



# Residents Handbook



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# Introduction



We hope that you will be happy in your home. This handbook contains information about the Association, our activities and services provided.

The handbook is intended as a guide and does not form part of your Tenancy Agreement. If you have any difficulties or disputes, you should always refer to your Tenancy Agreement. This will provide full details of all your legal rights and responsibilities, which you originally agreed to.

We aim to cover most issues in this handbook, if you cannot find the answer to a question you can visit our website – [www.lrha.co.uk](http://www.lrha.co.uk) – or please contact us and we will be happy to help.



# Your New Home

## Moving In

To help with the move into your new home, we have a list below of things that you may need to arrange.

Contact the energy providers and water companies, when you are moving in and arrange for the supplies to be transferred into your name. On the day your tenancy starts, you should provide your meter readings.

To find out who currently supplies electricity and gas to the property you are moving in to just call:

- 0845 603 0618 for electricity; or
- 0870 608 1524 for gas;
- Make sure a GAS SAFE registered tradesman installs any gas appliance in your home and that a copy of the installation certificate is sent to the Association;
- Any electrical appliance in your home must be installed by a registered NICEIC installer and a copy of the installation certificate sent to the Association;
- Arrange for a telephone company of your choice to take over or install a phone line. Please tell us your new phone number;
- Inform your doctor and dentist about your change of address;
- If you receive any benefits, tell the appropriate Council Office about your change of address, tenancy start date and the new rent, we can assist with this;
- Inform the Council Tax Department at the Local Authority about your change of address;
- Contact TV Licensing to get a new TV license or transfer your existing TV license to your new address;
- If you want to redirect your post to your new home, you can arrange this at any main post office.

## Keys



On the day your tenancy begins, you will be officially handed the keys to your home. Once you have possession of the keys, they are your responsibility all times, **no copies are retained by the Association.**

# Your Tenancy Agreement



Your tenancy agreement is a legal document that includes the rights and responsibilities you have as a resident, and the rights and responsibilities the Association has as your landlord.

When you signed your tenancy agreement, you agreed to the conditions within it. This is why the sign-up meeting on the first day of your tenancy includes a detailed review of the document to ensure you are fully aware, able to understand your responsibilities and be able to undertake them.

## We have two types of Tenancy Agreement:

1

Starter Tenancy – also called an assured Shorthold tenancy

2

Assured Tenancies

## Starter Tenancy

A fixed term Assured Shorthold Tenancy Agreement (or Starter Tenancy) is provided to any resident for the first twelve months. Subject to the resident complying with the tenancy agreement after the first twelve months an Assured Non-Shorthold Tenancy is granted unless there are serious issues of non-compliance with the tenancy agreement. If that is the case, we will meet to discuss these with you.

## Assured Tenancies

This is our standard tenancy agreement. It allows you to stay in your home for as long as you want, providing you keep to the conditions of the agreement. Our Residents are also asked to sign a good neighbour agreement and a vermin agreement; we do not provide a pest control service.

## Joint Tenancies

We will usually give joint tenancies to married couples or co-habitees. Each joint Resident has equal rights over the tenancy and is responsible for meeting the tenancy obligations, including paying the rent.

If a relationship breaks down, we cannot decide who should keep the tenancy. This matter can only be decided by you and your partner or by a court of law.



# The Right of Succession

(Succession is not permitted for Starter Tenancies) If one joint resident dies the tenancy will automatically transfer to the other person. The right of succession only applies when the tenancy has not previously been passed on by succession. We may grant a further tenancy to someone closely related to resident or to a partner of the resident who has died providing they have lived with them for over a year.

We will also consider the size of the property relevant to the potential successor's household.

## Temporary absence

If you are going away from your home for more than six weeks, please tell the Association immediately. If you are claiming Housing Benefit/Universal Credit you need to inform them also.

## How could you lose your home?

We can apply for a Court Order to repossess your home if:

- You are behind with your rent;
- You have broken any condition of your Tenancy Agreement;
- You have caused a nuisance;
- You gave false information on your application for housing; or
- You no longer use the property as your main residence.

Before we go to Court, we must first give you a Notice that explains why we intend to repossess your home. The Notice will tell you when we intend to go to Court. We must apply for the Court Order during the 12 months after that date.

## Taking in a lodger

A lodger is someone who lives in your home with you. If you are an assured or a secure resident, you have the right to take in a lodger as long as you do not cause overcrowding. You must not take in a lodger while you have a starter tenancy.

You should not take in a lodger without first obtaining written permission from the Association

You must tell us the name and date of birth of the lodger. If you are claiming Housing Benefit or Universal Credit, you must also tell the Council or Department of Work and Pensions as soon as possible, as it may affect how much benefit you get.

As the Resident, you are responsible for the behaviour of lodgers. Your tenancy may be at risk if they cause a nuisance.

## Subletting part of your home

If you charge a person for living in one or more of your rooms, this is known as subletting.

You must not grant a sub-tenancy of the premises or any part of the property. It is a Criminal offence to sub-let social housing under the Prevention of Social Housing Fraud Act 2013.





## Your responsibilities

Your responsibilities are outlined in your tenancy agreement. Please take time to read it carefully as it clearly sets out yours and the associations responsibilities. Please also remember that you are responsible for the behaviour of people who live with you and visit you. This responsibility covers behaviour in your home and also in the local area. Please retain your tenancy agreement and this handbook in a safe place in case you need to refer to them in the future.

