



Tenants Handbook

An easy read guide to managing your tenancy

Contents:

Introduction to Castle Housing	Page 3
Service Standards	Page 5
Understanding Your Tenancy	Page 9
Moving In	Page 13
Paying Your Rent	Page 17
Repairs and Improvements	Page 21
Summary of Repair Responsibilities	Page 25
Maintenance and Adaptations	Page 43
Gas Safety	Page 45
Electricity Safety	Page 47
Protecting Your Home Against Fire	Page 49
Preventing Damp and Mould Growth in Your Home	Page 51
Anti –Social Behaviour	Page 53
Moving On	Page 55
Frequently Asked Questions	Page 57
Appendix 1 – Tenancy Termination Form	Page 61
Appendix 2 – Permission Request for Minor Works / Redecoration	Page 63
Appendix 3 – Maintenance Request Form	Page 65

WHO ARE WE?

Castle Housing Limited was established in 2002. We are a local, private housing company specialising in supplying supported accommodation in the Lancaster and Morecambe area.

We work with a range of partners who are able to offer specialist support services to our tenants.

Castle Housing provides various types of accommodation to all types of people, ranging from single, adapted units of accommodation, to shared multi occupancy houses, all within the local community.

SERVICE STANDARDS

Quality Assurance

We are committed to providing our tenants with the best service possible, and therefore we have certain standards that you can expect of us.

We constantly review our procedures to see if we can improve the services that we offer you.

Communication

- Our staff will be polite to you at all times, and will always take your comments and queries seriously.
- You will be treated in a fair and equal manner.
- Telephone calls and emails will be answered as soon as possible.
- Letters will be answered within five working days of receipt. If a full reply is not possible, you will receive an acknowledgement within five working days telling you what is happening and give you a contact name and number.

Equality and Diversity

Castle Housing Limited is committed to equality for all, and to providing safe and sustainable communities. We value diversity in our communities.

We will take steps to encourage housing applications from all sections of the community. We will monitor each stage of the application process to ensure that each application is treated fairly.

We regularly consult with our customers and encourage participation from all our tenants regardless of gender, sexual orientation, religion, race, age, nationality, or financial circumstances.

Customer Feedback

At Castle Housing Ltd we have a sustaining commitment to continuous quality improvement. We welcome your comments and suggestions so that we can continue to improve our service. Our top priority is to deliver a high quality housing service and value for money.

If you have any suggestions about how we could improve our service, we will be grateful to receive them. Anyone receiving a service from us, or anyone acting on their behalf, can provide feedback.

Everyone likes to know when they have got things right! We will be delighted to hear from you if you feel that we have done well. Comments from tenants are extremely useful for staff training and for developing new policies and procedures.

We are aware that occasionally things can go wrong, and we welcome your comments as an opportunity to help us to improve our service.

Our complaints policy defines a complaint as:

An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, action or lack of actions or affecting an individual, customer or group of customers.

If you are not satisfied with the service that you have received from us please make a complaint.

Informal Complaints

If you wish to make a complaint, we recommend that you speak to a member of staff first, because they will endeavour to sort out the problem immediately. If you choose to keep your complaint informal, we will still listen to you and try to resolve the problem to your satisfaction.

Formal Complaints

If you feel the situation cannot be satisfactorily resolved informally, we have a process to ensure that we deal with your complaint promptly and effectively. We will respond to your complaint within five working days.

OUR FORMAL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

If you have a complaint, please contact Maria Bradley (see below) who will help you, or put you in touch with the most appropriate person.

You can make a complaint in the following ways:

- Telephone us on 01524 824081.
- Write to us at Castle Housing Ltd, 48 Hest Bank Lane, Lancaster. LA2 6BS.
- E-mail Maria@castlehousing.co.uk

Once you have made a formal complaint, we will respond to it within five working days.

Please note that this complaints process does not cover:

- Our waiting list and letting policy
- Neighbour nuisance and disputes

UNDERSTANDING YOUR TENANCY

The majority of our tenants have an Assured Shorthold Tenancy which can be ended by a Castle Housing Limited after the first six months of the tenancy. We do not need to prove any grounds for possession.

Ordinary Contractual Tenancies can be ended by the company without the need for legal action, by serving a notice to quit on you.

Castle Housing should keep your home in a proper state of repair and keep you're heating and plumbing in working order. For more information see – the Repairs and Improvements Section from page 17.

Tenants will be consulted before we make any major changes to the way we manage your home. We will give serious consideration to any objections or suggestions you make.

It is essential that we hold personal details of tenants in order that we can provide the service that is expected of us.

All information is kept confidential and is not passed onto a third party without your permission, except in circumstances where we are allowed to do so by law.

YOUR TENANCY RESPONSIBILITIES

Your tenancy agreement gives details of all of your responsibilities as a tenant. As well as paying your rent on time and being a good neighbour, your responsibilities also include:

- Keeping the interior of your home in a good and clean condition.
- Keeping your home well decorated.
- Not causing any damage to your home or to any fixtures and fittings owned by the company.
- Reporting repairs to us immediately.

