

# tenant information



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# moving in

Once we've shown you round your new home, we'll ask you to **read and sign your tenancy agreement**. We'll then give you a signed copy of your tenancy agreement and a new tenant pack.



## Settling in

Around the time of your tenancy starting, your housing officer will get in touch with you to check:

- If you've moved yet
- Your benefits are sorted out (if this applies)
- There are no outstanding repairs
- You've had the support you need

We'll then arrange another 'settling in' visit for 2-4 weeks time to make sure your rent is being paid on time, find out if you've settled in to your new tenancy and ask if you need more support.

One of the first things you'll need to do is arrange for gas and electricity supplies. Phone these numbers to check who currently supplies fuel to your address:

- Electricity: 0330 101 0300
- Gas: 0870 608 1524

*Tip: It's useful to have your meter readings and meter reference numbers ready in case you need to give them. These are shown on the meters.*

For extra advice call Advice Works on **0300 300 1238** or email **adviceworks@renfrewshire.gov.uk**. If you are having problems with the meters or energy suppliers, call **0300 300 0300** or email **emu@renfrewshire.gov.uk**

The team can advise on how to reduce your fuel bills, what payment schemes are available and what to do if you are behind with your payments.

You may want to contact some or all of the following organisations before you move so you can tell them about your change of address:

- Renfrewshire Council's Council Tax section
- The benefits agency
- The post office (to redirect your mail)
- Your bank, credit card and savings organisations
- TV licensing
- The DVLA (for your driver's licence)
- Your employer
- The electoral register (for voting)
- TV/broadband provider

## Register with MyAccount

View and manage your rent and Council Tax accounts online.

You can:

- view your balance and payments
- pay by debit/credit card
- tell us about a change in address
- apply for benefit, discount or exemption
- sign up at **[www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/MyAccount](http://www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/MyAccount)**

## Collecting rubbish

We will collect your household rubbish and items for recycling. We'll let you know about your rubbish and recycling collection days.

**Please remember to bring your bin in from the street as soon as possible after we have emptied it.**

If you have any bulky or awkward household rubbish you'd like us to take away, call us on **0300 300 0300** or email **customerservices.contact@renfrewshire.gov.uk**

If there is a bin chute in your building, remember to wrap all the rubbish tightly. Don't put any bulky items in the chute as this will cause a blockage. If a blockage does occur, please contact **0300 300 0300** to report it.

## Voting

If you want to vote in local or general elections, you need to make sure you're registered. You can register to vote at any time.

Don't wait until an election is called; make sure you register to vote **now**. Phone **0300 300 0150** or more information or email **ero@renfrewshire-vjb.gov.uk**

## Community alarms

Community alarms are designed to reassure you that help will be on hand if you need it.

If you have a disability, or you are frail or housebound, we can provide a community alarm to help you or your carers call for help 24 hours a day.

We can fit an alarm in your home if you have a working phone line. There is a small weekly charge for this service.

If you'd like a community alarm, call Renfrewshire Adult Service on **0300 300 1380**.

*Tip: if you want us to move your community alarm to your new home, call Renfrewshire Adult Services or you can tell the community alarm control centre that you are moving by pressing the button on your community alarm.*

# paying your rent

Paying your rent in advance and on time is very important in order to avoid unnecessary arrears.



Your rent depends on the size and type of your home, including the type of heating.

Rent levels are reviewed on an annual basis. Paying your rent is not optional and while we understand sometimes you may struggle, we are always happy to help you and provide advice where required.

We may consider carrying out certain duties in relation to your tenancy which we may charge for, for example, cleaning shared areas and maintaining shared ground. We will consult you before we introduce schemes like this, if they are not already in place.

## How to pay your rent

We'll give you a swipe card to use for paying your rent.

You can use your swipe card at PayPoint facilities throughout Renfrewshire (for example, at cash collection points in your local corner store).

You also pay your rent in the following ways:

- online at [www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/My Account](http://www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/My Account)
- by Direct Debit or standing order;
- at the Customer Service Centre in Paisley;
- at payment kiosks in the Renfrew and Johnstone Customer Service Centres or in Ferguslie, Glenburn and Foxbar libraries or Johnstone Castle and Gallowhill community centres;
- at most post offices
- by debit or credit card by phoning **0300 300 0222** (during office hours) or **0845 602 0355** (24 hours); or
- by post, making your cheque or postal order payable to '**Renfrewshire Council**' and sending your payment to: Director of Finance and Resources, Renfrewshire House, Cotton Street, Paisley PA1 1HY.

**Please do not send cash unless you send it by registered post.**

We'll send you a periodic statement of account showing the payments you've made. You can also access your rent account online with our free My Account service to check your payments and balance at the touch of a button—24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

If you're having problems paying rent or Council Tax, the most important thing is to get help and advice as quickly as possible—speak to an income advisor from our Advice Works service.

## Universal Credit/Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit/Reduction

You may be able to get help to pay your rent. This will depend on your income, the age and number of people living with you, your personal circumstances, and the amount of your rent.

Universal Credit will replace six key benefits and tax credits with a single monthly payment. Universal Credit is administered by the Department for Work and Pensions and aims to make the welfare system for working age customers simpler.

Universal Credit replaced the following benefits and tax credits:

- Housing Benefit
- Income Support
- Income Based Jobseekers Allowance
- Income Related Employment and Support Allowance
- Child Tax Credits
- Working Tax Credits

People who already receive any of the six benefits and tax credits listed above will continue to do so unless they have a change in their circumstances that would cause their benefits to be re-assessed. In that case, a new claim for Universal Credit would be required.

