



 **PORT OF LEITH**
HOUSING ASSOCIATION

TENANT HANDBOOK

Scottish Charity SC027945

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Tenant Handbook



Section 1 – Introduction / General Information

Section 1 – Introduction / General Information



Welcome to Port of Leith Housing Association. We hope you will enjoy living in and looking after your home. This Tenants' Handbook is designed to provide you with useful information to help you obtain satisfaction with your home and the services provided by us. We would ask you to keep it in a safe place for future reference. Please do not hesitate to contact us should you require further clarification on any issues.

Office Hours

Our office is open Monday, Wednesday and Thursday 8.45am - 17.00pm
 Tuesday 10.00am - 17.00pm
 Friday 8.45am - 15.45pm

Our registered office is at:

108 Constitution St
 Leith
 Edinburgh
 EH6 6AZ

Telephone: (0131) 554 0403

(Answerphone outwith office hours)

Fax: (0131) 555 1504

E-mail: info@polha.co.uk

Board of Management

The Association is governed by a Board which is elected by members at the Annual General Meeting. This is a voluntary committee that meets monthly to discuss Association business

and guide its overall direction.

Staffing

Customer Services - Should be contacted for all matters relating to your tenancy, including rent and repairs.

Finance & Resources – Should be contacted for all financial operations within the organisation and information technology support.

Property & New Business - Should be contacted for issues regarding our building developments, and cyclical maintenance / Scottish Housing Quality Standard work.

Senior Management – Responsible for overseeing the efficient running of the organisation.

Settling-in Visits

All new tenants will receive a visit from a member of the Housing Management Team, usually an Assistant Housing Officer. This will take place approximately 4 - 6 weeks after the moving in date giving you a chance to settle into your new home.

The visit will be arranged at a mutually convenient time and provides an opportunity for us to check that you are happy in your home and is a chance for you to ask any questions that you may have.

Please note, however, that you can request a visit from your Housing Officer at any time during your tenancy.

New Tenant Satisfaction Surveys

You should receive your satisfaction survey within the next week or so. We would encourage you to complete this as fully as possible. Your comments are vital in ensuring that we provide new and existing tenants with the best possible service.



Gifts

Employees are not permitted to accept any money (including cash, cheques etc) from any tenant in return for performing their duties for the Association. Personal and collective gifts may be accepted in exceptional circumstances on the assumption that they become the property of the Association for the benefit of all staff. The decision to grant this exemption will be taken by the Management Team.

We would ask for your co-operation to avoid putting staff in the position of having to refuse gifts, which may cause unintentional offence.

Confidentiality & Data Protection

Staff will bear in mind the principles of confidentiality at all times when speaking about or referring to tenants, sharing owners or applicants to others.

Information may need to be shared by staff with other relevant professionals on a day-to-day basis. This will take place in order to fulfil the responsibilities of the Association. Information shared will be restricted to what is necessary for other staff to carry out their tasks and will not extend beyond that. Where information is shared it will be noted in writing in the tenants file stating who gave what information, why and when.

At all times staff will remember that information concerning an individual belongs to the individual tenant and should only be shared where the purpose is clear. The Association has procedures in place for information sharing with key agencies such as the Police Service.

Access to Information

You have the right to access information held by the Association which concerns yourself or your tenancy. However, in order to protect the confidentiality of others, we will restrict access to information which identifies other individuals. This means that access will be

available to information specific to you as an individual. We will only give access to information which identifies or involves another individual, with the written permission of the other parties involved. The Association will charge an administration fee for this service.

Requests for access must be made in writing. We will give access to original documents and produce copies as requested. If there are terms in the document you do not understand we will give you assistance.

We will endeavour to provide information within 30 days of a request being made. This allows time to contact any person whose permission for access is required.

We will correct any information which is wrong. If there is a disagreement over what is wrong, the information will be amended to note the dispute. If we do not give access, you may appeal through the Association's Complaints Procedure.

The Association reserves the right to charge £10 to cover stationery and postage costs.





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Tenant Handbook

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Section 2 – Moving Into & Living In Your Home

Section 2 – Moving Into & Living In Your Home



Keys

You will be issued with two complete sets of keys for the property upon signing your tenancy. We do not keep spare sets of keys in the office so please look after these.

It may be advisable to give a spare set of keys to a friend or relative in case you misplace yours. If you do lose your keys, it is your responsibility to replace them.

Please note, we do expect two full sets of keys to be returned to us upon termination of the tenancy.

Some tenants may be issued with key fobs for the main access door to the building. The Association does keep copies of these in the office. However, you will be charged for any replacements that have to be issued to you. (Please note, identification will be required if you are buying a replacement fob from the office)

Council Tax and Housing Benefit

Please remember that when you move home you must complete a new application for Council Tax and Housing Benefit. This should be done as soon as possible to prevent arrears from accruing on your rent account.

If you require assistance with this, you can make an appointment with a member of our Housing Management Team.

Changing Your Address & Forwarding Mail

If you have not already done so, you should advise any relevant organisations of a change in your address. This may include, for example, your bank/building society, your doctor and the DSS/Job Centre.

It may be an idea to ask Royal Mail to forward any mail that is being sent to the wrong address until all organisations have updated their records. You should seek advice from your local Post Office on how to do this. Please note, there may be a charge for this service.

Gas and Electricity

It is your responsibility to pay for any gas or electricity that you use in your property. You should take meter readings as soon as you receive the keys to your new home to avoid being charged for power you have not used.

Your gas and electricity providers will be able to estimate your bill for you based on your meter readings.

TV Licence

You should ensure that you have advised the television licence company of a change in your address. If you do not currently have a television licence, we would advise you to apply for one immediately. Please note, tenants aged 75 and over are exempt.



Insurance

Every day newspaper and television reports tell of fires, floods and accidents in houses. Pictures show the relief of those who escaped uninjured. All too often this relief turns to despair when the devastation becomes apparent and the question of replacing their belongings arises.

A fire or burst pipe can mean financial disaster. If your carpets, curtains, clothing and furniture are destroyed, can you afford to replace them from savings? Each winter, the onset of severe weather causes a tremendous number of burst pipes in houses resulting in considerable damage to carpets and furnishings.

The Association insures your home for the full cost of rebuilding along with fixtures and fittings provided by us, for full replacement value, but we do not insure your household contents. You are responsible for insuring your personal possessions and property against ALL RISKS and it is recommended that you do this as soon as possible. Your insurance policy should also include accidental damage in case you cause damage to property owned by a neighbour or the building itself, for example by letting your bath overflow.

The Scottish Federation of Housing Associations offers an insurance service at a discounted rate to tenants and can be relatively inexpensive when compared to the cost of replacing a house full of furniture, electrical equipment and personal belongings. The appropriate forms can be obtained from our main office at Constitution St.

Bogus Callers

All staff employed by Port of Leith Housing Association as well as many other official bodies carry an identification badge with them and you should not let anyone into your home without asking to see this first. If you are in any doubt at all, you should contact the company they say

they are working for to double check their authenticity.

Being a Good Neighbour

Living in a flat may bring about problems not shared by people living in separate houses. This makes it all the more important that you treat your neighbours with particular consideration and respect.

Following a few simple dos and don'ts can make life more enjoyable for you and your neighbours:

DO :

- Take your turn at cleaning the stairs and common areas
- Keep pets under control at all times
- Close gates and doors behind you, particularly doors in blocks with controlled entry systems
- Keep an eye on your children and make sure they are not causing a nuisance
- Expect to hear some noise from other flats at times and be tolerant of this
- Make sure visitors enter and leave the building quietly
- Put your rubbish in the bins provided

DON'T :

- Play music, TVs etc at a loud volume, especially late at night
- Leave any rubbish or bulky items in the stair
- Let anyone into the block if you don't know who they are
- Use household appliances such as a Hoover or washing machine late at night

Anti-social Behaviour & Neighbour Disputes

Port of Leith Housing Association recognises the rights of its tenants to live in a safe, secure and pleasurable environment. No-one has the right to ruin this for you.



