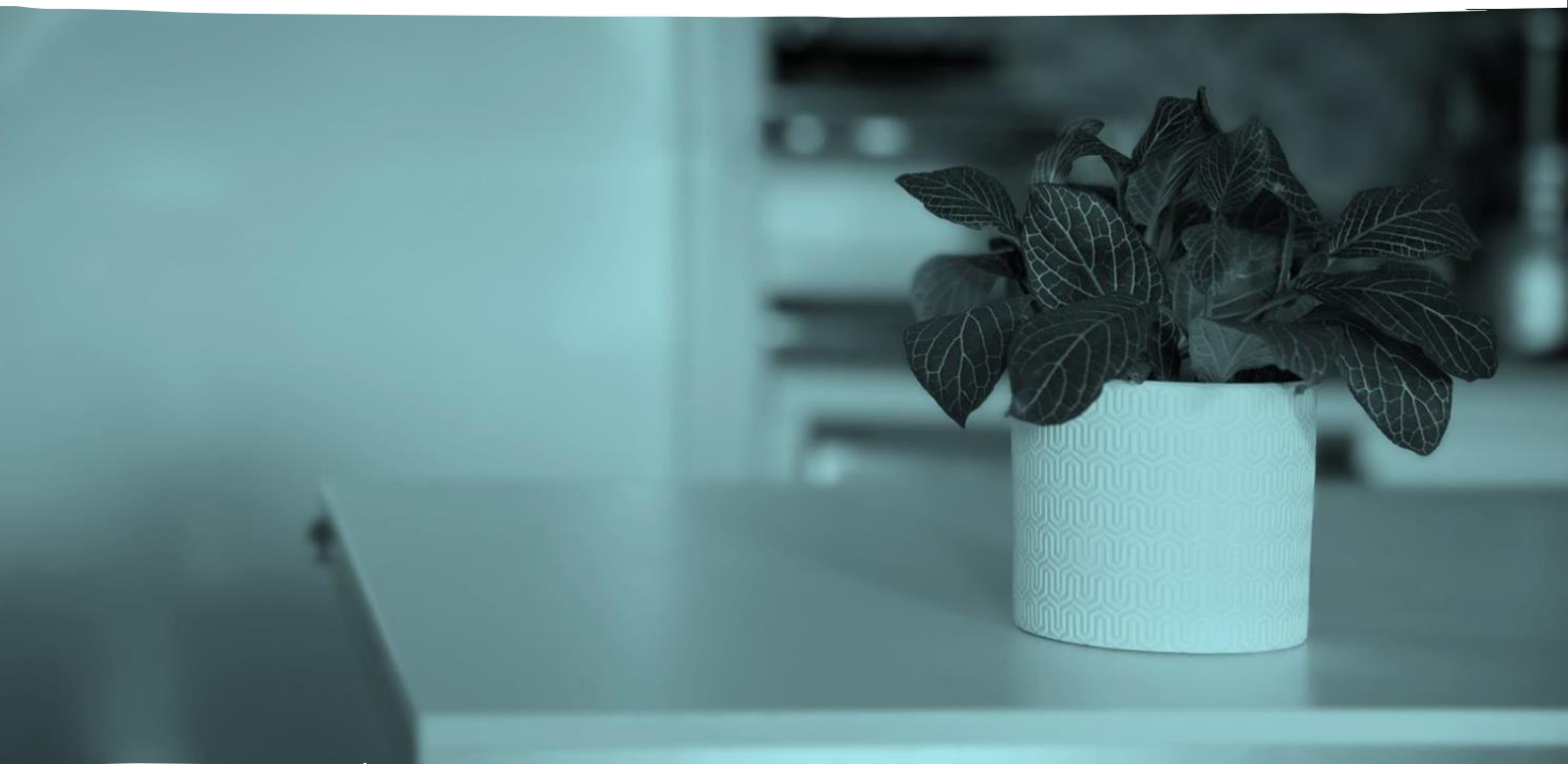


# Your tenant handbook

A handy reference guide to everything you need to know to manage your home and tenancy



**Rent reference number:**

**Income Officer:**

**Housing Officer:**

**Winter 2023**

## Welcome

### **Councillor Emily Darlington**

We have been working hard over the last couple of years to improve our services to you, our tenants. We want living in a council home to be an opportunity for you and your family. As such, we are committed to becoming a better landlord but we also need you to take care of your homes and communities.



This handbook outlines both what you can expect from the council as your landlord and what we expect from you as a tenant.

It also contains information about resources available to support you if needed.

Everyone in MK deserves to live in a home that is decent and safe. As such we are investing more than ever in your homes after what has been decades of under investment. It will take time to get all homes up to the new green and energy conservation standards we need but we are planning years ahead now and I hope that this investment will not only reduce your carbon footprint but also reduce your energy bills.

We know that there is much demand for council homes in MK which is why we have the biggest council house building programme for a generation.

By working together, families and communities can thrive.

### **Councillor Emily Darlington**

Cabinet Member for Adults, Housing and Healthy Communities

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## 1. Your rights and responsibilities

The tenancy agreement you have signed with us is a legal contract. There are different types of tenancies, and it will be made clear what type you are signing.