***Tip: If you already claim these six benefits or tax credits you do not need to do anything until the Department for Work and Pensions get in contact with you.***

From 1st February 2019, if you claim Universal Credit this will usually include your housing costs (previously Housing Benefit).

Some groups of people will continue to claim Housing Benefit. For example, new claims to Housing Benefit within Renfrewshire can only be considered for:

- Claimants who have reached Pension Age
- Claimants who live in supported exempt accommodation
- Claimants who live in temporary accommodation
- Claimants who have a Severe Disability Premium included in their Housing Benefit, Income Support, Employment and Support Allowance (IR) or Jobseeker's Allowance (IB) award

Those still eligible to apply for Housing Benefit should continue to do so through Renfrewshire Council.

For everyone else, Universal Credit should be claimed for help with housing costs. **If you don't apply straightaway, you may lose out as usually Universal Credit is not backdated.**

Council Tax Reduction should be claimed through Renfrewshire Council regardless of these changes as this is not included in Universal Credit. You can apply for a Council Tax reduction through MyAccount or by calling **0300 300 0204**.

## State pension age

Current UK Government rules mean that couples will be deemed to be working age until the younger partner reaches State Pension age.

Mixed age couples with a partner under State Pension age already in receipt of Pension Credit or Housing Benefit will be unaffected by this change, while they remain entitled to either benefit.

## Help to pay your Council Tax

You may be able to get help to pay your Council Tax. This will depend on your income, the age and number of people living with you, your personal circumstances, and the amount of your Council Tax.

Council Tax Reduction should be claimed through Renfrewshire Council as this is not included in Universal Credit.

## Disputes

If you want to dispute a decision on your claim, you should make your dispute request in writing. Phone Advice Works on **0300 300 1238** and they'll advise you on how to dispute a decision. There is normally a time limit for disputes to be made, so it is important that do this straightaway.

# about your tenancy

When you rent a council home, we will give you the keys and a **tenancy agreement**. Your tenancy agreement sets out the conditions of your tenancy, which protect both you and us. It is a contract, and records information such as your name, the date you became our tenant and how much rent you must pay. It also lists the conditions you must keep to as a tenant.



We agree to rent a home to you on the terms and conditions set out in your tenancy agreement. We are entitled to change the amount of rent and any service charge, as long as we tell you in writing at least four weeks before the beginning of the rental period when the change is to start.

You should read your tenancy agreement carefully and keep it in a safe place. If you need us to explain anything, please contact your Local Housing Office.

You have the right to a **Scottish Secure Tenancy** or a **Short Scottish Secure Tenancy**. We will advise you which type of tenancy you have as this will affect your rights as a tenant. This means that we cannot evict you from your home (force you to move) unless we can prove in court that we have a good reason for doing so.

Examples of good reasons for eviction are if you do not pay your rent or look after the property, or if you cause a nuisance to your neighbours. Eviction is a last resort and we will do all we can to deal with any problems in other ways before we consider it.

## Joint Tenancy

You may want to share the responsibilities of your tenancy with someone who lives with you. A joint tenant can be added to the tenancy agreement with permission from the Council. This can be your husband, wife, partner, brother, sister, carer and so on. Proposed joint tenants will need to have lived in your home as their main home for 12 months before applying to become a joint tenant. The 12 month qualifying period only starts from when the Council has been notified that the person is living with you. Please contact your Local Housing Office for advice.

## Transferring your tenancy

If you are leaving your home to live somewhere else, you may be able to apply to transfer your tenancy to someone who has lived with you for at least 12 months. The 12 month qualifying period only starts from when the Council has been notified that the person is living with you. The house must also have been your only or principal home during the 12 months immediately before you apply for written permission to pass your tenancy to someone else. Please contact your Local Housing Office for advice.

## Succeeding to a tenancy

If you die, your partner or a joint tenant has the first priority to succeed (take over the tenancy of your home). There may be exceptions if the property has been adapted.

There is no qualifying period for a tenant's husband, wife, civil partner or joint tenant to succeed to the tenancy provided that the property has been the person's only or principal home at the time of the tenant's death.

If you don't have a partner or joint tenant, or if you do and they don't want to succeed, your home can go to a member of your family aged 16 or over as long as your home was their only or main home at the time of death and if they lived with you for 12 months or more. The 12 month qualifying period only starts from when the Council has been notified that the person is living with you.

Finally, we give third priority to a carer who is providing or has provided care to you or a member of your family. To qualify, the carer must be aged 16 or over, and have given up his or her only main home to live with you and must have lived with you for 12 months or more. Again the 12 month qualifying period only starts from when the Council has been notified that the person is living with you. Please contact your Local Housing Office for advice.

In all of the above cases (ie. applying to be a joint tenant, transferring the tenancy or succeeding to the tenancy) your home must have been the only or main home of the applicant, **for at least 12 months before applying**—unless otherwise stated. The 12 month qualifying period only starts from when the Council has been notified that the person is living with you.

If you want someone to move into your home, it is important you let us know immediately so they don't miss out on being able to apply to: be a joint tenant, transfer the tenancy over to them or to succeed to the tenancy.

For further information on how to notify us that you want someone to move in with you or on how to apply for a joint tenancy, transferring your tenancy or succeeding to the tenancy please contact your Local Housing Office on 0300 300 0222.

