



Tenant Handbook



WELCOME!

This handbook is a helpful guide for you to refer to throughout your tenancy. It contains advice on how to pay rent, how to report repairs and some useful information on your responsibilities as a tenant.

Your copy of your Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement with us fully details your rights and responsibilities.

We would like to thank our Tenant Panel for all their hard work and commitment in the production of this handbook.

“Created by tenants, for tenants”



CONTENTS

About Shire	4
Contact Us	5
Your rent	6
Financial Inclusion	7
Rent arrears	8
Repairs & maintenance	9
Making alterations to your home	13
Our Improvement Programme	14
Enquiries and complaints	15
Being a good neighbour	17
Getting Involved	19
Vibrant Communities	20
Moving home	21
Scottish Housing Regulator	22
What do you think	23

ABOUT SHIRE

Our Vision

Great Homes, Great People, Vibrant Communities

Our Values

- Integrity
- Excellence
- Investing
- Partnership
- Innovation
- Listening

Formed in 1997, we are a successful locally controlled housing association based in Cumnock, East Ayrshire. We own and manage 963 homes across East Ayrshire, provide estate maintenance services to around 900 owners and have an annual turnover of nearly £5million. Committed to delivering our Business Plan Vision of “Great Homes, Great People, Vibrant Communities”, over the last 3-4 years the business has been transformed, and we have ambitious and exciting plans to integrate more with our tenants and communities.



CONTACT US

Our Office:

Shire Housing Association Limited
Netherthird House
Netherthird, Ayrshire, KA18 3DB

Office Hours:

Monday—Thursday 8.45am to 4.45pm

Friday—8.45am to 4pm

- Facebook: **Shire Housing Association Limited**
- Website: www.shirehousing.co.uk
- Email: info@shirehousing.com
- Office: **01290 421130**
- Freephone repair line: **0800 328 7446**

OTHER USEFUL CONTACTS:

- Gas Escapes Transco: **0844 4485699**
- Scottish Water: **08456 018 855**
- SP Energy Networks: **0800 092 9290**
- For emergency out-of-hours repairs please call **01290 421130** and our answering service will provide you with the appropriate contact number.



YOUR RENT

Paying your rent is your responsibility. We ask for one months rent in advance when you sign your tenancy agreement.

Rent is charged monthly in advance on the **29th of every month**. We provide a range of ways for you to pay rent:

- Direct Debit
- Phoning the office and paying by card
- Cash payment at reception
- Help to claim Housing Benefit or Universal Credit Housing costs
- Standing Order
- Paying at a paypoint

Before we offer you a tenancy we will check that you can afford to meet your rent.

We will assist by:

- Advising on increasing income and budgeting
- Helping to access Housing Benefit and Universal Credit
- Sending you a rent statement every six months
- Dealing with arrears cases in a sensitive but firm manner

We request that you:

- pay rent and/or complete Benefit applications on time
- seek our advice immediately if you have a problem paying your rent. We provide a fantastic financial inclusion service to help you maintain a successful tenancy with us.



FINANCIAL INCLUSION SERVICE

Our financial inclusion service offers person-centred support to try and avoid tenants getting into financial difficulty.

This service is designed to assist tenants in meeting their financial obligations and responsibilities.

Services include:

- Confidential one to one appointments, in the office, in your home or over the phone
- Benefit advice and assistance with claims
- Income maximisation
- Grant applications and budgeting advice
- Access to charitable support
- Digital inclusion support
- Access to food banks
- Referrals to partner agencies for energy advice/switching services, fire safety checks and adaptations

RENT ARREARS

Tenants have an obligation under the Terms and Conditions of their Tenancy Agreement to pay their rent in advance on or before the first day of each month.

If you fail to meet your rent liability, we will commence action to recover any outstanding debt through our arrears policy. <https://shirehousing.co.uk/knowledgebase/policies/>

We will provide clear information in relation to arrears recovery in line with the obligations set out in your Tenancy Agreement.

Rent arrears recovery is based on a staged process and we will initiate early action to prevent arrears escalating, giving tenants reasonable time to engage with the Association, up to and including possible repossession action.



REPAIRS & MAINTENANCE

Our tenants have come to expect high standards of delivery with our repair service and benefit from some of the fastest repair response times in our industry. We continually strive to ensure these standards are progressive through partnerships with our contractors to improve services and cost.

We have dedicated contractors who provide day-to-day reactive maintenance, void services, gas servicing and repair work for our tenants. Our partnership approach aims to achieve improvements in service delivery, value for money and prudent financial management.

Please remember to ask for I.D before letting anyone into your home.

Emergency Repairs - To make safe repairs which present a risk to you or the property's safety.

