in the tenancy agreement. If you break any of these conditions, we can extend the introductory period or take steps to end your tenancy. Introductory tenancies can be ended more easily than secure tenancies. We will write to you to confirm the situation.

As an introductory tenant you have fewer legal rights than a secure tenant. The differences are:

- you cannot assign your tenancy by mutual exchange
- you do not have the right to buy your home
- you cannot take in lodgers or sublet any part of your home
- you cannot use your home for business purposes
- you cannot make any alterations to your property (other than decorating, laying carpet and minor improvements such as putting up shelves)

### Secure tenancies

If you become a secure tenant, you get the full legal rights of a council tenant. This means you keep your home for as long as you choose - as long as you keep to the conditions set out in your tenancy agreement.

We can only take your home away from you if you give us good reason to do so, for example if you do not pay your rent, you harass other people, or if there is a legal ground for possession under the Housing Act 1985, the Housing Act 1996 or any other law.

### Demoted tenancies

If you do not keep to the conditions of your secure tenancy or you or your visitors behave anti-socially, we may apply to the court to remove

some of your rights as a secure tenant. You will then have a demoted tenancy. If you continue to break the conditions of your demoted tenancy, we can apply to the courts to evict you.

A demoted tenant loses a number of tenancy rights, including the right to buy, the right to exchange your home, the right to take in lodgers and the right to sublet part of your home. A demoted tenancy lasts for one year. If we are satisfied with your behaviour during that time, you will go back to a secure tenancy.

### Joint tenancies

As long as there are no previous rent arrears or breaches of the tenancy, we will normally grant joint tenancies to new tenants applying jointly who are:

- married couples or civil partners
- partners who have lived together for 12 months or more where both partners are over 18 years of age
- partners with a child or children

However, we are not able to accept applications for joint tenancies from existing sole tenants unless you can establish exceptional circumstances, which will need to be assessed.

If you have a joint tenancy, you are both responsible for the whole tenancy. If there are rent arrears or another condition of the tenancy is broken, either of the tenants can be held responsible. A joint tenancy can be ended if either person serves us a valid termination notice.

### Overcrowding

Every home has a maximum number of occupants according to the floor area of the living space (bedrooms and living rooms). These numbers are shown on your tenancy agreement or you can ask at your housing office.

If the number of people living in your home is more than the permitted number, the home is legally overcrowded. Young children are calculated differently from adults and older children for overcrowding purposes.

The rules are as follows:

- people aged 10 years or over count as one

- children aged between one and 10 count as a half
- babies under one are not counted

It is the tenant's responsibility to make sure the home is not overcrowded. You should contact your housing office if your home is likely to become overcrowded.

## Rights

### The right to live in your home

You have the right, as a tenant, to live in the property unless there is a legal reason for us to take action against you to recover possession of the property. For example, this might happen if:

- you break any conditions of the tenancy agreement. We will always try to sort out matters before taking legal action but, if you continue to break your tenancy agreement, we may have no option but to take possession of your home
- you abandon your home or live permanently at another address
- you have given false or fraudulent information to get the tenancy
- we need to carry out redevelopment or major repairs to the property, which we can not do unless you move out
- there is a legal ground for possession under the Housing Act 1985, the Housing Act 1996 or any other law

### The right of succession

Tenants may have the right for their spouse, partner or family member to take over their tenancy when they die - this is called succession. Please see 'ending your tenancy' section for further information. A succession can only take place once.

### The right of assignment

In certain circumstances you can transfer your tenancy to another family member, but this can only be to someone qualified to succeed to your tenancy under the right of succession. If you want to pass your tenancy on, please contact your housing office for further advice.

### The right to exchange (secure tenants only)

You have the right to mutually exchange your property with another council or housing association tenant (subject to certain conditions). See the 'ending your tenancy' section for further details.

### The right to sublet part of your home (secure tenants only)

You have the right to take in a sub tenant, but there are rules you must follow. You must not:

- sublet without our written permission
- sublet the whole of your property and move elsewhere
- create a situation of overcrowding

Please note that:

- it may affect any benefit entitlement
- you are responsible for the behaviour of people living with you
- if you decide you want them to leave, you will need to arrange it yourself

If you sublet the whole of the property, you will be in breach of your tenancy agreement and we will take action to end your tenancy by serving you with a 'Notice to Quit'.

If you suspect a property has been sublet, please report it to your housing office so we can investigate further. You can also e-mail [anti-fraud@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:anti-fraud@brighton-hove.gov.uk) or call 01273 291700.

### The right to take in lodgers (secure tenants only)

You have the right to take in a lodger but you must not create a situation of overcrowding.

Please note that:

- it may affect any benefit entitlement
- you are responsible for the behaviour of people living with you
- if you decide you want them to leave, you will need to arrange it yourself

### The right to buy (secure tenants only)

If you have been a secure tenant with us, or another public sector landlord for at least five

years (or two years if your tenancy started before 18 January 2005), you can apply to buy your home unless it's in a sheltered scheme suitable for older people or has been specifically adapted for someone with a disability. If you are interested in buying your home, please contact the Right to Buy & Leasehold Team for further information on qualifying criteria on 01273 293074 or [rtbleasehold@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:rtbleasehold@brighton-hove.gov.uk)

### **The right to be consulted and changes to your tenancy agreement**

We believe that it is important that you are involved in housing management decisions that affect you. We will consult you about any changes to our policy or practice that may substantially change the service we provide to you, your home and your neighbourhood.

Except for changes to rent and any other charges, the terms of your tenancy agreement can only be changed if we give you written notice. We will write to tell you about any changes we are proposing and give you the opportunity to comment. We will take your views into consideration before agreeing any changes and give you at least four weeks notice before the change takes place. The tenancy may also be changed where we both agree.

### **The right to manage**

You have the right to take over the management of your own home. This right can be taken by a group of tenants forming a Tenant Management Organisation (TMO) in a particular block or estate. The TMO would take on the responsibility for providing the housing services the council normally supplies, such as collecting the rents and organising repairs and maintenance.

All tenants in the block or estate must be consulted and those proposing to take over the management must go through competency tests. Support from outside agencies is available to help with this process.

### **The right to repair**

The right to repair is a scheme to make sure that small, urgent repairs (up to a value of £250) that

might affect your health, safety or security, are done quickly and easily. For example:

- loss of electricity
- a tap which cannot be turned
- a blocked sink, bath or basin

The types of repair we need to complete under the right to repair, and the response times you can expect from us are set by law. See the 'Guide to Repairs' for more information.

### **The right to improve your home (secure tenants only)**

You must get permission in writing from us before you start any work. Please note that you will be recharged for any damage caused to the property or if we have to put right any sub-standard work.

### **The right to compensation for improvements**

This scheme gives tenants moving out of their homes the right to claim compensation for certain authorised improvements they have made to properties. For further details on qualifying improvements, please contact your housing office.

### **The right to information**

We keep details about you and your family that are relevant for the management of your tenancy. You have the right to see the information we hold about you and your family. If you wish to see this information, please contact the council's Data Protection Officer on 01273 291207.

We can arrange an appointment for you to come to our offices to view the information. You cannot take the information away with you, but we can arrange to take copies of it for you at a reasonable charge. We cannot show you information that includes details of other people.

If you think the information we have is not correct, you can ask us to change or remove it. If we do not accept that the information is wrong, we will attach a note to your file recording your view and our decision not to alter it.

# 3

## Resident involvement

Resident  
involvement



The council has a long standing commitment to working closely with tenants. This commitment has been formalised in the Tenant Participation Compact - a written agreement developed by tenants and the council that sets out how residents will be involved in strategic and local housing decisions.

## How can I get involved?

Your opinions about your home and neighbourhood are very important to us, and we want to know your views about the service you receive. Your involvement helps us make sure our service to you is as good as it can be.

There are many different ways you can have your say. You can get involved by giving as much or as little time as you are able to. We have developed a variety of options to make sure there's something to suit everyone. By working together we can improve the service for everyone.

## What can I get involved with?

### Individual residents

#### Telling us what you think

You can raise issues, problems and ideas directly with our services. Contact details for our services are in our useful contacts section at the back of this handbook.

#### Estate inspections

We inspect all our estates quarterly to make sure they are clean and tidy, and identify work or improvements that need to be done. We encourage residents to take part in these inspections alongside housing staff and local councillors so you can tell us about the issues affecting your neighbourhood.

#### Taking part in surveys and consultations

These surveys may be done face-to-face, over the phone or by post or e-mail. We will promote these consultations and surveys in Homing In, on our website and at our housing offices.

### Mystery shopping

Resident mystery shoppers make unannounced visits or telephone calls and report back on the service they receive. Training is provided to help residents do this. Mystery shopping helps us to check how well we deal with our customers so we can improve our services to all residents.

### Neighbourhood agreements

Neighbourhood agreements are voluntary schemes where landlords, residents and other partners aim to agree standards and plans for delivering services in a particular area. If we are setting up a neighbourhood agreement in your area, we will let you know and give you the opportunity to get involved. If you think your area needs a neighbourhood agreement, let us know so we can start talking to residents about local issues.

### Local offers

You can help us to develop and monitor local standards for our services to ensure we are delivering quality, relevant services that reflect the priorities of local communities.

### At a local level

#### Tenant and resident associations

You can join your local association or set one up if there is not one in your area. Each association aims to represent the views of the residents within a defined area, or block of flats, and is open to everyone living there. Your association can also raise issues affecting you and your neighbourhood on your behalf. If there isn't a tenant or resident association in your area, we can help you start one by providing financial support and guidance.

#### Joining a Local Action Team

Local Action Teams consist of people who come together alongside the Neighbourhood Policing Teams and other public agencies to tackle crime and disorder in their area. These groups have a strong commitment to resolving problems at a local level.

## At area level

### Area Panels

These are panels of tenant and resident association representatives in each of the council's four housing management areas who meet regularly to discuss service, performance and neighbourhood issues.

## At a citywide level

### Citywide interest and monitoring groups

We have groups that meet several times a year to discuss particular subjects or services. Our current groups are:

- Tenant Compact Monitoring Group
- Repairs & Maintenance Monitoring Group
- Car Parks & Garages Monitoring Group
- Housing Income Management Monitoring Group
- Estates Service Monitoring Group
- Sheltered Housing Action Group
- High Rise Action Group
- Leaseholder Action Group
- Tenant Disability Network
- Asset Management Panel
- Homing In Editorial Board

### Working groups and focus groups

These are special working groups set up to deal with a particular aspect of the housing service, such as reviewing our Estates Service. They are task based groups set up for a short time until the aims have been achieved. The working groups can make recommendations for changes to the service or policies through our committees and are set up as and when required.

### The City Assembly

Representatives from all associations across the city come together to debate matters concerning tenants and leaseholders citywide. These meetings are held twice a year and all tenants and leaseholders are welcome to take part in the debates. Dates of the meetings are promoted in Homing In and on our website.

## Housing Management Consultative Committee

This is the main consultative body for housing management prior to the council's Cabinet and decision making process. Area Panels send elected resident representatives but there is a public gallery if you wish to observe. Meetings are held several times a year. Details are on the council's website or you can contact your housing office.

