



Tenant Handbook





Welcome to your new home

This handbook has been created with the help of tenants, for tenants. It has been designed as a guide to refer to at the start, during and at the end of your tenancy. It contains practical advice like how to pay your rent or how to report a repair, and information about your tenant responsibilities. Please keep this handbook and tenancy pack in a safe place so you can refer to it in the future. Of course, if you have any questions, please contact us.



Our address: 4 Carden Place,
Aberdeen, AB10 1UT

Our phone no: 01224 625822

Our email: info@castlehillha.co.uk

Our website: www.castlehillha.co.uk

Office hours: 9am – 5pm
Monday to Friday (except public holidays)

Emergencies outwith office hours:
01224 625822
(listen to recorded info)

Your Housing Officer is:

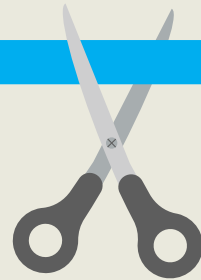
.....
@castlehillha.co.uk
01224

Your Maintenance Officer is:

.....
@castlehillha.co.uk
01224

USEFUL PHONE NUMBERS/ WEB ADDRESSES	ABERDEEN	ABERDEENSHIRE	MORAY
Gas (emergencies)	0800 111 999		
Electricity (emergencies)	0800 300 999		
Scottish Water (emergencies)	08456 018855		
NHS 24	111		
Police Scotland (non-emergencies)	101		
Council Tax & Housing Benefit	08456 080921	08546 081201	01343 563456
Welfare Rights	01224 523203	01261 813453	0300 1234561
Council Housing Support Charges	01224 523791	01467 629034	01343 567179
Environmental services e.g. bin collections, removal of bulky items, street lighting	08456 080919	08456 003900	01343 557073
Antisocial Behaviour Team	08456 066548	01467 628369	0800 5 877197
Dog Warden	01224 523737	01467 628195	01343 563345
Duty Social Work	01224 522055	08458 400070	08457 565656
SMART (Money Advice)	01224 202934		
Scottish Domestic Abuse Helpline	0800 027 1234		
Victim Support Scotland	0845 603 9213		
Citizens' Advice Bureau	0808 800 9060		
Care Inspectorate	0345 600 9527		
Homehunt NES	01224 628101; www.homehunt.info		
Apply4homes (house exchange)	www.houseexchange.org.uk		

Starting your Tenancy



When you move in...

- Decide how to pay your rent
- Advise Council Tax and Housing Benefit offices (if applicable) you have moved in
- Take over your electricity supply and tell them your meter reading
- Take over your gas supply (if this applies to your property) and tell them your meter reading
- You might want to set up a landline and/or broadband provider
- Insure your home contents
- Ensure you have a valid TV licence (Sheltered and Very Sheltered tenants refer to your offer letter)
- Contact your council to find out bin and recycling collection days (unless you have communal bins). See useful phone numbers
- Inform anyone who needs your new address e.g. your bank, insurance company, DVLA etc

Your Tenancy

Your Scottish Secure Tenancy starts on



Your tenancy agreement is a legal contract that outlines your rights and responsibilities as a tenant, and ours as your landlord. Please keep it safe.

Your Responsibilities to us

- Pay your rent and any charges on time
- Live in the property as your main home
- Look after the property
- Report repairs to us
- You and your visitors should respect others at all times
- Get permission from us before you make any changes to your tenancy
- Give us 28 days notice if you want to end your tenancy



Our Responsibilities to you

- Provide a windtight, watertight and habitable home
- Keep the property in good repair and proper working order
- Carry out repairs to an agreed timescale
- Consult with you before setting new rental charges or making changes to our services.



