



Council Housing
& Development
Services



Housing Tenant Handbook



www.exeter.gov.uk/Housing

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Introduction

1. Welcome to your new home

This handbook will provide you with valuable information, guidance and advice about your new home and tenancy with us. It is not a legal document, and it does not replace your tenancy agreement.

We may update this handbook from time to time, and we recommend that you check our website for the most up-to-date version.

Throughout the document we have provided links to useful websites. If you are reading this as a paper copy, you can find these websites listed at the end of this handbook in the [Online Contacts](#) section.

Your tenancy

2. About your tenancy

Your tenancy agreement (which includes your 'Conditions of Occupation') is important because it is a legal contract setting out the rights and responsibilities for you as a tenant, as well as for the Council as your landlord.

Main contact details for this section

Team: Housing Estates Management

Email: housing.estates.management@exeter.gov.uk

Telephone: 01392 265033

2.1 Your tenancy agreement

Your tenancy agreement covers introductory tenancies, lifetime secure tenancies and demoted tenancies. It sets out your rights and responsibilities.

2.2 Introductory tenancies

All new council tenants are given introductory tenancies, unless you moved on a transfer or mutual exchange. Introductory tenancies give you most of the rights of a secure council tenancy, except that you can be evicted more easily.

As an introductory tenant you do not have the right to:

- Sublet any part of your home, assign or exchange your home
- Make improvements or alterations to your home
- Apply to buy your home (although the introductory period will count towards any qualifying period)
- Vote before any transfer of your home is made to a new landlord.

Your conduct (including that of your household) will be monitored while you are on an introductory tenancy, and this will determine whether we will allow the trial period to expire or extend it or bring your tenancy to an end. The trial period is usually for one year but can be extended to 18 months.

If you do not comply with the terms of your tenancy agreement during this time, possession can be sought following service of a notice.

If you have been granted an introductory tenancy, and you believe you shouldn't have, you should raise this through the formal complaints process. These complaints should be raised within 14 days of signing the Tenancy Agreement.

If you do not break any conditions of your tenancy agreement while you are an introductory tenant, you will automatically be moved onto a **secure tenancy**.

2.3 Secure tenancies

Once you have a secure tenancy, we can only make you leave in certain very specific situations, and, even then, we have to take legal action through the court to obtain a possession order.

We may take legal action if, for example, you:

- Do not regularly pay your rent.
- Cause any form of anti-social behaviour.
- Act in a violent manner.
- Have been convicted of using your home for illegal purposes.
- Deliberately damage your home.
- Obtained your tenancy under false pretences.

We may also take legal action if we need to move you to another home (for example, if we need to carry out improvement works).

You are responsible both for your own behaviour and for the behaviour of anyone (family, visitors and animals) in your home and in the surrounding neighbourhood. More information on your tenancy agreement can be found [on our website](#).

If you are an introductory or lifetime secure tenant, you may have a right for your spouse, partner or civil partner to succeed to your tenancy on your death if they occupy your home as their only or main home – please see our section on [Succession](#) for more information about this.

2.4 Demoted tenancies

A demoted tenancy is a type of tenancy that we may use where there has been serious or persistent anti-social behaviour. We do this by asking the court to make an order that takes away some of your rights as a tenant. This is called a demoted tenancy order.

A demoted tenancy gives you fewer rights than a secure tenancy, particularly around eviction, while still allowing you to remain in your home if your behaviour improves.

If your tenancy is changed to a demoted tenancy, you do not have the right to:

- Sublet any part of your home, to exchange your home or assign (except where ordered by a court)
- Make improvements to your home
- Apply to buy your home
- Vote before any transfer of your home is made to a new landlord.

A demoted tenancy usually lasts for a fixed period (normally 12 months). If there are no further problems during this time, your tenancy may return to its previous status.

2.5 Occupation of your home and abandonment

This must be your main home. If this is not your main home, we may take legal action against you. Demand for affordable housing in Exeter greatly exceeds supply and it would be wrong for us to allow someone who already has another home to live in a council home.

If you live somewhere else for more than four consecutive weeks (for example, working abroad, visiting relatives, or a holiday) please contact the [Housing Estates Management](#) team so that we can advise you.

If your home appears to the Council to be abandoned and/or your whereabouts are not known, we will conclude that you are no longer occupying your home as 'your only or main home'. This means that you will no longer be a secure tenant and we can bring your right to occupy your home to an end by serving a notice and then seeking a court order for possession of your home. You will be liable for the costs incurred by the Council in doing this.

You should not have more people living in your home than the maximum number allowed by your tenancy agreement, except for natural changes in your household or if you have a relative staying with you. Please contact us to discuss permissions outside of these reasons and see our section on [Subletting and lodgers](#).

2.6 Changing tenancy conditions

We will give you four weeks' written notice if any tenancy conditions are to be changed, and we will consult you on any proposed changes beforehand.

2.7 Joint tenancies

The granting of a joint tenancy is at our discretion. You do not have the right to have a joint tenancy, but we would not unreasonably withhold permission.

If you and another adult both signed the tenancy agreement, then you are joint tenants, and the terms of the tenancy agreement applies equally to both of you. This means that you both enjoy the right to live in your home and to receive the services we provide, but it also means that you are both responsible for the rent and have all the other obligations of a tenant.

This does not mean that you are each responsible for half the rent, it means that each of you is responsible for all of the rent. For example, if you fall into rent arrears and one of you leaves, the remaining person would still be liable for all the outstanding debt.

If you are a joint tenant and one of you moves out, you must contact the [Housing Estates Management](#) team immediately.

The person who moves out can assign their share of the tenancy to the other. Please see the section on [Assignment](#) for more details about this. The person remaining will then become the sole tenant. If there is any question about who is to move out, this matter should be resolved by you, with independent legal advice if necessary.

A joint tenant who has moved out can give four weeks' notice and end the tenancy for everyone, so it is very important that you protect your right to live in your home.

2.8 Assignment

Lifetime tenants of Exeter City Council may assign their tenancy to another member of their household who would be qualified to succeed the tenancy if the tenant dies, as long as there has not been a previous succession or assignment of that tenancy. You will also need permission from us in writing. Please contact the [Housing Estates Management](#) team so that we can advise you.

The assignment must be to a sole tenancy only (except for mutual exchange). A joint tenancy cannot be assigned to a sole tenancy.

Where an assignment takes place all the rights and responsibilities of the tenancy are passed from the original tenant (the 'assignor') to the new tenant (the 'assignee'). The original tenant no longer has any rights or responsibilities whatsoever in relation to the property.

2.9 Succession

Succession rights mean the right to take over the tenancy or inherit it when someone dies. Succession can only happen once, so if the person who passed away succeeded to the tenancy themselves, there normally can't be another succession.

2.9.1 Who can succeed a tenancy?

If you signed your tenancy agreement after 1 April 2012:

- If you have a lifetime tenancy, there is one right of succession for your spouse, partner or civil partner to take over your tenancy after your death if they occupy your home as their only or main home.
- If you have an introductory tenancy, there is also a right for a member of your family to succeed (as defined by section 140 of the Housing Act 1996), if there is no spouse, partner or civil partner, as long as they occupy your home as their only or main home and have lived with you for 12 months.
- If you are a demoted tenant, there is also a right for a member of your family to succeed (as defined by section 143P of the Housing Act 1996), if there is no spouse, partner or civil partner, as long as they occupy your home as their

only or main home and have lived with you for 12 months. If there is more than one person, entitled to succeed then priority is given, to your spouse or civil partner.

If you signed your tenancy agreement before 1 April 2012:

- There is one right of succession after your death for a spouse, partner, civil partner or for any other immediate relative as long as they have been living with you for at least twelve months.
- Extended family members – other “family members” (defined below) do not have an automatic statutory right to succeed unless the specific tenancy agreement expressly permits it (known as contractual succession). Where a tenancy agreement does allow it, or in older definitions, “family members” include those related to the tenant such as parents, grandparent, children, siblings, uncles, aunts, nephews, nieces, step-relations and half-relations.

We will require proof that relatives have been living with you, and this must show they have been contributing to the household. For example, a gas bill showing their name as well as yours.

2.9.2 Joint tenancies

If someone is already a joint tenant then they will retain their tenancy on your death, and this is called ‘by right of survivorship’. The surviving tenant is treated as a successor to the tenancy.

2.9.3 If the home is too large or has adaptations

If your home is too large for the household’s needs, for example it has more bedrooms than is needed, or has adaptations worth £1,000 or over which are no longer required, we may acknowledge succession, but we will work with the successor to help them find and move to a different home.

2.10 Sub-letting and lodgers

Sub-letting means that you allow someone to have exclusive use of all or part of your home: they will usually do their own cooking and cleaning. In effect you will have created a new sub-tenancy. A lodger is someone who lives in your home but does not have an exclusive right to any part of it. For example, they would share your kitchen, bathroom or living room.

- You are not allowed to sub-let the whole of your home to anyone.
- You may sub-let part of your home, or take in a lodger, as long as you get our written permission first.

Whether you have a lodger or a sub-tenant (for part of your home), you must continue to live in your home, and it must be your principle (main) residence. If you don't, you will lose your secure tenancy, and we will take action to repossess your home. The Prevention of Social Housing Fraud Act 2013 also means that you will be committing a criminal offence if you sublet your home when you're not allowed to.

Please contact the [Housing Estates Management](#) team if you are considering taking in a sub-tenant or lodger. We will need the name and age of the intended sub-tenant or lodger, and we may ask you more questions about them. We are not likely to consent to Airbnb-style holiday lets. Remember, you should not overcrowd your home, and you are responsible for the behaviour of your sub-tenants and lodgers and if they cause a nuisance or harass your neighbours you will be breaking your tenancy conditions and you may lose your home. You will also be liable for any damage that they cause.

If you apply for a transfer, your lodger or sub-tenant will not be considered as part of your household. If you move out, they must move out at the same time.

It is your responsibility to declare any income you receive from lodgers or sub-tenants for tax and benefit purposes.

2.11 Housing officer visits

You will be visited by your Housing Officer at regular intervals throughout your tenancy. These visits are a way for you to get to know us, and for us to see you and your home. At these visits, your Housing Officer will conduct a property inspection, which will require access to all rooms in your home. This visit is also an opportunity for us to check and update the information we hold about you and your household, and for you to raise any concerns or issues. These visits are routine and are nothing to be concerned about.

We will work with you to find a mutually convenient time to visit you at home. Failure to permit us access to your home to complete this visit may result in us obtaining an injunction (or other legal action), and you are likely to be charged any associated costs.

You can contact your Housing Officer outside of these visits should you need to. You will be provided with their direct contact details during their visit, or please contact the [Housing Estates Management](#) team.

Under Section 11(6) of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985, and your tenancy agreement, we may enter the property to inspect its condition or carry out repairs, but only at reasonable times of day (usually Monday -Friday 9am -5pm) with a minimum of 24 hours' written notice, (either by letter, email or text). If possible, however, we will aim to give you at least 48 hours' notice, except in an

emergency. An example of an emergency would be if there was a fire or flood, where immediate access would be necessary.

If the proposed time is not convenient, please contact us immediately to rearrange. If we do not hear from you, we will assume the appointment is convenient and will proceed with the visit.

Failure to allow access may result in a recharge for officer and contractor costs incurred.

Please see our [Repairs, maintenance and improvements](#) section for more information about our targets for completing repairs (including emergency repairs).

2.12 Tenancy fraud and housing fraud

Tenancy fraud is when someone lies or deceives to get or keep a home that they're not entitled to. Housing fraud is where someone claims services or compensation based on false information.

If someone is found to be committing fraud, they could put their tenancy at risk and may be fined or even face prison. We will take steps to recover money obtained fraudulently and our costs.

Examples of tenancy fraud include:

- Subletting without permission: Renting out all or part of your home without approval (even to family), is illegal. This includes short-term lets through platforms like Airbnb. Offenders can be fined, jailed, and ordered to repay any profits.
- Misrepresentation: Giving false or incomplete information to get a home or move to a bigger one. This applies even if someone else lies on your behalf.
- Joint tenancy fraud: This is when a tenant adds someone to the tenancy, then moves out, leaving the new tenant in the home without a genuine need. This unfairly blocks others from accessing housing.
- Key selling: If someone is granted a tenancy but never moves in and sells the keys to someone else, that's tenancy fraud and it's a criminal offence.
- Succession fraud: Succession fraud is when someone falsely claims the right to take over a tenancy after the tenant dies by saying they lived there long enough when they did not.

Examples of Housing fraud include:

- Compensation fraud: This is when someone claims to have suffered damage or distress and supplied false information in order to receive compensation.

If you suspect tenancy or housing fraud, let us know by contacting the [Housing Estates Management](#) team.

2.13 Customer care and behaviour

We want to give you excellent customer service however you choose to contact us.

We do our best every day to serve our residents and you can expect that we will:

- listen to you and respond to you professionally and with respect
- help to resolve your query and achieve the best outcomes that we can for you
- treat you fairly
- value diversity and never knowingly discriminate against you
- recognise different communication needs and make reasonable adjustments to support you to communicate with us
- be honest with you and take responsibility for our actions

In return, we ask that you:

- treat us with respect - we understand that in times of trouble or distress, people may act out of character, you can ask us to contact you at another time if you are finding a conversation difficult
- are patient - sometimes it can take time for us to give you the information or support you need, we may need to talk to colleagues in other areas of the council before we can answer some queries, if we need to get back in touch with you, we will agree how and when to do this with you

We do not tolerate behaviour, language, or communication that is threatening, violent, or abusive towards our staff, contractors, Councillors or volunteers. This includes discrimination, harassment, hate incidents or crimes.

If you behave in this way, we can end correspondence, meetings, visits, or conversations. However, we will let you know first that we may do this.

We may also:

- record information about incidents and share this with other parts of the council
- limit how you can communicate with us
- report abuse to the police.

We have a duty to protect the welfare and safety of our staff. We should be able to work without fear of abuse, harassment, discrimination, or violence.

You are not only responsible for your own behaviour, but also for the behaviour of your family and any other member of your household, and your visitors.

2.14 Pets & animals

If you wish to have a domestic pet, written permission is required prior to the commencement of your tenancy or prior to you getting the animal. We won't unreasonably refuse a request for a pet.

Some breeds of dog, and other animals, are not permitted by law.

If you receive permission to keep a pet, the pet should be appropriately supervised and should not cause a nuisance to neighbours or their visitors. Dogs should be kept on leads within communal grounds and are not allowed to roam free.

We can only permit birds or aquarium fish in Chester Long Court.

If you are thinking of getting a pet, please ask your Housing Officer or contact the [Housing Estates Management](#) team to ask permission.

If you have a dog or a cat, they must be microchipped and registered with an approved microchip database (such as [Petlog](#)). It is also a legal requirement that all dogs always wear a collar and a tag when away from home.

Please do not feed wild birds unless you have a suspended bird table (one that hangs from a tree or similar). The scattering of food on the ground or on balconies attracts vermin.

2.15 Working from home

If you wish to run any kind of business from your home or the surrounding area, please contact us to ask our permission. We will not normally refuse permission unless the business would cause a nuisance, breach of any regulation or by-law, or damage the home and property. It will be your responsibility to obtain any necessary planning permission.

Please contact your Housing Officer or the [Housing Estates Management](#) team for permission.

2.16 Refuse & recycling

Rubbish collections take place once a fortnight for most residents. Your rubbish, recycling, food or garden waste should be put out for collection at the designated collection point for your home. In some cases, this might be a bin store.

Only household waste should be placed in your bin. You are encouraged to recycle as much waste as possible.

Garden waste can also be collected but there is a separate charge for this, please visit the [Bins and Recycling](#) section of our website for up-to-date information about charges etc.

To find out when your refuse and recycling will be collected, what can be recycled, or to request or pay for bins, please visit the [Bins and Recycling](#) section of our website or call 01392 277888.

If you are not able to move your rubbish, recycling, food or garden bin to your designated collection point, you can apply for [Assisted Waste Collections](#) (certain criteria must be met and this service does not apply to bin store collections).

2.17 Bin stores

These must be kept clear of bulky items so there is enough room for everyone's household rubbish. If you have a bin store and experiencing issues, please contact your Housing Officer or the [Housing Estates Management](#) team.

2.18 Bulky waste

Call Cleansing on 01392 277888 about the removal of bulky items. Four black bin bags tied and secured will be classed as one item.

The prices for the removal of bulky waste change annually, [please see our website](#) for up-to-date costs and information.

2.19 Littering and fly tipping

Littering and fly-tipping are illegal and a breach of your tenancy agreement. Those responsible could be subject to fines and persistent offenders will be subject to court action.

Exeter City Council Enforcement Officers have the power to issue on the spot fines and persistent offenders who dump rubbish. They can also be prosecuted with fines imposed by the courts.

2.20 Parking

When you moved in, you would have been told if your new home is in a resident parking permit area, and you will be provided with information about how to obtain a resident parking permit from Devon County Council.

All Devon County Council parking permits must be renewed every year and must be always displayed in your vehicle.

All vehicles parked on the road or in designated parking areas must be taxed, legal, and roadworthy. We do not allow SORN (off the road) vehicles to be parked on the road or in designated parking areas.

