



# Tenant's Handbook

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*Important information about your tenancy*

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# Contact us

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If you require further information about Co-op Homes please call us on 0845 250 7276 or 020 3166 2608, visit our website at [www.coophomes.coop](http://www.coophomes.coop) or email us on: [homes@coophomes.coop](mailto:homes@coophomes.coop).

# Introduction

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I am delighted to welcome you as a Co-op Homes resident.

We value you as a customer and this handbook sets out the main benefits of being one. It also sets out the high standards we and our other customers expect from you. It is intended for Co-op Homes' tenants living in our permanent homes although it can be used as a general guide to services for tenants living in short-life properties.

We are passionate about what we do - providing an excellent service that meets our tenants' needs and expectations whilst also delivering value for money. We want you to enjoy your home so please tell us whether you are happy with the service you receive.

If you register for a Co-op Homes online account on our website you will have the convenience of being able to view your rent account and make a payment online. In addition, you can make a routine repair request, check your tenancy record and find out what is happening in your area. If you don't have access to the internet please feel free to use the PCs available in the reception area at our head office in Teddington from 9am-5pm, Monday-Friday.

We want to deliver quality services, but know that we can only do this by working in partnership with you and your neighbours. There are many ways for you to have your say and influence the way we do things – from participation in surveys and focus groups and attending estate visits, to being a formal tenant representative on the Customer Focus Group or our Board of Management. If you have some free time and would like to get involved in shaping our current and future services we would be delighted to hear from you.

We will continue to keep you informed of changes to our service and financial performance through our Annual Report, our magazine 'Word on the Street' and our website. If you have any information that you think other residents would like to hear about, please let us know.

I hope you enjoy being a tenant with Co-op Homes and wish you the very best in your new home.

**Sue Philpott**

Managing Director Co-op Homes

## About us

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Co-op Homes itself was founded in 1986 and has grown since then by offering professional management services to independent co-operatives and other housing organisations, as well as managing new housing developments built for us. We also manage short-life properties, which are leased to us by local authorities and other landlords. These properties are rented out to tenants until the leases end. We then work with local authorities to permanently re-house these residents elsewhere.

We provide homes for our residents in permanent and short-life properties, and manage services for other co-operatives in Greater London and the south east region. We became a member of the Richmond Housing Partnership group in 2005, which is a dynamic, innovative and customer-focused organisation that owns and manages over 10,000 properties in south west London. We are focused on providing excellent customer service and constantly monitor our performance against our customer commitment.

Co-op Homes has a Board of Management, which is made up of unpaid members including tenant representatives, representatives from the independent co-ops, a nominee from our parent company, RHP, and independent members with professional expertise. The Board meets regularly throughout the year to decide policy and strategic direction. It also ensures that all of the rental income we collect is used to provide services and benefits for our tenants.

Co-op Homes is a registered provider (RP) with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), is a member of the National Housing Federation and has charitable status. We are an accredited provider of services to co-ops under the Confederation of Co-operative Housing's national accreditation programme. As part of the RHP Group we are also holders of Investors in People (IIP) Gold Award as well as being voted European Employer of the Year in 2013. In 2012 the Group was placed fifth in the Sunday Times list of best not-for-profit organisations to work for.

## Our people

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We employ people who want to deliver excellent customer service.

Our employees come from diverse backgrounds and bring with them a broad range of skills and experience. We know that our employees are crucial to Co-op Homes' success, and we provide them with a range of ongoing professional training and development opportunities.

We expect our residents to treat our employees, agents and contractors with courtesy and respect and we will take strong action against anyone who harasses or victimises our employees, agents or contractors.

# Get involved with Co-op Homes

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One of our key objectives is to ensure that our residents are involved in making decisions about Co-op Homes. This is because we believe that the people who live in our communities have a wealth of local information and experience to help make the best decisions for the benefit of us all. By getting involved and giving just a little of your time you can really make a difference for yourself and your community and by listening to your feedback we can continually develop and improve what we do.

There are many ways for you to get involved at Co-op Homes. These include joining our Customer Focus Group, feeding back to us through surveys and questionnaires, information bulletins and estate walkabouts. We also send you a newsletter called "Word on the Street". The newsletter is available in different formats, e.g. braille, large type or translated into different languages on request.

## Customer Focus Group

We hold focus groups throughout the year where we invite customers to discuss and develop the quality of our services and help us review and edit publications such as this handbook and our customer magazine, "Word on the Street". Please contact us if you would more information or would like to join the focus group.

## Consultation

We consult our customers about matters which significantly affect them, such as changes in tenancy conditions, housing management and the provision of estate services.

## Estate inspections

We regularly visit our estates to check that we are meeting the standards we have set and that our estates remain clean and free from hazards. If you would like to be involved in estate inspections please contact us.

## Tenant surveys

Twice a year our external consultants carry out an extensive survey to monitor our customers' views on a variety of performance and service issues. These results help influence our service improvement plans.

# Our customer commitment

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When you contact us we want to be able to answer your question straightaway. That means getting through to us on the phone or your email being responded to quickly. When something takes longer to fix we will always keep you informed about what is happening and be honest about when we are able to resolve it.

Our customer commitment is to focus on the issues and areas that you have told us are most important. Mainly customers tell us that they want our employees to be on their side, to be honest and helpful about the things we can and cannot assist with and fix their issue so it stays fixed.

Customers also tell us that some services are particularly important; namely our community housing advisors, how we respond to complaints and our repairs and maintenance services. We always want to hear your feedback about how we are doing in these key areas.

We are committed to making our services fair and accessible to all residents, and we have developed a Single Equality Scheme (SES) and Action Plan to demonstrate how we place equality and diversity at the heart of everything we do. We make sure we do not unfairly treat or discriminate against anyone.

To find out more about our SES, visit our website.

## Our Customer Promises

We aim to provide high standards of service and have produced a set of Customer Promises about what you can expect from us. These Promises were agreed with our Customer Focus Group and are monitored regularly. You can see how we perform against our promises on our website and in our customer newsletters.

