



Tenants Handbook

January 1  
2024

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Castle Housing Limited is a for-profit organisation and is a Registered Provider of Social Housing. It is registered with Homes England registration number 4709. Castle Housing Limited is committed to providing the highest quality supported housing solutions on a local basis, offering housing, housing related support and advice to its tenants to enable them to live as independently as possible

Bespoke Housing  
Solutions

# About Castle Housing Limited.

## 1

### Our commitment.

We are committed to creating and developing a positive approach to customer service, where the views and opinions of customers and colleagues are placed at the centre of everything we do.

Our vision and values are core to the delivery of these services - these are:

1. To provide quality services, promoting independence and the rights of all people with disabilities to have a safe and welcoming home, with support as and when they need it.
2. To work productively within a multi-agency team to meet the accommodation needs of people who have a learning disability or other requirement for support.
3. To treat every tenant with respect and equality - we believe in equal opportunities for all regardless of race, cultural heritage, sexual orientation, or disability.
4. To always support and promote tenant involvement.
5. To provide choice - we believe that people with disabilities should have a genuine choice about where and how they live.
6. To operate all parts of our business in an environmentally friendly way.
7. To manage our finances, debts, and resources prudently.
8. To grow and adapt our service to meet the needs of a larger number of people that require accommodation, care, and support.

## 2

### Welcome to your new home

We are delighted that you have chosen to live at one of Castle Housing Limited's supported housing services and would like to welcome you into your new home.

This tenants' handbook has been designed to provide you with some advice about your home and tenancy agreement, along with information on how to contact us and what we can do to help. We can provide an easy-read version if one is required. We hope that you find it useful.

Everybody at Castle Housing is aiming to provide you with a quality service to ensure that you are comfortable and happy in your new home. We welcome your contributions and feedback

to help influence how we provide our services, so if there is anything we can do to help you, please get in touch.

**This handbook will help you to understand:**

- How to report maintenance requests to Castle Housing Limited.
- Timeframes in which Castle Housing Limited will respond to maintenance requests.
- What to do if you wish to make improvements and adaptations to your home.
- How to look after your home and deal with problems that may arise.
- How to pay your rent and service charges.
  - Tenant Obligations in more detail.

### 3

#### Reporting Repairs

All maintenance requests should be reported Castle Housing limited. Please call us on 01524 824081 during office hours to report a repair or by using the link [tenantservices@castlehousing.co.uk](mailto:tenantservices@castlehousing.co.uk) If you are unable to call, repairs can be reported via email to: maria@myplaceltd.co.uk. For emergencies, please call 07850720460.

When reporting repairs, it is important to provide as much detail as possible to help describe the problem. Photographs are a useful aid in providing information, so please email images whenever possible.

#### Repair Priorities

Once repair requests have been received, Castle Housing Limited will categorise repairs into three groups depending upon the urgency of the situation. If you feel your request has been allocated an incorrect response time, please explain to our staff why you believe this to be the case.

Category 3 - ROUTINE - Attendance arranged within 28 Days.

For less urgent repairs where there is little or no inconvenience to tenants or their care staff. Usually where single items are defective but there is no loss of use of the home or its services.

Category 2 - URGENT - Attendance arranged within 5 Days.

For situations where there is no danger posed, but the ability to use the facilities or the home has been affected as a result.

Category 1 - EMERGENCY - Attendance arranged within 24 Hours.

This is considered as any occurrence where there is actual danger to the occupants of the building, staff or visitors, or there is potential for further damage to the property.

Wherever possible, support staff will be expected to assist tenants in troubleshooting any matters that may otherwise result in a maintenance call-out.

## 4

### Getting Comfortable

There are many things to consider now you have moved into your new home. Here are a few important points to help you adjust and settle in.

#### Smoking

Smoking cigarettes and e-cigarettes will not be permitted inside any of our buildings. Smoking can pose a serious risk of fire, can cause damage to property, and will invariably leave a building requiring redecoration. Any expenses incurred as a result of repairing damage caused by your smoking, i.e., staining, odour, burn marks etc. will be recharged to you as a result.

## 5

### Pets

We will always try to allow pets where possible. Some buildings may be more suitable for the keeping of animals than others and we must consider whether pets will have a negative effect on other residents and neighbours.

Please seek written consent \* before getting any pets to ensure your home is suitable for animals.

## 6

### Adaptations

If you wish to carry out alterations or improvements to your property, you must make a formal, **written request** to Castle Housing Limited\*. Major adaptations will be subject to the recommendation of an occupational therapist. Once Castle Housing Limited have received your request we will decide and write back to you to inform you of whether or not you will be able to carry out the work.

## 7

### Decorating

Should you wish to redecorate your home, you must seek permission with a written **request** before you make any changes.

\* Castle Housing Limited's postal address can be found on the rear of this booklet.

## **8**

### Keys

You are responsible for replacing any keys or fobs that you lose. If your keys or fobs are stolen, we recommend that you contact your contents insurance provider to make a claim on your policy for the costs incurred. You must first report the theft to the police and then provide your insurers with the crime reference number that the police will give to you. If you use the Castle Housing Limited's Emergency Maintenance Service to have your locks changed as a result of loss/theft of keys, you will be responsible for covering these costs.

