

Tenant Handbook



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



Welcome

This is your tenant handbook. It has been put together 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 may not be reflected here, but we will keep you up to date through our website at www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/council-housing and our Homing In newsletter. You can also view and download this handbook at www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/tenant-handbook.

Please let us know if you or a member of your household has a particular need and would like any part of the book explained, or put on to CD or produced in large print. If you need to have any of our documents translated, please contact us on 01273 293030 or email Housing.CustomerServices@brighton-hove.gov.uk.

For all general enquiries, please contact the Housing Customer Services Team on 01273 293030 or email Housing.CustomerServices@brighton-hove.gov.uk.

We would like to thank the tenant representatives involved in compiling this handbook. They helped make sure it was as useful as possible to you.

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1 Customer care



Contacting us

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

Details of 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.

Brighton & Hove City Council's website address is www.brighton-hove.gov.uk. You will find information and contact details for all the council services there, including a section on housing. If you are an 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. You can also contact us on facebook at www.facebook.com/tenantandleaseholder or follow us on twitter at twitter.com/BHCCtenants.

What we aim to deliver

We are committed to improving our service, with the overall aim of achieving excellent housing management services for council tenants and leaseholders in Brighton & Hove. Our priorities are to:

- 1 Provide leadership of the citywide strategic housing role
- 2 Improve housing supply
- 3 Improve housing quality
- 4 Improve housing support
- 5 Modernise our services to deliver value for money
- 6 Develop a high performing workforce

Performance

We monitor how well we deliver services to you and this is reported to you in the Homing In newsletter. Our performance reports are also discussed at Area Panels, at the Housing & New Homes Committee and are available on our website.

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 does not always happen. As a first step, it is often best to contact the person who dealt with your enquiry by phone, letter or email. 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 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. You can complete an online form at www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/complaints.

You can also make your complaint by telephone or authorise someone to act on your behalf. For more information contact Customer Feedback on 01273 291229 or email customerfeedback@brighton-hove.gov.uk.

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?

If you have a complaint against Brighton & Hove City Council and have been through our formal complaints process but are not satisfied, the next step is to contact a 'Designated Person' - this would be an MP or one of your local councillors. A Designated Person can help resolve disputes between tenants and their landlords in whatever way they think is most likely to work. If the Designated Person cannot help they can refer your complaint to the Independent Housing Ombudsman.

You do not have to contact a Designated Person before the Housing Ombudsman will consider your complaint but, if you do not, there must be at least eight weeks from the end of the council's complaint process before the Housing Ombudsman can consider the case. Further details about the role of the Housing Ombudsman can be found at www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk.

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. Further information can be found at www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/equalities.

Interpreting and translation

We can provide information in a range of formats including CD, large print and Braille. We can also translate into different languages or arrange interpreters. Please contact the Housing Customer Services Team to discuss your individual needs.

Data protection & information sharing

Brighton & Hove City Council is committed to protecting your personal information. The information you provide will be treated confidentially at all times. Security safeguards apply to both manual and electronically held data and only relevant staff can access your information. As a data controller, we also have a responsibility to make sure you know why and how your personal information is being used in accordance with relevant data protection law.

We will process your personal information for the following purposes:

- Managing your tenancy agreement
- Repairs and maintenance
- Provision of support and advice to you as a tenant

We will store your personal information such as your tenancy records in our housing management database and in paper files, for the duration of your tenancy. Following the end of your tenancy, the information will be archived for seven years and then destroyed.

Your personal information may be shared with the following teams or organisations for the purpose of prevention and/or detection of a crime/ fraud. The National Crime Agency, Social Housing Tenancy Fraud Project, the Department for Work and Pensions and Brighton & Hove City Council's Corporate Fraud team.

Remember

You have the right to obtain a copy of your tenancy record from the council upon request. If you wish to do this, you should contact the council's Data Protection Team by emailing data.protection@brighton-hove.gov.uk, calling 01273 295959 or writing to the Information Governance Team, Brighton & Hove City Council, 4th Floor, Bartholomew House, Bartholomew Square, Brighton, BN1 1JE.

2 Your rights



This section gives a brief description of your main rights as set out in housing laws. For more information, please contact the Housing Customer Services Team.

Types of tenancies

Introductory tenancies

The introductory tenancy is for a trial period of one year. During that time, you must show that you are responsible enough to keep your home and can keep to the conditions set out in your 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, paying guests, 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 or your visitors behave in an anti-social way, 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, paying guests 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 and civil partners
- partners who have lived together for 12 months or more and 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. At the end of the notice period, the entire tenancy comes to an end.

A joint tenancy can only be transferred into a sole tenancy with a court order.