## **We promise to:**

- See you within five minutes of arrival at our offices
- Answer your telephone call promptly
- Acknowledge your complaints within two working days and tell you who is dealing with your issue
- Send a written response to your enquiry or complaint within 10 working days
- Contact you within one working day if you report high-level anti-social behaviour
- Review your anti-social behaviour case at least once every 10 days and keep you informed
- Tell you when we are carrying out estate inspections in your area and offer joint inspections by publishing timetables on our estate noticeboards, on our website and in our customer newsletter
- Remove any offensive graffiti within one working day of notification
- Make sure every permanent property meets our lettings standard by the start of your new tenancy with us, or with your agreement, soon after you move in
- Visit you within the first two months of your new tenancy with us
- Send you written confirmation of any non-emergency repair order you report and let you know when you can expect it to be completed
- Do our best to complete your repair at our first visit

## **Confidentiality**

Co-op Homes has a Confidentiality Policy to ensure that residents' personal information is handled in a sensitive and confidential manner. We will not disclose your personal information to others without your consent, except under certain circumstances. To view a copy of the Confidentiality Policy please contact your Community Housing Advisor.

# Compliments, complaints & suggestions

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We take complaints and comments seriously and aim to put things right as quickly as we can and, where possible, to your satisfaction. We value all your feedback as a way of improving our services.

A complaint is when the level of service we provide falls short of your expectations, for example when:

- We have not followed a published policy or procedure.
- There has been a failure in our provision of service.
- One of our employees, agents or contractors has been discourteous or has acted inappropriately.

Our published complaints procedure is available on our website, or in print on request. To make a complaint, please write to us at:

8 Waldegrave Road,  
Teddington,  
Middlesex  
TW11 8GT

email us at [homes@coophomes.coop](mailto:homes@coophomes.coop) or telephone your Community Housing Adviser (or the Operations Manager if the complaint is about one of our employees) on 0845 250 7276 or 020 3166 2608. You can also log a complaint or compliment on our website.

We will acknowledge your complaint within two working days and tell you who is dealing with it. We will give you a final written response within 10 working days. If you are not satisfied with our response you have the right to appeal our decision.



# Your Tenancy Agreement

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When you became a Co-op Homes customer you would have signed a tenancy agreement. There are different types of tenancies, and you would have been told which one Co-op Homes was offering you at the time of signing.

## ***Starter tenancies & assured tenancies***

For the first 12 months you will have a starter or “assured shorthold” tenancy. It is important that you keep to the conditions of the agreement, including paying your rent. If you do, your tenancy will automatically revert to an assured tenancy after the first year. If you do not keep to the terms of the tenancy you will be served with a ‘notice to terminate’, which may lead to you losing your home.

If we decide to continue legal action we will apply to the county court for a possession order. Alternatively, we may consider extending the probationary period of your tenancy if any tenancy conditions are breached within the first 12 months of your starter tenancy.

If you are an existing Co-op Homes tenant and already have an assured tenancy, this will remain an assured tenancy in the event of you transferring to another Co-op Homes property.

## **Joint tenancies**

A joint tenancy is one in which two or more people have been given the same tenancy. Both joint tenants must keep to the tenancy agreement and make sure that all the rent and any other charges are paid.

# Your rights & responsibilities

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Your tenancy agreement is a legal document which sets out our responsibilities to you as your landlord and your responsibilities and rights as our tenant. We will act quickly if residents or their visitors do not keep to these standards.

## Use of your home

You must not use your home for illegal activities, for example:

- Dealing or storing controlled drugs
- Dealing or storing stolen goods
- Illegal gambling
- Running a brothel or other such establishment

We will take action to evict anyone who has been convicted of using their property for illegal activities.

If you are aware of any such activity being carried out in your neighbourhood please tell your Community Housing Adviser or the local police immediately so that appropriate action can be taken.

## Changing the terms of your tenancy

With the exception of changes to your rent, service charges and other charges, we can only change the terms of your tenancy agreement after we have consulted you.

If the terms of your agreement are going to be changed, we will tell you in advance and also give you the opportunity to comment.

## Taking over the tenancy when the tenant dies

Succession to a tenancy is where a person has the legal right to take over the tenancy when a tenant dies. There can only be one succession to a tenancy. Where there has been no previous succession, the rules of succession are:

- If a joint tenant dies, the other tenant succeeds to the tenancy. This counts as one succession. If there is any debt such as rent arrears they would still be owed by the remaining tenant.
- The deceased tenant's spouse or partner (including partners of the same sex) will succeed to the tenancy if they were living at the property as their only or principal home at the time of the tenant's death and for the preceding 12 months.

We will give sympathetic consideration to granting an assured tenancy (not necessarily at the same property) to members of a household who fall outside the above rules but who have:

- Lived in the property as their only or principal home for twelve months before the death of the tenant; or
- Been living in the property as their only or principal home when the tenant died and had been looking after the tenant; or
- Accepted responsibility for the tenant's dependents.

If you want to claim succession to a tenancy you should contact us as soon as possible, but no longer than one month after the tenant's death. You will be asked to provide evidence that you are eligible for the tenancy.

## **Consultation**

We consult our customers about matters of housing management and maintenance which significantly affect them, such as changes in tenancy conditions, local services and the arrangements for collecting rent.

## **Access to your personal records**

Under the Data Protection Act 1998, you are allowed to have reasonable access to any computerised and non-computerised information held about you. You should write to us if you would like to see any of these records. We will either send the information to you or arrange an appointment for you to come and see it. There is a standard administration charge for this.

## **Notices of Seeking Possession, court action & eviction**

If you break the conditions of your tenancy we will take action which could lead to eviction. Unless the tenancy breach is serious you will normally be given the opportunity to put the situation right. If you do not put things right, we will give you a formal warning before we ask a court to give us possession of your home. These warnings are called a Notice of Seeking Possession (NOSP) or a Notice to Terminate (NTT).

## **Absence from your home**

You must live in your home from the date that your tenancy starts and if you leave your home, you must inform us. If you are going to be away from your home for longer than a month, please let us know. If you do not tell us, we may think you have abandoned the property and take steps to end your tenancy.