Out with office hours—For emergencies only. Call the office, or check the website or Facebook page to be directed to the out of hours service.



REPAIRS & MAINTENANCE

Urgent Repairs - These are repairs which substantially inconvenience you. Examples of urgent repairs are partial loss of water, individual electrical faults - **Timescale: 3 working days**

Routine Repairs - Repairs or renewals which are not classed as emergency or urgent repairs. Examples of routine repairs are, repairs to internal joinery, routine plumbing or electrical work - **Timescale: 5 working days**

Right to Repair Scheme (RTR)- You may be entitled to compensation if a small urgent repair is not carried out within a set timescale.

This scheme covers qualifying repairs up to the value of £350. The Repair team will tell you whether your reported repair falls into this category, let you know when the repair should be complete and make access arrangements.

If our first contractor does not carry out the repair in time, you will be entitled to a payment of £15 plus £3 for each working day the repair remains outstanding up to a maximum of £100. For more information, please download the leaflet from the repairs section of our website.

Rechargeable Repairs—We may recharge you for the cost of repairs resulting from negligence in accordance with the terms of your tenancy agreement eg. lock change as a result of losing keys.



REPAIRS & MAINTENANCE

Reporting Repairs – You must report any repairs to us. Any repairs which are the responsibility of the Association should be reported to the office as soon as possible. We continually measure our performance as part of our commitment to improving services to all our tenants. When you report a repair, our staff will advise you about the category of the repair and the target time to complete it.

Gas Servicing – We have a legal duty to maintain the gas appliances (not gas cookers), fittings and flues installed in your home. We programme services annually to make sure systems are safe. **We need to gain access to your property every 12 months to carry out the annual gas safety check and service.**

When the gas safety check and service has been completed you will receive a **Gas Safety Record**. It is important that you keep this document safe.

It is not necessary for you to contact us to arrange a gas service. Our contractors will let you know when this is due.



REPAIRS & MAINTENANCE

To help you understand your repair responsibilities a quick guide can be downloaded from:

<https://shirehousing.co.uk/our-services/repairs-maintenance/>

If you require a hard copy, please contact the office.



Help us to get it right:

We welcome comments and suggestions concerning any aspect of the services provided. All suggestions and comments are considered. Where complaints regarding service delivery are made they will be considered quickly, in line with our complaints procedure.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY STANDARDS FOR SOCIAL HOUSING (EESH)

The Scottish Government has set Energy Efficient Standards for Social Housing (EESH) which all social housing landlords have to meet by 2020.

We are working towards meeting this standard and are providing up to date energy performance certificates for all of our homes. The minimum standard we are aiming to achieve is a 'C'.

MAKING ALTERATIONS TO YOUR HOME

If you want to carry out improvements or alter your home, you must first get our permission. It's straight forward, call us and we'll help you.

Permission is usually granted as long as:

- You complete an application form
- The improvement meets all necessary safety standards
- The work is of a good quality.
- You have obtained any necessary, Building Warrant, Planning Permission or Roads Permission.

We will write to you with permission and set out any conditions.

Examples of common improvements and alterations:

- forming a driveway
- moving internal walls or doors
- altering windows or doors
- installing a new kitchen or bathroom
- erecting a garden hut, greenhouse or garage

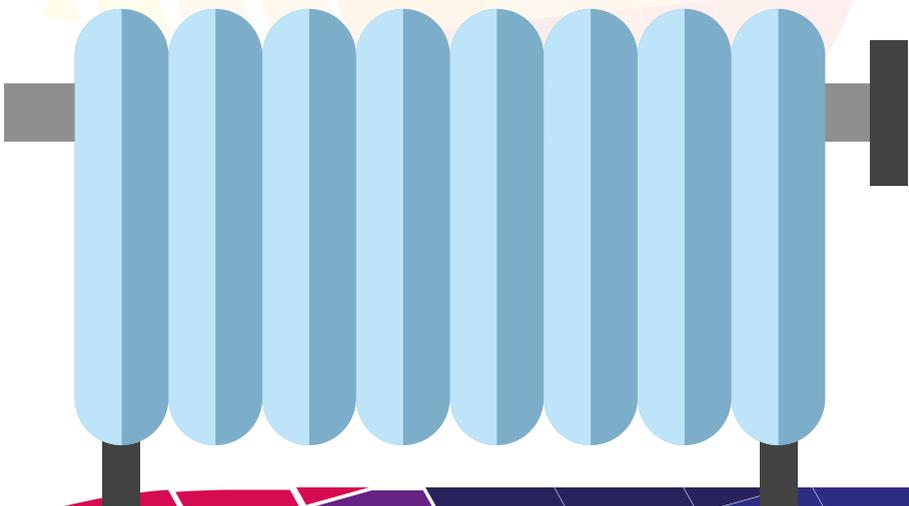


OUR IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME

We will consult regularly with you on what improvements we do to your home. Every year you will have the opportunity to influence our 3 year improvement plan.