You are responsible for keeping to the terms of your tenancy in the following ways:

- Paying your rent on time (your rent account must always be in advance);
- Allowing us and our contractors access to carry out repairs, especially annual servicing of gas appliances;
- Reporting faults and repairs to us that are our responsibility to carry out;
- Not causing neighbour nuisance or harassment;
- Keeping your home in a clean condition, including internal decoration and minor repairs;
- Arranging contents insurance to cover your personal belongings;
- Only operating a business from your home if you have discussed it with us first and obtained our permission;
- Not using your home for illegal or immoral purposes;
- Obtaining permission in writing before making any alterations;
- Obtaining permission to keep a pet. Lincs Rural's policy is one dog and up to two cats. Dogs are not allowed to be kept in flats;
- Keep the outside of your flat clear of rubbish and litter.

## Your responsibilities to your neighbours

Everyone has the right to live in their home without annoyance or disturbance from neighbours. Music should always be kept at a reasonable level. If you wish to play music loudly, please use headphones. It also helps if you place radios, stereo speakers and televisions away from adjoining property. Carrying out car repairs at your home is not permitted



## Your behaviour

You are responsible not only for your behaviour while at home and on the street/road you live, but also for the behaviour of everyone that lives with or visits you. If you are a joint Resident, you are responsible for their actions.

## Nuisance or Anti-Social Behaviour

Problems caused by nuisance or disagreements with neighbours are often referred to as anti-social behaviour

You must make sure that you do not cause a nuisance to others and we also rely on you to report any antisocial behaviour to the office, the police or the Anti-Social Behaviour Unit at your Local Authority.

Disagreements with neighbours range from annoying incidents such as playing music too loudly, to serious incidents such as sexual and racial abuse and threats of violence.

Disagreements often arise from:

- Ball games in the street;
- Inconsiderate parking;
- Too much noise;
- Pets, particularly dogs causing a nuisance;
- Car repairs;
- Untidy gardens;
- Boundary fences; or
- Certain businesses being run from home.



## Solving your own problems

Whenever possible you should try to solve the problem yourself. Often, the best way of solving a problem is for neighbours to talk to each other and try to see each other's point of view. Gently explaining that the behaviour is upsetting the peace and lifestyle of neighbours can be enough. When you speak to your neighbour, tell them why their behaviour is causing a problem to you. Remember to stay calm and not get involved in an argument.

If your neighbour is unreasonable while you are talking, walk away. If things do not improve get advice from the Association. You may be asked to record any incidents, if you wish to take the action further, these will include, dates, times and the names and addresses of any other witnesses. You could speak to other neighbours who are directly affected by what is happening and ask them to keep similar notes.





## Noise

Try to remember that noise is unwanted sound which disturbs, irritates and causes stress. Too much noise from parties, stereos or household machines can upset neighbours, especially at night. The Association would ask all residents to minimise the risk of annoyance by being more considerate in their day-to-day activities.

Remember consideration and cooperation usually makes a pleasant environment to live in. If all things fail, please refer to our complaint procedure.

## Running a business from your home

You must get our written permission before you start to run any business from your home. We will only refuse permission if we believe that the business would cause a nuisance or annoyance to other persons in the neighbourhood, or would affect your home in a negative way.

## Ending your tenancy

If you wish to end your tenancy you will need to give 28 days' notice in writing to **Katie@lrha.co.uk**. If you have a joint tenancy, it is essential that both parties sign the termination letter. Your tenancy will expire at the end of your notice period. Rent and service charges will continue to apply until the tenancy is ended.

If you leave without providing notice, as stated above you remain responsible for the condition of the home and rent until the end date of your tenancy. If communication and a reasonable arrangement is not possible, legal action may be considered.

After you hand your notice in:

- We will inspect the property 24 hours after you have given us notice;
- We will visit you to inspect the property and let you know if you need to do any repairs, cleaning, decorating, disposal of rubbish, or any other work before you move out;
- We will agree if you can leave any items for the new Resident. You will have received the Association's Property Conditions and Lettable Standard in advance of this visit; and
- We will write to you to confirm what we told you at the inspection, you must then do the repairs, cleaning etc. before you move out;

Before moving out, arrangements should be made to do the following:

- Carry out any required decoration or repairs before you go;
- Remove all your belongings;
- Check with us to make sure that your rent balance is up to date
- Provide a forwarding address; and
- Tell us the names of the gas and electricity companies you use and contact them to give meter readings

We may charge you for cleaning, repairs, removal and storage of belongings and the changing of locks, if you do not meet your responsibilities.

## Death of resident

- Where the resident has died, the estate of the deceased is liable for any outstanding rent arrears;
- The Next of Kin or executor of the deceased's estate must provide us with a copy of the death certificate;
- We will send a letter with the amount outstanding up to the termination date. This should be passed on to the executor of the deceased's estate, if this is not the person who terminates the tenancy;
- Housing Benefit ends immediately if a resident die, and full rent is payable for the 4-week Notice period, so it is important that you hand the keys in as quickly as possible to avoid any arrears; and
- If there is no money in the estate to pay the debt, the executor should contact us.

## Resident gone into residential or nursing care

- Where the resident has gone into residential or nursing care, the resident is liable to pay any outstanding rent, including rent for the 4-week notice period;
- Housing benefit ends immediately when the stay in residential or nursing care is confirmed as permanent;
- The tenancy should not be terminated until the stay in residential or nursing care is confirmed as permanent; and
- If we are able to let the property before the end of the notice period, rent will only be charged up to the date the property is re-let



# Settling In To Your Home

At the sign-up meeting we will introduce you to your neighbours and the Resident Representative on your development. We will provide a short guide with useful local information about your home and the village.

