

# Housing Information Handbook

Lodgers and sub-letting    Right to buy    Your right to improve your home    Your Tenancy Conditions    Security of tenure  
Neighbourhood problems    Who can take over your tenancy    Right to exchange  
Right to exchange    Lodgers and sub-letting    Right to buy    Your right to improve your home  
Lodgers and sub-letting    Right to buy    Your right to improve your home  
Neighbourhood problems    Who can take over your tenancy    Right to exchange    Lodgers and sub-letting    Right to buy    Your right to improve your home





# Contents

---

Page 3	Introduction	Page 29	Section 4
Page 4	Section 1	Repairs and Maintenance	
Your Tenancy - Secure Tenants		Your Responsibilities	
Your Tenancy Conditions		The Council's Responsibilities	
Security of tenure		Reporting Repairs	
Solving neighbour problems		Page 37	Section 5
Who can take over your tenancy (Assignment and Succession)		Communal Areas and Estate Services	
Right to exchange		Gardening	
Lodgers and sub-letting		Rubbish Storage and Removal	
Right to buy		Repairs and Maintenance	
Your right to improve your home		Page 42	Section 6
Your right to compensation for improvements		Services to Support Independent Living	
Page 11	Section 1	Warden Call	
Your Tenancy - Introductory Tenants		Special Equipment and Adaptations	
Your Tenancy Conditions		Moving Home	
Security of tenure		Sheltered Housing	
Solving neighbour problems		Sheltered Housing with additional support	
Who can take over your tenancy		Other Help and Benefits Available	
Right to exchange		Page 48	Section 7
Lodgers and sub-letting		Getting Involved	
Right to buy		'Getting on Board'	
Your right to improve your home		York's Tenant Participation Agreement	
Page 16	Section 2	Residents' Associations	
Customer Service and Complaints		York Federation of Residents' & Community Associations	
Customer Service		Other Ways of Getting Involved	
Equal opportunities		Your Rights to Information	
Contacting us		Page 56	Section 8
How to complain		Moving Home	
How to appeal		Transfers	
Access to information about me		Exchanges	
Attending council meetings		Terminating Your Tenancy	
Page 21	Section 3	Page 62	Section 9
Rent and Housing Benefit		Heating Efficiency	
Paying Your Rent		Controlling the heating & hot water in your home	
Claiming Housing Benefit		Type of heating	
What Happens if You Don't Pay Your Rent		Fuel deregulation	

# Introduction

---

**This handbook is designed to give you information about what it means to be a tenant of City of York Council, including more information about the rights and responsibilities of your tenancy, which are set out in your tenancy agreement. If you are a new tenant and have been signed up on an Introductory Tenancy, some of your rights may be different, and this handbook highlights those differences. The first chapter on 'Your Tenancy' contains separate information for Secure and Introductory tenants.**

Along with your Tenancy Agreement (Secure or Introductory) the handbook will help to answer questions you may have about your tenancy, your home or neighbourhood, and about the housing services we provide.

**The Handbook is divided into 9 Sections which cover the following areas:**

- Your Tenancy - Secure Tenants
- Your Tenancy - Introductory Tenants
- Customer Service and Complaints
- Rent and Housing Benefit
- Repairs and Maintenance
- Communal Areas and Estate Services
- Services to Support Independent Living
- Getting Involved
- Moving Home
- Heating Efficiency

As well as giving more information about your tenancy, the handbook also tells you about the standards of service you can expect.

**We hope that this handbook is useful, please keep it in a safe place, with your tenancy agreement for reference during your tenancy. If you would like any further information please contact us.**

# Your Tenancy - Secure Tenants

---

This Section Covers:- Your Tenancy Conditions

- Security of tenure
- Solving neighbour problems
- Who can take over your tenancy (Assignment and Succession)
- Right to exchange
- Lodgers and sub-letting
- Right to buy
- Your right to improve your home
- Your right to compensation for improvements

There are two types of council tenancy:

- Secure
- Introductory

Secure tenants have more rights and more security than Introductory tenants, as Introductory tenants can be evicted more quickly and easily. An Introductory tenancy lasts for twelve months and if the tenancy is conducted in a satisfactory way during this trial period, the Introductory tenant would automatically become a Secure tenant.

**This section only contains information about Secure tenancies.** For full details about your legal rights and responsibilities see your Secure Tenancy Agreement.

As a City of York Council tenant, you have a Secure tenancy. This means that you have the legal right to stay in your home as long as you keep to the conditions of your tenancy. These conditions are set out in your Secure Tenancy Agreement - a document we have to give you by law, and which all tenants sign at the start of their tenancy. It explains our rights and responsibilities and your rights and responsibilities. It also tells you what we can do if you break any of these conditions, and the standards of service you can expect from us.

We will

- Follow our responsibilities set out in the Tenancy Agreement
- Deal sensitively with enquiries and complaints
- Advise you of your rights and responsibilities as a tenant
- Respond to written enquiries about your rights within 5 working days
- Provide you with up to date information
- Make decisions on requests for changes to your tenancy within 5 days of receiving all the information
- Take swift action against anyone who breaches their tenancy condition
- Take legal action for severe or persistent breaches of tenancy conditions

- Provide a written explanation of any action taken
- Treat reports of harassment seriously

### You must

- Follow your responsibilities set out in the Tenancy Agreement
- Advise us of any changes in your circumstances that may affect your tenancy

### What does it mean to be a Secure tenant?

Signing the Tenancy Agreement makes you a Secure tenant with legal rights and responsibilities. It means that you can keep your home for as long as you want unless there is a legal reason for us to take possession and the court agrees. It also means we have responsibilities to you.

We cannot take back your home and end your tenancy without first getting a Court Order for Possession. We would do this if you have broken the tenancy conditions you agreed to when you signed the Tenancy Agreement, and we are unable to sort the problem out together.

In most cases, before going to court we must serve you with a Notice of Seeking Possession explaining why we are taking this action and which tenancy condition you are breaking. In all cases you will be given every chance to put things right to avoid court action.

### For what reasons can the Council seek possession?

We can ask for a Possession Order for reasons set out in law. These reasons are called "Grounds". Changes in the law from early 1997 have increased the range of reasons we can use to ask the court to repossess your home. If one or more of the grounds are broken we may decide that it would be better for you to be moved out of your home. To do this we have to prove to a court that you have broken the rules and that repossessing your home is reasonable action to take. In some cases we must provide another suitable home for you.

For the full rules relating to your tenancy, see your Secure Tenancy Agreement.

### What action is taken if someone breaks their Tenancy Agreement?

If any of the rules in the tenancy agreement are broken we can take action. Your Estate Manager will visit and/or write if you have broken one of the rules. You will then be given an opportunity to put the situation right. If you continue to break the rules we will serve you with a Notice of Seeking Possession, this is the first legal step we take to repossess your home.

The Notice gives you 4 weeks to start putting the problem right. Your Estate Manager will keep in contact with you to monitor the situation and be there to offer advice and guidance. If the situation is resolved no further action will be taken. The Notice is valid for a year so you must continue to follow your tenancy rules or action can be taken at any time during the 12 months.

### What can I do if I suspect my neighbour is breaking their Tenancy Agreement?

If you suspect your neighbour is breaking the terms of their Tenancy Agreement, contact your Estate Manager for example:

- They are sub-letting their home without permission.
- They have or are planning to carry out major improvements to their home without seeking permission from their Estate Manager.
- They are overcrowding the property or allowing unauthorised persons to occupy their home.
- They have moved out of the property or are not using it as their only or main home.
- They lied in order to obtain their council home.

## Solving neighbour problems

Your Tenancy Agreement states that you must not cause nuisance or harassment to your neighbours. However, if your neighbours are causing problems for you, you can report this to your Estate Manager and they will give you advice on whether or not we are able to help you and discuss any other remedies available to you. Changes to the law in 1997 changed the way we can start legal action against you when nuisance is being caused. Up until now, the Council had to serve a notice giving a tenant 28 days to stop causing the nuisance. We can now serve a notice and ask the County Court for a hearing immediately. In some very serious cases, we don't have to serve a notice and can just apply to the courts for a hearing. This would only be in exceptional cases. The Council also provides a leaflet on Neighbour Nuisance which can be picked up at Housing Services reception, Customer Services, Library Square.

Other agencies that may be of help are:

- North Yorkshire Mediation Service      Tel: 01904 669071  
mediation@york.gov.uk

- a free and confidential service which can help if you are in a neighbour dispute. Independent mediators will not take sides but will listen to how you feel about the situation. They will help you and your neighbour find a solution that everyone is happy with. You can try mediation and if it doesn't work, you can then try other options.

- Police      Tel: 101  
General.enquiries@northyorkshire.pnn.police.uk

- they can take action in a variety of cases e.g. harassment and parking issues.

- Smarter York      Tel: 01904 551551

-they can often take action where there is rubbish dumping or graffiti.

## Can someone else join my tenancy?

Yes, when two or more adults are housed together it is our policy to make all tenancies joint. If you are the only tenant and want someone to join your tenancy, we will agree if they would have the right to inherit your tenancy. Your rent account must be clear.

Joint tenants are equally responsible for keeping the tenancy conditions. Either joint tenant can apply for Housing Benefit.

If one joint tenant dies the tenancy is automatically transferred to the surviving tenant or tenants. Inform your Estate Manager if this happens so the implications can be explained in more detail.

If a relationship breaks down, neither joint tenant can evict the other. Contact your Estate Manager to get advice, in some cases you may need independent legal advice.

If one joint tenant leaves and wants to give up their share of the tenancy they must contact their Estate Manager.

## Can anyone inherit my tenancy when I die?

It may be possible for members of your family to take over your tenancy when you die. This is called a succession. Get advice from Housing Options at Customer Services, Library Square or your Estate Manager. The law says that the following people have a right to inherit a tenancy:

- A husband, wife or person living with the tenant as their partner at the time of death.
- Another family member or relative including parents, grandparents, children, grandchildren, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, nephews and nieces. It also includes adopted children, step children, and people who are relatives by marriage. Any relatives wanting to inherit the tenancy must have lived with the tenant for at least twelve months before the death of the original tenant. You may be asked to prove this.

## Can this happen more than once?

It is our policy to allow two successions of tenancy but a second succession may not be possible if your home

- Has been specially designed or adapted for the elderly or disabled and would normally be given to people with special needs.
- Is larger than necessary - and has more bedrooms than are needed.

In these cases alternative accommodation will be offered.

We will respond within 5 working days to a request about a tenancy. Whatever the outcome we will explain the reasons for our decision.

## What happens if there is more than one person able to inherit?

If family members or relatives cannot agree who should take over the tenancy the Council will decide. A joint tenancy may be offered to protect the family's security.

## Can I give my tenancy to someone else?

If you no longer wish to live in your home we may, in some cases, let you give your tenancy away to a family member who could have succeeded. This is called an assignment. For example, if you are taken into hospital for long-term care. Contact your Estate Manager about this.

Otherwise you are only allowed to give away (assign) your tenancy to someone else if you exchange with someone (See Section 7 Moving Home) or following a Court Order after the breakdown of a relationship. We will respond to any request within 10 working days.

## Can I take in lodgers?

You can take in lodgers, although you should let us know. You should remember the following points:-

- You must not overcrowd your home. Contact your Estate Manager if in doubt.
- If you are getting Housing Benefit you must tell the Housing Benefit Section. Taking in a lodger could affect the amount of benefit you receive.

## Can I sub-let part of my home?

You may be able to sub-let part of your home but only with our permission. You cannot sub-let all your home, if you do you will lose your Secure Tenancy. Again if you are claiming Housing Benefit let the Benefits Section know, as it may affect your claim.



We cannot refuse permission to sub-let without good reason, for example, overcrowding. We will explain any refusal in writing within 5 working days.

### What is the difference between sub-letting and taking in a lodger?

A lodger usually shares your house and may have meals with you. They will pay you for food bills and upkeep. For Income Support and Housing Benefit purposes a lodger has one or more meals a day provided and a sub-tenant does not have any meals provided.

A sub-tenant has their own use of part of your house, where you would need their permission to go. They would normally do their own cooking and cleaning.

If you are on Income Support, Job Seekers Allowance or Housing Benefit you must tell the office that pays your benefit, they will work out what affect it has on your claim.

### Can you change my tenancy conditions?

Yes, the terms of your Secure Tenancy Agreement can be changed. If we intend to change your Tenancy conditions, we will send you a Notice of Variation telling you what the change is and when it will apply, giving you at least 4 weeks during which you will be given a chance to comment on the proposals.

Residents' groups will also be consulted about major changes to policies and the way we deliver our services. We will listen to your views before we make any decisions.

If you do not want to accept the change you can terminate your tenancy.

### Your Right to Buy

Some tenants have the Right to Buy their Council home. If your secure tenancy started before 18 January 2005, you can apply after two years. If your secure tenancy started after 18 January 2005, you can apply after five years. Sometimes, time spent with another social housing landlord can count, if it has been continuous.

- Your house or flat will be valued at the market price less the value of certain improvements you have made that have increased the value of your home.
- If you buy your flat or maisonette you will usually have to pay an annual service charge for things like communal repairs, lighting etc. You will be advised of the amount you have to pay when you are given the price of your home.
- During the first 5 years this charge will only change because of inflation. After the first 5 years you are charged a proportion of the cost of maintenance and communal works.
- You will receive a bill each year.

Not everyone can buy their council home, for certain homes like sheltered accommodation for elderly people and homes that have been adapted for people with a disability the Right to Buy may not apply.

For advice on whether you can buy your council home contact us on 01904 551550 or speak to your Estate Manager.

For more details about buying your home the booklet "Your Right to Buy Your Home" is useful. Please ask for one to be sent, collect one from the Housing reception at Customer Services, Library Square or see the council's website: [www.york.gov.uk/housing/righttobuy/index.html](http://www.york.gov.uk/housing/righttobuy/index.html)

## Can I carry out improvements to my home?

Every Secure tenant has the right to improve their home. You need permission from your Estate Manager in writing and the work must be carried out to the guidelines given. Permission will be denied if the work could cause us expense or difficulty letting the home in the future, or is a potential safety risk.