## Subletting your tenancy

Before you can sublet your home, you must apply in writing to the Council for written permission. Before applying:

- You must have been the tenant of the house throughout the 12 months immediately before you apply for written permission to sublet your home.
- If you were not the tenant throughout that period, the house must have been your only or principal home during those 12 months; and the person who was the tenant at the time must have notified us that you were living there. The 12 month qualifying period does not start until the Council has been notified.
- You must also detail the amount of rent and any other payments (including any depots) you propose charging (if anything).

## Applying for rehousing

If you want to move from your council house, you should contact your Local Housing Office to discuss your housing options. You can then choose the solution that meets your housing needs.

## Mutual exchange

If you are a council tenant, you can exchange homes with another council tenant. This is called a mutual exchange.

You can also exchange with a tenant from a different council or housing association. If you want more information about the procedure and what to do next, please contact us.

We will normally allow a mutual exchange if this will not cause overcrowding in either home and if there have been no problems with either tenancy. We will refuse an exchange if you are behind with your rent or there have been any complaints about your behaviour at your present home.

The appropriate landlords must approve all exchanges. You must not exchange home without getting permission from us and any other landlord involved. **If you do, you could lose your home.**

The Renfrewshire Council House Exchange website brings together tenants looking to swap their home. For more information, go to **[www.renfrewshire.houseexchange.org.uk](http://www.renfrewshire.houseexchange.org.uk)**

For further information please contact your Local Housing Office or call **0300 300 0222**.

## Ending your tenancy

If you want to end your tenancy, you must contact the Customer Service Centre or your Local Housing Office **at least 28 days** before you plan to leave your home.

We will ask you to confirm this by writing to us or by filling in an 'end of tenancy' form at the Customer Service Centre or your Local Housing Office.

**If you don't give us 28 days written notice, we will charge you four weeks rent from the date you return the keys.**

We expect you to leave your home in good condition. If there is damage to your home or if we need to arrange to get rid of things you have left behind, we may charge you for this.

If you've made certain improvements to your home, you may be entitled to compensation when you end your tenancy, as long as you had our permission to carry out the work.

You must:

- have had our written permission to make any improvements before you started work; and
- keep any bill relating to the improvements you have made.

If you carry out alterations or improvements to the property without our permission, and we have to put the property back to the original condition, we may have to charge you for this.

For more information, please contact your Local Housing Office.

## What we expect from you

- You must pay your rent in advance.
- You must advise us of any changes in your circumstance.
- You must let us know if anyone moves into or out of your home, or if your name changes.
- You must look after the fixtures and fittings in your home.
- You must keep your garden tidy and cut the grass regularly. If you are elderly or disabled and have no able-bodied adult living with you, you can ask us to include you in the Garden Assistance Scheme (this means we will send someone to cut your grass and hedge if you have one).
- If you live in a flat, you must make sure you take your turn to clean shared areas, like stairs and landings.
- You must ask for our permission to keep a pet. Please contact us for an application form. If you live in a multi-storey or sheltered property, you are not allowed to keep dogs.
- You must keep your pets under control.
- You must keep any noise in your home at an acceptable level.
- You must keep your home property decorated.
- For your safety, you must not paint or varnish wooden gas-fire casings or fire surrounds.
- For your safety, you must not install ceiling fanlight fittings in rooms which have gas or solid-fuel appliances.
- You must keep common areas clear including landings and stairwells.

Please try not to fall out with your neighbours. You are living in a community. What happens in and around your home affects your neighbours. **Be considerate.**

We will hold you responsible if your visitors misbehave inside or outside your home. If you are having problems with your neighbours, please contact us. The good-neighbour agreement (which is included in your tenancy booklet) says that we will do everything possible to deal with the problem of antisocial behaviour effectively and firmly but in a fair way.

We also provide a mediation service to help sort out any problems between neighbours.

## What you can expect from us

We have responsibilities to you. As your landlord, we will:

- make sure that the wind and rain cannot get into your home;
- carry out necessary repairs to your home;
- tell you, each year, about any change to your rent;
- give you opportunities to participate as a tenant; and
- not refuse permission, without good reason, if you want to make changes to your home, or transfer or sublet your tenancy.

We are committed to providing good quality, affordable housing in an attractive and secure environment. To help us achieve this, you must look after your home and be a good neighbour.

## When you need our permission

You must ask for our permission if you want to do any of the following:

- Make alterations to your home or change any of the fixtures and fittings (for example, change the doors, or install a fitted kitchen or laminated flooring).
- Transfer your tenancy to someone else.
- Exchange home with someone else.
- Take in a lodger or rent your home to someone else if you have to leave the area for a while.
- Leave your home for more than four weeks.
- Have a pet.
- Run a business from your home.
- Build a garage, a garden hut, wall, greenhouse or a fence.
- Build a driveway.
- Erect timber decking.
- Fix something to the building such as: aerials, satellite dishes, external CCTV, lights or other fixtures.
- Store anything or park a vehicle, caravan or trailer on our land or common area.
- Install an electric vehicle charging point.

# protecting your home

From burglary to vandalism to extreme weather, there are many things which can threaten the safety and security of your home and can cause damage and loss.



## To protect your home from burglars or any other criminals

- Always lock your windows and doors when you go out. Take a few minutes to check around. You should even lock up if you are only leaving your home for a few minutes.
- Leave a light on if you will be out after dark.
- Never leave keys hidden outside your home. Burglars usually know the right places to look.
- If you live in a flat with a door-entry system, make sure that you keep the door shut at all times. When you answer your handset, only let people in if you know them.
- Do not let strangers into your home. If someone comes to your home claiming to be a tradesman or official, insist that they show you their identity card. If they do not have one, don't let them in.
- Report anything suspicious to the police immediately.

