

Handbook for Tenants

Welcome to your Exeter City Council home. We want you to enjoy living in your home and offer you the best possible service to allow you to do so. The handbook offers help and advice, we hope you will find it useful.

Other sources of information that complement the information in this handbook include:

Exeter City Council website Housing Webpages <https://exeter.gov.uk/housing/>

Repairs Handbook 'Maintaining Your Home' supplied when you moved in, or please call **01392 265031**

Tenancy Agreement provided when you moved in or available online at Flexible and Introductory Tenancy Agreement or Lifetime Tenancy Agreement

If you wish to have a hard copy of the Tenants' Handbook or any other information provided on our website please call us on **01392 265033** and we will be pleased to help.

About us

Exeter City Council's Housing Service manages nearly 5,000 council homes in the City and nearly 1000 leasehold properties.

Our operating hours are: Monday – Friday 9am-5pm

Exeter City Council

Civic Centre

Paris Street

Exeter EX1 1RQ

Tel: **01392 277888**

Fax: **01392 265265**

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/ExeterCouncil>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ECCHousing>

Website: <https://exeter.gov.uk/>

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1 Paying your rent

We use your rent to pay for the cost of repairing and managing your home and to cover the cost of any future improvements.

If we do not receive your rent we cannot fund any of these things, so it is vital that you make sure you pay your rent on time. If you do not pay your rent, you will be at risk of losing your home.

When the rent is due

Rent is due in advance every fortnight on a Monday, but you can pay monthly in advance if you prefer.

Rent is calculated on a 48-week year and rent is not due for the remaining weeks per year (for example, over Christmas). However, if you have rent arrears you must continue to pay during these weeks as this provides opportunity to reduce or pay off your rent arrears.

How to pay your rent

There are a number of ways you can pay your rent. For most payment methods you will need your rent payment card or the rent reference number located on your rent payment card.

- Pay rent online with a credit or debit card at <https://exeter.gov.uk/rent/>
- Direct debit or standing order through your bank or building society
- Telephone using a credit or debit card on **01392 265551** or **01392 265552**. Please quote your rent reference number and remember that if you pay by credit card, your card issuer is likely to charge you interest
- At any Post Office and at certain shops that advertise Paypoint:

To use this service you will need a small plastic swipe card. If you haven't received a rent swipe card, these can be obtained by contacting the Payments and Collection Team on **01392 265032**.

Remember, this can take up to five working days to process.

- In person at the Civic Centre using cash, credit or debit card. You must quote your rent reference number, found on your rent payment card.
- By post using cheque or postal order quoting your rent reference number on the back. Please do not send cash in the post.

If you have any questions about your rent please contact us on **01392 265032**. They will be happy to discuss any issues with you in complete confidence.

How your rent is worked out

The amount of rent you pay is linked to the facilities in your home, its size, age and type and to government rental policy.

Your rent may be changed from time to time and is usually increased, in line with National Government regulations, from the first Monday in April each year.

You will be notified in writing at least four weeks before any changes are implemented.

Rent arrears

If you are having a problem paying your rent, please contact the Payments and Collection Team on **01392 265032** straight away. Do not ignore any rent issues you are facing as these are easiest to manage as early as possible.

You must pay your rent, but if you get into difficulties please explain the problem to us. We will treat the matter in confidence and we can advise you of the best course of action and point you in the right direction for further debt advice if you need it.

By acting quickly, you are showing a commitment to paying your rent.

Legal action

If you make no arrangement to pay off your rent arrears, or break your agreement with us, we will take legal action against you. This will involve the issue of a Notice followed by a County Court hearing.

Tenants who do not pay their rent will, as a final resort, be evicted.

Service charges

You will only pay service charges if you live in a property which directly benefits from a service such as in a block of flats with shared areas or Older Persons' Housing. If this applies to you, service charges will be paid as part of your rent, there are no additional charges. You will be able to see the services you are paying for when you receive your annual rent notification letter.

Housing benefit & other benefits

If you have a low income you may be entitled to housing benefit to cover part or all of your rent. The amount of benefit you receive will depend on how much your rent is, your savings and your family size.

You can find out more and claim housing benefit by going to the Benefits and Welfare section of our website <https://exeter.gov.uk/benefits-and-welfare/>, by calling **01392 265440**, or by visiting the Civic Centre.

For more general information, please head to the Department for Work and Pensions website

2 Safety in your home

We hope you will enjoy living in your home. Together we can help make your home secure, comfortable and safe.

Fire safety

Fire safety is one of our most important priorities. Here's how we're protecting you from fire:

- We work with fire experts to make sure that we've done everything we can to reduce the risk of a fire starting or getting out of control
- All properties have smoke detectors installed
- In blocks of flats we have fire safety plans and additional fire protection features and detection equipment as required
- It's important that the fire equipment stays in tip-top condition
- If it's touched, tampered with or vandalised (either inside your flat or in the common areas) it may not work properly and this will put lives at risk
- For example, fire doors will prevent heat and smoke from spreading for up to half an hour whilst smoke detectors and fire alarms provide vital time for occupants to summon help and escape
- We will test your smoke detector once a year - you must allow our staff or contractor access to do so
- We recommend tenants check smoke detectors in their property once a month between our annual checks

Things you **need** to know or need to do **now** (please don't skip this bit)

- If you think - at any time - that any fire safety equipment in any homes or blocks is faulty, damaged or might have been tampered with, let us know straight away by calling **01392 265031**
- Make sure you know what you should do in case there's a fire in your home or blocks of flats
- What you should do will depend on where you live; get in touch with us if you're not sure
- If you live in a block of flats, you must keep common areas such walkways, corridors, staircases and escape routes clear at all times.

To reduce the risk of fire, please take the following precautions:

- Do not keep flammable liquids, such as petrol or paraffin, at home
- Do not store any items in the common areas of flats
- Do not use non-electric portable heaters such as those powered by paraffin or bottled gas
- Never store or keep items in corridors or exit routes
- Never charge electrical equipment or run electrical cables through corridors or exit routes in any block of flats

- Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG) cylinders must not be stored in any flat in a block. On any other premises they must be used and stored according to the manufacturers' instructions
- Never leave chip pans or your cooker unattended and never pour cold water onto a chip pan fire – smother the flames with a fire blanket or damp cloth
- Take care with cigarettes, candles, matches, lighters and ashtrays
- Do not hang clothes around fires, cookers or storage heaters
- Make sure you know how to get out of your home in a hurry
- If there is a fire in your home get out of the building and raise the alarm, do not try to fight the fire yourself.

Further information can be found on the Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service website: <https://www.dsfire.gov.uk/>

What to do if a fire breaks out where you live

There's different advice for different places:

If there's a fire in your own home:

- Quickly get out of the room where the fire is and close the door behind you
- Call the fire service on **999** immediately
- Tell everyone in your home that there's a fire and to get out too
- Don't stop to get any of your things, and shut the front door firmly behind you
- Do not try and put the fire out yourself
- Wait outside away from the building in a safe place

If you see or hear a fire when you are in a common area of a block of flats:

- Leave by the nearest available exit
- Call the fire service on **999** immediately
- Wait outside, away from the building

If there's a fire in the building (including in someone else's flat) and we've told you to stay put:

- The building you're in is designed to contain a fire inside the flat where it started
- If the fire isn't in your flat, close all your doors and windows and stay inside
- Dial **999** right away, just in case the person whose flat is on fire is out or hasn't been able to call **999**

- If smoke or heat from the flat where the fire is starts to affect your home then leave immediately, if it's safe to do so. Or if the fire service tell you to leave
- You can find out if this is the advice for your flat by contacting us.

If there's a fire elsewhere in the building (including in someone else's flat) and we've told you to leave the building (if possible):

- If you're in one of the homes where we told people to evacuate the building then do so, as long as it's safe
- If it isn't safe, stay where you are and raise the alarm by dialling **999** immediately
- Remember, when you dial **999** you need to ask for **Fire**
- When the operator answers give the address of where the fire is **don't hang up** until the address is repeated back to you and confirmed.

If you have any queries or concerns about fire safety then please call us on **01392 265031**.

There should be smoke detectors in all our properties. If they are missing or faulty, please call us immediately on **01392 265031**.

Gas safety

We carry out safety checks on gas appliances in our properties at least once a year. You must allow us into your home to do this. If you refuse entry for this to take place or fail to keep appointments we will take legal action to enter your home. You can find out more or arrange your gas service visit by telephoning **01392 265031**.

You must not block airbricks, ventilation or flues as this might lead to carbon monoxide poisoning. Provided the correct precautions are followed any risk is negligible. Nevertheless, for extra protection and reassurance, we install carbon monoxide alarms in all our properties where gas has been installed. You cannot see or smell carbon monoxide which is highly toxic so you should never tamper with, move or remove the carbon monoxide alarms we have provided.

If you do have a carbon monoxide alarm, we recommend you should test it monthly. If you think it is not working then please let us know by calling **01392 265031** (option 1).