## **9**

### Utilities

We can support you to notify gas, water, and electricity companies when you are moving in and can arrange for supplies to be connected. If you wish to have a landline in your property it will be your responsibility to arrange its connection and pay bills. Some properties will include utilities in the rent and we can support you to set up payments to cover these bills.

## **10**

### Furniture

Castle Housing Limited will usually provide your accommodation unfurnished although your support provider or social worker may have provided you with furniture. It is your responsibility to look after any furniture that has been provided.

## **11**

### TV Ariel and TV License

If you wish to watch TV it will be your responsibility to purchase and maintain a TV ariel and apply for a TV licence for your new home. We can assist you to apply for an Ariel and TV licence and/or you can register online at [www.tvlicensing.co.uk](http://www.tvlicensing.co.uk).

## **12**

### Communal Areas

Please make every effort to keep communal or shared areas clean and tidy so other residents can enjoy their home too. Clean up after yourself and leave the area presentable and ready for other tenants to use. Please do not use communal areas for the storage of personal belongings.

## **13**

### Looking after your Home

## Electricity

The fuse box (also called the consumer unit) contains the main on/off switch for the electricity in your home. The fuse box can usually be found next to the electricity meter, under your stairs or by your front door or in a box on the lower part the wall in your living room. In the event of an electrical fault, it has a circuit breaker that will automatically switch off the electricity by tripping a switch, breaking the circuit.

You will also find a row of smaller switches called mini circuit breakers. These control the electricity to the lighting and socket circuits in particular rooms or parts of your home. They will trip out if there is an overload on a particular circuit (e.g., if a light bulb blows).

### If you lose electricity

Loss of electricity could be because of a power cut or, if you have a top up electric key meter, a lack of credit. Check to see if neighbours' homes have also been affected by a potential power cut. If neighbours still have power, you may have to check whether a fuse has tripped in your fuse box.

- Open the cover on the fuse box
- Check which fuses have tripped to the 'off' position and turn them on.
- Be aware that a faulty electrical device may still be connected and may continue to trip the circuit until the device has been turned off or unplugged. If after following the above steps you still have a problem, please call our maintenance helpdesk on 0850 720460.

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### Safety around Electricity

There are a number of ways to increase your safety while using electricity in your home.

- Unplug electrical appliances when they are not in use.
- Keep appliances clean and in good working order.
- Keep water away from appliances, plugs and sockets – Don't touch sockets with wet hands
- Never put anything into plug sockets except plugs.
- Do not overload multi socket adaptors
- Do not cover electrical outlets
- Report any damaged sockets, light fittings, and other electrical outlets immediately.

## 15

### Energy Efficiency

Being energy efficient means that you are not only helping to save the planet but also helping to save your own money. To use less electricity in your home, please consider the following:

- Unplug electrical appliances when they are not in use.

- Wash clothes at a lower temperature.
- Empty your vacuum cleaner regularly.
- Turn lights off when leaving a room.
- Use energy efficient light bulbs.
- Dust the rear of your fridge regularly and keep its door closed.
- Turn the heating off if you have your windows open.

## 16

### Gas

Gas appliances can present danger in the home either when highly flammable gas is escaping, or through the emission of carbon monoxide. If you smell gas in or around your home:

- Turn off your gas supply at the meter if you can.
- Open any windows and doors to allow the gas to disperse.
- Do not light matches, lighters, or cigarettes.
- Do not turn on lights or sockets.
- Call the Gas Emergency Helpline on 0800 111 999

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### Gas Safety

In line with our legal obligations Castle Housing Limited need to have a gas safety inspection performed at your home every twelve months. Castle Housing Limited will instruct a gas safe registered engineer to visit your home to inspect the following:

- Gas appliances owned by CASTLE HOUSING LIMITED.
- Gas appliances owned by the tenant.
- Gas pipes that run from the meter into your home.

**You must allow the gas safe engineer to access your property when required. Failure to comply will constitute a breach of tenancy.**

## 18

### Carbon Monoxide

Carbon Monoxide is a poisonous gas that you cannot see, smell or taste. It can be caused by faulty central heating systems, gas appliances and fires, as well as blocked flues and chimneys. If it goes undetected it can kill without warning in a matter of hours.

Your home should have a carbon monoxide detector installed in any room with a gas appliance, including cookers, gas fires and boilers. **If you do not have one, please contact us immediately to arrange for one to be supplied.**

#### Dealing with Carbon Monoxide

If your carbon monoxide alarm sounds and you suspect a leak:

- Stop using all appliances. Turn them off and open doors and windows to ventilate the property. Do not turn on lights or sockets.
- Evacuate the property immediately. Stay calm.
- Call the gas emergency number on 0800 111 999 to report the incident.
- Do not re-enter the building. Wait for advice from the emergency services.
- Seek immediate medical help – you may not realise that you have been affected by carbon monoxide and going outside will not treat any exposure by itself.
- Finally, please notify Castle Housing Limited of the incident on 07850 720 460.

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### Water

A stopcock is a valve that stops the water supply coming into your home. It is important that you familiarise yourself with where your stopcock is located before an emergency arises. The stopcock is usually located under the kitchen sink. It may also be located at a point close to where the water main enters your home, such as underneath a metal cover on your garden path or in a cupboard close to the front door of your home.

