

TENANT HANDBOOK



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1. Welcome

1.1 Foreword by Iain Sim, Chief Executive

On behalf of the board members, the Tenant Executive Panel and employees of Coast & Country, I would like to introduce you to the latest edition of our Tenants' Handbook. If you are reading this as a new tenant, a particularly warm welcome to Coast & Country

The handbook has been designed to provide you with an easy-to-read guide to the main services provided by us. We have taken on board your comments and suggestions and I hope that the handbook helps you to make the most of your tenancy. If there is something not covered by this handbook or you have an issue you would like to discuss in greater detail, please contact our Customer Contact Centre where a member of our staff will be happy to assist you.

Coast & Country actively promotes inclusion, equality and diversity and as a part of this, we are happy to make this handbook available in other formats or languages.

1.2 Ways to contact us:

Write: 14 Ennis Square, Redcar, TS10 5JR
Phone: 01642 771300
Text: 07797 801713
Email: enquiries@cchousing.org.uk
Fax: 01642 771305
Through our website www.cch-online.org.uk

You can also contact one your local offices:

Redcar housing office

14 Ennis Square, Redcar, TS10 5JR
Tel 01642 836005
Email redcar_dho@cchousing.org.uk
Opening hours: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday & Friday: 8.30 am - 4.30 pm
Wednesday 12.00 noon - 4.30 pm
Evening appointments can be made between Monday and Thursday - available upon request.

East Cleveland housing office

Civic Centre, Coniston Road, Skelton, Saltburn, TS12 2HN

Tel 01642 836004

Email eastcleveland_dho@cchousing.org.uk

Opening hours: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday & Friday 8.30 am - 4.30 pm

Wednesday 12.00 noon - 4.30 pm

Evening appointments can be made between Monday and Thursday - available upon request.

Grangetown housing office

Barbara Bowater House, Kingsley Road, Grangetown, Middlesbrough
TS6 7PW

Tel 01642 836010

Email: grangetown_dho@cchousing.org.uk

Opening hours: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday & Friday 8.30 am - 4.30 pm

Wednesday 12.00 noon - 4.30 pm

Evening appointments can be made between Monday and Thursday - available upon request.

Spencerbeck housing office

Spencerbeck House, Ellerbeck Way, Spencerbeck, Middlesbrough, TS7 9PZ

Tel 01642 836009

Email: spencerbeck_dho@cchousing.org.uk

Opening hours: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday & Friday 8.30 am - 4.30 pm

Wednesday 12.00noon - 4.30 pm

Evening appointments can be made between Monday and Thursday - available upon request.

South Bank estate management board office

11/13 Steele Crescent South Bank Middlesbrough TS6 6QJ

Tel: 01642 836072

Email: southbank_emb@cchousing.org.uk

Opening hours: Monday & Friday 9.00 am - 12.00 noon

Wednesday 1.00 pm - 4.00 pm

2. About Coast & Country

2.1 Who are Coast & Country?

Coast & Country were set up as a 'not for profit' organisation in 2002. Known as a 'Registered Provider' of housing, we are regulated by the Tenants Service Authority. We are run by a Board of Directors, a third of which are tenants.

Our main business is providing affordable homes for rent and along with that we offer a number of services such as the repair and maintenance of your homes, maintenance of gardens and open spaces and managing the neighbourhood where you live.

There are also a number of other optional services that we offer such as Homecall and Telecare services to support you to live independently or debt and benefit advice to help you with your money.

2.2 Our aims

As a company with have four main aims and they are to:

- Give you a quality product and service
- Create neighbourhoods where you want to live
- Grow our business
- Be an excellent company

We plan what we do around those aims and we think that they cover everything but if you don't agree, we are always happy for you to get in touch. And if you have ideas that will help us achieve our aims, just let us know. Your views are important to us.

2.3 Equality

We have an Inclusion, Equality & Diversity strategy because you are a mixed group in terms of ages, disabilities, race, religion and sexuality. We know this because you fill in our 'About You' Survey and we need to make sure that everyone gets treated equally. That isn't about treating everyone the same but making sure that everyone gets an equal chance. Think about a person who can just walk into our reception to be able to see the receptionist. For them we don't need to do too much other than say have a door into the building. But then think about a person in a wheelchair. We need to make sure the doors are wide enough, make sure there is a ramp, have an automatic door and have part of the reception desk at a lower level. So while we have done more for the person in the wheelchair, we have just made sure that each person gets the same opportunity – to come in and speak to our receptionist. Creating equal opportunities is what equality means to us.

