

Tenants Handbook

Summary



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Section 1

Introduction

This handbook has been prepared by tenants and council staff as a brief reference guide with important information you may need about your tenancy. For more detailed information please see your Tenancy Agreement or speak to your local housing officer.

The Council works with tenants and tenant groups and we welcome any comments regarding the services we provide. You can find details of how to let us know what you think of the services we provide (section 13) and contact details are at the back of this handbook (section 14).

Section 2

Tenancy Agreement

What type of tenancy do I have?

Most council tenants have a Scottish Secure Tenancy. The Tenancy Agreement which is a legal contract sets out your rights and responsibilities as a tenant and the council's duties to you as your landlord. Everything you need to know about your rights and responsibilities as a tenant can be found in your Tenancy Agreement.

What are my main rights as a tenant?

- You have the right to occupy the property for as long as you wish if you comply with the tenancy conditions
- You have the right to have a joint tenancy with another person subject to certain conditions
- You have the right to carry out reasonable alterations to your home with the council's consent
- If you die, other members of your household living with you may have the right to succeed to your tenancy.
- You have the right to have a lodger, assign your tenancy or to sublet your home but written permission from the council is required
- The Council has adopted the Model Scottish Secure Tenancy agreement and given additional rights to tenants such as the right to keep one domestic pet in your home (tenants in flats and Sheltered Housing need to request permission).

What are my main obligations as a tenant?

You must occupy the property, pay your rent, look after the property and not annoy or disturb your neighbours.

Section 3

Repairs

What are my repairs responsibilities as a Tenant?

You are responsible for various maintenance tasks and some minor repairs, such as:

- Internal decoration and repairing minor cracks and holes
- Replacing plugs and chains on baths and basins
- Clearing internal plumbing blockages
- Resetting tripped circuit breakers and replacing light bulbs
- Testing smoke and carbon monoxide detectors
- Replacing keys and locks if keys are lost or stolen
- Repairing any damage that you, your family or any visitors have caused - otherwise you are likely to be charged for the repair of this damage (you will be recharged for the repair of any such damage if you move house, if not dealt with at the time, and costs are likely to be higher if the delay causes further damage)
- Reporting any criminal damage or vandalism to the police, getting a police incident number, and passing it on to the Council when requesting the repair
- Reporting repairs as soon as possible and taking action to prevent further damage
- The provision and upkeep of 'dividing' fences – the Council only provide 'boundary' fences at the boundary of Council land, and low level 'trip' fences to indicate the separation of garden grounds





What information do I need to provide when reporting a repair?

When requesting a repair please have ready:

- Your name, address and telephone number
- As much detail as possible about the problem

A convenient time for the repair or inspection

When you request a repair, it is given a priority based on the nature of the work required. For vulnerable tenants, it may be possible to arrange a repair faster than normal. Please make us aware of any special circumstances when reporting a repair.

How can I help?

Once arrangements for your repair have been made, there are a number of things you should do to help us minimise inconvenience to you.

Before we arrive, please clear the area around the repair - this may include lifting floor finishes, clearing surfaces, emptying cupboards, taking down curtains or moving furniture.

We can offer assistance in certain special circumstances. If you are going out, you need to make sure that there is a responsible person present to let us in and that they remain until the repair is complete.

Please keep pets and children away from the area of the repair whilst work is in progress.

How do I report a repair?

There are a number of ways you can do this:

- By Telephone: 08456 08 12 03 (this is the only way to report emergency repairs)
- By email to repairs@aberdeenshire.gov.uk
- Using our online form, available on: www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/housing/
- By Text message: to 07624 802 722 - start with REPAIRS and a space
- In person or by writing to your local housing office

If you are in sheltered housing accommodation, your Sheltered Housing Officer can help you to arrange repairs.

How do I report an Emergency Repair?

It must be reported by phone 08456 08 12 03.

Emergency repairs are to make your home safe where there is a health and safety risk, or to prevent further damage to your home - this may be limited

to carrying out a temporary repair only. If further work is needed, your local housing office will make arrangements for a follow-on appointment.

It is essential that a responsible person remains in the house to provide access and that they will stay for as long as the work takes. We will aim to have someone with you within 2 hours.

Please do not call to ask for an emergency repair outside normal working hours (9am to 5 pm) unless the repair needs immediate attention.

To request an emergency repair, phone 08456 08 12 03.

What is the Right to Repair scheme?

Under the Right to Repair scheme, you have the right to have certain essential repairs done within a prescribed time limit. You will be given details when you report your repair. If we fail to meet these requirements, you can contact us on 08456 08 12 03 to claim compensation and arrange for the repair to be carried out by an approved alternative contractor. You can get more information on Right to Repair by requesting a leaflet or visiting our website.



Section 4

Improvement Works

What are improvement works?