- Keeping your garden tidy and free from rubbish.
- Allowing access to Castle staff, contractors and agents.
- Not sub-letting part of your home.
- You can't keep mopeds or motorbikes inside your home or in shared areas inside, such as entrance halls, stairs or landings.
- If you have a wheelchair we will make every effort to help you find a safe store.
- Shared areas also need to be kept clean, tidy and clear of obstructions.
- You can't run a business from your home without first getting written permission from us.
- You can't carry out major car repairs or park an illegal or unroadworthy vehicle on the land around your home, on the road or any shared area.
- You should not store any type of highly flammable liquid such as propane gas, petroleum or lighter fuel.

You must pay your rent on time otherwise you will be in danger of losing your home.

If you get into financial difficulties you must contact us immediately and we will offer what assistance we can, which might include such things as providing advice, a payment plan, or assistance in claiming benefits.

You are responsible for your own behaviour and that of your family and visitors to your home. Should you, your family or visitors be involved in causing anti-social behaviour you will be in danger of losing your home.

You should read your tenancy agreement, making sure that you fully understand your responsibilities.

Further information and a table detailing who is responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of each aspect of your home can be found in the *Summary of Repair Responsibilities* section of this handbook, from page 21.

NEGLECT AND DAMAGE

We do not accept responsibility for any damage that you, your family or a guest in your home has caused deliberately or through neglect or carelessness. If you would like us to repair damage you have caused, we will do this but you will have to pay for the costs of the repair work.

MOVING IN

When you move into your new accommodation, you will need to ensure that the following utilities supplies are switched on and transferred into your name.

- Gas
- Electric
- Water
- Telephone

On the next few pages are details and advice about how to connect these services

Remember

CONNECTING SERVICES TO YOUR NEW HOME
IS **YOUR** RESPONSIBILITY

Connecting Your Gas Supply

STEP 1

Phone the National Grid on 0870 608 1524 to find out who currently supplies gas to your property.

This is an automated system, so you will need to have:

- The Post Code of your new property
- A pen and paper to take down the reference number.

The system will tell you:

- Your gas meter referenced number
- Your current supplier and their telephone number.

STEP 2

Read the gas meter and have the meter reading ready to give to your supplier.

STEP 3

Contact the gas supplier on the number given to you by the National Grid, and tell them that you are the new occupier and give them the meter reading. Before the supply can be installed, they may need to come and adjust the meter to clear any outstanding debt from the previous occupier. Fill in your details in the space below.

Gas meter reference number.....

Gas supplier.....

Phone number.....

Gas meter reading.....

Connecting Your Electricity Supply

STEP 1

Read the electricity meter and have the reading ready.

STEP 2

Contact United Utilities on 0870 751 0093 and advise them you are the new occupier and give them the meter reading. They will tell you who your electricity supplier is.

STEP 3

Contact the supplier and give them the electricity meter reading and arrange for the supply to be put in your name. Once again, they may need to adjust the meter before they can switch your electricity supply on. Fill in your details in the space below.

Electric meter reference number.....

Electric supplier.....

Phone number.....

Electric meter reading.....

Connecting your Water Supply

The water supply should be connected when you move into your new home. Contact United Utilities on 0845 050 0108 to set up an account.

You will need to give them your name, address and the date you moved in.

Gas Safety Check

Once you have changed both the gas and electric supplies into your name contact us on 01524 824081.

We will arrange for your gas system to be commissioned so that you can use it. If you have a pre-payment meter, you must have credit on both your gas and electricity meter for us to carry out this service.

Whenever possible an appointment will be made within 24 hours, however you must allow up to seven days for this Gas Service Check.

If you do not arrange this gas commission you will not be able to use your central heating boiler or gas appliances.

Connecting the Telephone

If you wish to have a telephone line connected, contact the phone provider that you would like to use. If you had a telephone line at your last property, and you are still living in the same area, you may be able to keep the same phone number.

Who Should I Tell That I Have Moved?

There are certain people that need to know that you have moved house and you should make arrangements to tell them as soon as possible. Below is a checklist of some important agencies that may need your new address:

- Your doctor and/or dentist.
- TV licensing on 0870 240 1674.
- Your bank or building society.
- The post office will redirect your mail for a small fee.

PAYING YOUR RENT

We collect rent from all of our tenants to pay for the homes and services that we provide.

Rent is charged weekly.

Our week runs from Monday to Sunday.

Rent and other charges are payable in advance on the Monday of each week. It is your responsibility to ensure that your rent is paid regularly to avoid going into arrears.

Your household running costs **are not** covered by the rent and you are responsible and will need to pay for the following:

- Gas
- Electricity
- Water Charge
- Council Tax
- Telephone/internet line
- TV licence
- Contents insurance
- Interior decoration
- Window cleaning

To make it as easy as possible for you, there are different ways for you to pay your rent. We do not make a charge for using any of these methods of payment.