While you are away, you must still pay your rent and any other charges. If you are claiming Housing Benefit, you may still be entitled to receive it whilst you are away. Your benefits office can advise you.

## Satellite dishes & TV aerials (those living in flats)

You must not put up or install any equipment on the building. Our flats have been upgraded to receive a digital TV signal and access to extra channels is possible by way of an additional charge to the service provider. Co-op Homes will not give permission for personal satellite dishes to be installed and those erected will be removed – the costs for this will be recharged back to the tenant.

## Lodgers

You do not need our permission to take in a house guest or lodger, but **you must let us know** so we can make sure your home is not overcrowded.

## Sub-letting

A sub-tenant has exclusive use of at least one room (usually a bedroom). They may put a lock on their door and have an exclusive use of this room. They may also have use of your kitchen and bathroom. **Before you sub-let any part of your home you must get our written permission.** You will need to tell us the name, age and gender of your sub-tenant. We will not refuse any requests unreasonably, however we will not give consent if the sub-letting will result in your home being overcrowded, or if your home is due to have work done to it which will affect the accommodation of the sub-tenant, such as modernisation that may reduce the size or number of rooms. You will need to inform your Housing Benefits department or the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) if you receive Housing Benefit or Universal Credit and you sub-let part of your home. Your entitlement to benefits may be affected if you have a sub-tenant or lodger.

**If you sub-let your entire home it is a breach of your tenancy agreement and a criminal offence.**

## Living in a flat

If you live in a flat, please give consideration to your neighbours. Make sure you:

- Keep all noise to a reasonable level.
- Keep corridors, stairways and communal areas clean and tidy. They should not be used to store items such as bicycles, pushchairs or mobility scooters, as this could cause problems for other residents in the event of a fire.
- Drying areas should be used properly and left in a tidy state.
- Bin storage areas should only be used for disposing of household rubbish, which should be placed in the bins provided. Bulk refuse and other large items such as furnishings, white goods and floor coverings should not be left in bin areas. You should make your own arrangements for disposing of these items.

## Pets

If you want to keep a pet you must get our permission in writing first. If we give permission, you will be responsible for your pet's behaviour which must be supervised and kept under control at all times. We have the right to withdraw our permission and give you 28 days to re-home it if the following conditions are breached. You must:

- abide by all relevant laws and local byelaws (such as the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991)
- make sure your pet does not annoy your neighbours
- make sure your pet does not foul or damage your home or garden, shared parts of the building, outside areas or neighbours' homes or gardens

You are not allowed to keep a dog if you live in a flat or maisonette unless the property has direct access to its own private and suitably enclosed garden.

## Guide, hearing and assistance dogs

We will generally give permission to keep a Recognised Assistance Dog if it has been registered with a charity and Assistance Dogs UK. Please ask your charity to contact us for permission before making any arrangements.

## Gardens

If you have a private garden, you are responsible its maintenance (including boundary fencing). Please keep it clean and tidy and ensure that any overhanging branches from your garden do not cause a health and safety hazard to neighbouring properties or passers-by. We request that all residents:

- report any incidents of vandalism or repairs needed to steps, footpaths and communal fencing
- ensure that entrance paths to homes, communal stairs and landings are kept clear
- clear up any rubbish or mess from communal areas created by members of the household, visitors or pets. ensure that entrance paths to your property and any communal stairs and landings are kept clear

## Fencing

We will only carry out emergency repairs to fencing to make a situation safe if there is a danger of injury. This could mean removing part of or the entire fence (which will not be replaced). Where a damaged fence leads on to public areas (public footpath/highway) we will assess the situation before considering a temporary repair if there is a health and safety concern. Where this repair is the tenant's responsibility the cost of this will be recharged.

# Anti-social behaviour

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Anti-social behaviour (ASB) is anything which interferes with the enjoyment of your home, garden or neighbourhood, or directly affects your health and safety. We recognise that anti-social behaviour can seriously affect quality of life and that everyone has the right to their chosen lifestyle, provided that this does not interfere with the quality of life for others. We therefore we will not tolerate any form of anti-social behaviour. You are responsible for making sure that you, people living with you, your visitors or pets do not cause any nuisance, annoyance or harassment to your neighbours.

If you are unhappy about a neighbour's or their household's behaviour, you should speak to them. People are often unaware that they are causing nuisance, and once they have been made aware, they will usually take action. If the nuisance continues after you have spoken to the person or people concerned, contact us. Depending on the circumstances, we may be able to take action against anyone persistently causing a nuisance to their neighbours; however, we cannot take sides in personal disputes between neighbours. We are committed to dealing with all forms of anti-social behaviour and have access to a specialist Anti-Social Behaviour Team to deal with these issues. You can report anti-social behaviour to us by telephone or on our website.

**In all cases of ASB we may need to co-ordinate with the police and any other agency involved with the case.**

## Noise

You must not make any noise that persistently causes a nuisance or annoyance to your neighbours. This can include music or televisions turned up too loudly, DIY, shouting, scraping furniture across floors or slamming doors. If you are disturbed by noise, tell your neighbour politely and ask them to stop. If this does not work, contact us. We will then contact your neighbours. You can also complain to your Council's Environmental Health Team. They have powers to deal certain cases of noise nuisance and in some cases take legal action on your behalf.

## Harassment & Hate Crime

Harassment takes many forms including abuse, threats, violence, graffiti and damage to property. We treat all forms of harassment seriously. Where we have evidence we will take action against anyone who has harassed or assaulted others, which could result in court action leading to criminal proceedings as well as eviction.

## Domestic abuse

Co-op Homes believes that no one should live in fear of domestic abuse and will take steps to advise, assist and support anyone suffering from, or threatened with, domestic abuse.

## What to do when you want to move

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We recognise that at some point you may need to move because your home no longer suits your needs, or for medical, work or family reasons. If you want to move we will try to help you, although we regret that we do not have enough empty homes for everyone to move. We will tell you what housing options are available to you, but will take action for repossession if you knowingly provide us with false information.