Overcrowding

It is your responsibility to make sure your home is not overcrowded. Every home has a maximum number of occupants according to the floor area of the living space (bedrooms

and living rooms). The permitted numbers are shown on your tenancy agreement. If the number of people living in your home is more than the permitted number, it 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 half
- babies under one are not counted

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. By law, the council is required to serve a notice warning the tenant of its intention to take legal action. These are legal documents. We may serve you notice, for a number of reasons, some of which are listed below:

- 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 cannot do unless you move out
- you are an under-occupying successor
- there is a legal ground for possession under the Housing Act 1985, the Housing Act 1996 or any other law

For more information, you can view our Tenancy Policy at www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/tenancy-policy.

The right of succession

Tenants may have the right for their spouse, cohabitee or civil partner 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 someone qualified to succeed to your tenancy under the right of succession. If you want to pass your tenancy on, please contact the Housing Customer Services Team 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 of Seeking Possession or a 'Notice to Quit'.

If you suspect a property has been sublet, please report it to the corporate Fraud Team on 01273 291700 or e-mail anti-fraud@brighton-hove.gov.uk.

The right to take in lodgers (secure tenants only)

You have the right to take in a lodger or have members of your family living with you, 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

You can inform us of any changes to your household, by completing our online form at www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/change-of-occupancy or calling Housing Customer Services on 01273 293030.

The rules for renting out a room in your home are not too complicated. The government's guide to renting a room in your home is a good place to start. You can find that at www.gov.uk/rent-room-in-your-home/the-rent-a-room-scheme.

The right to buy (secure tenants only)

If you are a secure tenant and have been the tenant of a public sector landlord for at least three years, you can apply to buy your home (unless it's Seniors Housing 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 Leasehold Team for further information on 01273 293074 or email 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 usually consult with you about changes to our policy or practice that may substantially change the housing service we provide to you, your home and your neighbourhood.

Except for changes to rent or any other charges, the terms of the tenancy agreement can only be changed if we give you written notice that we intend to alter the agreement. We will write to you and tell you about the changes we are proposing to make 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 agreement may also be changed where you and we agree in writing.

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:

- you have no hot water or 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.

Please see our repairs and improvements handbook for more information. You can view or download the handbook at www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/housing-repairs.

The right to improve your home (secure tenants only)

You must get permission in writing from us before you start any work. An improvement means an alteration or addition to your home. 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 Housing Customer Services.

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. If you wish to see this information, please contact the council's Data Protection Officer by emailing data.protection@brighton-hove.gov.uk or writing to Information Governance Team, Brighton & Hove City Council, 4th Floor, Bartholomew House, Bartholomew Square, Brighton, BN1 1JE.

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.

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 Your responsibilities

Your rent and 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

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

Tenants in Seniors Housing also pay an Intensive Housing Management Charge for additional services. This includes services charges which pay towards the costs for the scheme manager and the community alarm service.

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 choose to pay fortnightly or monthly rent must be paid in advance. Please contact the Housing Income Management Team if you want to discuss this.

You can also access your account online through the housing Customer Online Service (COS). You can view your rent account and other associated accounts online 24 hours a day, seven days a week. You can also make payments online or offer a repayment arrangement if you are in arrears.

Please contact housingcos@brighton-hove.gov.uk for more information or follow the link on www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/rent to sign up.

If you are not signed up to COS, 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.

Can my rent change?

We may increase or reduce your rent and other charges. If this is going to happen we will give you at least four weeks' notice in writing after which the changes in your rent will be implemented. This usually takes place in April each year in line with government guidelines.

If your home has had adaptations which have altered the original property, such as adding an extra bedroom, this could mean the property is revalued and the rental value could change immediately following the adaptation.

How do I pay my rent?

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.

Contact the Rent Accounting Section on 01273 293065 for more information or complete a direct debit form at www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/payingrent.

Standing Order

Paying by standing order is another simple way to pay your rent if you have a bank or building society account. You can complete a form www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/payingrent Once you have filled in a standing order form and sent it to your bank or building society, they will make your payments automatically.

Alternatively, you can fill in a form at the bank or building society. 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.

Pay online

You can pay your rent online through our secure server if you have a debit card. Go to www.brighton-hove.gov.uk and follow the 'pay online' 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, libraries in Brighton & Hove provide computers with free internet access.

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 or we can take telephone payments from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday on 01273 293030. You will need a debit card and your rent account reference number.

At any Pay Point outlet

You can pay at any outlet displaying a Pay Point sign free of charge using your payment card. Please contact the Rent Accounting Section to order a payment card on 01273 293065. If you use a payment card to pay your rent, please make sure that you always get a payment receipt for your records.