Fortunately, the vast majority of our residents act in a very reasonable and responsible way towards each other, with many examples of being a good neighbour. However, inevitably, there are times when disputes arise and Port of Leith HA works in partnership with various external agencies such as the Council and the Police in order to tackle incidences of anti-social behaviour.

If you are the victim of anti-social behaviour, we would recommend speaking to your neighbour or the person who is causing the problem in the first instance. If this does not resolve the issue or you feel it is too serious for you to deal with yourself then you should contact your Housing Officer as soon as possible. If you believe you or your family are being put in immediate danger, then you should contact the Police immediately.

We must remind all tenants that any nuisance caused by you or anyone visiting your home is a breach of your tenancy agreement and all cases of anti-social behaviour will be taken extremely seriously by Port of Leith Housing Association.

For further information on these issues please refer to our leaflet entitled 'Anti-social behaviour & Neighbour Disputes'.

Harassment

The Association is an equal opportunities organisation. It therefore attempts to make its services available to all regardless of race, colour, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, age, ethnic origin, physical disability, religion, AIDS or H.I.V.

The Association treats all instances of harassment extremely seriously. We will endeavour to resolve any such instances and will not hesitate to take legal action against any tenant who perpetrates harassment. People who harass others, or allow their visitors to do so, may lose their home as a consequence. This is clearly set out as a ground for repossession

of a property in the Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement.

If you are suffering harassment you should contact your Housing Officer in the first instance.

Domestic Abuse

Domestic Violence is defined as occurring when a person or persons threatens or causes actual harm to another member of the family household. This also includes verbal and emotional abuse and harassment from ex-partners who are no longer part of the household. The Association will take immediate action on any persons seen to be engaging in behaviour of this kind. As well as the action we will take, we will also report any such incidences to the relevant authorities.

Looking After Older Neighbours

If you know there are older people living next to you, keep an eye out for them to make sure they're ok. This is particularly important during the winter months.

If you are concerned about a neighbour, young or old, whom you've not seen for a day or two, you should contact the Police or your Housing Officer.

Pets

The Association will permit pets to be kept where it is reasonable and where prior written permission has been sought by the tenant.

Your pet must not cause a nuisance or damage to the property or communal areas and should be exercised away from the vicinity of your home. If your pet fouls in any of the common areas you must clean this up immediately.

Persistent nuisance of any kind may result in consent being withdrawn.



Communal Areas/Stair Cleaning

Many of our developments have a stair cleaning service which is paid for by you as part of your service charge. If you are not happy with the service that is being provided, you should contact your Housing Officer who will be able to discuss this with the stair cleaning contractor.

If your stair does not have a contracted cleaner then it is your responsibility to take your turn in ensuring that the communal areas are kept clean at all times. If this happens, it will assist in the creation of a more pleasant environment for all residents.

Gardens

Where you enjoy sole use of a garden, it is your responsibility to maintain and keep the garden tidy.

If you have a communal back green then you should take your turn in helping to maintain this, unless a contractor is paid to do this as part of your service charge.

Use of Your Home

The property in which you live is for use as a dwelling only and is not to be used for any trade or business unless prior permission from the Association has been sought in writing. Once this has been received the Association will give your request consideration.

You must not do anything nor allow family members or visitors to do anything which will cause nuisance or disturbance to neighbours. The property must not be used for illegal or immoral purposes. This includes prostitution and selling drugs. Such use is clearly identified as a ground for repossession of the property in your Tenancy Agreement. If you believe that one of our properties is being used for illegal or immoral purposes, please contact your Housing Officer who will be able to make appropriate enquiries confidentially. It is also essential that your Port of Leith house is your principal home

and you do not own or rent another home anywhere else.

Absences & Subletting

If you are intending on going away for an extended period, we would ask that you inform us of how long you are going to be away for. You must ensure that you have made arrangements for the rent to be paid for the full duration of your absence.

In some cases, the Association may permit you to sublet the property for particular periods of absence. The maximum period for sublet will normally be six months. If you wish to do this, you should make a request in writing. If your request is granted, you will still remain responsible for ensuring the correct amount of rent is paid to the Association and you must ensure that all other aspects of the tenancy agreement are strictly adhered to.

Refuse Collection

In the main, refuse collections in the Leith area are on Tuesday and Friday mornings. You should ensure your household rubbish is placed in the bins provided and that the area around the bins is kept tidy.

You should not leave any rubbish or items in your stairway as these pose a fire risk. You can arrange for any unwanted bulky household items to be collected by the Council. This 'special uplift' can be organised by calling 0131 529 3030. Please note that the Council charges for this service.





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Section 3 – Your Tenancy

Section 3 – Your Tenancy



Type of Tenancy

From 30th September 2002 all Port of Leith Housing Association tenants became Scottish Secure Tenants. This gave tenants certain rights and responsibilities laid out in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. These apply whether or not you have signed a Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement.

If you have signed a Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement, you will have additional contractual rights and responsibilities as stated in the agreement.

Preserved Rights

If you were a tenant before 1st January 1989 then you will have carried over some rights from your previous tenancy.

- Secure Tenants: Retention of the right to have rent set by a Rent Officer.

Security of Tenure

Your Scottish Secure tenancy ensures that you cannot be evicted from your home except by a Court Order. In this case, the court must be satisfied that there are reasonable grounds to grant an order. These include:

- A tenancy obtained through the provision of false information.
- Wilful damage to the property.
- Failure to pay rent which you are liable for.
- Nuisance to, or harassment of, neighbours.
- Property being required for demolition or reconstruction.
- Breaking any clause of the tenancy agreement.

Joint Tenancies

A joint tenancy grants equal rights to both people and makes them both collectively and individually responsible for their contractual obligations. If one tenant wishes to leave the property then the tenancy can be transferred into the sole name of the remaining joint tenant, though permission of the leaving tenant is required to do this.

If you have a sole tenancy and wish to alter this to a joint tenancy, then you should request this in writing and we will be able to assist you. Please note, a request of this kind may be refused if you have not adhered to the obligations of your tenancy agreement, for example if you have rent arrears and if the proposed joint tenant has not lived in the property for at least one year.

Succession

Succession is the right to take over a tenancy if the original tenant dies. The right of your family and relatives to succeed to the tenancy in the event of your death depends on the type of housing you are living in:

General Needs Housing – the right of succession would usually be given to your wife or husband (or someone co-habiting with you). If there was no-one in that position, the tenancy could pass to another member of your family or a carer as long as:



- They were over 16 years of age and the property was their only or principal home at the time of your death
- The carer had given up their home to care for you or a member of your household

In any dispute, the Association will decide who, if anyone, will take over the tenancy. We would let everyone know our decision within 1 month.

Wheelchair Housing - due to the severe shortage of housing suitable for wheelchair users, if the tenant (who is the wheelchair user) dies and there is no other family member who requires this type of housing, we would seek to find suitable alternative accommodation for the remaining family members, either within our own housing stock or through the local council.

If the wheelchair user is not the tenant and that person dies or leaves the household permanently then we would seek suitable alternative accommodation for the remaining family members.

We would only ask you to move to housing which was suitable for you in terms of size, location and amenities. If you were to refuse to move, however, we could go to court and ask for a Court Order to end your tenancy and move you to other accommodation.