A chart showing our resident involvement structure is shown on the following page.

## Breaking down barriers

We don't want any barriers to stop you being involved. That's why we offer to cover travel costs and can reimburse you for childcare or care for any other dependants. For further details, contact your Community Participation Officer at your housing office.

We aim to make sure that all venues we use have disabled access and facilities. We can provide British Sign Language signers and foreign language interpreters on request.

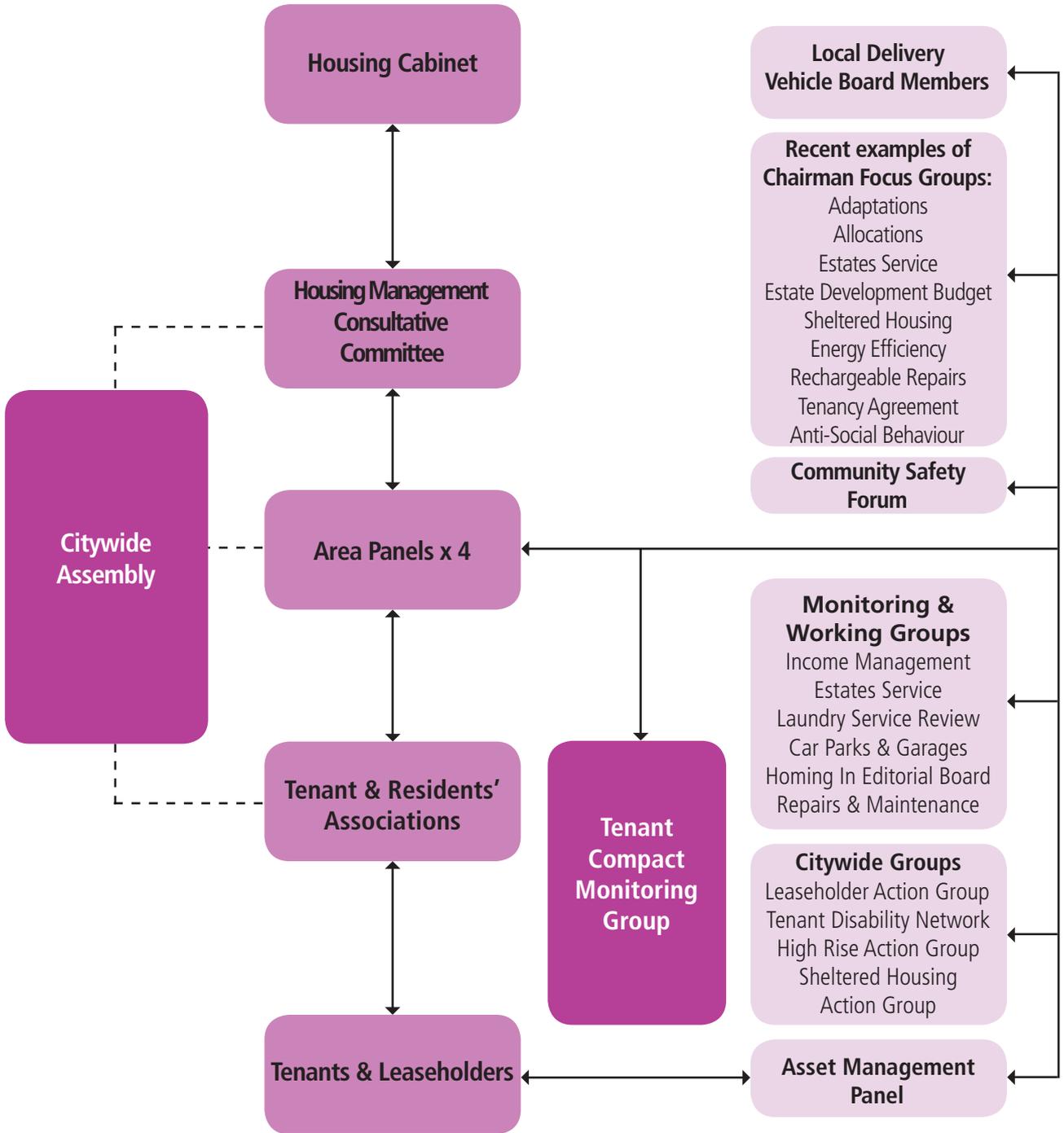
## Who should I contact?

Contact your housing office to discuss how you would like to get involved. Each neighbourhood also has its own Community Participation Officer who can provide support and advice to resident groups. They can tell you about activities and the dates of any meetings.

## Estate Development Budget

The Estate Development Budget is set up to allow tenant and resident associations to put forward bids for improvements on their estate and in their neighbourhood - this can range from installing a bench to putting in extra lighting. Bids are reviewed and voted on annually at area panel meetings. If you would like to know about any work due in your area, please contact the Repairs Helpdesk.

Brighton & Hove's formal resident involvement structure



# 4

## Your rent & other charges

Your rent & other charges



## What is included in my rent?

Your rent is a weekly charge for the property you live in, and reflects the size and type of property you have. You may also pay additional charges for any extra services you receive. These might include:

- communal heating
- cleaning communal areas, such as in blocks of flats
- grounds maintenance, such as grass cutting areas surrounding blocks of flats
- laundry charge for sheltered housing

If you live in a block with services such as these, charges are divided proportionately among all residents and the proportion is added to your rent account.

Tenants in sheltered housing also pay a support charge. This charge pays for the housing-related support provided by the sheltered service, including providing the Scheme Manager and the community alarm service.

Garages and parking spaces are managed by our Car Parks & Garages Team. Please contact the team on 01273 296646 for further information.

## When is my rent due?

Your rent is due on a Monday every week and must be paid on or before the date it is due. Most tenants pay their rent weekly, but it may be more convenient for you to pay fortnightly or monthly. If you do wish to pay at longer intervals, rent must be paid in advance. Please contact the Housing Income Management Team on 01273 293224 if you want to discuss this.

We will send you a statement of your rent account every three months. When you receive your statement, please contact us if you are not clear about any of the items or charges shown.

It is vital for us to collect the rent due every week in order to maintain and improve services to tenants. If your rent account falls into arrears, you are in breach of your tenancy agreement and could lose your home.

## Can my rent change?

The amount of rent you pay is reviewed at the beginning of each year. Your rent is based on a formula that takes into account the value of your home and other factors set out by the government. Any change in your rent will normally start in April and we will advise you at least four weeks before your rent changes.

## How do I pay my rent?

### At any post office or PayPoint outlet

You can pay at any post office or PayPoint outlet free of charge using your payment card. Please contact the Rent Accounting Section to order a payment card on 01273 293065. For a list of all of the payment outlets in Brighton & Hove, please contact your housing office. If you use a payment card to pay your rent, please make sure that you always get a payment receipt for your records.

### Pay on-line

You can pay your rent online through our secure server if you have a debit card. Go to [www.brighton-hove.gov.uk](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk) and follow the 'pay on-line' link. Select 'housing rents' from the drop down menu and follow the instructions to make your payment. If you do not have internet access at home we have computers available for you at the housing offices. All libraries in Brighton & Hove also provide free internet access.

### Direct Debit

This is the easiest way to pay. Once a direct debit is set up you don't have to think about paying your rent again, as we notify you of any changes and arrange to change the payment with your bank. It costs the council less to collect rent this way and any money we save means there is more available to help improve the services you receive. It costs nothing to set up and can be cancelled at any time by contacting your bank or building society.

For further information, pick up a leaflet from your housing office or contact the Rent Accounting Section on 01273 293065.

**Standing Order**

Paying by standing order is another simple way to pay your rent if you have a bank or building society account. You need to fill in a form at the bank or building society, and they then make your payments automatically. With a standing order you have to tell your bank or building society to change the amount that is paid if your rent changes. For further information, contact the Rent Accounting Section on 01273 293065.

**By telephone**

You can use a debit card to pay your rent by telephone 24 hours a day with our automated payment service on 01273 291908. You will need a debit card and your rent account reference number. The Housing Income Management Team can also take telephone payments from 8.30am – 6.30pm Monday to Thursday and from 9am – 5pm on Friday.

**By post**

Cheques or postal orders can be sent to your housing office, but please make sure you write your rent reference number on the back of the cheque. Please allow time for your cheques to clear. Never send cash through the post.

**At a housing office**

You can pay your rent in person at any housing office, by cash, cheque or debit card. Our cashiers can also take telephone payments during normal working hours.

**Council employees**

If you work for Brighton & Hove City Council, you can also pay directly from your wages. Please contact the Rent Accounting Section on 01273 293065 for further information.

**What if I am finding it difficult to pay my rent?**

Your tenancy agreement states that 'you must pay your rent and other charges on or before the date it is due'. The rent and other charges are due on Monday every week.

If you have difficulty paying your rent, contact the Housing Income Management Team as soon as possible on 01273 293224. We are here to help and the earlier you contact us the easier it will be to help you.

If you do get into arrears, the Housing Income Management Team will carry out a financial assessment and agree an affordable repayment plan with you. They can also refer you to specialist advisors to make sure you are getting all the benefits you are entitled to, or if you need help to cope with high levels of debt.

**What should I do if I have rent arrears?**

If you have arrears on your rent account you can take one of the following steps:

- Where possible make a one-off payment to clear your arrears in full.
- Agree a repayment plan to clear your arrears within a reasonable time. If you have agreed a repayment plan and have difficulty making a payment, contact the Housing Income Management Team immediately.
- Seek independent advice about your debts – the Citizens Advice Bureau on 0845 120 3710 can help.
- Contact the Housing Income Management Team or your housing office if you think you may be entitled to help with paying your rent - they can advise you and help you to make a housing benefit claim.

Remember the Housing Income Management Team is there to help you so please get in contact if you are experiencing difficulties. Contact them on 01273 293224.

**What will happen if I do not clear my rent arrears?**

If you don't pay your rent and fail to get in touch with us, we will make every attempt to contact you and help with any difficulties that might be stopping you making a payment. However, if you do not work with us and reduce your arrears, we will serve you with a 'Notice

of Seeking Possession'. This is the first stage of legal proceedings, which may result in you losing your home.

We will continue to try to help, but if you do not pay your rent, or if you continually fail to keep to a repayment plan to clear any arrears, you may end up being evicted from your home. If it does become necessary to refer your case to court, you will be responsible for paying all the court costs. These are currently several hundred pounds.

If you have rent arrears, you will not normally be allowed to carry out a transfer. You may also be excluded from our discretionary decoration and gardening schemes and will not be able to rent a parking space or garage.

Garages and parking spaces are on seven day licence agreements. If you are in arrears we will inform you. If the arrears are not cleared, we will end your licence.

## What happens about the rent if I am a joint tenant and one of us leaves?

If you have a joint tenancy, you are both responsible for the tenancy and for paying the rent. If one of you leaves, the rent must still be paid. If one tenant is planning to leave the property, please contact your housing office to discuss the options available to you.

## Am I eligible for housing or council tax benefit?

If you receive other welfare benefits or are on a low income and have savings below the amount advised by the Benefits Service, you may be entitled to housing benefit (rent rebate). If you are entitled, the amount you receive will depend on your income and household, and may cover all or part of your weekly rent. Housing benefit does not cover water rates, heating charges or garage and car parking charges.