Improvement works are works that provide your home with new fixtures and fittings, for example a new kitchen, bathroom, central heating or windows .

How do we decide which properties are upgraded?

The amount of money we have to spend varies each year. This means that the major works programme can change. For this reason, we may only give you a few months notice of when the major works will be carried out. Our stock improvement plan is published on the council's website:

www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/housing/tenant/improvementworks/index.asp

and this will give an indication on when improvement work is expected. However the amount of money we have to spend varies each year and this means that the major works programme can change. We will always try and give you as much notice as possible of when works will be carried out but when programmes change, it may only be a few months notice.

What do I need to do if I am told that my home needs improvement works?

In most cases, you will be able to continue living in your home while any upgrading work is done. We do our best to cause you as little inconvenience as possible, but you may experience some disturbance.

If you are concerned that you will not be able to cope with the level of disturbance please contact your local housing office before the work starts.

Will I have a choice of fixtures and finishes?

We try to provide you with a choice of fittings wherever possible. For example, if we intend to upgrade your kitchen, you will be provided with a choice of worktops, doors and floor finish.

Will I get a disturbance allowance?

You are entitled to disturbance allowance for some types of major works. For example when new whole heating is installed or the house is entirely rewired.

Can I carry out improvements to my home?

You can but you need to get written permission from us before you start. We will not refuse reasonable requests.

Section 5

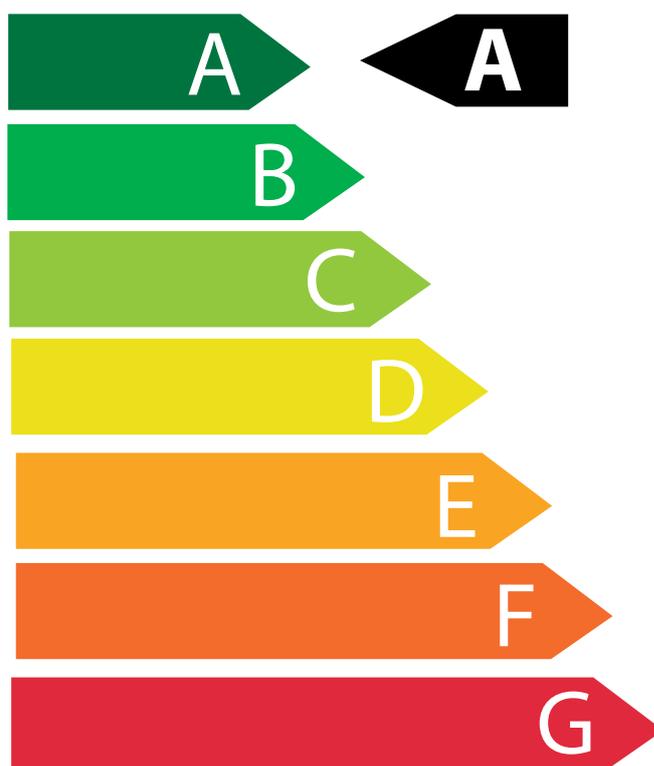
Energy Efficiency

What is energy efficiency?

Energy efficiency is about saving you money by making sure the energy used for heating, lighting and giving power to your home is not wasted.

What is an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC)?

An EPC is a document that details the energy performance of a home. The EPC details energy use, carbon dioxide emissions and fuel costs of the home. It is measured on a scale of A-G, with 'A' being the most efficient and 'G' the least efficient.



Energy Performance Certificates are required for every dwelling rented or sold after January 4, 2009, including under the Right to Buy scheme (see Section 10). An Energy Performance Certificate is valid for 10 years. However, in time we will be providing Energy Performance Certificates for all council houses.

What is the council doing to make my home more energy efficient?

We are installing energy efficiency measures to help reduce running costs, carbon emissions and energy used. We are carrying out energy efficiency improvements to all council housing, which will help save you money.

Examples of energy efficiency measures are:

- Installing cavity wall insulation
- Improving loft insulation up to 300mm deep
- Upgrading hot water tank and pipe insulation
- Using highly efficient 'A' rated gas and oil central heating boilers
- Installing highly efficient 'A' rated windows
- Investigating using renewable energy systems such as air and ground source heat pumps, solar thermal for heating hot water and solar panels for generating electricity

Not all these measures are suitable for all properties.

What can I do to help?

Energy Saving Scotland can give you free and impartial advice on energy efficiency measures and actions. You can contact Energy Saving Scotland on their free phone energy advice line 0800 51 20 12.

Section 6

A Healthy, Safe and Secure Home

Heating

Is the Council legally responsible for servicing my heating system?



Yes, we will inspect all gas and oil appliances every year and you must allow us access to do so - we can take legal action to force entry if you don't. We will also inspect and sweep chimneys where solid fuel heating systems are installed.