### **Introductory tenancy**

If this is your first agreement, you will probably be offered a 12-month introductory tenancy, during this time you will have fewer rights until we can be confident you are managing your tenancy. We'll visit you to see how things are going and if there are issues that we feel need to be addressed, such as poor rent payments or incidents of anti-social behaviour, we may extend this agreement until we are happy that you have addressed them. We may decide that the issues are too serious or we don't believe that you can manage your tenancy, in which case we will end the tenancy and you will have to leave your home.

### **Secure tenancy**

Once you have successfully completed your introductory tenancy, we will arrange for you to have a secure tenancy. This gives you more security and more rights (for example to buy your home) and more protection if we want to take your home away from you. If you are an existing secure tenant of ours, you will keep the secure tenancy if you move to another home with us.

### **Joint tenancy**

Most tenancies are in the name of one person, but some are in two people's names. This is called a joint tenancy. Both parties must sign the document, and both are equally liable for the rent and all other obligations.

## Your rights

Regardless of which tenancy you sign, you have these rights:

- The right of security of tenure. This means that we can't just ask you to leave.
- The right to live in your home peacefully.
- The right to be consulted before we make a significant decision that might affect you, such as improving your home or withdrawing an essential service.
- The right to swap your home with someone else. This is called a mutual exchange. You can do this with another tenant of ours, of another local authority, or another registered social landlord, such as housing associations. You must first get permission from both landlords.
- The right to buy your home.
- The right to rent a room in your home while you are still living there. If you wish to do this, you must get our permission first.

- The right to sublet your property. Subletting is when you let part of your home to someone else while you are still living there. If you wish to do this, you must get our permission first.
- The right to stay in your home as long as you keep to the conditions of your tenancy agreement.
- The right to take in a lodger. A lodger is someone living with you in your property and paying you rent. You must contact us and obtain our agreement before taking in a lodger.
- The right to passing on your home to your partner or a member of your family if you die. This is called succession. It can only happen once (if the tenant your home is passed on to dies, it cannot be passed on again).

If you have a joint tenancy and one of you dies, the tenancy will pass to the other tenant.

*If your tenancy was granted before 1 April 2012*

Your tenancy will pass to your husband, wife, or civil partner, provided they're living at the property as their only or principal home at the time of your death. If you do not have a husband, wife or civil partner, another member of your family can succeed to your tenancy if they've lived with you throughout the twelve months before your death. Family members include a partner, parent, grandparent, child, grandchild, brother, sister, uncle, aunt, nephew or niece. It does not include foster children.

*If your tenancy was granted on or after 1 April 2012*

Your husband, wife, civil partner or a person who lives with you as if they were a husband, wife or civil partner can succeed to your tenancy, provided they're living at the property as their only or principal home at the time of your death.

## Your responsibilities

- You must pay your rent in advance and on time. If you need financial support, you should apply for housing benefit or Universal Credit to help pay your rent. We can advise and help you. Even if you are not claiming benefit, we can give you advice and support.
- You should contact us as soon as possible if you can't pay and arrange to clear the arrears within a reasonable time.
- You must take care of your home, and any fixtures and fittings we have supplied.
- You must keep the property in a clean condition and the internal decoration in good order.
- You must report any repairs that are our responsibility and allow us reasonable access to do repairs and for safety reasons such as annual gas servicing.
- For anything more than decorating, changing carpets or putting up shelves, you must follow the tenants alterations process to get permission from MKCC.
- You must keep your garden in a good condition, if you have one.

## 2. Your new home

### Moving essentials checklist

	<b>Before you leave your old home</b>
	Let utility companies (water, gas, electricity, telephone, internet etc) know you're moving as early as possible – they may need time to move the supply to your new home for the day you move in.
	Take meter readings on the last day in your old home so you don't get left with a debt.
	Tell other people that you're moving – for instance GP, employer, school, bank, DVLA, MK City Council, Pension Service, Universal Credit – so you don't miss out.
	Arrange for your post to be redelivered to your new address <a href="http://www.royalmail.com/receiving/redirections/smooth-house-move">www.royalmail.com/receiving/redirections/smooth-house-move</a>
	<b>When you sign your new tenancy</b>
	Read the agreement carefully as it is a legal document and tells you what we expect from you as a tenant. If you break any of the terms, we may take legal action including asking a court to take your home away from you. We will explain the agreement including paying rent, reporting repairs and how to look after your home.
	Water rates will be paid separately to Anglian Water, the only exception will be within one of our Sheltered Schemes
	<b>In your new home</b>
	Take meter readings on the first day in your new home in case of any disputes.
	Check you know where your new mains water stopcock, gas tap (where fitted) and electricity fuse box are.
	Make sure appliances like a washing machine are fitted by someone competent as you are responsible for any damage caused by leaks.
	Cut a spare set of keys if you need them. We give you two sets, and you are responsible for them – we do not keep spare keys. We recommend giving a set to a family member or friend. If you lock yourself out, you are responsible for finding and paying a locksmith.
	If you are given a key fob for a communal door, please keep it safe as we will charge you for another.

### Am I allowed a pet?

We will tell you if you are allowed to keep a pet in your home, but if you currently have one or are intending to get one, please check with us first to avoid any disappointment. If we do allow a pet, they must not damage the home or cause a nuisance to your neighbours. If you need any guidance or support, we can give you details of organisations who can help you.

## Insuring your possessions

Insurance is to protect you in the event of damage caused by fire or flood or if you are burgled. We insure the building you live in, but you are responsible for covering your possessions by buying contents insurance.

