

Tenants Handbook

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Hello and welcome to Southampton City Council Housing, we hope you will enjoy living in your home. This handbook provides you with useful information and describes your rights and responsibilities as a tenant and the council's responsibilities as a landlord.

Please also refer to your Tenancy Agreement and the Welcome to your new home leaflet provided at your tenancy sign up.

You will find other information online at www.southampton.gov.uk/housing/

Your customer experience is important to us:

We are committed to delivering the best possible service to our tenants. These are the standards you can expect from us:

- We will treat you with respect and be welcoming, courteous and fair
- We will provide information in a format that is clear and meaningful
- We will seek to ensure value for money in all of our services, and will always remember that the money we spend comes from rent paid by our tenants
- We will promote our comments, compliments and complaints process, value your feedback on our services, and strive to improve areas where we could do better
- We will measure how satisfied customers are with our services and use your feedback to improve performance

For a full list of all our service standards please visit www.southampton.gov.uk/housing/

In brief, what we expect from you

Your responsibilities as a council tenant are explained in detail in your tenancy agreement which you must take time to read. Your main responsibilities however, are as follows:

- To pay your rent on time and not get into arrears
- Not to cause, or allow anyone else to cause anti-social behaviour in your home or neighbourhood
- To live in the property as your only or main home and not to sub-let the property to someone else
- To keep your home in good condition and allow us in to make repairs and improvements.

We take your views seriously

Our Comments, Compliments, and Complaints procedure

If you wish to make a complaint about council services, a detailed complaints policy is available on our website. There are 2 Stages in the council's complaint process.

In the first instance, you should contact the service area dealing with the issue. If the matter is unresolved, then you should put your complaint in writing (whether online, email, or by letter) directly to the Manager responsible for that team. Your online form, email, or letter should include:

- name
- address
- contact details
- what has happened
- when it occurred
- who was dealing with the matter
- how the council can put this right

The Manager responsible for the service area will then carry out an investigation into what has gone wrong and attempt to put it right. You will receive a written response either by letter or email. The response will outline the next stage of the complaints process should you remain dissatisfied with the outcome.

If you remain dissatisfied after you have received our stage 1 response, you can then contact our Complaints Resolution Team to request an independent review of the complaint at Stage 2 for the complaints process or in certain circumstances you can ask for a review by the Tenants Panel.

You can find the form here,

www.southampton.gov.uk/council-democracy/have-your-say/comments-complaints/

Getting in touch

Your Local Housing Office can give you a range of help, advice and information on your council home and the services available to you, such as:

- Reporting and dealing with neighbour nuisance
- Neighbourhood Wardens
- Tenancy queries
- Abandoned vehicles
- Empty property management
- Applying for a council owned garage
- Nuisance trees

The quickest and easiest way to access all of these services is online at www.southampton.gov.uk/housing

Housing Office contact details:

If you live in Millbrook, Maybush, Lordshill, Shirley, Coxford, or Lordswood contact:

Shirley Local Housing Office
Redcar Street,
Shirley,
Southampton,

SO15 5LL

Tel: 023 8078 9344

Email: housing.serviceswest@southampton.gov.uk

If you live in Bevois, Swaythling, Northam, Bassett, or St Denys contact:

Central Local Housing Office

100f St. Marys Street,

Southampton,

SO14 1PE

Tel: 023 8083 2211

Email: housing.servicescentral@southampton.gov.uk

If you live in Thornhill, Harefeld, Hightown, or Bitterne contact:

Thornhill Local Housing Office

Hinkler Community Centre

328 Hinkler Road,

Thornhill

Southampton,

SO19 6DF

Tel: 023 8042 0520

Email: housing.serviceseast@southampton.gov.uk

If you live in Woolston, Sholing, Merryoak, or Townhill Park contact:

Woolston Local Housing Office

Centenary Quay,

Victoria Road

Southampton,

SO19 9EF

023 8044 2604

Email: housing.serviceseast@southampton.gov.uk

Neighbourhood Wardens

Your Neighbourhood Warden is responsible for helping to keep your neighbourhood clean and tidy.