Is the Council responsible for servicing and repairs to gas appliances that I have installed?

Yes, we will service and maintain space or water heating systems that you install. All installations must be undertaken by a Gas Safe Registered engineer. We will not service or maintain any other appliance and you will be responsible for arranging servicing every year.

Can I use portable gas heaters or a propane gas cooker within my home?

You should not, under any circumstances, use portable gas or paraffin heaters, or a propane gas cooker within your home.

What is carbon monoxide and why is it so dangerous?

It is a highly poisonous gas that has no colour, taste or smell and can be produced by appliances that use gas, oil, wood or coal. Carbon monoxide is potentially fatal. That is why the Council must service appliances regularly.

What precautions can I take to protect myself from carbon monoxide?

- Make sure that rooms are well ventilated and keep all vents clear
- If you have a solid fuel appliance, it is essential that you clean the fireplace regularly
- Test and clean carbon monoxide detectors with a vacuum cleaner regularly

What should I do if my carbon monoxide alarm sounds?

- Open doors and windows
- Stop using all appliances and turn the alarm off
- Evacuate the property leaving the doors and windows open
- Contact Housing Repairs on 08456 08 12 03
- Get medical help immediately if required

What should I do if I suspect a gas leak?

- Extinguish all naked flame and do not smoke
- Do not turn electric switches on or off
- Turn off the gas supply at the meter (emergency control valve)
- Open doors and windows to get rid of the gas
- If there is a build up of gas in the area of your home that is not easily ventilated such as a loft or cellar, you should evacuate the property
- Call National Gas Emergency on 0800 111 999

Water

How do I prevent frozen pipes?

- Keep your house warm during cold weather
- Contact your local housing office if you are concerned that pipes are inadequately lagged
- If you leave your home empty for a day or more during winter, leave the heating on and leave a key with a relative or neighbour. If the home is unheated while you are away for a period of time, the water system should be drained
- If you do have frozen pipes, turn off the mains stop cock and telephone housing repairs on 08456 08 12 03 for advice

What should I do if I have a burst pipe?

- Turn off the stopcock at once
- Turn on all cold water taps
- Turn off central heating and immersion heater
- Switch off electricity if water comes into contact with wiring
- Warn any neighbours who may suffer water damage
- Contact Housing Repairs on 08456 08 12 03

Are there any safety issues relating to hot water cylinders?

There is a rare but potentially serious scalding risk when a fault occurs. You should switch off the heating system or immersion heater immediately and contact housing repairs on 08456 08 12 03 if you experience any of the following:

- Excessive noise from the hot water cylinder
- A very hot cylinder or airing cupboard
- Very hot water coming from hot taps or hot water coming from cold taps

What is legionella?

Legionella is a bacteria which causes a form of pneumonia called legionnaires' disease. The infection is caused by the inhalation of water droplets or spray-mists, which have been contaminated by the bacteria. The risk of legionella is very small. However, when you move into your home or where it has been left unoccupied for 1 week, be sure to:

- Run all showers, baths, wash hand basins or sinks continuously for a period of 5 minutes, to flush through any form of bacteria
- Switch your water heater 'on' (if possible) and leave on for a period of 1 hour prior to use
- Dismantle, clean and descale shower heads and hoses regularly.

Electricity

Who is responsible for checking the electrical wiring in my home?

We will inspect electrical wiring once every ten years. You must allow us access to carry out these important safety checks.

What should I do if the lights or sockets fail?

If you have a pre-payment meter, check that you have enough credit. You should then check the circuit breakers, which are normally located beside

your electricity meter. These are sensitive devices designed to switch off the electricity supply if there is a fault. A circuit breaker has a small switch or button relating to each electrical circuit within the house, for example lighting, sockets and cooker.

If your power fails and you do not know what caused it:

- Switch off everything, including lights
- Set all the circuit breaker switches to the 'on' position
- Switch the lights and appliances on one at a time. You will then be able to find the appliance or light that has caused the problem
- If a faulty appliance has caused the power failure, you should unplug it and have it checked by an electrician
- If you have a faulty light fitting, turn it off and contact the repairs line on 08456 08 12 03

Please remember that we are not responsible for faults in any light fitting that you have installed, including spotlights or halogen lights. If problems are experienced in respect of one of your own light fittings, you should turn it off and consult a qualified electrician. You may be recharged for a call out for electrical faults that relate to your own appliances.



Fire

How should I test and check my smoke detectors?

Mains-powered smoke detectors are installed in all homes. You should check that they are working once a week by pressing and holding down the test button until the alarm sounds.

If your alarm does not sound, contact housing repairs on 08456 08 12 03 immediately.

Never disconnect the power to a mains powered smoke detector. You should use a vacuum cleaner to clean your smoke detectors once a year.

