

# Private Tenants Handbook





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# 1 Your house

When you move into your rented home your landlord should provide you with certain documents and information.

## **Landlord details/Agents details**

Name .....

Address .....

Telephone Number .....

Emergency contact number .....

## **Other information**

Tenancy start date ..... Rent amount.....

Rent due date .....

## **Bond/Deposit/Tenancy Deposit Scheme Information**

Rent paid in advance .....

Housing Benefit Reference if Applicable .....

Amount of entitlement for Housing benefit/LHA (See insert) .....

## **Services**

Responsibility for **Gas** (Please circle one) Tenant/Landlord

Meter reading .....

Supplier and contact number .....

Responsibility for **Electricity** (Please circle one) Tenant/Landlord

Meter reading .....

Supplier and contact number .....

Responsibility for **Council tax** (Please circle one) Tenant/Landlord

Meter reading .....

Supplier and contact number .....

Responsibility for **Water** (Please circle one) Tenant/Landlord  
Meter reading .....  
Supplier and contact number .....

Use the checklist below to make sure you have everything you need:

- |    |   | Tick                     |
|----|---|--------------------------|
| 1  | Written tenancy agreement   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2  | Gas safety certificate* which should be dated within the last 12 months and updated every year  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3  | Energy performance certificate*+  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4  | Details of the tenancy deposit scheme* (If you have paid a deposit within 14 days of moving in) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5  | Contact details for your landlord*  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6  | Emergency contact details for your landlord   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7  | Confirmation of how, when and to whom your rent is paid   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8  | Inventory (agreed with you)   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9  | Provider of your utilities i.e. gas, electric etc   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10 | Details of bin collection days  | <input type="checkbox"/> |

*\*It is a legal requirement for your landlord to provide you with this document/information.*

*+ Bedsit type accommodation do not require this certificate.*

NB: If you require any support or assistance with your tenancy further information can be found at [www.kirklees.gov.uk/supporting people/supportingdirectory](http://www.kirklees.gov.uk/supporting%20people/supportingdirectory)

## During the first few days at your new home you should:

- If it is a furnished letting then the furniture provide by the landlord must comply with current fire and safety regulations. Sofas, mattresses etc. should have a label indicating they comply. West Yorkshire Trading Standards Office will provide further advice should you need it.
- Contact your utility suppliers e.g. electricity, gas, water and inform them that you are now living at the property. This should ensure that you are not affected by any unpaid bills left by previous occupiers.
- Inform the Council Tax team that you are now living at the property. Tel: **01484 414900** or email: **[revenues.benefits@kirklees.gov.uk](mailto:revenues.benefits@kirklees.gov.uk)**
- Check that everything in your home is working as it should be and you know how to use it e.g. heating, hot water, cooker etc. Inform your landlord if there is a problem.
- Check you have a grey bin and a green bin and that you know what day to put your bin out (see also pages 17 - 19).
- Make sure that you know where to find the stop tap for the mains water, the control valve for the gas and the fuse box/consumer panel for the electrics.
- Test all your smoke alarms.
- Check that smoke detectors and fire alarm systems are working.
- If you have paid a deposit to your landlord, you should have details of where your deposit has been placed (within 14 days of moving in) See [www.direct.gov.uk/tenancy\\_deposit](http://www.direct.gov.uk/tenancy_deposit) for further information.

- You will need a TV Licence to cover your property. A shared house requires one licence, bedsits a licence each. You may be liable to a fine of up to £1,000 if you do not have a licence. Phone the 08705 246246 hotline to transfer your licence.
- Ask the landlord/agent to provide you with written instructions or show you how to operate the heating system, washing machine, burglar alarm, etc.
- You will need your landlord's/agent's permission to decorate any rooms, put up shelves, or make any other alterations. If permission is given, get it confirmed in writing.
- In shared homes all occupants are jointly liable for bills. If you decide to change supplier, you should obtain permission from your landlord and provide him with details.
- Ask to see the Gas Safety Certificate, showing all appliances have been tested within the last twelve months and are safe.