It is an important condition of your Scottish Secure Tenancy that you contact us **if you plan to leave your home for more than four weeks.**

### **When you go away on holiday, you should:**

- leave your valuables at a bank or other safe place;
- leave your keys and the address where you will be staying with someone you trust, preferably a neighbour;
- ask someone to keep an eye on your home; and
- stop your milk and paper deliveries.

## Insurance

We have arranged buildings insurance for the structure of your home but you must insure the contents, your personal belongings and decorations.

We offer a low-cost home contents insurance scheme which you can pay for with your rent. You can get more information about our insurance scheme from your Customer Service Centre or local Neighbourhood Team or our website by visiting

**[www.renfrewshire.gov.uk](http://www.renfrewshire.gov.uk)**

If you don't insure your belongings, you risk having to pay the full cost of replacing or repairing them if they are damaged or stolen. The cost of household insurance is small compared with the cost of replacing all your possessions.

## Fire safety

There are smoke and heat alarms installed in your home. Some alarms are connected to the property electricity supply. They will also have a battery in case there is a power cut.

You must check that your smoke alarm is working properly. Test the alarm every week by pressing the button located on the face of the alarm. Other smoke alarms will be battery operated and should be similarly tested.

If your smoke alarm is not working, report the fault to Renfrewshire Council's repair line on **0300 300 0300**.

**Your life, and those of your family and your neighbours' will depend on an early warning if there is a fire. Do not disconnect your smoke alarm, even if the noise is irritating when the toast burns!**

*Tip: Polystyrene tiles should not be applied to ceilings and walls. In the event of fire these can produce dense black smoke and release poisonous gases.*

Some general fire safety tips are to:

Always:

- unplug electrical appliances at night when you are not using them (chargers may overheat and ignite causing fire);
- extinguish all cigarettes properly and empty all ashtrays at night;
- place a fireguard in front of fires (coal/gas/electric) and remove fabrics or clothes next to fire;
- when going to bed, close all the doors inside your home at night to limit the spread of fire and smoke;
- regularly clean filters in tumble driers to avoid lint build-up which can create fire risk.

Never:

- overload electrical power points – this can lead to sockets and adaptors overheating and creating a source of fire;
- leave matches or lighters where children can reach them;
- leave fires, heaters or candles unattended or near fabrics or clothing;
- leave a chip pan unattended on the cooker;
- leave clothing drying over electric heaters unattended; or
- never interfere with electrical wiring or gas pipework installed within the property as this may create risk of fire and possible explosion. Contact the Council's repair team on **0300 300 300** if you are experiencing problems.

## Additional safety information for high-rise flats

Living in a high-rise flat does not make you any more at risk from fire. Planning what you should do in the event of a fire is largely the same as for people in other property types.

But there are some key differences you should know if you live in a high rise flat.

Your building has been designed and built with fire safety in mind. The walls and doors between flats, stairs and corridors are designed to resist fire and spread of smoke.

Most fires don't spread across more than one or two rooms, so if there is a fire in your building you are usually safest in your own flat unless heat or smoke is affecting you.

Do not use lifts in the event of fire. On activation of the fire alarm, the lifts will automatically drop to ground floor and come under control of fire officers.

**Renfrewshire Council and Scottish Fire and Rescue Service have adopted a 'Stay in Place' policy for all multi-storey buildings.**

## **If fire breaks out in the building**

- If you smell smoke in the corridor, bin area or refuse chute, activate the nearest fire alarm call point or call 999.
- Stay inside your flat and close all windows and doors.
- Only leave your flat if you are affected by heat or smoke or told to do so by the fire officers or police.
- Do not block fire doors on landing and stairwells as they are there to restrict smoke transfer.

## **If there is fire in your flat**

- Try to keep calm. Make sure everyone in your home knows about the fire. Then get out and stay out. Try to close the door to the room where the fire is located and any other doors leading to the front door as you leave. This will reduce the rate of spread of the fire and smoke.
- Don't stop for valuables or belongings, your life is more important.
- Don't attempt to fight the fire, leave that to the Fire Officers.
- Don't open doors if they are warm to touch as the fire may be in that room.
- If there is a lot of smoke, crawl on the floor as the air will be clearer there.
- Don't use the lift – use the stairs. Do not panic and rush as this may result in fall and injury.
- Wait for the arrival of the fire officers and provide any information requested.
- As soon as you can activate the fire alarm call point on the landing and **call 999**, giving them your full address including your flat number and floor.

## **If your escape route is blocked**

- Do not leave any items or combustible materials on your landing corridors which will prevent escape in event of fire or hinder rescue attempts.
- Get everyone into a room with a window or balcony— room furthest from source if possible.
- Place cushions, bedding etc. round the bottom of the door to keep out smoke.
- If possible, open the window for fresh air, wave a sheet and shout for assistance to let firefighters know you are there and need rescued.
- If the fire is outside your flat, seal your front door with tape, damp towels or bedding to restrict smoke entry.
- Seal any ventilation grilles where fitted.
- Phone 999, giving the number of your flat.

If your front door becomes hot, wet it down.

**Scottish Fire and Rescue Service** offer free home fire safety visits to everyone in their area.

To arrange a visit call **0800 0731 999** or text 'FIRE' to **80800** on your mobile phone. Your local fire station will call you back to arrange a time and date that suits you. During the visit, firefighters will check each room of your house with you, helping you make sure your house is safe.

**[www.dontgivefireahome.com](http://www.dontgivefireahome.com)** or

**[www.firescotland.gov.uk](http://www.firescotland.gov.uk)** for practical safety advice.

## What to do in an emergency involving water, electricity or gas

### Water

There will usually be two water supplies in your home. To turn off the water, turn the stopcocks.