If you smell gas or if your alarm activates, switch off any gas appliances, open the doors and windows and call the National Gas Emergency Service on **0800 111 999**

Electrical safety

We carry out electrical safety checks in your property every five years. As with all safety related inspections, you must allow us into your home to do this. If you refuse entry for this to take place or fail to keep appointments we will take legal action to enter your home.

You must not undertake any DIY electrical works without our express permission. All works must be completed by a registered electrician having first obtained permission from us. Once the work has been completed, you must forward the certification to us within 14 days.

Should work be completed without our permission, we will arrange inspection and any remedial works, including reinstating the electrical wiring and appliances to their original condition will be undertaken by us at your cost.

Extension leads should not be run through communal areas (see Fire Safety) or above or across external communal areas, public footpaths, etc.

Asbestos safety

Asbestos containing materials (ACMs) were used widely for many years in the construction industry. Unfortunately it became clear that if disturbed, the fibres are so small they can be breathed in and lodge deep in the lungs. Over time this can lead to chronic ill health and even shorten life. Using ACMs in any form was completely banned in 1999.

This means that any home built before 2000, may contain ACMs in a wide variety of forms such as floor tiles, textured coating (Artex) and fire proofing panels behind fuse boards. It can be hidden in boilers installed before 2000 and also around door frames, window frames, toilet cisterns and external toilets, bath panels, drainpipes, under floor boards, electrical mains and in the loft; in fact anywhere.

Similarly, ACMs can be found in external areas such as older sheds, drainpipes, coalbunkers and garages (particularly the corrugated roofs).

Because of this, Exeter City Council Housing has carried out asbestos surveys in all of our properties built before 2000. The surveys indicate the location, amount and condition of any ACMs.

Of the properties surveyed, most still have asbestos containing materials in them and we have taken steps to ensure sure any asbestos in your home is safe. It will remain safe provided it is not disturbed or damaged*.

For these reasons you must not undertake any form of DIY (or employ contractors to do so) without contacting us **before** the work is carried out. We can check to see what ACMs may be in your property, where it is and guide you accordingly.

Asbestos registers and survey reports are readily available to you and could prevent you or your contractor from inadvertently disturbing ACMs.

Call: **01392 265031** or **01392 265657** or Email: housing.asbestos@exeter.gov.uk

* You should call us immediately for advice if you believe there is any damage or deterioration to floors, walls or ceilings in your home or any of the items we have listed above.

Please see [Asbestos in the Home](#) on our website.

Legionella

Legionella is a bacterium found in most water sources, including rivers and lakes. It can also be found in mains water and household plumbing.

It can be found in your home in all hot and cold water systems in any residential property. The bacteria prefer warm water 20°C to 45°C in relatively stagnant places such as a seldom used hot water pipes, water tanks with debris inside, redundant pipes which no longer have an outlet and even hot water tanks where the temperature has been set too low.

Legionella can also multiply on limescale or rust which can build-up on taps or shower heads because it is less likely to be washed away.

Legionella does not spread from person to person. It must enter the lungs in sufficient quantities via a fine mist or spray of water droplets. The most common source of mist and sprays at home are showers and taps which are not hot or cold enough.

Legionnaires Disease poses a higher risk to people over 45 years of age, smokers and heavy drinkers and people in poor health.

Symptoms include high temperature, fever or chills, headache, tiredness, muscle pain and/or a dry cough. If you are at all concerned, seek medical advice.

You can avoid legionella by following the advice below:

- Keep the temperature on your boiler or hot water system set at 60°C
- Contact us if the boiler or hot water tank is not working properly
- Use all your taps at least once a week
- Contact us if you find any bits or discolouration in the water
- Flush your shower through at least once a week

- If you have a garden hose, slow run it for two minutes if you haven't used it for more than a week before using the spray
- Keep your taps and showerhead clean – you can descale them with a proprietary product (follow the instructions carefully).

If you have been away for more than a week:

- Flush the shower and slow run all taps for at least two minutes. Ideally stay out of the rooms concerned to avoid breathing in the spray or mist
- Flush the toilet with the lid down.

For more advice, please call us on **01392 265031**.

Staying safe

We advise you to fit door chains and window locks, and to take other security measures.

For your personal security:

- Always ask callers for proof of their identity. If it relates to one of our contractors and you are in doubt, take their card, shut your front door and telephone us on 01392 265033 to confirm they are legitimate
- Lock doors and windows when you go out
- Do not leave keys under doormats, or notes visible, or social media updates saying that you have gone out or will be going away
- Do not allow anyone through a communal door unless you know them
- Do not leave communal doors open.
- If you go away, do not forget to cancel deliveries such as food or newspapers.

Bogus callers

Please remember to do the following when someone calls at your front door:

Stop Before you open the door think about whether you are expecting anyone. Do you have an appointment? Check your back door, lock it and take the key with you (distraction burglars often work in pairs when one keeps you talking at the front door)

Chain Install and use your door chain – it is a useful barrier because they may try and pressure you into letting them in

Check Check details before letting anyone you don't know into your house. Do not let a caller in, agree to any work being done or sign a contract until you are absolutely sure they are genuine.

If you have any doubts keep them out!

Anyone calling at your home from the Council will carry identification. If you are still not sure after seeing their identification, do not let them in. You can call us to check if they are legitimate and are due to be at your home.

Loft/Roof Voids

You should not store any belongings in your loft space/roof void; in most instances the loft hatches have been locked. The use of the roof voids for storage can seriously impact upon the effectiveness of the insulation laid down to improve the energy efficiency of your home and the ceiling joists are not designed for any sort of loading.

Communal areas

Where you share balconies and stairways with other tenants, you must keep these areas clean and tidy. Contractors will ensure these areas are cleaned to a hygienic standard approximately once a fortnight. No items (including doormats) should be stored or left on or in communal balconies, hallways, landings or stairwells; anything found in these areas will be removed and disposed of.

We have a Clear & Safe Policy which ensures fire safety in escape routes in blocks of flats; leaving items in these areas will be classed as a breach of your tenancy.

Exeter City Council's Public Realm Team are responsible for the design and management of landscaped areas. This includes grass cutting, shrub pruning. If you have any issue relating to the maintenance of landscaped areas on council land near where you live, please call us on **01392 265033**.

Communal passenger lifts

Lifts are maintained and inspected for safety every six months. Should a breakdown occur, please call **01392 265031**.

Please observe the following guidance to reduce the likelihood and frequency of breakdowns:

- Do not hold doors open except to stop it closing on someone entering or leaving
- Do not physically obstruct the door - always use the door open button
- Lifts are not designed to carry mobility scooters which should be left on the ground floor
- If the lift stops between floors and you are inside, operate the alarm button to summon help

- It is extremely dangerous to force open lift doors – only lift engineers or the fire service are permitted to do this
- Repeatedly pressing lift buttons or pressing multiple buttons can cause lift circuitry to malfunction and stop the lift operating.

Gas and electricity supplies for new tenants

Before you move into your new home the gas and electricity supplies will have been checked and ready for you to use.

The gas supply at your property will have been disconnected. Until Liberty visit you to re-connect the gas supply, you will have no central heating and no hot water. Once this has been done, you will be given a Gas Safety Certificate. Using anyone other than Liberty to reconnect your gas supply put your tenancy at risk. Liberty will not connect gas or electric cookers.

Connecting gas supplies

Check what type of gas meter you have

If it is a quarterly meter, take the readings and contact the supplier to change the account over to your details

Once you have contacted the supplier, ring Exeter City Council's gas contractors Liberty on **01392 265031** Option 1.

If it is a pre-payment meter order new cards. If there is a debt on the meter and you do not contact the supplier, you may be paying off someone else's debts

If you have a pre-payment meter you must order a card and put £5 credit on it before you make an appointment for Liberty to attend

Once you have your card, ring Exeter City Council's gas contractors Liberty on **01392 265031** Option 1.

Liberty need one to two working days' notice to book the re-connection and can attend Monday to Fridays only. Please do not leave this to the last minute or attempt to re-connect over the weekend. Only Liberty are authorised to undertake this works – please do not engage a third party.

Ordering a new card for gas pre-payment meters

If you do not know who the supplier is, please ring the meter point reference line on **0870 608 1524**. This is available 24 hours a day.

It is an automated service and you will have to provide the postcode and your new address. Remember to have a paper and pen handy. Once you have the supplier information you can contact them to change the details.

Electric supply

Check what type of electricity meter you have.

If it is a quarterly meter, take the readings and contact the supplier to change the account over to your details.

If you are on a pre-payment meter, order a new key if required. If there is a debt on the meter and you do not contact the supplier, you may be paying off someone else's debts

Ordering a new key for electric pre-payment meters

If you do not know who the supplier is, please ring Western Power NPAS services on **0845 601 5972**. This is available 24 hours a day.

It is an automated service and you will have to provide the postcode and your new address. Remember to have a paper and pen handy. Once you have the supplier information you can contact them to change the details.

Changing how you pay

If you currently have a quarterly gas or electric meter and wish to change to a pre-payment meter or vice versa please do not commence these changes until you have moved in. This is because it will delay any works that may be required for a number of weeks.