The different ways you can pay include:

- Standing Order
- Cash
- Cheque
- Direct Payment from Housing Benefit

Standing Order

Standing Order is the easiest way to pay your rent as the money will be paid into our account automatically on a regular basis. You can pay by Standing Orders weekly, fortnightly or four weekly.

Only the agreed amount of money will be transferred each week. If we need to change the amount or collection date, we will notify you first. You can find out how to set up a Standing Order on the next page.

We will give you a Standing Order instruction form, which you will need to complete and take into your bank.

You will need the following information to complete a Standing Order instruction form:

- Name and address of your bank or building society.
- The name(s) of the account holder.
- Your bank or building society account number.
- The branch or sort code (you will find this on your bank statement)

It may take a few weeks to set up a Standing Order and for us to receive the first payment from your account. So that you don't go into arrears during this time, you should arrange to pay by another method until you have checked that the first Standing Order payment has been made.

Cash

If you wish to pay your rent by cash, this will be collected at a regular, pre-arranged time / day by a representative of Castle Housing. You will be issued with cash rent book, in which all payments will be recorded.

Cheque

If you wish to pay your rent by cheque, then all cheques must be received 7 days in advance. This is to allow time for the cheque to be processed by the bank, to ensure payments are received on time.

All cheques should be made payable to “Castle Housing Ltd”. They should be posted to:

Castle Housing
48 Hest Bank Lane
Hest Bank
Lancaster
LA2 6BS

Please note, we do not accept liability for any cheques that are lost in the post. For this reason you should not post cash payment.

Direct Payment from Housing Benefit

Some tenants are eligible to receive Housing Benefit. This may cover all or part of the rent due. If you are eligible to receive housing benefit it will either be paid to you as the tenant, to pay your rent, or can be paid direct to Castle Housing.

Where housing benefit payments are made to you as a tenant, you are responsible for paying your rent in advance, in line with the arrangements above. You remain responsible for paying your rent, even if you experience a problem with receiving housing benefit payments.

If however your housing benefit is paid directly to Castle Housing as the Landlord, we have an arrangement to receive this payment on a four weekly schedule, up to four weeks in arrears. If you choose for your housing benefit to be paid to us directly you will not be held responsible for these arrears.

Top –up payment, if required remain the tenants responsibility.

REPAIRS AND IMPROVEMENTS

Day to Day Repairs

HOW CAN I REPORT A REPAIR?

You can report a repair to us by either phoning our office, by writing us a letter or by sending us an e-mail.

Contact details:

CUSTOMER SERVICES

Monday to Friday 9.00am - 5.00pm
(REPAIRS) 01524 824081

e-mail: ian@castlehousing.co.uk

Castle Housing Ltd
48 Hest Bank Lane
Lancaster
LA2 6BS

EMERGENCY OUT OF HOURS REPAIRS: 07850 720460

Please note, if a request for a repair is overstated as an emergency and the repair is not, then a charge will be made for this.

WHAT INFORMATION WILL I NEED TO PROVIDE?

To report a repair, we will need the following information:

- Your name, address and daytime telephone number.
- The days and times when someone will be at home, so that we can gain access to your property.
- As much information as possible about the repair.

HOW LONG WILL THE REPAIR TAKE?

We prioritise repairs by separating them into three categories:

1. Emergency;
2. Urgent; and
3. Routine repairs.

1. Emergency Repairs

We aim to complete emergency repairs within 24 hours.

An emergency repair is something which makes your house uninhabitable.

Examples of emergency repairs are:

- Burst pipes, severe roof leaks or flooding.
- Unsafe electrical fittings or wiring.
- Blocked main drains or blocked soil pipes to the ONLY toilet (not a blocked sink).
- Complete loss of electrical power or lighting.

2. Urgent Repairs

We aim to complete urgent repairs within 7 days.

An urgent repair is something which needs addressing quickly, to prevent your home from becoming hazardous.

Examples of urgent repairs are:

- Loss of heating.
- A blocked / broken toilet.
- Leaking pipes.
- Unsecure external doors or windows.
- Loss of cooking facilities if supplied as part of tenancy agreement.

3. Routine Repairs

We aim to complete routine repairs within 31 days.

A routine repair is something that will improve and enhance the standard of your accommodation, to better meet your needs and preferences.

Examples of routine repairs include:

- Repairs to internal doors and fittings
- Loose window catches
- Dripping taps
- Worn floor coverings

When you report a repair, you should be told what priority it will be given. You will receive a receipt confirming the details of the repair, your appointment date and time and a job number.

WHAT APPOINTMENT TIMES ARE OFFERED?

We normally offer appointments for urgent and routine repairs on weekdays between:

8am - 12pm (am) or
12pm - 4pm (pm)

Appointments required outside these times may be arranged, to cater for special circumstances. Please discuss this if required when reporting your repair.

WILL I BE CHARGED FOR REPAIRS?

You will only be charged if the following circumstances apply:

- If you tell us that the repair is an emergency and it isn't.
- If you report a repair and then deny access to the on-call trades person.
- If repairs need to be made as a result of damage (intentional or accidental) caused by you, your family or a visitor to your home.