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### Preventing Blockages

Blockages will usually occur when foreign objects have entered the pipework. To avoid potential blockages, please avoid putting anything down your toilet except for toilet paper. Other waste such as sanitary towels, nappies, wet wipes, and kitchen roll must be disposed of appropriately in a bin. To prevent blockages in sinks and toilets, please take the following precautions:

- Scrape plates thoroughly before washing up to minimise food debris.
- Keep a strainer over the plughole in your kitchen sink to prevent food debris entering the drain.
- Do not allow food, oil, or fat to be washed down the sink.

- Do not use too much toilet paper whilst using the toilet.
- Do not put wet wipes down the toilet.

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### Unblocking Sinks and Toilets

If you have found a sink or toilet to be blocked, please take the following steps to attempt to remove the blockage.

- Pour some hot, soapy water into the bowl. Allow some time for the water to sink into the pipework. Try this several times if possible and the blockage may break up. Also try to use commercially available products to disperse the blockage.
- Use a plunger which can be purchased from most supermarkets and DIY stores. Make sure there is enough water in the bowl to cover the rubber part of the plunger and pump it up and down. You may need to cover the overflow in a sink to create a seal.
- If following these steps has not proved to be successful, please call our maintenance line on 07850720460. If any foreign objects are found to have caused a blockage, the tenant may be charged the full cost of clearing the blockage.

### Sinks, baths, and showers

When bathing please make sure shower or bathmats are in use to catch escaping water. After bathing, be sure to check the floor for excess water and mop up any spills if necessary to avoid the spread of damp.

### Water Leaks

If you notice a water leak please turn off the water at the stopcock and place a container underneath the source to avoid further damage. Any water leaks should be reported to Castle Housing Limited immediately. Uncontainable leaks should be reported as an emergency. If you notice a non-serious water leak call Castle Housing Limited in office hours on 01524 824081 or use the email [tenantservices@castlehousing.co.uk](mailto:tenantservices@castlehousing.co.uk) For out of hours' emergencies please call 07850 720 460

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### Condensation

Everyday activities such as cooking, washing, and bathing can cause condensation. This is where moisture in the air contacts a cold surface, such as a window and condenses, leaving water droplets on the cold surface.

### Avoiding Condensation

Condensation will usually form because of a resident's habits and lifestyle. Wherever there is persistent condensation, there is usually black Mould to be found. The amount of condensation produced in a home will depend on three factors:

- Amount of water vapour produced by occupants.
- The temperature within your home. You should heat your home to the temperature of at least 21 °C.
- The amount of air circulation in the building. There are a few precautions you can take to prevent condensation and mould from forming in your home:
  - Do not dry clothing on radiators. Dry clothes outside or use an electric dryer.
  - Cover pans, use extractor fans, or open a window when cooking. • Do not turn extractor fans off.
  - Open windows regularly and keep trickle vents open (these are a small vent in some window frames which will allow air to flow).
  - When running a bath, run cold water first to avoid excess steam. Do not turn bathroom extractor fans off.

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### Black Mould

Regular build-ups of condensation can allow a fungus known as 'black mould' to grow on walls, ceilings, clothes, and furniture. As well as affecting plasterwork and rotting window frames, black mould can have a negative effect on your health if the mould is not treated promptly. Mould can be a particular problem in the colder months when residents will often keep windows closed and clothes will be dried inside the home. To prevent condensation and mould you should maintain a constant balance of warmth no lower than 21 and ventilation in your home.

### Treating Condensation and Mould.

Mould can be treated very easily by wiping off as much as is possible using a fungicidal wash, ensuring the instructions are being closely followed. Fungicidal wash can be bought from most supermarkets and hardware stores. Repaint the affected surface using a fungicidal paint and dry any wet surfaces, such as windows and windowsills daily to help prevent the mould returning. Windows should be left partially open to allow for adequate ventilation. To avoid the build-up of condensation and the growth of mould in your home, try following these six simple steps:

1. Produce less moisture
2. Remove excess moisture
3. Open the Windows

4. Heat your home more. You should heat your home to the temperature of at least 21 °C
5. Insulate and draught-proof
6. Kill and remove the mould

Tenants have a responsibility to ensure their home is adequately heated and ventilated to avoid mould growth. Instances of mould should be reported as soon as they are identified in order for advice to be given. Please take extra precautions against condensation and mould during the winter months.

## **24** Pests

The tenant is liable to pay for; the treatment of fleas, bed bugs, ants, mice, wasp nests and other pests unless it can be proved that these are a result of the Landlord being in breach of his repairing obligations or predate the start of the tenancy.

### Preventing Pests

Preventing pest infestations before they become established is vitally important. Infestations will often develop if a property is left unclean with food and/or waste left out. In order to prevent infestations please follow the below advice: • Keep surfaces free from food, crumbs, or waste. • Wash your bedsheets and clothing regularly at a high temperature. • Do not allow waste to build up inside or outside the property.

### Dealing with Pests

If it is determined that an infestation has occurred due to the lifestyle of a tenant, they may be charged for the resulting treatment. Domestic products such as ant powder or insect repellent should be used prior to reporting the problem to CASTLE HOUSING. Your local council may be able to provide services free of charge. Please contact CASTLE HOUSING for further information on our pest policy

## **25**

### Communal Areas and Storage

Castle Housing Limited has a legal duty to make sure that we reduce the risk of fire in our flats and schemes, and that tenants can escape in an emergency. We take safety very seriously and because of this, we're strict about what is stored in communal areas.