- New kitchens
- New central heating
- New windows & doors
- New energy efficiency measures

We have already invested over £13m in improving our homes over the last 20 years.



ENQUIRIES AND COMPLAINTS

How do I complain?

Unfortunately, things do sometimes go wrong. We understand that when this does happen, it is important for us to respond to you quickly and efficiently.

You can complain in person at our office, by phone, in writing, email or via the complaints form on our website.

It is usually easier for us to resolve complaints that you have quickly. We will endeavour to resolve these at first point of contact. Please talk to a member of staff to resolve any problems on the spot.

When complaining, tell us:

- your full name and address
- as much as you can about the complaint
- what has gone wrong
- what you want us to do to resolve it.

We will get back to you with the outcome of a stage 1 complaint in 5 days or a stage 2 complaint which would require investigation in 20 days.



ENQUIRIES AND COMPLAINTS

How long do I have to make a complaint?

Normally, you must make your complaint: within six months of the event you want to complain about, or within six months of you finding out that you have a reason to complain, but no longer than 12 months after the event itself.

In exceptional circumstances, we may be able to accept a complaint after the time limit. If you feel that the time limit should not apply to your complaint, we will consider this.

What can't I complain about?

There are some things we can't deal with through our complaints-handling procedures. These include:

- A first-time request for a service
- Insurance Claims
- things that are covered by a right of appeal. For example, where you do not agree with your priority for housing, you can appeal the decision.
- issues that are in court or have already been heard by a court or a tribunal
- an attempt to reopen a previously concluded complaint or to have a complaint reconsidered where we have already given our final decision. If you are still not satisfied, please go to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman for an independent review of the complaint.

If other procedures or rights of appeal can help you resolve your concerns, we will give information and advice to help you.

BEING A GOOD NEIGHBOUR

You are entitled to peaceful enjoyment of your home. We will help resolve issues if this is not the case. Even with the best intentions, problems can sometimes arise in your community or between neighbours. Antisocial behaviour, noise or harassment, for instance, can cause upset.

We can assist in resolving:

Difficulties with neighbours

- If a problem occurs between you and a neighbour and you are unable to resolve the issue contact us for help.

Gardens

- You must keep your garden from becoming untidy. We will inspect our estates and if your garden is not maintained we will ask you to rectify this, if not we may do the necessary work for which you will be charged.



Keeping Pets

- If you have a pet you must ensure that they do not cause a nuisance to neighbours. You must request permission to keep a pet and ensure that it is under control at all times and that you clean up after your pet.

BEING A GOOD NEIGHBOUR

We are an equal opportunity landlord and our policy ensures that we are opposed to discrimination and give equality of treatment to all of our customers.

All complaints will be dealt with in accordance with a set timescale and treated confidentially, seriously and sympathetically.

Should you wish to discuss any issue regarding your tenancy, please contact us direct. We can offer confidential interview facilities or alternatively visit you in your own home or at a location of your choice.



GETTING INVOLVED

At Shire, we believe our tenants are the best people to tell us what we can do better because they know what it's like to live in our homes and use our services.

We believe that every tenant should have the opportunity to influence the service they receive from us. We are looking for tenants who would like to be involved and influence the way in which our services are delivered.

Ways to get involved

We offer many ways to get involved, from being an armchair critic to a Member of our Management Board. We would be happy to talk you through how you could become more involved with us, please contact your Customer Service Advisor.



VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

At Shire, we believe that connecting with your communities can help create a sense of belonging and help you make new friends or develop new interests and hobbies. We are working hard with other community groups to help us deliver on our promise of great communities.

If you would like more information about local community groups or how to access your community action plan please use our useful connections listed.