Please be considerate to your neighbours while you are getting your home set up, by not causing a nuisance doing DIY late at night.

## Gardens and rubbish

Keep your garden tidy and free of rubbish.

Put your household rubbish and recycling in the bins provided, and ensure it is put out for collection on the right collection day. Put your rubbish and recycling bins back in their normal storage areas when they have been emptied.

Do not leave any rubbish or unwanted household items in any communal area, in your gardens or in the street.

If you want to put up a shed, greenhouse or other structure in your garden, then you must get our written permission first.

## Decorating your home

It is your responsibility to decorate the interior of your property and to keep it in good decorative order throughout your tenancy.

The Association recommends that you keep colour schemes to neutral colours and paintwork stained or white. When you vacate the property, you are required to paint the walls in neutral colours.

## Making your own alterations

You should not make any alterations, improvements or additions to your home (including the gardens), or put up any building or shed, unless you first get our permission in writing.



# What things do i need to get permission for?

You can put up pictures, mirrors and small items such as individual shelves without first seeking our permission. You need to get permission for anything that involves adding to or taking away from the structure of the property, or fixtures and fittings, both inside and outside. Examples include:

## Outside the property:

- Paths, patios, hardstanding areas, decking, ramps, steps
- Fencing or walls, gates
- Brick built barbecue areas
- Ponds, rockeries, raised beds, pergolas, gazebos or other decorative features
- Permanent hot tubs
- Timber, metal, plastic, brick or concrete sheds, garages, greenhouses, poly tunnels, summerhouses, gazebos or other permanent or semi-permanent structures
- Pet enclosures, kennels, aviaries, pigeon lofts, poultry housing
- TV aerials or satellite receivers, CB aerials

## Inside the property:

- Kitchen units, sinks, taps, extractor fans
- Bathroom suites: baths, toilets, basins, taps, shower enclosures, showers, hot tubs
- Electrical fittings such as switches, control panels, light fittings, ceiling fans, sockets
- Electrical wiring
- Heating appliances, boilers, radiators, pipework, programmers, controllers
- Underfloor heating, ceramic or terracotta floor tiling, laminate flooring
- Built-in wardrobes, cupboards and shelving, room dividers
- Alterations to walls, doors
- Disabled adaptations, chairlifts/stairlifts



# Adaptions and assistive equipment

Adaptations are specialist equipment, extra fittings or alterations that enable people with disabilities to overcome difficulties in their home and make the home more suitable for their needs

## Typical adaptations include:

- Grab rails
- Walk-in showers
- Stair lifts
- Widened doorways
- Ramped access
- Lever taps

We will work with the Occupational Therapy Service, the Disabled Facilities Grants sections of local councils, and other agencies as necessary, to help our residents to get access services. Joint visits with other agencies, will be completed if required.

If the work is quite small scale, such as a grab rail or lever taps, you may not need a grant, and we may be able to do the work fairly quickly, as long as we have enough money in our budget

## Who can apply?

All of our residents may request adaptations, as long as the resident or other permanent member of the household has a disability.

For major adaptations, we will support residents to apply for Disabled Facilities Grants. Residents are entitled to apply for grant aid, and we will not unreasonably withhold permission for the adaptation to be carried out.

You must get permission from us before you get a pet. You do not need permission if the animal is small, quiet and caged, and kept indoors, such as hamsters and gerbils, fish in tanks, non-poisonous insects and reptiles (in suitable containers) and single caged birds.

We will not give permission for a dog or two cats to be kept where we consider the facilities to be unsuitable e.g., no access to a suitable, secure outdoor space. We will not allow breeds of dog covered by the Dangerous Dogs Act 1993, or where we feel that the dog could pose a risk to neighbours.

Please contact us and tell us about the pet you wish to keep, or use the 'Permission to keep a pet' form given to you when you move in. Please let us know if you need help to fill in the form.

## Keep pets under control

If you are allowed one in your home. Remember to clean up after them and do not allow your pet to foul in communal areas.

If you have a dog, make sure it does not bark or whine for long periods of time, and do not leave it alone if you are away from home for a long time





# Being a good neighbour

We know that anti-social behaviour is a very important issue for you, and it is for us too. Such behaviour negatively affects lives and homes, it is the cause of much distress, which is why we have made a commitment to tackling it. The right to enjoy your home and the area you live in we believe that anti-social behaviour is unacceptable and we will not tolerate it. We will use all powers available to deal with the problem of anti-social behaviour firmly and effectively, but in a fair manner, ensuring that all our residents enjoy living in their homes.

## We are committed to:

Making sure that every Resident enjoys the right of security in their own home, regardless of age, race, religion, gender, disability or sexuality

- Creating an environment which makes our estates a more attractive place to live
- Making sure that every Resident's right to the peaceful enjoyment of their home is protected
- Creating an environment which makes our developments a more attractive place to live;
- Taking strong and effective action to tackle problems with anti-social behaviour, including legal action where necessary; and
- Responding professionally and sensitively to complaints.



## Noise

Being considerate about noise is especially important for people who live in flats, who may have children and visitors

Take responsibility for your children. Being a good neighbour applies to your children, too. They should be aware that respect should be shown to your neighbours and their property, especially in flats where areas are shared

Ensure that no deliberate damage occurs to your home by you, other persons living with you, or by visitors to your home

Be responsible for the behaviour of your visitors.

Be aware of the problems caused by loud noise: keep the volume of televisions, games consoles, radios and stereos as low as possible, especially late at night and early in the morning. Use washing machines, vacuum cleaners and other noisy equipment during the day and not at unsocial hours.