You can claim housing benefit if you are responsible for paying the rent. It is important to claim as soon as you think you may be entitled,

as it is only payable from the date you make your claim. When you claim, you must respond to any requests for documents within the time stated.

If you do get housing or council tax benefit and your circumstances change (someone moves in with you or your income changes for example), you must tell the Benefits Service straightaway. Please refer to the useful contacts section.

## Am I eligible for any help with my support charge?

If you receive any amount of housing benefit, you will be entitled to maximum help with your support charge (payable by sheltered housing tenants). You may also get help with this charge if you do not receive housing benefit, but you must complete a Fairer Charge Assessment form to find out if you qualify. Contact the Sheltered Housing Service on 01273 293255 for an application form and further advice.

## What other financial help can you provide?

We are committed to making sure that you have access to appropriate financial products and services so that you can make informed decisions about your circumstances. This ranges from where you can go to get the best money advice to information about maximising your income and minimising your financial outgoings.

The Housing Income Management Team can give you information about:

- setting up a bank account to pay rent by direct debit
- making claims for housing and council tax benefit
- other welfare benefits and how to claim
- independent financial and legal advice
- low cost home contents insurance
- low cost energy companies and energy efficiency
- joining the credit union (a not-for-profit savings and loans co-operative)

# 5

## Repairs & improvements

Repairs & improvements



We have included some key information on the repairs service - for full information, including a list of council and tenant responsibilities, please see the Guide to Repairs.

## What repairs are the council responsible for?

By law, the council has an obligation to look after the structure of your home. Repairs must be carried out to make sure that fixtures and fittings for water, sanitation, gas and electricity are safe and in working order. The council must also maintain any equipment it has installed to provide hot water and heating, and maintain communal facilities such as lifts and door entry phones.

## Servicing of gas appliances

**By law, it is essential that we service all gas appliances installed by us once a year** - this could save your life. If they are in a poor condition, they can produce carbon monoxide gas which doesn't smell and can't be seen, but can kill.

One of our gas contractors will contact you directly to make an appointment to service your gas appliances and if they cannot contact you by telephone, they will send a letter.

You must allow our contractors access to your home to carry out this work. It is a condition of your tenancy agreement and, if you refuse, we will take legal action against you to gain access. If we do this, we will seek to recover any legal costs from you.

### Gas leaks

If you think there is a gas leak in your home, the suggested steps to follow are:

- ring the National Grid on 0800 111 999
- open the windows to get rid of the gas
- turn off the gas mains
- do not turn electric switches on or off
- do not smoke
- do not use matches or other naked flames
- report the problem to the Repairs Helpdesk

## What repairs am I responsible for?

As a tenant you are responsible for all fixtures and fittings (apart from those mentioned previously or provided by the council), such as curtain rails, light bulbs and sink plugs. You are also responsible for internal decoration and for any improvements, alterations or work you do yourself. You will have to pay for repairing anything damaged by you, your family or your visitors.

You are expected to make sure that your home, garden and balcony (if you have one) are kept clean, tidy, and free from rubbish, and are not neglected.

Examples of the repairs tenants are responsible for include:

- internal doors, locks and handles, cupboard doors and catches
- wall, floor and fireplace tiles
- fences, gates, washing lines, posts and rotary driers
- toilet seats

Exceptions are made in some cases for people over 70, people who have a disability, and sheltered housing tenants.

## How do I report a repair?

Tenants can report repairs in a number of ways:

- by phoning the Repairs Helpdesk on freephone 0800 052 6140 or local number 01273 294409 24 hours a day (you may wish to use the local number if you have a mobile phone or free local calls)
- via the freephone at your housing office
- by emailing [BHCC.repairs@mearsgroup.co.uk](mailto:BHCC.repairs@mearsgroup.co.uk)
- by completing our online repairs reporting form
- by text message (for non-urgent repairs) to 07786 204352 – make sure each message begins 'Repairs' and we will text you back to confirm we've received your request
- by completing a form at our housing offices
- by letter

To report all urgent or emergency repairs, please phone the Repairs Helpdesk on 0800 052 6140 or 01273 294409.

**What do I do if I have an emergency repair?**

An emergency repair is one which needs to be carried out to avoid danger to you and/or your neighbours or serious damage to the building, **such as burst pipes, water leaks, gas leaks or complete power failure.**

Emergency repairs will be dealt with immediately and should be reported to the Repairs Helpdesk at any time. Please note that only emergencies will be dealt with outside of normal working hours.

**Who is responsible for reporting repairs to communal areas?**

Our Community Wardens will check for any repairs needed in the communal areas. However, they are not there all the time so if you see anything that needs repairing, please call the Repairs Helpdesk as you would for home repairs. In sheltered housing schemes, the Scheme Manager will report these repairs.

Appointments are not needed for repairs to common areas in blocks of flats as we can get to these areas without you being at home.

**When will the repair be done?**

This will depend on the work needed but should be within 28 days, unless the work is being done under a planned maintenance programme. When you report the repair, we will agree the date of the appointment and write to you to confirm it.

**How will the work be arranged?**

When you report a general repair, in most cases we will offer you the choice of a morning or afternoon appointment. Some evening and Saturday morning appointments are also available.

We will try to arrange to do the work at a time to suit you, but it is important that you are at home at the agreed time.

Please note that you will not be given an appointment for emergency repairs. Our contractors will get to these repairs as quickly as possible and you need to wait at home to let them in. Before you let anyone into your home

to carry out repairs or gas servicing, check their identity card to make sure they are genuine. If you are in any doubt, ring the Repairs Helpdesk on 0800 052 6140 or 01273 294409.

**What if I am not happy with the repair or the contractors?**

All work carried out by contractors should be done to the highest possible standard and finished properly. If a job cannot be completed due to lack of materials or parts, the contractor must tell you and make arrangements to return to finish the work. However, we aim to complete most repairs in a single visit.

We carry out customer satisfaction surveys across our repairs service, so you may be contacted and asked some short questions. Your responses give us a clear idea of the quality of work being done and information about where we can improve.

All contractors who work for the council have to abide by a Code of Conduct, covering how they should behave in your home, treat you and your property, and clean up. Our contractors will also carry identification badges which they will show to you. If you are unhappy with the way you were treated or the way work was carried out, please let us know by calling the Repairs Helpdesk on 0800 052 6140 or 01273 294409.

## Tenant alterations and improvements

**Can I carry out my own improvements?**

The council allows you to do improvements to your home, but you must get written permission from your housing office before starting. Only secure tenants can carry out improvements. If you are an introductory tenant you will need to wait until your tenancy is secure.

We will not normally refuse permission for work unless it is likely to affect the safety of the building, cause a future maintenance problem, or cause a nuisance to your neighbours. We may attach conditions to the permission, such as insisting that the work is carried out by a competent contractor and to a satisfactory standard.

You will need our permission to put down any hard floor finish such as laminate flooring, hardwood overlay and ceramic tiles, or if you want to have bare floorboards in any room. This is because these types of flooring can cause a noise nuisance to neighbours. We will not refuse permission unreasonably, but are only likely to agree if you live in a house or a ground floor flat where there is less risk of neighbours being disturbed. It is important that you make sure any floor covering is installed correctly with appropriate underlay to keep noise to a minimum. Any flooring of this type will be the tenant's responsibility to maintain and lift if we need to inspect anything below the floor.

You do not need permission to decorate the inside of your home, lay carpet or carry out minor improvements such as putting up shelves. However, you must not fit polystyrene (or similar) ceiling tiles or coving as they are a fire risk. If you do, you will need to pay for the cost of their removal.

If you move, you will be expected to return your home to its original condition or leave any alterations that we have given permission for in place. If we have to do any work to correct it, you may be charged – see 'Rechargeable repairs' for more information. Check with your housing office before you move out.

You may be able to claim compensation for certain types of improvements that we have given permission for - see the 'Right to compensation for improvements' information in the 'Ending your tenancy' section.

### **Do I need permission to put up an aerial, shed or other structure?**

You must get our written permission before erecting sheds, garages, greenhouses or extra fencing. We do not allow very large structures or sheds which cut out the light or views of your neighbours, and you should not put sheds or garages against boundary fences.

You must also get our written permission before putting up external aerials and you may also need planning permission. Aerials need to be properly fixed and should not interfere with

anyone else's TV and radio reception. There are also restrictions on where you can put aerials and satellite dishes.

### **How do I get permission to carry out an alteration or improvement?**

To get permission to do alterations to your home, write to your housing office giving details of the work and, if appropriate, a detailed sketch plan of what you intend to do.

A member of staff may visit you and we will write to tell you whether you have permission and if there are any conditions attached. Please note that some alterations and improvements may require planning permission or building regulations permission as well - this must be obtained in advance as it could cost you a lot to put things right afterwards.

Usually, a surveyor will inspect the work you do to check that it has been done to a satisfactory standard.

If permission is refused and you feel the decision is unreasonable, you can contact the Housing Manager at your housing office or your local councillor. You can also appeal in the County Court.

## **Rechargeable repairs – what we recharge for**

A recharge is for a repair or clearance done by the council to your property which you are responsible for. If we need to do this, you will be charged for the cost of the work.

We are committed to being clear about what work we are responsible for and what residents are responsible for. Being consistent about the way decisions are made about recharging helps us manage the repairs and maintenance budget. This money can then be spent on looking after and improving all residents' homes.

Recharges include:

- **Unauthorised alterations or DIY.** You must have written permission from your housing office before starting any alterations or improvements to your home (apart from decorating, laying carpet and minor improvements such as putting up shelves). It is important to check with the housing office before you move out to find out if you are expected to leave any alterations or improvements in place, or return the property to its original condition. If the council has to do any work as a result of alterations you have done, the cost will be recharged to you.
- **Moving out.** When you end your tenancy, we will explain your responsibilities and what you must do to avoid being recharged. This includes handing back all keys to the property on the agreed date and time, leaving the property clear of all goods, belongings and rubbish (including carpets and laminate flooring unless we have given you permission to leave them in the property). You should make sure the property is in a good state of repair.
- **Emergency repairs.** If emergency repairs are needed due to deliberate damage, vandalism, neglect or botched DIY, by any members of your household (including pets) or visitors to your home, the council will carry out the repair and recharge you.
- **Damage caused by condensation.**

We will tell you if we need to recharge you and how much you need to pay. If you fail to repay any sums due, legal action may be taken to recover the recharge debts.

Tips on how you can avoid being recharged:

- report repairs and keep the property in a good state of repair
- know your responsibilities as explained in the guide to repairs
- seek written permission before you make any alterations or improvements and keep a copy of any letters giving you permission
- clean and clear your property before leaving

## Looking after your home

### Condensation

Condensation is dampness caused by water vapour and it can cause a lot of damage to your home. Condensation occurs when there is too much water vapour in the air or when warm moist air meets cold surfaces.

Condensation is worse in cold damp weather and when heating is poor, but it can be controlled by proper heating and ventilation.