Assignment

Tenants have the right to sign over their tenancy to a member of their family who would have the right to succession if the tenant had died. The rules for assignment work in much the same way as succession. This means therefore that:

- The assignee, besides being a close relative and over 16, must have lived with the tenant in the property for at least twelve months.

- The assignee must be prepared to pay the rent due and adhere to the terms and conditions of the Tenancy Agreement.
- You must obtain written permission from the Association before any the assignment can take place.
- The existing tenant must be prepared to give up all rights to the property.

The Right to Buy

The Association has charitable status, therefore, the vast majority of our tenants do not have the right to buy their home. Only those tenants who have held a tenancy before 1st January 1989 have the right to purchase their property. If this applies to you and you wish to find out more information, please contact a member of the Housing Management Team.





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Tenant Handbook

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Section 4 – Money Matters

Section 4 – Money Matters



How Your Rent Is Set

The Association sets your rent in accordance with the costs of building, managing and maintaining its housing stock, and according to the size, type, age and amenities of the particular property. The Association also considers how affordable rents are and how they compare with other landlords. We also try to ensure that the rents set are regarded as fair and easy to understand.

Your rent will be adjusted each year on 1st April depending upon the costs incurred by the Association in the previous year. You will be given 28 days notice of any rent increase.

The Association, in addition to rents, levies service charges on many of its properties. This is to cover the costs of additional services such as lifts, wardens (for sheltered housing), door entry systems and stair cleaning amongst others. We have to ensure that the costs of providing such services are covered by costs levied on the tenants receiving the services. There will only be one review of service charges in any twelve month period.

It is important that the level of rents allow the Association to provide a good quality service to tenants which also allows for future growth and expansion of services. Tenants will be consulted whenever a rent or service charge increase is proposed and the Association will take account of your views.

What Does Your Rent Pay For

The majority of the Association's income comes from rents therefore it is of utmost importance for Port of Leith to collect all rents due. The rent you pay goes towards a number of services that are of benefit to you and the Leith community:

- Carrying out repairs and improvements to your home
- Managing your home and neighbourhood
- Helping to pay back loans borrowed to modernise older homes and to build new ones

Rent arrears cost the Association money if they are not paid. Inevitably, these costs will eventually be passed on through higher rents and service charges to all other tenants.

Paying Your Rent

Your rent is due to be paid in advance on the 1st of every month. It is your responsibility to ensure that your rent is kept up to date and paid on time. If you would prefer to pay your rent weekly for budgeting purposes, you should contact your Housing Officer to discuss an arrangement.

The Association offers a number of different ways to pay your rent. These are listed as follows:

Direct Debit:

You can pay your rent by Direct Debit – you can set this up over the telephone or by contacting your Housing Officer to complete an application form. Please allow 12 days for this to be processed. Payments will be shown on your bank statement under 'allpay.net'

Bank Standing Order:

Alternatively, if your bank does not accept Direct Debits, you can instruct your bank to pay your rent on the 1st of every month. Standing Order mandates can be collected at the office. Standing Orders ease administration for the Association and save you time and effort. They also ensure safety and security.



Please note, if paying by Banker's Standing Order, it is your responsibility to advise your bank of any changes to your rent and/or service charge.

AllPay:

All tenants can request an AllPay card to pay their rent. You can use the AllPay card to pay your rent in a variety of ways:

- At the Post Office – Simply hand over your card at the counter including your cash, cheque or debit card. You will be given a receipt and we recommend you keep this in a safe place as proof of payment.
- At any PayPoint outlet – Many convenience stores now allow people to pay bills using the PayPoint system. The process is the same as at the Post Office. Again, it is important that you keep your receipt as proof of payment.
- The Internet – You can pay your rent via the Internet by accessing our website at www.polha.co.uk; selecting the Allpay link and entering your payment card number. Debit and credit cards are accepted.
- The Telephone – You can pay the rent over the phone with your payment card and a debit or credit card by telephoning Allpay on 0870 243 6040.

Cheque:

You can pay your rent with a cheque. This can be posted to us at the office on Constitution St. If posting a cheque, please ensure you have quoted your name, address and tenancy reference number. You can also pay with a cheque by coming into the office and visiting the rent counter.

Please note, for security reasons, we only accept cash payments at the office in exceptional circumstances.

What You Must Do If You Can't Pay Your Rent

- You must contact your Housing Officer as soon as possible to discuss the situation.
- You must come to an agreement to pay off the arrears balance. If you are unable to pay them in full the Association will be willing to enter into a reasonable repayment arrangement so you can pay off the arrears over a given period of time.
- You must contact a local advice agency who can advise you on how to pay off the arrears. (see Section 11)

What You Must Not Do

- Do not ignore the problem. Our staff and external advice agencies are there to help you.
- Do not ignore our letters. This will result in the commencement of legal action.
- Do not borrow money from door-to-door lenders. This will only serve to worsen debt issues.

What Action We Will Take

The Association takes rent arrears very seriously and has strict procedures in place to deal with them quickly and efficiently. The following table outlines the actions and approximate timescale for dealing with rent arrears.

- Week 1
No payment received by end of Week 1 results in first arrears letter.
- Week 2
No response/no payment received. 2nd arrears letter sent asking for immediate contact.
(Continued on next page)



- **Week 4**
If contact is made, arrange interview and reach arrangement for repayment of arrear. Send letter detailing arrangement agreed in interview. If no contact, a warning letter from our solicitor is sent.
- **Week 6**
If no payment is made or a previously agreed arrangement broken – issue Notice of Proceedings and interview tenant again.
- **Week 9/10**
Instruct Solicitor to raise an action in the Sheriff Court.
- **Weeks leading up to court date.**
Monitor situation and attempt to get the tenant to pay.
- **When court decree awarded.**
Write to the tenant informing them that the Association has been granted a Court Order against them.
- **Next available management team meeting.**
Approval sought from the Association's Committee to evict.
- **Approximately one month after decree is awarded,** approval to proceed with eviction given. Advise Solicitor and Sheriff Officers to set a date for eviction to take place.

These necessary steps will be pursued in order to recover rents lawfully due by our tenants. In some cases, this does result in tenants losing their homes. Please note, however, that this is seen as an absolute last resort for the Association. We will do everything in our power to assist you in avoiding this outcome.

Former Tenants Arrears

The Association will pursue former tenant's arrears as vigorously as current tenants. If you do not pay the arrears or agree a suitable

repayment plan upon termination of your tenancy then the Association will investigate other areas of recovery. These include earnings arrestment and the use of debt collection agencies.

Please be aware that unpaid former tenants arrears may affect your ability to be rehoused.

Housing Benefit

Some tenants may be entitled to receive Housing Benefit to assist them with paying some or all of their rent. Eligibility will depend on your income and the other benefits that you are claiming. The Association recommends that you make an application as many benefits go unclaimed and you might find that you are entitled to help. If this is the case, then you will also receive assistance with your Council Tax payments.

You can pick up an application form from the Association's office or from the council. If you require assistance in completing the form, you should make an appointment with a member of the Housing Team who will be able to assist you.

Please note, if you receive Housing Benefit, it is extremely important that you advise the City of Edinburgh Council of any changes to both your financial and living circumstances. It is also your responsibility to advise the City Council of any changes to your rental charge.

If You Are Evicted

In some cases, the Association is left with no choice but to evict tenants. If this happens you may wish to present yourself to the Council as homeless. However, you will not be given another Housing Association or Council tenancy unless you start to repay your rent arrears.





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Tenant Handbook



Section 5 – Property & Repairs

Section 5 - Property & Repairs

Our Lettable Standard

All tenants have the right to live in good quality homes. Your home should be somewhere you feel safe and comfortable. This means wind and watertight, well insulated and with good amenities in a safe and attractive environment.