Try to avoid putting fridges, freezers and stereo speakers against walls that divide you and your neighbour. Carry out DIY work to your home during reasonable hours

Being considerate about noise is especially important for people who live in flats.

## Vehicles and Parking

Any car or light vehicle parked on your property must be taxed and have a valid MOT certificate.

Untaxed vehicles on a public right of way will be towed away by the Local Authority.

Please be considerate to your neighbours if you have guests visiting and make sure they do not block roadways or driveways. Do not park on grass verges, gardens, or pavements.

Larger vans, caravans, boats, trailers etc. Must not be parked or stored on Association property without prior permission.

## Insurance

Our insurance covers the building and fixtures of your home but NOT your personal items. We can provide information on contents insurance we are not responsible for damage to the contents of your home unless we were negligent.

It is most important that you arrange insurance to cover your belongings and house contents against any losses due to fire, theft, flood or damage. The cost of such a policy is low considering the cost of replacing all your possessions.

In addition, the insurance should include third party cover in case someone makes a claim against you, for example, if you left a tap running and flooded your neighbours' home.



# Rent and other charges

## When to pay your rent

Your rent is due every Monday for the week ahead. You can pay your rent every week, every fortnight, every four weeks or every calendar month for the week, fortnight, four weeks or calendar month ahead. It is important that you pay your rent-on time.

## There are several different ways you can pay your rent...

### Allpay

You can now make payments online at **[www.allpayments.net](http://www.allpayments.net)** and if you have a smart phone by downloading the Allpay app. You will be issued with the details to enable you to use this service.

### Paying by direct debit

Paying by direct debit means your rent is paid straight out of your bank or building-society account. Most banks or building societies will do this free of charge as long as there is enough money in your account to cover the payment. We will also send you a letter in March each year. The letter will tell you how much your new payments will be and the date we will ask for them from your bank or building society.

### Standing order

If you wish to pay your rent by standing order, please contact the Association and we send you a form.

### Paying by internet banking

The Association bank details will be provided with the tenancy agreement and can also be found on our website under paying your rent.

**[Irha.co.uk/Residents/paying-your-rent/](http://Irha.co.uk/Residents/paying-your-rent/)**



## Housing benefit and council tax reduction

Housing benefit and Universal Credit helps those on low incomes, or no income, to pay their rent, how much you receive depends on your income and savings. Council tax benefit helps those on low incomes to pay their council tax.

If you think that you are entitled to housing or council tax cost assistance, make sure you claim as soon as possible as claims can only be backdated in exceptional circumstances. If you are a new resident, you must make your claim from the start of your tenancy.

Payments will only be made from the Monday following the date of the claim.

When you claim, make sure you have the details of your rent, proof of income and details of any benefits you receive.

To apply for housing or council tax assistance contact your local authority.

## Universal Credit

If you are not already claiming housing benefit and will need help to pay your rent, or if your circumstances change, you may need to claim Universal Credit. This is handled by the Department for Work and Pensions, not your local council. New claims are made online, see [www.gov.uk/universal-credit](http://www.gov.uk/universal-credit) for guidance.

## Difficulty paying your rent? - DON'T PUT IT OFF!

If you are having difficulty paying your rent or think that you may get in to difficulty, please give Marji (Income Manager) or Katie (Tenancy Manager), a call on 01790 754219.

We understand the problems of getting by on a limited budget and there may be times when you can't pay all of your bills. We want to help you sort it out and would ask that you contact us as soon as possible when problems begin. We will be able to give you help and refer you to a debt advice service if required.

We know there are many reasons financial problems can start. We encourage you to talk to us as we provide a personal service - we can visit you, speak by phone and help make sure you get the advice you need to help get back on top of your rent account.

If you do fall into arrears, we will let you know, however do contact us as soon as possible it's a problem. You should pay them as quickly as you can; if you cannot pay the balance in full straightaway, you should contact us to make an agreement to repay the money you owe.







## If you don't pay your rent

We will contact you to discuss your arrears and aim to make an agreement for you to pay back the money you owe. If you still do not pay off your rent arrears or keep to your agreed repayment plan to reduce them, we will serve a Notice of Seeking Possession. This tells you that we intend to start legal action to recover money outstanding through the County Court.

You could receive a County Court judgement. This can seriously harm your future chances of getting credit. At the court hearing the judge will be asked to make an Order for the Possession of your home. The Court may agree not to enforce the order as long as you keep to an agreement to pay the rent and arrears. You will be liable to pay court costs. If you do not comply with the Court Order, we will ask the County Court to issue an eviction warrant, which may mean you losing your home. You will be given notice of eviction. At this point, to stop the eviction from going ahead you must pay your arrears and court costs in full.

We will add legal costs on to your rent account with us.

## If a joint resident left

As joint residents, you are both responsible for the home and paying rent. If one of you leaves the property, the remaining resident must still pay and the absent resident remains jointly responsible for any arrears even after they leave. It is important that you tell us of any changes that affect your tenancy.

## Service charges

If you need to pay service charges, they will be included in your weekly rent amount. We will make sure you see a breakdown of all the charges and what they are for. Not all developments have a service charge. For more information, or to see if you pay a service charge check your tenancy agreement. Service charges help us pay for looking after these areas and getting them repaired.

## How we work out the cost-of-service charges

Charges are calculated based on costs likely to occur during the year and are set every April. We consider what the actual cost was in previous years, what the rate of inflation is and any other factors that are likely to affect the costs.