### How can I minimise condensation?

You can minimise condensation by:

- closing kitchen and bathroom doors when cooking and bathing to stop water vapour spreading through the home - it also helps to have a window open
- avoiding drying clothes indoors - if you have to, always dry clothes near an open window with the door to the room closed
- avoiding using paraffin and bottled gas heaters as these give out a lot of water vapour
- keeping a constant level of heat throughout your home
- using air vents and opening windows slightly - never block air vents
- wiping your windows and sills regularly to prevent mould growth and other damage from standing water, which is quite common in winter
- washing off black mould growth with a weak solution of bleach - this is a common symptom of condensation but it will not usually become a serious problem if you remove it
- leave a gap between your furniture and the wall to let air circulate

If you do this and still have problems, report it to the Repairs Helpdesk on 0800 052 6140 or 01273 294409. If condensation causes damage to the property this will be a rechargeable repair.

### How can I prevent frost and flood damage?

A lot of damage is done by burst pipes in cold weather. To reduce the risk of damage, make sure you know where the stop taps are and check they work. If you cannot find them or they don't work, contact your housing office. It is a good idea to check and oil the taps regularly.

You should also make sure all pipes and tanks are properly insulated and keep your home heated during cold weather, even if at a low heat. If you go away during the winter, drain down the water system by turning off the main stop tap and running all the taps.

If one of your pipes does burst, turn off the stop taps, central heating and immersion heater, and run the taps to empty the system to minimise damage. Report the problem immediately to the Repairs Helpdesk, and mop up any water.

**How can I make my home more secure?**

If you have concerns about the security of your block of flats or local estate, speak to staff at your housing office - they will be able to tell you whether there are any plans to improve security, such as installing door entry systems or additional lighting.

You can do a number of things to improve the security of your home:

- never leave doors and windows unlocked when you go out
- don't leave keys under doormats, or flowerpots - burglars know all the hiding places
- don't make it obvious if you go away - get a friend to come in to open and close curtains and switch lights on and off or buy a time switch so that your home looks occupied
- never let people into your home unless you know who they are - if in doubt don't let them in and always ask workers to show their identity cards

**How can I keep safe in my home?**

We want to help you make your home a safer place. Taking simple precautions can help you avoid potentially dangerous situations.

**Safety in the home – gas heaters and flammable substances**

You will need written permission to store potentially flammable or explosive substances in your home, such as gas canisters and oxygen cylinders.

Although accidents involving oxygen cylinders are very rare, when they happen they can cause serious injury or death through fire and explosion. When you seek permission, we will write to you with some guidance on how to prevent accidents and keep safe. Always follow instructions given to you about your oxygen equipment carefully.

Due to the risk to other residents from explosion in flats of a particular construction, tenants must not use bottled gas in the flats listed below. If you live in these properties and require further advice, please contact your housing office.

• Dudeney Lodge	• Heron Court
• Falcon Court	• Kingfisher Court
• Kestrel Court	• Nettleton Court
• Swallow Court	• St James' House

**Asbestos**

Although asbestos is a hazardous material, it only poses a risk to health if the fibres get released into the air. Material containing asbestos poses little risk unless it is disturbed (for example broken, drilled, cut or sanded) and no precautions are taken.

Asbestos was often used in the construction of houses and flats, and was only completely banned in 1999. Most council properties were built before then and, therefore, may contain materials that have some asbestos in them.

A few examples of the most common items using materials that may contain asbestos are:

- corrugated or flat cement sheets used for roofing and wall panels
- ceiling tiles
- bath panels
- textured coatings such as Artex
- boilers and flue pipes
- floor tiles
- downpipes and gutters to carry rainwater

This list doesn't contain all possible materials containing asbestos and the only way to know for sure is to test it.

If your home has any of these items, it doesn't mean they will contain asbestos. However, if you suspect that there is asbestos in your property, please **report it to the Repairs Helpdesk on 0800 052 6140 or 01273 294409**.

A surveyor will visit to investigate and organise whatever action is needed, if any. Asbestos is not always dangerous and may not need removing, but it does need to be managed and the property address needs to be added to our asbestos register.

If you are thinking of carrying out any work on your home:

- identify if asbestos is present by contacting the Repairs Helpdesk
- do not break, cut or drill the material
- do not remove or dispose of any asbestos material

### Legionella

Legionella bacteria are common in natural sources of water but certain circumstances need to be in place for infection to occur, and this doesn't happen very often. You can take the precautions below to reduce the risk.

If you have a shower, regularly descale and clean the shower head to protect against the risk of legionella.

If you are going on holiday or away for longer than a week, take the shower head off and place it in a bowl of diluted disinfectant or a shower head cleaning agent. When you return, run the shower without the shower head for a few minutes and then refit it.

## Fire safety

### What you should do in the event of a fire

Preparing and practising a plan of action will help you act quickly if there's a fire in your home, and could even save your life. When discussing fire safety, involve everyone who lives in your home, including children, older or disabled people and any lodgers or regular visitors. Please note that the following safety advice is offered as guidance only. If in doubt, get out, stay out and call 999.

### Fire in your home

If there is a fire in your home you should:

- alert everyone
- get everyone out of your home and close the door after you
- call the fire service on 999
- close windows if it's safe to do so
- not delay to collect your valuables
- not investigate the fire
- check doors with the back of your hand before you open them - if they're warm don't open them as the fire is on the other side
- always use the stairs - don't use the lift

### Fires in communal/shared areas

If you are in any communal or shared area, such as a stairwell or resident lounges in sheltered housing, and discover a fire, please leave the building by the nearest fire exit and call the fire service on 999.

### If a fire breaks out elsewhere in your building

If you are in your home and there is a fire elsewhere in the building, you are usually safest in your own flat unless heat or smoke is affecting you. The council and the fire service support a 'stay put' policy unless you are told otherwise, meaning the majority of fires elsewhere in a building can be extinguished with residents staying in their homes.

### Keep safe

To help reduce the risk of fire you can:

- make sure all shared areas are kept free of rubbish and belongings
- fit smoke alarms and make sure you test them weekly and change the battery once a year – the East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service will supply smoke alarms free of charge. In sheltered housing, fire alarms are fitted in all individual properties and in the common ways
- have an evacuation plan – know your exit route, where your keys are, etc
- keep passage ways clear to help you get out quickly
- don't smoke in bed
- beware of chip pans – don't leave them frying on their own

- make sure cooking appliances are turned off when you have finished cooking
- unplug appliances at night or when your home is empty
- be careful with candles
- use fire guards on open fires
- don't put clothing close to open fires, storage heaters or electric fires to dry off
- don't overload power points and avoid using multi adaptors
- never leave children alone in a room with cookers and heaters on and always keep matches out of their reach
- tell anyone living with you or your visitors what to do in the event of a fire

If you have a mobility problem, you should discuss a personal emergency evacuation plan with your Housing Officer or Scheme Manager if you live in sheltered housing.

If you would like your Housing Officer to visit to discuss what to do in a fire, please contact your housing office.

For further information on fire safety please contact the East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service at [www.esfrs.org](http://www.esfrs.org) or 0845 130 8855.

# 6

## Living in your home



Living in  
your home

## Moving in – checklist for new tenants

If you are just moving in, there are a number of things you need to do or know about.

### Getting connected

Contact the electricity, gas and water companies to make sure supplies are connected. Make a note of all meter readings as soon as you move in. A council officer will tell you where the meters, fuse boxes and stop taps are. Make a note of where they are in case of an emergency.

### Letting people know

Below are some examples of who you might need to give your new address to:

• your doctor, dentist or healthcare visitors	• your home help and support workers
• your bank	• the benefits agency
• TV licence	• council tax
• your employer	• children’s school
• library service	• household insurance company

For council services we have the ‘tell us once’ scheme in place so we notify other council departments.

### What can I expect?

Once you have moved into your property, you will be contacted by your Housing Officer to arrange a visit within the first two weeks of your tenancy. This is to check that you are settling into your new home and give you an opportunity to ask any questions.

If you are an introductory tenant, you will receive three visits during the introductory period to see that your tenancy is running smoothly. At the end of the year, your tenancy will automatically become secure unless we have taken action to end or extend your tenancy.

Our staff also visit all households every so often. These are to find out how we can help you,

make sure the property is being looked after and check the property is occupied by the tenant. You don’t need to wait for our visit - if you think we can help, please contact your housing office.

If you live in sheltered housing, your Scheme Manager will also give you information about our sheltered housing service.

## Insuring your home’s contents

We strongly advise all tenants to take out household contents insurance, as we do not insure your belongings or decorations. This is important in case your belongings are damaged by fire, water leak or flooding, theft or burglaries for example.

You can insure your contents through your own private arrangements or through the council scheme. We have negotiated competitive rates with an insurance company and premiums can be paid weekly with your rent. For a little extra money, your insurance cover can also include accidental damage.

For further information and an application form on our insurance scheme, please contact the Rent Accounting Section on 01273 293303.

## What happens if I move out of the property?

Your tenancy agreement states that your property must be your main home. You must tell us if you are going to be away from your home for 28 days or more. This is so that we can contact you or a nominated representative if there are any issues while you are away.

If you don’t tell us that you are temporarily away, we may decide that you are no longer living at the property as your main home and treat it as abandoned. We will then serve a notice to quit on the property to end your tenancy and take legal action to take it back.

If you decide to move out, you need to tell us and provide four weeks written notice to end your tenancy. Information on how to do this is included in the ‘Ending your tenancy’ section.

## Can I run a business from my home?

You need to apply to your housing office for permission to use your home for business purposes. Permission will depend on the nature of the business and the likely impact on your neighbours – for example, we might not give permission for businesses involving car repairs or using controlled substances. If we do grant permission but receive complaints at a later date, we will investigate and may withdraw the permission. Obviously you cannot use your home for any illegal purposes.

## How is my estate kept clean and tidy?

We aim to make all estates safer, greener and cleaner places to live to improve the quality of life for all residents. We work closely with our colleagues in the council's refuse, recycling and park services to help us do this.

### Estates Service

The duties you can expect the Estates Service Team to do are:

- sweep and wash the entrance halls, banisters, railings and skirting boards
- clear litter in and around blocks of flats
- keep bin areas clean
- check for safety hazards
- report repairs to shared areas
- arrange the removal of dumped rubbish (we will take action against those responsible where possible)
- remove graffiti
- check and change lights as necessary
- adjust timers for the automated lights in shared areas

You can help by letting us know if anything in particular needs to be done. To do this or give feedback on the service, please call the Estates Service Team on 01273 294769 or e-mail [EstatesServiceTeam@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:EstatesServiceTeam@brighton-hove.gov.uk)

Residents can help to keep their estates and buildings clean by:

- taking litter home or putting it in bins
- wrapping and bagging rubbish and putting it in the bins provided
- keeping entrances and common ways clear – do not fly tip or leave bulky items or bags of rubbish in corridors, landings or beside bins and chutes
- clearing up any spills or leaks when taking rubbish to the bin rooms
- removing any marks on the floor or walls made by bikes, prams, or by dragging items in or out of the building

### Grounds maintenance

Some of our estates and sheltered schemes have shared grassed areas, which we are responsible for. We maintain landscaped areas and cut the grass and prune shrubs and hedges regularly, although we do not collect grass cuttings.