It is widely acknowledged that living in sub-standard accommodation can encourage new or worsen existing physical and mental health problems and prevent people from fulfilling their true potential. As a result of this, Port of Leith Housing Association is committed to ensuring that our properties and your homes are offered to you at the highest possible standards.

Our Repair Service

There are joint responsibilities on you as the Tenant and us as landlord, to make sure your home is maintained in a good state of repair.

Your main responsibility is to report repairs quickly to avoid further problems arising that could affect your wellbeing, or that of your neighbours.

You are also responsible for:

- Replacing electric fuses, light bulbs and sink and bath plugs.
- Keeping the inside of your home reasonably decorated.
- Replacement of keys and locks/ forced entry due to lost/stolen keys.
- Testing smoke alarms and replacing batteries when necessary.
- Unblocking any waste pipes blocked by misuse.
- Keeping your home free of vermin such as mice, ants or other infestations.
- Being aware of the position of the water main stopcock in your property and ensuring that it operates in case you need it.
- Resetting trip switches to consumer units as and when necessary.
- Lifting of any floor coverings if required to allow access for repairs, and relaying after completion.
- Ensuring access is granted for annual servicing of gas supply to your property.

Our Responsibilities As Your Landlord:

- To ensure that the structure of the property is maintained in good condition for example the roof and windows.
- To repair fixtures and fittings inside your home such as kitchen units, baths, sinks, toilets, heating systems and pipes.
- To ensure that water, electricity and gas are supplied safely and waste disperses properly.
- To repair and maintain shared common areas such as stair wells, door entry or aerial systems, and lifts, in buildings where we are the majority owner.
- To deal with infestations within common areas. We meet these responsibilities by responding to requests for repairs as and when faults occur, timetabling to carry out larger non-urgent types of repairs and scheduling improvements to prevent and reduce future repairs.

The Repair Service We Provide

Responsive, unplanned repairs

If a fault develops in your home that is our responsibility to repair you must tell us about it as soon as possible.

How to report repairs:

Telephone during office hours:

0808 100 0403 (free from most landlines) or
0131 554 0403 (charged at normal rates).

Writing to our office:

Property Department, Customer Services
Department 108 Constitution Street,
Edinburgh, EH6 6AZ

Email: info@polha.co.uk

Call in person at our office.:

We are open Mon, Wed, Thurs 8.45 to 5.00; Tues
10.00 to 5.00; Fri 8.45 to 3.45.

It's important for your safety and security to report repairs straight away.

What to tell us

Whenever you report a repair it will help if you give us clear information:



- Your name, address and daytime telephone number.
- A clear description of what needs repairing.

How We Prioritise Completing Repair Work:

On a daily basis we have many repair requests to attend to, we therefore prioritise the work needed in a fair and consistent way. When you report a repair you have a right to expect that the Association will respond within a certain period of time. If you are unhappy about the speed of the service please consult the 'Right to Repair' scheme which sets out legal time limits for certain repairs.

The Priorities we use

Emergencies:

Where there is a danger to health or personal safety. We aim to respond to these repairs within four hours of you reporting them to us. Where it is impossible to complete the repair immediately, a temporary repair to remove the risk will be completed by the target time. Some examples of emergencies are:

- No electrics
- Gas leak
- Serious water leaks
- Blocked toilet (where there is no other toilet facility in the property)
- Broken window to ground floor flats which may lead to a breach in security
- Serious roof leaks
- Forced entry for police
- Window not closing - ground floor flats only
- No heating in cold weather conditions
- Damage likely to be hazardous to life or limb e.g. loose masonry

Reporting emergency repairs outside normal working hours:

When our office is closed emergency repairs should be reported to our out-of-hours call service on free phone 0800 783 7937. If an out of office hours repair is classed as an emergency the out-of-hours service will send someone out immediately.

If it is not an emergency, they will pass the report on to us when the office is open the next day and we will then contact you to organise the repair.

Immediate:

Repairs causing very serious discomfort or inconvenience.

We aim to respond to these repairs within 24 hours of the report. Where it is impossible to complete the repair immediately a temporary repair to remove the risk will be completed by the target time. Examples of immediate repairs are:

- Lift Failure
- Central Heating failure or no hot water in cold weather
- Smashed Windows
- Serious Water Leaks e.g. burst pipes
- Door lock failure

Urgent:

Repairs causing discomfort or inconvenience but no serious danger to health and safety.

We aim to respond to these repairs within five working days of you reporting them to us. Such as:

- Minor leaks
- Blocked sinks, baths, WC (where more than one WC in the property), shower trays
- Running overflow
- Central Heating failure in warm weather
- Shower faults where property has no bath
- Roof leaks

Routine:

Minor repairs causing irritation but not serious inconvenience. We aim to respond to these repairs within 20 working days of you reporting them to us. Whilst the Association takes every care to make finances available to meet all its repair responsibilities it may on occasion be necessary to schedule non urgent repairs over a longer period than 20 days if the volume of more important work is such that the repair budget is over spending. You will be advised if this is the case and kept up to date on when the work can be done. Examples of routine repairs:



- Door entry system repairs
- Washing/tumble dryer repairs where the Association has provided the machine
- Dripping water taps
- Plaster cracks
- Faulty kitchen units
- Cracked or defective windows above ground floor
- Loose door handles
- Broken light fittings
- Damaged sanitary ware
- Insecure stair doors

For all repairs accepted by us, we post out a letter detailing the work that has been ordered. We also send a satisfaction slip to fill in and send back to us (freepost) when the work is done, so that we can check that the repair has been carried out properly. If you are unhappy with the work done please tell us as soon as possible.

Where an Association tenant is affected by a defect outwith the control of the Association, for example a roof leak in a mixed ownership tenement, a Property Officer will instruct an immediate temporary repair then liaise with the other owners to have a full repair carried out. Failing this, the Property Officer will ask for a Statutory Notice to be raised with the City of Edinburgh Council.

For your own safety please remember to check the identity of anyone you allow into your home – our staff and contractors will be able to provide you with identification cards.

What If Damage Occurs In My Property?

Where damage occurs to the structure and fabric of the property through no fault of yourself, for example a flood from a flat above's washing machine, we will pay for the structural repairs.

We do not, however, make good any decoration or compensate you for damage to belongings, this is your responsibility and we strongly recommend purchase of house contents



insurance to cover for this eventuality.

If you have reported a repair, and as a result of no action being taken by us, damage occurs to your personal belongings. Providing you took all reasonable precautions to protect them, you may pursue a claim for loss or damage to your personal possessions.

If your negligence caused the damage, you may be held responsible for costs incurred by the Association in completing the repair.

Stair Lighting:

Faults with stair lighting should be reported to the Council: Tel: 0131 529 5757 or 0131 200 2345.



Helping Us To Help You:

You can help us to provide you with an excellent repairs service by:

- Always reporting faults quickly.
- Keeping to appointments you make with POLHA contractors and staff.
- Sending back your satisfaction response slip so we know how our contractors and staff are performing.
- Ensuring that your home is not damaged deliberately, recklessly or through neglect.

Rechargeable Repairs

The Association will only meet the costs of repairs for which they are responsible. There will be some incidences where you will be held responsible for repairs done to your home. In these cases you will be recharged for them. Examples of rechargeable works include:

- All internal decoration
- All light bulbs, plugs and fuses
- All fittings and fixtures installed by tenants
- Replacement locks and keys caused by loss or negligence
- Repair and replacement of items damaged through neglect or misuse by a tenant, visitor or relative

You may also be held responsible for repairs or decoration costs due to fire or water damage which are as a result of negligence.