Rent

Rent is due on the 1st of each month. You can pay by:

- Direct Debit:** Full rent is collected on the 1st of each month. Part payment is not possible by direct debit.
- Standing Order:** Choose weekly, fortnightly or monthly payments.
- Allpay:** Pay using an Allpay card at Post Offices and PayPoint outlets.
- Online:** Pay at www.allpayments.net using your Allpay card and debit card.
- Phone:** Call 01224 625822 to make a debit card payment.
- Post:** Send a cheque to our office, making sure that you write your name, address and "Rent" on the back. Please do not send cash through the post.
- At our office:** You can pay by debit card, cash or cheque.
- Housing Benefit:** Payments can be made directly to us by agreement.
- More detailed information can be found in the "How to Pay Your Rent" leaflet in your tenancy pack.
- The welfare benefits system is changing so we will let you know of any changes that may affect your rent payments.



Letting Standard

You will have received a copy of this with your offer letter. Your property should be clean, in reasonable decorative order and everything should work properly i.e. heating, electricity, television reception and plumbing installations. An Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) will be displayed in your property. Gas and electric checks will be complete. The Letting Standard is Tenants' Panel approved.

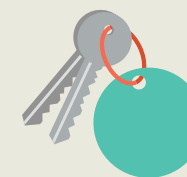


Maintenance queries

If you have any queries, such as operating your heating system or locating your stopcock, please contact your Maintenance Officer for advice.

Keys

We will give you two keys and two door entry fobs (if applicable). Extra keys and fobs are available on request for a standard charge.



You are responsible for lost keys, fobs and paying for lock changes due to lost or stolen keys. It is wise to make sure your contents insurance covers lock changes.

Sheltered and Very Sheltered properties



Sheltered tenants should refer to the Housing Support Service brochure sent with your offer letter. Extra copies are available from our office or scheme staff.

We will help you settle in and advise how everything works such as the emergency call system, door entry system, fire alarms and heating. If you have any questions, please ask.

We will contact you within 28 days of the start of your tenancy to discuss the support and assistance available to you, and to complete your Housing Support Plan. Further details are included in your Housing Support Service brochure or from your service provider.

The Key Project

The Key Project is a housing support service for tenants. We aim to help tenants sustain their tenancy i.e. “keep the key” and help tackle any risk that may threaten the tenancy.

Sometimes housing support is offered at the start of a tenancy. It may be the first time a tenant has taken on a tenancy, or perhaps they do not have furniture to move into a property.

Sometimes people experience difficulties during their tenancy, and again the Key Project can help. Difficulties could be problems with housing benefit, money worries, health concerns etc.

If you would like to find out if the Key Project could be helpful for you, please ask your Housing Officer or contact the Key Project on 01224 628105 or keyproject@castlehillha.co.uk

The Key Project is a free and confidential service.

Possible Areas of Housing Support

- Benefits advice
- Help with form filling
- Education and training
- Accessing community resources
- Energy supply queries e.g gas, electricity
- Advice and information
- Budgeting help
- Home management
- Housing benefit
- Mental health difficulties
- Drugs and alcohol
- Accessing health / care resources
- Getting furniture
- Getting to appointments
- Link to other resources / agencies
- Help with phone calls
- Accessing trusts / other funding agencies
- Family / relationships
- Letter writing
- Housing options
- Advocacy
- Employment
- Signposting
- Housing and debt advice
- Home visits

Key Project



During your Tenancy

Rent

You are responsible for paying your rent on time.

If you are struggling to pay your rent, please contact your Housing Officer for advice and assistance. We would like to help you tackle the situation before it becomes serious.

If you break a rent arrear agreement, we can:

- Negotiate a new agreement
- Arrange to take the rent arrear directly from your benefits
- Take court action to recover the rent due. This could result in you being evicted from your home.

Please contact us as soon as you are worried about paying your rent.

We want to help you keep your home.

Changes to Your Tenancy

You need permission if you want to:

- Create a joint tenancy
- Get a pet
- Make any alterations to your home
- Transfer your tenancy to another household member



Creating a Joint Tenancy

You have the right to apply to have a joint tenancy. A joint tenant must be someone who is not already a tenant or owner of another property and who intends to live in the property as their only or principal home. They must have been living at your address for a minimum of six months.