We will not accept responsibility for paying the bill if you instruct a third party contractor to carry out work

SUMMARY OF REPAIR RESPONSIBILITIES

Below is a table, outlining who is responsible for carrying out the different repairs and maintenance in your home.

Where a repair is regarded as a landlord's responsibility you must contact Castle Housing Ltd to arrange for the repair to be assessed, and works carried out.

Where the repair is your responsibility as a tenant, please note that Castle Housing Ltd will be able to arrange for this work to be carried out, but that you will be issued with an invoice to pay for this work.

Bathroom

No:	Repair / Maintenance	Landlord Responsibility	Tenant (Your) Responsibility
1.1	Broken Bath, not including Blocked Waste Pipe.	✓	
1.2	Blocked Waste / Toilet Pipes		✓
1.3	Broken Fixed Shower, not including shower screen.	✓	
1.4	Broken Shower Screen		✓
1.5	Broken Portable Shower Unit		✓

Bathroom Continued

No:	Repair / Maintenance	Landlord Responsibility	Tenant (Your) Responsibility
1.6	Broken Hand Basins, not including blocked / broken plugs.	✓	
1.7	Broken / Blocked plugs.		✓
1.8	Broken Toilet Seat		✓
1.9	Broken Toilet Cistern / Bowl	✓	
1.10	Bathroom Fixtures and Fittings Including: shower curtains and screens, bathroom cabinets, mirrors, towel/grab rails and toilet roll holders		✓
1.11	Chains and Plugs on Baths and Sinks		✓
1.12	Bathroom floor covering, (excluding mats and changes due to personal preferences or damage)	✓	

Living Room

No:	Repair / Maintenance	Landlord Responsibility	Tenant (Your) Responsibility
2.1	Fixed Fire Grates and surrounds (excluding removable / decorative surround)	✓	
2.2	Removable / Decorative fire surround or guard		✓
2.3	Curtains, Blinds and other types of window coverings including fixtures.		✓
2.4	Heating including Gas Fires (excluding those fitted by the tenant)	✓	
2.5	Furniture (except where this is provided as part of furnished or part furnished accommodation)		✓
2.6	Wall fixtures including picture, mirrors, shelving units etc.		✓

Living Room Continued

No:	Repair / Maintenance	Landlord Responsibility	Tenant (Your) Responsibility
2.7	Carpets, (excluding changes due to personal choice or damage)	✓	
2.8	Decorative light fittings and shades		✓
2.9	Light bulbs, starter motors and strip lights		✓
2.10	Decorating (excluding where the damage is caused by a structural defect)		✓
2.11	Solid Fuel Chimney (excluding sweeping)	✓	
2.12	Electrical appliances such as TV, radio equipment		✓

Bedroom

No:	Repair / Maintenance	Landlord Responsibility	Tenant (Your) Responsibility
3.1	Furniture (excluding where provided as part of furnished / part furnished agreement)		✓
3.2	Carpets, (excluding changes due to personal choice or damage)	✓	
3.3	Decorative light fittings and shades		✓
3.4	Light bulbs, starter motors and strip lights		✓
3.5	Decorating (excluding where the damage is caused by a structural defect)		✓
3.6	Soft Furnishings such as bedding, curtains etc		✓

Bedroom Continued

No:	Repair / Maintenance	Landlord Responsibility	Tenant (Your) Responsibility
3.7	Internal doors, locks and handles		✓
3.8	Wall fixtures including picture, mirrors, shelving units etc.		✓
3.9	Hand basins (excluding blockages or damage caused by tenant or visitors)	✓	
3.10	Electrical appliances, such as TV, hairdryer, portable heaters etc		✓

Kitchen

No:	Repair / Maintenance	Landlord Responsibility	Tenant (Your) Responsibility
4.1	Domestic appliances supplied by you, such as Cooker, Dryers, Freezers, Kettles etc		✓
4.2	Domestic appliances supplied by Landlord such as Cooker, Washing Machine (excluding blockages in dishwasher waste pipe)	✓	
4.3	Floor coverings such as carpets, vinyl etc (excluding where change is required due to personal choice or personal damage)	✓	
4.4	Window coverings and decoration such as curtains, blinds etc		✓
4.5	Decorative light fittings and shades		✓

Kitchen continued

No:	Repair / Maintenance	Landlord Responsibility	Tenant (Your) Responsibility
4.6	Light bulbs, starter motors and strip lights		✓
4.7	Fixtures and fittings such as coat hooks, shelving, curtain rails etc		✓
4.8	Fire fighting equipment such as kitchen fire blankets, kitchen fire extinguishers		✓
4.9	Hare wire smoke / fire detectors	✓	
4.10	Battery operated smoke / fire alarms		✓
4.11	Battery operated carbon monoxide alarms		✓
4.12	Internal doors, locks and handles		✓

Kitchen continued

No:	Repair / Maintenance	Landlord Responsibility	Tenant (Your) Responsibility
4.13	Decorating (excluding where the damage is caused by a structural defect)		✓
4.14	Kitchen sink, (excluding blockages, plugs and fittings)	✓	
4.15	Kitchen fittings, including cupboards, handles, doors, shelving		✓