### What do I have to do before I start any work?

You must ask permission for most alterations. Just follow these simple guidelines:

1. Write to your Estate Manager explaining what you want to do. Normally we will let you know within 5 working days if you can go ahead with the work.

#### You need our permission before you start any work.

2. Get building and planning permission where necessary or you may be required by law to put back the alterations you have made at your expense.
3. Follow the written advice and guidance notes from your Estate Manager.
4. You are normally responsible for making good any damage to your or your neighbours home, and the repair, maintenance, and renewal of the improvement.
5. Let your Estate Manager know when the work is finished so it can be inspected.
6. Leave fittings in good order when you move or replace the original fixtures or fittings.
7. If the work does not reach the required standard or you cause damage to our property you will be recharged for the work we have to carry out.

### Please follow the advice given to you before you start work.

Here are a few examples of the type of improvements which you will need to contact your Estate Manager for permission before starting work:

- Decorating the outside of your home
- Building a shed or greenhouse
- Fitting a new bathroom suite
- Fitting new kitchen units or replacing existing ones
- Installing central heating
- Building a garage or hard standing for a car
- Building a fireplace
- Putting up a satellite dish or aerial
- Making any alterations to your loft or roof space

All electrical alterations must be done by a NICEIC qualified contractor who will need to provide a certificate of completion.

### What happens if you refuse my request?

Permission to improve your home will not be refused without good reason and only in cases where, for example, it could affect the safety of your house or involve us in extra expense.

If a Notice has been served then permission for improvements may not be given.

We must explain any refusal in writing and if you think this is unreasonable you can challenge the decision exercising your right to appeal or by taking us to court.

### Will improvements I carry out increase my rent?

If you carry out improvements your rent, or that of any successors to your tenancy, will not be increased.

### Will I receive any money back for improvements when I leave?

Provided you get permission for improvements/alterations and carry them out satisfactorily you can request a cash payment when you leave your home.

The scheme is explained in a leaflet "A better deal for tenants - Your New Right to Compensation for Improvements". It is published by Communities and Local Government and is available from housing reception.

### Can I get help with the cost of improvements?

Generally the answer is no, but the government does run a scheme to help people on means tested benefits with the cost of insulation. The Home Energy Efficiency Scheme (H.E.E.S) gives grants for loft insulation and draught proofing.

FREEPHONE 0800 181667 for more information.

Free advice on heating and energy efficiency is also available from the Energy Efficiency Advice Centre, George Hudson Street. Contact them on FREEPHONE 0800 512012..

### Making Contact

Housing Services

Housing Services  
West Offices  
Station Rise  
York  
YO1 6GA  
Tel: 01904 551550

Planning Permission: Planning and Building Control

West Offices  
Station Rise  
York  
YO1 6GA  
Tel: 01904 551550

Building Control: Tel: 01904 551550 Ext. 1333

# Your Tenancy - Introductory Tenants

---

This Section Covers:

- Your Tenancy Conditions
- Security of tenure
- Solving neighbour problems
- Who can take over your tenancy
- Right to exchange
- Lodgers and sub-letting
- Right to buy
- Your right to improve your home

There are two types of council tenancy:

Secure

Introductory

Secure tenants have more rights and more security than Introductory tenants, as Introductory tenants can be evicted more quickly and easily. An Introductory tenancy lasts for twelve months and if the tenancy is conducted in a satisfactory way during this trial period, the Introductory tenant would automatically become a Secure tenant.

**This section only contains information about Introductory tenancies.** For full details of your legal rights and responsibilities see your Introductory Tenancy Agreement.

As a City of York Council tenant, you have an Introductory tenancy. This means that you have the legal right to stay in your home as long as you keep to the conditions of your tenancy. These conditions are set out in your Introductory Tenancy Agreement - a document we have to give you by law, and which all tenants sign at the start of their tenancy. It explains our rights and responsibilities and your rights and responsibilities. It also tells you what we can do if you break any of these conditions, and the standards of service you can expect from us.

We will

- o Follow our responsibilities set out in the Tenancy Agreement
- o Deal sensitively with enquiries and complaints
- o Advise you of your rights and responsibilities as a tenant
- o Respond to enquiries about your rights within 5 working days
- o Provide you with up to date information
- o Make decisions on requests for changes to your tenancy within 5 days of receiving all the information
- o Take swift action against anyone who breaches their tenancy conditions

- Take legal action for severe or persistent breaches of tenancy conditions
- Provide a written explanation of any action taken
- Treat reports of harassment seriously

### You must

- Follow your responsibilities set out in the Tenancy Agreement
- Advise us of any changes in your circumstances that may affect your tenancy

### What does it mean to be an Introductory tenant?

Signing the Introductory Tenancy Agreement makes you an Introductory tenant with legal rights and responsibilities. It means that providing you do not breach any of the tenancy conditions of your Introductory tenancy, you can keep your home for this initial twelve month period, and then automatically become a Secure tenant. A Secure tenancy has additional rights and responsibilities, which will be explained once you become a Secure tenant.

If you do breach any of the tenancy conditions in the Introductory Tenancy Agreement, we will take action to end or to extend your tenancy.

We have responsibilities to you. We cannot take back your home and end your tenancy unless you have breached your tenancy, and we have followed the Introductory tenancy process, by serving you with a notice, and offering you the right to request a review hearing to appeal against our decision. However, if we decide to take action to end your tenancy, and have followed the correct process, the Court cannot refuse to end or extend your tenancy. We would only do this if you have broken the tenancy conditions you agreed to when you signed the Introductory Tenancy Agreement, and we are unable to sort the problem out together.

In all cases, before going to court to end your Introductory tenancy we must serve you with a Notice of Possession Proceedings explaining why we are taking this action and which tenancy condition you are breaking. You will be given every chance to put things right to avoid court action.

### For what reasons can the Council seek possession?

We can ask for a Possession Order for reasons set out in law. These reasons are called "grounds". Changes in the law from early 1997 have increased the range of reasons we may use to ask the court to repossess your home. If one or more of the grounds are broken we may decide that it would be better for you to be moved out of your home. To do this we have to prove to a court that you have broken the rules and that repossessing your home is reasonable action to take. If we take you to court, providing we have followed the correct process, the court cannot refuse to grant an order to evict you. For a full list of the grounds see your Introductory Tenancy Agreement.

### What action is taken if someone breaks their Introductory Tenancy Agreement?

If any of the rules in the Tenancy Agreement are broken we can take action to end your tenancy. Your Estate Manager will visit and/or write if you have broken one of the rules. You will then be given an opportunity to put the situation right. If you continue to break the rules we will serve you with a Notice of Possession Proceedings, this is the first legal step to end your Introductory tenancy.

If a Notice is served and you wish to appeal against our decision to end your tenancy, you have 14 days from the date the notice was served to make a request for your case to be heard before a Review Board. Your Estate Manager will keep in contact with you and let you know when the Review Board hearing is taking place. The hearing must take place within 28 days of serving the Notice. The Review Board will hear evidence about your alleged breaches of tenancy and decide whether or not to allow your case to proceed to Court. You will have the opportunity to speak to the Review Board. If the Review Board agrees that you have breached your tenancy, your case will be taken to Court. Providing the Court can see that the Council has followed the correct procedure, they will end your Introductory tenancy, and you will have to leave your home. You will be offered advice and assistance at this time, but it is likely that you will be regarded as being Intentionally Homeless, so the Council will have no obligation to re house you.

At any point during the twelve months we can stop the action if you sort the problem out. If you continue to break the rules you are likely to lose your home. If you are evicted there may be restrictions on you joining the waiting list again.

### Solving Neighbour Problems

Your tenancy agreement states that you must not cause nuisance or harassment to your neighbours. However, if your neighbours are causing problems for you, you can report this to your Estate Manager and they will give you advice on whether or not we are able to help you and discuss any other remedies available to you. The Council also provides a leaflet on Neighbour Nuisance which can be picked up at both housing receptions. Other agencies that may be of help are:

➤ North Yorkshire Mediation Service      Tel: 01904 669071  
mediation@york.gov.uk

- a free and confidential service which can help if you are in a neighbour dispute. Independent mediators will not take sides but will listen to how you feel about the situation. They will help you and your neighbour find a solution that everyone is happy with. You can try mediation and if it doesn't work, you can then try other options.

➤ Police      Tel: 101  
General.enquiries@northyorkshire.pnn.police.uk

- they can take action in a variety of cases e.g. harassment, parking issues

➤ Smarter York      Tel: 01904 551551

-they can often take action where there is rubbish dumping or graffiti

### Can someone else join my tenancy?

At the start of your Introductory tenancy, if two or more adults are housed together it is our policy to make all Introductory tenancies "joint". However if you are the only tenant and want someone to join your tenancy, we will only consider this request after the 12 month period has been carried out satisfactorily, and your tenancy has become a Secure tenancy.

Joint tenants are equally responsible for keeping the tenancy conditions. Either joint tenant can apply for Housing Benefit.

If one joint tenant dies the tenancy is automatically transferred to the surviving tenant or tenants. Inform your Estate Manager if this happens so the implications can be explained.

If a relationship breaks down, neither joint tenant can evict the other. Contact your Estate Manager to get advice, in some cases you may need independent legal advice.

If one joint tenant leaves and wants to give up their share of the tenancy they must contact their Estate Manager.

### Can anyone inherit my tenancy when I die?

It may be possible for members of your family to take over your tenancy when you die. This is called a succession. In this situation you must get advice from your Estate Manager, or Housing Options at Customer Services, Library Square.

The law says that the following people have a right to inherit a tenancy:

- A husband, wife, civil partner or person living with the tenant as their partner at the time of death.
- Another family member or relative including parents, grandparents, children, grandchildren, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, nephews and nieces. It also includes adopted children and step children, and people who are relatives by marriage. Any relatives wanting to inherit the tenancy must have lived with the tenant for at least twelve months before the death of the original tenant. You may be asked to prove this.

### What happens if there is more than one person able to inherit?

If family members or relatives cannot agree who should take over the tenancy the Council will decide. A joint tenancy may be offered to protect the family's security.

### Can I give my tenancy to someone else?

No. If you no longer wish to live in your home your Introductory tenancy will end. No one in your household has any rights to take on your tenancy.

### Can I exchange my tenancy with another Council tenant or Housing Association tenant?

No. Introductory tenants have no right to exchange their home with any other person.

### Can I take in lodgers or sub-let part of my home?

No. Introductory tenants have no rights to take in lodgers, or to sub-let any part of their home. To do so would be a breach of the Introductory tenancy, and may result in action to end your tenancy.

### Can you change my tenancy conditions?

Yes, the terms of your Introductory Tenancy Agreement can be changed. If we intend to change your tenancy conditions, we will send you a Notice of Variation telling you what the change is and when it will apply from, giving you at least 4 weeks during which you will be given a chance to comment on the proposals.

Residents' groups will also be consulted about major changes to policies and the way we deliver our services. We will listen to your views before we make any decisions.

If you do not want to accept the change you can terminate your tenancy.

## Can I buy my council home?

No. As an Introductory tenant you do not have the Right to Buy your council home. However if you go onto become a Secure tenant the twelve months you spend as an Introductory tenant will count towards any discount that is available when you exercise your Right to Buy.

## Can I carry out improvements to my home?

No. Introductory tenants do not have the right to carry out improvements to their homes. You can get further advice about this from your Estate Manager.

## Energy Efficiency

The council does not provide funding for energy efficiency work to your home, but the government does run a scheme to help people on means tested benefits with the cost of insulation. The Home Energy Efficiency Scheme (H.E.E.S) gives grants for loft insulation and draught proofing. FREEPHONE 0800 181667 for more information.

Free advice on heating and energy efficiency is also available from the Energy Efficiency Advice Centre, George Hudson Street. Contact them on FREEPHONE 0800 512 012

## Making Contact

Housing Services  
West Offices  
Station Rise  
York  
YO1 6GA  
Tel: 01904 551550



# Customer Service and Complaints

---

This section covers:

- Our Customer Service Standard
- Equal opportunities
- Contacting us
- How to complain
- How to appeal
- Access to information about me
- Attending council meetings

## Our Customer Service Standard

The City of York Council exists to serve you. Whenever you contact us we want to make sure that you receive a high standard of service.

Our Customer Service Standard lets you know:

How long we will take to answer your telephone calls, letters and queries at housing receptions

What you can do to help

What to do if you are unhappy with the service you get from us

### We promise to:

- Treat you with respect and offer a friendly and courteous service
- Answer all letters and telephone calls promptly
- See you promptly when you call into one of our offices
- Listen to any problems you might have and put them right quickly
- If we fail to keep any of our promises, let us know. We will put the matter right quickly

## Equal Opportunities

Housing Services is committed to providing a high quality, customer centred service which meets all legal requirements.

### Housing Services will:

- Treat individuals fairly, with dignity and respect
- Understand the rights of individuals and the communities in which they live
- Make sure that the opportunities provided are open to everyone
- Make sure that there is a safe environment for customers of the service, and for those providing the service

Each member of staff is responsible for delivering the service fairly, consistently and openly, as well as keeping within Housing Services policies and procedures, and the law.

Any agencies or organisations that work with Housing Services will also be expected to make sure that they do not discriminate or act unfairly against any section of the community.

These principals will be adopted in all the work of Housing Services.

## Contacting us

How long will it take for my telephone calls to be answered?

- We promise that we will answer all calls to our main switchboard and to direct lines or extensions within 20 seconds
- Where calls are made directly to extensions and the person who can help is not available, we will either ring you back no later than the following working day or, if you prefer, tell you when to call back
  - People who have difficulty with their hearing can contact us by minicom on 01904 551550
  - Anyone whose first language is not English can be provided with interpretation through the Language Line scheme

How long will I have to wait for a reply to my letter?