Council employees

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

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

We will do everything we can to advise and support tenants who are adversely impacted by national changes to the welfare benefit system; we can and do offer additional support to tenants experiencing difficulties. Please contact us by calling 01273 293224 or emailing housing.incomemanagement@brighton-hove.gov.uk. For more information, visit www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/rent.

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 – Moneyworks helps Brighton & Hove residents save money, increase their income and manage their money better. The services are for anyone who is struggling to make ends meet.

For more information about Moneyworks, ring the Helpline on 0800 988 7037 or 01273 809288 or visit www.advicebrighton-hove.org.uk/moneyworks.

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. If it does become necessary to refer your case to court, you will normally be responsible for paying all the legal costs and court fees on top of the full amount you owe us. 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.

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

If you have a joint tenancy, each joint tenant is responsible for paying all of the rent, other charges and any outstanding arrears. Even if one joint tenant leaves, both tenants will still be responsible for the full weekly charges for the property and any outstanding arrears until the tenancy is ended. If one tenant is planning to leave the property, please contact Housing Customer Services to discuss the options available to you.

Am I eligible for Housing Benefit or Council Tax Reduction?

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 not it may delay the date from which any entitlement to housing benefit is paid.

If you do get Housing Benefit or Council Tax Reduction 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? (Seniors Housing)

There is a weekly service charge for the Seniors Housing service. This is called an 'Intensive Housing Management Charge' reflecting the additional support the service provides. This charge is eligible for housing benefit.

Contact the Seniors Housing team on 01273 293030 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 benefit 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

4 Repairs & improvements



For full information on the council's repairs service - including a list of council and tenant responsibilities - please refer to the Repairs & Improvement Handbook, which can be found on our website at www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/housing-repairs.

For a paper copy, please contact Housing Customer Services on 01273 293030.

How to report a repair

To report all repairs, call 0800 052 6140 24 hours a day, seven days a week

On our website at www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/repairs

By phone 01273 294409
(if calling from a mobile)

It is important you read the information in the Repairs & Improvement Handbook as you are required to adhere to the responsibilities and advice given as part of your tenancy agreement. It has all the key information required for repairs to your home, which includes the following:

- how to report a repair
- emergency repairs
- what repairs the council is responsible for
- what repairs you are responsible for
- servicing of gas appliances
- advice on safety in your home
- what to do in emergency situations
- how to manage and minimise damp and condensation in your home
- rechargeable repairs
- what you should do before carrying out alterations to your home

If you do wish to carry out any alterations or improvements in your home, you must seek permission from the council before you start any work.

5 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.

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 bank
- your home help and support workers

- the benefits agency
- TV licence
- council tax
- your employer
- children's school
- library service
- household insurance company
- DVLA

What can I expect?

Once you have moved into your property, we will contact you to check 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. We will contact you to arrange this. At the end of the year, your tenancy will automatically become secure unless we have taken action to end or extend your introductory tenancy.

Our staff also visit all households. These prearranged visits 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 do not need to wait for our visit - if you think we can help, please contact Housing Customer Services.

If you live in Seniors Housing, your scheme manager will also give you information about our Seniors Housing Service.

Insuring your home's contents

We strongly advise all tenants and leaseholders to take out household content insurance.

Many council tenants and leaseholders believe that we automatically insure their furniture, belongings and decorations against theft, fire, vandalism or burst pipes, but this is not the case. Unfortunately, many people only realise this after the damage has been done.

We recommend Crystal Insurance, provided by Thistle Insurance services, insured by Allianz Insurance PLC. They offer a good choice of cover with very competitive premium rates. You can of course choose to make your own arrangements through any other insurer.

Please contact Crystal insurance directly with any questions regarding their scheme on 0845 601 7007 (or 01628 586 187 from a mobile). You can also call them if you need help filling in the form as they can complete the application process over the phone with you.

Apply via the Crystal Insurance website at www.crystal-insurance.co.uk or pick up a form from housing office receptions. New tenant packs include a copy of this form. If you would like to request a Policy Document they are available upon request from Crystal insurance. Please send your application form directly to Thistle Insurance Services Ltd.

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
- do not delay to collect your valuables
- do not investigate the fire
- check doors with the back of your hand before you open them - if they are warm do not open them as the fire is on the other side
- always use the stairs - do not 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. For more information on fire safety, visit www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/fire-safety-in-flats.

Oxygen cylinders

You will need to notify us if you or a member of your household needs to store oxygen cylinders in your home for medical purposes.

You must not keep any portable oil or bottled gas appliances in your home or in shared areas such as storage rooms. You must not keep any dangerous or flammable items in your home, such as petrol, diesel fuel, and gasoline, apart from those reasonably needed for general household purposes.