You will be given the option to pay off the repair immediately or agree a repayment arrangement. In the case of the end of a tenancy, the charge will be made to the outgoing tenant.



Repairs & Maintenance Responsibility

Repair / Maintenance	POLHA	You	Exception
Ensuring property is wind and watertight	√		
Window glass		√	Unless reported to the Police as criminal damage
Window frames, cills and fitting	√		
Curtain rails, shelving and coat rails		√	
Decoration (external)	√		
Decoration (internal)		√	
Doors (internal)	√		Unless it can be proven vandalism
Doors (external)	√		Unless it can be proven vandalism
Door entry system	√		
Door Bells		√	
Communal TV aerial	√		
Bleeding of radiators		√	
Plumbing in kitchen equipment		√	
Connecting cookers		√	
Individual TV aerial		√	
Smoke Detectors	√		
Smoke detector battery replacement		√	
Replacement of light Bulbs		√	
Letterbox	√		
Keys lost or broken		√	
Bath or shower	√		Unless it can be proven vandalism
Wash hand basin	√		Unless it can be proven vandalism
Toilet seat	√		Unless it can be proven vandalism
All other sanitary fittings	√		
Blocked sink, bath or basin		√	
Replacing plugs and chains to basins and baths		√	
Pest Infestation		√	Unless in communal area
Heating units e.g. fires, water heaters and central heating systems	√		
Ventilation Units	√		
Leaks	√		
Replacement of electrical fuses		√	



Inspection & Access

You are required to allow members of the Association's staff (or any other person authorised by the Association) access to your house so that an inspection of its condition can be made and any necessary repairs or alterations carried out. Reasonable notice will be given if access is required. Please note that inspections of repairs outwith office hours can only be made if an emergency arises.

If you have made an appointment for a repair please ensure that you are at home to allow access. If a contractor visits to carry out the repair and cannot gain access, you may be charged for the call out and the repair will be cancelled. It is in your interests to ensure you are home at the pre-arranged date and time. Your cooperation in granting access will ensure the work is carried out quickly and efficiently.

Code of Conduct for Contractors

Port of Leith Housing Association works only with reputable and reliable contractors all of whom are required to work to certain standards. These standards are written down in the contractor's code of conduct so tenants, staff and contractors know what is expected. Some of these standards are as follows:

- Take care of the customer's property and possessions and protect them at all times from dust, paint, etc
- Keep safe all materials and equipment used on site to avoid danger to occupants and visitors
- Comply with our equal opportunities policy
- Make good any damage to the fabric of the property

For a copy of the Code of Conduct, you should contact our Customer Services Department. If you are unhappy with any aspect of our Contractor's work or behaviour, then you should again, in the first instance, contact our Customer Services Property Department. For further information regarding our complaints procedure, see Section 9.

Safety Policy

The Association recognises and accepts its responsibilities as an employer. All Maintenance

personnel receive a copy of the Association's Safety Policy and are required to carry out their duties within the guidelines set down. Similarly all contractors carrying out repair and maintenance work on behalf of the Association are required to operate in compliance with Health & Safety legislation.

Cyclical Maintenance Upgrade Programmes

It makes sense to deal with some maintenance issues in a more structured way than responding to problems as and when they occur.

This type of work is known as Cyclical Maintenance and the SHQS programme.

Scottish Housing Quality Standards

The new Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) implemented by the Scottish Government Office, defines what constitutes acceptable good quality housing. Local Authorities, Housing Associations and other registered social landlords have until 2015 to ensure that their stock meets the standard – this is known as the SHQS Programme.

In broad terms, to meet the SHQS, a house must be:

- above the tolerable standard which is the absolute minimum standard that a house must meet,
- free from serious disrepair such as major roof leaks, dampness or structural problems,
- energy efficient so it must have effective insulation and central heating,
- provided with kitchen and bathroom fittings that are in a good and safe condition,
- safe and secure, for example it must have a smoke detector, secure doors and safe electrical and gas systems.

The types of things we improve through our SHQS programme are kitchens, bathrooms heating systems and window repairs. The work included in the SHQS programme is based on information we gain from visiting our properties and surveying their condition. You will be informed if your home is due to be surveyed and told about any improvements that will be carried out as a result.



Cyclical Maintenance

Our yearly cyclical maintenance programme covers things that have to be attended to on a fixed cycle.

This includes:

- Annual servicing gas appliances we have fitted and gas safety checks
- Stair painting
- Roof repairs
- Rhone repairs
- Window and door painting
- Door entry system upgrades/installations

The above maintenance will often affect all residents of a communal stair and the Association will contact any independent owners in regards to carrying out these cyclical repairs.

Everyone involved in the painting of a communal area is offered the choice of paint colours and given the option of having their flat doors painted; the main stair doors are also painted.

The Association has the option of installing high security magnetic locking systems. Mag-locks have improved the quality and security of stairs for all residents.

We will always write to tell you in advance when any work is due and arrange appointments to inspect and carry out the work.

Gas Safety & the Annual Gas Servicing Programme

It is a legal requirement for us to carry out a gas service to your home every year. Approximately 30 people die annually in Britain from carbon monoxide poisoning caused by gas appliances and flues that have not been maintained or installed correctly. Many others suffer ill health as a result.

You can't see carbon monoxide, you can't taste it, and you can't even smell it. But carbon monoxide can kill without warning in hours. You are particularly at risk when you are asleep, as you cannot recognise symptoms that include tiredness, drowsiness, headaches, nausea, and pains in the chest and stomach.

As your landlord, we have to make sure that all our installations are set up correctly and serviced every year.

We will write to you in advance requesting that you arrange an appointment with our contractors for your Annual Gas Service. If you do not allow us access to your home to do this work, we will send you further warning letters detailing the action we may need to take to ensure that the service is carried out. If you have not granted access by the service date we will force entry to your property to ensure the Annual Gas Safety Check is carried out within the 12 month period and you will be responsible any costs incurred.

Alterations

You should not carry out any alterations to the exterior or interior of your house (other than normal interior decoration e.g. painting) without first obtaining permission to do so from the Association. Applications for permission to carry out alterations must be made in writing and should give as much information as possible about the proposed work. It will usually be necessary for a member of the Association's staff to visit your home and discuss the alteration with you before a decision is given. This includes, for example, laminate flooring and any preparation work such as hardboarding of floors. In some circumstances consent will be granted subject to certain conditions. Permission will not be unreasonably withheld.

Aids & Adaptations

Moveable aids, such as bath seats are normally supplied by the Social Work Department or the NHS. You should contact your local Social Work Department for further information on this.

The Association can access funding from Edinburgh City Council to install more permanent adaptations where appropriate. Adaptations can include grab rails and level access shower rooms. There is no cost to tenants where they have been assessed as requiring such works.

If you think you require specific adaptations, you should contact a Property Officer who will



advise you of the steps you need to take. You will need to be assessed by an Occupational Therapist and we will be able to assist you in organising this.

Unfortunately, there is only a limited amount of funding available each year so your name may have to be put on a waiting list depending on demand, with priority being agreed with the Occupational Therapist.

Aerials & Satellite Dishes

Many of our blocks have a communal television aerial with a connection point in each flat.

If you wish to erect an outside aerial, satellite dish or other fitting to the exterior of your house, please ensure that you have prior written permission. Our main concern is to ensure that the property is not damaged by the fitting and that it does not pose any danger to other occupants and passers-by. You must take out insurance against the possibility of an aerial or other external fitting becoming a danger to life and property. In some cases, Planning Permission will be required.

Drying Out

The Association as landlords do not expect their tenants to live in damp houses. It is recognised however, that some houses may be slow to dry out after repair work or may have suffered dampness from a burst pipe or roof leak.