## Parking and garages

We will tell you if you have access to a parking space or a garage at your new home and if you have to make a separate payment for it, or if you need a permit (for you or for visitors). If there is controlled parking managed by a parking company, they may issue you with a fine if the permit is not displayed correctly.

We have a number of garages available for rent, with details at:

[Renting a garage | Milton Keynes City Council \(milton-keynes.gov.uk\)](https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/renting-a-garage)

## Moving into sheltered housing

We own and manage homes specifically for people over 60. These homes are self-contained flats and bungalows with communal facilities such as a lounge, laundry, guest rooms and gardens. Residents are supported by staff, and an alarm system connected to our 24-hour Care and Response Centre where a trained team respond to emergencies.

There is a charge for some of these services, but these will be clearly explained once you have received an offer of a property.

We also have three sheltered housing schemes for residents who need enhanced care and support. Each scheme has a sheltered housing officer who is there to look after the residents and the building (testing fire alarms and arranging checks on gas, electrical and water services). They don't provide care but will help with every day matters and can arrange for residents to receive care if necessary.

Find out more at [Sheltered housing and Sheltered housing with care | Milton Keynes City Council \(milton-keynes.gov.uk\)](https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/sheltered-housing)

## 3. Paying your rent

There are several ways to pay your rent:

- By Direct Debit – call us on 01908 252937 to set this up.
- By phone on 0300 131 5555 (24hr automated payment line).
- In person at a post office that offers Paypoint or Payzone.
- Online at [www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/pay-report-apply/pay](https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/pay-report-apply/pay)
- By a transfer from your bank.

## About your rent

The money we raise through rent collections goes back into providing services and maintaining our homes.

We aim to set charge rents that are affordable, even to those on low incomes. All our rents and charges are designed to be fair, transparent, and compliant, and we review them every year.

Your rent will be reviewed on the first Monday in April following the start of your tenancy agreement. We will give you a 28-day notice of any rent change.

## Struggling to pay your rent?

Paying your rent on time should remain your priority. Rent is due in advance, and you will need to make a payment at the start of your tenancy when you sign up.

If you're struggling to pay your rent, please let us know as soon as possible as [help is available](#). We are not here to judge, and you don't need to be receiving welfare benefits for us to give advice. Call our advisors on 01908 252937 – we may be able to agree realistic amounts to pay your rent if you're getting behind.

You can also visit [www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/cost-living-support](http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/cost-living-support) for advice.

We will take action to recover rent arrears. Whilst eviction is a last resort, it does happen, particularly when a resident who owes the money doesn't keep in contact with us. Eviction starts with a legal notice ahead of court action to regain possession of your home. If you've been evicted for rent arrears or leave your property owing rent, in most cases we won't help you find another permanent home until you've made efforts to clear that debt.

## Benefits

If you're on a low income or not working, you may be entitled to claim help to pay your rent and service charges. This will be through Universal Credit or Housing Benefit depending on your circumstances. As a general rule, if you are a sheltered housing tenant, you should claim Housing Benefit whilst all other tenants should claim Universal Credit.

The Government is responsible for Universal Credit. When you sign up for your new home, our staff will tell you how to make a claim. Visit [www.gov.uk/universal-credit](http://www.gov.uk/universal-credit) for information.

Unless there are exceptional circumstances, Universal Credit is paid directly to you, and you must then pay us. This means you must have a bank account for the money to be transferred to you and then for you to pay us.



## Council Tax

This is a charge that is based on the value of the home you live in and the number of people living in it. All tenants must pay Council Tax and you should make arrangements to set up payments before you move into your new home, even if you've already been paying by Direct Debit. Contact our Council Tax team on 01908 253794 with the date you are moving in. The amount may be different, particularly if your new home is larger or smaller than the one you are leaving.

## 4. Repairs and maintenance

### Book a repair

We use a company called Mears to carry out repairs.

- **Emergency repairs:** contact them right away on 0330 123 2522, at any time.
- **Routine repairs:** the easiest way is to report your repair online, where you can arrange an appointment convenient to you <https://mearsmk.activehousing.co.uk/repairs-postcode-picker/>

Alternatively email [repairs.miltonkeynes@mearsgroup.co.uk](mailto:repairs.miltonkeynes@mearsgroup.co.uk) with your contact details and a brief description of your repair, or call 0330 123 2522

- **Smell gas?** Call 0800 111 999 at any time then contact Mears.

Routine repairs happen Monday to Friday between 8am 5pm, although we will try to offer either a morning appointment (8am - 1pm) or an afternoon appointment (1pm – 5pm).

If Mears has your mobile number, you will receive text notifications about your appointment. Mears staff and contractors will show you identification when they arrive. If you have any concerns, please call Mears on 0330 123 2522 to check.

If you need to rearrange your appointment, please call Mears on 0330 123 2522 as soon as possible.

There are repairs and inspections that we carry out on a cyclical basis including gas safety, and electrical installation inspections, which we do for your safety and wellbeing. It is important to let us in for inspection visits as well as to carry out repairs that have been identified. If you do not, this may lead to legal proceedings to gain access and force entry to fulfil our legal obligation.

## Repair timeframe

Our aim is to complete the work on the first visit but depending on the repair it may be necessary for a follow up visit. If that's the case, you'll be told at the time.