Independent fire safety advice can be provided by the Scottish Fire & Rescue Service. Telephone 01224 788758 to arrange a free Home Fire Safety Visit.

Home Security

What am I responsible for?

As a tenant, you are responsible for the security and protection of your home. You should ensure that you have adequate household contents insurance. (See Section 6)

Condensation and Dampness

What is condensation?

This is caused when warm moist air inside a building meets a cold surface such as a window or wall. We can supply a leaflet providing detailed condensation information on request.

What is dampness?

Dampness is the movement of moisture through the fabric of the building, from the outside to the inside. This can be in the form of rising damp or penetrating damp. Please contact your local housing office if you have any concerns regarding dampness.

Asbestos

Is there asbestos in my home?

Some of our properties may contain asbestos, which was widely used in the construction industry prior to the year 2000. Most of the asbestos is low risk and does not present any threat to safety if left sealed and undisturbed. You can get a leaflet on asbestos by contacting your local housing office.

Does Aberdeenshire Council undertake asbestos surveys?

Yes, we do undertake sample surveys and these are usually carried out when homes are due to be improved. This is to ensure that contractors do not disturb any asbestos when they carry out work.

Adaptations and Equipment

Is it possible to have my home adapted to meet my needs?

If you are finding it difficult to manage in your home, it may be possible to have it adapted. For example, it may be that the simple addition of a grab rail might make it easier for you to move around your home. It may also be the case that more extensive alterations are required to make life easier for you. Aberdeenshire Council aims to allow Tenants and their families to continue to live in their own homes safely and maximise independence where we are unable to assist in the provision of suitable alternative accommodation to meet your needs.

Housing Officers will, where appropriate, consult with Occupational Therapists and other health professionals to provide advice on the best way forward to meet your individual needs. Occupational Therapists can also assist in the provision of other equipment to meet your needs. Please contact your local housing office for more information.

Section 7

Rent and Service Charges

How is my rent worked out?

You will be advised how much rent to pay before you sign your tenancy agreement. The rent is based on characteristics of your property and you will receive a detailed breakdown of these. Please take time to check it carefully.

Will there be other charges in addition to my rent?

Service charges are made when a specific service is provided, for example sheltered housing attracts charges relating to heating and cleaning. You will be advised at the time you are offered the tenancy if service charges apply.

What is Housing Benefit?

Housing Benefit is available to help tenants to pay their rent. You can claim by completing an application and providing supporting documents.

The amount you receive will depend on your income, savings and who you have living with you. If you have any queries in relation this please contact your local Housing Office or check the link benefits@aberdeenshire.gov.uk and what they mean to you.

As from April 2013 the amount of bedrooms your property has may affect your housing benefit.

When should I pay my rent?

Rent is due weekly, every Monday. You can however arrange with your local Housing Officer to pay weekly, fortnightly, 4-weekly or monthly in advance.

Paying your rent regularly and on time is a condition of your Tenancy Agreement.

How and where can I pay my rent?

You can pay your rent by cash, cheque, debit card, credit card, standing order or direct debit. Credit card payments are subject to a 2% surcharge. You will be issued with a rent card and can use this at any of the following council offices: Aboyne, Banchory, Banff,



Ellon, Fraserburgh, Huntly, Inverurie, Peterhead, Stonehaven and Turriff. With your rent card, you can also pay at any Post Office or shop in the UK displaying a Paypoint sign. Payment made outside council offices will have a delay of 3 to 5 working days for the payment to be credited to your rent account. Contact your local housing officer who will help set up the payment method and frequency most convenient to you. If you are an Aberdeenshire Council employee, you can have your rent deducted directly from your pay. Contact your local Housing office for more information.

Rent payments can also be made 24 hours online at:

www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk or through the automated telephone payment service on 08453 0394 80 (minimum payment £5).

To pay your Housing rent online or making a payment over the telephone please make sure you have your housing rent reference number to hand.

Payments received before 17:30 each weekday will be credited to your account the same day. Payments received after 17:30 will be credited to your account the next working day.

What happens if I have a problem paying my rent?

If you don't pay your rent, you will receive reminder letters. If you are having difficulties, it is very important that you contact us immediately. Your housing officer will work with you to resolve any difficulties and help by making an arrangement to pay by instalments. If you don't make contact or don't pay, the problem will only get worse, ending with court action and in rare circumstances, eviction. Don't let this happen

to you, the earlier in the process you contact us, the greater the help we can offer.

Is my home insured?

The building structure is insured by the council. The household contents are your responsibility but the council can offer insurance cover for your belongings against fire,



flood, theft and accidental damage. If you choose this option, the insurance premium will be charged along with your rent. Please contact your local housing office for an application form. Please note a tenant cannot be accepted onto the tenant contents insurance scheme if their rent account is in rent arrears.