Where a dampness problem has been identified, the Association will lend a dehumidifier to the tenant in order to accelerate the drying process. Running costs for this machine have been obtained from Scottish Power. Once the drying process has been completed the tenant will be reimbursed the expense incurred in running the appliance.

Mould Growth

In many cases the presence of moisture in any form will stimulate the growth of fungus and

mould. If left untreated this mould will continue to grow and spread affecting and spoiling walls, wall coverings, furnishings and clothing.

Where a fungal attack is reported, the Property Officer will investigate the complaint to determine the cause and instruct, if necessary, remedial work.

Condensation

Condensation occurs to some extent in all houses and is caused by warm moist air from bathrooms and kitchens coming into contact with cold surfaces such as windows and walls. These cause the air to cool and because it cannot hold so much moisture when cooler, droplets of water tend to get deposited in the form of condensation. If allowed to continue, condensation can cause dampness and, in some cases, mould growth. It is impossible to prevent all condensation but the following measures will help keep it to a minimum.

Some houses have extraction fans fitted in bathrooms and kitchens to remove excess vapour. The fan in the bathroom comes on with the light and continues to operate for a few minutes after the light is switched off, whereas the one in the kitchen can usually be switched on and off separately. Neither fans use much electricity and you should use them whenever steam or cooking vapours are being produced.

Bedrooms tend to suffer the worst effects of condensation because they are generally cooler than the rest of the house. Keep bathroom doors closed and leave the window open slightly to allow any warm air which does enter to escape. In some modern properties ventilation grills have been built into the window frames – keep these grills clear as they provide permanent ventilation into the room.

Always close bathroom and kitchen doors when running hot water or washing. Keep a window open if possible.

Try to avoid sudden changes in the temperature of rooms, particularly in cold weather. Try also



to keep your accommodation heated especially in colder weather. If you are unsure how to operate electric heating systems, please contact your Housing Officer who will explain the most efficient way to run your heating system.

Tenants are not permitted to use paraffin or calor gas heaters as these produce one pint of water for every gallon of fuel burned and therefore cause a high level of condensation. They are also a major fire risk.

Try not to place any large item of furniture against outside walls and allow for ventilation of the contents of wardrobes and chests of drawers. Check clothes regularly for signs and dampness or mould growth.

Frost Precautions

During cold weather it is advisable to take precautions to ensure water pipes do not freeze and burst.

If you are going on holiday during cold weather, drain down the water system by switching off the stop valve and draining the hot and cold system. Ask for advice from the Customer Services Department. If you are going away leave keys with a relative or neighbour who is trustworthy and also notify the Association.

If your pipes do freeze, turn off the main stop valve and turn on all of your taps. You should then report this as an emergency repair immediately.

Emergency Situations

Burst Pipes

For burst pipes & leaks the following action should be taken:

Turn off the water supply to your house from the stop-cock. Notify any of your neighbours that might be affected. Please remember to switch off your immersion heater (or other form of water heating). If this happens outside of office hours, you should telephone the Association's office on 0808 100 0403 where the answer machine will provide the emergency repair contact number.

Electrical Faults

For electrical faults the following action should be taken:

You should, in the first instance, check the fuses or electric circuit breaker. If you have no electricity after checking these, then you should telephone Scottish Power on 0845 2727 999 regardless of who your energy supplier is.

Gas Leaks

For gas leaks the following action should be taken:

If you smell gas, you must turn off all cookers, fires and other gas appliances as soon as possible. Ensure you put out all naked flames and cigarettes. You should also turn off the entire gas supply to your property at the meter, open all doors and windows and telephone Transco on 0800 111 999 immediately. Once Transco have attended contact the Association as it is likely a gas engineer will need to attend to inspect the gas appliance.

Fire

In the case of a fire the following action should be taken:

If it safe to do so, you should close all windows and doors in the house. You should then get everyone out of your house and neighbouring houses immediately and telephone the fire brigade by dialling '999'. Under no circumstances should you re-enter the building at any point until the fire brigade have advised that it is safe to do so. Once the immediate danger has been taken care of, notify the Association.




Right to Repair

The Right to Repair scheme was introduced to ensure that all landlords carry out small urgent repairs within a specified time. The scheme promotes the highest standards in housing maintenance and ensures that tenants receive an excellent repairs service.

Certain repairs up to the value of £350.00 are covered. The table below outlines these 'qualifying' repairs and the maximum time given for completion. These times are set by law and not by Port of Leith Housing Association.

Qualifying Repair

Max Time For Completion (Days)

• Blocked flue to open fire or boiler	1	
• Blocked or leaking foul drains, soil stacks or toilet pans where there is no other toilet in the house.	1	
• Blocked sink, bath or drain	1	
• Electric power - full loss	1	
• Electric power - partial loss	3	
• Insecure external window, door or lock	1	
• Unsafe access path or step	1	
• Significant leaks or flooding from water or heating pipes, tanks, cisterns	1	
• Loss or partial loss of gas supply	1	
• Loss or partial loss of space or water heating where no alternative heating is available	1	
• Toilet not flushing where there is no other toilet in the house	1	
• Unsafe power or lighting socket, or electrical fitting	1	
• Water supply - full loss	1	
• Water supply - partial loss	3	
• Loose or detached banister or hand rail	3	
• Unsafe timber flooring or stair treads	3	
• Mechanical extractor fan in internal kitchen or bathroom not working	7	

There may be some exceptional circumstances where it is not possible for the landlord to keep to these timescales, for example, due to severe weather conditions. In this situation, temporary arrangements may be needed to extend the maximum time granted and we would notify you of this.



If the repair is not carried out within the legal timescale then you have the right to instruct another of the Association's contractors to carry out the repair. You will then be entitled to £15 compensation for the inconvenience caused to you. If the repair has commenced but has not been completed within the given timescale you will also be entitled to £15 compensation. You will then be entitled to £3 compensation for each working day until the repair is completed, up to a maximum of £100 per repair.

Please note, if the contractor cannot gain access to your property at a time previously agreed by you then your right to repair is cancelled and the process begins afresh.

Right to Compensation for Improvements

The Right to Compensation for Improvements scheme was introduced in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. You may be able to receive compensation from Port of Leith for improvements which you have made to your home. To qualify for this compensation you must have:

- Sought prior permission from Port of Leith Housing Association to carry out the improvement
- Had the work carried out by qualified tradesmen and obtained the necessary building warrants and planning consents (please note, we will require proof of this)
- Met all necessary standards in respect of materials and safety
- Ended your tenancy

You can get compensation for a number of improvements. Examples of these include installing, fitting or replacing:

- A bath or shower
- Cavity wall insulation
- Double glazing, replacing external windows or fitting secondary glazing
- Draught-proofing external doors or windows
- A kitchen sink
- A toilet

We will require you to provide proof of the amount you have spent. It is a good idea to keep a copy of any bills in a safe place and send a copy to us when the work has been done.

The value of any improvement you have made depreciates as it gets older and as you get more use out of it. Therefore, the lifespan of the improvement and the number of years since its completion will be considered when the compensation is being calculated. The Association is also required to manage the levels of compensation payable from within its budget therefore compensation payments shall be subject to a minimum of £50 and a maximum of £500.

The Association may also be required to make adjustments to the amount of compensation to reflect the following factors:

- If the Association believe that you paid too much for the improvement.
- If the deterioration in quality is greater than would reasonably be expected by normal wear and tear
- If you owe money to the Association, for example, through rent arrears or rechargeable repairs.

Claims must be made in writing 21 days prior to the tenancy termination date. If you disagree with the decision, you must advise the Association in writing immediately.