In line with the Equality Bill, we have an equality scheme to make sure that we are working towards equal opportunities. In practice this is what it really means for us:

Using details from our 'About You' project we will:

- Monitor who uses our services, including giving customer service comments and taking up resident involvement opportunities, so that we can work out that we are doing the right things for groups of people
- Make sure that all our information is available in a range of formats to suit everyone
- Make sure that offices and any venues that we use are accessible
- Offer support to make sure that you can take up opportunities to be involved
- Offer interpretation services where needed
- Train our staff in equality issues
- Work in partnership with other agencies to jointly fund initiatives or to find out if we are doing things right
- Make sure that all of our contractors have an equality policy like ours

We are always trying to do more to address equality issues and if there is anything that you think we need to know, then get in touch.

3. Getting involved and giving your views

3.1 What is resident involvement?

Coast & Country are committed to putting you at the heart of all that we do. We do this by making sure that you have the opportunities to be involved or to simply give your views so that we shape our services around you and what you want. We call this 'resident involvement'.

If you are new to the term 'resident involvement' then you may be wondering what it's all about. For us it is about making sure that you are kept informed and that you are consulted on issues that affect you such as when we send the 'Home Truths' magazine. It is about you telling us what you think so that we can use your views to change the way we do things such as when you fill in a survey. Then it is about you getting even more involved, giving us solutions to problems and really helping us give you a better service. This could be something like joining the property maintenance focus group. Finally you may want to take it even further and start to make key decisions about your homes and services by becoming a board member for example. Essentially, it is about giving you a range of ways that you can get involved at a level that will suit you. You can ask for a copy of our Resident Involvement Directory for more information.

3.2 Keeping you informed

The main way that we keep you informed is through our regular tenant's magazine 'Hometruths' but we use a wide range of ways such as newsletters, leaflets about the services we offer and our website www.cch-online.org.uk

3.3 Giving your views

You can tell us something that we do well or something that we need to improve. You may have an idea or suggestion that you want to share with us. Cards are available to complete in our main reception areas but you can telephone, email or write to us with your comments.

From time to time we will seek your opinions. We send out surveys and scorecards to ask you about your experience.

3.4 Consulting and involving you

There are lots of ways that we get your views face to face. Many are really informal such as our Tenant's Forums or Road Shows. We often arrange community projects such as mini makeovers.

If you want to get a bit more serious then you can take part in focus groups that look at a particular issue. You can become a tenant inspector and look for service improvements. If you have a bit more time on your hands, then you could join our Tenant Executive Panel, our Scrutiny Panel or become a Board Member.

All of the things that you tell us are recorded and we use them to make sure that we build our services around what you want. You can ask to see our Resident Involvement Impact Assessment (known as our Yearbook) that shows all the ways that services changed because of what you told us.

3.5 Support to get involved

We want everyone to be able to get involved in what we do and so we are committed to making sure, where we can, that there are no barriers to stop you. We understand that we can be hard to reach for some people and so this is what we do to support you.

We make sure that any meeting or conference venues that we use are accessible for people, including people with disabilities and we can also arrange suitable transport where needed. We can provide large print versions of any documents produced by us and we can also produce 'easy to read' versions of any documents that are difficult to understand. We have a hearing loop installed at our offices at Ennis Square, Redcar but we also have a portable hearing loop that we can take to most venues. We can arrange for a signer to be at any events or conferences that we hold. Finally where English isn't your first language, we can work with you so that you can still be involved. This could include having documents translated for you.

We know that travelling expenses may be a problem, especially as many of you live in rural areas, so we can arrange transport or pay for any public transport fares. If you have your own car, you can claim a mileage allowance from us in most cases. We ask people to car share when possible so that we save money and we don't add extra carbon emissions to the environment. We will always provide refreshments at meetings or events and if you are with us over a mealtime, we will arrange for food to be provided. We can usually suit any dietary requirements.