This applies to things such as mobility scooters, walkers, pot plants, bicycles, furniture, and ornaments which are in corridors, hallways, cupboards, and other communal areas.

### Communal Storage

Where your scheme has a designated communal space for storage, only permitted items are allowed to be stored there. You must get permission from us before any sheds and lockers are used or erected and items are stored in these areas. If permission is granted, all items

will need to be labeled with your name and address.

Our approach to dealing with items in these areas focuses on:

- Ensuring that our tenants enjoy a safe, clean, and tidy environment.
- Preventing the risk of injury or loss of life through cluttered communal areas
- Meeting our legal requirements.

These are our responsibilities, but tenants are also responsible for the safe storage of their goods, in line with their tenancy agreement.

Generally, within the communal areas of our homes, **there will be no storage of personal belongings permitted**. Even if the belongings are not an immediate risk or fire hazard, they will affect the cleaning and appearance of the area.

### Mobility Scooters

**You must seek written permission from Castle Housing Ltd to use/store/charge a Mobility Scooter on a Castle Housing property. It is strictly forbidden to bring one into the property without consent.**

If permission has been granted, the storing or charging of mobility scooters in any communal area **is strictly forbidden**. Tenants must obtain our written consent before purchasing or leasing a mobility scooter. Tenants may only store a mobility scooter within their own home, unless there is a designated space for mobility scooter storage area provided which has space available and which has been agreed to **by us**.

If you're thinking of getting a mobility scooter, please contact us first to ensure that there's a suitable location and risk assessment where it can be kept.

### Electric Bicycles/electric wheelchairs, etc.

**You must seek written permission from Castle Housing Ltd to use/store/charge an Electric Bicycle/wheelchair within a Castle Housing property. It is strictly forbidden to bring one into the property without consent.**

All electric bicycles/wheelchairs must be Risk Assessed by Castle Housing Ltd prior to consent being granted.

Failure to gain consent will be deemed a breach of your tenancy.

The storing of Bicycles/electric wheelchairs, Motability scooters in any communal area **is strictly forbidden**.

If permission has been granted Tenants may only store bicycles in a designated space for bicycle storage within the grounds if that space is available and which has been agreed by us. Please contact us first to ensure that there's a suitable location and risk assessment where it can be kept.

### Regular Checks

We'll check and enforce these rules when carrying out our regular health and safety inspections and risk assessments.

There will be times when we remove various items straight away if they cause an immediate

risk, such as if they are blocking a fire exit or if they could cause a fire. This could apply if items are stored in electrical cupboards, for example.

If they're not an immediate risk, we'll try and find out who's left the item and ask them to remove it within a specific timescale. If we can't find who's left the item, or if the person responsible has not removed it despite our request, we'll remove the item ourselves and, depending on its value, will dispose of it or store it for a limited time. We may charge the tenant for this.

## **26**

### Gardens

Castle Housing Limited may provide some gardening services at schemes with communal gardens. If so, Castle Housing Limited will maintain the garden, keeping it in a reasonable state by having grass cut, hedges trimmed and basic weeding performed. All residents are expected to keep their gardens clear of litter and discarded household items and especially animal waste in order to maintain a pleasant environment within your garden.

If gardening services are not provided, Castle Housing Limited would expect tenants to maintain their garden, keeping it tidy, free of litter and not overgrown.

We encourage our residents to take an interest in their gardens and welcome any improvements, but please check with Castle Housing Limited before cutting down any plants or performing other significant alterations in your garden. Alterations made without permission may leave tenants liable for the cost of returning the garden to its original condition.

## **27**

### Disposal of Waste

Castle Housing Limited encourages the practice of recycling at every possible opportunity. Please consult your local council's website for details on how to dispose of your waste responsibly. Waste should only ever be left in appropriate bins and must never be allowed to build up outside doors, in gardens, on paths or anywhere else on the property. Bulky waste collections can be arranged with your council for the disposal of your large and unusual items such as old furniture or appliances but please be aware that there may be costs associated with these collections.

## **28**

### Paying Rent

#### Rent and Other Charges

As a tenant of Castle Housing Limited, you are required to make payment for the 4-weekly rent amount stated on your tenancy agreement. You may be able to claim Housing Benefit to do this.

The main other charge payable by tenants who do not have utility accounts will be the service charge for electricity, gas, water, and sewerage. The service charge (rent contribution) for utilities will need to be paid via ongoing service charge payments every four weeks. We can help you set up a standing order to do this.

If there are no service charges in place within your property and Castle Housing Limited manages your bills, recharge invoices for these will be sent via post and will need to be paid within 30 days of the invoice date.

## 29

### Housing Benefit

Castle Housing Limited can help you apply for housing benefit to pay for part, or all your rent. The amount of Housing Benefit you are eligible to receive can vary, depending upon your income, savings, and other circumstances.

Housing benefit payments will cover rent and other property related charges but will not cover heating, hot water, energy, or support costs. This means that there may be some elements that you will have to pay for yourself. We may refer to these as service charges or rent contributions.

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### How to Pay

- From your bank account – make payments or set up a standing order using your online banking services to the bank details below.