- When you write to us, we will give you a full response, in writing where appropriate, within 5 working days
- Occasionally, we will be unable to provide a full reply within 5 days, for example if we need to get information from another organisation. If this happens we will write to let you know who is dealing with your query and when you can expect a complete reply.
- If you have problems with your sight we can write to you in large print, Braille, audio taped or translated versions of any correspondence or information within 10 working days - please let us know if this would help

How long will I have to wait when I visit reception?

When you call into our offices, we will see you within 10 minutes. The person you see will wear a badge showing their name. If this person is unable to help, someone who understands your query will see you. They will do this within a further 10 minutes.

We can also offer you an appointment to see someone and, if required, arrange for a signer or interpreter to be present. Just get in touch with the office concerned to agree a suitable time.

## How to Complain

What should I do if I'm not happy with your services?

### Making a Complaint

If you are not happy with our services you can make a complaint. You can make your complaint directly to the staff involved or contact the complaints team, if you prefer. You can also fill in a 'Have Your Say' leaflet which will be sent to the Complaints Manager. If you need any help in making your complaint, staff will do their best to assist you. Your complaint can be dealt with at a number of different stages.

### Stage One: The Informal or Problem Solving Stage

If you are unhappy about something you should talk to the staff involved. If you fill in a 'Have Your Say' form then this will be passed by the complaints team to the staff involved to try to deal with. They will try to deal with the problem and sort it out for you. They will tell you their name and what they will do to try and sort out the problem. If they need to write to you they should do so within 5 working days.

## Stage Two

If you are unhappy with what has been done or the problem continues then you can contact the person who manages the service and let them know your concerns. They will look into your complaint and review the action that has been taken so far. They should write to you within 5 working days responding to your complaint.

## Stage Three

If you are still not satisfied, then you can ask for your complaint to be looked at by someone who has not had any previous involvement with your complaint. In Communities and Neighbourhoods, this is usually the Complaints Manager. They will review your complaint and the action that has been taken to solve the problem. This will involve talking to all the staff involved and finding out what has happened. You should receive a written response to your complaint within 5 working days.

## Are there other people I can take my complaint to?

You can also contact your councillor or MP about your problem. If you are unsure about who your councillor or MP is then contact your Estate Manager on 01904 551550.

Residents Associations and York Federation of Residents and Community Associations may also be able to help.

If you are unhappy, about how Housing Services have dealt with your complaint then you can contact the Local Government Ombudsman.

The Ombudsman is independent and can investigate any complaints about Housing Services. They will normally only do this after you have been through the department's complaints procedure. The Ombudsman may make a recommendation that the council reconsiders a decision.

## How to Appeal

### Can I appeal against decisions about Housing Services?

If you disagree with our decisions on housing policy you have the right of appeal to a panel of Councillors and you can appeal against decisions about your request to move, claims for compensation, refusal to allow you to alter your home. If you are unhappy with our decisions and want to appeal you need to write to the Assistant Director of Housing & Public Protection.

### Can I make suggestions or comments about your services?

You can make comments or suggestions about our services in the following ways:

- Directly to the staff you are dealing with
- Directly to the manager of the staff you are dealing with
- By completing the "Have your say" leaflet
- To the Complaints Manager
- Via your local Residents' Association

Your comments or suggestion will be passed onto the relevant staff who will acknowledge your comments and tell you what they are going to do about it.

I'm really pleased with the service that I've received, who should I tell?

As well as dealing with your complaints it is really helpful for us to know when we have done something well. If you are pleased with the service you have received please tell the staff you are dealing with, or speak to their Manager. Alternatively, you can speak to the Complaints Manager who will pass the information on, or complete a "Have Your Say" leaflet.

## Access to information about me

### Access to personal records for Housing Services customers

The Data Protection Act 1998 gives you the right to see information held about you by the council. You can get further details in the "You and your Communities and Neighbourhoods Records" leaflet.

#### What to do:

- You should contact the council in person or in writing. You may be asked for information to help identify you and the information that you wish to see
- The council can ask you for a small fee to provide the information
- The council must provide the information within 40 calendar days, provided that you have paid the fee and that you have provided the council with enough details
- The council will give you the information in a form that you can understand. You can request information in large print, Braille or in another language
- If the council refuses to give you the information, you can contact the Data Protection Registrar, see contact details at the end of this section, or apply to the County Court or High Court. The court may be able to make the council grant your request for information

However, you will not have the right to see information held about you, if it is held for:

- Preventing or detecting crime
- Catching or prosecuting offenders
- Assessing or collecting tax or duty

If you have any queries about the information held about you, and think that it is being held unfairly you should contact the office of the Data Protection Registrar (see page 20).

The council can only give you information about another individual if that person has given the council permission, or if the council feels that it is reasonable to do this.

Personal data held by the Council in order to manage your tenancy will also be used for comparison purposes, within City of York Council's departments, with other councils and with central Government departments, for the prevention and detection of fraud. This includes the Audit Commissions National Fraud Initiative which takes place every other year.

#### Do I have the right to information about Council meetings?

Yes, you can attend meetings of the council, the Cabinet and other groups except where personal or confidential matters are being discussed. The Cabinet is a group of senior councillors who decide council policies, plan the council's budget and take decisions about the amount of money the council has to spend and how the council spends this money.

## Attending Council Meetings

The Cabinet meets every four weeks.

Councillors who are not members of the Cabinet meet regularly to look at the decisions that the Cabinet makes. These groups can make further investigations and put forward different points of view. They are called Scrutiny Panels and Advisory Panels. When all these groups have made decisions or new policies, the results are taken to meetings of the full council, which all councillors attend.

All reports are made available to the public at least five days before the meetings and the public can attend and speak at the Scrutiny Panel and Advisory Meetings. The public can also attend Cabinet meetings.

There are also Ward Committees and Area Committees, where more local matters are discussed and everyone can attend and speak at these meetings ( see section 7 Getting Involved)

Papers written for the meetings between the members of the Cabinet and senior council officers which provide information about the subject of the meeting and which help decisions to be made will also be available to the public.

### Making Contact:

Complaints Manager, Freepost RLXT-AYJJ-RXS, Customer Feedback Team  
City of York Council, PO Box 31, York, YO1 7DU  
Tel: 01904 551550 ext. 4080 e-mail: [haveyoursay@york.gov.uk](mailto:haveyoursay@york.gov.uk)

### Other contacts:

Chief Executive - Committee Services, West Offices, Station Rise, York YO1 6GAK Tel:  
01904 551550

### Local Government Ombudsman

The Oaks No 2, Westwood Way, Westwood Business Park, Coventry CV4 8JB  
Phone: 024 7669 5999 Fax: 024 7669 5902 [www.lgo.org.uk](http://www.lgo.org.uk)

Hugh Bayley MP - 59 Holgate Road, York YO24 4AA. Tel: 01904 623713

Anne Mackintosh MP - c/o Westgate, Thirsk YO7 1QS

Phil Willis MP - c/o Ashdown House, 75 Station Parade, Harrogate HG1 1ST

John Grogan MP - Wharf Bank Mews, Bridge Street, Tadcaster LS24 9AL

John Greenaway MP - c/o 109 Town Street, Old Malton, YO17 7HD

Citizens Advice Bureau - West Offices, Station Rise, York YO1 6GAK Tel: 0844  
8269705

For information about access to personal information contact:

Office of the Data Protection Registrar

Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF

Tel: 01625 545745 e-mail: [data@wycliffe.demon.co.uk](mailto:data@wycliffe.demon.co.uk)

# Rent and Housing Benefit

---

This Section Covers: Paying Your Rent

Claiming Housing Benefit

What Happens if You Don't Pay Your Rent

Each year we work out how much money we need to keep the housing service running smoothly. We then tell you how much rent you must pay each week. We aim to give you value for money. This chapter gives you advice about the different ways available for you to pay your rent. It tells you what to do if you have difficulty paying and who to contact to help sort things out.

If you are on a low income you can get help to pay your rent by claiming Housing Benefit. We try to make sure everyone claims all the Housing Benefit they are entitled to. We tell you how you can help us deal with your claim quickly and accurately, and what you can expect from the service.

We offer these services to help you with your rent

- Send you an Alpay swipe card when you accept the tenancy of your new home
- Provide a variety of ways to pay including Direct Debit or Standing Order. We can also take payments from you on the day that you accept your tenancy
- Send you a statement of your rent and any other accounts every 3 months. We can also give you these statements within 3 working days if you ask for them
- Give you advice to help you sort out any arrears
- Refund any credit on your account within 10 working days of your request

We make claiming housing benefit quick and easy by

- Giving you advice about Housing Benefit and how to claim
- Sending you a claim form within a day of your request
- Telling you what information we need to work out your benefit
- Answering your letters within 5 working days
- Returning your phone call within 1 working day
- Seeing you within 10 minutes if you call into our reception
- Assessing and paying your claim within 2 weeks once we have all the information we need from you
- Paying your benefit directly into your rent account
- Not normally taking arrears action if an outstanding Housing Benefit award will clear all the arrears on your account

## To make sure your account runs smoothly you should

- Make sure you pay your rent when it is due
- Let us know if you go away
- Contact us straight away if you have a problem paying your rent
- Make a Housing Benefit claim if you think you are entitled or are having difficulty

**Tell Housing Benefits about any changes in your circumstances straight away**

You have the right to 4 weeks notice of any increase in rent.

### Paying the rent

#### How do I know how much rent to pay?

When you are offered a home the Estate Manager showing you around will tell you how much the rent is. If you claim Housing Benefit your Estate Manager will advise you how much to pay until your claim is worked out. Your Estate Manager will be happy to answer questions you have about your rent. If you claim Housing Benefit we will send you a separate letter once your Housing Benefit claim has been assessed. This will tell you how much rent you have to pay.

If you have any other accounts with us, for example a court costs account, we will send you a separate letter and a payment card, telling you how much you have to pay.

#### How long will I have to wait for my Alpay swipe card?

If you are a new tenant we will send you an Alpay swipe card when you accept the tenancy of your new home. If you ask for a new swipe card we will send you one within three working days.

#### How are rents worked out?

From April 2002 City of York Council rents have been set according to a formula laid down by the government. The formula is designed to make sure that rents:

- Are affordable in the future
- Are generally well below those charged by private landlords
- Are linked to size, location and condition of your home
- Are similar to rents for other Council and Housing Association properties of a similar size, location and condition.

We work out your rent so that you normally pay for 48 weeks of the year. This means that you have 4 weeks in the year when you don't have to pay rent, 2 weeks at the end of March and 2 weeks at Christmas. If you owe the council rent you must still pay during these weeks to reduce your arrears.

#### What does the rent pay for?

Rent is used to manage, repair and modernise council homes. This includes staffing and other costs such as legal advice.

## Will I get notice of my rent increasing?

We will write and let you know of increases in rent at least 4 weeks in advance, telling you why we have to increase your rent and by how much. If you don't accept the increase you must terminate your tenancy. You will also be told about increases in any other charges, for example warden charges, before they are changed.

## How often should I pay?

Rent is due weekly. It should be paid one week in advance. If you want to pay over longer periods, for example, monthly by Direct Debit, you must pay one month in advance. If you have problems paying your rent you must speak to your Estate Manager straight away.

## Responsibilities of joint tenants

If you are a joint tenant you have equal responsibilities for the total amount of rent and any arrears. So, it is important that each tenant knows the state of the rent account.

## What are the different methods of payment?

There are a number of ways of paying your rent. When you first become a tenant your Estate Manager will tell you about the different ways you can pay your rent, you can then decide which method suits you. If you cannot pay in your usual way you should make other arrangements rather than delaying payment. If there is a problem tell your Estate Manager straight away. For more information on any of the following methods of payment please contact Customer Services on Tel: 01904 551550.

- **By Direct Debit**

If you have a current bank or building society account we can arrange for your rent to be paid on the 1<sup>st</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> or 22<sup>nd</sup> of the month, directly to us through Direct Debit. Contact Customer Services for a form Tel: 01904 551550 or download one from the council's website [www.york.gov.uk](http://www.york.gov.uk).

If you pay by Direct Debit we will notify the bank of any increases in rent. We will let you know in writing when the Direct Debit will start and any changes to the payments.

If the payments are rejected by the bank, the arrangement will be cancelled and you will have to pay by one of the other methods. If the Direct Debit is cancelled we will write and let you know.

- **Standing Order**

If you have a current bank or building society account we can arrange for your rent to be paid monthly directly to us through Standing Order. Contact Customer Services for a form Tel: 01904 551550 or download one from the council's website [www.york.gov.uk](http://www.york.gov.uk).

If you pay by Standing Order you must notify the bank of any increases in rent. We will let you know in writing when the Standing Order will start and any changes you need to make to the payments.

- **Paying in cash as shops or garages displaying the Paypoint sign**

Shops and garages will not be able to see any of your personal details held by City of York Council. You will be issued with a receipt which you should keep as proof of payment.



Your Alpay card is personal to you and your address.

It is not a credit card and has no monetary value

- If you move home do not give this card to the new occupier
- If you move to another City of York Council property you will be issued with a new card.
- If you leave property owing money you can still pay for this using your card.
- If your card is lost, damaged or stolen please contact Customer Services on 01904 551550 to order a replacement card.
- If you would rather pay by Direct Debit please contact Customer Services to arrange one.

You can also make payments via the website by visiting [www.york.gov.uk/payments](http://www.york.gov.uk/payments)

- **Payment by Debit / Credit Card**

You can pay by debit card either on-line via the website at [www.york.gov.uk/payments](http://www.york.gov.uk/payments) or over the telephone by ringing 01904 551550.

You can pay by credit card either on-line or over the telephone by ringing 01904 551550. You will be charged 2% of the amount you are paying by credit card.

- **By Post**

Never send cash through the post. Exceptionally, payments should be made by cheque, money order or postal order making sure you quote your rent account number. Make cheques, money orders or postal orders payable to City of York Council.

- **Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) Direct Payments**

If you are on Income Support or Job Seekers Allowance and your rent account is in arrears equivalent to 4 weeks full rent, a fixed amount and can be deducted to pay your arrears, directly out of your benefit by the Department of Work and Pensions. It is then paid to us every 4 weeks. Contact your Estate Manager to arrange this.