You can contact your Neighbourhood Warden by:

- speaking to them when they are out and about on your estate (the staff in red tops)
- emailing them at your Local Housing Office

- leaving a message at your Local Housing Office

Staying safe in your home – important advice

We recommend you familiarise yourself with the location of the gas meter (if you have one) and shut-off valve, cold water stop cock, electricity meter and fuse board in the event of an emergency. We provide smoke detectors in our properties for your safety. Please do not remove them.

Gas safety – if you smell gas you should turn off all gas appliances, open all doors and windows and call the Gas Emergency number 0800 111 9999.

Do not switch on lights, light matches or cigarettes.

We check our gas appliances and pipework annually and will be in contact with you to arrange an appointment to do this. We do this to meet Gas Safety Regulations and to ensure your safety. If you cannot be home for your appointment please let us know so we can arrange an alternative one. If you have your own gas appliance then you should arrange the annual gas safety check on it yourself.

Fire – if there is a fire in your home you should do the following:

- Get everyone out leaving by the quickest exit
- Close all windows and doors where possible
- Telephone the emergency services after you have left the building
- Alert your neighbours where possible

However, if you live in a flat and the fire is not in your home then please close all doors and windows and remain in your flat. Stay put until told to leave by the emergency services.

Tips on preventing fire in the home

- Do not smoke in bed
- Regularly test smoke alarms
- Do not cook late at night if you are tired
- It would be useful to get yourself a fire blanket to keep close to hand
- Avoid using chip pans
- Internal doors are there for your protection in the event of a fire do not remove them
- Keep curtains away from heat sources
- Do not use candles
- Remember not to block any fire exits with furniture or other items in your home

If you live in a block of flats make sure corridors are free from obstacles and stair wells are clear of pushchairs and bikes.

Paying your rent

Your tenancy agreement states how much rent you will pay each week. You need to ensure that you pay your rent regularly. You must pay in advance if you wish to pay anything other than weekly. Regardless of the benefits you receive you are responsible for paying your rent and must avoid getting behind with payments.

The amount of rent you are charged will change each year, usually in April. We will give you four weeks written notice of any change in the amount of rent charged for your home.

Set up your online rent account

You can manage your rent account online. Once you have registered, you can see your transactions, check your balance and pay your rent.

www.southampton.gov.uk/housing/your-tenancy/

Registration is quick and easy and all you will need is your payment reference number handy; this will start with D (14), I (15) or H (18).

If you need help with your online rent account please call the Customer Payment and Debt Team on 023 8083 3388 or email

cpd.general@southampton.gov.uk

Make an online payment

You can pay your rent with a credit or debit card by visiting our website www.civicaepay.co.uk/SouthamptonEstore/estore/default/Catalog/Index.

To use this service you will need to know your rent reference number.

Direct Debit

The best way to pay your rent is by direct debit and this can be done weekly on a Friday or monthly on the first day of each month. Most banks and building societies will let you pay your rent this way providing you have the right type of account. You must make sure there is enough money in your account to pay your direct debit, otherwise your rent will not be paid and you may be charged a fee by your bank.

Standing order

This is an arrangement between you and your bank. You will need the rent payment reference number which is on your rent statement, together with our bank details:

Bank: Lloyds Bank

Sort code: 30-00-00

Account number: 00332526

Your rent payment reference number: D(14), H(18), I(15) followed by six digits for example:

If D123456 use 14123456

If H123456 use 18123456

If I123456 use 15123456

Phone

Call our 24-hour automated phone line on 023 8083 3001 and follow the instructions.

Your rent explained

Statements

You can view your rent statement online this shows what rent you have been charged and what payments you have made. It is important that you look through this properly and contact the Customer Payment and Debt Team on 023 8083 3388 or email cpd.general@southampton.gov.uk if you have any queries.

Rent free weeks

Rent is charged 48 weeks of the year (in a 52 week year). There are two weeks at Christmas, one week at the end of March and one week at the end of August when you will not be charged rent. These are non-rent weeks and if your account is not in arrears you won't need to make a weekly payment during these weeks.