Some of our sites have a limited number of parking spaces for use by tenants, staff, visiting professionals and tenants' visitors. There may be insufficient parking available to provide a space for your exclusive use. Parking spaces are filled on a first-come first-served basis. You may not park heavy trade vehicle or large commercial vehicle (larger than standard transit size) on these spaces.

If you wish to keep a caravan, boat or trailer on one of our parking spaces, you must first seek permission from us.

Some of these sites require special permits issued by us. We use a parking management company who will issue fines on unauthorised vehicles.

2.21 Electric vehicles such as mobility scooters, electric wheelchairs, bikes, scooters and cars

We recognise the value that electric vehicles bring to the lives of many residents. Before purchasing one, however, we would ask you to carefully consider the nature of the surroundings where it will be stored and initially driven.

You must read and consent to our Exeter City Council electric vehicle requirements and **obtain permission** from [Housing Repairs and Maintenance](#) before purchasing an electric vehicle. This is so that we can assess and ensure that there is an appropriate area where they can be safely stored and charged. We do not allow mobility scooters or other electric vehicles in our passenger lifts.

For more information on fire safety in relation to mobility scooters and electric wheelchairs, please see the section [Electric Vehicles Fire Safety](#). We also have separate information about [electric vehicle charging](#).

2.21.1 Mobility scooters

Many of our estates were designed and built before the use of mobility scooters became widespread. As such, there is potential that when driving your scooter you may cross the path of residents, some of whom will themselves have restricted mobility. You must always be aware of the duty of care to others.

Some of our estates have their own designated scooter store, which you will need to speak to the us about reserving a space.

Mobility scooters must not be charged or stored in communal hallways, corridors, balconies, lift lobbies, escape routes or any other area which restricts access. Doing so creates a fire hazard and is an obstruction to residents, as well as an accessibility issues for emergency services.

Mobility scooters should never be driven into lifts because this can lead to breakdowns causing inconvenience to all residents as well as costly repairs.

In addition to obtaining permission from us, you will need to provide evidence of purchase and annual Portable Appliance Testing (PAT), servicing and appropriate third-party insurance. The insurance should cover things such as:

- Loss or damage
- Accidentally scratching a parked vehicle

- Causing a road accident
- Injury to pedestrians

2.22 Extra Care (Edwards Court)

Edwards Court is a block of 53 one and two-bedroom apartments that is managed by Exeter City Council's housing department. Residents have 24-hour care provided by Radis.

The building has:

- a restaurant
- multi-purpose hobby space
- lounges
- treatment room
- hairdressers
- assisted bathroom
- scooter and cycle store

If you live in Edwards Court and want to discuss anything in this handbook, or anything related to your tenancy, you can contact the Extra Care Property Services Manager directly on 01392 265900, or by emailing edwardscourt@exeter.gov.uk.

2.22.1 Who can apply?

If you are struggling to cope in your current home and want to be considered for a flat at Edwards Court, please email edwardscourt@exeter.gov.uk for more details about the application process and eligibility.

To be eligible to apply for a flat within Edwards Court, you must:

- Be aged 55 years or older.
- Have an eligible care and support need as defined by the Care Act 2014, and as assessed by Devon County Council adult social care.
- Live within Exeter, or have an established local connection to the City Council area (applicants from the wider Devon County Council area will be considered, but preference will be given to Exeter residents)
- Be living in accommodation that is currently unsuitable for them, leading to increased risks to their health and wellbeing
- Not have over £265,000 in equity or savings

Allocations will be considered and approved by a panel represented by Exeter City Council Housing Services, Devon County Council and the care service provider. As an affordable housing scheme, priority will be given to eligible applicants who meet the above criteria with preference given to Exeter residents.

3. Paying your rent

We use your rent to pay for the cost of repairing and managing your home and to cover the cost of any future improvements. If we do not receive your rent, we cannot fund these things.

Main contact details for this section

Team: Housing Income Collections

Email: Rent.collections@exeter.gov.uk

Telephone: 01392 265475

It is important that you make sure you pay your rent on time. If you do not pay your rent, you will be at risk of losing your home. If you have any concerns about paying your rent, please speak to the [Housing Income Collection](#) team and they can discuss your options.

You must pay all bills (including Council Tax, water, electricity and gas) for your home, and district heating scheme charges (if applicable). You must pay these direct to your provider, unless the charges are included in your service charge.

If you live in a block of flats or in Older Person Housing, you may receive services that you have to pay for as part of your rent. See section on [Service charge](#) for more information.

3.1 How to pay your rent

For most payment methods you will need your rent payment card, or the rent reference number located on your rent payment card. You can also find this number on your Tenant Portal account.

If you have not received a rent swipe card, these can be obtained by contacting the [Housing Income Collection](#) team.

You can pay your rent:

- On the Tenant Portal. Email tenant.portal@exeter.gov.uk for more information on how to register.
- [Online](#) with a credit or debit card.
- By direct debit or standing order - contact the [Housing Income Collection](#) team to set this up.
- By telephone using a credit or debit card on 01392 665885 quoting your rent reference number (remember, if you pay by credit card, your card issuer is likely to charge you interest).

- At any Post Office and at certain shops that advertise Paypoint. To use this service, you will need to bring your rent card. Remember, this can take up to 5 working days to process.

If you have any questions about your rent, please contact the [Housing Income Collection](#) team and they will be happy to discuss any issues with you in confidence.

3.2 When the rent is due

Rent is due in advance every fortnight on a Monday.

Your rent is charged over 48 weeks each year, rather than 52. This means there are four weeks during the year when no rent is collected. These usually fall around Christmas and March, and we will tell you the exact dates at the start of your tenancy and at the beginning of each financial year.

If your rent account is clear, you won't need to make a rent payment during these weeks. If you have rent arrears, you'll still need to keep paying – this helps reduce what you owe.

If you pay monthly, you still make 12 equal payments across the year, even in months that include a rent-free fortnight.

3.3 How your rent is worked out

The amount of rent you pay is linked to the facilities in your home, its size, age and type and in accordance with government rental policy.

3.4 Changes to my rent

Your rent can change from time to time. We will always tell you in writing before this happens.

Your rent may be changed from time to time and is usually increased, in line with National Government regulations, from the first Monday in April each year. We will write to you at least **4 weeks before** any change starts and explain your new rent and when it applies from.

Your rent may also change if:

- service charges change
- you move to a different property
- the number of bedrooms you are charged for changes
- your tenancy type changes

If you receive **Housing Benefit**, you must tell them about any rent change. If you don't, your benefit may not cover the full rent.

If you receive **Universal Credit**, you must use your journal to tell them about the change to your rent. You will need to tell them how much your new rent is and give them the date on which it changed. Universal Credit need you to give them this information after the rent has changed and not before.

If you don't understand a rent change or think something is wrong, contact us as soon as possible so we can explain or check your account.

3.5 Service charges

You will only pay service charges if you live in a home which benefits from a service such as in a block of flats with shared areas or Older Persons' Housing.

Service charges can include things like:

- Cleaning of shared areas such as stairwells and corridors
- Lighting in communal areas
- Grounds maintenance, including grass cutting and shared gardens
- Caretaking or communal safety checks
- Shared services such as door entry systems or lifts (if provided)

You only pay for services that apply to your home or building. If this applies to you, service charges will be payable alongside your rent.

We calculate the cost of each service provided by estimating the amount we are likely to spend in providing services to you over the coming year and dividing that fairly between the homes that must pay it.

We will give you a list of the services provided at the start of your tenancy and at the start of each financial year.

We may vary the services provided or introduce new services. If we do, the amount you pay in service charges will change accordingly. If we do make a change, we will give you at least 4 weeks' notice.

3.6 Rent refunds

You may receive a rent refund if you have paid more rent than was due on your account. This can happen if you move out part-way through a rent period, pay rent after your tenancy ends, or your rent or benefit entitlement is adjusted.

Any credit on your rent account will first be used to clear other housing-related charges or debt you owe us, where applicable. If a refund is due, we will contact you and pay it by bank transfer.

If you think you may be owed a refund or have questions about a credit on your rent account, please contact the [Housing Income Collection](#) team.

3.7 Support for tenants with individual needs and vulnerabilities

Some tenants may need extra support at times. This could be due to health issues, a disability, communication needs, money worries, or changes in circumstances.

We will take account of known needs or vulnerabilities and make reasonable adjustments where appropriate. This helps ensure our actions are fair and proportionate.

It's important that you tell us as early as possible if you are struggling or if your circumstances change. This allows us to look at what support may help and adjust how we work with you.

Your tenancy responsibilities still apply, but your individual circumstances will be considered when decisions are made.

3.8 What happens if you don't pay your rent

We try to help people avoid losing their homes. But if rent isn't paid, here's what we do:

Step 1: We contact you

We'll try to call, text, or email you. We'll also send letters.

Step 2: We send a legal notice

If you don't respond, we may send you a legal notice. This will either be a Notice of Seeking Possession (if you have a secure tenancy), or a Notice to End if you have an introductory tenancy. This is the first step in taking back your home. You'll should contact us immediately to pay what you owe or agree an affordable repayment plan.

Step 3: We go to court

If the debt gets worse, we'll ask the court for permission to take back your home. This is called a Possession Order.

Step 4: Court decision

The judge may let you stay in your home if you agree to pay your rent and a bit extra each week to clear the debt. This is called a Suspended Possession Order. We'll also ask the court to add legal costs to your rent debt.

Step 5: Eviction

If you don't pay what the court has told you to pay, we'll ask the court to tell bailiffs to take back your home. This is called a Possession Warrant.

Please don't ignore the problem. We want to help you stay in your home. Talk to us as soon as you can.

3.9 Former tenants

If you leave your council home owing rent, we will try to get that money back.

We might ask the county court to make a decision about the debt. The court will tell you how much to pay and when. This is called a County Court Judgement. It can make it harder for you to borrow money in the future, like getting a loan or credit card.

We might also ask the court to take money straight from your wages. This is called an Attachment of Earnings Order. Your employer will take money from your pay to help clear the debt.

We also work with debt collection agents. We pass the debt to them, and they will contact you directly to retrieve the debt. They are very good at getting unpaid rent back.

It's better to talk to us and agree a way to pay the debt off. If you don't, it could affect your chances of getting a home with another council or housing group in the future.

If you're struggling with money and rent debt, please contact us. We'll talk with you privately and try to help. We can give advice and support to stop the problem from getting worse.

3.10 Debt advice

If you don't pay your rent, you could lose your home. The money you owe is called rent arrears. Rent arrears are very serious. You should deal with them quickly.

In the UK, debt advice is free. If you're in debt, don't ignore it and try not to worry. There are people who can help you. They can:

- Check if you can get more money or [benefits](#)
- Help you fill in forms
- Show you how to manage your money

There's also a new government scheme called [Breathing Space](#). It gives you time to sort out your debts. You can get this help by talking to a debt advice service.

Need Help? Call Us

If you are worried about money, please contact the [Housing Income Collection](#) team as soon as possible. Talking to us early gives us the best chance to help.

We know that paying rent and other bills can sometimes be difficult. This might be because of changes to your income, benefits, health, or personal circumstances.

The [Housing Income Collection](#) team can:

- Talk to you about your rent and payment options
- Work with you to set up an affordable payment plan
- Check whether you may be entitled to Housing Benefit or Universal Credit
- Help you understand your rent account and any arrears
- Signpost you to Discretionary Housing Payments
- Signpost you to the Crisis and resilience fund
- Signpost you to free, independent money and debt advice
- Refer you to organisations that can help with budgeting, benefits, or financial hardship

We treat all enquiries confidentially. Our aim is to help you pay your rent, avoid arrears, and stay in your home.

If you are struggling with money, please do not ignore the problem. Contact us and we will try to help. **Or**, if you prefer, you can contact one of these organisations directly:

Organisation	Details
National Debtline	Free advice about debt problems Call: 0808 808 4000 Website: www.nationaldebtline.org
StepChange Debt Charity	Help with debt plans and budgeting Call: 0800 138 1111 Website: www.stepchange.org
PayPlan	Free debt advice and plans Call: 0800 316 1833 Website: www.payplan.com
Citizens Advice	Help with benefits, housing, and debt East Devon: 01395 265070 National line: 0800 144 8848 Website: www.citizensadvice.org.uk
Money Helper	Government help with money problems Call: 0800 138 7777 Website: www.moneyhelper.org.uk
Civil Legal Advice (CLA)	Free legal help for some people Call: 0345 345 4345 (Mon–Fri, 9am–8pm) Website: www.gov.uk/civil-legal-advice
Universal Credit	For new or existing claims Honiton & Exeter Job Centres: 0800 169 0190 (Mon–Fri, 9am–5pm) Website: www.gov.uk/universal-credit

Remember, you're not alone. Help is available, and it's free.

4. Moving home

There may be a time when you need or want to move house. The following information gives you an overview of the moving out process and the options available to you. We also have a Moving Out leaflet, which is available from the [Lettings and Home Ownership](#) team.

Main contact details for this section

Team: Lettings and Home Ownership

Email: lettingsandhomeownership@exeter.gov.uk

Telephone: 01392 265744

4.1 Giving notice on your tenancy

If you wish to end your council tenancy and move out, you must let us know in writing at least four weeks before you intend to leave your home.

This four-week notice period must end on a Monday, and you should return your keys to the Civic Centre by 10am on that Monday or leave them in the key safe that we have installed at your home. If you do not do this, we will keep the tenancy running, which will incur additional rent.

If you hand your keys in later than 10am on the Monday, you will be charged one more week's rent.

If you are joint tenants, one of you can end the tenancy for all by giving us four weeks' written notice. This ends the tenancy for everyone.

You must allow us to inspect your home before you leave so we can tell you what work needs to be done. We will also tell you how much rent you need to pay to clear your account before you leave.

You must make sure that the home and property, outbuildings and any fixtures and fittings, are clean, tidy and in good condition. You do not have to pay for any damage caused by normal wear and tear, but you will have to pay to repair or replace any items damaged deliberately or through neglect. We recommend that you repair or replace the items yourself before you leave.

4.2 When you move out

You should let the following people know that you are moving (more comprehensive checklists can be found online):

- Your utility companies (electricity, gas, South West Water)
- Your telephone, Internet and TV providers
- Banks, building societies and insurance companies

- Benefits agencies if you are claiming any benefits
- Council Tax
- TV licensing to get your licence transferred to your new address
- The Post Office to have your post re-directed.

On the day you move out, please:

- Arrange to pay all your bills: gas, water, electricity, Internet, TV, telephone etc.
- Read the meters and supply the readings to your energy companies on the day you move out to prevent future problems with the account.
- Clear the home and property completely and put out any rubbish in the usual way

Any items left will be stored for up to 28 days, before being disposed of. If we have to pay for clearing out unwanted items, or storing them, the cost will be charged to you.

Lock all doors and return the keys to us.

Ensure that all members of the household have left the property; you will be responsible for our costs if we have to obtain a court order to evict anyone remaining in the home.

4.3 Death of a tenant

If you pass away while you are a tenant and you have no successor, a three-week rent-free period will be given from the Monday following the date of death to allow the home and property to be emptied. This is if we are informed within 48 hours of your death.

If you believe you have the right to succeed a tenancy, following the death of a tenant, please read the section titled [Succession](#).

Keys must be returned on a Monday (or earlier), and you should return your keys to the Civic Centre by 10am on that Monday or leave them in the key safe that we have installed at the home. If the keys have not been returned after three weeks, rent will have to be charged to your estate. If we are not informed within 48 hours of your death, then no rent-free weeks will be granted.

If your home is not empty of all people and belongings, then your estate may incur other fees and charges.

To report the death of a tenant please contact the [Lettings and Home Ownership](#) team.

Please see the tenancy agreement for more details.

4.4 Mutual exchange

A mutual exchange by assignment is when you swap your home with someone else who also lives in a council or housing association home. This does not have to be in Exeter; it can be anywhere in the country.

You can use HomeSwapper to find and communicate with other people looking to exchange homes. It is a national database of tenants who wish to exchange their home with another social tenant. Please head to [HomeSwapper](#) website for more information.

If you find someone with whom you wish to swap homes, please contact the [Housing Estates Management](#) team (rather than the **Lettings and Home Ownership** team). If there are a mix of flexible and secure tenants involved in the process, a mutual exchange may not be the best solution.

We have six weeks to make a decision. You must get our permission in writing first before making any arrangements. The other tenant must also obtain their landlord's written permission before any swap can go ahead.

We would only refuse in certain circumstances, such as:

- If one of the homes would be overcrowded
- If one of the homes would be substantially too large for the new tenants. We define 'substantially too large' as having one extra bedroom more than requirements (unless an even greater level of under-occupation exists before the proposed swap)
- If legal action to gain possession of the home is being taken against any of the tenants involved
- If the home was adapted or designated for elderly or disabled people (usually with adaptations worth £1,000 or over) and the proposed incoming tenants did not need those services.

Although we will consider all applications to mutually exchange homes from those who have housing-related debt (rent, repair recharges etc.), we will not agree to any move taking place while there are any outstanding housing-related debts owed to us. The same rule would apply to tenants of other landlords.