It is cheaper to pay for gas and electricity by direct debit. This can be set up monthly.

If you consider yourself disabled you may also wish to contact your energy supplier to see if you are eligible for any discount on your fuel bills.

For further information on gas and electric supplies in your home, please contact the Repairs Team on **01392 265031**.

Housing officer visits

You will be visited by your Housing Officer about every 18-24 months. This visit is a way for you to get to know us, and us to see you and your property. At these visits, your Housing Officer will conduct a property and tenancy inspection, you will be able to raise any concerns or issues, and, if you are on a flexible tenancy, this will be discussed. These visits are routine and nothing to be concerned about.

We will work with you to find a mutually convenient time to visit you at home. Please work with us in facilitating this. Failure to allow us access to your property to complete

this visit may require us to obtain an injunction and you are likely to be charged any associated costs.

You can contact your Housing Officer outside of these visits should you need to. You will be provided with their direct contact details during their visit, or please call us on **01392 265033**.

Keys

Every property has its locks changed prior to a new tenant moving in. You will be provided with a set of keys but you are responsible for getting extra keys cut.

We do not hold spare keys. If you lock yourself out or lose your keys you need to arrange for a locksmith to attend. Call us on **01392 265031** for ALL enquiries relating to lost key fobs for communal doors; we will make a charge for replacing these.

All keys should be handed in when you leave.

Contents insurance

Exeter City Council does not cover your home contents and personal belongings. It's a good idea to consider what a home contents insurance policy would cover you.

Contents insurance is designed to help protect your possessions. No matter how careful you are, there's always a risk that your belongings could be broken, damaged or stolen so home contents insurance can help provide peace of mind.

To help you decide whether home contents insurance is right for you, Exeter City Council have teamed up with Thistle Tenant Risks and Allianz Insurance plc who provide the Crystal Insurance Scheme, a specialist Tenants Contents Insurance policy.

This 'Pay As You Go' home contents insurance scheme can offer you insurance for the contents of your home including cover for items such as furniture, carpets, curtains, clothes, bedding, electrical items, jewellery, pictures and ornaments.

How do I get further information?

Call us on **01392 265744** to request an application pack.

Exeter City Council believes it is important that all tenants have home contents insurance available through this scheme or by making your own arrangements.

Thistle Tenant Risks is a trading style of Thistle Insurance Services Limited. Thistle Insurance Services Limited is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority FRN 310419. Lloyd's Broker. Registered in England under No. 00338645. Registered office: Rossington's Business Park, West Carr Road, Retford, Nottinghamshire, DN22 7SW. Thistle Insurance Services Ltd is part of the PIB Group.

Water meters

Some properties already have water meters fitted. Water meters measure the amount of water used within a property and a charge is made based on the amount used. Properties without a water meter are charged at a flat rate.

You do not need our permission to have a water meter installed.

Please see South West Water for more details and to use their estimator to see whether you could save money by switching to a meter.

Condensation and damp

Condensation happens in everyone's home. You can see it when a kitchen window steams up while you are cooking, or on a bathroom mirror. The air in our homes always contains some moisture. When warm, humid air becomes colder tiny drops of water are released and this is condensation. It is only when condensation gathers on walls, furniture, clothing and so on that it becomes a problem and can lead to mould growth.

Condensation is one form of dampness. The main others are:

- Rising damp – usually caused by problems with a damp proof course allowing water to rise through the fabric of the building
- Rain penetration – for example through a roof or around window frames
- Leaking plumbing.

These types of dampness usually leave a tidemark.

Tips to help prevent condensation

Produce less moisture:

- Cover pans when cooking and do not leave kettles boiling
- Dry washing outside where possible, or put it in the bathroom with the door closed and the window open or fan on
- Avoid using portable flueless bottled gas heaters and these heaters put a lot of moisture into the air
- Cover fish tanks
- Vent tumble driers to the outside, unless it is self-condensing
- Wipe windows and window sills regularly.

Ventilate your home to remove excess moisture:

- Keep small windows slightly open if someone is home, or keep trickle vents open (these are the small grilles in the top of the window frames)
- Shut kitchen and bathroom doors when in use to prevent moisture travelling to other parts of the home

- Ventilate the kitchen and bathroom during and after use. Open windows even if you have an extractor fan
- Ventilate cupboards and wardrobes. Avoid putting too many items inside as this prevents air circulation
- Keep furniture away from walls to allow air circulation, particularly external walls.

Maintain the temperature of your home:

- In cold weather, it is best you keep your home warm by maintaining a low constant background temperature all day to avoid letting the house cool down overnight or when you are out.
- Some words of warning:
- Do not block permanent air vents or ventilation fans
- Do not draught proof a room where there is a cooker or a fuel burning heater, for example, a gas fire.

More advice on condensation and mould is available on our website:

<https://exeter.gov.uk/housing/repairs-and-maintenance-for-council-tenants/repairs-advice-guides/>

Your garden

You are responsible for keeping your garden tidy and well-maintained; this includes cutting the lawn regularly and maintaining any trees and shrubs in your garden.

You are also responsible for any fencing around your home. We do not provide or repair fencing unless it is for a communal garden with a boundary to a public footpath.

If you cannot look after your garden because of your age, ill-health or disability we may be able to help through our Garden Assistance Scheme. This scheme will not cost you anything and is available if you are over 70 years old or are disabled and receive housing benefit and do not have anyone else living in your who is able to do this for you. Please see our website or contact us on **01392 265031** for further details.

Pets & animals

If you take up a tenancy with the Council and wish to have a domestic pet, written permission is required prior to the commencement of your tenancy or prior to you getting the animal. If you receive permission to keep a pet, the pet should be appropriately supervised and should not cause a nuisance to neighbours or their visitors. Dogs should be kept on leads within communal grounds and are not allowed to roam free.

We can only permit birds or aquarium fish in Rennes House and Chester Long Court.

If you are thinking of getting a pet please ask your Housing Officer or call **01392 265033** to ask permission.

Your legal responsibilities as a dog owner

Your dog must be microchipped and registered with an approved microchip database (such as Petlog). It is also a legal requirement that all dogs wear a collar and tag at all times when away from home.

Feeding wild birds

Please do not feed wild birds unless you have a suspended bird table (one that hangs from a tree or similar). The scattering of food on the ground or on balconies attracts vermin.

Refuse & recycling

Rubbish collections take place once a fortnight for most residents. Your rubbish, recycling or garden waste should be put out for collection at the designated collection point for your property. In some cases this might be a bin store.

Only household waste should be placed in your bin.

Garden waste can also be collected but there is a separate charge for this, please visit the website below for up to date information about charges etc.

You are encouraged to recycle as much waste as possible.

To find out when your refuse and recycling will be collected, what can be recycled, or to request or pay for bins, please visit the Bins and Recycling section of our website or call **01392 265010**.

Bin stores

These must be kept clear of bulky items so there is enough room for everyone's household rubbish. If you have a bin store and experiencing issues, please contact your Housing Officer or call us on **01392 265033**.

Bulky waste

Call Cleansing on **01392 265010** about the removal of bulky items. Four black bin bags, tied and secured will be classed as one item.

The prices for the removal of bulky waste change annually, please see our website for up to date costs and information: <https://exeter.gov.uk/bins-and-recycling/special-collections/bulky-waste-collections/book-a-bulky-waste-collection/>

Littering and fly tipping

Littering and fly-tipping are illegal and a breach of your tenancy agreement. Those responsible could be subject to on-the-spot fines and persistent offenders will be subject to court action.

Parking

When you moved in, you would have been told if your new home is in an Exeter City Council resident parking permit area or a Devon County Council parking permit area.

Exeter City Council parking permits can be obtained from the Civic Centre. There may be a charge for this depending on where you live. We will need to see proof that you live in the property, such as a copy of your tenancy agreement, before we can issue permits. You will be provided with one resident and one visitor permit.

If you live in an area where Devon County Council resident permits operate, please visit <https://www.devon.gov.uk/roadsandtransport/parking/parking-permits/> or call **0345 1551073**. There is an annual fee for these permits.

All parking permits must be renewed every year and must be displayed at all times in your vehicle.

All vehicles parked on the road or in designated parking areas must be taxed and roadworthy. We do not allow SORN vehicles to be parked on the road or in designated parking areas.

Renting a garage

Garages are available to rent from us for both tenants and private residents. Garages are for storing vehicles only. Rental costs will vary depending on location. The charge for a garage will be collected with your rent. If you would like to rent a garage please contact us on **01392 265744**.

Energy efficiency

Home energy efficiency can save you money, help you improve your living conditions and reduce your impact on the environment.

A repairs advice guide on Energy and Water Saving is available online. If you would like a hard copy of this please contact us on **01392 265033**.

Solar photovoltaic (PV) panels

If your home has solar PV panels installed on the roof these can typically save you up to £120 a year on your electricity bill.

Solar PV panels only generate electricity during the day. They do not need the sun to be shining to work but the amount of electricity they generate will depend on the weather conditions – on a sunny day they will generate more electricity than if it is raining.