We encourage residents to take an active interest in their local areas and will not normally refuse permission to anyone wishing to cultivate or maintain shared areas and gardens. However, you must get written permission from your housing office first.

### Refuse and recycling

You are expected to dispose of your rubbish responsibly by bagging it up properly and putting it out for collection on the day it is due. If you live in a flat please place your rubbish in the provided bin areas.

If you have large or bulky items that you need to dispose of, the council's refuse and recycling service can collect it for a charge – call them on 01273 292929 for further details. Discounts are available for older residents and people receiving benefits.

The council encourages tenants to recycle and reduce waste as much as possible. If you want to find out more about recycling facilities in your area, go to the council website or call the refuse and recycling service on 01273 292929.

### Estate inspections

We inspect all our estates quarterly to make sure they are clean and tidy, and identify work or improvements that need to be done. We

encourage residents to take part in these inspections so you can tell us about the issues affecting your neighbourhood. If you are interested, please contact your housing office. If you would like to see feedback on recent inspections, results are displayed on community notice boards or at your housing office.

### Community Wardens

Our team of Community Wardens provide a presence on our estates and act as the 'eyes and ears of the council'. The wardens are there to deal with any environmental issues in the neighbourhood and can answer questions and provide advice. They provide support to local groups including resident associations, lunch clubs and youth activities. They also carry out welcome visits to new tenants and home visits to vulnerable tenants.

The Community Wardens spend much of their time out on our estates and can be easily identified by their distinctive uniform displaying the Brighton & Hove City Council logo so, if you see them, please approach them with any queries. Alternatively, you can contact them at your housing office.

## Sustainability & energy efficiency

The council is committed to taking action for a more sustainable future. Housing Management aims to improve the sustainability of our service to make sure we have a minimal impact on the environment and improve the energy efficiency of our properties. We hope to achieve this by:

- setting challenging targets to improve the energy efficiency of your home
- using contractors with a commitment to recycling and reducing their carbon footprint
- installing energy efficient lighting in communal areas
- working towards tackling fuel poverty for all our residents by being at the forefront of technology and innovation
- providing energy efficiency advice in Homing In and through home visits

There are also a number of things you can do:

- if you are worried about paying your fuel bills, SMART displays can help you make savings by showing exactly how much energy you are using in your home - some energy companies supply these so get in touch with your provider to see if you can benefit
- if you are having difficulties paying your fuel bills, contact the Homeheat helpline on 0800 336699 for further advice
- get involved in community based gardening and food schemes
- recycle as much as possible
- take steps in your home to reduce the amount of energy you use - eg by turning lights off when not in use and switching off appliances rather than leaving them in 'stand by' mode

For more information on energy saving, visit the Energy Saving Trust website at [www.energysavingtrust.org.uk](http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk)

### Energy saving lightbulbs

Energy saving lightbulbs contain a tiny trace of mercury and should not be put in the normal household waste. Unbroken bulbs can be recycled at the city's two household waste recycling centres. Please ask a member of staff to point out the correct container.

If you break one, make sure the room is well ventilated for 15 minutes as a precaution. Sweep up the remains with a damp cloth, place them in a sealed bag and dispose of them at one of the household waste recycling centres.

## Pest control

As a general rule, it is your responsibility to deal with pests in your home, and some you can deal with yourself. However, some pests need specialised treatment and it is essential to get professional advice on how to deal with them safely without damaging the environment.

The council's Pest Control Team offers advice on all types of pests. They treat rats, mice, cockroaches, wasps and fleas. They do not treat bedbugs but can give advice on how to deal with them. Contact them on 01273 292170.

7

# Being a good neighbour



Being a good neighbour

## Being a good neighbour

### How can I be a good neighbour?

- welcome new neighbours and say hello to them
- make sure your house/flat contributes positively to the appearance of an area
- alert someone if you notice a change in your neighbour, eg if you haven't seen them for a while
- help neighbours who are unable to use communal bins by taking their rubbish out for them
- getting involved in local groups
- don't carry out noisy DIY work at night or early in the morning
- be co-operative if asked by a neighbour to reduce noise
- be quiet when you return home late at night – don't slam doors or shout to your friends
- respect the fact that different people have different lifestyles, but do not impose your lifestyle on your neighbours
- if you have permission to keep a pet, look after it properly and don't let it foul public areas or cause a nuisance in any other way
- dispose of rubbish properly

## Abuse against staff

The council will not tolerate violence, threats of violence or abusive language towards our staff and contractors. We will support the prosecution of tenants or members of the public if any council employees are assaulted. Tenants who threaten staff could be taken to court and face eviction proceedings.

## Neighbourhood Agreements

These are voluntary agreements between landlords, residents and other partners setting standards and agreeing plans for delivering services.

They give residents the opportunity to get involved and shape the services they want to receive. They can cover a range of issues and services at a local level, such as anti-social behaviour, street cleaning and dog control.

They are tailored to meet your needs and take account of local priorities in your area. They can cover any area from a block to a few streets or a whole estate. To find out more about setting up a neighbourhood agreement, contact your housing office.

## Anti-social behaviour

### What is anti-social behaviour?

Anti-social behaviour (ASB) is any behaviour that unreasonably disrupts the peace and comfort of other residents or adversely affects their health and safety. ASB can be anything that prevents another person from enjoying their home, garden, estate or neighbourhood.

Brighton & Hove City Council is committed to making sure all residents can enjoy their home peacefully. We expect you to behave in a way that does not disturb your neighbours and respects differences in lifestyles.

You are responsible for the behaviour of anyone living with or visiting you. Your tenancy agreement makes it clear that we will not accept nuisance or harassment. It states that: 'you, anyone living with you and your visitors must not do or threaten to do anything which causes, or is likely to cause, a nuisance or annoy someone else'.

Examples of ASB include:

- loud music or car stereos
- graffiti
- vandalism (ie causing damage to property)
- dumping rubbish
- aggressive and threatening language and behaviour
- problems caused by pets such as noise and fouling

### What should I do if I experience anti-social behaviour?

If you are having problems with a neighbour, talk to them about it if you can. It's possible that they do not realise that their behaviour is disturbing you.

If the problem continues, or you do not feel able to contact the person causing the problem,

please contact your housing office. If you live in sheltered housing, please speak to your Scheme Manager.

If you are experiencing noise nuisance, you should contact the council's Environmental Health & Licensing Team on 01273 292929.

### **If I need to complain how will you deal with my complaint?**

We take all reports of nuisance and harassment very seriously, and will act quickly and decisively. We will:

- contact you to discuss your complaint
- agree an action plan with you
- investigate the complaint, including talking to other residents as necessary
- contact the person you are complaining about if you give us permission
- work with other agencies such as the police and environmental health to resolve the problem
- ask you to keep diary sheets as they are useful in allowing us to build a picture of what is happening
- keep you informed
- contact you once your case is closed and find out how you felt it was handled

### **What will you do to tackle anti-social behaviour?**

Brighton & Hove City Council is committed to effectively tackling and resolving nuisance and anti-social behaviour throughout the city. We aim to do this using a balance of support and enforcement.

There are lots of things that we can do to help stop anti-social behaviour. We recognise that there are no easy answers and no single solution that will work for everyone.

The range of action that can be taken is listed below. Your Housing Officer will explain more about which is most suited in your situation.

**Acceptable Behaviour Contracts** – these are written agreements between a person who has been involved in anti-social behaviour and their landlord, the police or another agency. They help the person to acknowledge their behaviour and its effect on others, with the aim of stopping that behaviour.

**Mediation** – we recommend mediation in cases of neighbour disputes which could be resolved through discussion and shared understanding. We use an independent external mediation agency and this has proved a very effective way of helping parties understand each other's views, particularly as they will usually remain living as neighbours. Mediation does not look to blame, but tries to find a middle ground that the parties can agree on and work from there. You can also refer yourself to the service by calling them on 01273 700812.

If these measures break down, we may consider enforcement action, which can include:

**Injunctions** – these are court orders which tell a person to stop behaving in an anti-social way. Injunctions can also be used against anyone living with our tenants, visitors, or even people with no connection to a council tenancy. If a person with an injunction disobeys the order, they may go to prison.

**Noise Abatement Notices** – these can be used to stop noise that is causing a statutory nuisance. If the noise continues, the council may put a stop to the nuisance, and recover the costs. This includes the power to seize and remove equipment.

**Demoted Tenancies** – these allow landlords to apply to the court to reduce the security of tenure. A demoted tenancy gives the tenant fewer rights and the tenancy can be ended quicker if nuisance continues.

**Possession action** – we may look to take possession action when a tenant has seriously or persistently broken the tenancy agreement.

Enforcement action is normally only considered when all other options have been exhausted. We will always consider issues of vulnerability such as mental health, drug or alcohol dependence. Where such issues exist, we will seek the intervention and support of our partner agencies to help to address problem behaviour.

Your Housing Officer will manage the majority of cases but cases of serious nuisance and harassment may be referred to one of our Anti-Social Behaviour Housing Officers. Your Housing Officer will tell you if this is necessary.

### Why is it taking a long time to get the problem resolved?

Tenants are protected by the terms of their tenancy agreement and this means that we may need to go through many steps if we want to take legal action. We always act as quickly as we can to resolve problems but need to make sure we have enough evidence. We will keep you informed of the progress of investigations but please let us know if you have any concerns.

### What can I do to help?

Witnesses are crucial to tackling anti-social behaviour. We recognise that being a witness in an anti-social behaviour case can be a daunting experience, but it is often essential to the success of a case, particularly if the case goes to court. Being a witness could involve providing us with a diary of events through to attending court to give evidence.

We make a commitment to support and protect witnesses throughout the process, including after a court case if necessary. We will also look at practical measures including additional security and referrals to partner agencies that can provide appropriate support.

### How can I get involved?

If you are interested in getting involved to improve community safety and reduce crime and anti-social behaviour in your local area, you can:

- join or start a neighbourhood watch scheme
- become involved in your neighbourhood's Local Action Team (LAT)

Contact your local Neighbourhood Policing Team for further information. Call Sussex Police on 0845 607 0999.

## Harassment

### What is harassment?

We expect all tenants to treat their neighbours with respect and any form of harassment, abuse or threatening behaviour will not be tolerated. Harassment differs from nuisance in that it is deliberate action to cause annoyance or distress to a particular individual, family or group.

Your tenancy agreement states:

'You or they must not harass or threaten any other person because of race, colour, gender, nationality, religion, age, mental illness, disability, sexuality or for any other reason.'

Harassment can consist of one incident or many. It may include attacks on property as well as the person, and can be:

- verbal abuse - eg racist or homophobic name calling
- physical abuse - eg spitting, punching, kicking, slapping
- threats
- attacks on property - eg throwing eggs or stones at properties, slashing tyres, breaking windows, racist graffiti, etc

### What is racial harassment?

Racial harassment is abuse suffered by individuals, families or groups of people because of their colour, race, nationality, or ethnic origin.

### What is a hate crime?

A hate crime is a criminal offence motivated by hostility or prejudice based upon the victim's disability, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation or because they are transgender.

We support people who experience harassment, victimisation or abuse because of their race, faith, religion, disability or because they are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.