Section 8

Neighbourhoods

What are the main neighbourhood issues?

The main issues that can cause problems with neighbours are noise and dogs barking. Other problems can occur with disputes about parking, condition of gardens and children.

Noise complaints are the most common cause of disputes between neighbours. Most complaints are due to people creating noise and not realising the effect of the noise on their neighbours. Please be aware that noise can be easily transmitted to others especially in flats and tenants should be considerate to their neighbours. In particular, tenants should not cause any disturbance to others late in the evening and throughout the night.

Dogs

If you have a dog, please ensure that it is properly exercised, always under control and does not disturb others with its barking. Please also clean up after your dog if it fouls in a public place.

Car Parking

If you have a driveway or designated parking space, you should use it to help reduce traffic congestion. Please be considerate when parking your car on a public road and do not cause an obstruction. Vehicles (including caravans and trailers) causing a nuisance are not permitted on Council land. Garages to rent are available in most areas although there are large waiting lists in high demand areas.

Common Areas

All tenants and residents in flats are responsible for cleaning common areas such as entrances, stairs, banisters, windows, ledges and bin areas - cleaning should take place regularly.

If tenants/residents fail to maintain common areas, the Council will do it and may charge the cost to tenants/residents. Bicycles, prams, motorcycles and rubbish must not be stored in common areas or on stairs.

Communal Gardens and Paths

No tenant or resident has exclusive use of communal gardens and landscaped areas if these are maintained by the council. If you want to put up a garden shed or greenhouse in communal gardens, you need to get the council's permission first.

If you live in the middle of a terraced block of three or more houses, you normally have right of access across linked footpaths to public paths and roads.

Gardens

Housing staff regularly inspect gardens during the growing season and tenants will receive reminders and/or visits if they fail to maintain their garden. If the Council needs to tidy a garden, the tenant will have to pay the cost. Garden maintenance is available to those tenants who are unable to manage it themselves; details are available from your local housing office. Permission is required prior to erecting sheds or greenhouses.

Bulky Uplifts

Large household items such as cookers, washing machines, beds, mattresses etc can be uplifted by the Council. **Costs for Special Uplifts** depend on the items being collected, phone Wasteline: 0845 600 3 900. Alternatively you could take the items to a **Household Waste & Recycling Centre**, free of charge.

Discounted **Special Uplift** and **Refuse Bin** prices are available in cases of financial hardship. To qualify for a discount, you need to be in receipt of:

- Council Tax Benefit
or
- Housing Benefit

Infestation and Vermin

All properties are let in a habitable condition. Tenants are responsible for dealing with any infestation such as mice, insects, wasps, ants etc. The Council offers a free insect identification and advice service. If you find any insect infestation in your home please bring in a specimen in an airtight container, together with your contact details, to your local **Environmental Health office** and we will advise you accordingly.

Bonfires

Most household items can be recycled or disposed of at council recycling points or uplifted by the Council's Waste section by arrangement (tenants in receipt of benefit payments can receive reduced rates for bulk uplifts). There is therefore no need to burn items in your garden. To find your next collection dates and nearest Household Waste and Recycling centre and recycling points using the address/ postcode search at www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/waste or by phoning the Wasteline number 0845 600 3 900.

Settling in visits

A housing officer will visit you within six weeks of the start of your tenancy to see how you are settling in. At this visit, you can discuss any problems that you may have with rent, housing benefit, repairs, waste disposal or any other housing related issue. Please try to keep this appointment as it is an important opportunity to meet your local housing officer and discuss any issues that you may have with your tenancy

Section 9

Sheltered Housing and Very Sheltered Housing

Sheltered Housing allows older or disabled people or people with particular needs to live independently, with the right support, in a comfortable and secure environment.

It is suitable for those who may find it increasingly difficult to maintain an independent lifestyle in their current accommodation, perhaps through increasing ill health or unsuitable accommodation.

Security and peace of mind are offered through a housing support service and an **alarm system**. Sheltered housing also gives the opportunity for social contact and companionship, if desired, and equally respects an individual's right to privacy. The Sheltered Housing Service have knowledge and means of including other services for tenants should this be necessary, e.g. homecare

Most sheltered housing has been designed to provide barrier free access and include specific features that make the property suitable for use by people with limited mobility.

The majority of sheltered housing has communal facilities including:

- a residents' lounge
- a laundry
- guest bedrooms
- a daytime support service during the week helping residents
- community alarm service when sheltered housing officers are off duty

The community alarm control centre operates when the sheltered housing staff are off duty or away from the scheme.



Very Sheltered Housing

We also provide accommodation known as Very Sheltered Housing which gives a higher degree of support to those in the most need. Very Sheltered Housing is self-contained accommodation where on-site support and care is provided by a dedicated 24hr staff team. An individual plan of care and support will enable tenants to maintain their independence and improve their well-being. Meals are provided and are prepared fresh on-site by experienced cooks. Social activities and in some cases a dedicated day care service are organised from the communal areas of the buildings.