### Mutual exchange

You have the right by law to exchange homes with:

- Another Co-op Homes tenant
- A tenant of another housing association, co-op or registered social landlord
- A local authority (council) tenant

If you wish to move in this way, both landlords must agree to the exchange, and give their written permission before the exchange takes place. Co-op Homes can only refuse a mutual exchange under certain circumstances, for example if one of the properties would become overcrowded or significantly under-occupied.

To register for a mutual exchange and search for available properties, please visit [www.homeswapper.co.uk](http://www.homeswapper.co.uk) or talk to your Community Housing Advisor.

### ***What happens if I have an urgent need to move home?***

In certain circumstances we may give priority to tenants who have to move because:

- There is an urgent medical need
- Their home requires repairs that cannot be carried out with them living there
- There are other reasons that require a management transfer decision

If we have no suitable property that meets a tenant's needs at the time of a management transfer decision we may refer the case to the local authority for emergency rehousing. Customers should note that any home offered is likely to be the same size as their current home and that failure to accept a reasonable offer of re-housing may mean that no further assistance will be given by either Co-op Homes or the local authority.

## Ending your tenancy

If you decide to end your tenancy, it is your responsibility to give us four weeks' notice in writing in advance of your intended moving date; otherwise you will still be liable for the rent. Your tenancy must end on a Monday and you should:

- Make sure all keys, including window locks and door entry fobs are returned to us before midday on the last day of your tenancy. If you do not return them on time we will need to charge you a week's rent.
- Make sure your rent account is clear
- Ensure that your electricity meter, gas meter and, if appropriate, water meter have been read and utility companies (gas, electric, water) informed
- Give us a forwarding address
- Arrange for your mail to be redirected.
- Leave keys for any electricity or gas pre-payment meters

## Moving out

If you leave any items behind which Co-op Homes then has to dispose of, or if we have to carry out repairs or decorating works that you were responsible for, we will

re-charge our costs back to you. At the end of your tenancy please make sure that:

- All fixtures and fittings that were supplied by Co-op Homes are intact and in working order
- The property, including any sheds, lofts, garages or gardens are left clean and tidy and free of rubbish
- All rooms are clean, empty and in good decorative condition
- All carpets and floor coverings fitted by you are removed, except where you have had our prior permission to leave them
- All kitchen cupboards and work surfaces are clean, empty and serviceable
- All sanitaryware is clean, free of damage and in working order
- Any glazing panels in door and windows are free from damage
- Any DIY work has been previously approved by us
- Any electrical or gas installations or alterations not carried out by us have valid safety certificates
- Any disconnection of gas appliances, i.e. cooker or personal gas fires, is carried out by a Gas Safe registered tradesperson.



## **Dealing with the estate of a deceased tenant**

If you are helping to end the tenancy for one of our tenants who has died, please contact us as soon as possible to prevent rent arrears building up on the account. You will need to give us written notice to end the tenancy and supply us with a copy of the death certificate. Your Community Housing Adviser will be able to help you during this difficult time.

## **Your rent & other charges**

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Paying your rent on time is very important. If you do not pay your rent, you could be evicted from your home. It is your responsibility to pay your rent, even if you receive benefits. Rent is due every Monday and you need to make sure that the payment reaches your rent account by this date.

Your rent is payable weekly in advance, but of course you can pay further in advance if you wish. We will give you four weeks' notice of any increase in your rent. We will also give you advance warning, where we can, of changes in any other charges which are payable as part of your rent.

### **Rent statements**

We will send you a printed statement of your rent account once a year, or when you ask us for one. If you register for a Co-op Homes "My Tenancy" account you can view your statement online every day at your convenience. Visit our website to sign up at [www.coophomes.coop](http://www.coophomes.coop)

### **Service charges**

Some residents pay a separate charge for additional services they receive, such as caretaking and grounds maintenance. We may also introduce other services but will consult with you before doing so.

If you have to pay a service charge we will tell you when we offer you the property. If you are entitled to Housing Benefit or Universal Credit the service charges are usually eligible to be paid as part of your benefit.

### **Other charges**

You will need to ensure that you make your own arrangements to pay Council Tax and any other bills connected with living in our home, e.g. water, electricity, gas, TV licence, home contents insurance.

# How to pay your rent

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There are a number of ways you can pay your rent.

## **i. Direct Debit**

This is when you tell your bank or building society to make a regular payment to us from your account. This allows us to automatically collect the correct rent due and means you don't have to do anything when your rent changes.

## **ii. Standing Order**

This is when you tell your bank or building society to make regular fixed payments to us from your account. You will need to change the standing order amount if your rent increases, otherwise you may get quickly into arrears.

## **iii. Allpay**

An Allpay card is a plastic swipe card that is free of charge. It will have your name and rent account number on it and is sent to you 7 – 10 days after the start of your new tenancy. It is not a credit card and is used for identification only. You can use Allpay cards with cash, cheques and debit cards, but if you pay by cheque it will take longer for a payment to show on your account.

You can use an Allpay card:

- At a Post Office - you may pay by cash, cheque or debit card.
- Where you see a Pay Point sign - Pay Point services are usually found at corner shops, newsagents and garages and many are open until late and at weekends. You can pay by cash and some outlets accept cheques by special agreement.
- In any PAY zone outlet - you can pay by cash, cheque or debit card. Outlets are mostly found in larger shops and garages. Spar and Alldays are members of this service.
- By telephone - 0870 770 0472. The automated service will request your Allpay swipe card number and your credit or debit card number. It will ask you to enter:
  - Your 19-digit Allpay card number.
  - Your credit/debit card number and four-digit expiry date.
  - The amount you wish to pay using (\*) button to separate pounds and pence.

When the transaction is authorised the system will give you a reference number. There is no additional cost for using this service.

- Online - log onto [www.allpayments.net](http://www.allpayments.net) and enter your Allpay card number.
- Using a mobile phone app – you can download an Allpay app for your mobile phone. On your first visit the system will ask you to enter and confirm a password and an email address for payment confirmation. You can use the password each time you log on. To use this service you must have a valid email address and have your Allpay reference number to hand. If you need a new or replacement Allpay card, please contact us. There is a charge of £5 for all replacement cards.