<b>Emergency repairs</b>	<p>If any of the following are causing danger and need to be made safe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Burst water pipe</li> <li>• Boiler – drain down or make safe</li> <li>• Chimney – make safe if dangerous</li> <li>• Electrical – communal hall and landing lights</li> <li>• Glazing – make safe board up</li> <li>• Immersion heater (if it's your only source of hot water)</li> <li>• Broken locks to gain access (not lost or stolen keys)</li> <li>• Walls, masonry, or walkways – make safe if dangerous</li> </ul>
<b>Routine Repairs</b>	
<b>Item</b>	<b>Details</b>
Bath, Basin, Sink	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refix loose wash hand basin</li> <li>• Replace tap</li> <li>• Refix wall tiles (where fitted by MKCC) to bath or basin</li> <li>• Bath repairs/replacement - re-enamel/framework</li> <li>• Extractors are operational</li> </ul>
Boilers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Repair</li> <li>• Renew</li> <li>• Service</li> </ul>
Ceilings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Repairs over 150mm square</li> </ul>
Chimney	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Repair/sweep</li> </ul>
Clothesline/rotary driers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communal only</li> </ul>
Doors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal door repairs - due to fair wear and tear only</li> <li>• Internal fire door repairs - due to fair wear and tear only</li> <li>• Cupboard doors - including kitchen, meter and bin doors</li> <li>• Doorsteps</li> <li>• Kitchen unit doors - due to fair wear and tear only</li> <li>• External door and frame repairs or replacement</li> </ul>
Drains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure these are draining correctly</li> </ul>
Electricity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All electrical work not listed as right to repair/urgent</li> <li>• Showers</li> <li>• Electrical testing every five years</li> </ul>
Fences and gates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minor repairs only</li> </ul>
Fire grates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Solid fuel system repairs</li> </ul>

Floors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Floorboard and joist repairs</li> <li>• Concrete screed repairs other than minor cracks</li> <li>• Skirting board</li> <li>• Relay or replace floor tiles</li> </ul>
Garages and carports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Door repairs and replacement</li> <li>• Roof repairs and down pipes</li> <li>• Brickwork repairs</li> </ul>
Gas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Central heating and water heaters</li> <li>• Gas safety checks annually</li> </ul>
Glazing – domestic and communal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Replace communal glazing</li> </ul>
Gutters and rainwater pipes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gutter clearance</li> <li>• Repairs and replacements</li> </ul>
Immersion heater	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Repair</li> </ul>
Kitchens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cupboards, worktops and sinks</li> <li>• Cupboard door catches, hinges and handles – fair wear and tear only</li> <li>• Drawers – runners and draw fronts – fair wear and tear only</li> <li>• Extractors are operational</li> </ul>
Locks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ease/adjust</li> </ul>
Porch and canopy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Repairs</li> </ul>
Paths and walkway repairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communal</li> <li>• Access paths</li> </ul>
Pipes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Air locks (water hammer)</li> <li>• Loose pipes</li> </ul>
Roofs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Major roof repairs - flat or tiled</li> <li>• Refix/replace loose or cracked tiles/slates</li> <li>• Fascia board and soffit</li> <li>• Roof Flashing</li> </ul>
Sheds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wooden – gifted to you by MKCC only</li> <li>• Brick built outhouse</li> </ul> <p>Note: wooden sheds will be removed when beyond economical repair and <b>not</b> replaced by MKCC</p>
Smoke alarms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wired and battery powered</li> </ul>
Toilets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blocked and will not flush</li> </ul>
Walls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• External – repointing</li> <li>• External – rendering</li> <li>• Internal – plastering</li> </ul>
Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minor leaks from waste or supply pipes</li> <li>• Overflows and ball valves</li> <li>• Burst external service pipe</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stopcock repairs – ease</li> </ul>
Windows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frame/panel repairs</li> <li>• Lock and stay repairs</li> <li>• Vents</li> </ul>

## The Right to Repair

The Government lists 20 common repairs (called qualifying repairs) and sets a period of working days in which they must be completed if you would like further information on this please do not hesitate to contact us.

## Improving your home

We have a legal duty to carry out certain repairs and to keep the following in good working order:

- The structure and outside of the building, including the roof, walls, windows, and external doors.
- The services and equipment that supply water, gas, electricity, sanitation, heating, and hot water.
- Decoration of the outside and communal parts of the building.
- Maintaining any smoke detectors that are connected to a communal fire detection system.

Your home should meet 'Decent Homes Requirements' which means it should:

- Be fit for human habitation (safe, healthy and free from things that could cause you or your household serious harm)
- Be in a reasonable state of repair
- Be equipped with reasonably modern facilities and services
- Not feel too hot or too cold

We have a planned improvement programme, which includes replacing kitchens, bathrooms, doors, windows, and boiler and heating systems. If an improvement is being considered for your home, you will be contacted to arrange a survey so we can check what needs to be done.

Generally, we expect kitchens to remain in reasonable condition for 20 years, bathrooms, windows and doors for 30 years and roofs for 60 years.

We will also get in touch if any other major works are needed in your neighbourhood, typically sending you a letter and inviting you to drop in sessions or other meetings, so you know what's planned and have an opportunity to ask questions.

## Aids and adaptations

Some tenants will need help if they develop an illness or condition that means they struggle to live in their home comfortably. We can make improvements or changes to help, for example by installing a stair lift or grab rails around a bath.

Contact us if you think you need extra help. You will be visited for an assessment and then advised on the next steps, including how long any equipment will take to be installed. Please note not all our properties are suitable for adaptations.