If child care is an issue we can usually arrange to pay child care fees and sometimes, at larger events, we organise a crèche. Check with us first as children are usually welcome at events and we often provide activities for them. If you have other caring responsibilities, let us know and we will try to help.

We can also make payments for any out of pocket expenses that you may have as a result of you getting involved. This may be for example calls made while mystery shopping.

We give you an 'induction' or new starter pack that has lots of information on how it all works. We also have an information pack should you be interested in joining the board. It tells you what you need to know.

Finally, you may think that you can't do it but we know you can. If you decide that you could do with a bit of help to bring out your skills then we have a Tenant's Training Programme where you decide what you want to learn and we then plan a programme.

So we hope that there is nothing stopping from you from giving your views but if there is, get in touch and will try to help you. Contact the Community Investment Team on 01642 771308.

4. Rents, service charges and money matters

4.1 What makes up your rent?

Rent is the weekly charge that we make for your home. Your rent will include a charge for water and sewerage, unless you have chosen to have a water meter fitted. This charge is for the supply of water to your home and for use of the drainage system.

Your rent may include charges to cover the cost of any other services you may have such as HomeCall or home insurance.

It may also include service charges. Service charges are for extra services that you may receive such as communal cleaning or the maintenance of lifts. Where a service charge shows on your rent statement, you will be given a full breakdown of how the service charge is calculated. We may add new or remove existing service charges. If the cost of the service changes your rent may change but we will let you know at least a month before. We would always let you know before we change any service or bring in a new one.

A separate charge is made if you rent a garage from us.

We send you regular rent statements showing your payments and any housing benefit received for you and the balance of your rent account. We also let you know of any changes in rent that will happen at least a month before. We normally change the rent that you pay in April each year. If you would like to know more on how we calculate rents then get in touch with us.

You have to pay council tax for your home to the council. Your rent doesn't include any charges for council tax and you will get a separate bill from the council when you first move in. Council tax helps to pay for services provided by the Council, the Police and Fire Service and in some areas, the Parish Council. Take a look at your bill for the ways that you can pay.

4.2 What do we do with your rent?

Your rent is the main income for us. We use it to repair, manage and improve your homes. It is also used to repay any money we borrow to carry out improvements and to provide extra services.

4.3 When to pay your rent

Your rent is due every Monday and needs to be paid by midday on the following Saturday to stop you falling into arrears. If your account does get into arrears we will let you know. You can also pay fortnightly, 4 weekly or calendar monthly but you need to make your payments in advance.

4.4 How do I pay?

- any Post Office in the UK using your rent swipe card
- any PayPoint outlet
- by telephone to Coast & Country
- by telephone to Allpay
- by text
- by direct debit or standing order
- by internet
- at our head office in Dormanstown.

If you'd like more details on any of the ways to pay then get in touch with one of our rent officers on 01642 771326 or 771327.

We always look for new ways for you to pay your rent and to make it easier for you. If you have any ideas, we would like to hear from you. Whenever we bring in new ways to pay, we will always make sure that we consult you to make sure it is what you want.

4.5 Problems paying your rent?

If you have problems paying your rent we will always try to help you. You should contact us as soon as you know you cannot pay. We can give you help and advice on rent and other money matters. If you need more specialist debt advice we can tell you about other agencies that can help you.

We can make an arrangement for the repayment of your debt that is affordable and will take into account your individual circumstances and needs.

We take a 'firm but fair' approach towards tenants who do not pay their rent. We will contact you by telephone or letter when your accounts falls into arrears to arrange a repayment plan. Legal action will only be taken if you fail to make contact or keep to an arrangement. We will only carry out evictions as a last resort and only where all steps to recover the debt have been taken and no arrangement has been made or kept to.

4.6 Housing benefit

To apply for housing benefit you need to complete an application form. The council deal with housing and council tax benefit claims but we can assist you with putting a claim in. We can check your claim and supporting documents before the claim is sent off. This helps you to get the claim right first time, and means you don't have to send off your documents.