- **Deduction From Wages Or Salaries**

If you work for the Council we can arrange to have your rent deducted from your pay. Other employers also have saving schemes which could be used to pay your rent, for example through a Bankers Order.

- **Post Office Giro Payments**

If you have a Giro account you can pay your rent weekly or monthly. The Council's Giro account number is 6094317. Please be aware this method can be expensive.

**Information about all these methods of payment can be found on the council's website at [www.york.gov.uk](http://www.york.gov.uk). You can also make payments via the website by visiting [www.york.gov.uk/payments](http://www.york.gov.uk/payments)**

## How can I find out the balance on my account?

We will send you a statement of your rent and any other accounts every three months, showing all the transactions that have been made. If you want to know your balance at any other time you can request a statement and we will send you one within 3 working days. Customer Services or your Estate Manager can give you a balance on your account if you phone in, provided you have your rent account number.

## What if I disagree with the balance on my account?

If you disagree with the balance on your rent account or rent account statement we will check it for you within 5 working days. If there is a credit we will refund this providing you do not owe us any other money.

## What Happens If I Don't Pay My Rent?

If you fail to pay your rent it is important that you bring your rent account up to date the following week.

If your account gets into arrears and you are unable to pay off all your rent arrears in one payment your Estate Manager can help. They can make an arrangement with you to pay the arrears off by an agreed amount each week. They can also give you advice about any benefits you may be entitled to.

If you don't get in touch you will be contacted and asked to clear your arrears or make an arrangement to pay the arrears off in regular amounts. Your Estate Manager will always offer help and advice and will be happy to visit you to discuss any problems.

## **If you don't reduce your rent arrears, we will take legal action which may result in you losing your home.**

(If you are an Introductory Tenant, different rules apply.)

Below is a list of the steps we take if rent remains unpaid:

Note: If your debt is reducing in line with an agreement to repay no further action will be taken

STEP ONE: An Estate Manager will send out a reminder asking for the amount owed to be paid immediately. If you are having trouble paying your rent you should contact your Estate Manager to discuss the problem. An agreement to repay any debt will be made.

STEP TWO: You will be served with a Notice of Intention to Seek Possession. This is the first stage of legal action, which could lead to you losing your home.

After receiving this Notice you have a month to pay off the whole debt or to make an agreement to pay it back in regular instalments.

STEP THREE: If your debt increases your Estate Manager will send you a further letter warning that court action to repossess your home will begin. Even at this stage, you can still sort the situation out by contacting your Estate Manager to agree a repayment plan.

If you are taken to court the costs can be over £200.

STEP FOUR: Legal action will be started against you at the County Court. You will be invited to a court hearing at which the court can agree to repossess your home or order you to pay back what you owe plus the court costs in weekly payments.

**STEP FIVE: If you don't keep the terms of the court order you will lose your home.**

If you lose your home because you have not paid the rent you will usually not be rehoused by the council until you have paid back everything you owe.

### **For Introductory Tenants different rules apply**

Being in rent arrears would be a breach of your introductory tenancy. We will

STEP ONE: Send you a letter notifying you of the amount of the debt, and help you to make an arrangement to pay your arrears.

STEP TWO: If you do not keep to this arrangement we will serve you with a Notice of Possession Proceedings. This gives you notice that we intend to end your Introductory Tenancy.

STEP THREE: If you wish to appeal against this decision you have 14 days from the date the notice was served to request a review of your circumstances in front of a Review Board of senior managers. If you do not request a review hearing we will apply to the County Court to end your tenancy. You will be responsible for the legal costs which will be over £200.

STEP FOUR: If you do request a review you will be asked to attend the review hearing within 28 days from the date the notice was served. The Review Board will decide whether or not you will be given a further chance to keep your tenancy.

STEP FIVE: If your case goes to court and your Introductory tenancy is ended you will be evicted from your home.

**If you lose your home because you have not paid the rent you will usually not be rehoused by the council until you have paid back what you owe.**

Our aim is to give you all the advice and help we can so that you don't lose your home.

#### **Renting a Council Cooker?**

If you rent a cooker from us then you must keep up with payments. If you are in arrears with your cooker rent and do not arrange to clear the arrears this is a breach of your tenancy and we may take the following action:-

- If you are on Income Support and only have your cooker charges to pay, we will try to arrange for your cooker rent and a payment towards your arrears to be made directly to us from the Department of Work and Pensions.
- Ask you to return the cooker

## Renting a garage

If you rent a garage from us you must keep up with payments. If you don't we will terminate your licence agreement with you and change the locks. You will be recharged for this work.

## Claiming Housing Benefit

If you are on a low income and think you should be getting help paying your rent contact the council's Benefits Service or your Estate Manager. They can give you help and advice about applying. We will send you a claim form within 1 day of your request. You need to complete a claim form with details of your income, savings and other people who live in your home. This information is used to work out if you are entitled to Housing Benefit and how much you will get. We will let you know how much you are entitled to within 2 weeks of having all the information we need to assess your claim. You can speed this up by providing information quickly.

You can get more detailed information about Housing Benefit by picking up the Housing Benefit leaflets and forms from the Benefits Service reception, Customer Services, Library Square. Or, if you want to speak to someone drop into our reception area, we'll see you within 10 minutes or you can make an appointment that suits you. Remember, many more people are entitled to Housing Benefit than claim it.

If you think you might be missing out on housing or any other benefits, or would like more information contact our Benefits Advisers based at Customer Services, Library Square, for expert help. They can help with a wide range of benefit issues, from helping you to complete claim forms to seeing what other benefits you may be entitled to claim. If you cannot get out they can visit you at home.

## How much will I get?

Your benefit is worked out by looking at your weekly rent, household income, savings, personal circumstances and those of other adults in your household. For more detailed information contact your Estate Manager or the council's Benefits Service. Housing Benefit is not paid for cookers, garages, heating or burglar alarms. It does not cover Warden Call. If you have Warden Call you may receive help with the cost of this from the Supporting People fund (and if you get Housing Benefit you will not be charged for your Warden Call).

## What if the amount of benefit you have been paid is wrong?

If we make a mistake we will correct it by the next working day and pay any outstanding benefit within a week. If we make a mistake and pay you too much benefit we will only recover it from you if we think it was reasonable for you to have known about it. If we pay too much benefit because you did not tell us everything about your circumstances, then we will have to recover the money from you.

Whatever the outcome we will let you know why the decision was made and what action will be taken.

## What if I'm not happy with the services you provide?

If you're not happy with the Benefits Team contact the Benefits Assessments Managers, Tel: 01904 551550.

If you are still not happy with the advice given , please contact the Housing Team Leader or the Tenancy Services Manager. See also Section 2 Customer Services and How to Complain

## .Making Contact

### **Housing Reception**

Customer Services, West Offices, Station Rise, York YO1 6GA.

Open: Monday - Friday, 8.30am to 5.00pm

By post

Housing Services  
West Offices  
Station Rise  
York  
YO1 6GA  
Tel: 01904 551550

### **Benefits Service reception**

Customer Services, West Offices, Station Rise, York YO1 6GA.

Open: Monday - Friday, 8.30am to 5.00pm

By post

Benefits Service  
West Offices  
Station Rise  
York  
YO1 6GA  
Tel: 01904 551550

Benefits Advisers who can advise on all benefit issues, including Housing Benefit issues are available on Tel: 01904 552233 and Tel: 01904 552252.

You can ask for an appointment to see them at Customer Services, West Offices between 8.30am and 5pm Monday to Friday.

# Repairs and Maintenance

This Section Covers:-

Your Responsibilities

The Council's Responsibilities

Reporting Repairs

We know that repairs and maintenance are the most important service we provide. This chapter tells you about the service you can expect. It also tells you how to complain if you are not satisfied with the service you receive.

The responsibility for looking after your home is a joint one. We are responsible for most of the repairs but you are responsible for internal decoration and items listed under "Your responsibility for repair". It also tells you about your rights and responsibilities as a tenant, how to report repairs, and what happens if you cause damage to your home.

To help maintain this level of service we will

- Attend emergency repairs, for example, no electricity or a burst pipe within four hours.
- Attend urgent repairs, for example, loss of heating and hot water within 24 hours, depending on what time you report the problem
- Attend all other repairs within 20 working days.
- Arrange appointments that suit you (including some evening appointments).
- Set high standards for our work.
- Make sure you get value for money.
- Try to complete all repairs during the first visit where possible.

## Your Responsibilities

You must..

- Keep your home in a reasonable state of decoration.
- Report any repairs or faults as soon as possible.
- Make sure our workmen can get in to carry out the repair - you may be charged if you are not at home when an appointment has been made.
- Ask permission before you make any alterations. Introductory tenants do not have the right to make alterations to their home.
- Pay for any deliberate damage.
- Carry out small repairs such as unblocking sinks.

## You have the right to

- Have your home maintained.
- Improve your home, subject to permission from the council. Introductory tenants do not have the right to carry out improvements.
- Have repairs done privately if we fail to carry out repairs within our statutory timescales.

## The Council's Responsibilities

### What repairs are the council responsible for?

We are responsible for repairs to the structure of your home, services to your home such as water and gas pipe work, electricity, and communal areas. This does not include water, gas or electric meters. The list below shows those repairs we are responsible for, if a repair is not our responsibility we will let you know.

### REPAIRS WHICH ARE THE COUNCIL'S RESPONSIBILITY

Bath	Cooker socket	Stairs (inside)
Shower unit	Kitchen units	Steps to entrances
Toilet pan	Sink bowl and drainer	Walls
Wash basin	Hot-water supply & domestic cold-water supply	Glass in windows
Taps	Down pipes (rain and soil)	Frames and fittings
Bathroom Tiles and Tiled splash backs in kitchens	Drains	Clothes line posts
Chimney and flue (not sweeping)	Gutters	Posts and wires marking boundaries
Coal bunker	Ceilings	Footpaths
Heating Systems	Damp-proof course	Gates
Glass in doors or screens	Floors	External painting
Inside doors	Outside woodwork	Brick and concrete sheds
All locks	Skirting boards	

### What about repairs to cookers?

If you rent a cooker from us we will arrange for it to be repaired. If we decide it is not economic to repair your cooker we will be unable to replace it. At each property we will supply and maintain either a gas or electric cooker point. If for example you have an electric cooker point and wish to install a gas cooker you would need to arrange to have a gas cooker point installed at your own expense by a registered GAS SAFE fitter.

### What repairs am I responsible for?

You must take reasonable care of your home, and report any repairs or faults to us straight away. If you have applied to buy your home then we will only carry out the basic repairs the

law asks us to do. Once you have bought your home you are responsible for all repairs. You are responsible for any alterations you make or you agree to take on as part of an exchange. **Introductory tenants are not entitled to the Right to Buy their home or the right to exchange their home.**

You are responsible for repairing/replacing any fixtures or fittings that you have fitted yourself.

## Your Responsibilities

### REPAIRS WHICH ARE YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

Sink, Bath Plugs & Chains	unless you have just moved in
Chimney sweeping	if you have an open fire
Any heating system fitted by you	
Door bell	except door entry systems
Door name-plate	
Cooker	unless you rent it from us
Washing machine fittings	unless we have fitted them
Fences between gardens	unless we put them in
Inside decoration	including wall tiles
Wooden sheds	except if provided to house a wheelchair
Timber garage	
Smoke alarms	except battery replacement
Any light bulb	including fluorescent tubes
Security Light bulbs	

If you or a member of your household, or visitor to your home, or a pet have

- Caused damage to your home that would not be considered as “fair wear and tear”, for example, damage to internal doors
- Neglected your home, or carried out unauthorised work (or had unauthorised work carried out by someone else acting on your behalf)
- Damaged any part of your home for which the Council is responsible (including electrical, gas, water or plumbing services) whilst carrying out DIY work (including decorating)
- Caused damage to your home or an adjoining home by items that you or others have brought onto the property, for example leaking washing machines
- Not taken reasonable precautions to safeguard your property against obvious potential harm, such as damage caused by fire, frost or inadequate security of your home
- Reported a problem with your gas or electricity supply and the cause of the problem is a pre-pay meter which has run out of credit
- Lost and misplaced your keys meaning we have had to gain access into your home



Under any of these circumstances you will be expected to make good the damage, or if we carry out a repair and find it is caused as a result of wilful damage or negligence we will recharge you for the cost of the repair, any materials or the visit to your home.

Where possible, you will be informed of our intention to recharge you before the work is undertaken and also given an approximate cost. In other circumstances where a tradesperson has already carried out the repair, we will notify you if we intend to recharge you for a repair and the reason for the recharge. Once the repair has been completed, we will send you a final statement of the costs.

## Reporting Repairs

### How should I report a repair?

You can call in, telephone or write to us at

Housing Services  
West Offices  
Station Rise  
York  
YO1 6GA  
Tel: 01904 551550 ( Option 4, then Option 1)  
Email : [housing.repairs@york.gov.uk](mailto:housing.repairs@york.gov.uk)

Give your name, address and as much detail as you can about the problem. You can also pass repairs onto your Estate Manager or Maintenance Surveyor when they call.

### How long will it take for us to carry out the repair?

When you report a repair if the repair requires access to the inside of your home you may be offered a morning or afternoon appointment which suits you. (There are also some evening appointments for certain minor repairs) . For most appointments we will send you written confirmation. We will let you know what priority your repair is and when it will be completed.

Please make sure you or someone else responsible is at home to let the tradesperson in. You may be charged if no-one is at home when you have requested an emergency call-out or an appointment has been made.

You must allow council staff, contractors and other authorised people into your home at reasonable hours to inspect conditions and carry out necessary repairs. We will give you 24 hours written notice (or without notice in the case of emergency), to inspect or carry out work in the property or an attached property. We will have given you proper notice under this condition if we leave it addressed to you at the property.