All our Sheltered Housing and Very Sheltered Housing complexes meet national standards set by the Scottish Government that are monitored by the Care Inspectorate, an organisation which regulates care homes, housing support complexes and other places where people are looked after.

Section 10

Tenant Participation

What is Tenant Participation?

Tenant Participation is how you as tenants help improve the housing services provided. It is a two-way process of tenants working in partnership with the Council to share ideas and information and to have input to decisions with regard to the improvement of the housing service. The opportunity is there and getting involved can and does make a difference.

Aberdeenshire Council covers a large geographical area. Because of this the council and its tenants have developed a variety of different ways that you can get involved, in a manner and at a level that suits your own circumstances. You do not need any prior knowledge or understanding to take part – just your own experience of being a tenant, of homelessness, or as a housing applicant.

Some opportunities for involvement are very local, looking at issues in your own neighbourhood, while

others such as the Tenant Working Groups look at wider issues across Aberdeenshire.

What are the ways to get involved?

- Tenants Newsletter – everyone gets this through the post four times a year and it is intended as a direct way of keeping you informed of what is happening. It is edited by tenants and includes news of changes happening to the housing service, updates of what tenant groups have been doing, lists contact information, and usually has a competition of some sort. Anyone can submit articles and photographs for consideration by the editorial team.
- Tenant Events – these are held to give tenants an opportunity to meet together and discuss changes, ideas for improvements to the housing service, areas of concern, etc. Usually held every six months on a Saturday morning at Woodhill House in Aberdeen and are organised by the tenants on TPPT (see below). Your opportunity to discuss a wide range of housing issues and put your views across to senior housing managers. All Aberdeenshire tenants receive an invitation to attend via the Tenants Newsletter. In order to encourage more tenants to come along and get involved, a number of more local events are being organised, across Aberdeenshire, in collaboration with other social housing landlords.
- Local Tenant Groups – tenants and other residents getting together, with the help of the council, to make their homes and localities better places to live. Funding is provided to help with running costs and anyone wanting to help set up a tenant group in their own area will get assistance from the local Tenant Participation Officer. Groups usually meet on a regular basis, often in a local school or village hall, and housing officers regularly attend to answer queries. Details of tenant groups are published in every issue of the Tenants Newsletter.

- Local Tenant Voices - where no local group exists there is the opportunity to have a Local Tenant Voice (or Village Voice), who is a tenant elected to provide two-way feedback between local tenants and the council. If you would like to be considered and think your locality would benefit from having someone doing this role, please get in touch. For details of any Local Tenant Voice in your area, see the listing in the Tenants Newsletter.
- Local Forums – usually organised by the council, more informal than having a tenant group, these consist of local tenants and council officials meeting perhaps every three or six months to discuss issues of concern. A way of keeping tenants informed of what is happening locally and the council getting feedback on how the service is perceived and identifying issues not already being dealt with. Advertised locally and open to all to attend.
- Focus Groups – occasional meetings held at locations across Aberdeenshire to discuss a particular issue (eg heating systems) affecting tenants. Usually held on a one-off basis. Open to all but those who initially express an interest in attending are usually given a specific invite with details of date, time and place.
- Tenant Working Groups – these are held centrally, being joint tenant & officer groups looking at the various housing functions – Asset Management (eg Repairs, Improvement Works); Housing Finance (Rents, Rent Arrears); Housing Options (Allocation Policy & Homelessness); Planning for the Future (wider housing strategies); Tenancy Management (Environmental issues, Anti Social Behaviour, Untidy Gardens, Settling In Visits etc). If you are interested in contributing your views on any of these aspects of the housing service, please get in touch and put your name forward for the Tenant Working Group that interests you. Anyone can get involved in decision-making on how the Housing Service is managed by joining and attending working group meetings.
- TPPT – the Tenant Participation Promotion Team is the core tenant body, comprised of seven tenants elected for three years on a rolling basis, overseeing Tenant Participation across Aberdeenshire. Any council tenant can be nominated to stand for election to TPPT. Details of vacancies and the election procedure are included in the Tenants Newsletter. Elections normally take place in the Autumn at the Tenant Event.



TPPT members meet monthly with senior management to discuss policy issues and they have editorial control of the Tenants Newsletter and organise and run the Tenant Events.

- Sheltered Housing Tenant Forum – recently set up to give Sheltered Housing tenants a voice about their housing concerns and comprised of representatives from complexes across Aberdeenshire. Will be meeting every six months to discuss issues relating to Sheltered Housing.
- Interested Tenants – tenants who have asked to be kept informed about specific issues or tenant involvement in general. Provided with information, copies of minutes, invited to take part in focus groups, etc. If you want to receive more detailed information and feedback on housing issues than is possible via the Tenants Newsletter, please advise us and your name and contact details can be added to the list.