Once you have moved home by way of a mutual exchange you must accept your new home in the condition you find it. If it is an Exeter City Council property, we will carry out a safety check and routine repairs, but any damage caused deliberately or through neglect becomes the responsibility of the person moving into our accommodation.

If you do exchange homes without our written agreement, we will take legal action to evict you. You will be unable to return to your original home and will not be offered alternative accommodation.

4.5 Downsizing

If you leave a large council home for a smaller home (for example, if you move from a four-bedroom to a two-bedroom house) you may qualify for assistance when moving. Tenants may be eligible, depending on their circumstances, for help towards moving costs, up to a maximum of £500.

We are keen to let large homes to families in housing need and will help our own tenants move into smaller, more appropriate housing in order to do this.

If you would like further information about downsizing, please contact the [Lettings and Home Ownership](#) team.

If your home has had significant adaptations that you no longer require, you may wish to free up your property for someone who needs it. If you do this, you may be eligible for a higher banding (Band B) on Devon Home Choice.

4.6 Moving to Older Persons' Housing

If you are finding that it is becoming increasingly difficult to manage your existing home, you may feel that a move to Older Persons' Housing is right for you. More details about Exeter City Council's Older Persons' Housing can be found in Older Persons Housing of this Handbook.

4.7 Transfers through Devon Home Choice

You have the right to apply to transfer to another council or housing association home. Transfers are made through [Devon Home Choice](#).

We cannot agree to a transfer if:

- You owe us rent or any other housing-related debt
- Your home or garden are in a poor condition
- You have made any alterations without our written agreement
- You do not give us access to carry out a home and property inspection before you move
- You have breached your Tenancy Agreement.

If we have to make repairs or clear rubbish after you have left, we will charge you for the costs incurred.

You will need to give four weeks' notice and allow us to carry out an inspection during that notice period. The four-week notice period must end on a Monday, and you should return your key to the key safe that we have fitted to the home.

4.8 Right to buy

As a council tenant you have the right to buy your home if you have been a secure tenant of Exeter City Council, or any other public sector landlord continuously for a period of time set out in legislation. Anyone who becomes a new council tenant will need to meet the qualifying period.

You do not qualify for Right to Buy if you:

- Live in Older Persons' Housing
- Live in a home that has had a major disabled adaptation or been designed specifically for a disabled occupant
- Have an introductory tenancy.

The Right to Buy scheme gives you a reduction on the market value of your home. The longer you have been a tenant, the greater discount you can get, up to a maximum limit set out in legislation.

If you are interested in the Right to Buy, please contact the [Lettings and Home Ownership](#) team for further information.

There is a website www.ownyourhome.gov.uk/ that could answer any questions you may have and lists all the options that can help you buy. You can also visit <https://righttobuy.gov.uk/> for further information.

4.9 Renting a garage

The [Lettings and Home Ownership](#) team manage Exeter City Council garages. Garages are available to rent from us for both tenants and private residents. Garages are for storing vehicles only. Rental costs will vary depending on location. The charge for a garage will be collected with your rent. If you would like to rent a garage, please contact the [Lettings and Home Ownership](#) team.

Your Home

5. Repairs, maintenance and improvements

As your landlord, we have a legal duty to keep your home in good repair, but you must also take good care of your home.

Main contact details for this section

Team: Housing Repairs and Maintenance

Email: housing.repairs@exeter.gov.uk

Telephone: 01392 265031

5.1 How to report a repair

Our offices are open Monday – Friday, between 9am and 5pm. If there is an emergency, or it is outside of these hours, please contact the [Housing Repairs and Maintenance](#) team by telephone only, not by online (or other) methods, so that we can act immediately.

You can report repairs to us at any time in the following ways:

- On the [Tenant Portal](#) - email tenant.portal@exeter.gov.uk for more information on how to register
- [Online on our website](#)
- By email: housing.repairs@exeter.gov.uk
- By telephone **01392 265031 (including emergency or out-of-hours)**
- By letter
- In person: Civic Centre, Paris Street, Exeter, EX1 1JN (our physical offices are open from Monday to Friday, Fri 9:00 – 14:00)
- At our Housing Surgeries.

When you contact us, please tell us:

- Your name and full address
- A daytime telephone number where you can be reached
- Times when you or someone else will be at home
- As much information about the repair as possible.

Appointments can be offered in the evening and on Saturday mornings depending on availability.

If you smell gas or suspect that you might have a gas leak, call the 24-hour gas emergency helpline on **0800 111 999** and follow the information provided in the **Gas Safety** section of this handbook.

Repairs are prioritised based on urgency. Depending on the type of work we will apply these timescales:

- **Routine maintenance** to be completed within 28 working days. All works which are not an emergency will be prioritised based on urgency.
- **Emergency work** to be made safe within four hours. The time starts when we receive notification of the emergency repair and ends when the job has been made safe. Any follow up work required will be prioritised based on urgency and completed within 28 working days.

When you contact us to request a repair we will:

- check your contact details
- confirm repair details and repair responsibility
- Check any individual needs or vulnerabilities relating to the household and confirm how we will adjust our services to take account of these
- Provide confirmation of the reported repair (including an order number) and details of what the next action will be (including details of whether an inspection is needed)
- Provide details of the timescales for the completion of the next action (and repair including its priority)
- treat you with courtesy
- offer appointments for non-emergency work that will be either a morning, afternoon or avoiding the school run
- protect you and your home by making sure the contractors work carefully and safely
- respect you and your home while the work is taking place keeping disruption to a minimum
- post inspect a minimum of 10% of all repair works
- ensure that everyone visiting your home has identification.

5.2 What you are responsible for

You are responsible for:

- Keeping the inside of your home clean, free from clutter, and free of vermin and pests - if you have a pest control problem, you can speak to Exeter City Council's **Environment Health** team for advice on **01392 265148**.
- Keeping the inside of your home in a good state of decoration. You must repair, or pay for the repair or replacement, if you have caused damage to

your home, for example, smashed glass in windows, broken or damaged doors, etc. This includes poor standard do-it-yourself work

- Taking action to prevent and control condensation
- Reporting any faults or damage immediately to the [Housing Repairs and Maintenance](#) team - if you, your household or visitors to your home deliberately cause damage or neglect a fault by not reporting it to us, we may charge you to put that extra damage right
- Allowing Council workers or contractors used by the Council into your home to carry out safety checks, inspections, repairs and improvements. Never let anyone in without seeing their identification. If you are at all concerned about who they are then take their details, shut the door and contact the [Housing Repairs and Maintenance](#) team to check their identity. Due to the risks to the health of your household if we are unable to carry out these essential activities, we reserve the right to use reasonable force to enter your home if access is refused.
- Allowing Council workers or contractors used by the Council into your home if there is an emergency and immediate access is needed. For example, if there are water leaks.
- Keeping appointments that we have arranged or give us reasonable notice if you cannot keep the appointment. You may have to pay the costs of the call-out if you do not keep the appointment.
- Removing any floor coverings you have fitted or laid. The Council cannot be held liable for any damage if the floor coverings have not been removed. You will also be responsible for replacing or re-installing any such floor coverings.
- Allowing the Council or contractors or the provider of the district heating scheme (if applicable), access to enable cables, drains, poles or other services to be laid in the home or its surroundings. We will give you at least 48 hours' notice of such work, except in a genuine emergency when we will need to gain access immediately.
- Repairing and maintaining your own domestic equipment such as a cooker or washing machine that you have installed yourself. Any damage caused by leaks from white goods such as a washing machine or dishwasher are your responsibility.
- Completing all repairs that you are responsible for. This includes chimney sweeping / clothes lines/posts / internal decoration / renewal of toilet seats / fuses, plugs and light bulbs / gate catches and locks / dividing wooden, concrete or metal fences and gates between properties / gas escapes from your appliances / certain footpaths specific to your home / TV aerials. This list is not exhaustive and may be added to from time to time.
- Making sure that occupants and visitors to the property do not cause any damage beyond general wear and tear

- Contacting the [Housing Repairs and Maintenance](#) team to discuss and get permission for any structural or other alterations you wish to make to your home, for example sheds, garages, and pigeon lofts. You will also need to meet building regulations and any planning requirements yourself. You must notify us when the alteration is complete and allow access to the premises to enable us to inspect the work to ensure that it is completed to a satisfactory standard and complies with any conditions imposed. If you carry out any unauthorised alterations, or your alteration creates a hazard, causes harm, or damage to others and/or their property, you will be responsible for the cost of putting this right. You may have to return the home and property to its previous state or pay for us to carry out such work. If your home is connected to a district heating scheme you must not make any alteration to this either externally or internally.
- Repairing, replacing or erecting any fencing around the property (except when it is adjacent to a public area).

5.3 What we are responsible for

We will repair and maintain:

- The structure and exterior of the building (including roofs, drains, gutters and pipes)
- Outbuildings, sheds, porches or garages we originally put up (we may remove them rather than repair them)
- Steps and paths that lead from the gate or boundary to the front and back doors
- The kitchen and bathroom fixtures.
- Electrical wiring and certain gas and water pipes.
- Most types of gas appliances and flues.
- Heating and water-heating equipment that we have installed.
- Any communal areas around your home (stairs, lifts, landings, lighting, entrance halls, paving, parking areas, rubbish chutes and communal bin stores).

5.4 Your rights as a tenant

You have the right to get your repairs completed in the timescales set out on our website. In certain cases, you may be eligible for compensation if repairs are not carried out on time.

You have the right to undertake your own improvements, such as central heating, a new kitchen or bathroom, shower, gas fire (unless you live in a Passivhaus home), but you must get our written permission first. Depending on the circumstances, permission may not always be granted, and we may require additional steps such as an asbestos survey. Please contact the [Housing Repairs and Maintenance](#) team

to ask permission. Once you have made improvements, they become part of the home and must be left if you move out.

All gas appliances must be installed by a Gas Safe registered and approved gas appliance contractor and all alterations to the electrical installations must be undertaken by a registered and approved electrical contractor. You will need to supply us with a certificate to show any works meet all health and safety standards (available from your contractor) within 14 days of the works being carried out. You may also need building regulation and planning permission approval with all relevant certification forwarded to Exeter City Council.

If you wish to upgrade your radiators, you will also need to provide us with a room heat loss calculation alongside the permission request (prior to permission being granted) so that we can make sure that the new radiator is of suitable size to heat the room.

If you have made improvements to your property such as a new central heating system and you move to a new home, you have the right to some money back for the work done, as long as it has been completed to a good standard. What you receive will depend on what you had done and how long ago. We will need to see receipts for the work carried out. If the work has not been completed to a good standard, you will be asked to put this right before you leave. If you do not, we will complete this work and charge you for it.

When we check whether work has been completed to a 'good standard', we mean that:

- Permission has been given for the works, both from us as the landlord and also Planning consent and Building Control (if required).
- Work has been completed with no missing parts.
- Any electrical or gas installations have up-to-date checks and safety certificates.
- There are no holes, scratches or blemishes in the surfaces.
- There are no missing handles or ironmongery.
- No damage has been caused to the building structure.

This list is not exhaustive.

5.5 Right To Repair

The Right to Repair is a government scheme that helps make sure certain urgent repairs in council homes are completed within a set time. They are called qualifying repairs.

If we do not complete a qualifying repair within the correct time, you have the right to ask us to get another approved contractor to do the work, within the same time

limits. If the second contractor fails to do the work on time, you may get compensation. This will be £10 plus £2 for every day over the time limit (up to a maximum of £50).

Each repair covered by the Right to Repair has a maximum time for completion. This is set by government guidelines and ranges from 1 to 20 working days, depending on the repair.

If we need to inspect the repair to decide what work needs to be done, the time limit will start from when the repair order is given to the contractor.

If you ask to have the appointment for the repair to be after the time limit set by the regulations, the Right to Repair conditions will no longer apply.

The Right to Repair usually applies if you:

- Are a council tenant
- Have a secure or introductory tenancy
- Live in a property where the council is responsible for repairs

Some repairs are not included, such as planned improvement works or damage caused deliberately. A repair won't qualify for the scheme if:

- it exceeds an estimated cost of £250, or
- the local authority isn't responsible for the repair.

Qualifying repairs under the right to repair scheme for local authority tenants

Repair type	Response time (working days)
Total loss of electric power	1
Partial loss of electric power	3
Unsafe power or lighting socket or electrical fitting	1
Total loss of water supply	1
Partial loss of water supply	3
Total or partial loss of gas supply	1
Blocked flue to open fire or boiler	1
Heating or hot water not working between 31 October and 1 May	1
Heating or hot water not working between 1 May and 31 October	3
Blocked/leaking foul drain, soil stack or toilet	1
Toilet not flushing (if there is only one toilet)	1
Blocked sink, bath or basin	3
Tap cannot be turned	3
Leak from a water pipe, tank or cistern	1
Leaking roof	7
Insecure external window, door or lock	1
Loose or detached banister or handrail	3
Rotten timber flooring or stair tread	3
Door entry phone not working	7
Mechanical extractor fan not working	7

Please contact us for further details and to discuss your repair under Right to Repair.

5.6 Home adaptations for people with disabilities

Alterations to your home may help you, and anyone caring for you, to manage daily activities more easily. We can provide home adaptations (in accordance with the Equality Act 2010) if you need them to help you or a member of your family with independent living, privacy and dignity.

You will be considered for a home adaptation if you are our tenant and you have a disability. The Equality Act 2010 defines disability as: "a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities".

We class home adaptations as:

- handrails by outside doors, in bathrooms and landings

- additional stair rails
- outside handrails by steps
- half steps at front or back door
- window winders
- lever taps
- level internal thresholds
- moving door intercoms
- changing kitchen cupboard door/drawer handles
- door, frame and wall protectors for wheelchair users
- raising electric sockets to waist height
- additional sockets to prevent trailing cables
- outside lighting near entrance doors for tenants who are partially sighted
- highlighted step edges on outside steps
- wider paths

If you need any of these works to improve your safety and independence you can contact the [Housing Repairs and Maintenance](#) team. We will arrange to visit the property if required and then issue the work for one of our contractors.

5.6.1 Larger home adaptations

Larger and more costly home adaptations require the advice of an occupational therapist and involvement of one of our Technical Officers. Examples of larger aids and adaptations include:

- a stair lift
- an adapted kitchen
- a walk-in shower
- ramped access to your home
- widening of doorways

If you think you may need any of these larger home adaptations, you will need to contact Care Direct on 0345 155 1007. They will arrange for an occupational therapist to visit you to look at your personal circumstances and find out what you need to help you to live as safely and independently as possible in your home.

5.6.2 Alternatives

Sometimes it makes more sense for you to move to a different, more suitable property or one that is already adapted. If this is the case we will talk to you and/or your family, friends, carers and occupational therapist about a possible move.

If you are willing to move to a house which is more suitable for your needs (rather than have the work carried out on your current home which is often very expensive and sometimes impossible to do) you may be entitled to:

- £500 disturbance allowance (for carpets, curtains and so on)
- removal costs, subject to a £500 limit

We will carry out minor adaptations ourselves, please call contact the [Housing Repairs and Maintenance](#) team to discuss this with us if you think you need a minor adaptation.

More complex requirements will be referred to Devon County Council's Occupational Therapists at Care Direct. You can call them on **0345 155 1007**.

Please see our website for more information on [Home Adaptations](#) or contact the [Housing Repairs and Maintenance](#).

5.7 Homecall alarm service

Homecall enables people to continue to live in their own home by providing peace of mind that help is only a button press away. Alarms are available to anyone who needs them if they are elderly or have mobility or medical problems.

If you need help at any time of the day or night, seven days a week, throughout the year all you need to do is to pull the alarm cord or push the button on the pendant.

The operator will react to your emergency, whether you need a family member or your first listed contact or the emergency services if required. They will also contact a family member or your first listed contact if required.

The control centre is in Exeter and has local knowledge and can access your details immediately. You will speak to a real person who is highly trained and will deal with your query in a confidential, sensitive and professional way.

However, if you need an emergency service and can get to a phone you may get a faster response if you phone 999 direct.

If you have a Homecall alarm, we encourage you to always wear your pendant or bracelet during the day and keep your pendant within reach, next to your bed at night, in case you need help in an emergency or have a fall and are unable to get to a pull cord for assistance.

You can read more about the Homecall alarm service, and how much it costs, [on our website](#).

5.8 Handyperson service

This service is open to people living in our older persons accommodation along with people over the age of 70 or those registered disabled in other types of accommodation. It is a free service to carry out minor repairs and DIY in your home. The following are the sort of jobs they can do for you:

- replacing tap washers

- easing doors
- repairs to internal door furniture
- changing light bulbs
- fitting curtain tracks
- putting up shelves
- renewing internal door furniture
- floor and wall tiling to small areas
- minor fencing repairs
- minor gardening works that may cause hazard (pruning shrubs where blocking paths etc.)
- minor decorations (this only covers 'touching up' work)
- plumbing in washing machines.

This is not an exhaustive list, if you need further assistance, talk the [Housing Repairs and Maintenance](#) team.

The maximum time the operative can spend on any one job is one hour, and the maximum number of visits permitted to any one home is five during any twelve-month period.

If you require items such as curtain rails and shelving, you will need to purchase them and have them ready to fit for when the operative arrives.

To request this service please contact the [Housing Repairs and Maintenance](#) team.