However, if your rent account is in arrears you will still be expected to make payments during these non-rent weeks to reduce your arrears.

If you pay monthly by direct debit these non-rent weeks will have already been taken into account when your monthly amount was calculated.

Please speak to Customer Payment and Debt Team on 023 8083 3388 or email cpd.general@southampton.gov.uk if you have any questions about non-rent weeks.

Summary of your rent

Depending on what type of property you live in your rent may include a heating charge and/or a support charge as well as the basic rent charge.

Heating Charge

You will need to pay a heating charge if you live in a flat where we control the heating system. This heating charge forms part of your rent and to help with

budgeting, the costs are spread over the year. This means that you must pay your heating charge even if it is the summer time when your heating is not switched on.

If you receive benefits to cover your full rent you will still be responsible for paying the weekly heating charge to heat your home. This forms part of your rent and you need to ensure that this is paid regularly. You will be advised how much your heating charge is when you sign up for your tenancy.

Support charges

In all of our housing designated for people over the age of 50 and housing complexes for people over 60, there may be an additional service charge. Our housing office and support staff will be able to explain these charges in more detail to you and answer any questions you have.

Struggling to pay your rent?

We can help, if for whatever reason you find yourself struggling to pay your rent it is important you contact our Customer Payment and Debt Team as soon as possible so they are aware of your situation and can advise you on your options, call 023 8083 3388 or email cpd.general@southampton.gov.uk

Financial support and debt advice

If you are having money problems and are struggling to pay your rent or other bills talk to our Welfare Rights & Money Advice Team who can offer advice and assistance.

They can help you to:

- claim any benefits you may be entitled to
- draw up a budget so you can see exactly what your financial position is
- explain which debts should be paid first and why they are so important
- negotiate affordable repayments with your creditors and respond to court action

For a copy of the 'Dealing with Debt' self-help magazine which provides step by step information to help you sort out your money problems email us at welfarerights.advice@southampton.gov.uk or call 023 8083 2339 alternatively you can take a look at our online debt toolkit at www.southampton.gov.uk/debttoolkit

For more information on claiming benefits that you may be entitled to go to southampton.gov.uk/benefits-welfare/benefits-advice/ or visit www.turn2us.org.uk.

What happens if you don't pay your rent?

Legal proceedings

If your arrears do not start to reduce we will begin legal proceedings to end your tenancy. We will also take back any garage or parking space you rent from us to enable you to pay as much as possible towards the rent for your home.

Eviction

We will only take action to evict tenants as a last resort where all other attempts to solve a problem have failed.

Please do not assume that we will not evict you because you have children or you are vulnerable.

If we have to evict you then we will also take further legal action to obtain payment of the overdue rent once you have moved out.

How to report a repair?

The quickest and easiest way to report a repair is online at southampton.gov.uk/housing/your-home/repairs/report-a-repair-new.aspx

For those of you who are not online please call 023 8083 3006.

If the repair you are requesting is an emergency that puts you, your family or your property in immediate danger please call:

- 023 8083 3006 (option 2) between 8:30am to 5pm, Monday to Friday
023 8023 3344 evenings, weekends and Bank Holidays
- For gas leaks call the National Gas and Emergency Service FREE on 0800 111 999 immediately.

Please note these telephone lines are for emergency repairs only, or for tenants who are unable to report online.

Repairs and maintenance

We aim to provide a home for you which is safe and in good condition with repairs done well and within the timescales set. Some repairs are our responsibility to carry out as the landlord and some are your responsibility as the tenant.

We are responsible for:

- the structure and outside of your home, including the floors, walls, stairs, roof, windows, drains and gutters

- decoration and repairs to the outside of your home and any communal areas in blocks of flats such as staircases, landings and corridors
- installations for supplying electricity, gas, hot and cold water, room heating and sanitation
- providing kitchen units for basic food storage and preparation, and bathroom fittings.