Contact details:

Details of local tenant groups, local tenant voices, TPPT members and tenant participation staff are available:

- on the Aberdeenshire Council website: www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/housing/tenant/tenantparticipation
- from your local housing office (each area has a local Tenant Participation Officer)
- in the Tenants Newsletter

New tenants are given local contact details and information on participating at tenancy sign up or during their Settling-In Visit. If you are in sheltered housing accommodation, your Sheltered Housing Officer can help you to get involved.

Section 11

Moving House

Can I transfer from my present property to another one?

If you want to transfer from your current property to another one you need to complete a housing application. The best way to do this is to go to www.apply4homes.org.uk. Alternatively, ask at your local housing office. Your application is assessed based on our housing allocation policy.

Can I exchange my property with another tenant?

A mutual exchange is when two or more tenants wish to swap their properties. You may exchange with another Aberdeenshire Council tenant, a tenant of a registered social landlord or a tenant of another council.

The best way to find someone to exchange with is through our mutual exchange website www.apply4homes.houseexchange.org.uk where you will find details of other tenants looking to swap throughout the UK and further detailed information. Alternatively, ask at your local housing office.

What other options are available to me?

You could try applying for housing with another social landlord, this can be done on your on line apply4homes application. You may also wish to consider low cost housing, mid market rent, or a private tenancy. More information on all these options is available on line or from your local housing office.

How do I end my tenancy?

If you wish to end your tenancy, you (and any joint tenants) need to give at least 28 days notice, in writing, before the date you intend to leave the property. Should you be transferring to another Aberdeenshire Council property the notice period may be less, this will be explained to you in full when you complete the termination notice.

You need to tell us if you normally live in the house with your husband, wife or partner because we also need their agreement.

We will ask you to complete a termination notice with relevant information, including your future address and what you need to do before you leave and what we have to do next.

Section 12

House Sales

Can I buy my home?

- New tenants and tenants who have moved into a new property on or after 1st March 2011 generally do not have the Right to Buy
- If you were a tenant before September 30, 2002 and still live in that property, then you have a Preserved Right to Buy and can apply to buy.
- If you moved into your home after September 30, 2002 and before March 1, 2011, you have a Modernised Right to Buy and you can apply to buy after you have lived in your home for five years unless you live in a Pressured Area. Pressured Areas are settlements where there is a scarcity of affordable rented housing and sales are suspended. A list of Pressured Area settlements is available on the council's website: www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/housing/tenant/housesales/index.asp

You will not be able to buy your home if you:

- owe rent, council tax or any other housing charges, or
- have been served with a Notice of Proceeding for Repossession because of anti-social behaviour or any other breach of tenancy

Are there any other Right to Buy Exemptions?

Certain areas, properties and tenancies are exempt from the Right to Buy:

- Most Amenity Properties (usually one bedroom bungalows) and all Sheltered Housing are exempt from the Right to Buy
- Tenants who have a Temporary Tenancy or a Short Scottish Secure Tenancy generally cannot purchase their home

What are Right to Buy discount entitlements?

Discount entitlements vary depending upon the type of tenancy, length of tenancy and type of property occupied.

Tenants with Preserved Right to Buy have discounts up to a maximum of 60% of the market value of the property (70% for flats). Tenants with a Modernised Right to Buy entitlement are limited to a discount of 35% of the value of the property up to a maximum of £15,000

End of Right to Buy

The Scottish Government has indicated that it will introduce legislation to abolish the Right to Buy by 2017 for all tenants.

Further information:

Your Right to Buy Your Home: A guide for Scottish Secure Tenants



Section 13

What do you think of our services?

Aberdeenshire Council relies on feedback from tenants and customers. Here is how to comment on the housing service,:

- From time to time, you may be asked if you wish to take part in a survey and give your views on the services we offer
- Sometimes, following contact with the housing service, you might be asked if you wish to comment on how you were treated
- At any time, you might want to comment on, compliment us or complain about our services. You can choose to do this by:
 - completing the Council’s online form www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk haveyoursay
 - emailing: haveyoursay@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

- phoning the Council’s general enquiries Telephone line on 08456 08 12 07
- phoning or visiting your local housing office and speaking to a housing officer
- writing to your local housing office
- picking up a “Have Your Say” leaflet from any Aberdeenshire Council office or facility

We really do want to hear from you and what you think of the housing service.

If you are unhappy with the Council’s response to your complaint you can contact the Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman: www.spsso.org.uk or contact your local Councillor.

The **Scottish Social Housing Charter** obliges the Council to provide an annual statement of performance to tenants and other customers. Tenants will receive the first annual report in autumn 2014.