5.9 Planned works

As well as day-to-day repairs, we carry out a planned works programme and regular servicing work. The planned works programme includes:

- New kitchens and bathrooms
- External painting
- Electrical rewiring
- New roofs
- New energy efficiency measures (such as solar PV panels)
- Windows/doors
- Communal flooring
- Internal painting (blocks)
- Heating
- Major repairs

Each property is different and therefore you may not receive the same improvements as your neighbour, this is due to each property being reviewed on its own merit.

When we are going to carry out planned work, we will give you reasonable notice of any planned works, including information about what to expect and who the contractor is, and we will check if you have any particular needs or vulnerabilities we need to consider before undertaking works, so we and our contractors can make appropriate adjustments.

The contractor will make contact with you to introduce themselves and make arrangements for suitable access to your home. You will be provided a contact for both the contractor and the member of staff responsible for overseeing the project during the works.

Where possible, we will try to give you choices of colours or styles.

We may, from time to time, need to arrange a visit to your property to undertake a survey so that we can understand what condition it is in. This will help us plan for future works. You will be notified in advance of a survey, and please ensure that you allow access for our staff and /or contractors to complete this work.

5.10 Energy efficiency

Home energy efficiency can save you money, help you improve your living conditions and reduce your impact on the environment.

A repairs advice guide on [Energy and Water Saving](#) is available online. If you would like a hard copy of this, please contact the [Housing Repairs and Maintenance](#) team.

5.11 Solar photovoltaic (PV) panels

Some of our properties are fitted with solar photovoltaic (PV) panels.

Solar PV panels only generate electricity during the day. They do not need the sun to be shining to work, but the amount of electricity they generate will depend on the weather conditions – on a sunny day they will generate more electricity than if it is raining.

The panels feed directly into your electric meter so the free electricity being generated will be used first when you switch on an appliance. If you use more electricity than the panels are generating at that time, you will be charged by your electricity provider in the normal way. You will be able to see how much electricity is being generated by looking at the solar PV panel information display near your electricity meter. You will still need to read your electricity meter if you have a billing account or top up your electricity if you use a key meter.

To make the best use of your solar energy, try to use one appliance at a time. For example, wait for the dishwasher to finish before switching on the washing machine.

If you think your solar PV panels are not working, please contact the [Housing Repairs and Maintenance](#) team.

5.12 Passivhaus homes

If you have moved into one of our Passivhaus homes, you will already be enjoying the benefits of a low-energy building, and your heating bills should be significantly reduced over the year.

When you moved into your Passivhaus home you will have received a booklet explaining how to make the most out of the special features of the home. If you did not receive this book, or have misplaced it, please contact us for a replacement.

In order to keep your Passivhaus eco-home home working efficiently, we will not allow any changes to be made to these properties as you may damage the building and stop it working as well as it should. If you need a repair, please call contact the [Housing Repairs and Maintenance](#) team. You are not permitted to fix anything to the walls in your Passivhaus home. Please contact our [Housing Repairs and Maintenance](#) team who have special fixtures.

5.13 Cleaning and maintaining communal areas

Where you share balconies and stairways with other tenants, you are responsible for keeping these areas clean and tidy. Contractors will ensure these areas are cleaned to a hygienic standard approximately once a fortnight.

No items must be stored in communal hallways, stairways or on balcony walkways as these are escape routes which must be kept clear in case of fire. No items should be stored in communal cupboards/ rooms.

Exeter City Council's **Public Realm** team are responsible for the design and management of landscaped areas. This includes grass cutting, shrub pruning. Occasionally we use other contractors for this type of work.

If you have any issue relating to the cleanliness of the communal areas or the maintenance of landscaped areas on council land near where you live, please contact your Housing Officer.

5.14 Damp and mould

We encourage any tenant who experiences any condensation, damp or mould issues to please contact the [Housing Repairs and Maintenance](#) team.

When reporting, tell us:

- Where the damp or mould is located
- How long it has been present
- Whether anyone in the household has health conditions affected by it

- If it is getting worse or spreading

We take our responsibilities seriously and will not blame residents for problems caused by defects in the property. Please see the section of this handbook called [Awaab's Law](#) for more information.

5.14.1 What is damp and mould?

Damp is unwanted moisture in your home. Mould is a fungus that grows in damp conditions and often appears as black, green, or white patches.

Damp and mould are not just a cosmetic issue, they can affect breathing, worsen asthma, and be especially harmful to babies, children, elderly residents, and people with existing health conditions.

5.14.2 Why does damp and mould occur?

Damp and mould usually develop due to one or more of the following reasons:

Condensation: This is the most common cause and happens when warm, moist air meets cold surfaces (such as windows or external walls). Everyday activities like cooking, showering or bathing, and drying clothes indoors can create moisture if there is not enough ventilation.

Structural Problems: These issues can allow water to enter the building, and can include:

- Leaking roofs, gutters, or pipes
- Cracked walls or defective brickwork
- Faulty windows or doors

Rising Damp: Moisture from the ground can travel up through walls if the damp-proof course has failed or been damaged.

What we do affects the amount of water vapour held in the air.

Warm air holds more moisture than cold, it's better to keep your home at a constant temperature, we recommend 19-21°C. The temperature of the air dictates how much of this moisture it can hold per day see below:

Cause of moisture in the home	How much water produced each day
2 people at home	3 pints
A bath or shower	2 pints
Drying clothes indoors	9 pints
Cooking and the use of a kettle	6 pints
Washing dishes	2 pints
Washing Clothes	1 pint
Total added moisture to your home	23 pints or 13.07 litres each day

The quickest and easiest way to bring in dry air, is through opening and shutting windows. It is advised to open a window, count to five, and then close it immediately. This is enough to reset the room as 'water as a gas' is always looking to get out of the house as fast as it can. It is also important to not to let heat out and cold in.

A good rule of thumb is you get cold while opening the window then that is too long. The object is not to air the house for hours at a time-that's only for the summer.

The golden rule is to do this in each room before you do any activity such as having a bath or shower or cooking. It should also be done as you get up in the morning to allow any moisture that has built up in the house overnight to dissipate.

Wiping down visible condensation from window sills etc. after a shower can help, as can closing the door, to prevent the warm air from escaping into the rest of the house.

5.15 Help and financial support

There are often financial support and advice available. Please contact us if you are experiencing financial hardship and this is affecting your ability to maintain your home.

We work with ECOE Advice, which is a Devon based charity, their team offers expert advice to help you stay warm, safe, and well. Whether you're worried about your energy/water bills or simply need support to make your home more comfortable. They can liaise with landlords, councils, and suppliers on your behalf.

Please see the [ECOE website](#) for further information.

5.16 Avoid disrepair claims

We strongly discourage residents from using disrepair claims management companies or “no win, no fee” solicitors who approach you through social media, leaflets, or cold calls. These companies often:

- Provide misleading advice
- Charge high hidden fees
- Delay repairs while pursuing compensation
- Create unnecessary legal action

Reporting issues directly to us is the fastest and safest way to get repairs completed and protect your home and health. Using third-party claims companies does not make repairs happen quicker.

If you are unsure or need support, please contact the [Housing Repairs and Maintenance](#) team.

5.17 Environmental sensors

Some of our homes are fitted with environmental sensors which monitor things like temperature, humidity and carbon dioxide. They may also be connected to smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.

We use these to ensure these monitored homes are safe and have a healthy indoor air quality. We also occasionally fit them where homes are suffering from damp or mould issues, to help us and tenants understand the causes and how to reduce it.

The most common system we use is the AICO HomeLINK system.

5.17.1 Tips to help prevent condensation

You should open your windows every morning, count to five, and then close them. This is enough to reset the room as water vapour always wants to leave a house as fast as it can. It is also important to not let heat out and cold in.

Other tips to produce less moisture include:

- Cover pans when cooking and do not leave kettles boiling.
- Dry washing outside where possible or put it in the bathroom with the door closed and the window open or fan on.
- Avoid using portable flueless bottled gas heaters and these heaters put a lot of moisture into the air.
- Cover fish tanks.
- Vent tumble driers to the outside, unless it is self-condensing.
- Wiping down visible condensation from windows and window sills when you see it.
- Ventilate your home to remove excess moisture by:

- Shutting kitchen and bathroom doors when in use to prevent moisture travelling to other parts of the home.
- Ventilating the kitchen and bathroom during and after use. Open windows even if you have an extractor fan.
- Ventilating cupboards and wardrobes. Avoid putting too many items inside as this prevents air circulation.
- Keeping furniture away from walls to allow air circulation, particularly external walls.

You should also maintain the temperature of your home. In cold weather, it is best you keep your home warm by maintaining a low constant background temperature all day to avoid letting the house cool down overnight or when you are out.

Some words of warning:

- Do not block permanent air vents or ventilation fans.
- Do not draught proof a room where there is a cooker or a fuel burning heater, for example, a gas fire.

More [advice on condensation and mould is available on our website.](#)

5.18 Awaab's Law

Awaab's Law, named after two-year-old Awaab Ishak who died from prolonged exposure to mould, sets strict new legal time limits for social housing providers to address dangerous health hazards. It is designed to ensure that all social housing tenants live in safe, decent, and healthy homes.

As a tenant, you have new legal protections and stronger rights under Awaab's Law. If your home has a potential hazard, we must now follow specific, legally enforced timescales.

Awaab's Law is being introduced in phases, with the first phase active from 27 October 2025.

- Phase 1 (from October 2025): Focuses on dangerous damp and mould hazards, along with all emergency hazards.
- Phase 2 (2026): Expands to include a wider range of health hazards.
- Phase 3 (2027): Covers all remaining hazards identified by the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS).

5.18.1 Assessing vulnerability and prioritising repairs

As a social landlord, we assess whether anyone living in the home may be more vulnerable to harm from housing conditions, such as children, older people, disabled residents, or anyone with a health condition that could be affected by issues like damp, mould, excess cold, or poor ventilation. When a vulnerability is identified, we

take this into account when assessing the level of risk and deciding how quickly action is needed.

In line with Awaab's Law, hazards that pose a risk to health are investigated promptly, and where vulnerable residents are affected, repairs and remedial works may be prioritised or accelerated to reduce the risk of harm. Our focus is always on addressing the cause of the problem and ensuring the home is safe and suitable for everyone living there.

5.18.2 How to report a potential hazard under Awaab's Law

Report the issue: Contact us as soon as you notice a potential hazard in your home and we will book an appointment for the Works Surveyor to come out and visit you.

Provide details: Give as much information as possible, including the location and a description of the issue. You can also submit photos to help our team assess the situation.

Expect an investigation: Once we are aware of a potential hazard, we have 10 working days to investigate. For emergencies that pose an imminent and serious risk, we will respond within 24 hours to make safe.

Receive a report: Within 3 working days of the investigation, you will receive a written summary of our findings. This will confirm if a hazard was found and outline the necessary next steps.

What is a 'hazard' and what should happen? (continued overleaf)

	Emergency hazard	Significant damp and mould hazard
What is it?	An emergency hazard is something in your home that needs to be fixed right away because it is causing or could cause serious harm to your health or safety - or the health or safety of anyone living with you.	A significant hazard is something in your home that could or is already causing serious harm to your health or safety - or the health or safety of anyone living with you. Right now, Awaab's Law focuses on significant hazards caused by damp or mould
Detailed description	Under Awaab's Law, a hazard is considered an 'emergency' if it could be an immediate risk to your health and safety or the health and safety of anyone who lives with you. This means we, as a responsible landlord, would see it as urgent and take action to fix it within 24 hours based on what we know or what you tell us about your situation.	Under Awaab's Law, a hazard due to damp or mould is considered a 'significant' hazard if it could be a risk to your health or safety. This means we as a responsible landlord would see it as urgent and take action to fix it quickly (though not within 24 hours) based on what they know and what you tell them about your situation.
Investigations	We must investigate within 24 hours	We must investigate within 10 working days
Making your home safe	We must make your home safe within 24 hours of the landlord finding out about the hazard.	We must make your home safe within 5 working days of the investigation concluding.
Further works	When the investigation has finished, we must begin or make plans for the work to begin within 5 working days . All work must start within 12 weeks at the latest .	When the investigation has finished, we must begin or make plans for the work to begin within 5 working days . All work must start within 12 weeks at the latest .

Written summary	Where further work is required, a written summary must be provided within 3 working days of the investigation concluding.	Within 3 working days after the investigation concludes.
Examples of hazards	• gas or carbon monoxide leaks • broken boilers • no water supply at all • dangerous electrical problems (like exposed wires) • major leaks • broken external doors or windows that make your home unsafe • very serious damp or mould • major structural problems	• any damp and mould can be a risk to you and the physical health of anyone who lives with you. It affects the airways and lungs, but also your eyes and skin • damp and mould can also affect your mental health, for example worrying about the health impacts or unpleasant living conditions • everyone can be at risk to the health impacts of damp and mould, but you might be at greater risk if you have a certain health condition • further guidance on the risks of damp and mould is available

However we find out about a hazard, the countdown for investigations starts as soon as we aware of it.

An investigation is when we as your landlord look into the issue you have reported to understand the problem and find out what repairs are needed to fix the hazard and stop it from returning.

Investigations can be done in person by visiting your home to look at the problem or remotely by using photos or videos.

Under Awaab's Law, there are 4 types of investigation.

Type	Description
Emergency Investigations	If there might be an emergency, we must start an emergency investigation within 24 hours . The investigation should confirm if there's an emergency hazard and what urgent repairs are needed to make your home safe.
Standard Investigations	If there might be a significant hazard, we must start a standard investigation within 10 working days . This should confirm it's a hazard, and to identify any repairs needed. If the investigation finds the hazard is an emergency, the faster emergency timeframes will start to apply.
Renewed Investigations	If we investigate a hazard remotely and you don't feel that was enough, you can ask for an in-person inspection . We must carry out a new investigation in person within 10 working days of your request – so we recommend asking for this early in the process.
Further Investigations	Sometimes, we might not know right away what's causing a serious issue like damp or mould. If we find that more work is needed to fix a hazard properly, we must carry out further checks. For example, we might need to arrange a structural survey. While we investigate, we still have to take steps to keep you safe, like treating visible mould or providing a dehumidifier.

In some cases, one of our officers may be able to investigate, but in other situations we might need to bring in a specialist to do a more in-depth investigation.

5.18.3 What happens after the investigation

Repairs begin: If a hazard presents a significant risk, we will begin repair work within 5 working days of the investigation concluding.

Temporary measures: If immediate permanent repairs are not possible, we will take temporary measures to make your home safe.

Alternative accommodation: If your home cannot be made safe within the set timescales, we will offer and pay for suitable alternative accommodation until the repairs are completed.

Your responsibilities

While the council is responsible for rectifying hazards, your cooperation is essential:

- **Allow access:** Please provide access to your home for inspections and repair work.
- **Cooperate with guidance:** Follow any advice given by our teams to help prevent or mitigate issues, such as properly using ventilation systems.

5.18.4 If you are unhappy with our response

If we fail to meet the legally required timescales, your options for escalating a complaint include:

- First, follow our [complaints procedure](#).
- If the issue is not resolved, you can escalate your complaint to the Housing Ombudsman for an independent review.
- For breaches of contract resulting from a failure to comply with Awaab's Law, you can take legal action against us.

5.19 Decent Homes Standard

We are committed to providing properties that meet or exceed the current Decent Homes Standard, and ensuring all properties are compliant with Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018

This means we are committed to ensuring all homes are:

- free from category 1 hazards (a serious problem in a home that poses a high risk to a person's health or safety)
- in a reasonable state of repair
- safe, healthy and free from things that can cause serious harm
- secure, warm and dry

To ensure that we meet our obligations we have a rolling programme of property surveys so that we have all the information about your home that we need to ensure we meet our commitments.

Each survey will also include an inspection to identify any hazards within your home, which are assessed using the Housing Health and Safety Rating System. We will use this information to help us to understand our properties better and target our investment in the areas that need it the most.

5.20 Your garden

You are responsible for keeping your garden tidy and well-maintained; this includes cutting the lawn regularly and maintaining any trees and shrubs in your garden.

You are also responsible for any fencing around your home. All fencing is the responsibility of the tenant (except when it is adjacent to a public area).

If you are concerned that you cannot look after your garden because of your age, ill-health or disability, please contact your Housing Officer or the [Housing Estates Management](#) team.

5.21 Communal gardens

Exeter City Council's **Public and Greenspaces** team are responsible for the design and management of landscaped areas. This includes grass cutting and shrub pruning. Occasionally we use other contractors for this type of work. If you have any issue relating to the maintenance of landscaped areas on council land near where you live, please contact the [Housing Repairs and Maintenance](#) team.

5.22 Camera doorbells

We do not object if residents wish to install camera-style doorbells for their safety and security, so long as they follow the guidance set out by the Information Commissioner's Office and follow all relevant data protection laws. If the installation involves drilling into the wall, please speak to the [Housing Repairs and Maintenance](#) team first for permission to do so.

Where possible, owners should position their cameras to only capture their own property. If this isn't possible and the camera captures someone else's property, a public area or communal space, then data protection law applies. The Information Commissioner's Office has published detailed information about what rules apply to camera doorbells, [please see their website](#) for more information.