You are responsible for:

- minor repairs and everyday tasks such as renewing a bath plug or unblocking a kitchen sink
- the internal decoration of your home including filling minor holes and cracks
- contacting us when repair work is needed to your property or to a communal area
- repairing and replacing items which you have installed yourself, such as a kitchen or bathroom fittings.

Charging for repairs

If a repair is needed due to damage or neglect by you, a member of your household or a visitor, then you may be charged for that work.

If the repair needed is due to crime or vandalism you will need to report the incident to the Police and get a crime reference number before reporting the repair to us. You may then not be charged for the repair.

There may be certain exceptional circumstances where we would not charge you for repairs, for example in cases of domestic violence. Please speak to your Local Housing Office for further advice on this. Please refer to your tenancy agreement for more information on repairs and maintenance rights.

Improvements to your home and neighbourhood

Improvements to your home

If you want to make changes to your home you need to refer to your tenancy agreement. This sets out what you can do without asking us. If you are thinking about making a change which is not covered by your agreement, or you are not sure, then you **must** contact us. If you want to make an improvement to your home you need to put your request in writing outlining what work you would like to do and when. Email:

permission.requests@southampton.gov.uk.

You must not start work without having first got the relevant permission from us.

Improvements to your neighbourhood

We are committed to improving your neighbourhood and outside space through a programme of improvement works called Decent Neighbourhoods.

The work completed as part of a Decent Neighbourhoods project might include re-surfaced pavements and pathways, community gardens and public artwork.

If you would like to find out whether there is a Decent Neighbourhoods Project happening in your area please contact your Local Housing Office or visit www.southampton.gov.uk/tenants

Major improvements

We have a thirty-year plan of major works for improving all of our properties. This plan includes improvements to kitchens, bathrooms and heating as well as roof replacements. To find out what work is needed we carry out regular inspections. We also speak to residents to find out what their priorities are and our programme of works reflects this.

The thirty-year plan is mainly funded from your rent money and can change if we do not collect the rent anticipated. We do also apply for external grant funding and we have been successful in making energy efficient improvements to homes much quicker as a result of this. Our main priority is to ensure that your home remains safe, wind and weather tight, and somewhere that you are happy to live.

For enquiries about major programmed works in your area email: capitalassets@southampton.gov.uk. Updates can also be found on our website www.southampton.gov.uk/tenants.

Special decorating scheme

If you are over 75 years of age you may qualify for our special decoration scheme which means we may decorate two rooms for you. To find out more about this scheme please call 02380833010 or visit www.southampton.gov.uk/housing/your-home/repairs/improvements/decorating-scheme.aspx

Disabled adaptations

If you or a member of your household requires an adaptation to your home that will help you to live more independently you can apply for help to do this.

If the adaptation is for an adult please contact the Adult Contact Team on 023 8083 3003. If the adaptation is for a child please contact the Jigsaw Team on 023 8091 5702. These Teams will assess your needs and liaise with the

Housing Team to arrange any appropriate alterations.

Your contract with us

When you signed up for your new home you were given a copy of your tenancy agreement. This is a very important document setting out your rights and responsibilities as a tenant and our obligations as a landlord.

It is the legal contract between you and the council.

Please keep your agreement in a safe place as you may need to refer to this in the future.

The tenancy agreement can be found at here

www.southampton.gov.uk/images/tenancy-agreement-english_tcm63-374621.pdf this is a copy and does not contain your signature, but apart from that is the same as the one you have signed.

Types of tenancy

As a local authority landlord the types of tenancy we can use are set out in law. The type of tenancy which you have depends on your circumstances but it will be one of the following types:

Introductory tenancy - this tenancy is usually given to people who are new council tenants. Introductory tenancies are usually for a 12 month probationary period where you need to demonstrate you are able to keep to the agreement. If you fail to keep to the terms of the agreement, for example by getting into rent arrears or causing a nuisance to your neighbours, then we are able to evict you more quickly than 'secure tenants'. For introductory tenancies we are required to prove to the court that the problem has occurred and that it has been dealt with properly. The court can then give an order to end the tenancy.