The first stopcock is usually in the kitchen next to or under the sink. The stopcock tank, which feeds water into your toilet cistern and bath, is usually in the bathroom or in a bedroom.

If you can't find your stopcocks contact our repair service on **0300 300 0300**.

### Electricity

Your fuse box or circuit breaker board is usually situated next to your electric meter.

If you need to switch off all your electricity, the main switch is on the circuit breaker board. Even if a switch, socket or appliance isn't working never assume that it's safe to investigate.

It is unlikely that all the circuits in your house will go off at the same time. If you know which circuit has failed, check to see if the circuit breaker has tripped off. If you can identify an appliance that's causing the fault, disconnect or unplug and then reset the circuit breaker. If the circuit breaker doesn't reset this may indicate a fault and you should report this to the Customer Contact Centre on **0300 300 0300**.

The Council carries out electrical checks to all its housing stock periodically, therefore it is important you allow us access to carry out these inspections.

## Gas

If you smell gas call the National Gas Emergency Service immediately on **0800 111 999**. If you need to turn off the gas supply, your customer control valve is next to the gas meter. Make sure you have turned it off completely (90 degree angle).

Should further assistance be required, contact our repair service on **0300 300 0300**.

By law, we must carry out a safety check on all gas appliances every year. You will be reminded of your gas safety check approximately 8 weeks prior to the due date and it is essential you contact our repair service on 0300 300 0300 to arrange an appointment to have this carried out. If you need to change the appointment, please contact us beforehand. Failure to arrange an appointment may result in access being forced to your property (which you could be charged for). Safety checks will also be carried out for new tenants to ensure that the gas supply and appliances within the house are safe. Copies of gas safety certificates are provided to all tenants.

Carbon monoxide is a very poisonous gas which you cannot see or smell. Any gas, oil or coal heater or fire can produce carbon monoxide. Breathing in carbon monoxide can make you feel tired and dizzy and can give you headaches and chest pains.

### **Carbon monoxide can kill.**

If you suspect there are high levels of carbon monoxide in your property, follow these steps:

- Open all doors and windows
- Move everyone into the fresh air
- Call the Gas Emergency Service on **0800 111 999**

The carbon monoxide detectors in your home are designed to detect levels of carbon monoxide long before they reach harmful levels.

If you feel that your carbon monoxide alarm is not working correctly, contact our repair service immediately on **0300 300 0300**.

## **Asbestos in the home**

### **What is asbestos?**

Asbestos is a natural mineral which is mined out of the ground. In the past, after processing, most asbestos was made into building materials and was used in building work for many years, reaching a peak during the period after 1945. We, along with most other UK local authorities, own many buildings which contain asbestos. All asbestos is potentially very dangerous. However, health risks only happen if asbestos fibers are released when materials containing asbestos are damaged or disturbed.

## Where might I find asbestos in my home?

You will find asbestos most commonly in some, but not all, of the following materials:

- Decorative textured coatings and paints applied to walls and ceilings
- Floor tiles
- Heating and ventilation flues and part of heaters
- Toilet cisterns
- Bath panels
- Old electrical fuse boxes
- Access panels to service ducts
- Screen panels under windows, fascia boards, soffits, roof tiles, rainwater gutters and pipes
- Water storage tanks

Please remember building materials in houses which contain asbestos, but which are in good condition, will not be a risk to anyone living in the property and are best left undisturbed rather than being removed. Asbestos which has been painted, covered by other materials or enclosed in ducts, for example, in cupboards should also not be a risk.

## What can I do to help?

If you know there is damaged asbestos in your home or you are planning DIY or maintenance work which could involve working with building materials containing asbestos, contact the Customer Contact Centre on **0300 300 0300**. You can arrange an appointment for a technical officer to visit you. We may arrange for a sample of suspected material to be taken for analysis and will give you advice on what action, if any, you need to take.

## Cold weather

Here are some tips on coping with things like damp, condensation and frost.

To reduce condensation in your home:

- Heat your home. Keep doors closed and draw your curtains at night to block out draughts.
- Increase the ventilation in your home.
- Allow fresh air into your home. Open windows a little and use any extractor fans you have.
- Do not cover airbrick or vents.
- Dry clothes outside when possible.
- Make sure tumble dryers are vented outside.
- Open your kitchen window when you are cooking and keep all your other doors closed to stop the steam spreading through your home. Keep lids on pots and pans when cooking.
- Do not use Calor Gas fires or paraffin heaters.

If you have any persistent condensation problems, please contact our repairs service on **0300 300 0300**.