The panels feed directly into your electric meter so the free electricity being generated will be used first when you switch on an appliance. If you use more electricity than the panels are generating at that time, you will be charged by your electricity provider in the normal way. You will be able to see how much electricity is being generated by looking at the solar PV panel information display near your electricity meter. You will still need to read your electricity meter if you have a billing account or top up your electricity if you use a key meter.

To make the best use of your solar energy, try to use one appliance at a time. For example, wait for the dishwasher to finish before switching on the washing machine.

If you think your solar PV panels are not working please call us on **01392 265031**.

Adaptations for people with disabilities

We can provide home adaptations if you need them to help you or a member of your family's independent living, privacy and dignity. We will carry out minor adaptations ourselves, please call us on **01392 265381** to discuss.

More complex requirements will be referred to Devon County Council's Occupational Therapists at Care Direct for their guidance Tel: **0345 155 1007**.

Please see our website for more information on Disabled Adaptations or contact us on **01392 265033** for a hard copy.

TV licence

You need to be covered by a TV Licence to:

- Watch or record live TV programmes on any channel (including BBC)
- Download or watch any BBC programmes on iPlayer – live, catch up or on demand.

This applies to any provider you use and any device, including a TV, desktop computer, laptop, mobile phone, tablet, games console, digital box or DVD/VHS recorder. The cost of a TV Licence goes up each year, so check with their website for up to date information: <https://www.tvlicensing.co.uk/>

TV aerials

Where possible you should use an indoor aerial. Some properties will already have an aerial installed. If you need to fix an outside aerial, please contact us on **01392 265031** to discuss how and where it could be fixed and for permission to do so.

Satellite dishes & cable TV

You will need our permission to put up a satellite dish; please call us on **01392 265031** to ask permission.

If we do approve your request, we advise that you obtain equipment from a reputable supplier such as a member of the Electrical and Television Retailers Association, and that you use an installer who is professionally qualified or a member of the Confederation of Aerial Industries.

If you intend to have cable TV installed in your home, please let your provider know that they will need to speak to us on **01392 265031** to gain our permission. We will not withhold permission for cable TV to be installed.

Working from home

If you wish to run any kind of business from your home or the surrounding area please contact us to ask our permission. We will not normally refuse permission unless the business would cause a nuisance, breach any regulation or by-law, or damage the property. It will be your responsibility to obtain any necessary planning permission.

Please contact us on **01392 265033** for more details.

3: Keeping your home in good repair

As your landlord, we have a legal duty to keep your home in good repair, but you must also take good care of your property yourself.

How to report a repair

If there is an emergency, including out-of-hours, please call **01392 265031**.

You can report repairs to us in the following ways:

- Online: <https://exeter.gov.uk/housing/repairs-and-maintenance-for-council-tenants/report-a-council-housing-fault-or-repair/request-a-repair/>
- Email: housing.repairs@exeter.gov.uk
- Telephone **01392 265031**
- Send us a text on **07772 346599**
- In person at the Civic Centre 9.00am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday
- Letter.

When you contact us please tell us:

- Your name and full address
- A daytime telephone number where you can be reached
- Times when you or someone else will be at home
- As much information about the repair as possible.

Appointments can be offered in the evening and on Saturday mornings.

If you smell gas or suspect that you might have a gas leak:

- Put out cigarettes; do not use matches or naked flames
- Open doors and windows, and keep them open
- Do not use any electrical equipment
- Do not turn on any light switches
- Turn off the gas using the lever near the meter
- Call the 24 hour gas emergency helpline on **0800 111 999**.

What you are responsible for

You are responsible for:

Keeping the inside of your home clean, free of vermin and pests. If you have a pest control problem please call **01392 265148**

Keeping the inside of your home in a good state of decoration

If you are elderly or have a disability we may be able to help with decoration; please find more information on our Decoration Assistance Scheme online or contact us on **01392 265031**.

Reporting any faults or damage immediately to us on **01392 265031**. If you deliberately cause damage, or neglect a fault by not reporting it to us, you will have to pay for any necessary repair work.

Allowing Council workers or contractors used by the Council into your home to carry out safety checks inspections, repairs and improvements. Never let anyone in without seeing their identification. If you are at all concerned about who they are then take their card, shut the door and phone us on **01392 265031** to check their identity

Allowing Council workers or contractors used by the Council into your home if there is an emergency and we need to get into your home immediately for example, if there are water leaks-we may need to force entry to do this

Repairing and maintaining your own domestic equipment such as a cooker, washing machine and any showers you have installed yourself

Calling us on **01392 265031** to discuss any structural alterations you wish to make to your home. You must get our permission for any structural alterations. You will also need to meet building regulations and any planning requirements yourself. If you carry out any unauthorised alterations, you may have to return the property to its previous state, or pay for us to carry out such work

Any fencing around the property.

What we are responsible for

We will repair and maintain:

- The structure and exterior of the building
- Kitchen and bathroom fixtures
- Electrical wiring and certain gas and water pipes
- Most types of gas appliances and flues
- Heating and water-heating equipment installed by us
- Any communal areas around your home (stairs, lifts, landings, lighting, entrance halls, paving, parking areas, rubbish chutes and communal bin stores).

See the Repairs Handbook 'Maintaining Your Home' for more details. Copies are available from the Repairs Team on **01392 265031**.

Major works

As well as day-to-day repairs, we carry out a major works programme and regular servicing work. The major works programme includes:

- New kitchens and bathrooms
- External painting
- Electrical rewiring
- New roofs.

When we are going to carry out planned maintenance we will give you at least two weeks' notice of the commencement of works and give you the contractor's contact details so that you can arrange access with them.

Annual servicing

It is a legal obligation for an annual gas safety inspection to be carried out – this will be done for free each year by our contractor. We also regularly service door entry systems, boilers, lifts and fire alarm systems. Please work with us and our contractors to ensure these servicing works can happen.

Cleaning of communal areas

Where you share balconies and stairways with other tenants, you are responsible for keeping these areas clean and tidy. Contractors will ensure these areas are cleaned to a hygienic standard approximately once a fortnight.

No items should be stored in communal stairways or balconies.

For further information please call us on **01392 265033**.

Passivhaus (eco-homes)

If you have moved into one of our eco-homes you will already be enjoying the benefits of a low-energy building and your heating bills should be significantly reduced over the year.

In order to keep your Passivhaus eco-home home working efficiently, we will not allow any improvements to be made to these properties as you may damage the building and stop it working as well as it should. If you need a repair, please call us on **01392 265031**.

Zero energy buildings catalyst (ZEBCat)

This also applies to other retrofit thermal insulation/energy upgraded properties. In order to keep your upgraded home working efficiently, we will not allow any improvements or alterations to be made to these properties as you may damage the building and stop it working as well as it should. If you need a repair, please call us on **01392 265031**.

Your rights as a tenant

You have the right to get your repairs done in the timescales set out in the Repairs Handbook. In certain cases you may be eligible for compensation if repairs are not carried out on time.

You have the right to undertake your own improvements, such as central heating, a new kitchen or bathroom, shower, gas fire (unless you live in an eco-home), but you must get our written permission first, but this may not be granted. Please contact the Repairs Team to ask permission on **01392 265031**. Once you have made improvements, they become part of the home and must be left if you move out or leave the property.

All gas appliances must be installed by a Gas Safe registered and approved gas appliance contractor, all alterations to the electrical installations must be undertaken by a registered and approved electrical contractor and you will need to supply us with a certificate to show any works meet all health and safety standards (available from your contractor). Remember, you may need building regulation approval and planning permission as well.

If you have made improvements to your property such as a new central heating system and you move to a new home, you have the right to some money back for the work done, as long as it has been completed to a good standard. What you receive will depend on what you had done and how long ago. We will need to see receipts for the work carried out. If the work has not been completed to a good standard, you will be asked to put this right before you leave. If you do not, we will complete this work and charge you for it.

When we check whether work has been completed to a 'good standard', we mean that:

- Permission has been given for the works
- Work has been completed with no missing parts
- Any electrical or gas installations have up-to-date checks and safety certificates
- There are no holes, scratches or blemishes in the surfaces
- There are no missing handles or ironmongery
- No damage has been caused to the building structure.

This list is not exhaustive.

4 About your tenancy

Your tenancy agreement

Your tenancy agreement (which includes your 'Conditions of Occupation') is important because it is a legal contract setting out the rights and responsibilities for both you, as a tenant, and the Council, as your landlord.

Provided you keep to the terms of your tenancy agreement you can live in your home for as long as you wish if you have a lifetime tenancy, or for the duration of the agreement if you have a flexible tenancy.

We can only make you leave in certain very specific situations, and, even then, we have to take legal action through the court to obtain a possession order. We may take legal action if, for example:

- You do not regularly pay your rent
- You cause any form of anti-social behaviour
- You act in a violent manner
- You have been convicted of using your home for illegal purposes
- You deliberately damage your home
- You obtained your tenancy under false pretences
- We need to move you to another property (for example, if we wish to carry out improvement works)

- You do not comply with notices ending your flexible tenancy.