If you know someone is being harassed, please encourage them to contact us.

### What should I do?

If you are being harassed, you should:

- report any violence, threats, damage to your property or any other criminal acts to the police immediately
- tell us as soon as possible
- keep a record of all incidents
- keep a note of the name and address of the person harassing you, if you know it
- let us know the names and addresses of anyone who saw any of the harassment

**What will we do?**

We will not accept any harassment. Once reported, we will:

- meet you as soon as possible (within one working day)
- arrange for an interpreter if you need one
- remove any offensive graffiti and complete emergency repairs within one working day
- agree with you what action we will take, and confirm this in writing
- keep you informed about what is happening
- work with the police and other agencies including the Partnership Community Safety Team
- put you in contact with any support agencies, such as victim support

**We may be able to:**

- help the police to take action
- improve your home's security, such as providing stronger locks and better lighting
- take out an injunction to stop the person from committing further acts of harassment
- start proceeding to demote or end their tenancy.

We will support you to stay in your home, which may include increasing your security. However, if you no longer feel safe, we will discuss the different housing options available to you. You may need to live in temporary accommodation before finding a new permanent home.

**What other support can I get?**

The Partnership Community Safety Team work with a range of organisations and groups to improve community safety, reduce crime and disorder and make people feel safer across the city. The Hate Crime & Community Engagement Team has specialist officers who can support victims of hate crimes.

The Racial Harassment Team work to reduce racist and religiously motivated crimes and incidents. They aim to increase the reporting of incidents, make sure that victims and witnesses are fully supported, and build their confidence in the criminal justice system. The team can be contacted on 01273 292735 or by e-mailing [racial.harassment@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:racial.harassment@brighton-hove.gov.uk). We can also contact them on your behalf.

Victims of racist, faith and disability hate crime can call 01273 294367, and victims of homophobic or transgender hate crime can call 01273 294636 for additional support.

## Violence

**Domestic violence**

Your tenancy agreement states that:

'You must not use or threaten to use violence by using physical, mental, emotional or sexual abuse against any other person living with you, anyone you have invited into your home, or anyone living in, or in the locality of our properties. If you do and that person or their children have to leave the property because of violence, or threats of violence or abuse against them, we may take steps to evict you from your home'

Anyone who is experiencing domestic violence can also expect help and support from the council. If you are experiencing domestic violence, please contact your housing office for further advice.

We will do everything we can to help you stay in your home - offering advice, security, support and a sensitive, confidential service. We can also put you in touch with other people who can help and support you, such as RISE and the police. Should you decide to take legal action against a violent partner, we can help you to access legal help. We will also take action where possible to evict any tenant who is violent.

If you are experiencing domestic violence you can get help and support from:

- the police on 0845 60 70 999 or call 999 in an emergency
- RISE (formerly the Women's Refuge Project) on 01273 622822 [www.riseuk.org.uk](http://www.riseuk.org.uk)
- the 24 hour National Domestic Violence helpline on a freephone number – 0808 2000 247
- the men's advice line on 0808 010 327
- Broken Rainbow for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people who are experiencing violence or abuse in their relationships on 0300 999 5428

If you need to leave your home, we can help you access emergency housing through a refuge, or where this is not appropriate, through temporary accommodation. We will discuss your longer term housing options with you.

**Safeguarding vulnerable adults**

Older people, people with a physical disability, mental illness or learning disability can be vulnerable to abuse. The abuser is usually well known to the person being abused. They may be:

- a partner, child or relative
- a friend or neighbour
- a paid or volunteer care worker
- a professional

Abuse can occur anywhere and people can be abused in different ways, including:

- physical abuse
- neglect
- financial exploitation
- psychological abuse
- sexual abuse

The housing management service follows the Sussex multi-agency policy and procedures for safeguarding vulnerable adults. If you experience, witness, or suspect abuse is happening to a vulnerable adult, it is important to tell someone about your concerns. For help and advice please call the council’s Access Point on 01273 295555 or Sussex Police 0845 60 70 999. In an emergency call 999.

**Pets and animals**

**How many pets can I have?**

If you want to keep pets you must get our written permission through your housing office. The number of pets we will allow will depend upon the type of pet, and the size and type of home you live in. If you live in sheltered housing, please check with your Scheme Manager to see whether your scheme allows pets. We will not unreasonably withhold permission but will not give permission for residents to keep the following animals:

- any dangerous wild animal as detailed in the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976

- the specific breed of dog restricted by law and detailed in the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, such as pit bull terriers and Japanese tosas
- a species prohibited by trade, import or export as detailed in the Endangered Species (Import & Export) Act 1976
- all venomous (poisonous) insects and spiders
- all large, poisonous or constrictor snakes or lizards

The Animal Welfare Team gives advice and practical help for keeping pets and animals in the city. They investigate complaints about stray animals, dangerous dogs, dog fouling and cases of animal cruelty. You can get further information and advice on 01273 292929 or 292446.

**Is there anything I need to know about keeping pets?**

If you have a pet or would like to get one, we expect you to look after your pets in a responsible way.

You must make sure that:

- they do not cause a nuisance to your neighbours by creating lots of noise or excessive smells
- you clean up after your pets
- you look after your pet responsibly

If you keep an animal that we believe is being mistreated, we will report it to the council’s Animal Welfare Team.

If your pets are causing a nuisance or disturbance to your neighbours, we may ask you to re-home them.

If these conditions are not kept, permission can be withdrawn and action may be taken against your tenancy.

**Can I feed wild birds and animals?**

You must not encourage pests, vermin or animals that may cause a nuisance or damage at your home or in the neighbourhood. Examples of this include feeding wild pigeons and seagulls and not disposing of rubbish properly.

This is because they can pass on diseases to people or, in numbers, can be a nuisance to or

Being a good neighbour

pollute the areas you live in. You must not feed them from your home or in your neighbourhood. If you do, action may be taken against your tenancy and you will have to pay the costs if we have to clean mess from the building.

## Communal areas

### What are communal areas?

Communal areas are shared areas of a block of flats, or an estate, which tenants, residents and visitors can use. This includes stairs and lifts, landings, bin stores, shared gardens and car parks.

### Are there any special considerations if I live in a flat?

Living in flats and maisonettes brings extra responsibilities. Everyone living in a block is responsible for keeping the communal areas clean and tidy, and must:

- not leave rubbish or property on the stairs or in the hallways - rubbish should be disposed of carefully
- not smoke in enclosed shared areas
- not interfere with fire safety equipment
- keep emergency exits clear
- not interfere with security equipment such as door entry systems and CCTV
- not throw rubbish or other items from balconies - if you, your family or visitors do this, you will be considered to have broken your tenancy agreement and legal action may be taken

The fire service and the council have agreed that personal goods should not be stored in communal areas as they could be a hazard if people need to leave the building in an emergency. If we need to clear any items belonging to you from shared areas, you will need to pay our costs.

You must not store mobility scooters in shared areas without our permission. You need to speak to your Housing Officer before buying a mobility scooter so we can make sure you have somewhere to store it safely.

### Door entry systems

To improve the security of people living in flats and maisonettes, we provide door entry systems so that only residents and genuine visitors can get in. Please help to keep the flats safe and do not:

- let someone you do not know into the building
- wedge the door open or leave it open for any reason

When you leave the building, please close the door securely to protect you and your neighbours' homes against theft, vandalism and unwanted visitors. If you notice that your door is being left open or is faulty, please let your housing office or the Repairs Helpdesk know.

## Parking

### Where can I park my car?

Both the council and your neighbours expect you to park in a reasonable way and not block other residents or obstruct emergency access routes.

You must only park in marked areas or on the side of the road. Where there are parking control schemes, you and your visitors must follow the rules.

You can only park on your property or your front garden if you have a driveway with a lowered kerb and a hard standing for your vehicle. If you wish to apply for this, you will need permission from us and the council's Highways Team. You may also need planning permission.

### How can I rent a garage or parking space?

We have a number of garages to rent and parking areas with marked bays. If you would like to rent a garage or parking space, please contact the Car Parks & Garages Team on 01273 296646.

If you rent a garage or car parking space you will have a separate account for it, but can pay in the same ways you pay your rent. If you are in arrears with your rent, you cannot rent a garage or parking space.

### Can I store anything in my garage or parking space?

A garage is only for storing a car, van or motorbike. You must not use it to store any dangerous items, such as petrol, bottled gas or any other flammable materials. Your garage must not be used for general storage, unless you have a garage licence agreement that allows it (only available in areas of the city where the demand for garages is low). They also must not be used in connection with a business.

### What do I do if my car is clamped or taken away?

Your vehicle will only be clamped or removed if you have not followed the rules of the local parking control scheme or have left it untaxed or abandoned. If your car is clamped, you can get it released quite quickly by making the payment - details are given on a ticket that is left on your car. If your car is taken away, there will be a notice nearby telling you what to do to get it back.

### Can I repair my car outside my home?

You are allowed to carry out minor routine maintenance to your own vehicle in your garage, parking space or outside your home, provided that you do not cause a hazard or nuisance to your neighbours and do not make a mess. If the council has to clear up after you, you will be charged.

You are not allowed to do welding, spraying or major car maintenance on housing land. If you do, we may take legal action which could result in you losing your home.

### Caravans, boats, trailers and other vehicles

You must get permission from your housing office before parking a caravan, boat, trailer or other such vehicle in your garden, in a parking space or on other housing land.

### Abandoned and unroadworthy cars and motorbikes

You are not allowed to leave unroadworthy vehicles in your front garden or in parking areas. If you do, we may arrange for the vehicle to be

towed away and you will be recharged the costs and may face action against your tenancy.

## Gardens and balconies

Tenants are required to maintain their own gardens and balconies to make sure they look acceptable and do not cause a nuisance to their neighbours. If you are having difficulty maintaining your garden, please contact your housing office as further help may be available through our discretionary gardening scheme.

You are responsible for:

- keeping the garden tidy and free of rubbish, household items and vehicle parts
- trimming shrubs, hedges or trees to make sure they do not become a nuisance to neighbours
- maintaining any fencing that is your responsibility - please check with your housing office if you are unsure which fences are your responsibility

You will need our written permission to:

- put up a garage, shed or greenhouse
- put up or change a wall or fence
- cut down, remove or destroy any bushes, hedges or trees unless you planted them

Harvest Brighton & Hove operate a 'Grow your neighbours own' which links people who would like their gardens to be used for growing fruit and vegetables but don't have the time or physical capability with those who don't have the space. If you'd like further information, contact Harvest on 01273 431700.

# 8

## Ending your tenancy



## Ending your tenancy

### What if I want to end my tenancy?

If you want to end your tenancy, you need to give us a minimum of four weeks notice in writing, with your tenancy ending on a Monday.

If you are transferring to another Brighton & Hove City Council tenancy, you can give two weeks notice. This is a requirement of your tenancy agreement.

If you do not give us the required notice before you leave, you will still be responsible for the rent until the end of the notice period.

You need to complete a 'Termination of tenancy' form, available from your housing office or our website. Once you have returned this to us, we will arrange for a council officer to visit you at home before you move out.

At this visit we will tell you about any work you need to do before you leave. This could include repairs which are your responsibility or returning any work done without our permission to its original state. However, we may only identify this after you move out, in which case you will be recharged for the work.