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 and must provide us with a forwarding address and telephone number. This is so that we can contact you or a nominated representative if there are any emergencies 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 and/or a Notice of Seeking Possession 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 Housing Customer Services 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.

Some requests may require permission from the council's planning department. To find out more about planning permission, call 01273 292222, email planning.applications@brighton-hove.gov.uk, or visit www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/planning.

Keeping firearms in my home

Firearms, such as a rifle, pistol, or other portable gun, can only be stored in council premises with our prior written permission and where licensed and confirmed with the police. No firearm or other weaponry can be publically displayed or discharged in and around council premises. No weaponry can be stored in council premises without our prior written consent including swords and bows such as crossbows.

How my estate is 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:

- keep communal areas of blocks clean
- keep bin areas clean
- check for safety hazards
- report repairs to communal areas
- arrange the removal of dumped rubbish
- check and change communal lights as necessary
- emergency lock changes (charges may apply)

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.

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, do not leave anything beside bins and chutes

- keeping entrances and common ways clear – do not leave anything in corridor or landings, it will be removed as it is a fire risk
- 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 Seniors Housing 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 Housing Customer Services 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 – please call 01273 292929 for further details. Discounts are available for older residents and people receiving benefits.

More information including costs for removing bulky items can be found at www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/bulkywaste.

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, visit www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/cityclean.

Sustainability and energy efficiency

The council is committed to taking action for a more sustainable future. The Housing Service 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:

- using contractors with a commitment to recycling and reducing their carbon footprint
- installing energy efficient lighting in communal areas
- 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
- 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 independent, expert advice on saving energy in your home, or for funding requests for making energy efficiency improvements, contact your local energy advice centre. Call the Energy Saving Advice Service on 0300 123 1234 or e-mail energy-advice@est.org.uk

For more information on energy saving, visit the Energy Saving Trust website at www.energysavingtrust.org.uk.

Energy saving light bulbs

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.

Water saving tips

To help reduce your water bill there are many tips provided online by your water supplier.

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 first. 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.

For more information, and to complete and online form, please www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/alterations.

For information about planning requirements, call 01273 292222, email planning.applications@brighton-hove.gov.uk or visit www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/planning.

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. Charges apply. They do not treat bedbugs but can give advice on how to deal with them. Contact them on 01273 294266 or email pest.control@brighton-hove.gov.uk.

6 Being a good neighbour



How can I be a good neighbour?

- welcome new neighbours
- make sure your house/flat contributes positively to the appearance of an area, eg keeping your garden tidy
- alert someone, such as the Housing Customer Services Team, 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
- become 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, clean up after the animal, don't let it foul public areas, or let it 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.

Anti-social behaviour (ASB)

Tenant responsibilities

As a council tenant your tenancy agreement states that you, anyone living with you, and your visitors must not behave in an antisocial manner or use your home or neighbourhood for any criminal activities, such as drug dealing.

You must not cause a nuisance, harass anyone or do anything that unreasonably interferes with the peace, comfort and enjoyment 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. You are responsible for the behaviour of every person (including children) living in or visiting your home, both within your home and in the surrounding area.

Examples of ASB include:

- loud music
- criminal damage and graffiti
- drug dealing
- vandalism, ie causing damage to property
- harassment or intimidation
- dumping rubbish
- racist and homophobic behaviour
- problems caused by pets such as noise or fouling
- abuse or violence towards someone living in your home, neighbours, other people in the community or council officers and contractors
- vehicle related nuisance
- verbal abuse
- violence

Reporting anti-social behaviour

You can report anti-social behaviour in different ways, either:

- Use the online anti-social behaviour and hate crime reporting form to report incidents and problems by following the link on www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/asb-housing
- In an emergency, you should contact the relevant emergency service, fire, police or ambulance on 999
- Contact the Housing Customer Services Team

For more information, please read our anti-social behaviour leaflet and our Witness and Victim Support leaflet which can be downloaded from www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/asb-housing.

Dispute resolution

There are charities in the city that may be able to assist with a neighborhood or family dispute, for example the Brighton & Hove Independent Mediation Service (BHIMS) offers a comprehensive range of services aimed at resolving many different conflicts and disputes including neighbourhood disputes and family conflict.

Please call 01273 700812 for more advice or email mediation@bhims.org.uk or visit their website at www.bhims.org.uk or contact Housing Customer Services.