5.23 Keys

Every home has its locks changed prior to a new tenant moving in. You will be provided with a set of keys when you move in, but you are responsible for getting extra keys cut.

We do not hold spare keys. If you lock yourself out or lose your keys, you need to arrange for a locksmith to attend.

For all enquiries relating to lost key fobs for communal doors contact the [Housing Repairs and Maintenance](#) team. We will make a charge for replacing them.

All keys should be handed in when you leave. We will fit a key box for you to leave them in when you leave.

5.24 Communal passenger lifts

Passenger lifts have two different contractors that carry out both servicing and inspections at regular intervals. Passenger lifts are inspected every 6 months and serviced every 4 months. Should a breakdown occur, please contact the [Housing Repairs and Maintenance](#) team.

Please observe the following to reduce the likelihood and frequency of breakdowns:

- Do not hold doors open except to stop it closing on someone entering or leaving.
- Do not physically obstruct the door with your person or any objects - always use the door open button.
- Lifts are not designed to carry mobility scooters and other electrical vehicles. If you are thinking about getting an electric vehicle, please speak to us so that we can discuss the safest ways for you to store and charge them.
- If the lift stops between floors and you are inside, operate the alarm button to summon help.
- It is extremely dangerous to force open lift doors – only lift engineers or the fire service are permitted to do this.
- Repeatedly pressing lift buttons or pressing multiple buttons can cause lift circuitry to malfunction and stop the lift operating.
- Do not use any lift in the event of a fire, please refer to your evacuation plan specific to your home or building

5.25 Stairlifts, through floor lifts, platform lifts and hoists

Some properties have lifting equipment installed such as stairlifts, through floor lifts, platform lifts or hoists. All these require regular servicing and inspection visits carried out by two separate contractors. The intervals for these servicing and inspection visits are outlined in the table below.

It is important that these visits are carried out to maintain the safe and reliable operation of the equipment. These visits may either be for a service, weight test or inspection, and we may use different contractors for these visits.

The contractors will contact you in advance to make an appointment for their visit.

Equipment	Service Interval	Inspection Visit
Stairlift	12 months (1 visit a year)	12 months (1 visit a year)
Through floor lift	6 months (2 visits a year)	6 months (2 visit a year)
Platform lift	6 months (2 visit a year)	6 months (2 visits a year)
Hoist	6 months (2 visits a year)	6 months (2 visits a year)

5.26 Loft/roof voids

You should not store any belongings in your loft space/roof void; in most instances the loft hatches have been locked. The use of the roof voids for storage can seriously impact upon the effectiveness of the insulation laid down to improve the energy efficiency of your home and the ceiling joists are not designed for any sort of loading.

5.27 TV aerials, satellite dishes & cable TV

Where possible you should use an indoor aerial. Some properties will already have an aerial installed. If you need to fix an outside aerial, please contact the [Housing Repairs and Maintenance](#) team to discuss how and where it could be fixed and for permission to do so.

You will need our permission to put up a satellite dish; please contact the [Housing Repairs and Maintenance](#) team to ask permission.

If we do approve your request, we advise that you obtain equipment from a reputable supplier such as a member of the Radio, Electrical and Television Retailers Association, and that you use an installer who is professionally qualified or a member of the Confederation of Aerial Industries.

If you intend to have cable TV installed in your home, please let your provider know that they will need to speak to the [Housing Repairs and Maintenance](#) team to gain our permission. We will not withhold permission for cable TV to be installed.

Remember, you need to be covered by a TV Licence to:

- Watch or record live TV programmes on any channel (including BBC).
- Download or watch any BBC programmes on iPlayer – live, catch up or on demand.

This applies to any provider you use and any device, including a TV, desktop computer, laptop, mobile phone, tablet, games console, digital box or DVD/VHS recorder. The cost of a TV Licence goes up each year, so check with their [website](#) for up-to-date information.

5.28 Home contents insurance

You are responsible for insuring your own belongings, such as furniture, electrical items, clothing, and personal possessions. This should include third-party liability to cover any personal loss or damage to others, say though water leaking from your washing machine into your neighbour's home. We will not accept liability in such cases.

Contents insurance is optional but strongly recommended, as it can help you replace your belongings if something goes wrong. Many policies are affordable, and some are designed specifically for tenants. Independent advice services or comparison websites can help you find a policy that suits your needs and budget. For more information about insurance cover, please seek advice from an independent specialist.

6. Safety and security in your home

It is important that the home that you live in is safe and free from hazards. This section will explain how to ensure the safety of you, your household, and people in your community.

As your landlord, we are legally required to carry out regular servicing, inspections, and routine maintenance on certain equipment and appliances within your home. These tasks must be completed within fixed timeframes to ensure safety, compliance, and the continued reliability of your home.

To meet these requirements, we begin contacting you ahead of the due date to arrange an appointment. This helps us work with you to agree a suitable time for access, minimise any inconvenience, and ensure all essential checks are completed before the required deadline.

Main contact details for this section

Team: Housing Compliance

Email: housing.repairs@exeter.gov.uk (if your concern or query is urgent, please always ring us)

Telephone: 01392 265031

Health and safety is our priority, so you can speak to any member of staff or contractor to raise any concerns.

If you are concerned with immediate threat to life or serious injury / ill health for you or anyone else, please dial 999.

If you suspect a gas leak or carbon monoxide is present, please call National Gas Emergency Service on 0800 111 999 and leave the property.

6.1 Fire safety

Your safety at home is very important to us. As your landlord, we have a legal responsibility to manage fire safety in council homes and communal areas, and to reduce the risk of fire wherever possible.

Here is how we are protecting you from fire:

- We work closely with Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service to help keep homes and buildings safe.
- We work with fire specialist contractors to make sure that we have done everything we can to reduce the risk of a fire starting or getting out of control.
- All properties have smoke detectors installed.
- We install and maintain emergency lighting and signage in communal areas

- We have Fire Action Notices in blocks of flats, as well as additional fire protection features and detection equipment as required.
- We will test your smoke detector once a year - you must allow our staff or contractor access to do so.
- We recommend tenants check smoke detectors in their home once a month between our annual checks.
- We undertake regular fire risk assessments

Fire doors will prevent heat and smoke from spreading for at least half an hour, whilst smoke detectors and fire alarms provide early warning for occupants to summon help and escape. If it is tampered with or vandalised (either inside your flat or in the communal areas) it may not work properly, and **this will put lives at risk**.

We inspect flat front doors (in blocks above 11m in height) every year. We also inspect communal fire doors every 3 months in blocks above 11m in height. If there are any issues, we will repair these as soon as reasonably possible.

It is important that the fire equipment stays in tip-top condition. This includes fire alarms, smoke detection, emergency lighting and fire doors. If they are missing or faulty, please call the [Housing Compliance](#) team immediately.

Please let us know of any specific or particular needs, requirements or vulnerabilities that we may need to know about. This will help us to prepare for how best to help and keep you safe in the event of an emergency.

Things you need to know or need to do now (please do not skip this bit)

If you feel - at any time - that any fire safety equipment in any homes or blocks is faulty, damaged or might have been tampered with, let us know straight away by contacting the [Housing Compliance](#) team.

Make sure you know what you should do in case there is a fire in your home or blocks of flats. You should read the Fire Action Notices displayed in all communal areas.

What you should do will depend on where you live; contact us if you are not sure.

If you live in a block of flats, you must keep communal areas such as walkways, corridors, staircases and escape routes clear at all times.

To reduce the risk of fire, please take the following precautions:

Do not:

- X Keep flammable liquids, such as petrol or paraffin, at home.
- X Store any items in the communal areas of flats.
- X Use non-electric portable heaters such as those powered by paraffin or bottled gas.

- X Smoke or vape in communal areas of flats. Always follow signage instructions.
- X Store or keep items in corridors or exit routes.
- X Prop or wedge open fire doors even if only for a short time.
- X Store timber, cardboard/paper, general refuse or any flammable liquids or materials on an external balcony or adjacent to the building.
- X Use a barbeque on your balcony, a communal balcony or immediately adjacent to the building. Keep store cupboards opening into communal areas always locked.
- X Charge electrical equipment or run electrical cables through corridors or exit routes in any block of flats.
- X Overload electrical sockets
- X Store Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG) cylinders in a flat or communal area. On any other premises they must be used and stored according to the manufacturers' instructions.
- X Leave chip pans or your cooker unattended and never pour cold water onto a chip pan fire. You should smother the flames with a fire blanket or damp cloth.
- X Take care with cigarettes, candles, matches, lighters and ashtrays.
- X Leave candles or naked flames unattended.
- X Hang clothes around fires, cookers or storage heaters.

Make sure you know how to get out of your home in a hurry. If there is a fire in your home get out of the building and raise the alarm, do not try to fight the fire yourself.

Further information can be found on the [Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service website](#).

6.1.2 What to do if a fire breaks out where you live

There's different advice depending on where you live.

Houses

If there's a fire in your house:

- Quickly get out of the room where the fire is and close the door behind you.
- Call the fire service on 999 immediately.
- Tell everyone in your home that there's a fire and to get out too.
- Don't stop to get any of your things.
- Shut the front door firmly behind you.
- Do not try and put the fire out yourself.
- Wait outside away from the building in a safe place.
- Alert the [Housing Repairs and Maintenance](#) team as soon as you can, when safe to do so.

Blocks of flats

We write to all residents in blocks of flats with communal areas once a year confirming what the fire strategy is for each building. Please familiarise yourself with this information and adhere to all of the instructions.

If you see or hear a fire when you are in a common area of a block of flats:

- Leave by the nearest available exit.
- Call the fire service on 999 immediately.
- Wait outside, away from the building.
- Alert the [Housing Repairs and Maintenance](#) team as soon as you can, when safe to do so.

If there's a fire in the building (including in someone else's flat) and we've told you to stay put:

- The building you're in is designed to contain a fire inside the flat where it started
- If the fire isn't in your flat, close all your doors and windows and stay inside
- Dial 999 right away, just in case the person who's flat is on fire is out or hasn't been able to call 999.
- If smoke or heat from the flat where the fire is starts to affect your home then leave immediately, if it's safe to do so, or if the fire service tells you to leave.
- You can find out if this is the advice for your flat by contacting us. We write to all residents in blocks of flats with communal areas once a year confirming what the fire strategy is for each building.
- Alert the [Housing Repairs and Maintenance](#) team as soon as you can, when safe to do so.

If there's a fire elsewhere in the building (including in someone else's flat) and we've told you to leave the building (if possible):

- If you're in one of the homes where we told people to evacuate the building then do so, as long as it's safe
- If it isn't safe, stay where you are and raise the alarm by dialling 999 immediately
- Remember, when you dial 999 you need to ask for Fire
- When the operator answers give the address of where the fire is don't hang up until the address is repeated back to you and confirmed.

6.1.3 Balcony fire safety

Each year in the UK, a significant number of fires start on balconies. Many of these fires are caused by the unsafe disposal of smoking materials or the misuse of barbecues. These fires can result in serious injuries and, in some cases, fatalities. Fires can also cause severe damage to your home and neighbouring properties.

If you live in a home with a balcony, or in a block with shared communal balconies, it is important to keep these areas clear and free from fire risks. Fires that start on balconies are likely to spread more quickly than fires inside buildings.

Your home is designed to be compartmented, meaning walls and doors help contain a fire and limit its spread. Inside a building, there is also a limited oxygen supply to fuel a fire. Outside, however, oxygen is unlimited, and wind can cause fire to spread rapidly upwards and outwards. This puts neighbouring balconies and homes—particularly those above you—at significant risk.

There are simple steps you can take to protect yourself, your family, and your neighbours:

- Do not use barbecues on your balcony, on communal balconies, or near the building. They are a serious fire risk, and falling embers can ignite balconies below.
- Do not store gas cylinders on your balcony, as they could explode.
- Do not store combustible or flammable materials on your balcony.
- Do not leave cigarettes unattended. Always ensure they are fully extinguished after use.
- Never throw cigarettes off your balcony. They could start a fire on a balcony below. Always use a suitable ashtray.
- Keep your balcony clear and uncluttered. Items that can catch fire increase the risk of flames spreading into your home.
- Do not store or charge electric vehicles such as e-bikes, e-scooters, electric wheelchairs, or mobility scooters on any balcony, communal area, or near the building. These pose a serious fire risk and can rapidly cause major fires without warning.
- Report any fire concerns, such as fire doors not closing properly, or any other issues relating to your personal or communal balcony.

If you have any queries or concerns about fire safety, then please contact the [Housing Compliance](#) team, or any member of staff.

6.1.4 Electric vehicles fire safety

Lithium-ion batteries are used in many everyday items, including; e-bikes, mobility scooters, e-scooters and electric cars. When used correctly, they are generally safe. However, if damaged, overcharged or used incorrectly, because of the size and type of the battery, they can quickly cause serious fires and deadly smoke release.

Battery fires can spread very quickly and are difficult to put out, which is why it's important these vehicles are stored, charged and used safely.

Do Not:

- X Charge vehicles overnight or whilst you are away
- X Leave vehicles permanently on charge
- X Cover chargers or vehicles
- X Overload electrical sockets or use extension cables
- X Use or charge damaged vehicles or batteries
- X Store or charge vehicles in communal areas
- X Block corridors, stairways or exits
- X Store or charge vehicles in your home unless you have sought and been granted specific permissions from us
- X Assume it is ok to purchase, store and charge a device – always seek permissions from us first.

Do:

- ✓ Use charging devices supplied with the vehicle or a genuine replacement that are UKCA/CE marked and are manufacturer approved certified
- ✓ Unplug the vehicles charger when fully charged
- ✓ Only charge vehicles when you are awake and at home
- ✓ Keep chargers and vehicles away from flammable and combustible materials
- ✓ Keep vehicles away from communal areas of buildings, the building itself and escape routes from buildings
- ✓ Use specifically provided, approved and allocated vehicle storage and charging points
- ✓ Always seek permissions from us before you purchase a vehicle or set up a charger
- ✓ Only use vehicles and charging equipment to the manufacturer's instructions
- ✓ Ensure any visitors or guests you have abide by the vehicle storage and charging rules.
- ✓ Chargers must be installed by a competent, qualified electrician with proficiency for electric vehicle charging points.
- ✓ Ensure that charging cables are not left trailing which could cause a trip hazard.
- ✓ Tell us immediately if you notice an electric vehicle being stored or charged indoors or incorrectly
- ✓ Tell us immediately if you are concerned or suspect a fault, damage or fire risk.

If you smell burning, see smoke or fire or are immediately concerned of a fire occurring, call 999 without delay and ask for FIRE.

6.2 Gas safety

Gas is used in your home for heating, hot water and cooking. When gas appliances are not working properly, they can be dangerous and increase the risk of fire or carbon monoxide poisoning.

We carry out a safety check on gas appliances in our properties at least once a year. You must allow us into your home to do this. If you refuse entry or fail to keep appointments, we will take legal action to enter your home. If we get a court order to enter your home, you will be responsible for the Council's costs in getting that order. You can find out more or arrange your gas service visit by telephoning the [Housing Compliance](#) team. You must not undertake any DIY or alterations to gas appliances without our permission, and then only by a registered Gas Safe Engineer.

Under the Gas Safety Regulations (Installation and Use) 1998, we carry out a MOT-Style gas service which means that we can carry out the annual gas safety check two months before the due date and retain the existing due date. This helps us to carry out your gas service before/on the due date without delay so that we are compliant with the law and you are kept safe.

You must not block airbricks, ventilation or flues as this might lead to carbon monoxide poisoning. Provided the correct precautions are followed any risk is negligible. Nevertheless, for extra protection and reassurance, we install carbon monoxide alarms in all our properties where gas has been installed. You cannot see or smell carbon monoxide which is highly toxic so you should never tamper with, move or remove the carbon monoxide alarms we have provided.

If you do have a carbon monoxide alarm, we recommend you should test it monthly. If you think it is not working, please let us know by calling the [Housing Compliance](#) team.

If you smell gas or if your alarm activates, switch off any gas appliances, open the doors and windows and call the National Gas Emergency Service on **0800 111 999**

You should familiarise yourself with the symptoms of Carbon Monoxide poisoning. If you suspect you could be suffering from Carbon Monoxide Poisoning, consult your doctor immediately. The Symptoms can be found on the [NHS website](#).

6.3 Electrical safety

We carry out electrical safety checks in your home every five years. As with all safety related inspections, you must allow us into your home to do this. If you refuse entry or fail to keep appointments, we will take legal action to enter your home.

You must not undertake any DIY electrical works without our permission. If permitted, all works must be completed by a registered electrician. Once the work has been completed, you must forward the certification to us within 14 days.

If we find that work has been completed without our permission, we will arrange for an inspection which will lead to remedial works undertaken by us, and the cost will be recharged to you. This will include reinstating the electrical wiring and appliances to their original condition.

Extension leads should not be run through communal areas (see [Fire Safety](#)) or above or across external communal areas, public footpaths, etc.

If you have or intend to own an electrically powered vehicle such as a mobility scooter, E-bike, E-Scooter or electric car, please see the [Electric Vehicle Fire Safety](#) section for further advice. You should always seek permission before purchasing an electrical vehicle.