If you do not let our staff, contractors or other authorised persons into your property to carry out gas servicing or repairs after we have given you 24 hours notice (or without notice in the case of an emergency) we may apply to the court for an order which may be either a possession order or an injunction order (and you may have to pay our court costs).

What should I do in an emergency?

During office hours, report emergency repairs on 01904 551550( Option 4, then Option 1)

**Outside normal office hours report an emergency repair to 01904 630405.**

**For gas leaks you must phone Transco on 0800 111 999**

Emergency repairs are ones which are needed to avoid serious health and safety risk or prevent serious structural damage to your home. They include:

- Burst pipes
- Electrical faults
- Fire damage
- Blocked toilet drains and a blocked toilet – where home only has one toilet.
- Your home is insecure, for example following a burglary

We usually respond to emergencies within 4 hours. Sometimes only a temporary repair will be carried out with the full repair being carried out soon after.

If an emergency occurs when you are not at home, for example a leak from your home into another flat, we may tell our employees, contractors or other authorised persons to enter the property straight away, in which case we will put right any damage we cause.

What if repairs take longer than expected?

Some complicated or major repairs may take longer where parts need to be ordered or made, in these cases a further appointment will be made for the work to be completed. If this is the case we will keep you informed.

What if the work is very disruptive?

If the work will potentially cause you a serious health and safety risk or renders your home uninhabitable, we will offer you temporary accommodation whilst it is carried out.

## Heating Systems

### Gas Servicing

The council has a legal responsibility to carry out a safety service on your gas heating system each year. We will check that it is operating efficiently and safely. We will also give advice on the effective use of your system.

At the same time we will check your gas cooker if you rent it from us. We will give you written notice that we are going to call. If it is not convenient you can rearrange it to suit you. If you do not allow access to your property in line with the written notice, we will regard the case as an emergency. If you do not let our staff or other authorised persons in to the property to service gas appliances we may apply to the court for an order, which will allow us to gain access to your property without your permission. You may have to pay our costs of going to court.

**The council is required by law to service gas appliances in council homes each year. You are putting your life at risk if you do not allow regular checks to be made to gas appliances in your home.**

Electric and solid fuel systems will be checked when you report repairs.

If you need advice about the kind of fuel you can burn on solid fuel systems, contact Environmental Protection on 01904 551597.

If you need advice on operating your system efficiently you can ring 01904 551550 to arrange for someone to visit. If it has just been installed the contractor that fitted it should explain how to work it and leave any instructions with you. Section 9 of this handbook contains some basic guidelines on how to operate common types of heating system.

#### What if I'm out when the worker calls?

If you are out when the worker calls they will leave you a card. Ring the number on the card to rearrange the appointment.

#### What if you don't turn up when you say you will?

We aim to meet all of our appointments. If we do miss an appointment we will send you a written apology, and will rearrange the appointment at a time convenient for you.

#### Who carries out the work?

We employ contractors to carry out our repairs service. Surveyors sometimes need to carry out inspections before repairs are ordered to decide exactly what is needed.

#### How do you check the standards and quality of the work?

We expect our contractors to carry out work in your home without causing too much mess and they should leave your home clean and tidy. To check the quality of the work we often carry out inspections of completed repairs. If damage is caused while work is being done in your home you must let us know. We also rely on you to let us know if you are not happy with any aspect of the work carried out.

#### How much does it cost?

We aim to get value for money, whilst providing a quality service. We'll keep a close eye on our contractors and seek competitive quotes for the work we need to do.

#### Can I organise the work myself?

If we have failed in our legal responsibilities to repair your home, you have the right to organise certain repairs yourself, with all or part of the cost met by us. This process is quite complicated and is explained in more detail in the Communities and Local Government leaflet 'A better deal for tenants - Your Right To Repair' our housing reception areas.

#### Planned maintenance

We aim to visit homes in your area every 7 years to carry out planned maintenance. The sort of work this covers is:

- Outside painting
- Repairs to outside woodwork
- Repairs to gutters and pipe work

#### Modernisation programme ( Tenants' Choice )

We usually carry out major improvements outside of the normal repairs system. This is called the Capital Programme. These schemes can include such things as central heating, new kitchens and bathrooms, rewiring and new windows. Much of the work is carried out through our highly praised Tenant's Choice modernisation scheme.

The amount of work we can do through the Capital Programme is set by how much the government say we can borrow each year, which limits the amount of modernisation work the council can carry out each year.

## Helpful Advice

**Electricity** - Contact your electricity supplier to have your electricity supply connected or disconnected. They generally need 48 hours notice. You are responsible for all charges. If you are unsure who supplies electricity to your home Tel: 0800 551555

**Circuit Breakers** - Some homes may be fitted with circuit breakers instead of fuses. These are switches which switch off in circumstances where a fuse would have blown. Disconnect the appliance causing the problem then reset the switch. If the circuit breaker continues to switch off contact us.

**Gas** - Contact your gas supplier to connect or disconnect your gas supply. They need about 48 hours notice. You are responsible for all charges. Gas appliances need either a flue or adequate fresh air to work safely. Do not block air vents. If you are unsure who supplies gas to your home Tel: 08706 081524 or Tel: 0800 048 0303

**GAS LEAKS** - Transco on 0800 111 999

### IF YOU THINK YOU CAN SMELL GAS

- DON'T turn electric switches on or off.
- DON'T smoke.
- DON'T use naked flames.
- DO turn off the gas supply at the meter.
- DO open doors and windows to get rid of the gas.

### FOR ANY GAS EMERGENCIES AT ANY TIME

**CALL TRANSCO FREE ON 0800 111 999**

**Water** - Make sure you know where to find your stop tap to turn off your water supply at the mains. It is often under the kitchen sink.

**Overflows** - If water overflows from the water cistern or toilet, and the over flow does not stop dripping contact Customer Service on 01904 551550.

**Mould and Condensation** - Condensation is caused by too much moisture in the air. When moisture in the air it hits something cold like a window or wall, it turns back to water, making condensation. You can reduce problems with condensation by keeping your home warm, and by keeping the amount of water vapour in your home to a minimum. You can do this by keeping your home well ventilated, not drying clothes indoors, keeping doors to kitchens and bathrooms shut when you are cooking or bathing. For more advice please contact us, we can arrange for a surveyor to look at the problems and give you practical advice.

If the reason for mould growth is due to structural problems we will arrange for these problems to be investigated.

## **Frost Precautions**

In wintry conditions it is important that your heating system is not allowed to freeze. So if your home is going to be left unoccupied for any length of time during very cold weather, you should set your heating system timer, so that the heating comes on for a short time for regular periods every day. Any exposed pipe work, for example outside taps, should be protected with the appropriate lagging. For further advice contact the surveyor for your area on Tel: 01904 551550.

## **Street repairs, Graffiti and Rubbish - Smarter York**

Smarter York seeks to encourage residents to take pride in the City and to take part in achieving a better environment and quality of life for all. There are Street Environment Officers who are responsible for monitoring York's streets by inspecting areas for graffiti, rubbish, abandoned cars and repairs to roads and pavements. The aim is for residents to see a real difference in the quality of the environment and to feel safer in their own communities.

The Smarter York Line is 01904 551551.

## **What if I'm not happy with the service you provide?**

If you are not happy with the quality of the work carried out or if things go wrong we want to know. If we fail to keep our promises phone us on 01904 551550 and we'll deal with the problem. If you are still not happy contact your Estate Manager. Your complaint will be investigated. If you remain unhappy, see Section 2 Customer Service & How to Complain for more information.

## **Making Contact**

Housing Services  
West Offices  
Station Rise  
York  
YO1 6GA  
Tel: 01904 551550

To speak to your Estate Manager

01904 551550 - Monday - Friday, 8.30 to 5.00pm.

Reporting Repairs Tel: 551550 ( Option 4, then Option 1)

Gas leaks TRANSCO: 0800 111 999

# Communal Areas & Estate Services

---

This Section Covers:- Gardening  
Rubbish Storage and Removal  
Repairs and Maintenance

This is our promise of how we will maintain the communal areas and facilities around your home. It tells you how often we cut the grass and hedges, how we keep planted areas and trees tidy, how quickly we clear rubbish and repair communal facilities. It guarantees high standards of service and says how we will achieve this. It explains how you can help, by letting us know of any problems. If you have a problem or you are dissatisfied it explains what to do and how to complain

This chapter applies to customers who live in homes that share communal areas and facilities owned by Housing & Adult Social Services.

To help maintain communal areas and facilities we will

- Cut the grass regularly between April and October each year
- After cutting, keep paths clear of large amounts of grass clippings
- Keep hedges and planted areas tidy
- Prune trees when they need it
- Carry out repairs to communal areas and facilities quickly
- Repair internal communal lighting within 24 hours
- Keep communal areas tidy and free of rubbish
- Ensure that a routine check of the area takes place every 3 months
- Listen to any problems you have
- Put things right quickly

To help you should

- Let us know if something needs doing
- Ask permission before planting in communal gardens
- Make sure your rubbish is secure and left in the correct place
- Let us know if someone has dumped rubbish

## Gardening

How often will the grass be cut?

We will cut the grass 14 times between April and October, approximately every 2 weeks. We can't cut the grass if it is very wet, but we will come back to cut it within 2 days of it becoming dry.

If the grass or ground is damaged while being cut we'll repair it.

We'll pick up any litter before cutting the grass. If we miss your grassed area or miss picking up litter let us know by contacting Smarter York on 01904 551551. We'll make sure the work is carried out within 2 working days of receiving your complaint.

**Why don't you pick up the grass clippings?**

We don't pick up the grass clippings at present because to do so would more than double the cost of the work. We will brush off large amounts of grass clippings that fly onto paths or hard surfaces.

**How often will you cut the hedges?**

We'll cut the hedges three times a year, in spring, summer and autumn. The gardening contractor will clear away all hedge clippings and clear rubbish from the bottom of the hedge.

**How will you keep the planted areas tidy?**

We check planted areas every spring, summer and winter to make sure they are in good condition and not overgrown. We prune any shrubs that require attention in the winter, and clear away any litter. In the spring we also spray weeds to keep these areas tidy. We only use weed killers that are not harmful to the environment or your health.

We appreciate that because you don't have your own garden you may wish to plant flowers or shrubs in the communal planted areas or create your own planted area. In most cases we are happy for this to happen but you will need to contact your Estate Manager Tel: 01904 551550 to get permission.

If customers create their own planted area and then move away we will grass it over if the new tenant doesn't want to maintain it.

**What do you do to look after trees?**

We prune trees when they need it. If you think a tree needs attention, please let us know. We'll check it within 2 weeks and decide if any work needs to be done. We'll tell you what work we will do and when. Normally the work will be carried out within 3 months. We will arrange to prune or remove a tree within 24 hours if it is a danger to lives or property.

Our gardening experts advise us about work needed to trees. If we have to remove a tree we will consult customers and replace it if the majority agree. We also have to get approval from the Gas, Electric and Water companies.

**Will you keep paths and other areas free of weeds and moss?**

Yes. We spray all weeds on paths, drying areas, seating areas and play areas twice a year, in the spring and summer. We only use weed killers that are not harmful to the environment or your health.

We will arrange for the removal of moss on paths, drying areas, seating areas and play areas.

## **Rubbish and Storage and Removals**

**Who is responsible for keeping the bin stores tidy?**

The council's refuse collectors empty the bin stores. When putting out your rubbish please be considerate, make sure you securely tie and wrap up anything that will attract the attention of cats and dogs.

If the bin store is not tidy after the refuse collectors have been, please telephone Smarter York on 01904 551551. Any bulky items like furniture or fridges will not be collected from the bin stores. To arrange for these to be collected contact Smarter York.

The refuse collectors will always bolt the bin store doors after they have collected the rubbish. We will do any repairs needed to the doors within 3 working days of being reported.

### How often do you clean the refuse chute?

If the refuse chute is blocked, please report it on 01904 551550. We will arrange for it to be cleared within 24 hours.

### How quickly will you remove dumped rubbish?

If you find rubbish dumped in a communal area please let us know. We'll clear it away within 7 working days. If the rubbish is dangerous to you or your family, for example broken glass we will remove it within 24 hours. If you know who has dumped the rubbish tell your Estate Manager. We will try to recover the cost of removal from whoever dumped the rubbish. This helps to keep the cost of managing your home down.

## Repair and maintenance

### How do I report a repair to communal areas or facilities?

Report repairs to communal areas or facilities in the same way as you report repairs to your home. We will respond promptly depending on the urgency of the problem. Call into our reception or report it by phone on 01904 551200. Outside of office hours you can report Emergency Repairs by ringing Tel: 01904 630405.

### How quickly will you repair communal lights?

If communal lights are not working let us know. We will repair internal communal lights within 24 hours of the problem being reported and external lights within 3 working days.

We will adjust the timing on all communal lights twice a year. If they are not coming on or going off at the right time let us know. We will adjust them within 2 working days for internal lights and 3 working days for external lights.

We also check and service all communal lights each year. Where possible we use low energy bulbs.

### How quickly will you repair a door entry phone?

If your entry phone system is not working report it straight away. We will repair it within 24 hours. If your block doesn't have a door entry system and you would like one contact your local residents' association or Estate Manager Tel: 01904 551550.

### Do you repair communal TV aerials?

If you are having a problem with your TV reception check your television and find out if your neighbours are having the same problem. If you think the fault is with the communal TV aerial contact us. We will repair communal TV aerials within 24 hours.



## When will you decorate the internal communal areas like halls and stairways?

We will check the internal decoration of blocks of flats every 7 years and repaint if necessary. If you have a concern about the internal communal areas in your block let us know and we'll check it. We'll let you know what painting work we will do and when. To decide a colour we'll consult you and your neighbours.

## How quickly will you remove graffiti?

We'll remove graffiti within 5 working days. We will remove any offensive graffiti on council owned property, for example if it is racist, within 24 hours. Please report graffiti to the Repairs number Tel: 01904 551200. If you see someone writing graffiti please report it to the Police and your Estate Manager.

## What about vandalism?

Vandalism is an inconvenience to us all and it costs you money. If you see someone damaging communal areas or facilities contact the Police. If you know who it is tell your Estate Manager.