#### **iv. *By cheque or bankers' draft***

Please make these out to Co-op Homes South (Ltd), (or your landlord), ensuring that your address and rent account number is written clearly on the reverse. Please post to: Co-op Homes, 8 Waldegrave Road, Teddington, TW11 8GT

#### **v. *Housing Benefit/Universal Credit***

If you are entitled to Housing Benefit you should ensure that any payments you receive are paid immediately to Co-op Homes (or your landlord). You are responsible for making a claim for help with your housing costs and should notify us of any changes to your benefits. If you claim partial Housing Benefit you are responsible for making up the shortfall towards your rent. Co-op Homes cannot organise your claim for Housing Benefit or Universal Credit – it is your responsibility.

#### **vi. *Online or telephone banking (Co-op Homes tenants only)***

If you use Internet Banking you can pay directly from your bank account into ours, using these details:

**Account name:** CO-OP HOMES (South) Ltd

**Sort code:** 30 80 12

**Account number:** 10881868

**Reference:** (your rent account number)

### **If you cannot pay your rent**

You should tell us straight away if you are having problems paying your rent or your rent account is in arrears. We can only help and advise you if you let us know there is a problem.

If you are confused about your rent, other charges or which benefit forms to fill in, our highly-trained team is on hand to give you advice and support.

# Repairs

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If you are registered for a Co-op Homes online account, you can report a routine repair online. Please give us as much information about the repair as you can. You can also report your repair over the telephone.

For more information on the type of repairs we can carry out for you please visit our website or contact us.

## What is Co-op Homes responsible for?

As your landlord we will always be responsible for repairs to:

- the structure and exterior of the building - this includes the roof, walls, windows and external doors
- central heating (boilers, radiators, pipe work), gas fires (if they have been fitted by us), fireplaces, flues, ventilation and chimneys
- water, pipes, basins, sinks, toilets and baths, drains and guttering
- gas pipes and electrical wiring
- common parts such as lifts, and communal entrances.

We are not responsible for unblocking sinks, basins or WCs where the blockage has been caused by inappropriate use or lack of cleaning.

We are not responsible for carrying out cosmetic works or repairing or replacing any alterations, fixtures or fittings installed by you. We will only replace our fixtures or fittings when it does not make economic sense to repair them.

## What are my responsibilities?

It is your responsibility to look after the property and avoid causing damage. This involves:

- keeping your home clean and making sure the walls, ceiling and woodwork are in good decorative order
- not damaging the property or any contents provided, and not allowing your family, guests or pets to do so
- carrying out minor maintenance, like changing light bulbs, pull cords, fluorescent fittings or unblocking a sink
- preventing pipes from bursting during cold weather
- keeping air vents and window trickle vents clear both inside and outside
- maintaining cooker connections using a qualified installer
- maintaining all paths except those that lead to the front door and continue to the back door
- keeping gullies clear of leaves
- replacing door bells, door knockers and chains
- repairing any additional units or work surfaces fitted to the kitchen or other parts of the home not provided by Co-op Homes
- replacing any broken glass to doors and windows

- resetting trip switches and adjusting heating controls
- fitting additional door locks or burglar alarms
- testing smoke detectors (if fitted) and replacing batteries in any mains-operated backup or battery-operated devices
- getting TV aerials installed professionally if you live in a house
- putting up, removing or replacing shelves, rails or hooks and to make good to any damage to the walls on removal
- replacing bath and sink plugs and chains
- replacing toilet seats
- telling Co-op Homes when a repair needs to be done and giving us access so we can fix the problem in yours or a neighbouring property.
- allowing us access to your home every 12 months to carry out the Landlords Gas Safety check

Customers receiving Disability benefits may be entitled to certain repairs from Co-op Homes under our Aids and Adaptations scheme. Please contact us for help and advice about this.

## Response times

An important part of our work is to make sure that any repair jobs we agree to do are carried out in order of priority. Requests will fall into one of four categories:

<b>Emergency repairs</b>	<b>Urgent repairs</b>	<b>Routine repairs</b>	<b>Programmed works</b>
These repairs make safe a fault where there is an imminent threat to life, danger of a serious injury or major damage to property. The problem will be made safe within 24 hours - although repairs to resolve the problem completely may take longer.	These are repairs which prevent or resolve a significant interruption to your facilities. They are carried out within 7 calendar days.	These are non-urgent repairs and are carried out within 30 calendar days.	In some cases work will take longer because of the amount of work required. In this situation you will be given a target date for completion of the works.

If you report a repair to us, it will help us if you can tell us what and where the problem is, whether any other work has been done recently and whether you have any special requirements.

We will then:

- Confirm whether the repair is our or your responsibility
- Confirm your order and appointment for non-emergency repairs in writing if we have agreed to carry it out\*
- Ring you afterwards to check that you are happy with the work

\* Please note that if there is no one at home to let our repairs operative in, or if the operative is refused entry, the cost of the call-out will be recharged back to you and you will receive an invoice for our costs. Where this happens more than once, we may refuse to carry out any future repair orders, other than those deemed essential by us, e.g. gas servicing. We also have the right to apply an additional £50 administrative fee. If unpaid invoices remain on an account, we have the right to request payment in advanced for any future repair requests. Where persistent refusal to give us access for gas servicing occurs, we will take formal court action to forcibly gain access to your home.