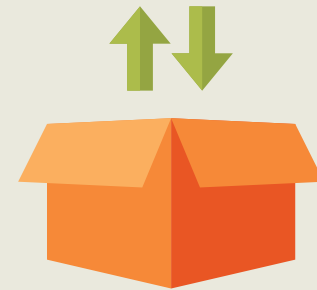


Pets

If you want to keep a pet, you need written permission from us first. There are several schemes where no cats or dogs are allowed. Contact your Housing Officer for advice.

Changes to Your Household

You must tell us if anyone moves out or if you want someone to move in to your property.



Transfers and Exchanges

You may wish to consider applying for new accommodation particularly if you are affected by overcrowding, under-occupation, if you can no longer manage due to medical conditions or need some support. You should firstly speak to your Housing Officer about your options.

Transfers

Castlehill Housing Association allocates all our homes using a choice based lettings system called HOMEHUNT NES (North-East Scotland). Instead of being awarded points and being placed on a waiting list, we advertise our properties and you apply for them – giving you the choice. If you feel that you have a need to be rehoused you can apply for a priority pass which may be awarded depending on your circumstances.

Properties are advertised every two weeks on the Homehunt phoneline 01224 628101 and Homehunt NES website: www.homehunt.info

Mutual Exchange

This is an arrangement where you can “swap” homes with a tenant of Castlehill or another public sector landlord, i.e. Housing Association, Council or Housing Co-op. Permission is granted by each landlord subject to their exchange policy. Our exchanges operate through House Exchange.

House Exchange is a quick and easy website designed to bring people together who are looking to swap their home. The service operates nationwide. The web address is www.apply4homes.houseexchange.org.uk

Succession of Tenancy

There are three levels of qualification to a tenancy if the tenant or joint tenant dies. A successor must have already been occupying the property as their main or principal home prior to the tenant's death. All three levels are described in your tenancy agreement.

If You Are Away From Your Home...



Please let your Housing Officer know if you will be away from your property for more than four weeks.

If you are away from home in the winter, remember that pipes may freeze and burst. If you are going away for a couple of days, you could leave your heating on at a low temperature e.g. 5°C. However, if you are leaving for a

longer time, please consider leaving the heating on at normal levels or draining all storage tanks and pipe work. Your Maintenance Officer can give you advice. Please remember that if you do not take precautions and water damage occurs, you may be recharged for the repair costs.

Communal Areas (Sheltered and Very Sheltered Housing)

Many schemes have a communal lounge with kitchen facilities. We encourage you to use this room for social activities.

Guest rooms are available in most schemes and can be used by friends or relatives to stay for short periods of time. There is a charge for this service and you can book through scheme staff.

Communal laundries are for tenant use only. Scheme staff will show you how to use the machines and explain if there is a rota or booking system.



Respect for Others

We would like you to be considerate towards your neighbours and staff, and to refrain from antisocial behaviour. Remember that you are responsible for those living with you, and your visitors too. If a dispute arises between you and a neighbour,



we encourage you to try to resolve the problem by talking to them. People often do not realise they are causing a nuisance and will remedy the situation. If you do not feel able to deal with the problem, or the situation continues, please contact your Housing Officer for further support.

You can find out more in section 3 of your tenancy agreement.

Right to Buy

We are a charitable organisation so all our properties are exempt from the Right to Buy. None of our tenants have the right to buy their home.

Your Maintenance Responsibilities

- Please keep your home in a clean and good decorative condition
- Please keep your garden tidy
- Report damage or required repairs to the maintenance department
- Repair any damage caused by you, your household or visitors. This includes damage to glass, sinks or sanitary ware, choked wastes and damage caused by forced entry due to lost keys
- Report any criminal damage or vandalism to the police
- Have contents insurance including cover for tenant-responsible items
- Please test your smoke alarm(s) regularly
- Please test your carbon monoxide alarms regularly (if fitted)



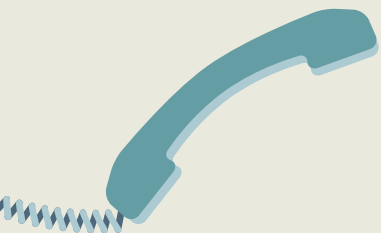
If we have to carry out any repairs that are your responsibility we will charge you the cost of doing so e.g. repairing damage caused by you or your visitors. We call this a 'recharge'.