Harassment

You or anyone living with you or visiting you must not harass or threaten any other person (or group of people) at all and in particular not do so because of their age, disability (which includes mental health conditions) ethnicity/ race, gender reassignment, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, or for any other reason. This applies to residents, their family, friends and visitors, officers and employees / agents of the council. Examples of harassment include, but are not limited to:

- physical violence or assault, threats of violence or violent gestures
- using intimidating abusive or insulting words or behaviour
- persistent and vexatious or offensive contact by post, telephone or any other means
- damage or threats to damage property
- stalking
- displaying any notice which is visible outside your home that is inflammatory; offensive or defamatory
- using social media to post any material which is indecent, abusive, offensive or false which causes needless anxiety or distress
- allowing your property to be used as a platform for radicalism or extremist activities or to publish/broadcast hate messages

Safeguarding

Anybody can be subject to abuse including, older people, people with a physical disability, mental illness or learning disability. The abuser can be well known to the person being abused. The abuser may be:

- a partner or a 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 abuse
- domestic violence
- psychological or emotional abuse
- sexual abuse
- discriminatory abuse
- modern slavery

We follow the Sussex multi-agency policy and procedures for safeguarding vulnerable adults. If you experience, witness, or suspect abuse is happening to a vulnerable person, 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 or 101. In an emergency call 999 or visit www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/keeping-people-safe.

If you are concerned about a child or young person, please visit www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/frontdoorforfamilies.

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
- smoke in enclosed shared areas
- interfere with fire safety equipment
- block emergency exits
- 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
- let someone you do not know into the building
- wedge the door open or leave it open for any reason

In the case of flooring, we recommend that floors should be carpeted with underlay and the use of wooden flooring in flats must be avoided altogether.

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.

Mobility scooters

You must contact us before purchasing any mobility scooter in order to get permission and to discuss safe storage options. It is your responsibility to find a suitable location to store scooters. We will take action to remove any items left in shared areas without our permission, including mobility scooters, and apply appropriate charges for removal, if this becomes necessary.

Parking

Where can I park my car?

There are different parking control schemes across the city and it is your responsibility to ensure you and your visitors follow the rules relevant to the area.

Vehicles cannot be kept in front gardens unless you have a driveway with a lowered kerb and a hard standing for your vehicle, then you can use this to park. If you wish to apply for an alteration, please visit www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/alterations. This will be subject to approval by housing, the Highways Team and you will need planning permission.

How can I rent a garage or parking space?

We have dedicated parking bays and garages across the city on Housing land and if you would like to rent a garage or parking space, you can do so on line through the Car Parks & Garages webpage at www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/garages.

If you don't not have access to the internet, please contact Housing Customer Services on 01273 293030 for more information.

If you rent a garage or car parking space, you will pay a weekly rental charge. If you are in arrears with your rent, you will not normally be allowed to rent a garage or parking space.

Can I repair my car outside my home?

You can carry out minor routine maintenance to your own vehicle in your garage, parking space or outside your home, if 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. You must not dispose of oil or oil-based paint down the drains. If you do, we may take legal action which could result in you losing your home.

Anything non-routine or if it is a cause of nuisance should be reported to the Housing Customer Services Team 01273 293030.

Caravans, boats, trailers and other vehicles

If you want to park a caravan, boat, trailer or other such vehicle in your garden, in a parking space or on other housing land, you will need to get permission from Housing Customer Services.

You cannot leave a vehicle, which has been declared SORN -(Statutory Off Road Notification) on housing land without permission from Housing Customer Services.

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 take action against your tenancy. Any vehicles considered to be abandoned can be removed and disposed of.

What do I do if my vehicle is ticketed, or taken away?

Your vehicle will only be ticketed or removed if you have not followed the instructions of the local parking control scheme or have left it untaxed or abandoned or in an unroadworthy condition. If your car is ticketed, you will need to contact the company responsible to make payment – full details are given on the Parking Charge Letter, which will be sent to your home address. If your car is taken away, there will be a notice nearby telling you what to do to get it back.

Pets and animals

If you want to keep pets you must get our written permission. 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 Seniors 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

Tenant Handbook

- 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, venomous (poisonous) or constrictor snakes or lizards

We do not permit pet breeding in our properties and strongly recommend that you have your pet neutered. There are an enormous number of unwanted pets and neutering helps control the problem. Your vet can explain the procedure and tell you about the health benefits it can also have for your pet. We have a list of local subsidised schemes which can help with the costs.

To view our Pet Policy, or to download a pet permission form, or our leaflet about keeping pets, please visit www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/pets-in-council-homes. Alternatively, for more information and paper copies, please contact Housing Customer Services.

If you believe an animal is being mistreated, please report it to the RSPCA on 0300 1234 999.

The Animal Warden Team investigates complaints about stray dogs, animal licensing, dangerous wild animal licensing and home boarding. They also investigate:

- dogs causing fear or minor injury to people
- injury caused to dogs by other dogs in public places
- attacks on assistance dogs

You can report any of the issues by emailing animalwardens@brighton-hove.gov.uk, by calling 01273 294266 or visiting www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/animalwardens.

brighton-hove.gov.uk/animalwardens.