# 2

## Local information (see insert)

# 3 You and your Landlord

## Your responsibilities

### As a tenant you are responsible for:

- ✓ Keeping up to date with your rent.
- ✓ Paying your bills e.g. electric, water etc. (if this is part of your agreement with the landlord).
- ✓ Taking proper care of the property and any furnishings provided.
- ✓ Allowing your landlord access to the property to carry out inspections and repair work providing you have had reasonable notice.
- ✓ Giving the required notice, specified in your tenancy agreement, to end your tenancy.
- ✓ Seek written permission from your Landlord before decorating or carrying out any works of improvement to the property.

## What you shouldn't do as a tenant:

- X** Intentionally damage the property or any fixture, fittings or furnishings.
- X** Let your pets roam or let any visitors to your home cause a nuisance to neighbouring property.
- X** Refuse to pay your rent or bills
- X** Be responsible for causing anti-social behaviour e.g. noise nuisance, dumping of rubbish etc.
- X** Vacate the property without giving the correct period of notice to your landlord.
- X** Overcrowd your home by moving too many people in.
- X** Carry out illegal activities at the property.

# Your Landlord's Responsibilities

## Your landlord is responsible for:

- ✓ Repairs to the structure of the property; sinks, baths, toilets and other sanitary fittings; heating and hot water; gas appliances, pipes, flues and ventilation; electrical wiring.
- ✓ Ensuring that the property is free from any hazards which may affect the health and/or safety of the tenants (this includes things like damp, cold and unsafe structures).
- ✓ Ensuring furniture provided by the landlord meets fire safety requirements.
- ✓ Giving you the correct notice if he/she wants to enter the property.
- ✓ Giving you the correct notice if he/she wants you to leave the property.
- ✓ Giving you certain information (as detailed on the checklist on page 1).

## What your landlord shouldn't do:

- ✗ Enter your home without your permission.
- ✗ Harass you e.g. by threatening you, visiting your home at unreasonable times frequently and without notice or disconnecting essential services.
- ✗ Attempt to evict you without following the correct legal procedure e.g. by changing the locks or removing your possessions.
- ✗ Refuse to accept rent from you.
- ✗ Fail to carry out essential repairs

# 4 Problems living in your home

## Housing disrepair issues

If you think the conditions in your rented property are not as good as they should be then you should speak to your landlord.

If your landlord refuses to carry out repairs then you should contact the Council's **Private Sector Housing Unit**.

The **Private Sector Housing Unit** can deal with disrepair issues which may affect your health and/or safety while living in the property. Examples of such issues include: broken boilers, leaks, damp and damaged electrics.

The **Private Sector Housing Unit** are not able to deal with problems such as poor decoration or broken kitchen appliances as these do not affect your health and/or safety and are likely to be your own responsibility.

If you contact the **Private Sector Housing Unit** with a complaint about conditions an Officer will visit you at your home and carry out an inspection.

After this inspection the Officer will contact your landlord and liaise with him/her in order to make sure the required works are carried out. Please contact:

### **Private Sector Housing Unit**

Tel: **01484 221392**

email: [private.sector@kirklees.gov.uk](mailto:private.sector@kirklees.gov.uk)

The way in which you occupy your property can also lead to poor housing conditions.

- Take care of fixtures and fittings
- \* See insert about preventing damp and mould

# Anti-social behaviour

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) is behaviour that causes or is likely to cause alarm, distress or harassment to one or more people not of the same household as the defendant and is of a serious and persistent nature.

Landlords can start possession proceedings against their tenants without a notice period under ground 14 (Anti-social behaviour) Remember tenants are responsible for the behaviour of members their household and their guests and visitors.