Hallway

No:	Repair / Maintenance	Landlord Responsibility	Tenant (Your) Responsibility
5.1	Floor coverings such as carpets, vinyl etc (excluding where change is required due to personal choice or personal damage)	✓	
5.2	Window coverings and decoration such as curtains, blinds etc		✓
5.3	Decorative light fittings and shades		✓
5.4	Hare wire smoke / fire detectors	✓	
5.5	Battery operated smoke / fire alarms		✓
5.6	Battery operated carbon monoxide alarms		✓
5.7	Fixtures and fittings such as coat hooks, curtain rails, shelving etc		✓

Fabric of the Building

No:	Repair / Maintenance	Landlord Responsibility	Tenant (Your) Responsibility
6.1	Carpentry, including main banister, skirting boards, door frames (excluding where damage is caused by tenant/visitor)	✓	
6.2	External decorating as part of maintenance schedule	✓	
6.3	External Doors including frames, hinges, external locks, door jambs and thresholds, letterboxes and handles. <i>(Except repairs due to forced entry if you are locked out or ill fitting thresholds due to the replacement of floor coverings undertaken by tenant)</i>	✓	
6.4	Lost or stolen keys and repairs due to forced entry if you are locked out.		✓
6.5	Floor boards	✓	

Fabric of the Building continued

No:	Repair / Maintenance	Landlord Responsibility	Tenant (Your) Responsibility
6.6	Electrical installation (wiring) unless tampered with	✓	
6.7	Glazing. <i>If your property is broken into you must report this to the police.</i>		✓
6.8	Porches, except glazing	✓	

External Areas

No:	Repair / Maintenance	Landlord Responsibility	Tenant (Your) Responsibility
7.1	Fences and gates (excluding the maintenance of your garden fence, if it is situated between your garden and that of another, or damage caused by you)	✓	
7.2	Garages. The use of any garage must be included in your tenancy.	✓	
7.3	Garden maintenance, including dustbins, recycle units and refuse areas.		✓
7.4	External timbers	✓	
7.5	Out buildings. Only if provided by Landlord and included in your tenancy	✓	

External Areas continued

No:	Repair / Maintenance	Landlord Responsibility	Tenant (Your) Responsibility
7.6	Paths including steps, footpaths and ramps, provided by Castle Housing (excluding garden paths)	✓	
7.7	External washing lines		✓

Miscellaneous

No:	Repair / Maintenance	Landlord Responsibility	Tenant (Your) Responsibility
8.1	Central Heating System and Boiler (unless damaged or tampered with)	✓	
8.2	Re-lighting pilot light and re-setting timer clocks		✓
8.3	Central Heating / Boiler switches and timer clocks		✓
8.4	Plumbing repairs, leaks and burst pipes (Except for washing machines and dishwashers)	✓	
8.5	Plastering (Except minor cracks or patches during redecoration)	✓	
8.6	Roofs	✓	
8.7	Hard wire smoke detectors	✓	

Miscellaneous continued

No:	Repair / Maintenance	Landlord Responsibility	Tenant (Your) Responsibility
8.8	Battery operated smoke alarms		✓
8.9	Stairs and banister rails (Unless damaged by you or guests)	✓	
8.10	Electrical switches and sockets, (excluding dimmer switches)	✓	
8.11	Telephone points		✓
8.12	TV aerials and sockets		✓
8.13	Washing lines		✓
8.14	Waste pipe blockages including sinks, baths, dishwashers etc		✓
8.15	Windows including window sills, catches, sash cords and frames (excludes glazing or damage caused by you or your visitors)	✓	

Miscellaneous continued

No:	Repair / Maintenance	Landlord Responsibility	Tenant (Your) Responsibility
8.16	Kitchen Worktops	✓	
8.17	Infestations by birds, insects and vermin		✓
8.18	Door bells		✓
8.19	Hard Wire Fire Alarm and Emergency Call system	✓	
8.20	Any damage caused by tenant or visitors as a result of aggression, horseplay, negligence, or carelessness, whether intentional or accidental.		✓

If Castle Housing has to carry out any repair as a result of damage (intentional or accidental) caused by you, your family or visitors to your home then you will be charged for these repairs.

You are responsible for repairing and maintaining any additional improvements that you have carried out, or that have been done on your behalf.

MAINTENANCE AND ADAPTATIONS

CYCLICAL MAINTENANCE

Some repairs are carried out on a regular, scheduled basis in order to maintain your home in a good condition. Examples include:

- Painting any external work.
- Servicing gas and electric appliances provided by Castle Housing.
- Servicing fire/panic alarms and in some communal areas, fire fighting equipment.

We will inform you in advance if we need access to your home in order to carry out any of these repairs.

MAJOR REPAIRS AND IMPROVEMENTS

From time to time, we may need to carry out major repairs or improvements to your home.

This type of work can include:

- Replacing the roof.
- Replacing or improving the kitchen.
- Replacing or improving the bathroom.
- Replacing or improving the wiring.