These are just some examples, not a full list.

Remember that you are responsible both for your own behaviour and for the behaviour of anyone (family, visitors and animals) in your home and in the surrounding neighbourhood. More information on your tenancy agreement can be found here on our website.

Confidentiality and personal information

We will treat what we know about you, and anything you tell us, as confidential information. We do pass on certain information to other organisations (for example, for statistical purposes or to prevent fraud) but we would seek your consent first.

If you wish to check the information we hold about you, please contact us on **01392 265033**. A small administration charge may be made for these requests. Please remember, we cannot show you confidential letters written by other people without their permission.

Changing the tenancy conditions

We will give you four weeks' written notice if any tenancy conditions are to be changed and we will consult you on any proposed changes beforehand.

This must be your main home

You must live in your council property as your only or main home. If you do not do this we may take legal action against you. Demand for affordable housing in Exeter greatly exceeds supply and it would be wrong for us to allow someone who already has another home to live in a council property.

If you have to live somewhere else for more than four consecutive weeks (for example, working abroad, visiting relatives, or a holiday) please contact us on **01392 265033** so we can advise you.

Introductory tenancies

All new council tenants are given introductory tenancies, unless you moved on a transfer or mutual exchange. These tenancies give you most of the rights of a secure council tenancy but you can be evicted more easily. As long as you do not break any conditions of your tenancy agreement while you are an introductory tenant, you will become a secure tenant after a year – in most cases this will be on a flexible tenancy.

Flexible tenancies

The majority of new tenants after 1 October 2013 will have a flexible tenancy for five years (two years in exceptional circumstances). Flexible tenancies will be reviewed 9-12 months before the end of your tenancy to assess whether the property is still suitable for your needs. Your Housing Officer will discuss your flexible tenancy with you.

Lifetime tenancies

You will have a lifetime tenancy if you are:

- A tenant of Older Persons' Housing
- Living in a property specially designed for you or a member of your household (for example, wheelchair accessible housing)
- In a property which has fixed adaptations worth £1,000 or over, which you, or a member of your household needs for life
- Transferring from another social rented home and already have a lifetime tenancy.
- In a tenancy agreement signed before 1 October 2013.

Joint tenancies

The granting of a joint tenancy is at our discretion. You do not have the right to have a joint tenancy, but we would not unreasonably withhold permission.

If you and another adult both signed the tenancy agreement then you are joint tenants and the terms of the tenancy agreement applies equally to both of you. This means that you both enjoy the right to live in your home and to receive the services we provide but it also means that you are both responsible for the rent and have all the other obligations of a tenant.

This does not mean that you are each responsible for half the rent, it means that each of you is responsible for all the rent (for example, if you fall into rent arrears and one of you leaves, the remaining person would still be liable for all the outstanding debt).

If you are a joint tenant and one of you moves out (for example, because of a relationship breakdown), you must contact us immediately on **01392 265033**.

The person who moves out can assign their share of the tenancy to the other. The person remaining will then become the sole tenant. If there is any question about who is to move out, this matter should be resolved by you, with independent legal advice if necessary.

A joint tenant who has moved out can give four weeks' notice on your home and end the tenancy for everyone so it is very important that you protect your right to live in your home.

Succession

If you signed your tenancy agreement after 1 April 2012, there is one right of succession for your spouse, partner or civil partner to take over your tenancy after your death. There are no other rights of succession for family members.

If you signed your tenancy agreement before 1 April 2012, there is one right of succession after your death for a spouse, partner, civil partner or for any other immediate relative as long as they have been living with you for at least twelve months. We will require proof that relatives have been living with you and this must show they have been contributing to the household. For example, a gas bill showing their name as well as yours.

If the property is a family home which is too large (more than one bedroom in excess of requirements) for the remaining household's needs, or has adaptations worth £1,000 or over which are no longer required, we may acknowledge succession but move the occupier to more suitable accommodation.

Lodgers

A lodger is someone who lives in your home but does not have an exclusive right to any part of it. They usually get some other sort of service provided apart from a bed space, such as meals or cleaning.

You have the right to take in lodgers provided you get our permission in writing first. Please contact us on **01392 265033**, who will need to know the name, age and gender of the intended lodger.

You should not overcrowd your home. If you claim any benefits, you must contact the benefits service to let them know you are taking in a lodger.

Sub-letting

You are not allowed to sub-let the whole of your property to anyone.

Sub-letting means that you allow someone to have exclusive use of all or part of your home: they will usually do their own cooking and cleaning. In effect you will have created a new sub-tenancy.

You may sub-let part of your home, so long as you get our written permission first. Please call us on **01392 265033** to discuss this. We will need the name and age of the intended sub-tenant.

5 Concerns about neighbours

This section is about problems and how to resolve them. Please remember that you are responsible for the behaviour of every person, including children and animals, living in or visiting your home. You are responsible for them both in your home and in the surrounding locality.

Anti-social behaviour

Anti-social behaviour is any activity that causes harassment, alarm or distress to one or more other people.

Anti-Social Behaviour can take many forms, and at Exeter City Council includes:

- Violence or threats of violence
- Verbal abuse
- Harassment (including racial harassment)
- Domestic violence
- Arson or attempted arson
- Drug dealing or other criminal activity
- Persistent noise nuisance (exceeding everyday living noise)
- Graffiti and criminal damage.
- Annoyances that are likely to be considered everyday living or minor lifestyle differences, and not Anti-Social Behaviour include such things as:
 - Noise generated by everyday living such as walking across floors with shoes on
 - Children playing in their own homes and gardens
 - Cooking smells
 - Occasional or one off parties
 - DIY noise, voices, television noise, and other everyday noise during the daytime
 - Dogs that bark occasionally
 - Neighbour disputes about parking.

These lists provide guidelines and are not exhaustive.

Reporting Anti-Social Behaviour?

You can report anti-social behaviour to us:

- Online
- Through contacting your Housing Officer directly
- Telephone us on **01392 265033** to be put through to your Housing Officer
- Email estates.management@exeter.gov.uk
- Letter

- In person at the Civic Centre.

Responding To Reports of Anti-Social Behaviour

Your Housing Officer will be the first and main point of contact once you report a case of anti-social behaviour.

Each complaint of anti-social behaviour is taken seriously and will be investigated. You can expect an initial response within a maximum of five working days, with shorter timescales for more serious reports.

We will need to speak with all involved parties in investigating reports of anti-social behaviour and we will respond in adherence to the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy and Procedure.

When a report is confirmed to be a proven case of anti-social behaviour, an action plan will be agreed setting out how the case intends to be resolved.

Hate crime and harassment

We will not tolerate any form of harassment, racial harassment or hate crime.

Harassment is a serious form of antisocial behaviour. It can take a variety of forms, but in general, it means a situation when someone behaves in a way towards someone else that makes that person feel intimidated, degraded, humiliated or offended.

Hate crime is any offence committed against a person or a person's property that is motivated by the offender's hatred of people because they are seen as being different. By reporting it, you may be able to prevent these crimes from happening to someone else. Anyone who is made aware of the incident can report it. Reporting makes a difference to you and your community. Don't suffer in silence. Sometimes you may feel that the incident is too minor to bother the police. It is however, still important to tell us.

More information on what is included as harassment and hate crime, and how to report such incidents can be found here on our website.

Noise

Noise is not necessarily an example of anti-social behaviour, although excessive and persistent noise can be and will be dealt with through our Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.

Please remember that Exeter City Council cannot solve all noise problems. In most cases you will need to take some action yourself. More information and advice on noise can be found here on our website.

We work closely with the Council's Environmental Health Team and with any other statutory or voluntary agency to use a range of ways to deal with noise nuisance.

Cars

We need the co-operation of everyone to park thoughtfully and responsibly dispose of unwanted vehicles.

Section C1 'Behaviour' of your Tenancy Agreement outlines what is expected from you and what is not permitted in relation to vehicle storage and maintenance on and around your home.

It is an offence to carry out 'restricted works' on a road. Restricted works include car repairs, maintenance, servicing, improvements and dismantling vehicles.

You can report an abandoned vehicle online or telephone our Environmental Health Team on **01392 265147**.

Safeguarding

We will do everything we can to safeguard you from abuse which includes:

- Physical abuse - this may include hitting, pushing, kicking, shaking and misusing medication
- Sexual abuse - any sexual activity that a person does not understand or want
- Psychological abuse - this includes threats of harm or abandonment, emotional or verbal abuse, humiliation and intimidation
- Financial abuse - this may include theft, fraud, denying a person access to their money or belongings or putting pressure on someone in connection with their inheritance or will
- Neglect - this includes failing to provide health-care and social-care services or food, or ignoring someone's needs for medical or physical care
- Discrimination - this includes any harassment associated with, for example, a person's race, sexuality, disability, gender.