## Who is responsible for repairs

<b>Communal door keys and fobs</b>	If you live in a property with a communal entry system we will give you two communal door keys, fobs and/or access codes. If you need replacement or extra keys or fobs there will be a charge.
<b>Customer fixtures and fittings</b>	We are not responsible for the fitting, repair or replacement of customer goods, such as curtain rails, hooks, showers, shower heads or shower curtains. We do not fit or repair wastes or supply pipe work or ventilation for washing machines, dishwashers, tumble driers or provide or repair clothes driers, posts or washing lines (unless in communal areas). Vulnerable customers or those with disabilities may be eligible for certain works to be carried out under our Aids & Adaptations scheme, see page 25 for further details.
<b>Damaged items</b>	We are not responsible for repairing damage or replacing goods damaged by neglect or misuse by the tenant, a member of their household their pets or any visitor to the property
<b>Decorations</b>	We are not responsible for internal decorations.
<b>Doors (Exterior)</b>	We will repair exterior doors unless the fault is broken glazing which is your responsibility. We will only replace exterior doors if we judge that they are beyond economic repair.
<b>Doors &amp; Joinery (Internal)</b>	We will only carry out repairs to internal joinery where the damage is caused by rot or woodworm or where items are beyond economic repair due to age. We will not carry out minor repairs to internal joinery or renew internal doors or door furniture or for adjusting doors when you fit new floor coverings
<b>Draught excluders</b>	We do not provide draught excluders
<b>Floor covering</b>	We are only responsible for repairing flooring in your kitchen and bathroom if it was installed by us. We will renew it in keeping with our property lettings standard.
<b>Gardening</b>	We will not maintain gardens in individual homes, nor any communal areas of grass, shrubs, trees, sheds etc. not already covered by an estates management programme
<b>Glazing</b>	You are responsible for repairing broken glass in windows and doors, unless you have been broken into and have a crime number which we can check with the police. We can however arrange to board broken windows to secure your home, the cost of which may be recharged to you.
<b>Light bulbs &amp; fuses</b>	We are not responsible for renewing light bulbs and fuses, pull cords, tubes and / or starters.
<b>Locks (external)</b>	If you lock yourself out, you are responsible for getting the lock changed and, if necessary, the door repaired. We can sometimes arrange to change the lock for you, but you will have to pay for the work plus an admin charge. If the door or frame is damaged in getting back into your home, you are responsible for the cost of repair.

<b><i>Locks (internal)</i></b>	We will not provide locks to internal doors
<b><i>Pests / Vermin</i></b>	We are not responsible for removing most types of vermin - If you have problems with pests (rats, mice, wasps, foxes, squirrels, bedbugs etc) you should contact your local authority's Environmental Health Team. We can sometimes arrange for pests to be dealt with by our contractors if you agree to pay the charges. If the problem is affecting a block of neighbouring properties that share communal areas and/ or the property is infested by Pharaoh ants or cockroaches we will assume responsibility.
<b><i>Plaster repairs</i></b>	You are responsible for all minor plaster repairs. If you strip wallpaper and remove the plaster from the walls in the process we will not re-plaster your walls. You may be recharged for any re-plastering we need to carry out when you leave the property.
<b><i>Showers</i></b>	We will maintain showers only where these have been provided by us or installed as part of a disabled adaptation
<b><i>Sinks and Basins</i></b>	We are not responsible for unblocking kitchen or bathroom sinks where the blockage is caused by food, fat or other waste products. Customers will be recharged for our costs if this is discovered. We do not provide plugs or chains on bathroom or kitchen sanitaryware.
<b><i>Taps</i></b>	We do not install mixer taps
<b><i>Toilet seats</i></b>	We do not repair or renew toilet seats.
<b><i>WC</i></b>	You are responsible for preventing items such as baby wipes, nappies, sanitary towels or other inappropriate items being flushed down your toilet. If we are called to a blockage where it is found to be caused by resident mis-use, you will be recharged for our costs. We will not deal with a toilet repair as an emergency if you can use have another toilet in your property.

\* If we are asked to carry out any of the works listed above which are subject to re-charge, we have the right to ask for payment of the work in advance

## The Right to Repair

If you are an assured tenant and certain 'qualifying repairs' have not been carried out within the specified times, we may offer compensation under the Right to Repair scheme. These repairs must be less than £250 in value to qualify and include:

### **One day:**

- Total loss of electric power\*
- Total or partial loss of gas supply\*.
- Total or partial loss of heating or hot water during colder months (1 November to 30 April) if there is no other means of heating available
- Total loss of water supply
- Toilet not flushing (if no other WC in the home)
- A blocked or leaking foul drain, soil stack or toilet pan (if there is no other WC in the home)
- Blocked sink, bath or basin (unless caused by tenant misuse)
- Leaks or flooding from water or heating pipes, tanks or cistern
- Blocked flue to open fire or boiler
- Insecure window, door or lock
- Unsafe power or electrical fitting (provided by us)

### **Three days:**

- Broken window pane
- Broken door entry system
- Partial or total loss of heating or hot water (1 May to 31 October)
- Partial loss of water supply
- Partial loss of electric power or gas supply\*
- Unsafe timber flooring or stair treads
- Loose or detached banister or hand rail

### **Seven days:**

- Extractor fan in internal kitchen or bathroom not working.
- \* Not associated with no fuel credit.

## Repeated or unexplained damage to your home

If damage occurs to your home which is unexplained or repeated, we reserve the right not to carry out non-essential repairs or to charge you in advance for our costs before attending to rectify the problems.



## Condensation

Co-op Homes is not responsible for redecorating or cleaning mould caused by condensation. To help minimise condensation and avoid mould in your property:

### **Do:**

- Ventilate by opening windows, allowing moisture to escape.
- Dry clothes outside if possible.
- Keep your kitchen and bathroom doors shut especially when cooking, bathing or washing.
- Keep lids on pans when cooking and do not boil longer than is necessary. Keep your home fairly warm.

### **Don't:**

- Block external wall air bricks which cover under-floor ventilation.
- Disconnect or block external ventilation into rooms. This could be dangerous if your home has gas heating.
- Seal up unused fireplaces without leaving adequate ventilation.

If we are called to a repair caused by condensation the cost of the visit and the remedial action taken will be recharged to you.

# Improvements & alterations

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All improvements and alterations require our written permission before you plan or start work. This also applies to minor changes, such as the erection of a garden shed.

Major changes may also need separate Planning Permission and Building Control Approval from the local authority. We will also inspect work once it is finished to ensure it meets our agreed standards.