We will repair any damage to communal areas that causes inconvenience or nuisance to customers within 20 working days. If the damage is dangerous it will be made safe within 24 hours.

## How will I know that the Council is achieving what it promises?

We will check our performance against the service promises made to you, as well as asking you what you think. Every year we will also seek views on the quality of service, giving customers the chance to tell us of any problems. Estate Managers meet with resident association representatives to discuss local issues. We will publish the results. Every three months your Estate Manager and Housing Manager will carry out a check of communal areas during an estate walkabout. A representative from the area's residents association is also invited to attend the walkabout.

## Smarter York

Smarter York seeks to encourage residents to take pride in the City and to take part in achieving a better environment and quality of life for all. There are Street Environment Officers who are responsible for monitoring York's streets by inspecting areas for graffiti, rubbish, abandoned cars and repairs to roads and pavements. The aim is for residents to see a real difference in the quality of the environment and to feel safer in their own communities.

Contact Smarter York on 01904 551551.

## What if I'm unhappy with the services you provide?

If you are unhappy about any aspect of our service please talk or write to your Estate Manager. If you don't get a satisfactory answer from them contact Housing's Landlord Service Manager on 01904 551550 ext. 1298

We'll respond straight away and if a written reply is needed, it will be sent to you within 5 working days.

If you are still unhappy you should read the section called “Customer First and How to Complain”

## Making Contact

Housing Services  
West Offices  
Station Rise  
York  
YO1 6GA  
Tel: 01904 551550

For Estate Management Tel: 01904 551550

For Repairs Tel: 01904 551550

Open: Monday - Friday 8.30 to 5.00pm

Smarter York 01904 551551

Monday - Friday 8.30am to 5.00pm (answer phone outside of these hours)

North Yorkshire Police ( non-emergency line ) 101

The council's website: [www.york.gov.uk](http://www.york.gov.uk)

The council's email address: [comments@york.gov.uk](mailto:comments@york.gov.uk)

# Services to support Independent Living

---

This section covers:

- Warden Call
- Special Equipment and Adaptations
- Moving Home
- Sheltered Housing
- Sheltered Housing with additional support
- Other Help and Benefits Available

We aim to provide a safe and secure home environment for older people and those who need extra support. We offer a number of services to help you stay in your home, or if you prefer, accommodation designed to make life a little easier and more secure for you.

If you or someone in your household is an older person, vulnerable, has a disability, or has difficulty carrying out everyday tasks, (like taking a bath or using the toilet), we can offer help in many cases.. If we cannot help we will try to tell you about other organisations that may be able to.

To help you keep your independence we can arrange for you to have a 24 hour helpline installed called Warden Call. Your home could be adapted to meet your needs or you could move to more suitable accommodation. There is also help available with decoration, garden maintenance and home insulation.

To help you stay in your home we will

- Offer help and advice about services available and inform you of the choices you have.
- Visit you within 10 working days of your first enquiry to Warden Call
- Offer a 24 hour emergency Warden Call service response, 365 days a year.
- Visit at least once every two months if you have Warden Call
- Look at ways we can alter things in your home to make you more independent
- Acknowledge a request for adaptations to your home within 7 working days
- Tell you about agencies that could provide independent advice or advocacy services
- Inform you about any charges you may have to pay and how those charges have been worked out
- Inform you about any benefits that you may be able to claim to meet the cost of your care
- Ensure that information is made available on request in a form that suits you, for example in another language or Braille
- Provide all the help we can

If you need a move to more suitable accommodation we will...

- Discuss fully with you your housing needs and options
- Help you fill in an application form for rehousing
- Tell you what sort of accommodation is available and where
- Write and confirm whether your application for rehousing has been accepted or not and tell you the level of priority you will receive within 10 working days
- Provide any help needed to bid for available accommodation

You must

- Keep us up to date with information on your circumstances
- Let us know if you want to change your area choice
- Keep all service providers up to date with what you need from them and let them know if you don't need a particular service anymore
- Look after any equipment you have in your home and return it when you don't need it anymore

## Warden call

**What is Warden Call?**

Warden Call is a 24 hour helpline for older people, people with disabilities, or anyone who may need assistance day or night. Your home will be fitted with a community alarm telephone. You will also be given a pendant to wear around your home and just outside it. If you have a problem you just press the button on your phone or pendant. Your call will be answered by friendly trained staff who can get the help you need. Wardens can also give advice about other services and benefits available to you.

For more information contact York Warden Call on 01904 645000

**How do I apply for Warden Call?**

Just contact York Warden Call. We will visit you within 10 working days. Depending on what is needed we will let you know if and when we can fit your Warden Call System. To help the wardens assist you, we will ask you for details of relatives and friends who could help you in an emergency. Details of your doctor are usually held too. Any information we have is kept in strictest confidence.

**How often will I be contacted?**

A mobile warden will visit you every 8 weeks. If you are ill or are just home from hospital then more regular visits can be arranged. Your Warden will make sure you get the assistance you need, while respecting your privacy and independence.

**What happens if there is an emergency?**

Call Warden Call straight away, anytime day or night. If you wear your pendant you will be able to contact Warden Call from anywhere in your home or just outside it. Your call will be answered as soon as we receive it. We will contact the best person to help which could be the emergency services, your agreed emergency contact or a mobile warden.

Unless we are concerned for your safety we will not enter your home without your permission.

### Do I have to pay for the service?

Housing Benefit is available if you cannot afford the rent. For the warden and emergency alarm service there is a weekly Supporting People charge added to your rent. If you receive Housing Benefit this charge will be covered by the Supporting People grant paid directly to your support provider. If you are not in receipt of Housing Benefit, you can request a financial assessment to see if you are eligible for help towards the cost from Supporting People. Contact the Benefits Advice Team on 01904 551556 for further details about financial assessments. For more information about Warden Call and the current charges contact York Warden Call.

## Special Equipment and Adaptations

### If I'm having difficulty with everyday things like bathing is there help available?

Items of portable equipment like bath seats, raised toilet seats and walking aids are available on loan through us. Tel: 01904 554141 for more information.

### What about more permanent alterations - Who can help with those?

Permanent alterations are called adaptations. These are changes to your home to help you live life as fully and independently as possible. They can be very simple like an extra stair rail, or more complex like a stair lift or ground floor toilet. We will organise for the work to be carried out.

We have a waiting list and prioritise the applications so that the most urgent cases are dealt with quickly.

If your home needs a lot of changes a move to more suitable accommodation may be more appropriate. So we may need to visit you to discuss the options available.

For more information Tel: 01904 551550

## Moving Home

### If I want to move, what sort of accommodation could I move to?

That would depend on what was suitable for your needs. You would be assessed according to your needs. The following are the types of accommodation you may like to consider.

- Ground floor accommodation so you don't have to climb stairs
- First floor flats so everything is on one level inside your home
- Accommodation adapted for wheelchair users (wider doors, higher sockets etc).
- Sheltered accommodation
- Independent supported housing
- Accommodation elsewhere in or away from York to be near family support

Many of these homes have Warden Call fitted

## How do I apply to move?

To apply for a move you need to fill in an application form. You can get one by contacting our reception areas. If you need help completing it we will be happy to help, either at our reception areas or by arranging for someone to visit you in your home.

For more information see Section 8 Moving Home.

## Sheltered Housing

### What is sheltered housing?

Sheltered accommodation is designed to make life easier, more secure and offers help and support when it is needed. A warden is on call during the day to help you with day to day problems and when your warden is not on duty your call is answered by York Warden Call. In Sheltered Accommodation you still have your own front door, you are in charge of cooking and cleaning and everything else inside your home. Each home has an intercom for you to contact your warden. Many schemes have communal facilities such as a community room, laundry, hairdresser and greenhouse. There are often gardens for your enjoyment, which are maintained by us, but you may be able to plant things, where appropriate, if you wish.

### What do I have to pay for?

The rent you pay for sheltered accommodation includes charges for other services such as window cleaning. Housing Benefit is available if you cannot afford the rent. For the warden service there is a weekly Supporting People charge added to your rent. If you receive Housing Benefit the charge will be covered by the Supporting People grant. If you are not in receipt of Housing Benefit, you can still be assessed to see if you are entitled to the Supporting People grant to help towards the cost. For further information, please contact the Benefits Advice Team on 01904 552927.

Your warden will help you fill in a form.

Some schemes have heating supplied by us, for which we make a charge, others do not and you pay your bills direct to the energy companies. Housing Benefit cannot help with fuel bills. For details of what your rent covers contact your Estate Manager.

### What does the warden do on sheltered schemes?

Wardens are there to provide help and advice. They look after the building, including repairs and maintenance work for the communal areas, and help you arrange social activities. They work Monday to Friday, office hours. Trained staff answer a 24-hour Warden Call helpline for out of hours calls.

A warden cannot give you medicine, or help you bathe, dress or shop except in an emergency. If you need help, your warden will try to get it for you.

If a lift needs repairing, the warden will ensure it is looked at through a 24-hour call out service. Faults with the door entry systems will normally be dealt with as an emergency.

## Sheltered housing with additional support

### What is sheltered housing with additional support?

There are two sheltered housing schemes which provide additional support - Glen Lodge and Barstow House. They are similar to sheltered housing but with a dedicated staff team

to help tenants who need support to live in their own flats. The team is led by a manager and staff are trained and experienced in helping residents to maintain their independence and to provide reassurance and care if tenants require extra support. The staff are available 7 days a week from 8.00 am to 10.00 pm. The support they provide includes, help to get into and out of bed, dressing and undressing, feeding, preparing meals, washing, bathing and toileting. There are communal lounges, a dining room in each scheme where tenants can choose to have lunch, a hairdressing salon and library. There are also specially adapted bathrooms and shower rooms that are available to everyone as well as individual facilities in each flat. For more information see section 8 Moving Home.

## Other help and benefits Available

What other help is available for older and disabled people?

**Help with gardening.** If you have no one at home to help with the gardening, we will cut your grass five times during the growing season and your hedge twice. This is free from April to the end of summer. Contact your Estate Manager for details.

**Internal decoration.** Every five years we offer a grant to help with the cost of decorating the inside of your home. Contact your Estate Manager for details.

**Repairs.** Our Housing Assistants will deal sympathetically with your repair request. See section 4 on Repairs and Maintenance.

**Decoration after repairs.** We may be able to help with providing decoration vouchers if work is needed after repairs.

**Home insulation.** If you receive Income Support or Housing Benefit, you can get help with the cost of insulating your home. Contact the Home Energy Efficiency Scheme on (freephone) 0800 181667. For more information on Heating efficiency see section 9.

**Better Care, Higher Standards.** A charter for long term care is available in all housing reception areas. This booklet includes an A-Z guide to long term care services within York and the standards of service you can expect.

**Day care.** All residential homes run by Social Services offer day care for a small charge which includes meals and transport. There are also some day centres run by voluntary agencies. If you would like more information please contact Adult Social Care on 01904 551550 or pick up a leaflet from our reception areas.

**Help with meals.** If you or someone you know finds it difficult to prepare meals, contact Adult Social Care on 01904 551550.

**Personal Care.** This includes helping you to get out of bed, wash, dress, go to the toilet, have a hot meal, keep warm and return safely to bed at night. This service may be provided by the council's own home care assistants or by staff working for an approved provider. Contact Adult Social Care on 01904 551550.

Home care assistants do not carry out professional nursing duties, gardening, decorating, household repairs, spring cleaning, polishing brass or silverware and climbing ladders to clean windows. If you need help with these tasks, contact Adult Social Care on 01904 551550.

## Making Contact:

York Warden Call  
Evelyn Crescent, Clifton, York YO30 6DR  
Tel: 01904 645000

Adult Social Care 01094 551550

Estate Managers: Tel: 01904 551550

### Carers Information and Advice

York Carers Centre, Nursery Block, 17 Priory Street, York YO1 6ET. Tel: 01904 715490

Disability Benefits Enquiry Line: Freephone: 0800 882200

### Social Security Benefits Helpline:

Freephone Benefits Enquiry Line: 0800 882200      Text phone: 0800 243355

Help The Aged - Helpline: Freephone: 0808 8006565

(Free welfare rights) Head office: 020 72781114 email [info@helptheaged.org.uk](mailto:info@helptheaged.org.uk)

Selby and York Primary Care Trust: Tel: 0800 068 8000

Age Concern: Tel: 01904 627995 or 01904 621020

St Sampson's Social Centre: Tel: 01904 652247

Dial and Ride: Tel: 01904 551441

York Wheels: Tel: 01904 630080/726791

Resource Centre for Deafened People: Tel: 01904 623459

Fax: 01904 623459

61 Bootham, YO30 7BT.

Thursday Drop in 10am to 5pm

Tuesday to Friday Appointments 10am-5 pm

Disability Information & Advice Centre: Tel: 01904 638467



# Getting Involved

---

This Section Covers: Your Service, Your say  
York's Tenant Participation Agreement  
Residents' Associations  
York Federation of Residents' & Community Associations  
Other Ways of Getting Involved  
Your Rights to Information

This section tells you about the different ways we will keep you informed about changes that affect you and how you can get involved to influence and improve housing services. We must, under the Housing Act 1985, consult you before introducing a new programme such as a modernisation scheme, or before making changes to services and policies which will affect you.

## Your Service, Your say

*Your Service, Your Say* is our customer engagement strategy which was developed with tenants in 2010. Along with its action plan, it sets out our overall approach to tenant participation in York showing how you can be involved and setting out our priorities for actions in future years. This section summarises the key commitments made. Copies of the full strategy, summaries and a Your Choice! Leaflet showing how you can get involved are available on request or on our website..

We will also tell you about your rights to see information held about you, what you can see and how to arrange to see it.

We will

- Tell you about all the different ways you can get involve
- Work to the standards and priorities set out in our strategy, *Your Service, Your Say*
- Give you a full copy of our strategy, *Your Service, Your Say* on request
- Tell you how to contact your local residents' association
- Advise who to contact to start a new residents' association
- Offer support to associations and the York Federation of Residents & Community Associations
- Consult you fully on any new or changing services
- Arrange for you to see your tenancy file within forty days of the request

You have the right to...