If you or someone you know is a victim of any form of abuse, it is important that you tell someone:

- By phone to Exeter City Council on **01392 277888**
- By phone to Care Direct (Devon County Council) on **0345 155 1007** or out of hours in an emergency their Emergency Duty Service on **0845 6000 388**
- By speaking to your Housing Officer or Older Persons' Property Service Officer (OPPSO)
- By pressing your alarm pendant (if you have one).

You can also call any of the following organisations:

- Police by phone on **101** or **999** in an emergency
- Age UK (Exeter) by phone on **01392 202092**
- 24 Hour Domestic Violence Helpline **0808 200 247**
- Splitz Helpdesk (9.30am-4.30pm) **0345 155 1074**

These agencies will work with you and other people to make sure you are safe.

6 Getting involved

As your landlord, we are interested in your views. We need to know what you think so that our ideas, plans and services can match your needs. The following information will tell you how you can make your voice count and how you can become actively involved in the decisions affecting your home and neighbourhood.

How you can get involved

You can:

- Join a Tenants' Group

This group review housing performance and services that affect tenants and leaseholders and provide us with feedback.

- Join the Editorial Board

The members' review draft versions of InSight magazine which is sent to Tenants and Leaseholders.

- Sign up to the Email Consultation Group

This is the easiest way of getting involved. Residents can supply their email addresses during the Housing Officer visits or by emailing residentinvolvement@exeter.gov.uk. The Housing Team can then email when feedback or consultation is needed.

- Become involved in a Focus Group

These meet from time to time to discuss different topics, if you'd like to take part, or set up a residents group' group where you can get involved on a local level, please contact us on **01392 265033**

Involvement goes beyond being informed and consulted by us on issues that affect you. It is about working together in partnership so that all residents can make an active contribution to the decisions affecting their housing and tenancies.

We are keen to have more residents working with us to ensure we deliver an effective and efficient service to our tenants.

If you have any questions about resident involvement please contact us on **01392 265033** or email residentinvolvement@exeter.gov.uk.

How we support residents to become involved

We support resident involvement by:

Having a team dedicated to promoting resident involvement and supporting residents

Providing training and paying expenses for those involved in our groups

Providing a range of opportunities for residents to have their say and get involved in decision-making

Producing **InSight** magazine, **Stay Connected** email bulletins, Housing **Twitter** and **Facebook** pages, and making sure you receive good quality information (follow links to find out more)

Residents' groups

We strongly support residents' associations and encourage the setting-up of new ones. Residents' groups can:

- Campaign for improved local facilities
- Help expand the provision of amenities for children and young people
- Help you to improve your neighbourhoods
- Give you and your neighbours a way of getting together to make your voices heard, both to us and to other service providers and agencies
- Help to develop a sense of community
- Enable you to organise local social events such as outings, playgroups for children or seasonal parties.

For more details please contact us on 01392 265033.

7 Moving home

There may be a time when you need or want to move house. The following information gives you an overview of the moving out process and the options available to you.

If you have any questions, please contact us on **01392 265033**.

At the end of your flexible tenancy

If you have a flexible tenancy, we will discuss your tenancy with you regularly at Housing Officer visits. Between twelve and nine months before the end of your tenancy, we will visit you to discuss whether your current home is still right for your needs and assess:

- The condition of the property
- The income of everyone of working age living in the home
- Whether there are any rent arrears
- Whether there has been any anti-social behaviour or other breaches of tenancy conditions
- Your needs, for example, whether your house is too small or too large for you
- The availability of alternative accommodation which could meet your needs.

We will let you know whether your tenancy will be renewed at least six months before the end of your tenancy. If your circumstances change for the worse after this review is undertaken and before your flexible tenancy has come to an end, we have the flexibility to amend our decision if it is appropriate.

It is likely the outcome will be one of the following three:

Flexible tenancy renewed for the same property

If there have been no relevant changes to your household circumstances, we will renew your flexible tenancy for five years (or two years in exceptional circumstances). You will need to sign your new tenancy agreement and this will begin the day after your previous agreement expires.

If you think the length of the flexible tenancy offered is not correct, you have the right to review this decision within 21 days. Please contact us on **01392 265033** to discuss.

Flexible tenancy renewed for a different property

In some cases we may agree to renew your flexible tenancy for five years (or two in exceptional circumstances), but ask you to move to a different property which would better suit your needs. This may happen when:

- Your current property has become larger than your household requires (more than one bedroom in excess of requirements)
- Your current property has become overcrowded (two people or more lacking bedrooms)
- The property has fixed adaptations worth £1,000 or more which are no longer required by you or any member of your household

- We intend to demolish, redevelop, or dispose of your current property within the next five years. In these situations, we will consider offering a short term tenancy of your current property if possible, or find you suitable alternative accommodation.

You will receive notice that your tenancy is ending at least six months before the end of your flexible tenancy. Assistance will be provided to help you move to alternative accommodation.

If you think the length of the flexible tenancy offered is not correct, you have the right to review this decision within 21 days. Please contact us on **01392 265033** to discuss.

Ending your flexible tenancy

Exeter City Council will not renew your flexible tenancy if any of the following apply to your household:

- Your combined household income is greater than a specified amount-this changes annually so check with your Housing Officer for details of the up to date figure
- Other accommodation or assets which could meet your housing requirements are available. For example, a member of your household may own a home
- You or a member of your household has committed serious or persistent anti-social behaviour or other tenancy breaches during the term of the tenancy
- The property is in poor condition due to your neglect
- The rent account is in arrears at the time of the review or has been in arrears for at least six out of the last twelve months, or there are other housing debts owed to us. Exceptions can be made if you are getting benefit assistance with your rent for minor rent arrears, or if you have an agreement to pay by instalments and have kept to this agreement.

You will receive a notice at least six months before the end of your flexible tenancy to tell you that your current flexible tenancy is ending. In all cases, assistance will be provided to help you move to more suitable accommodation – this may be in the private rented sector, shared ownership or owner-occupation.

You have the right to appeal this decision within 21 days of receiving the notice. Please contact us on **01392 265033** to discuss.

Giving notice on your flexible or lifetime tenancy

If you wish to end your council tenancy and move out, you must let us know in writing at least four weeks before you intend to leave your home.

This four-week notice period must end on a Monday, and you should return your keys to the Civic Centre by 10am on that Monday

If you hand your keys in later than 10am on the Monday, you will be charged one more week's rent

If you are joint tenants, one of you can end the tenancy for all by giving us four weeks' written notice. This ends the tenancy for everyone

You must allow us to inspect your home before you leave so we can tell you what work needs to be done. We will also tell you how much rent you need to pay in order to clear your account before you leave.

When leaving a council property you must make sure that the property itself, and any fixtures and fittings are in good condition, clean and tidy. You do not have to pay for any damage caused by normal wear and tear, but you will have to pay to repair or replace any items damaged deliberately or through neglect. You may choose to repair or replace the items yourself. Any decoration that needs doing should be done before you leave.

Good property condition incentive

You may qualify for an incentive payment if you leave your council home in good condition at the end of your tenancy. To qualify for the payment you must:

- Give us four weeks' notice before you move out
- Hand your keys in by 10am on the Monday that your tenancy ends
- Leave the property, garden and out-buildings free of rubbish, belongings and furniture
- Leave no outstanding repairs for which you are responsible
- Have a clear rent account.

When you move out

You should let the following people know that you are moving (more comprehensive checklists can be found online):

- Your utility companies: electricity, gas, South West Water
- Your telephone, Internet and TV providers
- Banks, building societies and insurance companies
- Benefits agencies if you are claiming any benefits
- Council Tax
- TV licensing to get your licence transferred to your new address
- The Post Office to have your post re-directed.

On the day you move out, please:

- Make sure that you have arranged to pay all of your bills: gas, water, electricity, Internet, TV, telephone etc.
- You should read the meters yourself and supply the readings to your energy companies on the day you move out to prevent future problems with the account
- Clear the property completely and put out any rubbish in the usual way. Any items left in the property will be treated as rubbish and disposed of by us. If we have to pay for clearing out unwanted items the cost will be charged to you
- Lock all doors and return the keys to us.

Death of a tenant

If you pass away whilst you are a tenant and you have no successor, a three week rent-free period will be given from the Monday following the date of death to allow the property to be emptied.

If the keys have not been returned after three weeks, rent will have to be charged to your estate.

To report the death of a tenant please call us on **01392 265744**.

Assignment / mutual exchange

A mutual exchange by assignment is when you swap your home with someone else who also lives in a council or housing association home. This does not have to be in Exeter, it can be anywhere in the country.

If you find someone with whom you wish to swap homes, please contact us on **01392 265033**. If there are a mix of flexible and lifetime tenants involved in the process, a mutual exchange may not be the best solution.

We have six weeks to make a decision. You must get our permission in writing first before making any arrangements. The other tenant must also obtain their landlord's written permission before any swap can go ahead.

We would only refuse in certain circumstances, such as:

If one of the homes would be overcrowded

If one of the homes would be substantially too large for the new tenants. We define 'substantially too large' as having one extra bedroom in excess of requirements (unless an even greater level of under-occupation exists before the proposed swap)

Legal action to gain possession of the home is being taken against any of the tenants involved

The exchange would mean that a home adapted or designated for elderly or disabled people (usually with adaptations worth £1,000 or over) would have no one in residence who needed those services.