Contact the police about:

- dogs used as weapons
- incidents involving guard dogs
- incidents involving banned breeds as listed in section 1 of the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 (amended)
- dog attacks of a serious nature on humans

Incidents of this nature should be reported to Sussex Police on 101.

Visiting officers and dogs

If an officer visits your home we ask that dogs are kept in another room.

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 Housing Customer Services.

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

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



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 normally ending on a Sunday. If you are transferring to another Brighton & Hove City Council tenancy, you can give up to 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 should complete a 'Notice to end a tenancy' form, available from www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/ending-your-tenancy.

Once you have returned your written notice to us, we will arrange for a member of the Re-Housing Team 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 your tenancy end 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 Benefits 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 Housing Customer Services.

Compensation for improvements

If you move, you can apply for compensation for certain improvements you have made with our permission, eg fitting a new kitchen or bathroom. Please contact Housing Customer Services for more details.

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 contact Housing Customer Services.

Who can take on my tenancy if I die?

If a tenant dies, their tenancy can be passed on to a joint tenant, spouse, cohabitee or civil partner, and in certain circumstances a family member - 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.

If your tenancy began before 1 April 2012

In the event of your death, the tenancy may pass on to your spouse or civil partner, a joint tenant or a member of your family if certain conditions are met. This is called 'succession'.

If your tenancy began after 1 April 2012

In the event of your death, the tenancy may pass on to your spouse or civil partner or a joint tenant or a co-habitee (a person living with you as if they were your spouse or civil partner) if certain conditions are met.

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, cohabitee or civil partner can succeed to the tenancy and can stay in the same property
- if a member of the household is able to succeed to the tenancy, but 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

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.

What will happen if a succession has already taken place?

There can only be one succession in law but we will work closely with anyone remaining to find a solution. Family members can apply for discretionary succession and may be accepted if they are in priority need. The application will be assessed against criteria set out in the Tenancy Policy to decide whether they can succeed to your tenancy. A successful application for a discretionary succession where the property they live in is not suitable for their needs, for example it is too large, will mean the family member will be required to move.

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.

Housing & Planning Act 2016

After Chapter 6 of the Housing & Planning Act 2016 comes into force, all rights to succeed will be limited to a spouse, civil partner or co-habitee living with you (as if they were your spouse or civil partner). A new tenancy will be granted for a fixed term unless exceptions apply. The council will apply this law when it comes into force.

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. Please visit www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/housing-application or call Housing Customer Services. 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 so please ensure your rent payments are up to date.

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 £2500 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 Housing Customer Services for more information and an application form or visit www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/tis.

Moving to Seniors Housing

We have Seniors 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. Contact Housing Customer Services Team or for more information visit www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/seniors-housing.

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. Each tenant signs over (assigns) their tenancy to the other. Please note that introductory tenants cannot exchange their property.

If you are interested in a mutual exchange and would like to find someone to swap with, you should register your details on Exchange Locata, an online service which helps council and housing association tenants find an exchange.

The web address is www.exchangelocata.org.uk.

You can also place adverts on national websites like www.homeswapper.co.uk and www.houseexchange.org.uk. This can be a good way of finding an exchange if you want to move out of the local area, but please note that there is a fee for joining these services.

Once you have found a potential swap, please download a form at www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/mutual-exchange or contact the Housing Customer Services 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 give permission unless there is a ground set out in Schedule 3 of the 1985 Housing Act, such as the property being substantially larger than the tenant needs or the swap causing overcrowding, or in one of the grounds set out in Schedule 14 of the Localism Act 2011.

Private sector

You can also 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 Housing Customer Services 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 the tenancy, but the property is too big for you
- the property is seniors accommodation or 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 Housing Customer Services for further advice.

Buying your home

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

- **Right to Buy** - If you are a secure tenant with us, and have been the tenant of a public sector landlord for at least three years, you can apply to buy your home (unless it's Seniors Housing 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 Leasehold Team for further information on 01273 293074 or email rtbleasehold@brighton-hove.gov.uk.
- **Low Cost Home Ownership** - There are various low cost home ownership options available to Brighton & Hove residents, although all are subject to eligibility and funding. Moat is the appointed home buy agent in Sussex who co-ordinate affordable home ownership schemes in the south east. Details of all the schemes currently available can be found on www.homebuyservice.co.uk/homebuy-options or you can call the Moat home ownership enquiry line on 0300 323 0002 (8am to 5pm Monday to Friday).