## **If you are the Victim of ASB**

If you suffer from anti social behaviour of others you should take it seriously and try to take action to alleviate the problem. Do not suffer in silence inform your landlord. He/she will need following information:

- details about the problem
- if other people are affected
- where and when the behaviour has happened
- why do you think it has happened

You should keep an accurate record of the problem and events as they happen. Your landlord may try to sort out the problem by talking to the alleged perpetrators but if the problem is serious and persistent he may contact the Anti-Social Behaviour team at your local authority. Contact details are provided in the useful contacts list at the back of this handbook.

# 5 Safety in your home

## Fire Safety

You should have smoke alarms in your house.

If you do not have any smoke alarms or you think you should have more then you should contact your landlord.

To arrange a FREE Home Fire Safety Check call:

### **FREE Home Fire Safety Check**

Tel: **0800 587 4536**

## Gas Safety

Every twelve months your Landlord must carry out a safety check of all the gas appliances in your house. The check must be carried out by a Gas Safe engineer. You can check their ID on [www.gassaferegister.co.uk](http://www.gassaferegister.co.uk)

When you move into a new house you should always ask your landlord to show you the current gas safety certificate. Always check that the certificate is dated within the last twelve months.

If you provide your own gas cooker it is your responsibility to make sure it is safe.

**If you smell gas in your house call the National Gas  
Emergency Service free on 0800 111 999**

# Gas Leaks

**If you smell gas, act quickly. If the smell is strong:**

- don't light any naked flames or smoke;
- don't switch on or off a light or anything else electrical;
- stay away from rooms with a strong smell of gas

**If there is a slight smell of gas, check;**

- pilot lights are still lit;
- the gas burner on your cooker has not gone out; and
- you have turned off gas knobs properly

**If you smell gas or are worried about escape of fumes of carbon monoxide then you should notify Transco on 0800 111999**

## **Carbon Monoxide**

Every year there are more than 50 home deaths from carbon monoxide poisoning caused by faulty gas applications.

**Signs that carbon monoxide is being emitted are:**

Stains around the appliance, scorching on any part of it, a yellow or orange flame instead of blue.

**The symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning are:**

Unexplained headaches, sudden dizziness when you stand up, general lethargy, sickness, diarrhoea, stomach pains, chest pains and muscle weakness.

**What to do:**

Do not use the appliance, open windows, inform your Landlord, in emergency call Transco on Tel: 0800 111 999 and do not use the appliance again until Gas Safe engineer has checked it and deemed it safe to use.

## Do's

- ✓ Always check your smoke alarms regularly.
- ✓ If your smoke alarms are battery operated then you should replace the batteries when required.
- ✓ If your smoke alarms stop working and you have tried replacing the batteries then contact your landlord.
- ✓ If your landlord will not repair the smoke alarms then contact the Council on: **01484 221392 / 221394.**
- ✓ If your landlord will not provide you with a current gas safety certificate then contact the Council on: **01484 221392 / 221394.**
- ✓ Make sure you check your own appliances e.g. cooker to make sure they are safe.

## Do nots

- ✗ If your smoke alarm starts making a "beeping" noise, do not ignore it. This means it is not working properly.
- ✗ Do not remove the batteries from your smoke alarms or disconnect them.
- ✗ Do not tamper with any gas appliance or piping. Servicing/repair of gas appliances should only be carried out by a Gas Safe registered engineer.
- ✗ If you smell gas do not create a flame or use electrical switches. Open doors and windows and keep away from the area.

# 6 Making your home warmer and cheaper to run

## Energy efficiency

There are a number of ways you can help to keep your gas and electricity bills low.

- Use energy-saving lightbulbs. Energy-saving lightbulbs are expensive to buy, but they last for several years and use about a quarter of the electricity used by normal ones.
- Turn off lights when you leave a room
- Keep doors shut to keep heat in and use a draught excluder if there is a gap at the bottom of the door.
- Close your curtains in the evenings, but make sure they aren't in front of your radiators.
- Turn your thermostat down by 1C. It could cut your heating bills by up to 10%
- Use timers carefully. If you are out all day, you don't need to keep the house warm all the time. Set your heating to keep the house warm first thing in the morning and in the evening when you get home. Reset your timer when the weather begins to change.
- Turn down the temperature of the water.
- Avoid using fan or electric-bar heaters, as they are very expensive.
- Defrost your fridge and freezer regularly.
- Remember to change the fridge temperature when the weather starts getting colder again.
- Don't boil more water than you need for a cup of tea. Jug kettles allow you to boil smaller amounts of water.
- Remember showers use a lot less water than baths.
- Try to plan your laundry so you only wash full loads (or half loads, if your machine has a special setting for this). Wash coloured clothes at low temperature and try using less soap powder.