Although we will not refuse outright any applications to mutually exchange homes from those who have housing-related debt (rent, repair recharges etc.), we will not agree to any move taking place while there are any outstanding housing-related debts owed to us. The same rule would apply to tenants of other landlords.

Once you have moved home by way of a mutual exchange you must accept your new home in the condition you find it. If it is an Exeter City Council property, we will carry out a safety check and routine repairs, but any damage caused deliberately or through neglect becomes the responsibility of the person moving into our accommodation.

If you do exchange property without our written agreement, we will take legal action to evict you. You will be unable to return to your original home and will not be offered alternative accommodation.

Downsizing

If you leave a large council home for a smaller property (for example, if you move from a four-bedroom to a two-bedroom house) you may qualify for assistance when moving. We will pay up to £500 removal costs.

We are keen to let large homes to families in housing need and will help our own tenants move into smaller, more appropriate housing in order to do this.

Details will vary between cases, but if you would like further information about downsizing, please contact us on **01392 265582** or **01392 265744**.

Moving to older persons' housing

If you are finding that it is becoming increasingly difficult to manage your existing home, you may feel that a move to Older Persons' Housing is right for you. More details about Exeter City Council's Older Persons' Housing can be found in Section 9 of this Handbook.

Transfers through Devon Home Choice

You have the right to apply to transfer to another council or housing association home. Transfers are made through [Devon Home Choice](#).

We cannot agree to a transfer if:

You owe us rent or any other housing-related debt

Your property or garden are in a poor condition

You have made any alterations without our written agreement

You do not give us access to carry out a property inspection before you move

You have breached your Tenancy Agreement.

If we have to make repairs or clear rubbish after you have left we will charge you for the costs incurred.

You will need to give four weeks' notice, and allow us to carry out an inspection during that notice period. The four-week notice period must end on a Monday, and you should return your key to the Civic Centre by 10am on that Monday.

Right to Buy

As a council tenant you have the Right to Buy your home if you have been a secure tenant (lifetime or flexible) of Exeter City Council, or any other public sector landlord continuously for a period of time set out in legislation. Anyone who becomes a new council tenant will need to meet the qualifying period.

You do not have the Right to Buy if:

- You live in Older Persons' Housing
- You live in a property that is adapted specifically for disabled tenants
- You have an introductory tenancy
- You work for Exeter City Council and your home is part of your benefits of service (this only applies in certain cases).

The Right to Buy scheme gives you a reduction on the market value of your home. The longer you have been a tenant, the greater discount you can get, up to a maximum limit set out in legislation.

If you are interested in the Right to Buy please contact the Lettings, Leasehold & Team on 01392 265744 for further information.

There is a website <http://www.ownyourhome.gov.uk/> that could answer any questions you may have and lists all the options that can help you buy. You can also visit <https://righttobuy.gov.uk/> for further information.

Homeswapper

You can use HomeSwapper to find and communicate with other people looking to exchange homes. It is a national database of tenants who wish to exchange their home with another social tenant. Please head to HomeSwapper website for more information.

Help to Buy

Help to Buy South West is the Government appointed Help to Buy agent. Their website details a range of Affordable Housing Schemes and can help find the right Low Cost Home Ownership scheme for you <https://www.helptobuyagent3.org.uk/> or tel: **0800 456 1188**

8 Comments and complaints

We are committed to providing the best housing service we can but we know that things sometimes do go wrong. If this happens, we would like to hear from you, so we can put things right and learn how we can improve the service for everyone.

You can complain in a number of ways:

- Completing the [complaints form online](#)
- Contacting us by email on housing.complaints@exeter.gov.uk
- In writing via letter or email to the relevant service
- By telephone to the relevant service
- In person at the Civic Centre
- Via social media private message

9 Older Persons' Housing

This section contains information that specifically relates to Older Persons' Housing. Much of the information contained in earlier sections of this handbook is also relevant to tenants living in Older Persons' Housing.

Older Persons' Housing is usually accommodation that is grouped together to provide independent living for people over the age of 60. Each unfurnished flat or bungalow is self-contained with its own bedroom(s), living area, bathroom and kitchen. Some schemes also have a range of communal facilities such as a lounge and kitchen, guest room, laundry.

All of our tenants of our Older Persons' Housing can have the benefit from having our Home Call alarm service. This means that help is on hand 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If you press the button on your pendant, one of our trained operators will be able to talk to you to find out what the problem is and help you to solve it. This system gives peace of mind, not only for the residents, but for family and friends too.

If at any time you need extra support to stay in your home, we will be able to help you get in touch with the most appropriate services and agencies.

For further information see the information on our [website](#) or telephone **01392 682349** or **665003**

The benefits of older persons' housing

- Living in a comfortable, well-maintained home
- Having your independence and your own front door
- Living in a safe and secure environment
- The chance to enjoy a range of social activities and events
- You will be living alongside people of a similar age to you
- There is a dedicated handyman service.

Older persons' housing team

This consists of Housing Officers who are your first point of contact for any matters relating to your tenancy or other housing management queries. They can be contacted on **01392 265033**.

There are also Older Persons' Property Services Officers (OPPSOs) who look after the property. They will visit each scheme regularly and can provide advice to tenants.

The role of the OPPSO

These officers visit each scheme regularly (about once a week). They spend half a day on each scheme (usually the same day each week) and are available to residents during that time and by phone on **01392 265338** or email olderpersons.service@exeter.gov.uk at other times.

They help new tenants settle into their new homes, then on a rolling programme visit and inspect all schemes regularly including health and safety checks on safety equipment and the emergency alarm system.

They also administer the communal rooms, guest rooms and laundries.

Unfortunately they cannot perform any care functions such as collecting prescriptions, administering any medication or cooking.

Housing officer visit

Just like all our tenants, you will receive a regular visit (every 18-24 months) from your Housing Officer. During this visit you will be able to discuss any aspect of your tenancy. The Housing Officer will undertake a property inspection and talk to you about your home. We will take the opportunity of updating our records so that we make sure that we have the most recent information for you.

These are routine visits and provide a vital link between us and our tenants and properties.

Your alarm system

You can choose to have our Home Call alarm service. This is a unit linked via your telephone line that comes with a pendant to activate the alarm.

If you need help at any time of the day or night, seven days a week, throughout the year all you need to do is to pull the alarm cord or push the button on the pendant.

The operator will react to your situation, whether you need Fire and Rescue Services, the Police, an Ambulance or a Doctor. They will also contact a family member or your first listed contact if required. The control centre is in Exeter and has local knowledge

and can access your details immediately. You will speak to a real person who is highly trained and will deal with your query in a confidential, sensitive and professional way.

However, if you need an emergency service and can get to a phone you may get a faster response if you phone 999 direct.

We encourage you to wear your pendant or bracelet at all times during the day and keep your pendant within reach, next to your bed at night, in case you need help in an emergency or have a fall, and are unable to get to a pull cord for assistance. The OPPSO will demonstrate how the system works if you are unsure and will test the system on a regular basis.

Visitors

We are happy for people to visit you at any time but you are responsible for making sure that your visitors do not cause a nuisance or annoy your neighbours. This applies to your home and all communal areas, and includes any family member and other visitors.

Guest room

Some of our Older Persons' Housing schemes have guest rooms. These are only available to the families and friends of the residents of the sites where they are located. These are usually located near the common room and consist of a room with a double bed. Some have an en-suite toilet but shower or bathing facilities are not available. A small charge is made for the use of these rooms, contact your OPPSO in the first instance.

Communal rooms

One of the advantages of living in our Older Persons' Housing is that some schemes have the benefit of a community room or lounge for the use of residents. These are used for social activities and events such as coffee mornings, games groups, yoga, seated exercise, art & craft, bingo and many more. These are organised by the residents themselves, or in conjunction with the Housing Community Partnerships Officer.

If you have any ideas for what you would like to do on or near your home, please let us know and we will see what we can do to help. Please see your OPPSO in the first instance.

The communal lounge can be reserved for private use. If you wish to use for this facility you should contact your OPPSO who will check the bookings. A small charge may be levied for the use of the lounge.

Please note that smoking or vaping is not permitted in any of our Communal Lounges or any other communal area within each scheme.

Laundry facilities

A large capacity tumble drier (and at Rennes House, a washing machine) is provided for the sole use of the residents of our schemes with common rooms. You are not permitted to do any washing/drying for family members.

These machines are operated by 50p or £1 coins.

Repairs

Please see Section 3 'Keeping Your Home in Good Repair' for full details on reporting repairs.

Handyperson service

We run a handyperson service for all of our Older Persons' Housing Schemes. It is a free service to carry out minor repairs and DIY in your home. The following are the sort of jobs they can do for you:

- replacing tap washers
- easing doors
- repairs to internal door furniture
- changing light bulbs
- fitting curtain tracks
- putting up shelves
- renewing internal door furniture
- floor and wall tiling to small areas
- minor fencing repairs
- minor gardening works that may cause hazard (pruning shrubs where blocking paths etc.)
- minor decorations (this only covers 'touching up' work)
- plumbing in washing machines.