Your home must be left in a clean and tidy condition. All fixtures and fittings supplied by the council should be left in the property. All your items and possessions must be removed, including anything kept in lofts, sheds and gardens. In some cases, fittings such as carpets and curtain rails can be left for the incoming tenant but please discuss this during our visit.

If we need to remove anything after you leave or if you do not complete any work identified, you will be recharged.

### Moving checklist

- it is your responsibility to tell all parties that you are moving, including your gas, electricity, water and telephone suppliers
- you must return all keys and/or pendant alarms to us on or before the termination date
- you will need to pay any outstanding rent and any other charges owed to us
- if you receive housing or council tax benefit, you must tell them when you intend to leave

If you want your mail to be redirected to your new address, please contact the Post Office.

If you have any questions or need help or advice about ending your tenancy, please contact your housing office.

### Compensation for improvements

If you move, you can apply for compensation for certain improvements you have made with our permission. Please contact your housing office for a list of qualifying improvements.

Please tell us if you would like to claim when you give notice to end your tenancy. We will need to see bills for the work – if you do not have these, tell us the cost and when the work was done. The maximum payment for each improvement is £3,000, but this depends on when you made the improvement, how much you have benefited from it, the cost, and its quality and condition.

## Ending a tenancy – following the death of a tenant

We understand that this is a difficult time for families and friends and want to make the process of returning the property as simple as possible. We give a broad outline of what to do here, but for more advice or to arrange an appointment to speak to a Housing Officer, please contact the housing office where staff will be happy to help.

If there is no one to succeed to the tenancy, the tenancy will need to be legally ended. This can happen in two ways:

1. If there is an executor, they will need to provide four weeks notice. Rent will be charged for the four week period but we appreciate this places a burden on the deceased tenant's estate. If the executor is able to clear the property within the first two weeks of the notice period and return the keys to us we will not charge rent for the final two weeks of the notice period.
2. If there is no executor, we will serve a notice to end the tenancy and register it with the

Public Trustee. If there is a next of kin, we will provide them with a copy of this notice.

### **Who can take on my tenancy if I die?**

If a tenant dies, their tenancy can be passed on to a joint tenant, spouse, civil partner or another family member (including partners) - this is called succession. Under the Housing Act 1985, only one succession is allowed for each tenancy. The successor will have the same tenancy conditions as the previous tenant.

There are some rules we have to follow when someone wants to succeed to the tenancy:

- if you are a joint tenant, your surviving joint tenant will succeed to the tenancy and can stay in the same property
- if you are a sole tenant, your married partner or civil partner can succeed to the tenancy and can stay in the same property
- a family member (including partners) can succeed to the tenancy if they can prove they have resided with you for 12 months before your death and used it as their only or main home – however, they may have to move if the home is larger than they reasonably need
- if there are two or more family members who can succeed, they must decide who will take over the tenancy – if they cannot agree, we will decide
- if a family member is required to move to smaller accommodation and refuses to, we can take legal action to take back the property and enforce the move to suitable alternative accommodation

### **What will happen if a succession has already taken place?**

There can only be one succession in law but we will work with the family member to find a solution. In certain circumstances, our allocations policy allows us to make further offers but each case needs to be looked at on an individual basis.

We appreciate this is a difficult time and our staff will work closely with the family member. If we cannot offer a further tenancy, we will provide advice and help on other housing options, and allow a reasonable time for the family member to find another home.

## Moving options

### **What happens if I want to move home?**

We have several schemes that may help you if you wish to move to a different property.

#### **Transfer Scheme - Homemove**

If your current home no longer suits your needs, you can apply to transfer to alternative accommodation using the housing application form, available from our website or your housing office. Once we have assessed your application, you will receive a banding depending on your level of housing need - for example, whether your home is overcrowded or if you need to move for medical reasons.

Properties that become available to let are advertised and you 'bid' for the properties you wish to be considered for.

We will not normally agree transfers for tenants in rent arrears.

We try to help as many people as possible, but there are more people wanting to move than homes available. For this reason, we actively promote the alternative housing options below.

#### **Transfer Incentive Scheme**

The Transfer Incentive Scheme offers a financial reward of up to £3500 to tenants who want to downsize from a family home or wheelchair adapted property that they no longer need. Incentives are also available for tenants moving into the private sector. Please contact your housing office for further information and an application form.

#### **Moving to sheltered housing**

We have sheltered housing schemes for older people with identified support needs. All schemes have scheme managers and a 24 hour call system in case of emergencies. This allows older people to continue to live independently while having the reassurance of having support close by when needed. The schemes also provide opportunities for social activities.

If you would like more information, contact the Sheltered Housing Team on 01273 293255.

### Apply directly to another council

You can apply directly to a council in another area. However, you may be given less priority than someone with a connection to that area

### Mutual Exchanges

Mutual Exchanges are where council or housing association tenants apply to swap homes with each other. Each tenant signs over (assigns) their tenancy to the other. **Please note that introductory tenants can not exchange their property.**

If you are interested in a mutual exchange and would like to find someone to swap with, you can:

- Enter your details on our Sussex Homemove Mutual Exchange Register, a web-based service on [www.homemove.org.uk](http://www.homemove.org.uk). You can use computers in housing offices and in the city's libraries to check potential swaps. Once your details appear on the mutual exchange register, other tenants may contact you.
- Contact another tenant who already has their details listed on our mutual exchange register.
- Advertise your home in a local newspaper or place an advert in a local shop. Please note that you must pay for any advertising costs yourself.
- Check the Homeswapper website, a national database with information on people wanting to move locally and nationally. Find out more by logging on to [www.homeswapper.co.uk](http://www.homeswapper.co.uk). Please note that there is a fee for joining this service.

Once you have found a potential swap, please contact your housing office for an application form. Before a mutual exchange can take place each tenant will need the written permission of their landlord – you must not move home unless you have this. We will usually give permission unless there is a ground set out in Schedule 3 of the 85 Act, such as the property being substantially larger than the proposed tenant needs or the swap causing overcrowding.

### Buying your home

There are a range of opportunities for tenants to become home owners:

- Right to Buy – if you have been a secure tenant for at least five years (two years if your tenancy began before 18 January 2005), you

may have the right to buy your home (this doesn't apply to sheltered housing or homes adapted for someone with a disability). You get a discount on the price depending on how long you have been a tenant and your family members may be able to share in the purchase. For further information, please contact our Right to Buy & Leasehold Team on 01273 293074. **Introductory tenants can not exercise the right to buy.**

- Low Cost Home Ownership - there are various low cost home ownership options available to Brighton & Hove residents but all are subject to eligibility and funding. Moat is the appointed homebuy agent in Sussex and they co-ordinate affordable home ownership schemes in the south east. Details of all the schemes currently available can be found on [www.homebuy.co.uk](http://www.homebuy.co.uk) or you can call the Moat home ownership enquiry line on 0845 359 6161 (8.30am to 5.30pm Monday to Friday).

### Private sector

We strongly recommend that you consider renting in the private sector where properties are in far greater supply. This gives you choice over where you live and the type of property you want to live in. If you are on a low income or benefits, you may be entitled to help with the rent through the local housing allowance. Please contact your housing office for further advice.

### What if you ask me to move?

There are some circumstances when we might ask you to move. These include if:

- we need to carry out major works to repair or modernise your home – if this happens, we will provide financial and practical help
- you succeeded to your tenancy, but the property is too big for you, is sheltered accommodation, or is designed for someone in a wheelchair or who has mobility problems and you do not need this type of property

If we ask you to move, we will explain why and give you as much notice as we can. We will discuss your rehousing options with you and make sure we keep you informed. Please contact your housing office for further advice.

# 9

## Supporting independence



We provide a number of services to help you live independently.

## Sheltered housing service

The council manages a number of sheltered schemes across the city, providing over 800 homes. The service aims to provide older people with a high quality of accommodation and support services to meet a wide range of needs, enabling older people to live independently and in comfort.

Our sheltered schemes can offer the following benefits:

- a wide variety of locations and properties, including flats and bungalows
- a secure tenancy with the privacy of your own front door and living space
- a Scheme Manager
- a 24-hour alarm that allows residents to call for help in an emergency
- a friendly, welcoming community of vibrant and diverse people
- communal lounges with a selection of social activities
- guest rooms where family and friends may stay
- shared gardens or patios where residents may sit and relax
- laundry facilities
- existing sheltered tenants who need to move to a more suitable property get priority to move within their scheme

Our Sheltered Housing Service can offer:

- a personalised support plan
- regular call service
- emergency support service
- a range of social, learning and healthy living activities

For more information and an application form, please contact the Sheltered Housing Team on 01273 293255.

If you currently live in sheltered housing and have any queries, please speak to your Scheme Manager.

## Can I still get emergency alarm support if I don't live in sheltered housing?

A 24-hour community alarm is provided by the council's CareLink Plus service and is available to anyone living in Brighton & Hove, in any type of housing. The service provides a communication link for people who may need to call for help quickly in an emergency, due to age, illness or disability.

The system can be installed in your home and linked through your telephone to the CareLink Control Centre. In an emergency, you use the alarm button, pendant or pull-cord to alert the CareLink staff to get help to you as soon as possible. For more information call the Carelink Control Centre on 01273 673105.

## Tenancy support

### What if I need extra support managing my tenancy?

If you are having problems managing your tenancy, your housing office can advise you and may be able to offer you support. Depending on your needs, this may involve referring you to another service.

The support we offer may include:

- regular visits by your Community Warden
- advice in running your home well
- making the most of your neighbourhood
- putting you in touch with extra help

If you are having difficulties, please get in touch with your housing office for advice.

### What if my tenancy is at risk?

Our Tenancy Sustainment Team offers flexible support to tenants experiencing difficulties in maintaining their tenancy, and who may be at risk of homelessness without appropriate advice and intervention.

The aim of the service is to prevent residents losing their homes, and to make sure they are supported with extra services where needed.

The Tenancy Sustainment Team can provide support that includes:

- help and support to access other services to meet health, financial or social needs - this may include employment, education, training, statutory health and social care services, local community and voluntary sector organisations
- support to access services that help with budgeting and managing debt
- advice and assistance to maximise your income and claim benefits
- advice and assistance on housing options
- help to manage neighbour problems
- help to access services in the local community

You must be willing to work with us to agree and work through a support plan to address tenancy problems so that you do not lose your home.

If you would like to find out more about the Tenancy Sustainment Team or if you think you could benefit from the support they offer, please contact them on 01273 293171 for information and advice.

## Adaptations

### What if I, or a member of my family, need adaptations because of a disability?

If you or someone living with you has a disability that restricts quality of life or ability to live independently, there are a number of ways we can help you to remain in your home.

This includes advising you about equipment you can buy, providing equipment to make daily tasks easier, or adapting your home to improve access or help you use bathing facilities, etc. Alternatively, if your current home is unsuitable, we can help you move to a property that will be more suitable for your needs.

If you are living in a property that is too big for your needs, we can also support you to move to a smaller, more suitable property. You may also be entitled to transfer incentive scheme money if you agree to move to a smaller home. See our 'Moving options' section in 'Ending your tenancy' for more information.