For further information on this subject or to request permission on installing an improvement you should, in the first instance, contact a member of our Customer Services Department.





PORT OF LEITH

HOUSING ASSOCIATION

Tenant Handbook



Section 6 – Moving On

Section 6 - Moving On



Key To Choice

Since February 2010, we have been advertising our available properties through Key to Choice. Our vacancies are advertised weekly alongside council and other housing association vacancies. This means that anyone who wishes to be housed by us or if any of our tenants wish to transfer to another Port of Leith property, they will have to use Choice to bid for any vacant properties they are interested in.

To apply, you need to fill in an EdIndex form. EdIndex is a partnership between the Council and 20 Housing Associations and Housing Co-operatives for allocating properties. The form is available from the Association and any local Council neighbourhood office. If you need help filling out the form, please ask.

Our vacant properties are advertised every week in Monday's Evening News and also in a free supplement available at our office. Details of vacancies are also available to view at the Council's Key to Choice website - www.keytochoice.scotsman.com - and you may submit your bids online.

How Do I Know Which House Is Right For Me?

Each property advertised tells you where the house is, how many bedrooms there are, if it's suitable for children and how much the rent is. It will also tell you if it is for a Starter or a Mover and if Port of Leith tenants will have priority over other applicants. You will be classified as a Mover as you are already one of our tenants.

You can then submit your bid for a particular property in various ways:

- Online at the Key to Choice website
- By phoning the council on 0131 529 5080
- By completing the form in the free supplement and posting it to the council
- If you are having difficulties, we can help you with your bid if you come into our office

Does This Mean I Will Get One Of My Choices?

Not necessarily. We have a limited number of properties available and there are other applicants wanting to live there too. Homes are offered based on either how long you have been in your current home or how long you have been registered on Edindex, whichever is appropriate. You may get priority if, for example, you have a medical condition, are overcrowded, under-occupying your property or if your property is below the 'tolerable standard'.

If you are shortlisted for the property you wanted, we will get in touch with you after the closing date.

If you've been unsuccessful, you will not hear from us. You should carry on bidding for properties until you get your home. If you're not having any success, come in and speak to a Housing Officer who will be happy to help.

If you need advice or help in bidding please feel free to contact us, and staff will be happy to help. You may telephone us on 0131 554 0403, call into our office or email info@polha.co.uk.

Transferring

Sometimes tenants may wish to transfer to a different property, usually due to a change in circumstances. This will depend on the availability of property, but bids through Choice, as above, will be considered provided the tenancy has been conducted in a satisfactory manner, and they have kept to an arrangement to pay off any arrears for at least 3 months. Have a word with your Housing Officer if you would like more details.



Mutual Exchange

Tenants can carry out Mutual Exchanges with other Port of Leith tenants or tenants of other Social Landlords, e.g. City of Edinburgh Council and other Housing Associations, with their landlord's permission. There is a Mutual Exchange book held in the Association's office where you can enter your housing details and search for properties that may be of interest to you. You can also look at the website www.houseexchange.org.uk which is free

HomeSwapper

HomeSwapper is a national mobility scheme for people who wish to move to another part of the country, usually to take up a new job or to be nearer to friends or family.

The system works in much the same way as a mutual exchange. There is, however, a fee for registration. For more details and to register with HomeSwapper, you should visit their website at www.homeswapper.co.uk.

Please refer to our leaflet, 'Moving House', for further information on all of the above options.

Terminating Your Tenancy

A tenancy can be terminated as follows:

Giving Notice:

If you wish to end your tenancy with us you must give 28 days notice in writing. You can send us a letter or complete a termination form which you can collect from the office. Your tenancy will terminate on the last day of your notice period or the day on which you hand back your keys if this is after the end of the notice period.

If you have a joint tenancy, then the termination notice must be signed by both tenants. Once we receive your notice, we will write to you advising of your official end date, any monies outstanding and of your end of tenancy obligations with regard to repairs and maintenance. Please remember that two full sets of keys should be returned to the Association.

Please refer to our leaflet 'Leaving Your Tenancy' for further information on your obligations prior to the termination date.

On the Death of a Tenant:

Where the tenant dies and there is no-one who qualifies to succeed the tenancy (see Section 3) the tenancy is terminated on the date of death and no rent will be charged from this date. There will however be an occupancy charge applied, equivalent to the full rental charge, until all keys are returned, to cover the costs for loss of rental income.

Please note that Housing Benefit will cease on the date of death. Any charges accrued after this date will be recovered from the tenant's estate along with any other outstanding charges, where funds are available.

Arrangements will be made with the tenant's representatives with regard to clearing the property and handing back the keys.

Eviction:

There are some occasions where the Association has no choice but to obtain a Court Order granting an eviction. This action is taken as a last resort and is usually granted in cases such as anti-social behaviour and rent arrears. Evictions can only take place where a Sheriff is satisfied that it is reasonable.

Abandonment:

If we have reasonable grounds for believing that you have abandoned your property then we may forcibly enter the house to make it secure. You will be given four weeks' notice that we believe you have abandoned your home. If you do not contact us within the four weeks then we may repossess it.

We have the right to make a charge for the safe storage of any property that is found in your home and to dispose of this if you have failed to make arrangements for its delivery within a given period.

You should refer to Section 6 of your Tenancy Agreement for full details on ending your tenancy.





PORT OF LEITH

HOUSING ASSOCIATION

Tenant Handbook



Section 7 – Tenant Participation

Section 7 - Tenant Participation



What is Tenant Participation?

Tenant participation is about giving choices and encouraging tenants to have a say in the management and development of their housing provision. Participation can take place either individually or as part of a group.

Why Get Involved?

Tenant Participation is extremely important in improving communications with tenants and residents; giving more say to tenants and addressing the wider issues of social inclusion and diversity. It gives individuals and groups the opportunity to become more involved in the work of the Association.

How Can You Get Involved?

By contacting Port of Leith Housing Association's Customer Engagement Officer

who is on hand to work with all tenants who have a desire to establish a Tenants' Group. Our Customer Engagement Officer can offer advice on forming your group and registering you with the Scottish Housing Regulator.

There are also a number of ways you can participate without forming a Tenants' Group. We hold tenant meetings wherever this is appropriate, e.g. at the occupancy of a new scheme and each new tenant is given an opportunity to become a member of the Association.

We keep a consultation register of tenants who have indicated they would like to be contacted to give feedback on specific issues, either through a questionnaire or as part of a discussion group.

We must consult tenants on proposed changes in management and maintenance policies and practices which may affect a substantial proportion or number of tenants and we will consult you on any proposed major alterations or improvements to your home or your environment. There may be times where a decision has to be made immediately and we are not able to consult you. If this happens, we will explain why the decision was made. The Association works with Focus Groups and Consultation Groups consisting of a number of tenants who advise us of their views on matters affecting tenants. If you would like to participate in any of these ways, again, you should contact our Customer Engagement Officer.

We also carry out surveys asking for your views about policies, procedures and service delivery. We would encourage you to complete these as we are keen to ensure that you are happy with our standards of service.

You can also become a member of the Association and seek election to the Board of Management.



Keeping You Informed

You have the right to be kept informed and given information on the standard of service that we are providing. You have the right to:

- Know about our performance each year
- Obtain a copy of our Housing Management policies
- Access information we hold about you and have it corrected if it is not accurate
- Know the names of Port of Leith Housing Association's Board of Management
- Know the name of the person dealing with any matter you raise with us and when you can expect an answer

Registered Tenant Organisations

Port of Leith Housing Association encourages the setting up of Registered Tenants Organisations. To qualify for registration, your Group must meet certain specific criteria.