Some examples of major changes are listed below:

- Alterations to gas pipe work
- Installation or change of central heating boilers and/or water heaters
- Alteration or extension of electrical installations
- Renewal of doors and windows
- Renewal or installation of sanitary fittings, including showers
- Renewal or installation of kitchen cupboards and sink units.
- Structural alterations
- Construction of porches, conservatories and other extensions
- Construction of hard standings, car ports or garages
- Pavement or driveway alterations

If you do not get our permission in advance, or the agreed works are not completed to an acceptable standard we will take action under your tenancy agreement and can recharge you the costs of making good or reinstating the property to its original condition.

## Tenant improvements

Under certain circumstances you may be entitled to some reimbursement for improvements when you move out of your home. You will need our written permission for this before you carry out the work and also provide details of plans and costs. For further information please speak to your Community Housing Adviser on 0845 250 7276 or 020 3166 2608 or email [homes@coophomes.coop](mailto:homes@coophomes.coop).

## Adaptations for residents with disabilities

If you have a disability, Co-op Homes will do all it can to help you adapt your home so that you can enjoy a comfortable and independent life.

Should your Occupational Therapist recommend an adaptation we may be able to help. If the adaptation costs less than £500 we will consider paying for it and will prioritise your request depending on how severe your disabilities are. We may also consider carrying out other ad-hoc repair works, if these are recommended

by an Occupational Therapist. These are generally the resident's responsibility. For further guidance please consult your Community Housing Adviser.

Works likely to cost over £500 may be covered by a Disabled Facilities Grant from your local authority. We can help you apply for this. If you feel you need an adaptation to your home please contact us for more information.

## Grounds maintenance in your area

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We employ external contractors to maintain and improve communal areas. The service includes one or more of the following, depending on location:

- Cleaning communal floors, stairs and skirtings
- Bin rooms and chutes
- Litter bins
- Play areas
- Lifts
- Lighting (interior and exterior)
- Courtyards
- Car parks
- Pathways
- Communal gardening and tending to grass, shrubs and trees

We will also remove offensive graffiti. Please report this to us by phone.

Everyday household rubbish should be disposed of in the bins and chutes provided - please recycle as much as possible.

In order to make sure your communal areas are kept in excellent condition, we ask that you avoid:

- Forcing large items of rubbish or furniture down the chutes as this will cause blockages
- Smoking in communal areas, especially in internal parts of the block, bin stores or sheds
- Leaving toys, furniture, rubbish or dog faeces in the area around your home

If you pay a service charge for any of these elements and have any questions please contact us.

No items should be left in communal corridors or stairwells, as this is a health and safety risk to tenants and to the emergency services. If we discover or are notified of prams, pushchairs, bicycles or other personal goods left in communal areas these will be removed and disposed of, the cost of which will be recharged to the tenant. Where a tenant repeatedly leaves items in communal areas we will consider this as Anti-Social Behaviour and will take appropriate action.

Where Co-op Homes removes such items and the costs cannot be recharged to the person responsible, this may result in the service charge element of rent being increased to cover out costs. Please help avoid this by keeping communal areas clear or reporting where you have witnessed neighbours or other residents dumping items or rubbish in your area.

## **Estate inspections**

We carry out regular inspections of your estate to make sure that standards are being met. You are very welcome to attend and you can arrange this by contacting us to find out when the next inspection is taking place.

## **Fly-tipping**

Fly-tipping is a criminal offence and can also be hazardous. Anyone caught fly-tipping faces prosecution and a fine.

Our team works hard to clear fly-tipping as quickly as possible, but you can help by reporting it to us with as much detail as possible.

## **Repairs to communal areas**

We are responsible for the repair and upkeep of the common parts of blocks of flats and regularly inspect them to ensure that they are maintained and safe. If you are aware of work that is required or items that have become damaged, please contact us to report it.

## **Abandoned vehicles**

Please tell us if a vehicle has been abandoned on your estate. We work closely with the local authority and remove abandoned vehicles quickly. Vehicles abandoned on public roads should be reported to your local authority. If you are the registered keeper of unlicensed vehicles which are kept illegally or parked inappropriately on our estates we will consider this as anti-social behaviour and deal with it accordingly.

# Safety in your home

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## What you can do

Make sure you know where the following can be found in your home in case of emergencies:

- Electricity meter
- Gas meter and tap
- Fuse board and isolation switch
- Cold water stop tap

**Gas Safety:** As Landlords, we have a legal duty to inspect your gas supply and appliances once a year. We will make an appointment with you to do this at a time that is convenient. We ask you to co-operate with us to allow us access to carry out this important task. If you do not, we will take legal action to gain access in your absence.

If you smell gas: Call the National Grid immediately on 0800 111 999. Please also call us so we can arrange for an engineer to attend. Do not use electrical items (such as mobile phones) – or light naked flames inside as these can ignite the gas. For more information on gas safety, including advice on carbon monoxide, visit our website or call us to request a leaflet.

**Fire Prevention:** Make sure you have a working smoke alarm in your home, and plan a route of escape in the event of a fire. As well as keeping the communal areas of your block clear you should consider the escape route inside your property too.

**Smoking:** Carelessness when smoking is the biggest cause of fatal fires at home. If you are a smoker, make sure you extinguish cigarettes properly, in a proper ashtray, and don't smoke in bed. Always keep matches and lighters away from children.

**Cooking:** Over half of accidental fires at home are started through cooking. To try to avoid this do not leave cooking unattended, especially hot oil. Do not leave children unattended in the kitchen when cooking and make sure all cooking equipment is switched off when you have finished.

**Candles:** Do not leave candles unattended, especially with children. Make sure that you don't put them close to curtains or other flammable materials.

**Electricity:** Electricity is another big cause of fires in the home. There are some simple steps you can take to try and avoid electrical fires:

- Do not overload electrical sockets. Overloaded plug sockets can overheat and cause fires.
- Take care of electrical appliances and visually check them regularly - including flexes and fuses.

- Old or damaged equipment or cables can also be a fire risk. This includes chargers for laptops, mobile phones and other portable devices.
- Remember to switch off electrical appliances before you go to bed or on holiday.
- Never touch anything electrical with wet hands, and avoid using electrical items in your bathroom.