Section 14

How do I contact the housing service?

EMERGENCY TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Repairs	08456 08 12 03
Homelessness	08458 40 00 70

OTHER HOUSING ENQUIRES

Repairs telephone number.	08456 08 12 03
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Online www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/housing

By text Use number 07624 802 722 as TEXTSHIRE on your mobile phone

By phone, letter or visit:

(a) Council housing offices and cash collection offices

Banff: 32 Low Street, Banff, AB45 1AY	01261 81 32 00
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Fraserburgh: 55 Mid Street, Fraserburgh, AB43 9EP	01346 51 48 66
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Huntly: 23 – 25 Gordon Street, Huntly, AB54 8AL.	01466 79 41 21
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Inverurie: Gordon House, Blackhall Road, Inverurie, AB51 3WA	01467 62 09 81
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Peterhead: Baltic House Broad Street, Peterhead AB42 1JL	01779 47 73 63
(Please note there is no cash collection in this office).	

Stonehaven: 16 – 22 Allardice Street, Stonehaven, AB39 2BR	01569 76 20 01
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(b) Additional cash collection offices

Aboyne Council Offices, Bellwood Road, Aboyne, AB34 5HQ	01339 88 73 73
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Banchory Burgh Offices, The Square, Banchory, AB31 5RB	01330 82 28 78
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Ellon 45 Bridge Street. Ellon, AB41 9AA	01358 72 64 45
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Peterhead 88 King Street Peterhead AB42 1UN.	01779 48 32 62
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(c) Visit Council Service Points:

Huntly Aberdeenshire Council Offices, 23 – 25 Gordon Street, Huntly, AB54 8AL

Westhill Police Station, Old Skene Road, Westhill, AB32 6RL

Turriff Divisional Office, Towie House, Manse Road Turriff AB53 4AY

Non-council utilities:

Electricity loss and emergencies, available 24 hours.	0800 30 09 99
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Gas leaks and emergencies, available 24 hours	0800 11 19 99
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Water and waste water service, available 24 hours.	08456 00 8855
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Floodline (SEPA)	0845 998 1188
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Police Emergency	999
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Police Non-emergency	101
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Section 15

Data Protection

Under the Data Protection Act 1998 we must safeguard the information which we collect from you. We will take all reasonable steps to keep your personal information secure. It is however necessary to pass your personal details to our agents and contractors to manage your tenancy e.g. carrying out repairs. Contractors employed by the Council are bound by confidentiality. Under the Data Protection Act 1998 you have the right to access personal information that Housing/Council holds about you.

Section 16

Freedom of Information

Under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 you have the right to access any information (subject to certain exemptions) from Aberdeenshire Council.

Section 17

Equality

The Equality Act 2010 ensures that everyone has equal access to our services. We aim to make sure that our services are relevant, responsive and sensitive to the needs of our existing and future tenants. The Equality Act places a general duty on local authorities to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. The duty covers: race, sex, disability, sexual orientation, religion and belief, age, gender reassignment and pregnancy and maternity.



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Website www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk.

If you need a copy of this document or a section of this document in another language, large print or Braille please contact your local Housing office.

Lithuanian

Jei jums reikalingas šis dokumentas kita kalba ar Brailio raštu ar tik kokia jo dalis, prašau kreipkitės į jūsų vietinį apgyvendinimo skyrių.

Russian

Если вам нужна копия этого документа или раздел этого документа на другом языке, крупным шрифтом или шрифтом Брайля, пожалуйста, обратитесь в жилищное управление по месту жительства.

Polish

Jeśli ten dokument lub jego część jest wymagana w innym języku, w dużym druku, lub w alfabecie Brajla, proszę się skontaktować z lokalnym Urzędem Mieszkaniowym.

Portuguese

Se precisar de uma cópia deste documento ou duma seção deste documento numa outra lingua, em letras grandes ou em Braille, por favor entre em contacto com o seu escritório local de Alojamento.

Thai

หากท่านต้องการสำเนาเอกสารฉบับนี้ หรือส่วนหนึ่งส่วนใดของเอกสารฉบับนี้ เป็นภาษาอื่น, เป็นตัวพิมพ์อักษรตัวใหญ่ หรือเป็นภาษาเบลล์ กรณาติดต่อแผนกการเคหะท้องถิ่นของท่าน

Latvian

Ja Jums ir nepieciešams šī dokumenta vai šī dokumenta nodaļas eksemplārs citā valodā, lielā drukā vai Braila rakstā, lūdzu sazinieties ar savu vietējo mājokļu biroju (Housing office).

Cantonese

亞巴甸郡政府 – 租戶手冊摘要

如果你需要此文件或其中某部份翻譯為別的語文、大字或凸字版本，請聯絡你當地的房屋辦事處。

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