Housing Access 01908 253772 [access.team@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:access.team@milton-keynes.gov.uk)

## Inspections and maintenance

Every year we need to carry out important inspections and maintenance. Do not ignore our requests to do these checks. They are for your own safety and wellbeing. If you do not give us access, we will take legal action and force entry.

- If you have a gas boiler or fire, we must check it each year to make sure there are no carbon monoxide fumes. We will also check your smoke and heat detectors, and carbon monoxide alarms.
- Registered engineers will carry out a five-year inspection of the property's electrics to make sure they are in good condition and will not cause a fire or shock.
- We have a rolling routine of safety checks for communal areas and things such as gas appliances within individual properties.

## Caretaking and cleaning

We will:

- Carry out health and safety checks including checking communal areas are free from personal belongings and bulky items which can be a hazard in the event of a fire.
- Report and chase outstanding communal repairs faults to our contractor.
- Update notice boards and signage with relevant information.
- Work with council teams and the police on important matters including fly-tipping.
- Regularly clean communal areas (landings, entrance hallways, bin areas, lifts).

## 5. Looking after your home

### Staying safe dos and don'ts

Play your part to keep you and your neighbours safe.

	Do	Don't
<b>Electrical safety</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Keep appliances clean and in good repair</li><li>• Only use appliances with British or European safety mark</li><li>• Use one plug per socket</li><li>• Unplug appliances when not in use or fully charged</li><li>• Allow access for electrical testing to be completed</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Overload sockets</li><li>• Allow unqualified individuals to carry out electrical installations</li><li>• Leave items on charge overnight or unattended</li><li>• Tamper with your electrical meter</li></ul>
<b>Fire safety</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Know how to find your way out of your home in the event of a fire</li><li>• Familiarise yourself with building signs for fire routes and call points to raise the alarm</li><li>• Replace the battery in your smoke alarm when it runs low.</li><li>• Test detectors weekly (minimum monthly)</li><li>• Report any damage to fire doors in your property or communal areas</li><li>• Ensure that furniture has the fire-resistant permanent label</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Obstruct fire escape routes with possessions such as prams, bikes or rubbish (please tell us if this is happening)</li><li>• Wedge fire doors open (please tell us if this is happening)</li><li>• Leave pans/cooking unattended</li><li>• Leave appliances such as tumble dryers running whilst unattended</li><li>• Smoke in bed</li><li>• Tackle fires yourself</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Stub cigarettes out properly &amp; dispose of them carefully</li><li>• Make sure candles are secured in a proper holder away from materials that may catch fire.</li><li>• Make sure candles are out completely at night</li><li>• Ensure lint filters in tumble dryers are cleared after each use</li></ul>	

<b>If there is a fire or you hear the alarm...</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get out and close the door when the last person has left (unless the fire is outside, in which case stay inside)</li> <li>• Call 999 as soon as you are clear of the building or in a safe place</li> <li>• If you can't get out get everyone into one room, ideally with a window and a phone</li> <li>• Plan your escape route</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tackle fires yourself</li> <li>• Waste time investigation what's happening or rescuing valuables</li> <li>• Use a lift</li> <li>• Try to get back in your home until the fire service says it's safe</li> </ul>
<b>Gas Safety</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow access for your annual gas safety check to be completed</li> <li>• If you smell gas report it immediately</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow unqualified individuals to work on gas appliances</li> <li>• Tamper with your gas meter</li> </ul>
<b>Water safety – to guard against Legionella</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Run taps for five minutes if they have not been used for any length of time</li> <li>• Regularly clean shower heads</li> </ul>	
<b>Asbestos</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask us for permission before carrying out any DIY projects</li> <li>• Report any damage in your property</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disturb/remove or damage known/suspected asbestos items</li> </ul>

More information on Fire safety in your home can be found on local fire authority's website:  
<https://bucksfire.gov.uk/safety-category/at-home/>

## Your repair responsibilities

You are responsible for some repairs and maintenance and for keeping your home in a good and clean condition. This includes 'making good' any work that you've done (for instance after removing shelves that you've put up).

Repairs you are responsible for:

- Damage to the dwelling caused by you, your family, or visitors, including broken glazing.
- Additional door, window and shed locks
- Ceiling minor patching repairs and cracks
- Cooker connection and tenants' appliances
- Fuses, electrical plugs
- Carpets and flooring
- Gardens - dwarf walls, ponds, trellis, landscaping and cutting back of shrubbery and grass
- Internal decoration - papering, woodwork, coving, painting
- Internal walls - cracks and minor repairs
- Light bulbs and shades
- Pelmets, battens and curtain rails

- Sink plugs and chains
- Smoke alarms - cleaning and weekly testing
- Toilet seats – refix or replace
- Television aerials and satellite dishes other than communal aerials erected by us
- Keeping mechanical air extractors clean and free from blockages

Repairs we may charge you for:

- Repairs required to any fixtures or fittings in the property or in the communal areas as a result of accidental or deliberate damage caused by the tenant, their family, visitors, or neglect.
- Re-glazing of cracked or broken windows (unsupported by a crime reference number)
- Repairs which are the tenant's responsibility and have been carried out by us at the tenant's request.
- Works to remove alterations where consent was not obtained from us.
- Costs associated with repair works resulting from tenant's appliances causing electrical, flood damage or other faults.
- Cost to replace lost or broken door entry keys or fobs.
- Out of hours costs where our contractor is called out as a convenience service for an emergency that is not an emergency in the view of the contractor.