If you are entitled to housing benefit you will usually receive it from the Monday after your application form is received. Sometimes you can ask for it to be backdated. Once you are getting benefit, you need to inform the council of any changes that may affect your benefit and in some cases you will need to complete a new form. It could be:

- Changes in your household income
- Someone joins or leaves your household
- Changes in your circumstances such as marriage or separation or starting work
- You stop getting benefits like income support or job seekers allowance
- You or your partner start claiming sickness benefit or go into hospital
- Someone else living in your home has a change of circumstances

If you are ever in doubt then get in touch with either us or the council and we will advise you. Don't forget that if you continue to get benefit that you are not entitled to, you will have to repay it. This could put your rent account into serious arrears. If the council think that you have knowingly received benefit to which you are not legally entitled, they may consider prosecuting you.

Under the terms of your tenancy agreement we would expect housing benefit to be paid directly to us. That will then show on your rent account. You can sometimes choose to have your housing benefit paid to you but you would then be responsible for paying the full amount of rent due.

If you are not happy with a benefit decision made by the council, our Benefit and Money Advice team can contact them on your behalf. We can help you to ask the council to look again at your claim or to appeal against the decision. They can also go with you to the Appeal Tribunal if you want them to.

4.7 Council tax benefit

You can apply for council tax benefit if you are on a low income by completing a form and sending it to the benefits section at the council. We can help you complete the form. You can also apply for discounts on your bill, such as if you live alone. You need to contact the council if you have a query about your council tax bill, discounts or benefit and you need to report any changes in circumstances to them straight away.

4.8 Other benefits

As well as housing benefit there are other benefits that you could be entitled to such as:

- Disability living allowance
- Attendance allowance
- Carers allowance
- Working tax credit
- Child tax credit

Our Benefit & Money Advice Team can check that you are getting all the benefits you can and that the amount is right. The team can also help with other money matters, such as budgeting advice, ways to save and getting cheaper bills.

For more information, get in touch with us or you can visit the section on our website:

<http://yourmoneymatters.cch-online.org.uk>

5. Repairs and maintenance

This section is a summary of our repairs and maintenance service together with some general advice. For more details you can refer to your Repairs & Maintenance handbook that also contains details on diagnosing the repair that you require.

5.1 How to report your repair

You should tell us as soon as possible when you think that your home needs a repair. To report your repair, you can:

You can report a repair in any of the following ways:

1. Online at www.cch-online.org.uk. You will be guided through identifying the repair and logging the details.
2. Telephone our repairs line on 01642 771300. A 24 hour service is provided for emergency repairs. All other repairs can be reported between 8:30am and 5pm, Monday to Friday.
3. Visit your local Coast & Country office
4. Fax on 01642 771392
5. Text to 07797 801713

We have a legal responsibility to carry out some repairs but sometimes the repair may be something that you as a tenant are responsible for. You can refer to your repairs handbook for more details or contact us if you are unsure.

When you contact us to report the repair, we will need to know:

When you contact us, we will ask for:

- Your name and address
- A contact telephone number
- The times when it is convenient for us to carry out the repair
- Full details of the repair
- Whether you would like a free text service reminder of your appointment
- Anything else that you think we need to know

When you ring, we will put your repair into a category and these are:

- Emergency
- Urgent
- Routine
- Planned

5.2 Emergency repairs

If we think that your repair should be an emergency repair we will try to fix or make safe within 4 hours. An emergency repair is usually when there is a danger to you, your family or visitors or where there may be damage to property.

When you ring, we will try to get to you as soon as possible but within a maximum of 4 hours. Wherever possible we will try to give you some idea of when we are likely to call but this often depends on other emergencies that happen that day. We know that vulnerable tenants will need special consideration in some circumstances.

The following repairs will usually be classed as emergency repairs

- Gas Leaks including carbon monoxide
- Major leaks that cannot be resolved by turning off the stop tap
- Total loss of electric power
- Unsafe lighting socket or electrical fitting
- Partial loss of power when a danger to health (such as stair lift)
- Blockage with drainage resulting in water overflowing within the property
- Insecure door or window at access level*
- Smoke/house alarm constantly sounding
- Blocked flue to open fire or boiler
- Serious gale damage, fire, flood or explosions

*Refer to the repairs handbook for full details as charges may apply

5.3 Urgent

An urgent repair is usually where the repair is needed to solve either a serious inconvenience to you or some degree of inconvenience but is not classed as an emergency. We aim to fix either within 24 hours or up to 3 working days depending upon the level of inconvenience that it is causing.