We will inform you in advance to explain our plans if we intend to carry out this type of work to your home. We always consult with tenants before major repairs or improvements are carried out.

ADAPTATIONS TO YOUR HOME

If you or someone in your household is, or becomes, physically disabled, you must discuss your requirements with us. You can contact your Housing Manager who will guide you through the process. For more information please telephone Castle Housing 01524 824081.

GAS SAFETY

ANNUAL GAS SAFETY CHECKS

As a landlord, we are required by law to carry out an annual safety check of all the gas appliances that we have provided in your home. This may include the central heating boiler and gas fires. This is a legal requirement for all landlords and a safety check must be carried out every year. You are obligated by law to allow access to our gas engineers to undertake your gas safety check.

The gas check is for your safety, and we appreciate your co-operation in allowing access into your home in order to carry out these checks.

We will telephone you with an appointment for this service. If a gas engineer calls at your property and has been unable to gain access, a card will be posted through your door to tell you that someone has called to do your inspection. The card will have our phone number on it. It is important for your own safety that you contact us to rearrange an appointment.

WHO WILL CHECK THE SAFETY OF MY PERSONAL APPLIANCES?

If you have installed your own appliances, it is your own responsibility to ensure that they are safe. However, if you are installing a gas appliance you must inform us as we need to inspect the works after installation.

Please note, a charge may be raised for this inspection.

You should make sure that all necessary appliances are installed by a qualified gas engineer or electrician. Gas appliances should be installed by a Gas Safe (formerly CORGI) registered gas engineer. Electrical appliances should be installed by a NICEIC registered electrician. You should also have your own appliances checked every year to make sure that they are safe.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I CAN SMELL GAS IN MY HOME?

- Put out cigarettes and do not use matches or naked flames.
- Do not turn on or off any light switches.
- Do not use any electrical equipment.
- Check that all Gas appliances are turned off, such as cookers.
- Check if the pilot light on your boiler has gone out.
- Turn off Gas at the meter.
- Phone the National Grid immediately on 0800 111 999

ELECTRICITY SAFETY

Electrical Power Failure

Residual Current Device

Your main electric switch may incorporate an automatic switch off device called a Residual Current Device (RCD).

If a situation arises which creates a potential shock or fire risk, the RCD will switch off automatically.

If your power supply switches off and the reason for this is not clear, then you should:

1. Switch off all Miniature Circuit Breakers (MCB's). These are located in your fuse box. They are switches which replace fuses.
2. Return the RCD switch to the "on" position.
3. Switch on each MCB switch in turn, until the RCD switch automatically switches off again. This will indicate which circuit has the fault.
4. Switch off and unplug any appliances connected to the specific circuit. If there is more than one, attempt to switch the RCD switch to the on position after removing each appliance. In this way the faulty appliance can be identified.
5. Should either the RCD or MCB switches not return to the "on" position, a fault could exist in your circuit, which you should report to us.

Individual Fuses

Fuses will automatically stop the flow of power if there is a fault with an appliance you are using or with the wiring in your home. If this happens:

- Unplug or switch off at the main socket any appliances that you think may have caused the problem.

- Switch off the electricity at the mains supply.
- You may have to replace the fuse in the plug of an individual appliance. Unless the appliance has been provided by Castle Housing, you will need to arrange for the appliance to be fixed.

PROTECTING YOUR HOME AGAINST FIRE

Please take care when using electrical appliances or when cooking to safeguard against fire hazards. Check the cords of appliances regularly to check they are not worn or frayed and do not leave heated appliances such as irons unattended.

Be careful not to cover electrical heaters; leave them well ventilated and positioned well away from water.

During a power failure keep a torch on hand and never use candles for lighting as this represents a very high fire risk.

- Regularly check that your smoke alarm is working and keep a log of this.
- Keep matches and lighters in a safe place.
- Do not cover over gas or electric heaters, boilers or fireguards.
- Do not leave your pans unattended on the cooker.
- Never leave burning candles unattended.

If A Fire Starts In Your Home

- Alert everyone in your home of the fire.
- Close all doors behind you if you can do so safely.
- Get everyone out immediately.
- If there is smoke in the air, crawl on the floor.
- Call the fire brigade on 999.

- Warn your neighbours.
- Find somewhere safe to wait and do not go back into your home until the fire officer tells you that it is safe to do so.

When You Go On Holiday

- Unplug electric plugs and switch off sockets at the wall.
- Close and lock all windows and doors.
- Cancel regular deliveries like milk and papers.
- Ask a trusted friend or neighbour to keep a watch on your house and make sure that post is not left sticking out of the letter box.
- Use a timer switch to switch lights on and off after dark.
- Leave heating on a low setting in cold weather.

PREVENTING DAMP AND MOULD GROWTH IN YOUR HOME

Condensation can cause damp in your home. It is caused by the condensation of moisture in the air onto a cold surface like a window or cold wall. There are a few steps that you can take to reduce condensation:

- Shut the bathroom door and open the window when having a bath or shower.
- Cover pans when you are cooking and open the kitchen window.
- Dry washing in a bathroom or kitchen with the door closed and the window open.
- Keep your home warm and well ventilated at all times.
- Dry windows and surfaces that have condensation on them.

ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

We take anti-social behaviour very seriously.

We take a very firm approach towards all forms of violence, harassment and hate crimes. If you engage in anti-social behaviour, you are in danger of losing your home and you will be evicted.

Anti-social behaviour is any unreasonable behaviour, which threatens others or stops them from enjoying their homes and from living in a peaceful community. The following can all be classed as acts of anti-social behaviour:

- Creating excessive noise. This includes such things as playing loud music, holding frequent parties, or having your television turned up too loud.
- Violence or threats of violence, within the home or local community.
- Racial or homophobic harassment and intimidation.
- All forms of verbal harassment and intimidation.
- Criminal activity including using homes to supply drugs.
- Having an extremely untidy garden.
- Abandoned cars on the premises.

MOVING ON

If you would like to move out of your property, your support worker will be able to help you with this process.

NOTICE PERIOD

You must give us four weeks' notice in writing. You can do this by completing the "Termination of Tenancy" form from the appendix of this document.

During this four week period we will arrange to carry out a pre-termination inspection.

TO TERMINATE YOUR TENANCY

When you move out, you should remove all your personal belongings. The house and garden should be left in a clean and tidy condition.

We will charge you if we have to remove any of your belongings, or clear out any of your rubbish. We will also expect you to meet the cost of repairing any damage to the property or alterations that have not been made good.

You must pay all your rent, and any other charges owing before leaving the property.

You cannot store personal belongings at the property after the day you have left.

ON THE DAY YOU MOVE OUT

Make sure you have arranged to pay all your outstanding bills for your rent, council tax, gas, water, electricity and telephone. Before moving out, read all meters and send a copy of the meter readings to the suppliers. Keep a copy for your own records.

Clean every room of the property and remove all rubbish. Do not leave rubbish in the garden or stacked by the bins. If an accumulation of rubbish is found then a charge will be raised to remove this rubbish.

Lock all the doors and windows and return all sets of keys to Castle Housing Ltd by 12 noon on the day of termination. You will be met at the property by a representative from Castle Housing, who you can hand these keys to.

CHECK LIST

- Cancel milk, papers and other regular deliveries.
- Complete a post re-direction form at the Post Office (there is a charge for redirection).
- Inform TV licensing on 0870 241 668 to transfer your TV license.
- Turn water off at the stop-cock (especially in winter)
- Turn Gas and Electricity off at the meters.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

DO I NEED HOME CONTENTS INSURANCE?

Yes - As a tenant, you are responsible for insuring your own belongings against fire, theft or damage.

As your landlord, we are responsible for insuring the building.

CAN I KEEP A PET?

You may be able to keep a small pet such as a Hamster in your home but you must get permission from Castle Housing first.

Some properties are not suitable for pets. If you wish to request permission to keep a pet, please contact us to discuss this. Please do not buy a pet until you have received written permission from Castle Housing Ltd to keep the pet in your home.

CAN I DECORATE MY HOME?

We encourage all tenants to make their home 'their own'. Please note the replacement of carpets, soft furnishings and interior decoration is not included in your rent or service charges.

If you wish to make any significant or permanent improvements in your property, you will need to speak to us first to get permission. Telephone Customer Services 01524 824081.

Any works undertaken must be completed to a professional standard. Please discuss any plans for redecoration beforehand to avoid any reinstatement charges at a future date. Failure to consult with us regarding this may invite charges for restoration if you leave the property.

CAN I CARRY OUT IMPROVEMENTS TO MY HOME?

You must ask permission and get written approval before carrying out any adaptations or improvements to your home.

All building, wiring and plumbing work should be carried out by suitably qualified trades' people.

Gas appliances should be installed by a GAS SAFE (formally CORGI) registered gas engineer.

Electrical appliances should be installed by a NICEIC registered electrician. In order to comply with building regulations, certain jobs must be completed by a member of a Domestic Installer Scheme.

We will require access to the property to inspect completed work to ensure that it has been carried out to a high standard, and complies with the appropriate regulations.

CAN I FIT NEW FLOOR COVERINGS?

If you choose to fit a carpet in your new home you will be responsible for making sure the internal doors open and close properly over the new carpet. Laminate floors are not suitable in some properties because they cause a noise nuisance to neighbours. Therefore you will need to ask permission before laying such flooring.

WHAT HAPPENS IF ANOTHER AGENCY CAUSES DAMAGE TO MY HOME?

From time to time, you may find that third parties, such as support workers or visiting engineers cause damage within your home. If this occurs it is the responsibility of the third party agency to pay for the repair costs. They will usually have insurance arrangements to cover such costs.

If damage occurs:

- Tell the worker that they have caused damage, and encourage them to look at it.

- Ask them to write a report about what happened and the damage caused. Make sure they sign this report.
- They may need to inform their employer about this damage, to let them know they will be charged for the repair.
- Telephone us, and inform us immediately of the situation.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I FIND VERMIN OR PESTS IN OR AROUND MY HOME?