If you notice any electrical installations within your home or communal areas of flats are faulty, if you feel they are unsafe, or if you feel that there is an immediate electrical danger, you should switch off the power supply (if it is safe for you to do so) and then contact [Housing Repairs and Maintenance](#) team straight away.

6.4 Electric vehicle charging points

Residents who wish to purchase an electric car, and who have a driveway suitable for an EV charging point, should seek permission from us to ensure it is suitable and safe to do so. If you are considering getting an electric vehicle, please contact the [Housing Repairs and Maintenance](#) team to discuss.

You must not undertake any electrical works without our permission. If permitted, all works must be completed by a registered electrician. Once the work has been completed, you must forward the certification to us within 14 days.

For more information on fire safety in relation to electric vehicles, please see the [Electric Vehicles Fire Safety](#) Section and our [Electric Vehicles](#) section.

6.5 Asbestos safety

Asbestos containing materials (ACMs) were used widely for many years in the construction industry. Unfortunately, it became clear that if disturbed, the fibres are so small they can be breathed in and lodge deep in the lungs. Over time this can lead to chronic ill health and even shorten life. Using ACMs in any form was completely banned in 1999.

Asbestos is **not dangerous if it is in good condition and left undisturbed**. It only becomes a health risk if it is damaged or disturbed, which can release fibres into the air.

6.5.1 Where can asbestos containing materials be found?

Any home built before 2000 may contain ACMs in a wide variety of forms, such as floor tiles, textured coating (Artex) and fireproofing panels behind fuse boards.

It can be hidden in boilers installed before 2000 and also around door frames, window frames, toilet cisterns and external toilets, bath panels, drainpipes, under floorboards, electrical mains and in the loft. This list is not exhaustive, and there are many more locations that ACMs can be found.

ACMs can also be found in external areas such as older sheds, drainpipes, coalbunkers and garages (particularly the corrugated roofs).

6.5.2 What is being done about asbestos containing materials?

Exeter City Council Housing has carried out asbestos surveys in all our properties built before 2000. The surveys indicate the location, amount and condition of any ACMs.

Of the properties surveyed, most still have asbestos containing materials in them and we have taken steps to ensure sure any asbestos in your home is safe. It will remain safe provided it is not disturbed or damaged. **You should contact us immediately for advice if you believe there is any damage or deterioration to floors, walls or ceilings in your home or any of the items we have listed above.**

For these reasons you must not undertake any form of DIY (or employ contractors to do so) without contacting us **before** the work is carried out. We can check to see what and where ACMs may be in your home and guide you accordingly.

Asbestos registers and survey reports are readily available to you and could prevent you or your contractor from inadvertently disturbing ACMs. It is important that you allow our contractors access to undertake any surveys that need to be done.

Contact the [Housing Compliance](#) team or email housing.asbestos@exeter.gov.uk

We have lots of information about asbestos available on our website.

6.6 Legionella

Legionella is a bacterium found in most water sources, including rivers and lakes. It can also be found in mains water and household plumbing.

It can be found in your home in all hot and cold-water systems. The bacteria prefer warm water between 20°C and 45°C, and it is most often found in stagnant places such as rarely used water pipes, water tanks with debris inside, pipes which no longer have an outlet and even hot water tanks where the temperature has been set too low.

Legionella can also multiply on limescale or rust which can build-up on taps or shower heads because it is less likely to be washed away.

Legionella does not spread from person to person. It must enter the lungs in sufficient quantities via a fine mist or spray of water droplets. The most common source of mist and sprays at home are showers and taps which are not hot or cold enough.

Legionnaires Disease poses a higher risk to people over 45 years of age, smokers, heavy drinkers and people in poor health.

Symptoms include high temperature, fever or chills, headache, tiredness, muscle pain and/or a dry cough. If you are at all concerned, seek medical advice.

You can avoid legionella by following the advice below:

- Keep the temperature on your boiler or hot water system set at 60°C
- Contact us if the boiler or hot water tank is not working properly
- Use all your taps and showerheads at least once a week for at least 5 minutes
- Contact us if you find any bits or discolouration in the water
- Flush your shower through at least once a week

If you have a garden hose, slow run it for two minutes if you haven't used it for more than a week before using the spray.

Keep your taps and showerhead clean; you can descale them with a specialist product (follow the instructions carefully).

Do not keep drinking water for more than 24 hours.

If you have been away for more than a week:

- Flush the shower and slow run all taps for at least two to five minutes. Ideally stay out of the rooms concerned to avoid breathing in the spray or mist.
- Flush the toilet with the lid down.

For more advice, please contact the [Housing Compliance](#) team.

6.7 Staying safe

We advise you to use your door chains and window locks, and to take other security measures.

If you live in a block of flats, do not interfere with security and safety equipment, jam open doors or let strangers in.

For your personal security:

- Always ask callers for proof of their identity. If it relates to one of our contractors and you are in doubt, take their card, shut your front door and telephone us on 01392 265031 to confirm they are legitimate
- Lock doors and windows when you go out
- Do not leave keys under doormats, or notes visible, or social media updates saying that you have gone out or will be going away
- Do not allow anyone through a communal door unless you know them
- Do not leave communal doors open and make sure they close properly when you are entering and exiting the building
- If you go away, do not forget to cancel deliveries such as food or newspapers.

6.8 Bogus callers

Please remember to do the following when someone calls at your front door:

Stop - Before you open the door think about whether you are expecting anyone. Do you have an appointment? Check your back door, lock it and take the key with you (distraction burglars often work in pairs when one keeps you talking at the front door)

Chain - Install and use your door chain – it is a useful barrier because they may try and pressure you into letting them in

Check – Check the details before letting anyone you don't know into your house. Do not let a caller in, agree to any work being done or sign a contract until you are absolutely sure they are genuine.

If you have any doubts, keep them out!

Anyone calling at your home from the Council will carry identification. If you are still not sure after seeing their identification, do not let them in. You can call us to check if they are legitimate and are due to be at your home.

6.9 Communal areas and escape routes

Where you share balconies and stairways with other tenants, you must keep these areas clean and tidy. Contractors will ensure these areas are cleaned to a hygienic standard approximately once a fortnight. No items (including doormats) should be stored or left on or in communal balconies, hallways, landings or stairwells; anything

found in these areas will be removed and disposed of as they are a serious fire hazard.

Do not store, keep or charge Mobility Scooters, E-Bikes, E-Scooters or any item with a Lithium-Ion Battery in any communal areas or close to the building. This also applies to any visitors or guests.

We have a Clear & Safe Policy which ensures fire safety in escape routes in blocks of flats; leaving items in these areas will be classed as a breach of your tenancy.

6.10 Utilities

Before you move into your new home the gas and electricity supplies will have been checked and ready for you to use.

The gas supply to your home will have been disconnected. Until our gas contractor visits you to re-connect the gas supply, you will have no central heating and no hot water. Once this has been done, you will be given a Gas Safety Certificate. Using anyone other than our gas contractor to reconnect your gas supply will put your tenancy at risk. Our gas contractor will not connect gas or electric cookers.

6.11 Gas supply

If you have a quarterly meter, take the readings when you move in and contact the supplier to change the account over to your details.

If you have a pre-payment meter, order new cards. If there is a debt on the meter and you do not contact the supplier, you may be paying off someone else's debts.

If you do not know who the supplier is, please ring the meter number helpline on **0870 608 1524**. Calls to this number are charged at 7p per minute, plus your phone company's access charge.

You can also access this information online by visiting the [Find My Supplier](#) website.

6.12 Electric supply

Check what type of electricity meter you have. It is your responsibility to contact your electricity supplier to provide your details when you move in.

If you have a quarterly meter, take the readings when you move in and contact the supplier to change the account over to your details.

If you are on a pre-payment meter, order a new key if required. If there is a debt on the meter and you do not contact the supplier, you may be paying off someone else's debts.

If you do not know who the supplier is, please ring National Grid on **0800 096 3080**.

You can also access this service online using only your post code by visiting their [website](#).

6.13 Changing how you pay your utilities

If you currently have a quarterly gas or electric meter and wish to change to a pre-payment meter, or the other way around, do not commence these changes until you have moved in. This is because it will delay any works that may be required for a number of weeks.

It is cheaper to pay for gas and electricity by direct debit. This can be set up monthly with your supplier.

If you have a disability, you may also wish to contact your energy supplier to see if you are eligible for any discount on your fuel bills.

For further information on gas and electric supplies in your home, please contact the [Housing Repairs and Maintenance](#) team on 01392 265031 or email housing.repairs@exeter.gov.uk

6.14 Water meters

Some properties already have water meters fitted. Water meters measure the amount of water used within a property and a charge is made based on the amount used. Properties without a water meter are charged at a flat rate.

You do not need our permission to have a water meter installed.

Please see [South West Water](#) for more details and to use their estimator to see whether you could save money by switching to a meter.

6.15 Priority register

Your energy supplier and your network operator (the company responsible for the pipes and wires that carry electricity and gas – this is National Grid for electricity and Wales and West for gas) will both keep a Priority Services Register. You may be eligible to join the register, for example if you are over a certain age, are pregnant, have a disability, or struggle with speaking or reading English.

Joining their Priority Services Register means you will be able to get a range of extra help when you need it. This could be all the time, or for a brief period due to something that has happened in your life.

Contact your energy supplier and network operator for more information and to apply. There is also more information on [Ofgem's website](#), including further information on who is eligible and what the service covers.

South West Water also offers a priority register, visit their [website](#) for more information.

Your neighbourhood and community

7. Concerns about neighbours

This section is about problems and how to resolve them. Please remember that you are responsible for the behaviour of every person, including children and animals, living in, or visiting your home. You are responsible for them both in your home and in the surrounding locality.

Main contact details for this section

Team: Housing Estates Management

Email: housing.estates.management@exeter.gov.uk

Telephone: 01392 265033

7.1 Anti-social behaviour

Anti-social behaviour is a broad term that is used to describe behaviour that may affect your quality of life and the peaceful enjoyment of your home.

We expect our residents to accept a certain level of noise from day to day living and be tolerant of other people's lifestyles, but we also expect our residents to behave in an acceptable manner. Problems often arise when people act without thinking about their neighbours and other residents living nearby.

We will not tolerate anti-social behaviour, harassment or domestic violence and we will take firm action against anyone carrying out this behaviour. As a tenant you are not only responsible for your own behaviour but also for the behaviour of your family, your household, and visitors to your home.

We actively promote ways to prevent anti-social behaviour, but we will use our enforcement powers in appropriate circumstances.

Anti-social behaviour can take many forms, including:

- Violence or threats of violence
- Abuse of any kind (including mental, verbal, emotional, financial, and sexual)

- Harassment (including hate related incidents – see section [Hate incidents and hate crime](#) for more information)
- Domestic violence
- Arson or attempted arson
- Drug dealing or other criminal activity
- Persistent noise nuisance (exceeding everyday living noise)
- Graffiti and criminal damage, including racial or offensive graffiti

Annoyances that are likely to be considered everyday living or minor lifestyle differences, and not Anti-social behaviour include such things as:

- Noise generated by everyday living such as walking across floors with shoes on
- Children playing in their own homes and gardens
- Cooking smells
- Occasional or one-off parties
- DIY noise, voices, television noise, and other everyday noise during the daytime
- Dogs that bark occasionally
- Neighbour disputes about parking.

These lists provide guidelines and are not exhaustive. We have a [Housing Anti-social Behaviour Policy on our website](#) which provides more information.

7.1.2 Responding to reports of anti-social behaviour

See the section [How to report anti-social behaviour, hate crime and hate incidents](#) for information on how to report anti-social behaviour.

Your Housing Officer will be the first and main point of contact once you report a case of anti-social behaviour. We also recognise our duties under the **Equality Act 2010**, including making reasonable adjustments to ensure all tenants can access our services safely and fairly.

Each complaint of anti-social behaviour is taken seriously and will be investigated. You can expect an initial response in the following timescales:

- For anti-social behaviour that presents a risk to public health or nuisance, we will make contact with victim or referrer within five working days.
- For more serious reports (including hate incidences or hate crimes) we will respond within three working days, but will endeavour to contact the victim or referrer sooner.

We will need to speak with all involved parties in investigating reports of anti-social behaviour, and we will respond in accordance with the Housing Anti-Social

Behaviour Policy and Procedure. We also have a separate, but related, Housing Residents' Hate Crime Policy (for more information about hate crime and hate incidents see the section [Hate incidents and hate crime](#)).

When a report is confirmed to be a proven case of anti-social behaviour, an action plan will be agreed setting out how the case intends to be resolved. Due to the complex nature of these situations, it can sometimes take time for them to be fully investigated.

Under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, victims of persistent anti-social behaviour have the right to request a review of their case if they believe that no effective action has been taken. This process is often known as the Community Trigger. It allows victims to ask local agencies, such as the council, housing providers, and the police, to work together to review what has been done, identify any gaps, and agree further actions to resolve the problem. The Community Trigger is designed to ensure victims are heard and that ongoing anti-social behaviour is dealt with more effectively.

7.2 Hate incidents and hate crime

We are committed to creating safe, respectful neighbourhoods where everyone is treated fairly and with dignity. We have a zero-tolerance approach to hate crime in all its forms and will always act promptly to support tenants and address concerns.

A hate incident is any incident that the victim, or anyone else, believes is motivated by prejudice or hostility towards a person because they have (or are perceived to have) one or more of the following protected characteristics:

- Race
- Religion
- Disability
- Sexual orientation
- Transgender identity (including people who identify as non-binary)

A hate crime is a hate incident that is also a criminal offence.

Hate incidents and crimes can include:

- Verbal abuse or threats
- Harassment or intimidation
- Bullying
- Assault
- Damage to property
- Incitement to hatred

All hate incidents are treated as serious cases, even if they do not involve criminal behaviour.

We have a [Housing Residents' Hate Crime Policy](#) on our website with more information about hate crimes.

7.2.2 How we will respond to hate incidents

See the section [How to report anti-social behaviour, hate crime and hate incidents](#) for information on how to report hate crime and hate incidents.

We work in partnership with the police, local authorities, and other relevant organisations to deter and tackle hate incidents and anti-social behaviour in our communities.

When a hate incident or hate crime is reported, we will:

- Treat all reports seriously, confidentially, and respectfully
- Respond within 24 hours of the first report
- Make reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010 where needed
- Meet with the victim at a location of their choosing, within an agreed timeframe
- Carry out a detailed risk assessment to understand the impact of the incident
- Investigate the report fully before agreeing an action plan
- Work with the police and partner agencies, and refer to specialist support services where appropriate
- Keep the complainant updated on progress at agreed intervals
- Only contact witnesses or other residents with the victim's consent
- Review cases regularly with senior officers
- Close cases only after discussion with the victim

All incidents are carefully recorded on our housing management system to ensure accurate records and the appropriate follow-up is delivered.

7.3 How to report anti-social behaviour, hate crime and hate incidents

The responsibility for dealing with antisocial behaviour is shared between a number of agencies including Exeter City Council and Devon & Cornwall Police.

You can report:

- Something that has happened to you
- Something you have witnessed
- Something reported to you by another person

Contact the Devon & Cornwall Police if you believe a crime has taken place.

This includes:

- Serious cases of anti-social behaviour, for example groups gathering causing public disorder, harassment or intimidating behaviour.
- Hate crimes

To contact the police, call 999 if you or someone else is in immediate danger, or if the crime is in progress. Call 101 to contact the police to report a crime if it is not an emergency.

You can also contact [Crimestoppers](#) to report a crime anonymously. They will pass the information about the crime to the police. More information is available from [Devon & Cornwall Police](#)

We can also support you if you wish to report the incident to the police.

You should also contact us as your landlord and make us aware of any issues you are experiencing because of anti-social behaviour, or to make us aware of a hate crime or hate incident.

You can report anti-social behaviour, or a hate crime or hate incident to the [Housing Estates Management](#) team:

- Telephone us on **01392 265033**
- Email housing.estates.management@exeter.gov.uk
- By letter
- In person at the Civic Centre (by appointment).
- [Online](#)
- For making noise or loud music complaints [please use the noise complaint form](#) instead.

Our opening hours, including out of hours contact details, are listed in the [Contact us](#) section.

8. Getting involved

As your landlord, we welcome in your views. We need to know what you think, so that our ideas, plans and services can match your needs. The following information will tell you how you can make your voice count and how you can become actively involved in the decisions affecting your home and neighbourhood.

We offer many ways for residents to get involved in shaping the Housing Service. Getting involved is a good way to provide us with valuable feedback and influence the way we work. It's also a great way to meet new people and gain valuable skills

and experience. We are keen to have more residents working with us to ensure we deliver an effective and efficient service to our tenants.

Main contact details for this section

Team: Resident Involvement

Email: resident.involvement@exeter.gov.uk

Telephone: 01392 265767 or 01392 265184

8.1 Getting Involved

We offer support to residents so that they can participate in our engaged groups or attend any of our events. Members of our engaged groups received:

- Tablets so that they can read agendas and minutes
- Childcare and other carers expenses covered so that they can attend meetings
- Travel expenses such as parking, taxis and bus travel covered so that they can attend meetings
- £10 vouchers for groceries or shopping for every meeting attended

We will work to ensure that this group is representative of the wider tenant population, and that opportunities are advertised widely to everyone in many different formats; where we identify gaps in representativeness, we will seek to address them.