Contact us for a full copy of our Recharge Policy.

## Damp and condensation

Condensation is the build-up of moisture on cold surfaces, usually in the kitchen or bathroom from the use of hot water. It can cause staining and mould, and if untreated can cause chest infections. You must look after your home by heating it and opening windows or using extractor fans in the kitchen and bathroom to remove moisture and avoid condensation.

Damp to your home can be caused in several ways. You may have a leaking roof or gutter that allows rain to damage ceilings or walls, or you may have rising damp which is water or moisture in the ground that's absorbed by plaster in walls. Both are damaging to your home and you must let us know if you smell or see anything that you think is damp.

## Home improvements

To make your council property more of a home, you might want to make changes or do some DIY.

We are happy for you to make minor changes without our permission like decorating, changing carpets or putting up shelves. For anything else, you'll need to let us know what you want to do and receive written permission before you begin, otherwise you will be liable for the costs of reinstatement.

For example, if you wish to have a shed in your garden, you must ask our permission first or if you would like permission to put up a television aerial or satellite dish. If you don't, we



may ask you to take it down if we feel it's dangerous or causing a nuisance to your neighbours.

To apply for permission, and to view a more detailed list of alterations. Please complete our tenants' alterations online form at [www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/repairs](http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/repairs) giving full details of what you propose to do.

## Pest control

Pests such as mice, rats and wasps in your home can be a real nuisance. You can play your part by keeping your house clean, particularly in the kitchen and around bins as food waste encourages rodents.

Pests within your home are your responsibility to deal with <https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/pest-control>

but if they are seen in communal areas, such as landings, lifts or bin areas, please contact us to arrange for a pest control team to deal with them.

## Waste and recycling

Fly-tipping is the illegal dumping of waste and can lead to a fine. We ask all tenants to dispose of household rubbish responsibly, and we offer lots of services to help you do that:

- Weekly waste collection including a separate food and garden waste collection. Find out what bag, box or bin to use at <http://www.miltonkeynes.gov.uk/recycling>

From 2023, many tenants will receive wheeled bins for recycling and rubbish instead of using black bags. This will help keep your environment cleaner with fewer reports of rats and mice.

- Eurobins for flats, where residents can separate their waste and recycling.

- A 'request it' service where you can order new bins, recycling sacks or report a missed collection. <https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/waste-and-recycling/report-or-request-it>
- Household waste centres where you can book to dispose of your bulky waste. These centers are open seven days a week and it's free and easy to book a slot at [www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/hwrc](http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/hwrc).
- A service you pay for to collect items such household furniture, carpets, cookers and microwaves. Contact our Customer Services team on 01908 252570 or email [customerservices@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:customerservices@milton-keynes.gov.uk)

## 6. Keeping you safe

### Anti-social Behaviour (ASB) and harassment

We want residents to enjoy their homes in peace while also respecting their neighbours. In most cases people are on good terms. However, there are times when things go wrong, and problems escalate.

Neighbour disputes can start low key, for example a television or music being played too loud, a noisy dog or DIY late at night. You should try and resolve these problems by talking to your neighbour first. Sometimes they aren't aware that they are causing a problem. If this doesn't work, keep a record of what the nuisance is and how often it is happening and then discuss this with us.

We take action to deal with ASB and harassment through preventative measures, enforcement, and support for victims, witnesses and staff.

By harassment we mean where a person knows or ought to know their conduct is putting pressure on or intimidating someone on two or more occasions. It can be violent or non violent, in person or online.

By anti-social behaviour we mean things that cause nuisance and annoyance; the use or threat to use any residential accommodation for an unlawful purpose; and deliberately engaging in behaviour that negatively impacts others.

For instance:

#### **Personal incidents that deliberately target or have an impact on an individual or group**

- Hate related incidents and crime
- Violence
- Criminal damage including arson
- Verbal abuse
- Harassment

#### **Environmental impacts on a street, open space, or estate**

- Street drinkers

- Drug use and its effects
- Trespass
- Nuisance from vehicles

**Nuisance incidents that can cause annoyance, inconvenience, offence or suffering to the whole local community**

- Drug dealing or cultivation of drugs
- Prostitution
- Criminal damage to public buildings
- Pets not being kept under appropriate control

## Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse is when one adult's behaviour is abusive to another adult they are personally connected to, such as:

- Physical or sexual abuse
- Violent or threatening behaviour
- Controlling or coercive behaviour
- Economic abuse (controlling / stopping access to money)
- Psychological, emotional or other abuse

We take reports of domestic abuse extremely seriously and work with the police and other partners to support local people. We commission local organisation MK Act to offer support on our behalf to anyone who has or is suffering from fear and abuse.

Call them on 0344 375 4307 (helpline available 9am-5pm) or visit [www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/domestic-abuse](http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/domestic-abuse) for details. We urge you to seek support as quickly as you can.

## 7. Moving home

### Moving to a different MK City Council property

You may be able to transfer to another home if your circumstances change. For example, you may need to move because your family is growing, or you develop a medical condition.

We apply a nationally set banding system to allocate homes. Your band is based on your circumstances and need, with band A being the highest priority and D the lowest priority. The bands are explained below to give you an idea of where you might be placed if you needed to move.