Right to Repair Housing (Scotland) Act 2001

You have a right to have small urgent repairs carried out within a given timescale. Please refer to the Right to Repair leaflet in your tenancy pack, our website or ask your Maintenance Officer.



Reporting Repairs



Call **01224 625822/628104** to report a repair Monday to Friday, 9am -5pm. If you have a non-emergency repair, please wait until the office opens to report it. Sheltered and Very Sheltered tenants should report non-emergency repairs to scheme staff.

For all tenants, if you have an out of hours emergency, call **01224 625822** to find out the number of the emergency contractor.

You can also report non-emergency repairs online at:

www.castlehillha.co.uk/reportrepair.html

For gas heating issues, call the number on the sticker on your boiler, the maintenance department or the out-of-hours number if applicable.

Long Term Maintenance

We have two scheduled maintenance programs, cyclical and planned maintenance.

- Cyclical maintenance covers checking essential equipment each year to ensure they are safe, including:
 - Annual gas servicing
 - Portable fire equipment and fire alarm systems
 - Smoke detectors
 - Water storage systems
 - Lifts
 - Door entry systems

We will also inspect the outside of your home and paint it every seven years if needed.

- Planned maintenance is where we renew or replace components in your home as they come to the end of their useful life. This may include refits of kitchens, bathrooms, heating systems and windows. The amount of work we can do depends on the amount of funds available each year.



Information about planned and cyclical maintenance programmes will be published in our newsletter and on our website.

Adaptations

If you or someone who lives in your home has a disability, we may be able to help by adapting your home.

Adaptations range from handrails and lever taps to level access showers, stair lifts and ceiling hoists. You can ask an Occupational Therapist to visit your home and make recommendations. Contact the Technical Officer or your Maintenance Officer to find out more.

Getting Involved

Helping us to help you...

We encourage you to be involved with Castlehill, and we want you to have a voice in influencing decisions about your housing. It is a two-way process between you and us to share information, ideas and decision-making.

How you can contribute

Tenants' Panel

Anyone is welcome to join our Tenants' Panel. You don't need any specific skills or training, just an interest in how we deliver our housing service. We will give you information and offer training when required. Our focus is on improving services, our standards and our performance.



Scrutiny Group

This tenant group examines our services and performance in more depth. We will provide training and offer you practical opportunities to help you assess our services. There could be mystery shopping, site visits, desktop audits, focus groups or surveys.

Tenant Groups

You are welcome to come along to a meeting of an existing group in your scheme, or we can help you to set up a group. This is a great way to get to know your neighbours and can help with improving your neighbourhood.

Scheme Walkabouts (General Needs/Amenity schemes)

We invite you to join us on our twice-yearly walkabouts and help us identify any concerns, maintenance or management issues. Your Housing Officer will write to you in advance of these visits.

Tenant Open Days

These are held from time to time and are usually in collaboration with other landlords. Look out for information on our website or in the local press. We may be able to help with transport in certain cases.



Focus Groups

We discuss a particular issue with tenants to help us gather opinions and useful information.



North East Tenants, Residents and Landlords Together (NETRALT)

This group is a mixture of tenants and staff from several housing organisations. We meet regularly to focus on tenant involvement in the North East. This ranges from introducing new skills to tenants, to organising tenant events. We are always happy to invite interested tenants to join us.



How we will keep you informed

We want our tenants to know what we are doing, why we are doing it and how we will achieve it. We do this in several ways.



Landlord Performance Report

This report highlights our performance annually and lets you know what action we will take to improve our services. We publish our Landlord Report in October each year and welcome your feedback on how we are doing.