This is not an exhaustive list, if you need further assistance, talk to your OPPSO in the first instance.

The maximum time the operative can spend on any one job is one hour. If you require items such as curtain rails and shelving you will need to purchase them and have them ready to fit for when the operative arrives.

The maximum number of visits permitted to any one property is five during any twelve month period.

You can request this service in a number of ways:

You can contact the Repairs Team:

- call **01392 265031**
- email housing.repairs@exeter.gov.uk
- text **07772346599**.

Decoration and garden maintenance

You are responsible for the internal decoration of your home and the maintenance of your garden if you have one.

We do, however, have a garden and decoration assistance scheme for residents over the age of 70. Our decoration assistance scheme is designed to help you with internal decorations. Due to the demand for this scheme; only one room can be decorated at a time, once a year. Please find more information on our Decoration Assistance Scheme online or contact us on **01392 265031**.

You are responsible for keeping your garden tidy and well-maintained; this includes cutting the lawn regularly and maintaining any trees and shrubs in your garden. You are also responsible for any fencing around your home. We do not provide or repair fencing unless it is for a communal garden with a boundary to a public footpath.

If you cannot look after your garden because of your age, ill-health or disability we may be able to help through our Garden Assistance Scheme. This scheme will not cost you anything and is available if you are over 70 years old or are disabled and receive housing benefit and do not have anyone else living in your who is able to do this for you. The garden assistance scheme is designed to help with the maintenance of grass areas, shrubs, bushes and hedges. Please see our website or contact us on **01392 265031** for further details.

Communal garden areas

We will maintain communal areas surrounding Older Persons' Housing. This means that we will cut the grass regularly during the growing season and trim any shrubs or hedges.

If you wish to plant in the communal gardens or have pots of plants to enhance the environment you are most welcome to do so, but you then must be willing and able to maintain them.

Cleaning of communal areas

Cleaning contractors are employed at most schemes to ensure that the facilities and communal areas are cleaned and maintained to a hygienic standard. Cleaning staff do not clean individual tenants' homes or provide housing support to tenants. The OPPSOs will monitor the cleanliness of the communal areas.

Adaptations for disabled people

Your home needs to be suitable for you to live in, however alterations may help you, and anyone caring for you, to manage daily activities more easily.

You will be considered for a disabled adaptation if you have a physical disability which has a serious and long-term effect on your ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Minor adaptations include the following:

- handrails by steps, outside doors, in bathrooms and landings
- window winders
- lever taps
- moving door intercoms
- changing kitchen cupboard door/drawer handles
- door, frame and wall protectors for wheelchair users
- raising electric sockets to waist height
- outside lighting for tenants who are partially sighted
- highlighted step edges on outside steps
- wider paths.

If you need any of these works to improve your safety and independence you can contact our repairs team on **01392 265031**. We will arrange to visit the property if required and then issue the work for one of our contractors.

Larger and more costly adaptations require the advice of an occupational therapist and involvement of one of our Technical Officers. Examples of larger adaptations include:

- a stair lift
- an adapted kitchen
- a walk-in shower
- ramped access to your home
- widening of doorways.

If you think you may need any of these larger adaptations you will need to contact Devon County Council Care Direct on **0345 155 1007**. They will arrange for an occupational therapist to visit you to look at your personal circumstances and find out what you need to help you to live as safely and independently as possible in your home.

Parking

Some of our Older Persons' Housing Schemes have a limited number of parking spaces for use by tenants, staff, visiting professionals and tenants' visitors. There may be insufficient parking available to provide a space for your exclusive use. Parking spaces are filled on a first-come first-served basis.

On some sites - particularly in the City centre - you will need a permit to park your vehicle as we have introduced wheel-clamping. You should ask your OPPSO or Housing Officer for an application form.

Mobility scooters

We recognise the value mobility scooters bring to the lives of many residents. However, before purchasing a scooter we would ask you to consider carefully the nature of the surroundings where it will be stored and initially driven. You must seek consent to have a scooter from your Housing Officer before purchasing one.

Many of our Older Persons' Housing schemes were designed and built before the use of mobility scooters became widespread. As such, there is potential that when driving your scooter on to or off the scheme that you may cross the path of residents, some of whom will themselves have restricted mobility. You must be aware of the duty of care to others at all times.

If your scheme does not have its own designated scooter storage store, then we would request that your scooter is kept within your home, or, if this is not possible due to health and safety reasons, the scooter should be kept outside your property as long as it does not cause a health and safety issue to others. Scooters must not be charged or stored in communal hallways, corridors, balconies, lift lobbies, escape routes or any other area which restricts access. Doing so creates a fire hazard and is an obstruction to residents, as well as resulting in accessibility issues for emergency services.

Mobility scooters should never be driven into lifts because this can lead to breakdowns causing inconvenience to all residents as well as costly repairs.

We advise any mobility scooter owners to have appropriate third-party insurance, for loss or damage and also for liability to cover such things as:

- Accidentally scratching a parked vehicle
- Whilst crossing the road you cause a car to swerve and it hits another vehicle or person
- Whilst using your scooter you run into and hurt a pedestrian.

TV licence

Please see Section 2 for more general TV Licence information.

Key safe

You will be provided with keys to your home when you move in, however if you need extra keys you will have to get them cut. We do not hold spare keys so you are advised to have a key safe in case you lock yourself out, or if you have regular callers such as carers.

A key safe can be secured near your front door. Through a combination lock, or similar, your keys will be protected from intruders while allowing only certain people access to the keys stored in your key safe. These must be removed at the end of your tenancy.

If you lock yourself out or lose your keys you are responsible for organising a locksmith. Call us on **01392 265031** for ALL enquiries relating to lost fobs for communal doors.

You are advised to use a door chain when opening your front door. Anyone calling at your home from the Council, or any contractors employed by the Council will carry official identification. If you are not sure about someone's identity, don't let them in. If you want to check out any callers you can press your pendant and the control centre staff will check with the organisation the caller is representing.

The tenants' handbook is available in other formats

This handbook is available in other formats, including large print. Please contact us on **01392 265033**, email estate.management@exeter.gov.uk or write to: Housing, Exeter City Council, Civic Centre, Paris Street, EX1 1RQ.

Name of Contact	Telephone Number and Email
Gas Emergency Helpline	0800 111 999
Electricity (power cut)	0800 6783 105
Water & Sewerage	0800 1691 144
Water Leak	0800 230 0561
Police/Fire/Ambulance (emergency)	999
Police (non-emergency)	101
Exeter City Council Housing Team	01392 265 033 estates.management@exeter.gov.uk

Name of Contact	Telephone Number and Email
Housing Repairs	01392 265 031 housing.repairs@exeter.gov.uk
Payments and Collection	01392 265 032 paymentsandcollection@exeter.gov.uk
Devon Home Choice https://www.devonhomechoice.com/	01392 265 881
Exeter City Council https://exeter.gov.uk/	01392 277 888
Council Tax	01392 265 635 council.tax@exeter.gov.uk
Housing Advice https://exeter.gov.uk/housing/	01392 265 726 housing.advice@exeter.gov.uk
Housing Benefit https://exeter.gov.uk/benefits/	01392 265 440 housing.benefits@exeter.gov.uk
Environmental Health Team https://exeter.gov.uk/clean-safe-city/	01392 265 148
Planning Services https://exeter.gov.uk/planning-services/	01392 265 223 planning@exeter.gov.uk
Refuse Collection and Bulky Items	01392 265 010
Exeter Home Call Alarm	01392 682 349 or 01392 66 50 03 homecall@exeter.gov.uk
Age UK (Exeter) https://www.ageuk.org.uk/exeter/	01392 202 092 info@ageukexeter.org.uk
Care Direct	0345 1551 007 csc.caredirect@devon.gov.uk
Help to stay living at home	0344 411 1444
Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) Exeter https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/	
Devon County Council https://www.devon.gov.uk/	0345 155 1015 customer@devon.gov.uk

Name of Contact	Telephone Number and Email
National Domestic Violence Helpline	0808 2000 247
https://www.ncdv.org.uk/	
Pinpoint	01392 385522
Pinpoint thousands of services and SAFE (Stop Abuse For Everyone)	pinpoint@devon.gov.uk 030 30 30 0112
https://www.safe-services.org.uk/	
Samaritans	116 123
	jo@samaritans.org
Shelter	0808 800 4444
Housing help and advice	info@shelter.org.uk
South West Water	0344 346 1010
Transco – Meter point reference line	0870 608 1524
Find out who your gas supplier is	
TV Licence	0300 790 6165
https://www.tvlicensing.co.uk/	
Universal Credit helpline	0345 6000723
Victim Support Devon	0300 303 0554
https://www.victimsupport.org.uk/help	victimservice@devonandcornwall.pnn.pol
Western Power	0800 6783 105
Western Power NPAS to find out who your electricity supplier is	0845 601 5972

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