**Smoke detection:** The best thing you can do to is to have a working smoke alarm in your home. The link below gives information on what type of smoke detector you should use, where and how to install them and how to maintain them: [www.direct.gov.uk/en/HomeAndCommunity/InYourHome/FireSafety](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/HomeAndCommunity/InYourHome/FireSafety)

## What to do in the event of a fire

To call the fire brigade:

- Dial 999 and ask for FIRE.
- Give the address where the fire is including the postcode.
- Do not end the call until the fire service has confirmed the address.

The 'stay-put' advice below at 1 (b) applies to purpose built blocks of flats only. If you live in a building that was converted into self-contained flats and/or there is a communal fire alarm system, you should always evacuate the building in the event of a fire or alarm activation.

Current advice on what to do in an emergency, based on the type of accommodation you live in, is available at [www.direct.gov.uk/en/HomeAndCommunity/InYourHome/FireSafety/index.htm](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/HomeAndCommunity/InYourHome/FireSafety/index.htm). and is summarised below depending on what type of property you live in:

### 1. If you live in a purpose built block of flats

#### a. If a fire breaks out in your flat:

- Leave the room where the fire is straight away, and then close the door.
- Do not try and tackle the fire.
- Alert everyone in your home and get them to leave the flat.
- Close the front door of your flat behind you. They are designed to stop the spread of fire when closed.
- Do not stay behind to put the fire out.
- Call the fire brigade on 999.
- Leave the building immediately
- Go to an area a safe distance away from the building

#### b. If you see or are aware of a fire in another part of the building:

- Please stay in your flat. The building is designed to contain a fire in the flat where it starts. This means it will usually be safe for you to stay in your own flat if the fire is elsewhere.
- You must leave immediately (IF SAFE TO DO SO) If smoke or heat affects your home or if you are told to by the fire brigade.

**2.** If you live in a converted block:

**a.** If a fire breaks out in your home:

- Leave the room where the fire is straight away, then close the door.
- Tell everyone in your home and get them to leave. Close the front door of your flat behind you.
- Do not stay behind to put the fire out.
- Raise the alarm by using a break glass call point.
- Call the fire service on 999.
- Wait outside, away from the building.

**b.** If you see or aware of a fire in another part of the building, or if the alarm sounds:

- You must leave immediately.
- Raise the alarm if it is not already sounding.
- Call the fire service and wait outside away from the building.

**3.** If you live in a house

- If there is a fire, the most important thing is to get out and stay out of the building
- The best escape route is usually your normal way in and out of the building, unless this is blocked by fire or smoke. Plan for a second escape route and make sure everyone in your household knows what it is and how to use it.
- Test closed doors with the back of your hand before opening them. If they are warm to the touch you should not open them as the fire may be on the other side
- As you leave the building, close doors behind you to delay the spread of fire
- If there is a lot of smoke, crawl close to the floor as the air will be clearer there.
- Do not leave through a window unless you are on the ground of first floor. Throw bedding or other soft furnishing out to break your fall. Don't jump, but lower yourself to the ground.
- Call the fire service on 999 and wait outside, away from the building.

You can request a free fire safety home visit at  
[www.direct.gov.uk/en/Dio11/DoltOnline/DG\\_10027464](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Dio11/DoltOnline/DG_10027464)

# Accessibility

At Co-op Homes we are committed to a policy of equal access to all of our information. If you would like this booklet supplied in alternative formats, such as Braille, large print, on audio tape or in another language, please contact us on **0845 250 7276**, send an email **communications@rhp.org.uk** or write to us at the address below.

<b>Albanian</b>	Sipas kërkesës, ky dokument gjithashtu gjendet edhe në gjuhë të tjera, me shkrim të madh dhe në formë dëgjimore.
<b>Arabic</b>	هذه الوثيقة متاحة أيضا بلغات أخرى والأحرف الطباعية الكبيرة وبطريقة سمعية عند الطلب.
<b>Bengali</b>	এই ডকুমেন্ট অন্য ভাষায়, বড় প্রিন্ট আকারে এবং অডিও টেপ আকারেও অনুরোধে পাওয়া যায়।
<b>Farsi</b>	این مدرک همچنین بنا به درخواست به زبانهای دیگر، در چاپ درشت و در فرمت صوتی موجود است.
<b>Gujarati</b>	આ દસ્તાવેજ વિનંતી કરવાથી બીજા ભાષાઓ, મોટા છાપેલા અક્ષરો અથવા ઓડિઓ રચનામાં પણ મળી રહેશે.
<b>Hindi</b>	अनुोध पर यह दस्तावेज़ अन्य भाषाओं में, बड़े अक्षरों की छयाई और सुनने वाले माध्यम पर भी उपलब्ध है
<b>Mandarin</b>	如欲索取以另一语文印制或另一格式制作的资料，请与我们联系。
<b>Polish</b>	Dokument ten jest na życzenie udostępniany także w innych wersjach językowych, w dużym druku lub w formie audio.
<b>Portuguese</b>	Se gostaria de ter este documento noutra idioma ou formato, ou se necessita de um intérprete, contacte-nos.
<b>Punjabi</b>	ਇਹ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ, ਵੱਡੇ ਅੱਖਰਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਅਤੇ ਆਡੀਓ ਟੇਪ 'ਤੇ ਰਿਕਾਰਡ ਹੋਇਆ ਵੀ ਮੰਗ ਤੇ ਲਿਆ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ।
<b>Somali</b>	Waxaa kale oo lagu heli karaa dokumentigaan luqado kale, daabacaad ballaaran, iyo cajal duuban haddii la soo waydiisto.
<b>Turkish</b>	Bu belgenin Türkçe'sini edinmek ya da Türkçe bilen birisinin size yardımcı olmasını istiyorsanız, bize başvurabilirsiniz.
<b>Urdu</b>	درخواست پر یہ دستاویز دیگر زبانوں میں، بڑے حروف کی چھپائی اور سننے والے ذرائع پر بھی میسر ہے۔

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