We can extend the introductory tenancy period by a further six months if we feel you need this. At the end of your introductory tenancy (usually after 12 months) and as long as you have kept to the terms of the tenancy agreement, your tenancy will automatically convert to a secure tenancy which gives you more security in your home and more rights.

Secure tenancy - If you've been a tenant with us for more than a year you will normally hold a secure tenancy. This usually means that you can remain in your home for as long as you like provided that you don't break the terms of your tenancy agreement. There are some circumstances, for example redevelopment, where the council can make you move to another property. If this is likely to happen to you we will give you plenty of notice.

Flexible tenancy - we may offer you a flexible tenancy but we will discuss this type of tenancy and what it will mean with you.

Joint tenancy - you may have signed one of the types of tenancies described above as a joint tenant with someone else. If you are a joint tenant you are both responsible for keeping to the tenancy agreement.

Both tenants remain responsible for keeping to the terms of the tenancy agreement (including paying the rent) until the joint tenancy has ended. If you start with us as a sole tenant you may later request that we give you a joint tenancy with someone else. It is our decision whether to grant you a new joint tenancy and we will consider factors such as whether you have any rent arrears, how long the other person has lived with you, and whether the person owns property or holds a tenancy elsewhere.

If one of you no longer wants to be a joint tenant then you need to take proper independent advice from the Citizens Advice Bureau or a Solicitor.

Breaking your agreement

If you break the terms of your agreement, for example you do not pay your rent on time or you do not look after your home properly, then we can take action against you. We can apply to the court to end the tenancy and we can then re-let the property to a new tenant. We can also apply to the court for an order saying that you must or must not do something and this can involve other agencies such as the Police or Environmental Health.

We want you and your neighbours to be happy in your homes so we will always do our best to help if there is a problem. We will take firm action to put matters right if the need arises.

If you break the terms of your agreement because you are unwell or in other difficulties we will try to help you. If you are worried about not being able to keep to the terms of your agreement then please let us know straight away.

Members of your household

Your tenancy agreement will state the maximum number of people legally allowed to live in your property. If you are considering having someone else move into the property to live then you should contact your Local Housing Office or an independent advisor for advice. You need to also be aware that this could affect any claim for benefits and you will need to declare that they have moved in.

Changes to your tenancy

If your circumstances change this may mean that a change to your tenancy is required. These are some of the possible changes:

Ending joint tenancies

If you hold a joint tenancy with your partner and your relationship breaks down, one tenant may move out of the property. If this happens the tenancy will remain in joint names until you take the necessary steps to resolve the situation. The tenancy agreement is a legal contract and we cannot alter it without following certain steps. Whilst a joint tenancy is in place both people are responsible for paying the rent even though they may not both live at the property. In these cases you need to seek independent advice and also contact us.

Passing on the tenancy

If a tenant dies it may be possible for someone who is living at the property to take over the tenancy. This is called succession.

If the deceased tenant was your partner and you had been living with them in the property at the time of their death you will usually be able to stay on as the tenant yourself. If you are a close family member living in the property and the tenant dies without a surviving partner you may, in some circumstances, be able to stay in the property as the tenant or we may be able to offer you a property more appropriate to your needs. You should contact your Local Housing Office and if you want to your independent advisor, for advice in either of these circumstances or in any other situation where the tenant of the property has died, or moved away leaving you in residence.

In some circumstances it may be possible for the tenant, within their lifetime, to transfer the tenancy to someone else living at the property, this is called assignment. If you are the tenant and you are thinking about transferring your tenancy you should seek independent advice as to what this could mean for you as well as speaking to us.

The right to pass on a tenancy to another person either through death or by choice can usually only occur once. If a tenancy has already been passed on previously it cannot happen again.

Keeping your home clean

By keeping your home clean and tidy and disposing of rubbish correctly you will be able to make sure your home and the surrounding area are a pleasant place for everyone to live. Not having a clean home can affect your health and wellbeing.