**Band A (highest priority)**

- Tenants who have been approved for an emergency transfer because of harassment, domestic abuse or hate crime.
- Tenants who are under-occupying a family home and are willing to transfer to a home that has fewer bedrooms. This is sometimes called 'downsizing'.

- Tenants who are occupying a specially-adapted home and are willing to transfer to a home that is more appropriate for their needs.
- Tenants who need extensive facilities for disabilities that can be provided more appropriately in alternative accommodation
- Tenants who need to be permanently relocated to enable essential repairs or redevelopment.

#### **Band B**

- Tenants who are living in substantially overcrowded conditions because they have two or more bedrooms fewer than the number of bedrooms to which they would normally be entitled to under the Milton Keynes Housing Allocation Scheme.

#### **Band C**

- Tenants living in overcrowded conditions because they have one bedroom fewer than the number of bedrooms to which they would normally be entitled.
- Protected tenants and tenants of tied accommodation who have been served with a valid notice to quit and we are satisfied that they have little or no prospect of successfully defending the possession proceedings.
- Tenants needing to move for medical or welfare grounds (including grounds relating to a disability), due to detrimental effects caused by their current accommodation, either due to the location of the present accommodation and/or due to the physical conditions of that accommodation.

#### **Band D (lowest priority)**

We do not currently place any tenants in this band.

### Could you benefit from moving to a smaller home?

We're in urgent need of more family-sized accommodation. If you're living in a Council home that is now too large and would like to move somewhere smaller, cheaper, and easier to manage, we can offer you a generous downsizing cash incentive.

If you move from a property with two or more bedrooms to somewhere smaller, you could receive:

- £1,000 per bedroom
- An additional £1,000 if you move into a sheltered housing flat
- Up to £500 towards relocation costs
- Help to buy carpets
- Help disposing with unwanted furniture
- Call Housing Allocations on 01908 252937 (option 4) or email [housing.allocations@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:housing.allocations@milton-keynes.gov.uk) to learn more.

### Mutual exchanges

If you are a secure tenant, you have the right to swap your home with another council/housing association tenant, provided you meet certain criteria. Social housing providers can only refuse permission for an exchange on legal grounds as laid out in the Housing Act 1988. Eg you are not due to be evicted, the properties to be swapped are the right size, anyone wishing to exchange with

someone in an adapted property or sheltered scheme must meet the criteria for that particular property. You do not have to swap with someone within Milton Keynes, which is useful if you want to move to be nearer family or friends or to take up an offer of a job elsewhere. In all cases permission must be granted by your landlord. We advise tenants to register with [www.homeswapper.co.uk](http://www.homeswapper.co.uk) to find out more or speak to your Neighbourhood Officer.

## Home ownership

If you are a secure tenant, you will have the Right to Buy the home you live in. There are also opportunities to buy a home through Help to Buy or Shared Ownership. If you are interested in any of these, please contact us or visit:

<https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/housing/leasehold-and-shared-ownership>

<https://www.gov.uk/affordable-home-ownership-schemes>

## Ending your tenancy

If you want to end your tenancy with Milton Keynes City Council, you must give us at least four weeks' notice in writing. This is a legal requirement and is set out in your tenancy agreement. If you don't do this, we may charge you the rent for this period. If you are a joint tenant, one person can give notice and we will decide if the other tenant is able to stay by looking at the circumstances such as property size and how well the tenancy has worked.

During your notice period, we will visit to check the condition of your home and see what repairs need to be done. If any are due to your negligence or actions, such as home improvements not agreed by us, we will charge you the cost of putting them right.

## Moving out checklist

	Before you leave
	Let utility companies (water, gas, electricity, telephone, internet etc.) know you're moving.
	Take meter readings on the last day in your old home and make sure they are left without debt.
	Tell other people that you're moving – for instance GP, employer, school, bank, DVLA, MK Council, Pension Service, Universal Credit – so you don't miss out.
	Arrange for your post to be redelivered to your new address <a href="http://www.royalmail.com/receiving/redirections/smooth-house-move">www.royalmail.com/receiving/redirections/smooth-house-move</a>
	Remove all furniture and personal items including rubbish from the property and outside areas.
	Leave the property clean and in a good state of repair – You may be charged for any items that we have to dispose of
	Leave the garden tidy.
	Return all keys and fobs.

## 8. Giving us feedback

### Have your say

We are keen for tenants and residents to get involved in activities that will influence what we offer. You might want to join our Resident Engagement Team (support and training is offered) or join – or even start – a resident association for where you live. You can give as much or as little time as you have available. Call us on 07557 318943 or 07765 343451 for a chat to find out more.

### Our commitment

If you give us feedback, we will:

- Act on comments and suggestions that may improve services.
- Ensure compliments are recorded and shared with staff.
- Aim to resolve concerns raised by customers quickly and informally wherever possible.
- Help customers to make a formal complaint if informal resolution is not possible and advise on taking a complaint further to the Housing Ombudsman.
- If we write to you, our response will be clear and will include a contact name and telephone number. We can provide Braille, large print or other alternatives.
- If we need to visit you, we'll keep you informed if we can't make it, we'll establish any special requirements beforehand (for example any language issues), and we will show you an identity card on arrival.

### Feedback about a repair

Complaints, comments, or compliments all help us to improve the way we do things, you can tell us about a complaint, provide positive and constructive feedback or make a comment using our online form by visiting [Give feedback about a repair | Milton Keynes City Council \(milton-keynes.gov.uk\)](#)

You can also contact us on 01908 691691 or [customerservices@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:customerservices@milton-keynes.gov.uk)

### Our complaints process

We have designed our complaints process to be easy and fast for tenants.