E.g.

- I've seen a rat at the bottom of my garden
- There is a wasp's nest in the air vent.
- Ants are coming in through the skirting boards.

Your local authority will have a specialist team that deals with all vermin and pests. These teams are usually based within the environmental health department. There may be a charge for this service, however, rats and mice are usually considered to be vermin and there is not usually a charge to deal with them. You can find a list of local authority contact details from Morecambe Town Hall. Your support worker will be able to help you to manage this.

HOW CAN I GET RID OF BULKY ITEMS OR RUBBISH?

It is your responsibility to keep your external area tidy and free from a build up of rubbish.

If external areas are not kept tidy, then Castle Housing Limited will tidy it up and make a charge to you.

Your local authority will usually arrange to remove bulky items but depending upon where you live, there may be a charge for this service. Your support worker will be able to assist in the removal of unwanted bulky items.

WILL SOMEONE HELP ME WITH MY GARDEN?

It is your responsibility to maintain your garden and fences, including cutting your grass. If you are elderly, infirm or have a disability and you are not able to do your own gardening, there is a gardening service available from Castle Housing. There is a weekly charge for this service which may be included in your rent.

We do not remove unwanted trees unless they are diseased or damaging the property. Some trees may be protected and cannot be removed. If you want to arrange to have a tree removed, you must first check with your local authority that it is not protected, and then discuss this matter with us.

FURTHER QUESTIONS / QUERIES

If you have any further questions or queries that are not answered in this handbook, please do not hesitate to contact us as Castle Housing Ltd.

You contact us by:

- Telephone on 01524 824081. (Monday – Friday Office Hours Only)
- Write to us at Castle Housing Ltd, 48 Hest Bank Lane, Lancaster. LA2 6BS.
- E-mail **Maria@castlehousing.co.uk**

Appendix 1

TENANCY TERMINATION

To: CASTLE HOUSING LIMITED

I hereby give you **four weeks' notice** that I/we will terminate my/our tenancy of (name):

Address:

The tenancy will end at 12 noon on Monday: _____

Before this date we will arrange to carry out a pre-termination inspection of the property

My forwarding address is:

Reason for termination:

Supplier of Gas is:

Electricity is:

IMPORTANT - PLEASE READ CAREFULLY

You are required to clear the property of all effects before handing in all keys to Castle Housing Limited. If you fail to clear the property of all effects Castle Housing limited will remove and dispose of all contents and **you will be charged for this work** to be carried out.

By signing this form you are also relinquishing all rights of ownership to anything you may leave in the property, either intentionally or accidentally and agree that Castle Housing Limited or any sub-contractor in their employ will not be held liable for disposing of any such property or contents left in the property after the date of termination, stated above.

Signed Dated

Signed Dated

KEYS SHOULD BE RETURNED BY 12 NOON ON THE DAY OF TERMINATION OR YOU WILL BE CHARGED RENT FOR ALL EXTRA WEEKS IN FULL UNTIL THE KEYS ARE RECEIVED

Please return this form to:

Castle Housing Limited
48 Hest Bank Lane, Lancaster. LA2 6BS

Appendix 2

PERMISSION FOR MINOR WORKS OR REDECORATION

To: CASTLE HOUSING LIMITED

Name:

Address:

I am writing to ask permission for the following:

I understand that if permission is granted all the work will **be at my full expense**. They will be carried out to a high standard and that any necessary planning and building regulations will be complied with and that:

1. All gas alterations or installations will be carried out by a Gas Safe (formerly CORGI) registered plumber and on completion of the work a Gas Safe (formerly CORGI) safety certificate will be forwarded to Castle Housing Limited.
2. All electrical work will be carried out by a NICEIC registered electrician and upon completion of the work a NICEIC safety certificate will be sent to Castle Housing Limited

If applicable: Please supply a sketch of your property and the location of any alterations.

Signed Dated

Signed Dated

Please return this form to:
Castle Housing Limited

48 Hest Bank Lane
Lancaster
LA2 6BS

Appendix 3

Maintenance Request Form

Please complete all questions on this form. Thank you.

Occupant's name:

Address of house requiring maintenance.....

Contact person:..... Contact telephone number:.....

Nature of the fault: *(please be specific)*

How did the fault/damage/accident occur *(please be specific)*:

.....
.....
.....

Who is Reporting This Fault? Position:.....

Date Reported:.....

Has this particular fault already been reported? YES/NO

If so, by whom?..... Date

What was the job number given.....

(Please note: All reported faults trigger a Call Out. A repeated Call Out to a job currently being dealt with will result in additional 'Call Out' charges being made.)

I understand that reporting this fault will trigger a Call Out.

If I overstate/misrepresent/ report a new fault that is already scheduled within the system (a fault that is already/ has already been dealt with), tenants may be charged for additional unnecessary Call Outs.

Please sign..... Date: / /

Below: For Castle Housing- Office Use Only:

Job Number: _____

Method of Receipt

Date & Time (am/pm) form received: / /

Signed