If you live in a block of flats with communal areas such as stairs or an entrance hall then you and your neighbours are responsible for keeping the area clear, clean and tidy. In tower blocks and supported housing there will be staff who are responsible for day-to-day cleaning but we expect all residents to be considerate to others and help keep the block and surrounding areas clean and tidy.

Gardens and balconies

If you have a garden or balcony it is important that you look after these too. Grass must be kept cut and hedges kept trimmed to a maximum height of no greater than 2 meters. You must get permission before you plant a hedge or tree, or remove an existing one. Some blocks of flats have communal garden areas, especially blocks for older people. There will usually be some agreement locally about who does the gardening. If you would like to get involved then speak to your neighbours, the Local Housing Office, or your Support Worker. We often offer free gardening courses and if you are interested in attending one of these please contact tenant.engagement@southampton.gov.uk

Pets

You may only keep pets in your home or allow them to visit you if we agree to it. However, you are allowed to keep some pets such as cats in your home, without asking our permission first.

For other pets, such as dogs, you must obtain permission from your Local Housing Office before you bring them home. There are some animals which you will never be allowed to keep at your property; these include livestock and animals which are potentially dangerous or likely to cause a nuisance to other residents.

Please see your tenancy agreement for a full list of animals which you can and cannot keep.

Recycling

Recycling cuts down on the need to send rubbish to landfill. It also reduces the use of new materials and saves energy, helping to tackle climate change. We are committed to ensuring that we increase the amount of recycling done in the city.

If you live in a house you will have been provided with a wheelie bin with a blue lid, this is to be used for recyclable materials. You can recycle: paper, cardboard, cans, drinks bottles and plastics such as milk cartons. It is important that you put the items directly in the blue-lidded recycling bin and not inside a plastic bag.

If you live in a flat you will have recycling facilities at your building. It is important that these communal collection bins are not contaminated by mixing recycling with other rubbish. Please make sure you only put appropriate recyclable materials in the recycling bins and not general waste. To find out when your waste and recycling is due to be collected visit www.southampton.gov.uk/bins-recycling/bins/

Mixed plastics recycling banks

You can now recycle different types of plastic containers and cartons in the new mixed plastics banks. To find out where your nearest bank is visit www.southampton.gov.uk/bins-recycling/recycling/recycling-banks.aspx

Southampton City Council does offer a green (garden) waste collection service or you can compost your own garden waste at home visit www.southampton.gov.uk/garden for more information.

Don't forget you can also recycle your old clothing at clothing banks around the city.

Working at home

We encourage people to work from home as long as they do not cause a nuisance to their neighbours and do not infringe planning regulations. We welcome tenants who provide a service for the community, for example, through fostering or childminding. However, some occupations for instance those which cause noise or involve lots of people coming to and from your property may be unsuitable. Please refer to your tenancy agreement for more information on this. If you are considering working from home then please contact your housing office to discuss your plans.

Being a good neighbour

Please remember to keep noise to a minimum. Some everyday noise can be unavoidable (for example a washing machine or normal conversation). However, you should not cause noise through the night and early in the morning or expect your neighbours to put up with anti-social behaviour such as shouting, loud music or disruptive visitors. If you are doing something during the day which you know will cause extra noise (e.g. decorating) it's a good idea to talk to your neighbours about your plans. See your tenancy agreement for more information.

What to do if you are experiencing anti-social behaviour

As a first step, in most cases of anti-social behaviour we encourage tenants who are experiencing problems with neighbours, to try and settle the dispute amicably. Often your neighbour may not realise that they are causing an annoyance and involving us straight away can make your neighbour feel threatened which may make the situation worse.

Explain to your neighbour in a calm and reasonable way the problem you have and be prepared to compromise. You may be able to settle the matter straight away without any further action. However if you approach your neighbour and they behave unreasonably, you should walk away. If you are

unable to resolve the problem yourself you can report it to us and we will advise you how we can help.

For more information on how to deal with anti-social behavior visit www.southampton.gov.uk/tenants.

Garages and parking

Renting a garage or parking space

In some areas there may be garages and parking spaces which can be rented out to residents for a separate weekly charge. There is usually a waiting list for these.