**Stage One:** complaints are investigated formally by a manager within the service. In most cases problems can be sorted out quickly. We will give you a full response within 20 working days of receiving your complaint.

**Stage Two:** If you are unhappy with the outcome of your complaint you can request that the matter be reinvestigated at stage 2 of our complaints process. This request will be reviewed, taking into consideration what has been investigated at stage 1 and your reasons for why this has not fulfilled your expectations.

If it is deemed that the council's response will stay the same, we may confirm a final decision at stage 1, however if we agree that a further investigation is required then the matter will be escalated to stage 2.

After this, if you are not happy with the outcome you can contact the Housing Ombudsman. They are free and independent. They will normally only investigate complaints that have been through a council's complaints process; however, they may investigate sooner if a vulnerable person is involved.

For more information visit [Housing Ombudsman Service website](#) or call 0300 111 3000.

## Regulation

We are expected to provide services to tenants and residents according to standards set down by Government for tenant involvement and empowerment; home; tenancy; rent; neighbourhood and community; value for money; and governance and financial viability. Our councillors are responsible for making sure we meet the standards. If the Government's Regulator of Social Housing believes that we are not meeting the standards, it can intervene and make us improve.

## Data protection

All organisations, including councils, have a legal obligation to tell you how your data is collected, stored and used.

- We will not sell your personal information
- We will keep your personal information safe and secure
- We will tell you how we use your personal information.

We hold personal information about you and your household such as your name and date of birth, home address, National Insurance number and contact details. This is essential to allow us to provide services to you.

There may be times when we have to collect sensitive information about you or your family but we will tell you when we do this and only store it with your consent.

There may be times when we must pass on this information to another organisation or department. For more information on this and how you can access the information we hold, please visit: <https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/housing-privacy-notice>

## 9. Useful contacts

### Report a repair (Mears)

- In an emergency call 0330 123 2522 at any time
- The easiest way to report routine repairs is online <https://mearsmk.activehousing.co.uk/repairs-postcode-picker/>
- Or email [repairs.miltonkeynes@mearsgroup.co.uk](mailto:repairs.miltonkeynes@mearsgroup.co.uk)
- Smell gas? Call 0800 111 999 at any time
- Give feedback on a repair to [Give feedback about a repair | Milton Keynes City Council \(milton-keynes.gov.uk\)](#)

### Milton Keynes Council housing or caretaking enquiries

01908 252937 or out of hours (emergencies only) 01908 226699

- **Welfare and rent team** (Option 1) or [rents@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:rents@milton-keynes.gov.uk)
- **Housing allocations** (Option 4) or [housing.allocations@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:housing.allocations@milton-keynes.gov.uk)

### Report anti-social behaviour

Thames Valley Police – 101 (non-emergency) or 999 (emergency)

Council Housing Service 01908 252937 (Option 3)

Council Environmental Health – 01908 252570 (noise nuisance)

[asb@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:asb@milton-keynes.gov.uk)

### Struggling financially?

Visit <http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/cost-living-support> for advice and local organisations that can help, or call us on 01908 252937

### Neighbourhood services

01908 252937 [customerservices@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:customerservices@milton-keynes.gov.uk)

### Housing solutions

01908 253481 (or 01908 226699 for out of hours emergencies) or

[HSAssessment@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:HSAssessment@milton-keynes.gov.uk)

### Sheltered housing and sheltered housing with care

01908 222616 or [sheltered.housing@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:sheltered.housing@milton-keynes.gov.uk)

### Resident engagement

07557 318943 or 07765 343451 or [residentengagement@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:residentengagement@milton-keynes.gov.uk)

### Homelessness

01908 253481 or [homeless.enquiries@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:homeless.enquiries@milton-keynes.gov.uk)

### Housing benefit

01908 253100 or [benefits@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:benefits@milton-keynes.gov.uk)



**Regeneration**

07443 204793 or 07557 318900 or [regeneration@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:regeneration@milton-keynes.gov.uk)

**Domestic abuse**

Phone 0344 375 4307 if someone is in fear or call 999 immediately if someone is in danger  
[info@MK-ACT.org](mailto:info@MK-ACT.org)

**To give us other feedback**

01908 691691 or [customerservices@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:customerservices@milton-keynes.gov.uk)

**Housing Ombudsman**

0300 111 3000 [www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

**Local utility suppliers**

- Anglian Water 08457 145 145
- Electricity - Central Networks 0845 6030618

Find more information at [www.milton-keynes.gov.uk](http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk)

Find us on Facebook @MKCouncil1 or on Twitter @MKCouncil

### **Keep these details handy....**

#### **Report a repair to Mears**

Call 0330 123 2522 at any time or email [repairs.miltonkeynes@mearsgroup.co.uk](mailto:repairs.miltonkeynes@mearsgroup.co.uk)

#### **Smell gas?**

Call 0800 111 999 at any time

#### **Talk to Milton Keynes City Council Housing**

Call us on 01908 252937 or (emergencies only) out of hours 01908 226699

#### **Report anti-social behaviour**

Thames Valley Police – 101 (non-emergency) or 999 (emergency)

Call us 01908 252937 (Option 3) or email [asb@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:asb@milton-keynes.gov.uk)