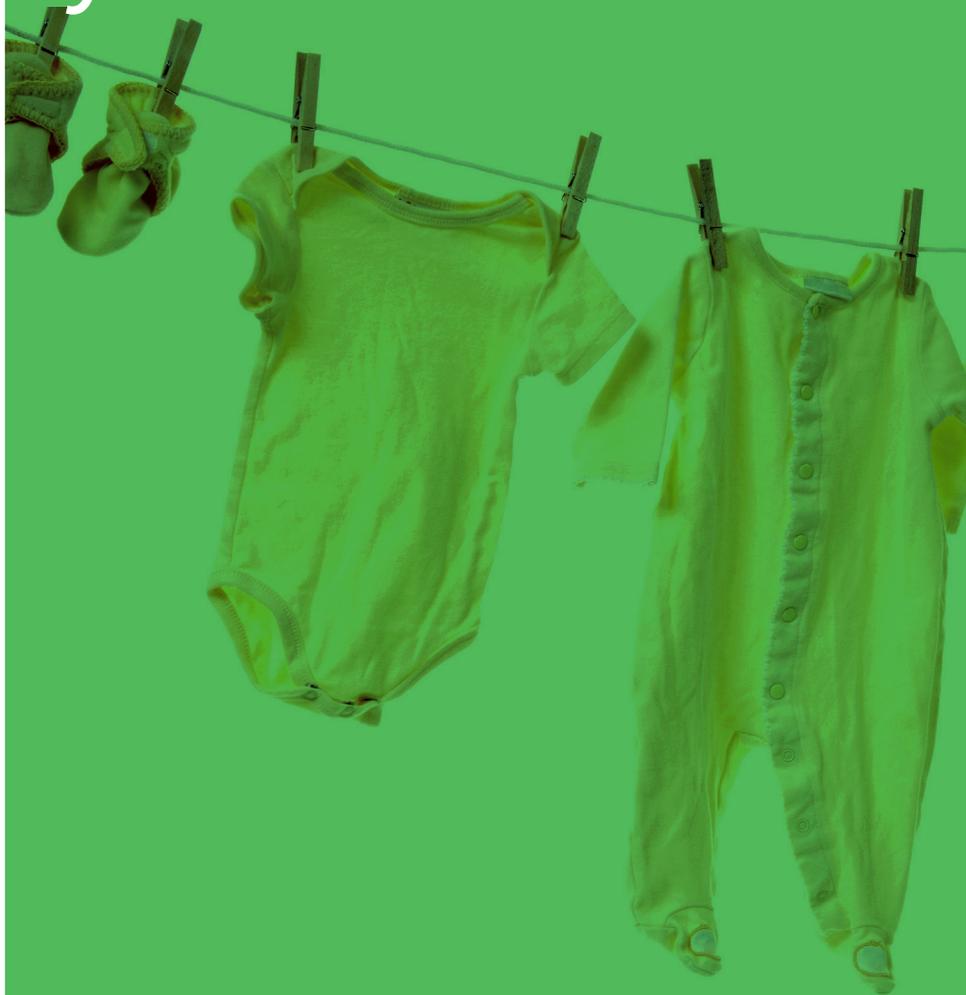
In very cold weather, frost can get into water pipes and make them expand. This can cause burst pipes. If your pipes burst, you should do the following:

- Turn off the water supply at the stopcock.
- Turn on all the taps.
- Switch off the electricity at the mains if the water has come into contact with electrical wires or fittings.
- Switch off your water heater or the central heating system. (If you have solid-fuel heating, put out the fire. Do not try to drain the boiler unless the fire has gone out).

If you have any of these problems, contact our repairs service on **0300 300 0300**. They will send a plumber.

*Tip: Don't pay too much for your electricity or gas. Our fuel advisers help tenants to find the lowest energy rates. Contact us on 0300 300 0300 to make an appointment.*

# looking after your estate



## Keeping a pet

You must not keep any dog, cat, bird or any other animal in the home or on any part of our property without our permission (which we will not refuse without good reason). Due to the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, you need our permission if you want to have a dog, even if it is a dog not covered by the Act. Please contact us to fill in an application form to have a dog.

If you have problems with stray dogs, contact our animal warden service on **0300 300 0380**.

## Put up a satellite dish

If you want to put up a satellite dish, you must apply to us. You will have to fill in an application form giving details of:

- the size of the satellite dish;
- where you plan to put the dish; and
- how you will fix the dish to the property.

We will let you know the result of your application within 28 days. We may remove any satellite dish which you have put up without permission.

## Build a garage or lay a driveway (or both)

If you want to build a garage or lay a driveway (or both), you must get permission from your local Neighbourhood Team and from our Planning section. You may have to pay a fee.

Please contact us and we will give you the application forms you need.

## Put up a fence, hut or greenhouse

If you want to put up a fence, hut or greenhouse on your property, please fill in an application form which you can get from the Customer Service Centre or your local Neighbourhood Team.

If you are not sure which area of garden you are responsible for, your housing officer will be able to assist.

## Antisocial behaviour

What happens in and around your home can affect the quality of life within your neighbourhood. You are living in a community and you should consider your neighbours, as should any visitor(s) to your home.

We will hold you responsible for your visitors' behaviour. The good-neighbour agreement included in your tenancy booklet says that we will do everything possible to deal with the problem of antisocial behaviour, effectively and firmly but in a fair way.

If you have any antisocial behaviour problems with your neighbours, you can call your housing officer on **0300 300 0222**.

## Abandoning your home

You may lose your tenancy if you do not permanently live in your home.

If your home appears to be empty, or if we believe that you are no longer using the property as your home, we can serve a notice which allows us to legally claim the property back. If you do not respond to the notice, in writing, within 28 days giving the reason why you are not staying in your home, we will take action to end your tenancy.

## Waste and recycling

Information regarding your household waste can be found on the Council's website [www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/mybins](http://www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/mybins) and in your new tenant pack with details of your bin rota and recycling arrangements.

Your bin must be presented for collection before 7am on the collection day or the night before and then returned to its storage point as soon as possible after collection.

When you put your bin out for us to collect, don't block the footpaths. Always leave room for people, prams and wheelchairs to get past.

If you have large, bulky items to dispose of, you can use one of the Household Waste and Recycling Centres throughout Renfrewshire.

Alternatively, the special uplift service can collect bulky or awkward items householders are unable to deal with themselves. Tenants are limited to a maximum of two special uplifts per year. If any additional uplifts are requested, they will be charged at current rates.