If you do wish to rent a garage or parking space you will need to prove that you own the vehicle, that it is registered to your address and that you have the right insurance for it. Contact your Local Housing Office for more information on how to apply for this facility.

Parking

There is no guarantee you will be able to have an allocated parking space when you sign up for your tenancy so please don't assume there will be somewhere for you to park when you move into your new home.

Parking is often very limited so we ask all tenants to be considerate of their neighbours. Unless you have a designated parking space, or there is a permit system in place then parking in the car parks available is on a first come first served basis. Please park in designated areas only.

Do not park on grassed areas or verges.

If you are expecting visitors be sure to explain to them the arrangements for parking.

Parking permit zones

In some areas a parking permit scheme may operate. Please visit www.southampton.gov.uk to find out more about this.

Support to live in your home

Housing Support Staff

Our Supported Housing Team work primarily with people over the age of 60 to help them to manage their home and live independently for as long as possible.

The type of support we can give includes regular visits to you to check that you are ok. We can also offer you help and advice on a range of issues from benefits to local health services. Staff members can help you fill in forms and get in contact with other agencies who will be able to help you in your home. We want to offer you any help that you might expect from a good neighbour.

Housing Support Staff will also help you to get in touch with our Activity Coordinators who can help arrange a variety of activities for older people in the area. These often take place in our supported housing schemes and all older people living locally are welcome to attend. Support Staff will also help you find out about other services that are available. These might include visits from health professionals, hairdressers, 'keep fit' instructors or services to help you learn a new skill such as using the internet.

For more information email: housing.support@southampton.gov.uk

City Telecare Services and Careline

All of our supported housing schemes and our accommodation for people aged over 50 have an alarm which is linked to the City Telecare Services. This enables you to talk to someone directly 24 hours a day if you have a problem or an emergency. When you move into your home we will explain in detail how this system will work for you.

You don't have to live in our supported housing properties to receive the Careline service. For more information visit www.southampton.gov.uk/kb5/southampton/directory/advice.page?id=CaQ6P-h5f2k

If you want to move

If you want to move to another property there are a number of different ways in which you can do this. For more information on moving call the Allocations advice line on the number 023 80832777 or visit www.southampton.gov.uk/housing/

Mutual Exchange

If you want to move you could think about moving by mutual exchange. This means you will need to find another local authority or housing association tenant to swap properties with. You can go online to www.homeswapper.co.uk to find tenants who live locally and nationally that want to move. It is free for you to register on this site.

Once you have found someone who would like to swap properties with you then you need to complete an application to exchange properties and hand this into your Local Housing Office who will assess whether or not your application can be approved. You cannot swap homes without getting our agreement.

You will not be able to move if you have any rent arrears or if your home is in a poor condition. If you are considering applying for an exchange please make sure you clear any arrears first and that your home is in good condition.

If you exchange your home with someone else please be aware that in exchanging you are agreeing to accept the property in its current condition, including all its fixtures and fittings. You will become responsible for any alterations or work carried out by the tenant you have exchanged with.

If you are overcrowded sometimes it can be quicker to move by finding someone to exchange with who wants to downsize.

Transfers

If you are in housing need as a Southampton City Council tenant you can apply to move via Homebid, the council's choice-based lettings scheme by completing an application form online.

Your application will be assessed, not everyone will qualify but if you do you will be awarded points based on your circumstances.

All available properties (including council and housing association homes) are advertised on Homebid which is published weekly and available on our website. Visit www.southampton.gov.uk/housing/find-a-home/homebid.aspx

Once your application has been assessed you will be given information about how to 'bid' for properties you may have seen in Homebid. When bidding closes the council will generally offer the property to the person who has the highest number of points.