- Be consulted
- Choose your landlord
- Look at information we hold about you

- Start a residents' association
- Manage your homes

## Our commitment to tenant involvement

Our strategy, *Your Service, Your Say* tells how you can get involved to influence and improve housing services and sets standards for the support available from housing the Council. It also sets out standards for:

- Meetings
- Information
- Checking how well services and our resident involvement strategy are working

## Your Service, Your Say - Our approach to resident involvement

Our resident involvement strategy aims to

- Empower tenants, residents and leaseholders to participate in the management of their homes at a level they wish
- Work in partnership with tenants, residents and leaseholders to enable them to play a central role in the decision-making process in housing services
- Involve tenants, residents and leaseholders in a way that fits with other community-based policies and schemes
- Increase the opportunities for everyone in our communities to become involved at the level and in the way they choose.
- Listen to tenants and leaseholders and respond to what they tell us and use this information to continuously improve and provide services that meet the needs and wishes of tenants and leaseholders.
- Copies of the strategy are available on request or from our website. This will give you full details of how you can become involved and we will be happy to offer support and guidance.

The Government also supports and promotes the development of greater participation in the management of council housing. A package of grants are available, called section 16 tenant empowerment grants, to tenants and councils, from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, to support the Government's policies for increased tenant involvement.

For more information please contact Your Service, Your Say on 01904 554379 or [yourservice.yoursay@york.gov.uk](mailto:yourservice.yoursay@york.gov.uk).

### How can I get involved?

There are a number of different ways customers can get involved, so please contact us to find out what is available that would suit and interest you.

We will:

- Always consult individuals and groups about issues that directly affect them

- Support residents groups to provide a contact point and channel for consultation about estate issues
- Tell you about how you can get involved including:
  - taking part in one-off panels or on-going groups
  - responding to surveys by phone, post or email
- Support the York Federation of Residents & Community Associations, an umbrella organisation of residents groups to comment on housing policy and strategy
- Produce *Streets Ahead* the newsletter to inform all tenants about housing services and show how tenants have influenced services and improvements.
- Use other forms of local media to inform and seek comments
- Carry out independent customer research every year to seek the views of individual tenants
- Use the Talkabout Panel to seek the views of individual tenants
- Use customer surveys and focus groups to find out views of particular aspects of services e.g. following modernisation schemes
- Set up working groups with tenant representatives, as agreed, to look at and develop areas of policy or service development
- Work with tenant representatives to review and develop the *Your Service, Your Say* action plan to make sure we keep improving.
- Agree a calendar of consultation activities each year
- Develop the existing complaints procedure to seek comments and suggestions
- Promote information and training opportunities to raise awareness of the various options for management of council homes and help tenants develop skills so that they are able to participate
- Help tenants to link into opportunities for wider community involvement
- Support and develop the role of tenants in monitoring and improving housing services  
 You also have the 'Right to manage'. Tenants can take over all or part of the management of their homes from the council under the Right to Manage (RTM) Regulations. For more information about the Right to Manage ask for a copy of the leaflet - "A better deal for tenants - Your new right to manage", available from housing receptions or contact Your Service, Your Say on 01904 554379 or [yourservice.yoursay@york.gov.uk](mailto:yourservice.yoursay@york.gov.uk).

## Residents' Associations

### What are residents associations?

One way in which we encourage tenant involvement is to support the creation and development of resident associations. We currently have 18 of these groups across the city and they are a means of local people working together to improve their area as well as organising social events. They also put pressure on the Council and other official bodies to get things done. Everyone has the right to have a say in what goes on in their neighbourhood so these groups are open to all residents in an area, not just council tenants.

You are more likely to achieve your aims when you speak with one voice in your area.

We consult residents' associations to gather views about our services as well as asking them about many housing issues. Issues that have been considered by residents' associations and customer groups have included the Housing Capital Programme, allocations policy and the repairs contract. Your views are taken into account before decisions are taken.

We benefit because we can approach a single group in an area to discuss improvements and seek collective views.

You benefit from having a say in how money is spent on improving your area. Each Association receives an Estate Improvements budget each year and consults with residents to discuss how the money should be spent. The current total Estate Improvement budget is over £170,000 each year. Suggestions for work to improve estates will be made through Streets Ahead or by contacting members of your residents association. Workable suggestions will then be voted on by council tenants, as the funds are generated from the rent that tenants pay. Improvement work is then prioritised and Estate Managers provide regular progress reports to resident association meetings.

Guest speakers are invited along to meetings when information is needed on particular issues. For example the Police usually attend to update on local policing issues. To find out about what associations are doing check the latest edition of our *Streets Ahead* magazine. If you want to contact your association or set up an association please contact Your Service, Your Say on 01904 554379 or [yourservice.yoursay@york.gov.uk](mailto:yourservice.yoursay@york.gov.uk).

If you live on an estate represented by a residents' or community association you can go along to the meetings, get involved with what's happening in your neighbourhood and put your view across.

Once you are a member of an association you can be elected to the Federation of Residents' & Community Associations.

## York Federation of Residents' & Community Associations

### What is the York Federation of Residents' and Community Associations (YFRCA)?

This is the organisation that represents the residents and community associations in York. This group aims to represent the views of local people by identifying issues and speaking out against things that need to be put right on a city wide basis.

We recognise this group and consult it about things that will affect York citizens, as well as housing issues. The Federation receives copies of reports from housing services which include management and policy changes so they can have input before a final decision is made. The Federation also receives an allocation of funds each year to which residents groups can bid for to carry out additional estate improvements in their area.

### Training

We provide a training programme which offers free access to training opportunities for members of residents' associations. The programme is made up of courses which address

current resident involvement and housing issues. The training ranges from half day sessions which are held at local venues through to residential weekends which take place in other areas of the country. Where possible training is customised to meet the specific needs of residents associations and will be offered at the most suitable times and venues.

We collate information on training and publish details through a training diary. The diary is updated on a regular basis and sent out to all residents groups. Groups are also encouraged to identify their own training needs

Recent courses have included:

- “Neighbourhood Management”
- “Negotiating rents”
- “Managing budgets”
- “Being a Better Chair”
- “Changing the Image of your neighbourhood”
- “Running Social events”
- “Equal opportunities”
- “Producing newsletters and Publicity”.

As a result of attending training people tell us that they have developed more self-confidence in their roles as a community representative and value the opportunity to meet people and share experiences with them.

## Other Ways of Getting involved

What services can I get involved in?

Some of the main areas where you can be involved in are:

**Developing our housing strategy and business plan** - we have committed ourselves to increasing the ways individuals and groups can be involved in developing the housing strategy. This will include a series of meetings for representatives from residents’ associations to input into plans before producing the document, making links with community planning, and circulating plans to members of the Talk About panel. Since 2002 tenants representatives have been directly involved in the working group producing the business plan.

**Budgets** - there are two main budgets for housing, the capital programme and housing revenue account . The capital programme budget includes money spent on modernisation and improvements to homes, building new homes in partnership with housing associations and grants and adaptations to homes. The housing revenue account includes expenditure on repairs, staffing and projects like painting and estate improvements. We consult and provide information about how each budget is spent through meetings with representatives from residents groups and the York Federation of Residents & Community Associations.

**Improving your area** - you can attend local public meetings to vote your priorities for improvements in your area. You can join your local residents’ association to get involved on an ongoing basis. In Bell Farm, we have negotiated an estate or neighbourhood

agreements with residents which cover services or issues that are priorities for local people. The Clifton Project was also set up with full resident involvement. There will also be opportunities for you to get involved in your ward committee (see wider community involvement below).

### Monitoring and Reviewing services

Information about how well housing services is performing provided to Residents' Associations every three months. Every October, we publish our *Tenant and Leaseholder Annual Report* to which gives feedback on our performance, comparing it to the targets we set ourselves and with the performance of other comparable landlords. More regularly, *Streets Ahead* and our website give updates on how well housing is performing.

### Wider community involvement

Ward Committees are another way to air your views and have a say in how money is spent in your area and influence how local services are provided. There are 22 ward committees made up of two or more councillors, which will have the responsibility for allocating local budgets. The ward committees provide opportunities for everyone to be involved in the local governance of their community and encourage people to play an active part in their community by creating neighbourhood 'visions' and plans.

### Will you let me know what's going on?

As well as consultation with the groups already mentioned we keep individual people informed of changes through letters, public meetings, exhibitions and *Streets Ahead* magazine for tenants. We will also seek the views of individual tenants by carrying out surveys each year like the Tenant Satisfaction Survey, surveys before and after modernisation schemes, the New Homes survey for new tenants and the Talkabout Panel. Information received from surveys is published in *Streets Ahead*, on our website and used to develop our service plans top set future work priorities.

### What is *Streets Ahead*?

*Streets Ahead* is our free magazine, delivered to every tenant and leaseholder. It has up to date articles on changes to housing services and information about how we perform in the delivery of those services. It also features articles on welfare benefits, staff changes, planned maintenance projects and customers' lives.

*Streets Ahead* is available on audio tape, in large print and in other languages on request, contact Your Service, Your Say on 01904 554379 or [yourservice.yoursay@york.gov.uk](mailto:yourservice.yoursay@york.gov.uk).

### How can I find out more about the Council's activities?

'Your Ward' is the council's ward based newsletter, published quarterly and containing information about your local area. It ties in with ward committee meetings, and gives details of local issues & services.

'Your City' is a fact sheet published quarterly and distributed with the Your Ward newsletter. It contains details about the services delivered by City of York Council and keeps you up to date with the latest developments and issues. It includes an events guide, service, budget & council tax information.

The A-Z is a directory of all Council services set out in alphabetical order, to help you contact the right department quickly and easily. This is available on the Council's web site (<http://www.york.gov.uk>).

For an audio version of these publications please contact Marketing & Communications on : 01904 551550.

## Do I have a right to information on Council meetings and reports?

Yes, you can attend meetings of the Council - please see section 2 Customer Service and how to complain for more details

### Making Contact List of local resident associations:

To find out what's happening in local associations and for information about how to contact your nearest group contact:-Your Service, Your Say on 01904 554379 or [yourservice.yoursay@york.gov.uk](mailto:yourservice.yoursay@york.gov.uk)

Bell Farm Residents' Association	Kingsway West Area Residents' Association
Cambridge Street Residents' Association	Lindsey Avenue Residents' Association
Carr Residents' Association	Muncaster Residents' Association
Chapelfields Residents' Association	Navigation Residents' Association
Clementhorpe Community Association	Nunnery Residents' Association
Clifton Residents' Association	Oaklands Community Group
Dodsworth Residents' Association	Poppleton Ward Residents' Association
Dringhouses West Residents' Association	St George's Place Residents' Association
Dunnington Residents' Association	Tang Hall Community Association
Fulford Residents' Association	Walmgate Community Association
Foxwood Residents' Association	
The Groves Residents' Association	

## Other contacts

### Tenant Engagement and Equalities Facilitator

Lead officer for resident involvement and equalities in housing  
01904 554379  
[yourservice.yoursay@york.gov.uk](mailto:yourservice.yoursay@york.gov.uk)

### Chief Executive

City of York Council, West Offices, Station Rise, York YO1 6GA. Tel: 01904 551550

### York Council for Voluntary Services

Priory Street Centre, York YO1 6ET. Tel: 01904 621133

### Communities and Local Government Office

National department co-ordinating housing and tenant participation.  
[www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk) Tel: 020 7944 4400

### Tenant Participatory Advisory Service (TPAS)

Free Government funded information and advice on tenant participation issues  
FREEPHONE 0800 731 1619

### Tenant Participation Advisory Service

5th Floor, Trafford House, Ince Lane, Chester CH2 4JP. Tel: 01244 301513

### National Tenant's Resource Centre

Trafford Hall, Chester M2 4JA. Tel: (01244) 300246  
[www.traffordhall.com](http://www.traffordhall.com)

### Safer York Partnership

York Centre for Safer Communities, Lower Friargate, York YO1 9SL. Tel: 01904 669069



# Moving Home

---

This Section Covers:- Transfers  
Exchanges  
Ending Your Tenancy

This chapter explains how we will help you make the right move and how you can help us by letting us know of any changes to your housing needs. It also tells you how to complain if you are not satisfied.

There are two ways you can move home:

- An exchange involves swapping your home with another council or housing association tenant. It can often be much quicker than waiting for a transfer.
- A transfer involves the council prioritising a new home when your existing home no longer meets your needs. This could be a council or housing association home.

We transfer an average of 170 customers each year. There is a large demand for homes and we are not able to help everyone. We have a system which gives priority to those in the greatest housing need and there are currently nearly 4,000 people ( applicants and existing tenants ) looking for a home in York.

Housing association homes are managed by independent organisations, often charities, and in most cases their rent levels are set by government policy . Rents for council managed homes are also set by a Government formula.

For further information, please contact our Housing Registration Team on 551550.

You can decide if you do not want a housing association home but need to be aware this may increase the time you have to wait.

## **If you are an Introductory Tenant you are usually not entitled to move by transferring or swapping your home.**

If you are unable to remain in your home due to a change in your health, for example, if you become disabled and need ground floor accommodation, you may be able to apply to move. Each case will be assessed individually and you will only be approved to move if your housing needs have significantly altered since you became an Introductory Tenant. If you move, any time you have spent in your first home, will be counted towards the twelve months of your Introductory Tenancy.

## **An Exchange**

Our Direct Exchange leaflet gives you advice on how to apply for an exchange.