Becoming a Registered Tenants Organisation entitles you to resources and support from Port of Leith. You also have a legal right under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 to be consulted and informed by Port of Leith Housing Association on housing management and related issues within your area.





PORT OF LEITH

HOUSING ASSOCIATION

Tenant Handbook



Section 8 – Complaints

Section 8 - Complaints



Complaints Procedure

Port of Leith Housing Association aims to provide high standards of service but there may be occasions when you're not happy about something. If this is the case it is important for you to tell us.

The aim of the complaints procedure is to give you clear details on what steps you can take to try and get things put right where there has been a problem.

The complaints procedure also gives us an opportunity to ensure that we are providing our customers with the highest level of service possible.

Who Can Use It?

Anyone who receives or requests a service from Port of Leith Housing Association can use the complaints procedure. This includes tenants, people applying for housing, owners or sharing owners and people living in neighbouring property.

The procedure is also open to people who may be acting on your behalf, such as a councillor, Member of Parliament, advice agency or solicitor (but, as you will see later, we do encourage you to try to sort things out informally in the first instance).

If you belong to a Tenants' Group or Residents' Association and would prefer to ask them to

help you complain we will be happy for them to contact us on your behalf.

What Can You Complain About?

You can complain about any aspect of our service which you are unhappy about. For example:

- If a repair has not been carried out properly
- If you have not received information you have asked for
- If you feel that a member of staff, a committee member or a contractor has not behaved reasonably towards you
- If you feel your housing application has not been handled properly; or
- If you feel you have been unfairly discriminated against

We will also try to deal with complaints sympathetically, but there are some things we will not be able to give you information about. For example, it would be wrong for us to discuss with you the details of someone else's housing application as this would be a breach of confidentiality, but we can of course talk to you about how our allocations procedure works.

Trying To Sort Out Things Informally

You have every right to make a formal complaint whenever you wish to, but in the first instance it can often be quicker and easier for everyone if the problem can be sorted out informally.

To try and resolve a problem informally, you should normally phone or make an appointment to see a member of the Housing or Property staff, or if you prefer, write to your Housing Officer or Property Officer. Let them know what the problem is and how you would like it to be put right. They will let you know what we can do and how long it should take for the problem to be sorted out. Hopefully a resolution can be reached to your satisfaction.



The Formal Complaints Procedure

If the problem cannot be sorted out informally, you should in the first instance address your complaint to:

- The Housing Manager if your complaint is about housing applications or general tenancy matters
- The Property Manager if your complaint is about a repair or maintenance problems

When you make the complaint it is really important for you to let us know exactly what the problem is and how you would like to see it resolved. We would encourage you to do this in writing wherever possible, but if this is not easy you can complain by telephone or in person. Your complaint will be noted by the person who speaks to you and passed on to the appropriate Manager.

If you have made a formal complaint in writing, we will write to you within three working days to acknowledge that your complaint is being dealt with and by whom.

We will then write to you again within two weeks of receiving the complaint to let you know the outcome.

Do please remember that some things may not be within our control and may therefore be less easy to sort out.

If you are not happy with the response you will be able to use the appeals procedure.

If a manager has already handled your complaint at an informal level, then the Customer Services Director would handle any formal complaint.

Taking Your Complaint Further

If you don't feel that we have resolved your complaint satisfactorily, you can appeal.

To do this you should write to the Association's Chief Executive and advise that you wish to appeal the response to your formal complaint and some background information about the complaint and why it wasn't handled to your satisfaction.

We will write to you within three working days to acknowledge receipt of your letter and advise of when it will be reviewed.

The Chief Executive will write to you within three working days of the meeting at which your complaint is considered to let you know the decision.

If you are not happy with the decision you will normally be able to contact the Ombudsman.

If you live in our Sheltered Housing you can also make a complaint direct to the Care Commission at any stage by contacting them at:

Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY
Tel: (01382) 207100

Scottish Public Services Ombudsman

The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman investigates individual complaints against Housing Associations and Co-operatives. This is a free and impartial service and a leaflet about it is available from our office.

The service is available to anyone who receives a service from a Housing Association or who has applied to one of them for housing. Note: you must have gone through the Association's own complaints procedure before the Ombudsman can deal with your complaint.



The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman is based at:

4 Melville St
Edinburgh
EH3 7NS
Tel: 0800 377 7330
Email: ask@spso.org.uk

Who Will Know About Your Complaint?

We will as far as possible respect the confidentiality of your complaint. Whilst we are looking into your complaint, your name will not be divulged any more than is absolutely necessary within the Association.

You will appreciate, however, that if your complaint involved another tenant or a member of staff it may be very difficult for us to look at this without talking to that tenant or staff member. If you ask us not to talk to the tenant or staff member we will, depending on the nature of the complaint, respect your wishes, but it will probably limit any action we can take to tackle the problem.

It will not normally be possible for us to deal with anonymous complaints.

Getting Independent Advice

You may feel it is important for you to get advice before you decide whether to complain to us formally. Advice agencies in this area include:

- Citizen's Advice Bureau - 0131 554 8144
- Welfare Rights Service - 0131 222 1255
- Solicitors

Monitoring Complaints

All formal complaints made to the Association are recorded and reported to the Management Team who regularly advise the Board of Management of changes or improvements the Association may be making as a result of complaints received.





PORT OF LEITH

HOUSING ASSOCIATION

Tenant Handbook



Section 9 – Useful Contacts

Section 9 - Useful Contacts



Emergencies Outwith Office Hours

- Fire, Police, Ambulance
999
- Social Work
0131 554 4301
- Gas Escapes
0800 111 999
- Electricity
0845 27 27 999
- Emergency Repairs
0808 100 0403
0800 783 7937 (Bield 24 - outside office hours)
- Water
08457 420 420
- Special Uplifts
0131 529 3030

Advice Centres

- Citizens Advice Bureau
166 Great Junction St
Leith
0131 554 8144
- 192 Portobello High St
Portobello
Edinburgh
0131 669 7138

- Advice Shop
85-87 South Bridge
Edinburgh
EH1 1YN
0131 225 1256
- The Rights Office
117 Nicholson St
Edinburgh
EH8 9YG
0131 667 6339
- Shelter Scotland
0800 800 4444 (freephone helpline)
www.shelter.org.uk

Neighbour Disputes

- Antisocial Behaviour Investigation Team
Chesser House, 500 Gorgie Rd
Edinburgh
EH11 3YJ
0131 529 7050
- Noise Complaints
0131 311 3131
- Leith Police Station
Divisional Headquarters
Queen Charlotte St
Edinburgh
EH6 7AF
0131 554 9350



Partnership

- Edinburgh Community Safety
Chesser House,
500 Gorgie Rd
Edinburgh
EH11 3YJ
0131 529 3030
- Edinburgh Community Mediation
Service
1 Abercromby Place
Edinburgh
EH3 6QE
0131 557 2101

Housing & Council Tax Benefit

- Chesser House
500 Gorgie Rd
Edinburgh
EH11 3YJ
- 249 High St
Edinburgh
EH1 1YJ
0131 469 5000

Benefits Agency (Department of Social Security)

- 199 Commercial St
Edinburgh
0131 555 8000
- 275 Portobello High St
Portobello
Edinburgh
0131 657 7400)

Social Work Department

- Social Care Direct
Chesser House
500 Gorgie Rd
Edinburgh
EH11 3YJ
0131 200 2324
socialcaredirect@edinburgh.gov.uk

Other

- Samaritans
0131 225 3333/4/5 (24 hrs)
- Woman's Aid
0131 229 1418 (24 hrs)
- SSPCA
0131 225 6418
- Lothian Racial Equality Council
14 Forth St
Edinburgh
0131 556 0441