8 Resident Involvement



Get involved and make a difference

The council has a longstanding commitment to working closely with tenants and leaseholders to work on continually improving our housing services.

How can I get involved?

Your opinions about your home and neighbourhood are very important to us. We want to hear your views about the service you receive. Your involvement helps us make improvements.

There are many different ways you can have your say. You can get involved by giving as much or as little time you are able to. For more information contact the Resident Involvement Team on 01273 294651.

What can I get involved with?

Tenant and resident associations

If there is not a group near you, start your own group with the support of the Resident Involvement Team. For more information and a full list of associations in the city, visit www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/resident-associations.

Individual residents

Use social media

Keep up-to-date with news on resident involvement by visiting www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/resident-involvement, liking our facebook page at www.facebook.com/tenantandleaseholder and following us on twitter.com/BHCCtenants.

Take part in surveys

Talk to us on the doorstep, over the phone, by post or email or at a community event. We promote these surveys in Homing In, on facebook and on our website. Contact the Resident Involvement Team to join the five-minute survey group.

Estate inspections

We inspect all our estates to make sure they are clean and tidy, and identify work or improvements that need doing. Residents can report issues by following the link to the online form on www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/estates-service or calling the repairs helpdesk.

Resident Citywide Conference

Tenants and leaseholders from across the city come together to discuss citywide matters, find out what is available, and meet the faces behind our services.

Mystery shopping

Residents are trained to make unannounced visits or telephone calls and report back on the service they receive. This helps us improve our customer services.

Service Improvement Groups – four meetings a year

These groups give residents a voice in improving standards in your homes, value for money, tenancy, neighbourhoods, communities and involving more people.

City-wide Special Interest Groups – from four to six meetings a year

These groups are resident-led groups of people who live in either seniors housing or are leaseholders or who have a disability who come together to share what is important to them, and are consulted on services that affect them.

Area Panels – two-hour meetings four times a year

These panels consist of resident association representatives who meet regularly to discuss service, performance and neighbourhood issues. Volunteer as an Area Panel representative at your local tenant and resident association and come to our Area Panel meetings. Comments are collected for reports that go to the council's Housing & New Homes Committee.

Who should I contact to get involved?

The Resident Involvement Team can be contacted by calling 01273 294651 or emailing RIT@brighton-hove.gov.uk.

9 Supporting independence



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

Seniors Housing – independent and community living

Seniors Housing is a positive housing choice for older people, over 55 years, who want to live independently in a sociable community.

Our Seniors Housing team offers the following benefits:

- a variety of locations and properties, including flats and some bungalows
- a secure tenancy with the privacy of your own front door and living space
- a named scheme manager who can help residents remain independent, safe and happy
- a 24-hour alarm that allows residents to call for help in an emergency
- a vibrant community so residents can sustain friendships and feel a sense of belonging.
- regular scheme meetings and other get-togethers
- opportunities for residents to comfortably maintain or improve their health, care, resilience and wellbeing
- shared gardens and lounges where residents may sit and relax
- guest rooms where family and friends may stay for short visits
- we will carry out a fire drill at least once a year

Our Scheme Managers work Monday to Friday and can carry out a wellbeing call at least once per week. They will also carry out a longer review meeting with residents at least once a year or where requested.

Seniors Housing is not a nursing home or residential care – it is specialist housing that enables older people to live an independent and enjoyable life. Housing do not provide social or

medical care although staff can advise how to contact Adult Social Care for referrals or for a health practitioner.

For an information pack and application, please call the Housing Customer Services Team on 01273 293030 or please visit www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/seniors-housing.

If you currently live in Seniors Housing and have any queries, please speak to your scheme manager.

Tenancy support

What if I need extra support managing my tenancy?

If you are having problems managing your tenancy, please contact Housing Customer Services for advice. Depending on your needs, this may involve referring you to another service. The support we offer may include:

- advice in running your home well
- making the most of your neighbourhood
- putting you in touch with extra help

What if my tenancy is at risk?

Our Tenancy Sustainment Team offers flexible support to tenants experiencing difficulties 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.

Tenancy sustainment

The Tenancy Sustainment Team can provide support that includes:

- help 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
- accessing 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 it offers, please contact Housing Customer Services on 01273 293030 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 your home 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 or visit www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/accesspoint. 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 people 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 in receipt of Housing Benefit and over 70 or have a disability, and do not have 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 every two years. You can apply for a decorating pack 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, please complete an online application form at www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/gardening-and-decorating.

If you do not have access to the internet, please contact Housing Customer Services on 01273 293030.