Newsletter

Our twice-yearly newsletter is produced with help from our tenants. We value your input and hope you enjoy it.



Sheltered Housing Magazine

This magazine is produced annually by sheltered tenants and staff. Contributions are always welcome.



Website

You will find updates, news bulletins and information about upcoming tenant events at www.castlehillha.co.uk



Noticeboards in communal areas

We keep these up to date with relevant and useful information.

Leaflets and other formats

We have a range of leaflets available for tenants' information. We welcome your feedback and any idea you may have for new or improved leaflets.

Membership of the Association

Anyone who wants to be more involved and is interested in the work of Castlehill may apply for membership of the Association. The one-off membership fee is £1.00. Members can vote to elect the Management Committee at the AGM and be nominated themselves. A form is available from our office.



We hope you are interested in finding out more about how you can help shape Castlehill's future.

To join us, or to find out more, please contact our Tenant Participation Officers on 01224 625822 or at

info@castlehillha.co.uk

Ending your Tenancy



Giving up your Tenancy

You have to give us at least 28 days notice and ask for a termination pack.

Please complete, sign and return a termination form. The form will be in your termination pack, or you can download one from our website. Sheltered and Very Sheltered tenants can request a termination form from scheme staff.

Your tenancy will end 28 days from the date we receive your termination form. We will write to you to confirm the exact date.

Ending a Joint Tenancy

You will need to complete a termination form and pass to us. You must also tell everyone who lives with you that you wish to terminate your share of the joint tenancy. Joint tenants need 28 days written notice.

Your Rent

Please ensure that your rent is up to date at the end of your tenancy. If you do not do this, it may affect future housing applications.

If you are in receipt of housing benefit it will stop on the day you leave the property or the day your tenancy ends, whichever is soonest. Your Housing Officer will confirm this to you by letter.

Please note that there may still be housing benefit pending so it can be difficult to give you an accurate balance straightaway but we will endeavour to do this for you as soon as possible.

If you have arrears on your account, please contact your Housing Officer to discuss how you plan to clear the debt. If you do not do this, our Income Management Officer will contact you to discuss your rent arrears and/or recharges and ultimately recover the debt.

Other charges can be added to your account after you have ended your tenancy e.g. if you do not hand in all your keys and we have had to change the locks. There may also be rechargeable repairs which will have been advised by the Maintenance Officer after their inspection. We will let you know about any recharges as soon as we can.

End of Tenancy Inspection



We will inspect your house to make sure it can be relet in accordance with our tenant-approved Letting Standard (a copy of this will be in your termination pack). We aim to do this shortly after we receive your termination form.

If after the termination date we find repairs that are your responsibility, the decoration is not acceptable, or we have to remove any property you leave behind, you will have to pay for this.

Remember to take your meter readings! A detailed checklist of things to do when you are leaving is included in your termination pack.

Complaints, Comments and Compliments



We hope you enjoy being a Castlehill tenant and we welcome your comments about our service. If you want to let us know about something you like or are unhappy about you can do this in a number of ways. You can email us directly or through our website, write to us or speak to a member of staff on the phone or in person. If you have a complaint then we have a complaints policy which you can use. Any member of staff can get a copy of this to you so please ask.

If you do make a complaint and are not happy with the way we have dealt with it or feel that our decision is unfair then you can complain to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. Our Complaints policy will give you information about this.

We hope you don't have to complain but we accept that we don't always get it right and that we need to know when that happens. Equally we appreciate hearing that we've done well so please pass any positive comments to us as well!

If you need more information about any aspect of your tenancy, please contact us.

01224 625822

info@castlehillha.co.uk

www.castlehillha.co.uk

Notes

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Castlehill Housing
Association Office
4 Carden Place,
Aberdeen AB10 1UT

Tel: 01224 625822

Fax 01224 625830

W: www.castlehillha.co.uk

E: info@castlehillha.co.uk

Office hours are:

Mon – Fri 9.00am – 5.00pm

Registered Charity Number: SC013584



Tenant
approved