Vibrant Communities

Telephone: 01563 576354

Telephone: 01563 578104

Email: vibrantcommunities@east-ayrshire.gov.uk

Facebook: www.facebook.com/eavibrantcommunities

Twitter: www.twitter.com/VibrantEAC

East Ayrshire Money

Freephone: 0800 3897750

Email: info@eamoney.co.uk

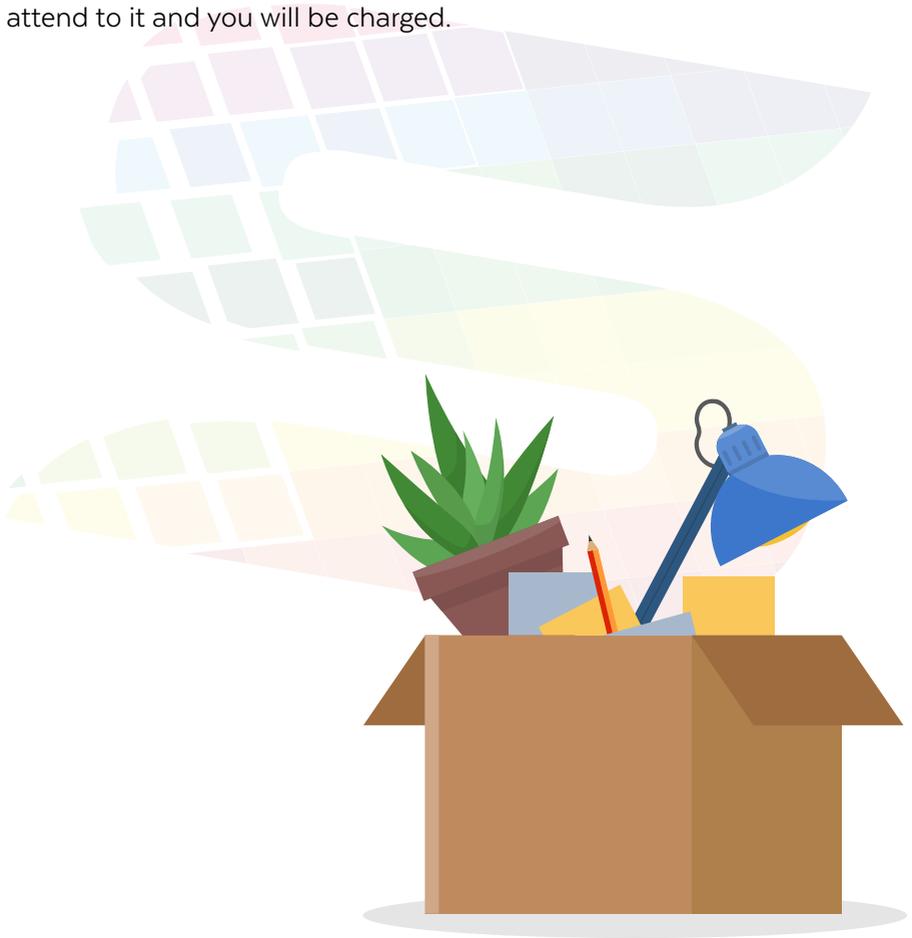
Website: <https://eamoney.co.uk/>



MOVING HOME

If you wish to end your tenancy, you must give us 28 days notice in writing.

Your home will be inspected before your tenancy ends to check it is in good order. We will let you know of any work that you have to do before you leave. At the end of your tenancy the property should be left in a clean and tidy condition. If work or cleaning is not completed we will attend to it and you will be charged.



SCOTTISH HOUSING REGULATOR (SHR)

The SHR is the independent regulator of social landlords in Scotland. It's statutory objective is to safeguard and promote the interests of current and future tenants, homeless people and others who use services provided by social landlords.



Scottish Housing
Regulator

You can download the Regulatory Framework and find out more about them on their website at www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk or contact them by phone on **0800 377 7330**.



WHAT DO YOU THINK?

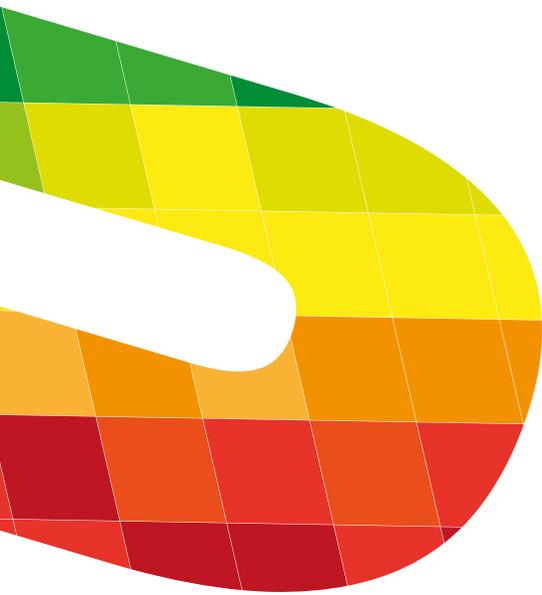
We would love to hear what you think of our brand new handbook, created by tenants, for tenants.

- Is it clear and easy to understand?
- Does it hold the information you require?
- Is there anything else you would like it to include?
- What format do you think is best e.g. electronic, hard copy, website, etc?

We welcome your feedback and suggestions.

Please contact us at the office.





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Shire Housing Association Limited is a Registered Charity number SC038664