If you think you would benefit from an assessment, please contact the council's Access Point on 01273 295555. They will take your details and your needs will be assessed by a disability professional, who will discuss their recommendations with you. If these include an adaptation, the Adaptations Team will contact you to organise a visit.

If you are eligible to have your home adapted, the Adaptations Team will tell you when this work will be done. Priority is given to those in greatest need and there is likely to be some delay as the demand for the work exceeds the budget we have available each year.

## Help with gardening and decorating

### What if I can no longer maintain my home?

Help with gardening may be available if you are over 65 or have a disability, and do not have a relative, friend or anyone else to do the gardening for you. The gardening scheme covers grass cutting and other essential work such as hedge trimming and pruning.

You may also be able to get help with the decoration of your home for a maximum of one room per year. You can apply for vouchers to buy decorating materials in certain DIY stores if you have someone to do the work for you or apply for us to do the work.

The yearly budgets for these schemes are limited, but if you are having difficulties, contact your housing office for more details and an application form. The application form can also be downloaded from our website.

Alternatively, if your current home is unsuitable, we can help you to move to a property that will be more suitable for your needs. Please contact your housing office for further advice.



# 10

## Useful contacts & index



## Useful contacts

### Housing Management

#### Lavender Street Housing Office

01273 293260

email: LavenderStreetOffice@brighton-hove.gov.uk

#### Manor Place Housing Office

01273 293200

email: ManorPlaceOffice@brighton-hove.gov.uk

#### Oxford Street Housing Office

01273 293230

email: OxfordStreetOffice@brighton-hove.gov.uk

#### Selsfield Drive Housing Office

01273 293171

email: SelsfieldDriveOffice@brighton-hove.gov.uk

#### Victoria Road Housing Office

01273 293377

email: VictoriaRoadOffice@brighton-hove.gov.uk

#### Repairs Helpdesk - 24 hour reporting

0800 052 6140 or 01273 294409

#### Text (for non urgent repairs)

Begin your text with 'Repairs'

07786 204352

email: BHCC.repairs@mearsgroup.co.uk

#### Housing Income Management Team

01273 293224

email: Housing.IncomeManagement@brighton-hove.gov.uk

#### Rent Accounting Section

01273 293065 - for direct debit and payment method enquiries

01273 293303 - for home contents insurance

email: rentaccounting@brighton-hove.gov.uk

#### Car Parks & Garages

01273 296646

email: Parking.Domestic@brighton-hove.gov.uk

#### Right to Buy

01273 293074

email: rtbleasehold@brighton-hove.gov.uk

#### Sheltered Housing

01273 293255

email: sheltered@brighton-hove.gov.uk

#### Estates Service

01273 294769

email: EstatesServiceTeam@brighton-hove.gov.uk

#### Lettings

01273 293205

email: LettingsTeam@brighton-hove.gov.uk

### Other useful council numbers

#### Abandoned Vehicles

01273 292929

email: abandoned.vehicles@brighton-hove.gov.uk

#### Access Point (Adult Social Care)

01273 295555

email: accesspoint@brighton-hove.gov.uk

#### Allotments

01273 292929

email: allotments@brighton-hove.gov.uk

#### Animal Welfare Team

01273 292929/292446

email: ehl.community@brighton-hove.gov.uk

#### Building Control

01273 292030

email: building.control@brighton-hove.gov.uk

#### Carelink Plus

01273 673105

email: CareLinkPlus@brighton-hove.gov.uk

#### Council switchboard

01273 290000

#### Council Tax

01273 291291

email: council.tax@brighton-hove.gov.uk

#### Crematorium (Woodvale)

01273 604020

email: woodvale@brighton-hove.gov.uk

#### Disabled Access Toilets (Radar keys)

01273 292929

email: cityclean@brighton-hove.gov.uk

#### Disabled Parking (blue badges)

01273 296270

email: parking@brighton-hove.gov.uk

#### Gritting (roads)

01273 292929

email: wintermaintenance@brighton-hove.gov.uk

### Highways - dropped kerbs and crossovers

01273 292929

### Homemove Team

01273 294400

email: [homemove@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:homemove@brighton-hove.gov.uk)

### Housing Advice

01273 294400

email: [housing.advice@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:housing.advice@brighton-hove.gov.uk)

### Housing Benefit

01273 292000

email: [housing.benefits@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:housing.benefits@brighton-hove.gov.uk)

### Noise Nuisance

01273 292929

The Noise patrol can be contacted for noise complaints over the weekend from Friday 10pm – 3am Saturday morning and from 10pm Saturday night – 3am Sunday morning on 01273 293541

### Parking

01273 296622 (Hove) 01273 293225 (Brighton)

email: [parking@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:parking@brighton-hove.gov.uk)

### Pest Control

01273 292170

email: [pest.control@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:pest.control@brighton-hove.gov.uk)

### Planning applications & permissions

01273 292222

email: [planning.applications@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:planning.applications@brighton-hove.gov.uk)

### Public Toilets

01273 292929

### Refuse, recycling, and street cleansing

01273 292929

email: [cityclean@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:cityclean@brighton-hove.gov.uk)

### Roads and Pavements

01273 292929

### Stray dogs

01273 292929

Out of hours: 07827 967088

### Street Lighting

01273 292929

email: [streetlighting@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:streetlighting@brighton-hove.gov.uk)

### Trees

01273 292929

email: [arboriculture@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:arboriculture@brighton-hove.gov.uk)

## Other useful contacts

### Action on Elder Abuse

0808 808 8141

### Age Concern Brighton, Hove and Portslade

01273 720603

website: [www.ageconcernbrighton-hove.org.uk](http://www.ageconcernbrighton-hove.org.uk)

### ageuk

0800 169 6565

website: [www.ageuk.org.uk](http://www.ageuk.org.uk)

### Brighton & Hove Independent Mediation Service

01273 700812

email: [mediationservice@bhims.org.uk](mailto:mediationservice@bhims.org.uk)

### Brighton & Hove Resource Centre

01273 606160

### Brighton Housing Trust

01273 234737

email: [advice@bht.org.uk](mailto:advice@bht.org.uk)

### Citizens Advice Bureau

0845 120 3710

### Energy Saving Trust

0800 512 012

website: [www.energysavingtrust.org.uk](http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk)

### Harvest (Brighton & Hove)

01273 431700 email: [harvest@bhfood.org.uk](mailto:harvest@bhfood.org.uk)

### Job Centre Plus

01273 647400 (Brighton), 01273 368100 (Hove)

### Local Government Ombudsman

0300 061 0614 or 0845 602 1983

email: [advice@lgo.org.uk](mailto:advice@lgo.org.uk)

website: [www.lgo.org.uk](http://www.lgo.org.uk)

### Probate & Inheritance Tax helpline

0845 302900

### RISE (formerly women's refuge project)

01273 622822

website: [www.riseuk.org.uk](http://www.riseuk.org.uk)

### Sussex Police

Emergency 999

Non-emergency 0845 607 0999

website: [www.sussex.police.uk](http://www.sussex.police.uk)

### Treasury Solicitor

020 7210 3116 or 020 7210 3117

website: [www.tsol.gov.uk](http://www.tsol.gov.uk)

## Index

### A...

abandoned cars 38  
 adaptations 45  
 alterations 21  
 anti social behaviour 32  
 asbestos 24

### B...

benefits 18  
 business use 29  
 buying your home 42

### C...

car parking 37  
 caravans 38  
 community wardens 30  
 complaints 4  
 condensation 23  
 consultation 10  
 contents insurance 28  
 customer service standards 4

### D...

data protection 5  
 death of a tenant 40  
 demoted tenancies 8  
 domestic violence 35

### E...

ending your tenancy 40  
 energy efficiency 30  
 equalities 5  
 estate development budget 13  
 estate inspections 29  
 estates service 29  
 exchanges 42

### F...

fire safety 25  
 flood damage 23  
 freedom of information 6  
 frost 23

### G...

gardens 38  
 gas leaks 20  
 gas servicing 20  
 good neighbour 32  
 grounds maintenance 29

### H...

harassment 34  
 hate crimes 34  
 help with gardening and decorating 45  
 home security 24  
 homemove 41  
 housing benefit 18

### I...

insurance 28  
 improvements 21  
 introductory tenancies 8

### J...

joint tenancies 8

### L...

legionella 25  
 lodgers 9

### M...

moving 40  
 moving in 28  
 mutual exchanges 42

### N...

neighbourhood agreements 32  
 noise 33

### O...

overcrowding 8

### P...

paying rent 16  
 pest control 30  
 pets 36

### R...

racial harassment 34  
 rechargeable repairs 22  
 recycling 29  
 rent 16  
 rent arrears 17  
 repairs 20  
 resident involvement 12  
 right to buy 9  
 right to repair 10  
 right to manage 10  
 right to information 10  
 right to compensation for improvements 10  
 rubbish 29

**S...**

- secure tenancies 8
- service standards 4
- sheltered housing 44
- subletting 9
- succession 41
- sustainability 30

**T...**

- tenancy support 44
- tenant & resident associations 12
- transfers 41

**V...**

- violence 35

**W...**

- wildbirds and animals 36

**Y...**

- your rights 9

## Notes



**This is your tenant handbook. If you need a translation, tick the box and take to any housing office.**

هَذَا هو كتيب المستأجر الخاص بك. إذا كنت بحاجة إلى نسخة مترجمة، ضع علامة في الخانة و من ثم أخلد هذا إلى أي مكتب من مكاتب الإسكان.

Arabic

এটা হচ্ছে আপনার 'টেন্যান্ট হ্যান্ডবুক'। আপনি যদি এর বাংলায় অনুবাদের কপি পেতে চান, তাহলে বগুটিতে টিক চিহ্ন দিন এবং যেকোন হাউজিং অফিসে নিয়ে যান।

Bengali

这是你的租户手册。如果你需要一份翻译本，请在方格内加刷，并交给任何房屋办事处。

Cantonese

Ceci est votre manuel du locataire. Si vous avez besoin d'une traduction, cochez cette case et présentez-vous à n'importe quel bureau des affaires de logement.

French

این کتابچه مستأجر شما است. اگر احتیاج به ترجمه آن دارید، در مربع این علامت (✓) را بگذارید و به یک اداره مسکن ببرید.

Farsi

这是您的承租人手册。如果您需要一份翻译件，请勾此方框并拿到任何一个住房办公室。

Mandarin

Jest to Informator dla Najemcy (Tenant Handbook). Jeżeli chcesz otrzymać jego tłumaczenie, proszę o zaznaczenie okienka i dostarczenie tego do któregośkolwiek biura ds. mieszkaniowych (housing office).

Polish

Este documento é o seu "Manual de Inquilinos" (Tenant Handbook). Se precisa de uma tradução, por favor assinale a caixinha e entregue em qualquer Gabinete de Habitação (Housing Office).

Portuguese

Bu sizin kiracı el kitabınız. Çevirisine ihtiyacınız varsa, kutuyu işaretleyiniz ve herhangi bir konut bürosuna götürünüz.

Turkish

**This handbook can also be made available in large print, Braille or on CD or audio tape.**