You can get more information on special uplifts on **0300 300 0300** and more information on the recycling service on **0300 300 0380**.

## Pest control

Normally, we expect you to deal with everyday insects, for example, flies, garden insects and the occasional wasp. You can contact Environmental Services on **0300 300 0380** or use the online form on our website if your house is infested with larder beetles, fleas, bedbugs or cockroaches. The department can also deal with wasps nests in or near your home. You can also contact the department if your house is infested with mice or rats.

# energy advice



## Heating your home

Make sure you know how to use your heating controls and programmer. Set your timer to suit your personal requirements. If you don't understand how to use them properly, call **0300 300 0300 (selecting option 5)** and request assistance from the energy team or email **emu@renfrewshire.gov.uk**.

If you are struggling with your energy bills, have problems with meters or with suppliers, call **0300 300 0300 (selecting option 5)** and ask to be referred to the Energy Advocacy Team. As a guide, the Scottish Government set out what they call a 'Satisfactory' heating regime:

- For older and infirm people, 23c in the living room and 18c in other rooms for 16 hours a day
- For all others, 21c in the living room and 18c in other rooms for 9 hours a day (or 16 in 24 over the weekend) with 2 hours being in the morning and 7 hours in the evening. If it goes above 21c, try turning your heating down. It should still be warm enough to be comfortable and it will help save you money.

Running costs vary according to the type and size of your house, how often you use your heating and the tariff you are on. However, the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) that comes with your property will tell you the estimated cost of heating. Based on previous EPCs, Ofgem report that the average cost in the UK is £470-970 a year in heating, water heating and lighting costs. On top of this, you need to add on the running costs of your appliances.

## Tariffs and methods of payment

You are responsible for all payments to gas and electricity suppliers. You should arrange with your supplier a heating payment plan that suits your circumstances.

Here is a summary of the main types of payment plans and what circumstances they might suit:

### Standing charges

These are fixed charges that must be paid regardless of how much fuel you use. Some suppliers may offer lower charges or no standing charges at all. It is worth checking suppliers to see who offers the best deal.

### Meters

Suppliers offer various types of meters that can be broadly divided into:

- Credit or quarterly meters, when fuel is supplied in advance of payment;
- Prepayment meters, when fuel is paid before consumption.

**Credit meters** are the most popular type and often the cheapest. The bill is sent at the end of each billing period and can be paid by direct debit or standing order. Make sure you get the meter read —estimated bills can mean you may not be paying enough to cover your actual use.

You can also arrange flexible payment and budget schemes that allow you to pay weekly, fortnightly, monthly or whenever suits you best. But you need to be careful that you have enough money in your bank account to cover the direct debit/standing order to avoid overdraft charges.

If you use electric storage heaters or immersion heaters, you should consider a variable rate meter, such as an Economy 7 or a White meter, to take advantage of their cheaper night- time rates.

**Prepayment meters** are generally the most expensive way to pay, but they are a ‘pay as you go’ budgeting method suitable for some people’s circumstances. Be aware that if you do not put sufficient funds in the meter, you will effectively disconnect yourself. The meter can be reset to collect arrears, and you will pay for the supply of fuel, standing charges and any arrears you owe.

Types of **prepayment meter** systems available include:

### **Token meters**

These meters use plastic tokens purchased from shops, post offices, petrol stations or 24 hour vending machines, and are available in £5 units. If your fuel runs out, you can use an emergency button on the meter to obtain a small amount of credit. The next token inserted will be used to pay for the emergency credit used.

### **Key meters**

These operate the same way as token meters, but using a rechargeable ‘key’. Emergency credit is normally available on the meter.

### **Card meters**

These are similar to token meters but are operated by electronically-coded cards, inserted into the meter and available in units of £1 or £5 from customer service centres, vending machines and some shops, post offices and petrol stations. Emergency credit is available on the meter.

## **Quantum meters**

Developed by British Gas, this is an electronically-coded card encoded with the customer's reference number and the meter serial number. Gas cannot be purchased from anyone else. The card reads the meter and passes the reading on to the charging point when you next purchase credit. Emergency credit is available on this meter.

**Variable rate meters** are available for electricity only.

Types available include:

### **Economy 7 / White meters**

These meters allow you to pay for your electricity at two different rates, or 'tariffs'. A low rate is charged at night for heating and to heat water overnight, so you can cut your fuel costs if you run some electrical appliances (washing machines and tumble dryers) overnight.

All energy providers have to offer 'Warm Home Discounts' to help their most vulnerable customers cope with the high costs of gas and electricity. So if you're struggling to keep up with the rising cost of heating your home, talk to your provider and see if you qualify for their discount or can be moved to a cheaper tariff.



## Use your energy wisely

Remember, any fuel you use, you will have to pay for. It makes sense to use it as wisely as possible. This doesn't mean sitting in a cold house – it means making sure you don't waste energy. By following these simple energy saving tips, you can save money on your fuel bills:

- Turn your heating down by one degree and you could save 10% on your bill
- Always turn off lights when you leave a room
- Get lined curtains. Close your curtains at dusk to prevent heat escaping through the windows and check around windows and doors for draughts
- Do not leave appliances on standby
- Try to fill appliances such as washing machines and dishwashers
- Only boil the water you need in the kettle (but always remember to cover the element)
- Use energy saving light bulbs. They last longer than standard light bulbs and can save you £40 over the lifetime of the bulb.
- Use a lid on saucepans where possible so that the contents heat up faster and require less energy. Set your heating to go off 30 minutes before you leave the house and come on 30 minutes before you are due back
- When buying new appliances, try to buy those that have an energy rating of 'A' as these will cost you less to run

*Tip: You can get free and impartial energy-efficiency advice from Home Energy Scotland advice centre on 0808 808 2282.*

## Solar PV panels

Renfrewshire Council are installing Solar PV panels on a number of properties as part of our programme to improve the energy efficiency of our houses.