## Council tax

You are responsible for paying council tax on your home. This tax is for providing local services, such as rubbish collection, leisure facilities, roads, social services and education. If you are on a low income, you may be eligible to receive council tax benefit to help you pay this. You can apply for this at the same time you apply for housing benefit. If you receive Universal Credit, you can still apply to your council for help.



## Gas and electricity

You are responsible for paying the gas and electricity charges for your home. You can choose who supplies your gas and electricity, and you could save money by shopping around. You can get free advice about switching suppliers from Consumer Direct, the government funded consumer advice service.

## Television licence

If you have a TV set, or you watch live TV on a laptop, a computer or any other device, you must buy a TV licence. To buy a TV licence for your home go to [www.tvlicensing.co.uk](http://www.tvlicensing.co.uk). Anybody over 75 years of age is also entitled to a free TV licence, but you do still need to apply to TV Licensing for this. You will need your National Insurance number. Free licences last for 3 years at a time. From June 2020, you are only able to get a free TV licence if you also receive pension credit.



## Rent arrears

We will:

- Tell you if you have rent arrears at an early stage;
- Send letters about rent arrears that encourage personal contact;
- Provide a personal service on rent arrears, which will include visiting you to speak face to face;
- Encourage you to make agreements with us to reduce any rent arrears;
- We will be clear about what action we will take next if agreements are not kept to;
- Follow the pre-court action protocol before a rent arrears court hearing takes place;
- Carry out evictions for rent arrears if necessary, but only as a last resort, and after having tried all other reasonable steps;
- Pursue rent arrears and other debts owed by former residents

For confidential finance advice and assistance, you can contact any of the following;  
**National Debtline 0808 808 4000** or **[www.nationaldebtline.org](http://www.nationaldebtline.org)**.

# Mutual Exchanges and Transfers

All residents have the right to exchange their home with:

- Another of our residents;
- A resident of another housing association; and
- A resident of a local authority.

In order for the mutual exchange to go ahead, both residents have to obtain written permission from their own landlord. The person with whom you wish to exchange must have a local connection to the village in question. Permission will not be unreasonably withheld, but approval could be refused for a number of reasons.

You may register for a transfer in the following circumstances:

- Your home is too small or too big;
- You have medical circumstances which means your current home is no longer suitable for your needs;
- There is a social circumstance which means that your home is no longer suitable for your needs.

## Who can apply for an exchange?

Both secure and assured residents have the right to exchange homes. If you have a starter tenancy you will not have the right to exchange (a starter tenancy normally lasts 12 months).

## Will my rights as a resident be affected?

There is a good chance your rights will be affected if you exchange your property. When you exchange, you take over the rights and terms of tenancy of the person you exchange with.

These may be different from the rights you have now, so it is important that you check with us, and the landlord of the resident you want to exchange with, before making a decision. For example, a resident of a different landlord may have a fixed term tenancy which is not guaranteed to be renewed when it ends. Your position will depend on whether you had your tenancy before April 2012.



## What should I look at when I view a property?

When you have found a possible swap, you should arrange to view the property on more than one occasion, and in daylight. Don't be afraid to ask lots of questions, and take notes to help you remember. Continue to ask questions if you are not satisfied with the answers you get.

Your landlord will not carry out any internal decoration to the property when you move in. You will be asked to accept (and be responsible for) the property in the condition your mutual exchange partner leaves it.

You should find out whether the other resident intends taking with them fittings they have put in themselves, such as kitchen units, fireplaces or light fittings. If they do, you should check what the other resident intends to put in their place, as the landlord will not replace these items, nor will they do any redecoration needed following their removal.

The landlord will not put right any damage caused by the resident or change any non-standard alterations that may have been done. This would become your responsibility and you would have to pay to put things right.

If you are a Lincs Rural resident, you can use the HomeSwapper website for free. You need to register to use the site, and tell HomeSwapper who your landlord is. They send us an email to ask us to confirm that you are a resident, and then you can start to use the site.

Go to [HomeSwapper.co.uk](https://www.HomeSwapper.co.uk) to register and start using the site.



# Repairs and Maintenance

## How to report a repair:

- Speak to a member of staff visiting a development;
- Email – [repairs@lrha.co.uk](mailto:repairs@lrha.co.uk); or
- Call 01790 754219 between the hours of 8.30am- 5pm, outside office hours a mobile telephone number will be available on the recorded message for emergency repairs only.
- You can now report a repair online too at any time of day.

In order that your repair can be processed efficiently, you should try and describe the repair in as much detail as possible and state when you will be at home, to allow the workmen access.

## Who is responsible for what?

Lincs Rural is responsible for most of the repairs in your home apart from those listed below:

- Damage caused by household members or visitors
- Garages (erected by residents)
- Appliances – cookers, fridges etc.
- Television aerials or satellite equipment
- Garden sheds (unless provided by Lincs Rural)
- Fences (erected by residents)
- Floor coverings (Bathroom and Kitchen non-slip flooring provided by Lincs Rural)
- Toilet seats
- Blocked toilets and sinks.



# Repairs Priorities

LRHA are prioritising repairs and maintenance in residents' homes based on seriousness and allocate different timescales to making things right.

When determining response times, we will take into account the specific circumstances of the household, for example whether there are young children, elderly people or occupants with a disability. Only emergency works will be carried out outside normal working hours. Some emergency repairs may have to be temporarily resolved or made safe until the following day.

## Emergency

To be responded to within 24 hours

Any disrepair that causes an immediate threat to the safety, security or health and safety of occupants or members of the public.