Account Name:	Castle Housing Limited
Sort Code:	09 01 28
Account Number:	90 36 73 10

- At your bank via cash or cheque.
- Direct Debit. Please speak to a member of Castle Housing Limited for details.
- Post - send a cheque made payable to CASTLE HOUSING LIMITED to our office address:

CASTLE HOUSING LIMITED, 48 Hest Bank Lane, Hest Bank, Lancaster. LA2 6BS

### Payment Information

When making payments to Castle Housing Limited please use the following details and please remember to use your name as the reference for your payment.

You are liable to pay your rent in full through housing benefit or other means. It is your responsibility to maintain payments and satisfy any requests made by the housing benefit department of your local authority. Failure to cooperate with any such requests may adversely affect your Housing Benefit award and may jeopardise your ability to adhere to your tenancy agreement if you do not otherwise pay your rent.

Failure to pay your rent and service charges when they are due will constitute a breach of your tenancy agreement and may result in the termination of your tenancy, loss of your home and recovery action.

Account Name: Castle Housing Limited.

Sort Code: 09 01 28 Account Number: 90 36 73 10

Payment Reference: **Your Name**

## 31

### General Information

#### Writing to You

Castle Housing Limited may occasionally send letters to you in the post. Please make sure you read these letters to make sure you don't miss out on important information. In addition to this, you may receive letters addressed to Castle Housing Limited. Please forward these to us in the post or hand them to a member of Castle Housing Limited staff.

#### Visiting Your Home

Castle Housing Limited reserve the right to enter the communal areas of any property without giving notice to tenants. We are required to give reasonable notice before entering any area/property/bedroom that is not used for communal use.

Castle Housing Limited Employees will always carry their identification cards with them, please ask to see ID if you are uncertain of who is calling at your door.

We will aim to give at least 24 hours' notice prior to visiting your home and will try to give longer notice where possible.

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### House Rules – Shared Properties

Castle Housing Limited expects tenants to maintain good relationships with housemates, taking their share of household management. Tenants in shared properties should be able to communicate and apply methods of managing household matters such as cleaning and the replacement of toilet paper, lightbulbs, and other sundries.

Other tenants and support staff may have rules in place to help in the management of daily life. Please make sure you abide by any rules that are in place when you move into your home.

## **33**

### Troubleshooting

Tenants and support staff may be asked to troubleshoot with certain issues, devices and appliances that may otherwise result in a repair request. This can help in solving problems promptly and without the need for an engineer to attend. This includes using domestic products to unblock drains, changing standard light bulbs, checking fuse boxes to see if a trip switch has activated, checking time clocks on boilers for on and off times and other checks that any tenant would be reasonably expected to undertake.

#### Need More Help?

Our staff at Castle Housing Limited are experienced in helping our tenants get the most out of their homes. We can help with the following and more:

- Liaising with local authorities regarding Housing Benefit claims and assisting tenants to make a claim.
- Advising tenants regarding housing and welfare benefit claims.
- Consulting with occupational therapists regarding adaptations to the accommodation.
- Signposting to local accommodation related services.
- Attendance and input at tenancy related meetings.
- Liaison with court appointed deputies, appointees, and those with lasting power of attorney over tenant's affairs and other matters relating to accommodation.
- Managing antisocial behaviour and offering mediation between tenants.
- The provision of documents in an 'easy read' format.

## **34**

### Breaching the Agreement

#### Anti-social Behaviors

You are responsible for your behaviour while at home and when out in the local area. You are also responsible for the behaviour of your visitors; this includes family members and friends so you must ensure that you and your visitors do not cause a nuisance to others. Whenever possible, you should try to solve any problems yourself. We can advise you on how to do this. Often, the best way of solving a problem between neighbours is for both parties to talk to each other and try to see each other's point of view.

If your neighbour continues to be unreasonable while you are talking, walk away and report the problem to CASTLE HOUSING LIMITED.

Castle Housing Limited's anti-social behaviour policy can be made available to read along with many other useful pieces of information – [info@castlehousing.co.uk](mailto:info@castlehousing.co.uk)

If you, another person, or someone's property is in danger please report this to the police using the usual methods (999/101).

## **35**

### Subletting and Visitors

Subletting, or allowing other people to live in your home is not allowed under any CASTLE HOUSING LIMITED Tenancies and will constitute a breach of the tenancy agreement.

Visitors are generally welcome but this may be subject to the agreement of your support provider and other tenants. Please check with your support staff, keep noise at an acceptable level and always avoid causing disturbance to other tenants and neighbours.

## **36**

### Working from Home

Tenants must have Castle Housing Limited's written permission to run a business from their homes. Permission should be sought from your local council's planning department and this may have an effect upon your housing benefit awards.

By running a business from your home without the written permission of Castle Housing Limited you will be placing yourself in breach of your tenancy agreement.

## **37**

### Damage and Recharges

Tenants must report any damage, either intentional or accidental to Castle Housing Limited immediately. This can be reported via the repairs phone number. You should explain what happened and provide as many details as you can, sending photographs wherever possible.

Tenants will be required to pay for any damage caused by the tenant or their visitors either intentionally, accidentally, or through neglect.

Tenants will be sent an invoice for the full costs of repairing any damage caused. This is known as a recharge.