We will

- Display exchange registers in reception areas and update them monthly
- Display exchange requests on the notice boards in our reception area and update these every two weeks
- Tell you about people who may want to swap homes with you

- Help you complete your exchange within 6 weeks of finding someone

### If you find an exchange you must

- Ensure that your rent is up to date
- Thoroughly check the house you plan to move into
- Fill in a home swap form with your family and housing details
- Wait for written confirmation before moving
- Make sure your home and garden are in good condition
- Tell us if you have an agreement with the new tenant to leave any items for them

### We will

- Check your rent account
- Inspect your home and garden within four weeks of your application
- Check that you have not broken any of the rules of your tenancy
- Give a report to your new Estate Manager or new landlord
- Identify repairs that are your responsibility, which must be done before you move
- Advise you of anything in your new home that will be yours to repair in the future Inform you of your rights and responsibilities
- Give you our decision about your application to exchange within six weeks of your application
- Arrange for you to sign up for your new home within 10 days of our inspection visit, if your exchange is approved
- Help you apply for Housing Benefit, and give you advice about any other benefits you may be entitled to
- Tell you in writing if your exchange is not allowed and give you the reasons

### If I want to exchange what should I look out for?

You should have a good look around the home you wish to move to. This is important as you may become responsible for any outstanding repairs, alterations or improvements carried out by the outgoing tenant. You will also be responsible for any alterations to the services, for example water meters and gas key meters.

Do not agree to move until you are completely satisfied with your new home. Equally you must leave your home in a good state of repair. Failure to do so may result in a bill for work we have to carry out after you leave.

### What happens if the exchange is out of York?

If you find someone to exchange with who is either a tenant of another local authority or housing association we will have to send their landlord a report of our visit to you. We will also have to wait for a similar report from them on the tenants wishing to swap with you.

Once this has been done the exchange will proceed in the same way as an ordinary exchange. You must wait for written approval from us to say you can move.

**Do not move without written permission.**

Our website tells you how to apply for a transfer, or please contact your Estate manager or the Housing Registrations team.

### You must:

- Fill in a Housing Application form –get one from the website or ring Tel: 01904 551550
- Provide all the additional information we ask for
- Keep us informed of any changes to your household, as it may change the priority you receive t. If we find out your circumstances have changed from those on your application we may have to withdraw the offer of a home

### We will:

- Give you help and advice about moving home
- Acknowledge your transfer application within 5 working days
- Tell you in writing if your transfer application is not accepted and give you the reasons
- Let you know if you can join the housing register
- Review your application each year
- Tell you your priority banding
- Provide copies of the allocations policy summary on request

### When you have successfully bid for a property, we will

- Give you the information you need to decide whether to take the offer
- Show you around the home you have been offered
- Give you up to 48 hours to decide to accept an offer of a home
- Give you details of any decoration vouchers and repairs

If you decide not to take the property and we believe the offer was reasonable, it may affect your application for a move.

### When you accept an offer we will:

- Start your new tenancy on the first Monday following the viewing, unless you view on a Monday; then the tenancy will start on that same d
- Inform you of your rights and responsibilities as a tenant
- Agree how you will pay your rent and arrange for payment in advance
- Help you apply for Housing Benefit and give you advice about other benefits
- Give you a rent card when you sign your Tenancy Agreement

## What happens if I need an urgent move?

If you need to move urgently because you are living in fear of violence or have other exceptional circumstances, talk to your Estate Manager or Housing Options. We will decide what action should be taken, which could involve a move. We will also look at other ways to solve the problem such as an injunction. This may mean contacting other agencies like the Police and social workers. For further details about dealing with nuisance or neighbour problems see Section 1 - Your Tenancy.

## Ending My Tenancy - Giving Notice.

**When you decide to leave your home you must give four weeks notice.**

- In person to - Customer Services at West Offices, Station Rise, York, YO1 6GA
- In writing to - Housing Services, West Offices, Station Rise, York, YO1 6GA
- By telephone to - Tel: 01904 551550

**We will still charge four weeks rent if you don't give notice.**

This doesn't apply to Transfers, Direct Exchanges or HomeSwap moves.

If you return your keys early - before the end of the 4 week notice period, we will try to let the property as soon as possible. If we are able to let the property so that the new tenancy starts before the end of your 4 week notice period, you may not need to pay the full 4 weeks rent. All tenancies start on a Monday.

### We will:

- Give you advice about repairs that are your responsibility
- Assess any improvements you have made to your home, that may qualify for compensation
- Tell you how much rent you need to pay
- Allow you to extend your notice period
- Ask you to let us show new tenants around your home during the notice period
- Charge you one weeks rent if your keys are returned after 12 noon on the Monday your tenancy ends
- Dispose of anything you leave in the property and recharge the cost of this to you.

You must leave your home with all its original fixtures and fittings in good condition. If you have made any agreed improvements to the original fixtures and fittings these must be left. Your Estate Manager will advise you about this. If anything is not in good working order when you leave, or you fail to reinstate original items, you will be charged for the cost of the work.

**WARNING: Only GAS SAFE registered contractors can remove gas appliances. Legal action may be taken if you do not comply.**

If you have made improvements to your home, such as installing central heating, you may get a cash allowance. This will depend on the value of the work and when it was done. You will be asked to provide receipts. See Section 1, Your tenancy for more details.

### Advice for relatives of tenants who have died

When someone close to you dies we understand it is a difficult time and will deal sensitively with any enquiries you make. The following advice may be helpful:

- Contact us straight away. Full rent is payable on the property until the keys are returned
- Tell us as soon as you can when you expect to be able to return the keys
- Keys should be handed in before 12 noon on a Monday to avoid a further weeks rent being charged. Please make sure you get a receipt
- Remember to have the gas and electricity meters read before returning the keys
- Tell us about any items in the property you are not able to clear

You are not personally responsible for any charges left on the account. You will be advised of the amount due, but payment will be expected from the tenants' estate. If there is a credit on the rent account when the notice period ends we will refund the balance.

### Checklist for moving

- If you get any benefits the Department of Work and Pensions (formerly the Benefits Agency) may be able to help you with removal costs. Contact them before you move Telephone: 01904 682100
- Unwanted furniture may be welcome at the Community Furniture Store Tel: 01904 426444
- Bulky items for disposal can be collected and removed for a charge. Fridges and freezers attract an individual charge otherwise up to 10 items can be removed for one payment. Ring Smarter York on 01904 551551 to arrange collection.
- Turn the water off at the stop tap and the gas and electricity off at the meter
- Arrange for your gas and electricity meters to be read before you hand in your keys. This can usually be done on the day you leave, but the companies need at least 48 hours notice
- Inform your water and sewerage companies that you are moving
- Arrange redirection of your post to your new address

- Check your removal firm's insurance cover before allowing them to move your furniture. If you are doing your own removals check if your household contents insurance policy covers you for any damage
- Tell your telephone company or cable provider so they can disconnect your line

### What if I am unhappy with the services you provide?

If you are unhappy please contact your Estate Manager.

We'll look into your concerns and if a written reply is required we will send it to you within 10 working days.

If you are still not satisfied, read section 2 Customer Services and How to Complain

### Making contact

Housing Services West Offices Station Rise York YO1 6GA Tel: 01904 551550
--

Open: Monday - Friday 8.30 to 5.00pm

### Useful numbers

Smarter York to arrange bulky good disposal Tel: 01904 551551

Electricity - to find supplier Tel: 0800 551555

Gas - to find supplier Tel: 08706 081524 or Tel: 0800 048 0303

Telephone disconnection Tel: 150 (a free call)

Mail redirection Tel: 08457 740740

The Community Furniture Store Tel: 01904 426444

# Heating Efficiency

This section covers:

- Controlling the heating in your home
- Getting the most out of your heating
- Helping to control your heating bills
- Setting the controls for:

- Central heating with radiators
- Electric storage heaters
- Electric room heaters
- Warm air systems
- Solid fuel systems
- Fuel deregulation

## Control the Heating in your Home

### If you have central heating with radiators

( If you have an older central heating system, you may find only some of the following advice applies to you.)

### How can I control the temperature in my home?

You can control the temperature by using the room thermostat. This is usually in the hall or living room, and reacts to the temperature of the air around it.

You should set the room thermostat to between 18°C and 21°C. When this temperature is reached, the thermostat will switch off the central heating. It will switch it on again only when the temperature of the room falls.

To save energy you should set the temperature as low as is comfortably possible.

By turning down your room thermostat by 1°C you could save up to 10% on your annual fuel bill.

You can control the temperature in individual rooms by using the controls on your radiators. These radiator controls are also called thermostatic radiator valves.

Radiator controls work by opening or closing the valve allowing water to flow in. You can use the controls to keep bedrooms at a lower temperature than your living room.

If you do not have radiator controls, you can still turn a radiator off by closing the ordinary valve.

## How can I control the hot water in my home?

A hot water thermostat is fitted to your hot water tank or cylinder. This stops the water heating up more than you want. Some homes don't have a separate water tank because the boiler produces instant hot water and the thermostat is fitted to the boiler.

If your water is too hot, you can make it cooler by lowering the thermostat setting.

You should set the hot water thermostat at around 60°C.

## What does the thermostat on the boiler do?

The boiler thermostat controls the temperature of the water in the radiators. It should be at its maximum setting as this means the boiler is operating most efficiently.

## How can I control the timing of my heating?

A timer or programmer allows you to set your heating and hot water to go on and off when you want.

Some only allow you to switch your water and heating systems on and off twice a day. Others allow you to set up three different daily on/off periods for every day of the week.

Remember to check the clock before setting your timer or programmer. You have to re-set it every time the clocks change in the winter and summer, and generally after a power cut.

Set your system to come on about half an hour before you want the house to be warm and half an hour before you want it to cool off completely.

You probably don't need your heating and hot water switched on all the time, so you should avoid using the 24 hour ON constant setting.

Heating your home for half an hour more than is needed could add 6% to your heating bills.

You should read the timer or programmer instructions carefully.

If you are still unsure about what to do, contact:

Housing Services West Offices Station Rise York YO1 6GA Tel: 01904 551550
--

## Type of Heater

### If you have electric storage heaters

Electric storage heaters charge up during the night when electricity is cheaper and release the heat during the day.

### How can I control my electric storage heaters?

Most storage heaters have two controls: an Input (sometimes called 'Charge' or 'Auto set control') and an Output (sometimes called 'Boost' or 'Room temperature').



Input controls how much heat is stored and how much electricity is used. The lowest setting

is suitable for spring or early autumn or in a cool summer.

To stop the heater storing any heat, switch it off at the wall.

Output controls how quickly heat leaves the heater. On its highest setting, the stored heat is used up faster. Some storage heaters have an automatic output control. This means a thermostat controls how quickly the heat is released.

Some storage heaters are combined with a convector heater. You should be careful to identify which controls operate each part. The convector heater will have an on/off switch and a temperature control.

### **If you have electric room heaters**

Electric room heaters use normal rate electricity, each heater will have separate controls.

Some room heaters have a built in thermostat which keeps the room at a pre-set temperature. You should set the thermostat to between 18°C and 21°C. To save energy you should set the thermostat as low as is comfortably possible.

Other heaters have a built in timer which allows you to set your own on and off times. Set your heater to come on about half an hour before you need the room to be warm, and to go off half an hour before you want the heater off completely.

### **If you have a warm air heating system**

Warm air systems usually have a room thermostat and a timer/programmer. The grilles in each room can also be opened or closed manually to increase or decrease the amount of heat released.

### **If you have a solid fuel heating system**

Room heater thermostats help control how fiercely the fire burns and how much heat is produced.

You may have a room thermostat which controls how hot water is circulated around the radiators. When the room reaches the required temperature, the water stops being circulated.

Some radiators will have individual temperature controls (called thermostatic radiator valves). These radiator controls control the flow of hot water and mean you can keep different rooms at different temperatures. If you do not have radiator controls, you may still be able to turn the radiator off by closing the ordinary radiator valve. You may have a programmer/timer which controls when hot water is pumped around the radiators.

### **Are there any other ways of controlling the heating in my home?**

Another way of keeping control over your heating is to keep an eye on how much you're using. You can do this by reading your meter regularly, keeping a note of the readings.

If you are having difficulty reading your meter, contact your gas or electricity supplier for help.

## What help can I get from the Energy Efficiency Advice Centre?

The Energy Efficiency Advice Centre provides free advice on heating and energy efficiency. It also provides information on grants for loft insulation and other home improvements.

Contact the Centre on Freephone Tel: 0800 512 012.

## What can I do if I am having problems using my heating system?

If you are still unsure about using your heating system, contact:

Housing Services West Offices Station Rise York YO1 6GA Tel: 01904 551550
--

## Gas servicing

If you have a gas heating system, it will be serviced every year. You must allow us access to your property to do this. If you are unsure about how to make the best use of it, ask the person who carries out the service to demonstrate how it should be used.

## Fuel Deregulation

### What does fuel deregulation mean for me?

Customers who pay their own gas and electric bills can now choose their supplier. You do not have to change from your current supplier. If you do nothing, your current supplier will automatically continue to supply and bill you.

Even if you do decide to change your supplier, your gas and electricity will come through the same pipes and wires to the same meters, and the same people will respond to emergency calls.

### What if I want to change my gas or electricity supplier?

You should shop around before making a decision on changing your supplier. If you need information or advice, contact:



ur Tenancy Conditions Security of tenure Solving neighbour problems Who can take over your tenancy Right to exchange L  
Tenancy Conditions Security of tenure Solving neighbour pr  
our Tenancy Conditions Security of tenure Solving neighbour problems Who can take over your tenancy  
ho can take over your tenancy Right to exchange Lodgers and  
s and sub-letting Right to buy Your right to improve your home Your Tenancy Conditions Security of tenure Solvin

**This information can be provided in your own language.**

**我們也用您的語言提供這個信息 (Cantonese)**

**এই তথ্য আপনার নিজের ভাষায় দেয়া যেতে পারে। (Bengali)**

**Ta informacja może być dostarczona w twoim (Polish)  
własnym języku.**

**Bu bilgiyi kendi dilinizde almanız mümkündür. (Turkish)**

**یہ معلومات آپ کی اپنی زبان (اردو) میں بھی مہیا کی جاسکتی ہیں۔ (Urdu)**

**☎ 01904 551550**

**This agreement is also available on request in Braille,  
on audio cassette or in large print**