Examples include:

- Major water leaks and flooding
- Total loss of electrical supply / major fault
- Total loss of water supply
- Security risk to the property
- Major loss of heating and/or loss of hot water in a cold spell
- Damage caused by racial or other forms of harassment
- Threatened or actual collapse of any part of the structure

## Urgent

To be responded to within 7 working days (unless estimates or tenders are required)

Any disrepair that is causing serious inconvenience to the occupants or likely to cause further problems to the property.

Examples include:

- Failed showers (if the only means of washing)
- Loss of hot water in summer months
- Minor plumbing (e.g. a leak that can be contained)
- Minor electrical supply faults

## Routine

To be responded to within 56 working days

Any disrepair that is not urgent or an emergency.

Examples include:

- Tap repairs
- Light fitting repairs
- Repairs to doors and windows
- Minor fencing repairs
- Flooring repairs (including vinyl covering)
- Replacing or repairing hinges
- Replacing extractor fans
- Repairs to broken kitchen components
- Repairs to broken bathroom components
- Broken tiling
- External and internal wall repairs
- Garage door repairs
- Minor repairs to gutters
- Minor leaking roofs



# Gas safety

We are required by law to carry out an annual safety check and service of all gas heating installations in our properties. You will be contacted by the approved contractor advising you when this will take place.

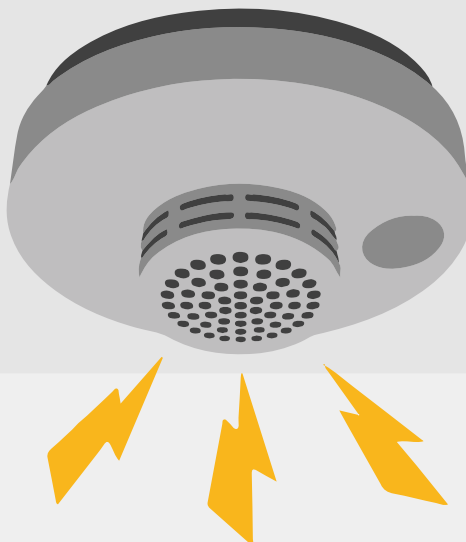
Please note that you are required by your tenancy agreement to provide access for such safety checks. Should you fail to do so we will gain access to your home and any costs which we incur will be recharge you, the resident.



If you smell gas or fumes you should:

- Turn off the appliance;
- Turn off the gas supply at the meter;
- Do not switch any electrical appliances on;
- Put out cigarettes;
- Do not use matches or naked flames;
- Open doors and windows to allow the gas to disperse and keep them open until the leak has stopped;
- Does not use a mobile phone anywhere near the leak;
- Check to see if a gas tap has been accidentally left on or if a pilot light has gone out;
- Do not switch on lights;
- Call the National Gas Emergency Service immediately from a phone outside the property and report the leak; and .
- Never attempt to fit, repair or service your gas fire, central heating or cooker yourself. Gas can be extremely dangerous, and any work connected with it should only be carried out by suitably qualified individuals who carry the appropriate registrations.

**For Gas Leaks only please telephone Transco on 0800 111 999**  
(this service is 24hours)



## Electrical safety

Remember that most accidents involving electricity can be avoided, if you follow some simple advice such as:

- If your sockets are faulty, sparking or are overheating please contact us;
- Never tamper with electricity;
- Never overload electrical power points;
- Use electrical socket adaptors as little as possible and use adaptors only for low loaded items such as table lamps, radios, alarm clocks etc;
- Never take electrical appliances into the bathroom;
- Always unplug appliances when they are not in use; and
- Never use damaged flexes or run them under carpets or rugs.

We will carry out electrical safety checks (EICR) in all our homes on a 5 yearly cycle to ensure the sockets and cabling are in good condition and the property is safe.

## Smoke alarm maintenance

- Do not paint or paper over the detectors or reposition them.
- Do test the detector once a week, by holding the test button in for ten seconds and then the smoke alarm should sound;
- Do clean the detector monthly with a vacuum to remove dust and improve efficiency; and
- Our staff will check all smoke detectors during each visit to your home.

## Burst or leaking pipe

If the leak is serious, turn the water off at the main stop tap (this is usually under the kitchen sink or in a cupboard in the kitchen).



## Garden Safety

- Protect yourself from electrocution by always using a Residual Current Device (RCD) when operating electrically powered garden tools and mowers.
- Avoid poisoning and chemical burns by storing chemicals for use in garage or garden safely out of sight and out of reach of children, preferably in a secure cabinet.
- Reduce the risk of small children drowning by securely fencing or filling-in garden ponds or water features and always supervising children near water.
- Avoid accidents and injury when doing DIY tasks by always operating within the range of your skills, ability and experience. Always use personal protective equipment including gloves, goggles, helmet, and facemask and safety shoes as appropriate and recommended for the task and follow manufacturer's instructions.
- Avoid injury from falls by always checking a ladders condition before use and using at a safe angle (1 in 4).
- Avoid injury from sharp garden tools to users or children by keeping them in good repair and safely tidied away after use. Keep children safely away whenever using lawnmowers, doing DIY projects or household repairs.
- Prevent accidental poisoning or injuries to yourself or others by carefully following manufacturers' instructions when using weed killers, adhesives and solvents. Never transfer to alternative containers that could confuse and lead to poisonings.
- Prevent injury from trips, slips and falls, by providing safety rails and barriers to changes in garden levels and ensure all paths and steps are level, stable and free from moss.
- Avoid uncontrollable fires by always siting bonfires and barbecues well away from fences, sheds and trees. Supervise children all the time.