Solar PV Panels are panels which are fitted to the roof of a property. They collect energy from the sun and convert it into electricity that can be used within your home. The Solar PV Panels generate the most electricity when the sun is shining and during the summer months when the days are longer. The amount of electricity generated will depend on the weather conditions, but they can produce electricity even during cloudy days meaning that free electricity can be generated all year round.

All electricity generated is free and this can help reduce your energy bills.

If you have Solar PV panels fitted on your property, a user guide is available at [www.renfrewshire.gov.uk](http://www.renfrewshire.gov.uk). The guide contains information on how to review the energy usage in your home to make sure you are making the best use of your electricity and to maximise potential energy savings from the Solar PV Panels.

# making your voice heard

You are our customer and we want to make sure you have a say in how we run the housing service.

You can play your part and influence decisions about housing policies, housing conditions and the standard of housing and other related services.



We have a flexible approach to tenant consultation and as far as possible we will try to suit particular circumstances to provide the best opportunities to have your voice heard.

These are some of the ways we consult with tenants:

**Tenants and Residents Associations:** We support Tenants and Residents Associations, where required we will support tenants in starting their own associations and develop ways to assist TRAs in promoting their activity.

**Council Wide Forum** provides tenants an opportunity to hear and comment on service performance and priorities. The Council Wide Forums will be open to all Council tenants as well as representatives from Registered Tenants Associations. Representatives from other services in the Council may also be invited where required.

**Some tenants like to look at the service we deliver in more depth.**

To help this we have a **Tenant Scrutiny Panel** that scrutinises a range of service activities to see how they can be improved.

Our **Quality Circles** carry out valuable inspection work in High Rise properties and Sheltered accommodation.

We also consult in other ways such as surveys on rents and tenant satisfaction and drop in sessions in regeneration areas.

For more information visit [renfrewshire.gov.uk](http://renfrewshire.gov.uk) or call our development officers on **0141 618 2502** or email:

**[tenantparticipation@renfrewshire.gov.uk](mailto:tenantparticipation@renfrewshire.gov.uk)**

# making a complaint

We regard a complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction about our action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by us or on our behalf.

You can complain about things like:

- delays in responding to your enquiries and requests
- failure to provide a service
- our standard of service
- our policies
- treatment by or attitude of a member of staff, or
- our failure to follow proper procedure.

## **How do I complain?**

You can complete the online form on our website or:

- phone: **0300 300 0300**
- email: **complaints@renfrewshire.gov.uk**
- write to: **Complaints Officer, Renfrewshire Council, Renfrewshire House, Cotton St, Paisley PA1 1WB**

It is usually easier for us to resolve complaints if you make them quickly and directly to the service concerned. So please talk to a member of staff at the service you are complaining about. Then they can try to resolve any problems on the spot.

### **When complaining, tell us:**

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

### **How long do I have to make a complaint?**

Normally, you should make your complaint within six months of:

- the event you want to complain about, or
- finding out that you have a reason to complain, but no longer than 12 months after the event itself.

In exceptional circumstances, we may be able to accept a complaint after the time limit. If you feel that the time limit should not apply to your complaint, please tell us why.

## What if I'm still not satisfied?

After we have fully investigated, if you are still not satisfied with our decision or the way we dealt with your complaint, you can ask the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) to look at it.

The SPSO can't normally look at:

- a complaint that has not completed our complaints procedure (so please make sure it has done so before contacting the SPSO)
- events that happened, or that you became aware of, more than a year ago, or
- a matter that has been or is being considered in court.
- You can contact the SPSO using the following:
  - phone: FREEPHONE **0800 377 7330**
  - web: **[www.spsso.org.uk/contact-us](http://www.spsso.org.uk/contact-us)**
  - write to: **Freepost SPSO**

## Council housing complaints

As a Renfrewshire Council tenant if you are unhappy about the services you receive or have issues about the way we operate, you can use the Council's complaints procedure noted above, to report your concerns.

If your landlord does not deal with the failure using the complaints procedure noted above, you can contact the Scottish Housing Regulator. Their Significant Performance Failures page:

**[www.housingregulator.gov.scot/for-tenants/how-we-regulate-information-for-tenants](http://www.housingregulator.gov.scot/for-tenants/how-we-regulate-information-for-tenants)** provides more information on what you should do and how to raise your concerns with them using the form provided by the Regulator. A significant performance failure is something that your landlord does, or fails to do, that puts the interests of its tenants at risk. This is something that does, or could, affect all of your landlord's tenants.

# Notes

Notes

This document can be made available  
in braille, large print or audio.

A summary is also available in these languages on request:

如欲索取以另一語文印製或另一格式製作的資料，請與我們聯絡。

**Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo uzyskać informacje w innym języku lub  
w innym formacie, prosimy dać nam znać.**

اگر آپ کو معلومات کسی دیگر زبان یا دیگر شکل میں درکار ہوں تو برائے مہربانی ہم سے پوچھئے۔

ਜੇ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੀਦੀ, ਤਾਂ ਇਹ ਸਾਥੋਂ ਮੰਗ ਲਓ।

 0300 300 0222