Tenants are expected to take all reasonable precautions to minimise the potential occurrence of accidental and intentional damage.

## **38**

### Contents Insurance

Tenants are responsible for insuring the contents of their home against loss or damage. We strongly recommend that you arrange insurance to cover the cost of replacing all your possessions, should you suffer any loss. Castle Housing Limited is unable to assist in setting up content's insurance upon the behalf of our tenants.

Castle Housing Limited will not be able to help you to replace lost or damaged items unless their loss or damage was caused by our negligence.

## **39**

### Castle Housing Service Charges

Where Castle Housing Limited provides additional services to its tenants, it will add service charges to the rent charged and bill these as part of the rent. Service charges are set to cover the cost of providing and managing the services that the tenant or scheme requires, and Castle Housing Limited endeavours to recover the full cost of HB eligible services that it provides. Information about specific service charges is below.

Please contact Castle Housing Limited if you wish to discuss any of your service charges.

#### Gardening/Grounds maintenance

Where included, the **Gardening/Grounds Maintenance** charge will allow a gardener to attend on a periodic basis to cut grass, clear weeds and nettles, trim hedges, remove leaves, sweep hard standings, and cut back trees. The frequency of the visit depends on the size and maturity of the garden.

#### **Window Cleaning - External only**

**Window Cleaning** is usually included for sites with communal windows which cannot be cleaned by the tenants. Visits are usually made either quarterly or monthly. Cleaning internal windows is the responsibility of the tenant(s)

### **Fire Alarm and Emergency Lighting Servicing**

Many of Castle Housing Limited's properties have an interlinked fire alarm system and emergency lighting which require an engineer to make a periodic **Fire Alarm and Emergency Lighting Servicing** visit to ensure the system is working correctly. If this charge isn't included it is likely that the cost of providing the service is included within the core rent and paid to the owner of the property.

### **Fire Fighting Equipment Servicing**

Fire extinguishers are provided in certain types of schemes, particularly larger properties. Where Fire Extinguishers are provided by Castle Housing Limited, they are serviced and inspected to ensure that they are safe. Castle Housing Limited will include Fire Fighting Equipment servicing in its service charge schedule where it is responsible for arranging and providing this service.

### **Pest Control**

Regular **Pest Control** services are provided at some larger sites where a planned pest control programme is required. At other sites a contribution is collected to allow Castle Housing Limited to provide responsive pest control services to address statutory pest nuisances when required

### **Communal Cleaning**

Communal Cleaning is sometimes provided in blocks of flats and where the tenants have been assessed as being unable to clean the shared areas of the property. The cost allows for a frequent visit to sweep, vacuum, dust, and wipe down communal areas. Some sites may have a charge listed as **Communal Cleaning (ad hoc)**, which is intended to provide occasional and irregular cleaning such as an oven cleaning, irregular deep cleans, etc

### **Furniture and Household Equipment**

In some schemes, Castle Housing Limited may initially provide **Flooring, Furniture and Household Equipment** to some tenants. The tenant is responsible for the ongoing maintenance of these items and for their removal and replacement if no longer required.

### **Laundry Equipment and White Goods**

In some schemes, Castle Housing Limited may initially provide **Laundry Equipment and White Goods** for its tenants use. White Goods include items such as fridge, cooker and washing machine. The tenant is responsible for the ongoing maintenance of these items and for their removal and replacement if no longer required.

### **Periodic Redecoration**

Whilst tenants are responsible for maintaining the standard of decoration in their own areas of accommodation, we recognise that communal areas in blocks of flats require periodic decoration. This is typically provided on a 5-year basis depending on need, and can cover repainting of walls, ceilings and woodwork, and replacement flooring where required.

### **Utility Bills (Gas, Water, Electricity and Sewerage)**

Where a Castle Housing Limited site receives one supply from each utility company, a fixed contribution may be included in the rent. The contributions are reviewed to ensure that they are sufficient to cover the cost of providing the utilities required. If the charge is included, Castle Housing Limited will be the account holder and will pay the supplier on receipt of the bill. This charge is **not** eligible for payment via Housing Benefit and must be paid by the tenant.

### **Support**

Where Castle Housing Limited includes a designated support cost within the rent charged it will appear on the rent breakdown. This charge is **not** eligible for payment via Housing Benefit and must be paid by the tenant

### **Other**

Examples of other services that may be provided on a site-by-site basis (subject to contract and funding being available) are:

- CCTV
- Broadband
- Servicing of Hoists and large occupational therapy aids
- Alarms
- Alarm monitoring service
- TV Licence
- Access systems

## **40**

### **Ending Your Tenancy**

**Giving Notice** Should you wish to end your tenancy you must give Castle Housing Limited at least one month's notice in writing. Your support worker may be able to assist although you must sign the notice yourself for it to be valid.

## **41**

### **Time to Move On**

When leaving your home, the property will need to be left in a similar condition to how it was when you moved in. This will involve making good any damage and returning furniture to its original position. All keys will need to be returned, including any copies that you have had made. Your home will need to be cleaned to a suitable standard including all surfaces and appliances and you will be required to pay in full any outstanding balances that are due to

CASTLE HOUSING LIMITED for rent, service charges and recharges. Castle Housing Limited may take legal action to recover any outstanding funds.