Residents can expect the following arrangements for all our formal group meetings, events and activities:

- Fully accessible venues, including access for wheelchairs and hearing loops
- A PA system for events over 40 people
- Support so that anyone can attend regardless of circumstances; this includes paying for and arranging accessible taxis, and providing payments for childcare and carers
- Carers of residents who attend events, activities and meetings are welcome, regardless of whether they are tenants themselves
- Translation and interpretation services are available if required; this includes access to telephone translation services, in-person translation and interpretation services will need arranging in advance
- Tablets are provided to residents who are part of our formal groups to enable them to attend virtually and access meeting agenda, minutes and other documents
- Paper and electronic copies of all documents made available, and large print (including braille) can be sent out in advance of meetings via post

- Where possible, we have offered some activities in the morning, afternoon and evening.

We are committed to removing barriers that residents might face in participating in our groups, events and activities.

8.2 How to get involved

We run several groups and panels where residents can help shape our services.

Tenants' Voice

Tenants' Voice is a formal panel made up of tenants and Housing staff that meets every two months to consider issues that affect neighbourhoods and estates. A sub-group (Tenants' Voice: Special Project Group) undertake their own projects of review.

Complaints and Performance Group

The Complaints and Performance Group are a small group of tenants that meet every two months to help us identify learning opportunities from our complaints. The group also plays an important role in scrutinising our performance.

Resident Communications Panel

The Communications Panel is responsible for making sure that our publications and reports are user friendly, and that the content is interesting and useful to readers. The panel also acts as an editorial board for InSight magazine. If you have a good grasp of English, a bit of creative flair, and like to see things produced properly, then the Communication Panel could be for you.

Repairs, Maintenance and Procurement Group

This group focuses on issues that affect tenants' homes and communal areas, including repairs, maintenance, cleaning, and health and safety. It also plays an important role in selecting contractors for new contracts, helping to ensure that tenants have a voice in decisions that impact their homes and communities.

Tenants' Voice: Special Project Group

This sub-group undertake critical reviews of our services and produce recommendations on how we can improve. They select the area(s) they want to focus on, undertake investigative work, produce reports and present their findings to senior managers. The results of their work are also published online enabling our residents to see their input into improving our services. If you are part of any of our tenant groups above, you are welcome to participate in these projects.

Take part online

If you prefer to get involved online, you can join our mailing list to take part in surveys, consultations or focus groups.

You can sign up to **Your Voices** to receive consultations and focus group invitations; you can do this by subscribing to [News for council tenants and leaseholders](#).

Visit the [Housing Hub](#), an online space where you can take part in consultations and short surveys about your experiences as a tenant. We also use this space to share information about how your feedback is shaping our service.

Focus groups

These sessions are held on an ad hoc basis to discuss different topics. If you'd like to take part or set up a residents' group where you can get involved on a local level, please contact the [Resident Involvement](#) team.

8.3 Residents' groups and associations

We strongly support residents' associations and encourage the setting-up of new ones. Residents' groups can:

- Campaign for improved local facilities
- Help expand the provision of amenities for children and young people
- Help improve neighbourhoods
- Give communities a way of getting together to make your voices heard, both to us and to other service providers and agencies
- Help to develop a sense of community
- Enable you to organise local social events such as outings, playgroups for children or seasonal parties.

We have produced a [free online guide](#) with information about how residents can organise themselves into groups or associations. Contact the [Resident Involvement](#) team for more information.

8.4 Estate inspections and housing surgeries

We try to visit our communities as frequently as possible. These sessions are another opportunity for you to chat to us in person about any issues you may have, report a repair or maintenance issue, provide feedback or a complaint, or share your ideas on how we can contribute to your neighbourhood or community.

We hold housing surgeries in Community Centres or communal rooms and advertise these sessions by letter to local residents. We also arrange estate inspections where we invite local residents to join the local Housing Officer and other staff as they walk around the neighbourhood.

8.5 Community rooms

Some Older Persons' Housing schemes have community rooms that can be used for activities such as coffee mornings, craft sessions, exercise classes and digital

support. We can help if you'd like to organise an event. Please see [Communal rooms](#) in the Older Persons' Housing section for more information.

8.6 Community funding

Grants may be available for local community projects through our [Community Grants Programme](#).

9. Comments and complaints

We are committed to providing the best housing service we can, but we know that things sometimes do go wrong. If this happens, we would like to hear from you, so we can put things right and learn how we can improve the service for everyone.

Main contact details for this section

Team: Housing Complaints

Email: housing.complaints@exeter.gov.uk

Telephone: 01392 265759

9.1 What is a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the council, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents.

You do not have to use the word 'complaint' for it to be treated as such, and anyone that expresses dissatisfaction is given the opportunity to make a complaint.

You will need to raise your complaint within 12 months of when you first noticed the issue. We will not normally consider a complaint made after that time.

We will review each complaint individually, consider the circumstances and take the complaint on its own merit.

You can make a complaint if you think we have:

- done something wrong
- behaved unfairly or impolitely
- not carried out a service to an agreed standard
- not responded to your request for a service within our stated timescale
- or if you think we have got something wrong in an Exeter City Council policy decision

A service request **is not a complaint**. For example, reporting a leaky tap. Service requests will be logged and forwarded to the relevant department for action.

A service request may become a complaint when we have not addressed the problem or if there has been a service failure, for example if we do not repair your leaky tap within appropriate timescales.

Dissatisfaction with the service received, or lack of service, **can be raised as a complaint**. For example, correspondence outlining that a reported repair or incident of anti-social behaviour has not been dealt with.

9.1.2 When we may not accept a complaint

We may not accept a complaint if:

- it is determined to be a service request, for example a repair or enquiry
- more than 12 months has elapsed since the issue arose (we will use our discretion over this and will consider each complaint individually)
- it duplicates another complaint already made, or a complaint in progress
- legal proceedings have commenced and / or a [Housing Disrepair Protocol](#) is in progress
- if there is an accident or incident – this will be investigated separately from our complaints process
- the complaint is made in a vexatious manner (see “Housing Complaints Process”)
- If Exeter City Council decides not to accept a complaint, a detailed explanation will be provided setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process and how to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman.

9.1.3 Who can complain?

You can make a complaint, or someone can make it on your behalf.

Anyone acting on your behalf needs a signed authorisation from you. You will need to complete an “Authority to discuss” form to give them permission; please see the section [Choosing Someone to Act on your Behalf](#) for more information.

Anonymous complaints cannot be accepted as official complaints as they cannot be responded to and may be impossible to substantiate. However, these are recorded and reviewed as feedback.

9.1.4 How can I complain?

Complaints can be made by:

- Telephone 01392 265759
- A letter or personal visit to Exeter City Council, Civic Centre, Paris Street, Exeter, EX1 1JN
- Email to housing.complaints@exeter.gov.uk

- Online, via the [complaints form](#)
- Via our [Housing Facebook page](#)
- During a home visit, housing drop-in surgeries or through your housing officer or area surveyor
- During housing resident involvement events
- You can also raise housing complaints through your local councillor. These will be acknowledged and progressed in line with our Housing Complaints policy.

9.1.5 How will my complaint be dealt with?

We are committed to making our services work for all of our residents. We will ask you:

- your preferred method of contact to help us so that we can stay in touch throughout the complaints process
- any adjustments or additional support that you may need
- any vulnerabilities within your household

We will respond to your complaint in line with the latest Housing Ombudsman's guidance as set out in the Complaint Handling Code. We operate a two-stage complaint process.

9.1.6 Stage One

We will acknowledge your housing complaint within five working days. An officer will then investigate and respond within 10 working days from the acknowledgement. We may extend this by a further 10 working days if the investigation is complex.

Where additional investigation time would take the complaint outside of the extension period, e.g. beyond the extended deadline date, an agreement would be made by both parties.

Where agreement over an extension period cannot be reached, we will provide you with the Housing Ombudsman's contact details so you can contact them directly.

If you are unhappy with our response at Stage One, you can escalate your complaint to be considered by another person at Stage Two.

9.1 7 Stage Two

If you remain dissatisfied following our Stage One investigation, you can request to escalate your complaint. A new senior officer will conduct an independent review.

We will acknowledge your escalation within five working days. Your request to escalate must be made within three months of the conclusion of the Stage One complaint. We will complete a Stage Two review within 20 working days of your acknowledgement email and send you a final response. This timescale may be extended by 20 working days if the investigation is complex. We will normally

respond within the additional 20 working day extended deadline unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Where additional investigation time would take the complaint outside of the extension period, e.g. beyond the extended deadline date, an agreement would be made by both parties.

Where agreement over an extension period cannot be reached, we will provide you with the Housing Ombudsman's contact details so you can contact them directly.

We can only escalate a complaint to Stage Two once it has completed Stage One of the Complaints process.

We will not investigate a complaint at Stage Two if it was not part of the original Stage One complaint, but we would either open a new Stage One complaint for any additional elements raised or it may be deemed a service request and will go through a different process.

We will not refuse a reasonable request to escalate to Stage Two unless the request falls within our exclusions, for example legal proceedings have commenced.

9.1.8 Stage one and stage two responses

When responding to complaints we will use plain language, include the reasons for any decisions made and, where appropriate, provide details of any remedy to put things right and details of any outstanding actions.

We will issue our complaint response when the answer is known, or by the deadline provided and not wait until any outstanding actions required to address the issue are completed.

If a complaint response is handled by a third party (e.g. a contractor) at any stage, it will form part of the two stage complaints process set out in the Complaint Handling Code.

When responding to a complaint about an individual, we refer to staff members by their title in our communications.

Where the key issue of a complaint relates to the parties' legal obligations, we will clearly set out legal obligations of all parties concerned.

9.1.9 Complaints made in a vexatious manner

Complaints are considered vexatious when they are:

- obsessive, harassing, abusive or repetitive
- insistent on pursuing non-meritorious complaints and/or unrealistic, unreasonable outcomes

- insistent on pursuing what may be meritorious complaints in an unreasonable manner
- designed to cause disruption or annoyance
- demands for redress which lack any serious purpose or value.

This list is not exhaustive.

Exeter City Council takes each complaint seriously and will always raise genuine issues and concerns for its residents. However, we will follow our internal processes when dealing with vexatious complainants.

When a service user demonstrates persistent and vexatious behaviour, we invoke our 'Acceptable Behaviour Contract' which manages communication in line with the Unacceptable Customer Behaviour Policy.

9.1.10 After your complaint

If you remain dissatisfied at the end of our complaints process, you have the following options available to you:

- Use the Housing Ombudsman's Early Resolution Service. This is an alternative process to formal investigation where they will work with you and us to resolve the dispute as fairly and quickly as possible
- Refer your complaint to the Housing Ombudsman to be formally investigated.

9.1.11 Putting things right

There are lots of things that we can do to put things right if they go wrong. We can:

- Say sorry and give you an explanation
- Make sure that any repairs needed are carried out
- Learn from your complaints to improve our service
- Make sure our staff have extra guidance and support to help other residents
- Consider compensation, and we use the Housing Ombudsman's guidelines to help us make fair and transparent decisions

9.2 The Housing Ombudsman

The Housing Ombudsman's role is to regulate how we provide our complaints service. They are available to our tenants and leaseholders. They provide a free, independent, and impartial dispute resolution service throughout the entire complaints process.

You can contact the Housing Ombudsman in the following ways:

- By telephone: 0300 111 3000
- Online: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk
- Address: Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 1484, Unit D, Preston, PR2 0ET.

Older Persons' Housing

10. What is Older Persons' Housing?

This section contains additional information that specifically relates to Older Persons' Housing. Most of the information contained in earlier sections of this handbook is also relevant to tenants living in Older Persons' Housing.

Main contact details for this section

Team: Older Persons Property Services

Email: olderpersons.service@exeter.gov.uk

Telephone: 01392 265338

Older Persons' Housing is usually accommodation that is grouped together to provide independent living for people over the age of 60. Each unfurnished flat or bungalow is self-contained with its own bedroom(s), living area, bathroom and kitchen. Some schemes also have a range of communal facilities such as a lounge, kitchen and laundry facilities.

All our tenants of our Older Persons' Housing can have the benefit from having our Home Call alarm service at a small weekly charge. This means that help is on hand 24 hours a day, seven days a week via our local call centre. If you press the button on your pendant, one of our trained operators will be able to talk to you to find out what the problem is and help you to solve it. This system gives peace of mind, not only for the residents, but for family and friends too. We have a separate section about [Homecall alarms](#) under "Your Tenancy".

If at any time you need extra support to stay in your home, we will be able to signpost you to the most appropriate services and agencies.

10.1 Older persons' housing team

The team consists of Housing Officers who are your first point of contact for any matters relating to your tenancy or other housing management queries. Contact the [Housing Estate Management](#) team to speak to your Housing Officer.

There are also [Older Persons' Property Services Officers](#) (OPPSOs) who look after the property. They will visit each scheme regularly and can provide advice to tenants. They can be contacted on **01392 265338**.

These officers visit each scheme regularly (at least monthly). They spend time at each scheme (usually the same day each week) and are available to residents during the visit time and by phone or email.

OPPSO's help new tenants settle into their homes and on a rolling programme they visit and inspect schemes regularly including health and safety checks.

They also administer the communal rooms and laundries.

Unfortunately, they cannot perform any care functions such as collecting prescriptions, administering any medication or cooking.

10.2 Communal rooms

One of the advantages of living in our Older Persons' Housing is that some schemes have the benefit of a community room or lounge for the use of residents. Some are used for social activities and events such as coffee mornings, games groups, yoga, seated exercise, art & craft, bingo and more. These are organised by the residents themselves, or in conjunction with the Housing Community Initiatives Officers.

If you have any ideas for what you would like to do on or near your home, please let us know and we will see what we can do to help. Please contact the [Older Persons' Property Services Officers](#) in the first instance.

The communal lounge can be reserved for private use. If you wish to use for this facility, you should contact the [Older Persons' Property Services Officers](#) who will check the bookings. A small charge may be levied for the use of the lounge.

Please note that smoking or vaping is not permitted in any of our communal areas.

There is a separate leaflet about the use of communal rooms that should be kept in the room itself. If it is not there, please contact the [Older Persons' Property Services Officers](#) and they will arrange a replacement.

10.3 Laundry facilities

Laundry equipment is provided in some schemes for the sole use of the residents. You are not permitted to do any washing/drying for family members. These machines are operated by coin slots.

10.4 Keys

You will be provided with keys to your home when you move in, however if you need extra keys you will have to get them cut at your own cost. We do not hold spare keys, so you are advised to have a key safe in case you lock yourself out, or if you have regular callers such as carers. Some schemes are master suited, and you will need a letter of authority from us first.

You may also have been issued with a key fob for front door entry, depending on your home. If you require additional fobs, contact the [Older Persons' Property Services Officers](#) who will arrange this. You will have to cover the cost of any new fobs.

A key safe may be secured by us near your front door. Through a combination lock, or similar, your keys will be protected from intruders while allowing only certain people access to the keys stored in your key safe. These must be removed at the end of your tenancy.

If you lock yourself out or lose your keys, you are responsible for organising a locksmith at your expense, and any damage to the door will be subject to recharge to you.

Call the [Housing Repairs and Maintenance](#) team for ALL enquiries relating to lost fobs for communal doors.

Anyone calling at your home from the Council, or any contractors employed by the Council will carry official identification. If you are not sure about someone's identity, do not let them in.

Accessibility & reasonable adjustments

In providing our services as a landlord, we understand that some people may need extra support, and we aim to provide reasonable adjustments to meet the diverse needs of our tenants. Our [Vulnerability Policy](#) is available to read on the internet, and it contains more about our approach to vulnerabilities and how we make reasonable adjustments.

As part of our Service Standards, we are committed to treating you with fairness and respect. As part of this pledge, we:

- Aim to involve a diverse range of residents in our tenant groups
- Review our complaints and anti-social behaviour cases regularly to make sure that we are treating our tenants fairly and with respect
- Have adopted a Vulnerability Policy and a Hate Crime Policy
- Review the results of Tenant Satisfaction Surveys with our tenant groups and Council Housing and Development Advisory Board

Main contact details for this section

Team: Housing Estates Management

Email: housing.estates.management@exeter.gov.uk

Telephone: 01392 265033

Write to us or visit us: Housing Estate Management, Exeter City Council, Civic Centre, Paris Street, EX1 1JN. Our Customer Service Centre is open Monday – Friday, 9am to 2pm.

11. Accessibility

We at Exeter City Council's housing service has pledged to provide services which are fair, equitable and accessible, free from discrimination, making reasonable adjustments where we should.

We can provide this information, or any other documents (including your Tenancy Agreement, or any of our publications) in different languages and formats including braille, large print or electronically. Use the [contact information](#) in the section to request this.

If you are unable to use or access the internet and would like any information that this handbook links to on our Exeter City Council website, please contact us and we will arrange to send you a hard copy.

The address of our main reception area at the Civic Centre is: Exeter City Council, Customer First, Paris Street, Exeter, EX1 1JN.

Our offices are open Monday – Friday, 9am to 2pm. The reception is fully accessible, and it has audio induction loops, or if you contact us before your visit, we can arrange a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter.