# 7 Rubbish and Recycling

## Bin Collections

You should have both a grey bin and a green bin. These are collected on alternate weeks. This is what you can put in your bins:

### Green bin

- ✓ Newspaper & magazines
- ✓ Junk mail & envelopes
- ✓ Cardboard
- ✓ Telephone directories
- ✓ Books (*remove hardback first*)
- ✓ Plastic bottles
- ✓ Drinks cans and food tins

## Glass collection

### Grey bin

✓ General household rubbish

#### but not:

✗ Garden waste

✗ Building waste

✗ Electrical equipment

✗ Hazardous materials

# Bulky Items Collection

The Council can collect other waste materials from your house including furniture, domestic appliances, garden waste, fixtures and fittings etc. There is no charge for removal of many of these items.

## Bulky Items collection

Tel: **01484 414700**

online: [www.kirklees.gov.uk/bulkywaste](http://www.kirklees.gov.uk/bulkywaste)

## Do's

- ✓ Always put your rubbish in the bins provided.
- ✓ Recycle as much as you can - this will give you more room in your grey bin.
- ✓ Make sure your bin is at its collection point by 07:00 on your collection day.
- ✓ Remember to return your bin to your property after it has been emptied.
- ✓ You can also take rubbish and recycling to your local Household Waste Recycling Centre - call **01484 226884** for further details.
- ✓ If you have recently moved into your house and don't have a bin you can order one by calling **01484 414700** or by email: [waste@kirklees.gov.uk](mailto:waste@kirklees.gov.uk)
- ✓ If you are not able to wheel out your bin you may qualify for assistance. Please call **01484 223120** for further details.

## Do nots

- X** Do not place rubbish on the ground - this causes problems with pests and bad smells and your rubbish will not be collected.
- X** Do not overfill your bins as they may not be collected.
- X** Do not put the wrong type of rubbish in your bins as they may not be collected.
- X** Do not leave your bins in the road or on the pavement after they have been emptied.

**For more information on bin and waste collection services log on to [www.kirklees.gov.uk](http://www.kirklees.gov.uk) or call 01484 414700**

# 8

# Ending your tenancy

## If you want to end your tenancy

If you have an Assured Shorthold Tenancy Agreement (*the most common type of tenancy agreement in the private rented sector*) you can end your tenancy in two ways:

**1) By agreement with your landlord.**

This can be done at any time but you should make sure you get the agreement in writing.

**2) By giving your landlord the correct period of notice in**

**writing.** This can only be done if your fixed term has ended.

If you are still within the fixed term of your tenancy agreement you will only be able to end the agreement if your tenancy agreement says that it is allowed, otherwise your landlord may be able to take you to court.

## If your landlord wants to end your tenancy

Your landlord has to give you a written Notice if he/she wants you to leave your home.

If you receive notice to leave your home then you should immediately check that it is a valid notice and get advice about what to do next.

# Illegal eviction and harassment

If you think your landlord is harassing you or trying to evict you illegally, for example by changing the locks or threatening to disconnect your gas, electricity or water, you should get advice straight away from either:

**CHAS Housing Centre**

Tel: **01484 223922**

**Private Sector Housing Unit**

Tel: **01484 221392**

It is a criminal offence for a landlord to harass or illegally evict a tenant.

**If you are being threatened with or experiencing violence then you should call the police.**

**999** (emergencies)

**0845 606060** (non-emergencies)