Any remaining furniture and other personal effects will be disposed of in accordance with the relevant law. The tenant will be recharged to cover any costs incurred from its disposal or storage. You could be held liable for the costs of professional cleaning, in the event that Castle Housing Limited deems that further cleaning is required once you have returned possession of the property.

## **42**

### Final Inspection

To ensure the property has been left in an acceptable condition and to establish that it is ready for the next tenant to occupy, Castle Housing Limited will need to inspect the condition of your home at the end of your tenancy. Castle Housing Limited will contact you to arrange for this to take place once you have submitted your notice.

Should there be any damage to the property that does not constitute normal wear and tear, you may be liable for the costs incurred in having the damage repaired.

## **43**

### Feedback

#### Complaints, Compliments and Feedback

Feedback from our tenants, their families and support staff are always appreciated, whether good or bad. We will always try to resolve any issues in the way we deliver our services, and all complaints will be treated seriously. Likewise, if we have done something well, or a particular staff member has gone above and beyond to help you, we will always be pleased to hear about it.

Please send compliments and complaints to:

CASTLE HOUSING LIMITED, 48 Hest Bank Lane, Hest Bank, Lancaster.LA2 6BS.

Alternatively, you can call 01524 824081 and ask to leave feedback, or send us an email at [info@castlehousing.co.uk](mailto:info@castlehousing.co.uk)

## **44**

### Getting Involved

We will work with our tenants to continually develop and improve the service that you receive from us.

If you would like to get involved with Castle Housing Limited and the work we do, please get in contact with us and we will be able to provide you with further advice in how to do so.

## 45

### Data Protection

Castle Housing Limited takes your personal information seriously and will only process it for legitimate reasons.

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### Contacting CASTLE HOUSING LIMITED

For general enquiries and to report routine maintenance issues please call Castle Housing Limited's office landline: 01524 824081

Maintenance issues reported to this number will be followed up during office hours which are 09:00-17:00 excluding bank holidays and weekends.

You can use the email [tenantservices@castlehousing.co.uk](mailto:tenantservices@castlehousing.co.uk)

To report an emergency maintenance issue at any time of the day, please call Castle Housing Limited's emergency hotline. 07850720460\*

\*You must tell the operator that you are calling about a Castle Housing Limited property.

**Please note that misuse of the emergency facility will result in charges being made back to the tenant.**

Routine repairs can also be reported via email to: [info@castlehousing.co.uk](mailto:info@castlehousing.co.uk). Or following the link [tenantservices@castlehousing.co.uk](mailto:tenantservices@castlehousing.co.uk)

For queries that are not dealt with in this handbook, please contact us using the details below.

Phone: 01524 824081

Email: [info@castlehousing.co.uk](mailto:info@castlehousing.co.uk)

### **Eligibility Criteria for a Supported Tenancy**

Castle Housing properties are specifically intended to offer Supported Tenancies to people who are disabled or disadvantaged and who must also have a current Package of Care in place.

Only people who fall into this category are eligible to rent a property. If you fall outside of this criterion you must rent from a mainstream landlord.

To become Eligible for a Castle Housing Limited property, you need to be in receipt of and accepting of your Package of Care (POC). Your POC means you have help and support from a social care worker.

Your social care worker will help you manage your day-to-day living including managing your home and tenant obligations.

- Once you've been granted a Supported Tenancy, If, at any time during that term of tenancy, you refuse to engage with your social care worker specifically around your tenant obligations, you will be deemed ineligible for your property and asked to move into mainstream accommodation.
- If your package of care reduces and Castle Housing Limited deem you too vulnerable to live in your accommodation, you will be asked to move into alternative, more suitable accommodation.
- If your care needs reduce you may be asked to move into mainstream accommodation.

## TENANTS OBLIGATIONS

### **1. You must pay your rent in full and on time.**

You must pay your rent including any shortfall, without deduction, by standing order, in advance on the Monday for the preceding week. This payment can be weekly, 4 weekly or monthly.

### **2. You will be given one set of keys for your property which you are responsible for must keep safe.**

You are not permitted to give your keys to a third party to allow access. If you lose your keys you will be financially responsible to pay up front, for replacements.

### **3. You are not permitted to paint or decorate your property.**

You must not paint or decorate your property without the explicit and prior written permission from Castle Housing Limited. When redecoration is required following damage or wear and tear it must be carried out in a workmanlike manner to a professional standard.

### **4. You must pay your utility bills in a timely manner.**

You are responsible and must pay your gas, electric and council tax and any other bills on time.

### **5. You must always keep the internal parts of the property, clean, tidy and hazard free.**

You must keep the inside of your property clean and tidy.

You must keep it in a good state of repair and condition.

You must reduce household risks and remove hazards immediately - *to Castle Housing standards.*

### **6. You must manage household waste by recycling appropriately and using the outside bins provided. You are responsible and must dispose of your unwanted bulky items properly.**

You must manage your waste by using the appropriate bins provided and recycle where possible.

You must keep the external parts and facilities of your property clean, tidy, and clear of rubbish.

You must not dump your unwanted bulky items at the front or rear of the property, disposing of them appropriately.

**7. Do not to allow others to stay in your home.**

You are not permitted anyone else to stay in your property. By prior agreement with Castle Housing, visitors occasionally maybe allow overnight.