10 Useful contacts



Housing

Car Parks & Garages

01273 293030
housing.carparksandgarages@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Estates Service

01273 294769
EstatesServiceTeam@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Housing Customer Service Team

01273 293030
housing.customerservices@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Housing Income Management Team

01273 293224
housing.incomemanagement@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Rehousing

01273 296686
Re-HousingTeam@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Rent Accounting Section

01273 293065 - for direct debit and payment method enquiries
rentaccounting@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Repairs

To report all repairs just call 0800 052 6140, 24 hours a day, seven days a week or from a mobile phone call 01273 294409

You can also report repairs on our website at www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/repairs

Right to Buy & Leasehold

01273 293074
rtbleasehold@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Seniors Housing

01273 293030
seniorshousing@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Other useful council numbers

Abandoned Vehicles

01273 292929
abandoned.vehicles@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Access Point (Adult Social Care)

01273 295555
accesspoint@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Allotments

01273 292929
allotments@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Animal Warden Team

01273 294266
animalwardens@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Building Control

01273 292050
building.control@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Carelink Plus

01273 673105
CareLinkPlus@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Community Safety Team

01273 292735
communitysafety.casework@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Council switchboard

01273 290000

Council Tax

01273 291291
council.tax@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Crematorium (Woodvale)

01273 604020
woodvale@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Highways - dropped kerbs and crossovers

01273 292929

Homemove Team

01273 293030
housing.customerservices@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Housing Customer Online Service

housingcos@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Housing Advice

01273 294400

housing.advice@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Housing Benefit

01273 292000
housing.benefits@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Noise Nuisance

01273 294266
ehl.environmentalprotection@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Citywide Parking

01273 296622
01273 296270 Disabled parking (blue badges)
parking@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Pest Control

01273 294266
pest.control@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Planning applications and permissions

01273 292222
planning.applications@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Public Toilets

01273 293118
01273 292929 Disabled Access Toilets (Radar keys)
cityclean@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Refuse, recycling, and street cleansing

01273 292929
cityclean@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Roads and pavements

01273 292251
HighwayBasicMaintenance@brighton-hove.gov.uk

School Admissions

01273 293653
Schooladmissions@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Stray dogs

01273 294266
Out of hours: 07827 967088

Street lighting

01273 292929
streetlighting@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Trees

Tenant Handbook

01273 292929
arboriculture@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Other useful contacts

Action on Elder Abuse
0808 808 8141
www.elderabuse.org.uk

ageuk Brighton & Hove

01273 720603
info@ageuk-bh.org.uk

Brighton & Hove Independent Mediation Service

01273 700812
mediation@bhims.org.uk

Brighton & Hove Resource Centre

01273 606160
www.resourcecentre.org.uk

Brighton Housing Trust

01273 234737 or 01273 645400
www.bht.org.uk

Citizens Advice Bureau (Hove)

0300 330 9033

Civil Legal Advice Website

0345 345 4 345
www.gov.uk/civil-legal-advice

Energy Saving Trust

0300 123 1234
energy-advice@est.org.uk

Harvest (Brighton & Hove)

01273 431700
Info@bhfood.org.uk

Housing Ombudsman Service

0300 111 3000
www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Job Centre Plus (Brighton)

0345 604 3719

Money works

0800 988 7037
01273 809288
www.advicebrighton-hove.org.uk/moneyworks

National Centre for Domestic Violence (NCDV)

0800 970 2070
www.ncdv.org.uk

Probate and Inheritance Tax helpline

0845 302900

RISE (formerly women's refuge project)

Freephone 0300 323 9985
www.riseuk.org.uk

RSPCA

0300 1234 999
www.rspca.org.uk/home

Sussex Police

Non-emergency 101
Emergency 999
www.sussex.police.uk

Translation? Tick this box and take to any council office

- ترجمة؟ ضع علامة في المربع وخذها إلى مكتب البلدية. Arabic
- অনুবাদ? বক্সে টিক চিহ্ন দিয়ে কাউন্সিল অফিসে নিয়ে যান। Bengali
- 需要翻譯? 請在這方格內加刷, 並送回任何市議會的辦事處。Cantonese
- ترجمه؟ لطفاً این مربع را علامتگذاری نموده و آن را به هر یک از دفاتر شهرداری ارائه نمایید. Farsi
- Traduction? Veuillez cocher la case et apporter au council. French
- 需要翻譯? 請在這方格內划勾, 并送回任何市议会的办事处。Mandarin
- Źłumaczenie? Zaznacz to okienko i zwróć do któregokolwiek biura samorządu lokalnego (council office). Polish
- Tradução? Coloque um visto na quadrícula e leve a uma qualquer repartição de poder local (council office). Portuguese
- Tercümesi için kareyi işaretleyiniz ve bir semt belediye burosuna veriniz Turkish
- other (please state)

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