Unfortunately the council does not have enough properties available to rehouse everyone who needs a home and it may take some considerable time before you are successful in bidding for a property. For more information on waiting times and points please take a look at Homebid.

www.homeconnections.org.uk/Southampton/CFEHome.jsp?partnerName=Southampton

Moving out

If you are planning to move out of your home there are some things you need to do:

- Let your Local Housing Office know four weeks in advance that you are planning to leave. This notice can be given in a letter to us or we can give you a form to complete
- If you are moving via a transfer arranged through us you will not be required to give the full four weeks' notice. Please discuss this with your Local Housing Management Officer
- Leave your home clean, tidy, in good repair and decorative order.

Remove all rubbish and all possessions. If you have been putting off reporting any repairs please report them and get them done before you go. This will mean we can re-let your home more quickly to a family who need it. If we need to carry out repairs to the property after you have moved out (caused by damage or misuse of the property) we will charge you for the cost of these repairs

For more information take a look at our Moving Out Standard leaflet available online at www.southampton.gov.uk/tenants.

We will arrange for someone to inspect your home in the four week notice period, we will carry out minor repairs in your home during this time.

Death of a tenant

If the tenant has died and you are dealing with their affairs you will need to do the following:

- Let the Local Housing Office know. They will be able to give you advice on what to do
- Give us two weeks' notice to end the tenancy – a tenancy does not automatically end when a tenant dies so you will be asked to complete a form giving notice
- Clear everything from the property and hand in all the keys.

If we have to make any charges because there is work to do in the property after you have cleared it these will be made to the estate of the deceased tenant not directly to you.

Get involved

Tenant Engagement is really important to all of us in Southampton City Council's Housing Service. We want you to have a real say in how your homes are managed and be able to choose the extent of your involvement. Whether you join a local tenant's group to concentrate on issues and events in your area, or would like to have more input into housing issues that affect the whole of the city on a strategic level, there is a group out there for you.

If meetings are not your thing, there are many ways you can become involved as an individual or by coming to an event and providing us with your feedback.

If you want to become involved in your housing service in any capacity then we have a way for you to have your say.

www.southampton.gov.uk/housing/your-tenancy/tenant-participation/

Block Reps

Block and Street Reps are a great way for individuals that live in a block of flats or street to represent their neighbours. As volunteers they act as an important link between the council and tenants. Some examples of what block and street reps can do are:

- Chatting to your neighbours and completing surveys telling us what your neighbours think
- Go on area inspections with housing staff and neighbourhood wardens
- Tell us what is important to you and your neighbours
- Meet other block reps to share ideas and provide mutual support
- Signpost residents to council departments when necessary
- Help at community events
- Provide your views about estate improvement such as environmental improvement projects

For more information visit www.southampton.gov.uk/housing/your-tenancy/tenant-participation/individual/block-reps.aspx

Junior Neighbourhood Wardens

The Junior Neighbourhood Warden scheme is designed to encourage children and young people to take pride in their local neighbourhood. The junior wardens work alongside the Neighbourhood Wardens and other council services to help improve their local area. Regular fun activities are organised for young people throughout the year. For more information visit

www.southampton.gov.uk/housing/your-tenancy/tenant-participation/junior-neighbourhood-wardens/ or alternatively email: junior.wardens@southampton.gov.uk.

Keeping you informed

Tenants' Link is a monthly emagazine delivered straight to your inbox. It's packed with housing news and important information just for tenants and leaseholders, along with lifestyle articles on issues ranging from getting a job to keeping fit. You can find out what's happening in your area, planned improvements to your home and neighbourhood and read the latest benefits advice. Tenants' Link is also a platform to showcase the achievements of our residents and highlight how you can get involved and influence the housing service. To sign up for your free monthly copy visit

www.southampton.gov.uk/housing/your-tenancy/tenants-magazine/

Employment and training advice

If you would like advice about returning to work, help with finding a job or want to know how to write a great CV then we can help you with this. We can put

you in touch with local and national organisations that will provide friendly and helpful support to set you on the right track to securing a job.

Visit www.southampton.gov.uk/people-places/community-involvement/work-clubs.aspx to find out how to contact support organisations, work clubs and employment advice services. You can also use this site to search for job vacancies in the city and further afield and to find out about training and skills development opportunities.