**8. Do not cause noise disturbance to your neighbours.**

Between 11.00pm – 8.00am you are not permitted to play loud music and must keep all other noise to a minimum.

You are not permitted to do anything in the property which is illegal or not or which may be or become a nuisance, annoyance, inconvenience, or disturbance to the Landlord or to other tenants or neighbours and their visitors.

**9. Do not bully or harass your neighbours.**

You are not permitted to bully, harass, intimidate, stalk, shout, swear, strike, or do anything else which may cause offence or upset to your neighbours.

**10. You must work harmoniously with your support staff.**

You must work in partnership and harmony with your staff. This includes allowing 24/7 access into your property. You must allow them to clean/tidy and make good any areas of their concern. You must not try to intervene, intimidate, harass, bully, strike, shout, swear or display behaviours which may cause offence, upset, or concern to them. Disengaging or withdrawing from your support worker will deem you ineligible for your property.

**11. Do not intentionally cause damage to the property or any other property.**

You must not cause damage to your property.

You are fully responsible for any damage caused either: intentionally, through negligence, neglect, carelessness, by your guests or your staff team.

You will be financially responsible for any damage to be rectified.

If you cause damage to another property this is also your responsibility. So, if you live in a flat and flood the flat below you will have to pay for it. Similarly, if you damage any property belonging to a neighbour you will have to cover the costs.

Intentional and continuous property damage will result in eviction.

**12. Pay for any damage you do cause in a timely manner.**

If you cause damage to your property you will be issued with an estimated invoice to cover the repair. You must pay the estimate within the timeframe of 2 weeks from date of Issue.

You must not withhold any part of the payment.

**13. Report defects as soon as possible.**

Defects must be reported as soon as possible. Use the link [tenantservices@castlehousing.co.uk](mailto:tenantservices@castlehousing.co.uk) or Tel: 01524 824081 [info@castlehousing.co.uk](mailto:info@castlehousing.co.uk). It's helpful, where possible, to give as much detail and send photos too.

**14. Report property damage as soon as possible.**

All damage must be reported immediately. Tel: 01524 824081. [info@castlehousing.co.uk](mailto:info@castlehousing.co.uk). Or at [tenantservices@castlehousing.co.uk](mailto:tenantservices@castlehousing.co.uk) It's helpful, where possible, to give as much detail and send photos too.

Castle Housing Limited is not responsible for any damage to property or items that belong to others – you are. Failure to report property damage immediately may lead to eviction.

**15. You must not smoke within any part of your property.**

You are not permitted to smoke inside the property or permit others to smoke. Should Castle Housing Limited permit outside smoking, a stringent fire and health and safety risk assessment must be in place and strictly adhered to at all times. Any breach of the risk assessment will immediately revert back to the No Smoking Policy.

**16. Candles are not permitted to be used within any part of your property.**

You are not permitted to use lighted candles within any part of your property. Lighted candles are considered an extremely high-risk fire hazard and can lead to death to you and others within the building.

**Never dry laundry on radiators.** This is highly likely to cause damp and black mould to build up.

Mould is a frequently disputed problem between tenants and landlords, so make sure you've taken every step to clean existing mould and prevent it from reoccurring.

Mould is often caused by bad exploitation of the property. The property can become a fertile environment for the growth and spread of mould, when tenants:

- Don't ventilate the property well.
- Don't heat the property adequately.
- Use the heating incorrectly throughout the winter and cold months.
- Allow moisture to build up in the bathroom without proper ventilation or don't use extractor fans as intended.
- Don't remove unattended spillages of water.

**Examples that would be considered 'Damage' and not 'fair wear and tear'.**

- Broken panes in windows caused by you or someone you know.
- Stains or burn marks on the ceiling, walls, paintwork, or flooring.
- Scratched, holes or gouged in walls and flooring.
- Paint damage from removing sticky tape, Blu-Tack, nails, or wall fixtures.
- Burns, cuts, or damage in kitchen worktops.

- Broken fixed items such as: internal doors, kitchen cupboards and their handles, bath/bath panel/sink/toilet/reoccurring broken toilet handle, Breaking chairs, tables, bed frames, wardrobes, draws etc.
- Damaged electrical wall sockets or electrical appliances by damage or bad usage.
- Water stain on carpet or flooring, as a result of incorrect use of bath/shower/sink.
- Broken cupboards and their hinges/handles.
- unapproved or poor-quality paint job or wallpaper
- Intentional or unintentional damage to walls and wallpaper.
- Any Property damage caused after an outburst.

#### **Examples of 'fair wear and tear':**

fair wear and tear refer to the damage that you expect to see in a property **over time**.

- Faded curtains or frayed cords from natural causes.
- Minor scuff mark.
- Sun fading and small stains.
- Faded, chipped, or cracked paint.
- Worn kitchen worktops.
- Door handles or hinges that are loose from use.
- Cracks in the walls from movement.
- Worn paint near light switches.

#### **Use of Goods supplied in your property**

If you have household items supplied by Castle Housing Limited such as a bed, fridge, washing machine etc, it will be your responsibility to maintain them.

If, after a time, you no longer require them, they become defective, or you damage them intentionally or unintentionally, it is your responsibility to have them fixed or to remove them appropriately. This will be at your expense. If you need help with this please let us know.

Thank you for reading this document.