# Complaints

The Association value complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve. The procedure is a two-stage process, enabling complaints to be considered in a timely manner, with the objective of achieving a fair and transparent outcome. Your first action if you are unhappy with any aspect of our services, you can make contact with our Tenancy Manager, who will help you.

## The Definition of a complaint

A complaint is defined as

*'an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by Lincs Rural, its own Staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual Resident, or group of Residents', or other parties.'*

You can contact us in a range of ways:

- In person by calling at our office;
- By telephone;
- By letter;
- By email;
- By Facebook; or
- At [www.lrha.co.uk](http://www.lrha.co.uk)

We will endeavour to resolve the complaint straightaway and provide you with actions you are satisfied with. If that's not possible then the complaint will be registered and the process started.

## Comments and Compliments

We always welcome suggestions and comments on how we can improve our services. We also want to hear from you, if you are happy with the service, you have received so we know what we are doing well.



# Complaints Procedure Flow Chart

The Resident Engagement Manager (or Head of Operations, if not available) is responsible for complaint handling. The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for the complaints process, and will monitor and authorise progress and action at each stage to resolution and review of each complaint.

## STAGE 1

A complaint is logged on the date received (receipt date), and acknowledged in writing within 3 working days, confirming the understanding of the complaint, outcomes being sought, or clarification if issues are unclear.



Stage 1 decision within 10 working days from the complaint receipt date. Should this not be possible, a written explanation, and a date is sent by when the stage one response should be received. This should not exceed a further 10 working days without good reason.



**Complainant satisfied.  
Complaint closed.**



**Complainant not satisfied.**



## STAGE 2

Stage 2 response within 20 working days from request to escalate. Should this not be possible, a written explanation, and a date is sent by when the stage 2 response will be received. This should not exceed a further 10 working days without good reason.



**Complainant satisfied.  
Complaint closed.**



**Complainant not satisfied. Complaint can be referred to the Housing Ombudsman Service.**



# Property Conditions

We will send you a copy of the Association's 'Property Condition and Lettable Standard' when you give notice to quit your home, but the key points about the condition you should leave the property in are highlighted below;

## Decoration

- Woodwork (painted or stained) should be clean and unmarked;
- Painted walls should be clean, smooth and without holes, dents, significant marks, picture nails and hooks. Paint should be the same colour all over. If we consider the colour scheme to be too dark and/or colorful, we will ask you to redecorate in lighter, neutral colours;
- Ceilings should be painted white, clean, with no holes or marks; and
- Wallpaper should be clean, properly fitted, and free from rips, scratches, smoke staining and faded areas.

## Fitted wardrobes, shelves, cupboards etc.

Where these are in good condition, and we agree, they can be left behind for the new Resident. If we ask you to remove them, you must repair any damage to walls, floors and ceilings and decorate, as necessary.

## Doors

- External doors should be in good condition and work properly. A full set of keys must be returned to us.
- Internal doors should be in good condition, doors must be replaced if they have been removed.





# Cleaning

The property should be clean and tidy, with no rubbish left inside and out.

## *Kitchens*

Kitchen units should be clean and not damaged. Work tops should be in good condition with no significant chips, cuts, burn marks or staining.

Your cooker and other appliances must be removed.

## *Bathrooms*

Baths and basins must be in good, clean condition.

Toilets should be clean and free from limescale.

## *Floors*

If we agree that you can leave carpets or other flooring behind, it must be in very good condition.

If carpets are taken up, grippers should be removed.

Kitchen and bathroom flooring is provided by the Association and should be clean and in good condition.

## *Gardens*

The gardens should be tidy, with grass cut short, and hedges and trees trimmed. Gardens should be free from rubbish, rubble and animal faeces. Ponds must be filled in and greenhouses and other structures removed. Sheds may be left if in good condition.

## *Pets and Vermin*

Any problems with pests in your home are the responsibility of the resident including:

- Wasps;
- Bees;
- Fleas;
- Mice;
- Rats; or
- Ants.

If you are unable to find a local pest control contractor, the Association can provide the contact details of our approved contractor but you remain responsible for meeting the cost upon completion of any agreed actions.



# Getting Involved

The Association promotes and supports resident involvement. We work closely with residents to continue to develop and improve the service you receive from us.

## Resident Groups

The Association encourages residents to work together in their community, including forming constituted Residents Associations or less formal groups, if they wish. We will facilitate and support the formation and development of any such groups.

If you want to get involved, please contact the Association.



## Resident Representatives

If you are a resident who is passionate about improving your neighbourhood, you can become a Resident Representative for your development.

You will have a chance to work with us and have a say on how Lincs Rural's services can be improved. We will provide you with the information, training, and support in carrying out your volunteering role.

The role involves being part of the Lincs Rural community by;

- Making sure that all vulnerable and elderly residents are safe and sound during the cold weather periods;
- Liaising with new residents to ensure that they are made to feel welcome and be a point of contact if any problems arise;
- Reviewing and giving feedback on communications produced by the Association, such as Resident Matters, the Calendar and the Website; and
- Working with Residents and colleagues to promote, coordinate and develop Resident participation.

## How we will keep you informed

We provide regular information about the services we provide, our performance, events, and updates on our activities and details on how you can participate.

You can access our information through our:

- Newsletters
- Annual Reports
- Information Leaflets
- Website
- Social Media pages (Facebook & Twitter)

We always want to hear your ideas and welcome any new Lincs Rural residents



## The Rural Gold Star Scheme

The Rural Gold Star Scheme is the Association's way of saying thank you to our residents who pay their rent on time and follow the terms of their tenancy agreement.