There is no drop-in service, except for emergency housing enquiries. Self-service computers and phones are available in the Civic Centre. If you wish to speak to a member of Housing in person, you should make arrangements in advance. You can also report a repair or make a housing complaint with reception.

Our main reception area at the Civic Centre is fully accessible, and it has audio induction loops, or if you contact us before your visit, we can arrange a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter (see our sections below on interpretation and translation).

11.1 Interpretation services

If you require an interpreter to access our services, we can arrange for one. This can be either over the phone or in-person.

11.1.2 In-person interpretation

In-person interpreting is almost always better than telephone interpreting because the people in the meeting can pick up on non-verbal cues such as facial expressions and use documents, pictures or objects to help explain things.

A list of languages is held in reception so you can easily point out the symbol for the language that you speak.

If you speak Farsi, Dari, Polish, French, Turkish, Spanish, Lithuanian, German, Romanian, Bulgarian or Russian we will normally be able to get an interpreter to you within 10 minutes. For other languages we may need to arrange another time for you to come back or use a telephone interpretation service.

If you are Deaf and use British Sign Language, it may be difficult to get an interpreter immediately so we may have to make an appointment for you to come back at another time.

You can always contact us in advance so that we can make sure we have an interpreter available to attend your appointment.

11.1.3 Telephone interpretation

We use Language Line service that offers telephone interpretation in over 150 languages, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. If you wish to speak to us over the phone, we can arrange for Language Line to provide an interpretation service.

Language Line can usually provide a service straight away, however, in a small number of cases we may need to arrange to call you back.

11.1.4 Can I have a friend/relative to interpret for me?

You have the right to use your own translator or interpreter, who can be a friend or family member, but the Council will not pay for this service. We do not recommend that children interpret.

If the conversation is to do with a legal matter, you will need to employ a professional interpreter.

11.1.5 Translating information on the website

There are a number of options available if you want to translate pages on the website into other languages:

- [Google Translate](#)
- [Chrome automatic translate](#)
- [Firefox - download a translator plugin](#)
- [Microsoft Edge - Use Microsoft Translator](#)
- [Translate a web page in Safari on Mac](#)

11.1.6 Request information in another language

We are able to provide certain print information (and other documents such as your Tenancy Agreement and publications) in other languages or formats. Please contact the City Council if you would like this done.

11.1.7 Other Communication support is available

In addition to interpretation and translation services, we will provide communication support for those with additional needs, including literacy, hearing, visual impairment, mental health conditions, and any other forms of support in communication. This might include offering in-person meetings, allowing someone to act on your behalf (we will need you to first agree to an “[authority to discuss](#)”), or other reasonable adjustment depending on your circumstances.

11.2 Reasonable adjustments

Vulnerabilities can be temporary or long-term and may result from factors such as:

- Age, disability, or health conditions
- Mental health challenges or learning disabilities
- Exceptional life events like bereavement or domestic abuse
- Financial hardship or language barriers

We will make reasonable adjustments to our service to tailor our approach to respect individual needs by:

- Recording any known vulnerabilities and communication needs on our housing system
- Taking these into account when delivering services such as repairs, adaptations, tenancy management, and enforcement
- Helping residents access additional support and make safeguarding referrals where needed
- Working with other agencies to ensure residents receive the right help

This will vary by service, but some examples are:

- Allowing extra time for residents to answer the door
- Arranging joint visits with a support worker or representative
- Prioritising urgent repairs if delays could affect health
- Escalating damp and mould issues for vulnerable households
- Explaining letters in person or by phone
- Offering or refer for support before enforcing against anti-social behaviour
- Making an application for a civil remedy or injunction rather than evict a vulnerable person where possible
- Providing welfare and money advice before rent enforcement
- Completing follow-up work after repairs if a vulnerable person is not likely to be able to do this
- Arranging translation or interpretation services when needed. We will also support residents with other types of communication needs (incl. literacy, hearing, visual impairment and other forms of support in communication)

If you have a disability we may be able to help make your home more accessible. Please see our section on [Home adaptations for people with disabilities](#) for more information.

Please contact [Housing Estates Management](#) to update any information about yourself, including any existing or new vulnerabilities, or if there is anything else that you think we need to know so that we can adjust our services to meet your individual needs.

11.3 Other organisations that can offer support

Devon Services keep a directory of public and community services online, covering disability support, advice, transportation and carers. You can find this [directory online](#).

Citizens Advice Exeter keep a directory of useful organisations that can help you with your individual needs. You can find this [directory online](#).

Examples of organisations that can help support you, or signpost you to support, include:

- AgeUK
- Citizens Advice
- National Debtline
- Stepchange

If you need additional help and support, there are other organisations that can help, such as the [Housing Ombudsman](#).

We have information about other organisations that can help with debt-related issues elsewhere in this handbook. Please see [Debt advice](#) for more information.

11.4 Personal information

We use the information you provide us to process your housing application and manage your tenancy. We may continue to use all or part of the information to provide ongoing related services to support you in your home, and to make reasonable adjustments to our services so that we can meet your individual needs.

The information we hold includes: your name, address, telephone number(s), email address and photograph (if permission has been given). We also collect data on your protected characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation) (if permission has been given).

Please let us know if any of the information that we hold about you has changed and needs updating.

If you are a tenant, we will store information relating to property inspections, rent increases, and correspondence between yourself and our housing teams (including Council Housing Income Collections, Tenancy Services and Housing Repairs and Maintenance).

Your information will be held and used by the Council. We may check information you have provided to us with your doctor, support worker, social services in order to ensure the accuracy of the information, to prevent or detect fraud, or to protect public funds.

We may share your information with our commissioned service providers to provide you with a repairs and maintenance service. Your name and address may be passed to a third-party organisation to distribute our publications or for the purposes of collecting Tenant Satisfaction surveys as required annually by the Regulator for Social Housing. This data will be treated in compliance with relevant legislation and ICO Guidance and only shared with organisations working for us and agreed a Data Sharing Agreements with.

We may also share your information with partnership agencies such as the Police and the NHS where there is a legal obligation for us to do so or to effectively carry out our landlord obligations.

We will keep your tenancy agreement for 6 years after your tenancy has ended. We will keep other information for up to 6 years from collection. When we no longer need to keep your information, we will securely and confidentially dispose of it.

For more information about how we look after your information or to find out more about your rights, please see our Privacy Notice for housing which is on our [website](#) or contact the Data Protection Officer on 01392 265257.

To protect your privacy, we can only talk about your tenancy or release personal information to you or the named person on your account. There are a few exceptions, such as legal requirements, emergencies, or safeguarding concerns, but in all other situations, your information is kept strictly confidential.

11.5 Choosing someone to act on your behalf

We understand that some tenants and leaseholders may want someone else to help manage aspects of their tenancy. This may be:

- A family member
- A friend
- A support worker
- An advocate
- Someone formally appointed through an Appointeeship or Deputyship

This may include discussing matters such as rent or rent arrears, repairs and maintenance, or complaints and general tenancy issues.

If you would like someone to act on your behalf, you must give us permission first.

You should think carefully before giving permission for someone to speak on your behalf. We cannot selectively withhold details or information from someone that you have granted permission to, and you should therefore consider carefully before granting family members or third parties' access to your information.

To authorise someone to discuss your tenancy with us, please contact the [Housing Estates Management](#) team. We will then arrange for you to complete a simple form confirming who you want to act on your behalf. If someone is acting under an Appointeeship or Deputyship, we may need to see formal documentation.

It is your responsibility to make sure the information we hold is accurate. If your chosen representative changes, or you no longer want someone to act for you, please let us know straight away.

You can withdraw your authority at any time. Just contact the [Housing Estates Management](#) team and we'll update your records immediately.

11.5.1 Power of attorney

Sometimes a tenant's affairs need to be managed by another person under a Power of Attorney or a guardianship or by other similar court orders. This can be a family member, a friend or a professional, such as a social worker.

It's important to let us know when this happens, so we can share information about the tenancy and contact the right person if needed.

Please contact the [Housing Estates Management](#) team to send a copy of the Power of Attorney or court order, along with contact details of the person who has responsibility for the tenant's affairs.

12. Equality and diversity

Exeter City Council welcomes the diversity of the community living, working, visiting and learning in the city. As a service provider, community leader and employer the council is committed to being an exemplar in promoting equality and tackling social exclusion.

As part of our Service Standards, we pledge to make sure that no one uses any of our services or is treated less favourably because of their disability, age, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, and gender reassignment.

We will use plain English and avoid the use of jargon in our communications.

Exeter City Council has a zero-tolerance approach to all forms of discrimination. As part of this all-embracing commitment to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion for all, we pledge to become an anti-racist council and to uphold this stance in everything that we do.

You can read more about our commitment to equality and diversity, including our Equality and Diversity Policy, [on our website](#).

Contact information

How to contact us

If your query is urgent, it is advisable to always call us first.

By letter:

Housing Landlord Services, Exeter City Council, Civic Centre, Paris Street, Exeter, EX1 1JN

Housing Estates Management

Email:

housing.estates.management@exeter.gov.uk

Telephone: 01392 265033

Housing Income Collections

Email: Rent.collections@exeter.gov.uk

Telephone: 01392 265475

Lettings and Home Ownership

Email:

lettingsandhomeownership@exeter.gov.uk

Telephone: 01392 265744

Housing Repairs and Maintenance or Housing Compliance

Email: housing.repairs@exeter.gov.uk

Telephone: 01392 265031 (this is also the out-of-hours repairs number)

Resident Involvement

Email:

resident.involvement@exeter.gov.uk

Telephone: 01392 265767 or 01392 265184

Housing Complaints

Email:

housing.complaints@exeter.gov.uk

Telephone: 01392 265759

Out of hours

Our general phone numbers above are staffed Monday – Friday, 9am to 5pm. You can still contact us out of hours in the following ways outside of these hours in an emergency:

Exeter City Council Customer Service: 01392 277888

Housing emergency Repairs: 01392 265031

Online contacts

Handbook Section	What do you need?	Website
Your tenancy	Information about your tenancy agreement	www.exeter.gov.uk/housing/council-housing-tenants/information-for-tenants/your-tenancy/your-tenancy-agreement/ or search for “tenancy agreement” on www.exeter.gov.uk
	Information about myself from ECC	www.exeter.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/council-information/data-protection/obtaining-information-about-myself
	Microchipping information (Petlog)	www.petlog.org.uk
	Bins and Recycling information	www.exeter.gov.uk/bins-and-recycling or search “bins and recycling on www.exeter.gov.uk
	Apply for assisted waste collections	www.exeter.gov.uk/bins-and-recycling/special-collections/apply-for-assisted-waste-collection
	Apply for a bulky waste collection	www.exeter.gov.uk/bins-and-recycling/special-collections/bulky-waste-collections
	Pay my rent online with a credit or debit card	www.exeter.gov.uk/rent or search “rent” on www.exeter.gov.uk
	Information about benefits and welfare	https://exeter.gov.uk/benefits-and-welfare/ or search “benefits and welfare” on www.exeter.gov.uk

Your tenancy	Access Breathing Space for problem debt	https://www.gov.uk/options-for-dealing-with-your-debts/breathing-space
	National Debtline - Free advice about debt problems.	www.nationaldebtline.org
	StepChange Debt Charity - Help with debt plans and budgeting	www.stepchange.org
	PayPlan - Free debt advice and plans	www.payplan.com
	Citizens Advice	www.citizensadvice.org.uk
	Money Helper - Government help with money problems	www.moneyhelper.org.uk
	Civil Legal Advice (CLA) - Free legal help for some people	www.gov.uk/civil-legal-advice
	Universal Credit - For new or existing claims	www.gov.uk/universal-credit
	Department for Work and Pensions	www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions
	HomeSwapper – for if you want to swap your Council home	www.homeswapper.co.uk

	Devon Home Choice – for finding a new Council or Housing Association home	www.devonhomechoice.com/
Your Home	Report a council house fault or repair	www.exeter.gov.uk/housing/repairs-and-maintenance-for-council-tenants/report-a-council-housing-fault-or-repair/request-a-repair or search “housing repairs” on www.exeter.gov.uk
	Access the Tenant Portal	www.exeter.gov.uk/TenantPortal
	Information about home adaptations	www.exeter.gov.uk/housing/council-housing-tenants/information-for-tenants/repairs-maintenance/home-adaptations or search “home adaptations” on www.exeter.gov.uk
	Homecall alarm service	www.exeter.gov.uk/clean-safe-city/community-safety/homecall-alarm-service or search “Homecall” on www.exeter.gov.uk
	Energy and water saving guidance	www.exeter.gov.uk/housing/council-housing-tenants/information-for-tenants/damp-home-condition/energy-and-water-saving or search “energy and water saving” on www.exeter.gov.uk
	Damp and mould information	http://www.exeter.gov.uk/housing/repairs-and-maintenance-for-council-tenants/repairs-advice-guides or search “a guide to damp” on www.exeter.gov.uk

Your Home	Further guidance on damp and mould	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/damp-and-mould-understanding-and-addressing-the-health-risks-for-rented-housing-providers
	ECOE Advice	www.ecoeadvice.org.uk
	Information Commissioner information about CCTV and camera doorbells	www.ico.org.uk/for-the-public/home-cctv-systems/#rules
	TV Licensing	www.tvlicensing.co.uk
	Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue service	www.dsfire.gov.uk
	NHS carbon monoxide safety	www.nhs.uk/conditions/carbon-monoxide-poisoning
	Asbestos in the home guide	http://www.exeter.gov.uk/housing/repairs-and-maintenance-for-council-tenants/repairs-advice-guides/asbestos-in-the-home or search “asbestos” on www.exeter.gov.uk
	Find my gas supplier	https://findmysupplier.energy
	Find my electricity supplier	https://supplier.nationalgrid.co.uk
	South West Water	www.southwestwater.co.uk
	Priority Services Register for energy	www.ofgem.gov.uk/energy-advice-households/join-your-suppliers-priority-services-register
	Priority Services Register for water	https://www.southwestwater.co.uk/priority-services

Your neighbourhood and community	Housing Anti-social Behaviour Policy and Hate Crime Policy	https://exeter.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/council-information/strategies-policies-and-plans/housing/ or search “housing policies” on www.exeter.gov.uk
	Crimestoppers	https://crimestoppers-uk.org/
	Devon and Cornwall Police	https://www.devon-cornwall.police.uk/
	Report anti-social behaviour	https://exeter.gov.uk/clean-safe-city/anti-social-behaviour/report-antisocial-behaviour/
	Report a noise complaint	https://exeter.gov.uk/clean-safe-city/anti-social-behaviour/noise-complaints/make-a-noise-complaint/
	Subscribe to news for Exeter City Council tenants	https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/UK ECC/subscriber/new
	Housing Hub – Engage Exeter	https://engage.exeter.gov.uk/hub-page/housing-tenant-services
	Guide to setting up a residents’ association	https://exeter.gov.uk/housing/council-housing-tenants/information-for-tenants/involvement-engagement/set-up-a-residents-association or search “resident association” on www.exeter.gov.uk
	Exeter Grants Programme	https://exeter.gov.uk/people-and-communities/grants/exeter-grants-programme/ or search “Exeter grants programme” on www.exeter.gov.uk

Your neighbourhood and community	Information about housing disrepair claims	https://exeter.gov.uk/housing/council-housing-tenants/information-for-tenants/damp-home-condition/housing-disrepair-claims/ or search “Housing direpair claims” on www.exeter.gov.uk
	Report a complaint online	https://my.exeter.gov.uk/service/Housing_complaints or search “Housing complaints” on www.exeter.gov.uk
	Housing Facebook page	www.facebook.com/ECCHousing
	Housing Ombudsman	www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk
Accessibility & Reasonable adjustments	Equality and Diversity Policy	https://exeter.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/council-information/strategies-policies-and-plans/equality-diversity-and-inclusion or search “Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy” on www.exeter.gov.uk
	Vulnerability Policy	https://exeter.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/council-information/strategies-policies-and-plans/housing/ or search “housing policies” on www.exeter.gov.uk
	Devon Services Directory	https://www.devonservices.org.uk/
	Exeter Citizens Advice Bureau Directory of Services	https://www.citizensadviceexeter.org.uk/advice-and-information/



Council Housing & Development Services

How to contact us:

If your query is urgent, it is advisable to always call us first.

Housing contact details

By letter:

Housing Landlord Services, Exeter City Council,
Civic Centre, Paris Street, Exeter, EX1 1JN

Housing Estates Management

Email:

housing.estates.management@exeter.gov.uk

Telephone:

01392 265033

Housing Income Collections

Email:

Rent.collections@exeter.gov.uk

Telephone:

01392 265475

Lettings and Home Ownership

Email:

lettingsandhomeownership@exeter.gov.uk

Telephone:

01392 265744

Housing Repairs and Maintenance or Housing Compliance

Email:

housing.repairs@exeter.gov.uk

Telephone:

01392 265031

(this is also the out-of-hours repairs number)

Resident Involvement

Email:

resident.involvement@exeter.gov.uk

Telephone:

01392 265767 or 01392 265184

Housing Complaints

Email:

housing.complaints@exeter.gov.uk

Telephone:

01392 265759



www.exeter.gov.uk/Housing