To become a member of the service you will need to apply, and provided you satisfy the following criteria you will be accepted:

- A clear rent account; or
- 12 weeks of regular rent payments plus agreed repayments to arrears;
- No breaches of the tenancy agreement including anti-social behaviour and a clean and tidy garden and home; and
- Held your tenancy for a minimum three months.

Member benefits include entry into prize draws, these benefits will be reviewed regularly and the Association welcomes any new ideas from its residents.

# Useful Information

## Websites

Citizens Advice Consumer Service: 08082231133

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/energy/energy-supply/>

Step Change: 0800 138 1111

<https://www.stepchange.org/>

Winter Fuel Payments Helpline Number

<https://www.gov.uk/winter-fuel-payment>

Ofgem: Energy Regulator (Complaints) 020 7901 7295

<https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/>

Why you shouldn't leave devices on standby mode

<https://www.money.co.uk/energy/guides/why-you-should-not-leave-devices-on-standby-mode>

## Telephone Numbers

Boston Borough Council	01205 314200
East Lindsey District Council	01507 601111
East Lindsey DC Benefits Section	01507 609333
Kings Lynn & West Norfolk	01553 616200
Borough Council	01553 616200
North Kesteven District Council	01529 414155
North Lincolnshire Council	01724 296294
Rutland County Council	01572 722577
South Holland District Council	01775 761161
South Kesteven District Council	01476 406080
West Lindsey District Council	01427 615411



## Advice and Helplines

Age UK	020 7239 1942 or 0207837 4570
Childline	0800 1111
Citizens Advice Bureau	08444 111 444
National Debt Line	0808 808 4000
Parentline	0808 800 2222
Refuge Domestic Violence Helpline	0808 200 0247
RSPCA	0870 333 5999
Samaritans	08457 90 90 90
Shelter	0808 800 4444

## Social Services

Kings Lynn & West Norfolk	01553 669300
Lincolnshire (adults)	01522 782333
Lincolnshire (children)	01522 782111
North Lincolnshire (adults)	01724 297979
North Lincolnshire (children)	01724 296500
Rutland (adults)	01527 722577
Rutland (children)	01572 758407



# Links

## **Women's Aid National Domestic Abuse Helpline**

Tel: 0808 2000 247 (freephone)

## **Lincolnshire County Council – Domestic Abuse**

Website: <http://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/parents/family-support/safety/domestic-abuse/>

Tel: 0808 200 0247

**Counselling Directory** – connecting you with professional support Counselling Directory provides a huge support network of counsellors, enabling visitors to find a counsellor close to them and appropriate for their needs.

Website: [www.counselling-directory.org.uk](http://www.counselling-directory.org.uk)

## **Men's advice and Enquiry line**

Helpline: 0808 801 0327

Website: [www.mensadviceline.org.uk](http://www.mensadviceline.org.uk)

## **Broken Rainbow**

Telephone helpline for lesbians, gay men and bisexual or transgendered people experiencing domestic violence. It's staffed by workers from these communities.

Helpline: 0845 260 4460

Website: [www.broken-rainbow.org.uk](http://www.broken-rainbow.org.uk)

## **West Lindsey District Council**

Information on Domestic Abuse on the West Lindsey District Council website. Website: [www.west-lindsey.gov.uk/residents/living-in-your-area/health-and-nhs/domestic-violence/](http://www.west-lindsey.gov.uk/residents/living-in-your-area/health-and-nhs/domestic-violence/)

## **Domestic Abuse in Lincolnshire**

Website: [www.domesticabuselincolnshire.com/](http://www.domesticabuselincolnshire.com/)

## **Refuge**

Offers emergency accommodation and support for women and children experiencing domestic violence.

Helpline: 0808 200 0247

Website: [www.refuge.org.uk](http://www.refuge.org.uk)

## **Samaritans**

24-hour confidential emotional support for anyone in a crisis.

Helpline: 08457 909 090shire

Website: [www.samaritans.org.uk](http://www.samaritans.org.uk)

## **ChildLine**

Free, 24-hour helpline for children and young people who need to talk about any problem they may have.

Helpline: 0800 1111

Website: [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

**Barnardo's**

Barnardo's helps children, young people and their families to overcome the most severe disadvantages such as abuse, homelessness and poverty.

Website: [www.barnardos.org.uk](http://www.barnardos.org.uk)

**The Hideout**

Website for children and young people to inform them about domestic violence, to help them identify whether it's happening in their home, and to provide indirect and informal support.

Website: [www.thehideout.org.uk](http://www.thehideout.org.uk)

**National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC)**

Specialises in child protection and the prevention of cruelty to children. Helpline: 0808 800 5000. Textphone: 0800 056 0566

Website: [www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)

**Parentline Plus**

Information and support to anyone parenting a child. Parentline Plus runs a freephone helpline and courses for parents.

Helpline: 0808 800 2222. Textphone: 0800 783 6783

Website: [www.parentlineplus.org.uk](http://www.parentlineplus.org.uk)

**Victim Support**

Offers free and confidential service, irrespective of whether or not a crime has been reported.

Support line: 0845 303 0900

Website: [www.victimsupport.org](http://www.victimsupport.org)

**Karma Nirvana**

Supporting victims of honour-based abuse and forced marriage.

Helpline: 0800 5999 247

Mon-Fri 9am-5pm

**Respect**

A phonenumber for domestic violence perpetrators. Also welcomes calls from those concerned about a perpetrator.

Helpline: 0845 122 8609

Website: [www.respect.uk.net](http://www.respect.uk.net)