- Major leaks that can be resolved by turning off the stop tap
- Partial loss of electrics
- Blocked / leaking foul drain, soil stack or toilet pan where there is no other working toilet
- Loss of heating in the winter (November to April)
- Smoke / House alarm sounding intermittently
- Tap fully turned on and can't be turned off
- Total loss of water supply
- Repairs to your main heating where there is another source of heat such as electric/gas fire
- Loss of heating in the summer (May to October)
- No hot water
- Toilet not flushing

- Loose or detached banister or handrail
- Rotten timber flooring or stair tread that could be classed as a safety problem
- Minor internal water leaks that cannot be contained
- Blocked sink or bath
- Repairs to heating or fires (where there is another source of heat)

When you ring, we will offer you an appointment. We offer appointments, Monday to Friday, for the following time slots:

- All day – anytime between 8am and 5pm, (4pm on a Friday)
- Morning – anytime between 8am and 12 noon
- Afternoon – anytime between 12.30pm and 5pm (4pm on a Friday)
- School run – anytime between 10am and 2pm

5.4 Routine and other repairs

All other repairs, unless treated as planned or cyclical maintenance, will be routine repairs. Routine repairs are carried out within 15 working days. Again an appointment will be made when you contact us.

Planned maintenance is where we plan in repairs needed such as fencing, garage repairs or footpaths. By putting these non urgent repairs together, we can achieve better value for money. Cyclical repairs are jobs that we carry out regularly. This might be lift servicing, clearing gutters or gas safety checks for example.

5.5 What you can do to help

You are responsible for keeping your home in a reasonable condition and trying to solve minor problems yourself. Take a look at your repairs handbook for more details. Let us know if you don't have one.

If you need a repair carrying out, then let us know. We rely on you to report them promptly and to be as accurate as possible. Please be available for any emergency repairs or appointments so that we can carry out the repair within the agreed time. If we are calling to carry out a gas service then it is really important that you allow access.

When we call to do your repair, make sure that you check our identification and confirm with us the work that is being done. It is also helpful if you keep the area clear of your belongings, children and pets.

If you need to change the time of your appointment, please call us and let us know so we can re-arrange it. If we attend an appointment and can't gain access to your property, it wastes our engineers' time and costs us money which could be spent on improving our service.

We expect you to take reasonable care to prevent damage to the property by fire, frost, burst pipes or blocked drains. We always recommend that you have

contents insurance to cover your belongings. We have a scheme that allows you to pay a weekly sum with your rent payments. Contact us for more details.

5.6 What you can expect of us

We will identify ourselves when we call to do your repair by showing you our identification cards. If you are ever in doubt about our identity then you should not allow access. Ask the member of staff to wait outside while you get in touch with us. They will be happy to wait until you have checked

We will be courteous and professional, respecting your home and will carry out the repair in a safe way. If you are vulnerable, need help or have a communication problem, the staff member will contact their manager for guidance where needed. If the job cannot be completed then we will let you know what is happening. When we have finished the work, we will provide you with a job satisfaction card and these will be used to improve the service we give you.

Sometimes we may have to charge you for carrying out a repair – this may be if we carry out work that is your responsibility, or if we carry out additional work at an extra cost. We will always tell you about any charge before we carry out the work and give you a rough estimate of the cost. You'll usually receive a bill after the work has been completed, although in some cases, we may ask for payment before the work is undertaken.

5.7 The National Compensation Scheme and the Right to Repair

You are entitled to claim compensation if you report certain repair or maintenance problems that affects your health, safety or security and we have failed on two occasions to carry out the repair within the set timescales. There is a flat rate award which is currently £10, plus £2 a day up to a total of £50, for each day the repair remains outstanding.

We also have a right to repair scheme similar to that above but it only applies to tenants who were a tenant at the time we transferred from the council. Under this right to repair scheme, if repairs costing up to £250 are not carried out within a fixed time scale, you can tell us that you want a different contractor to do the job. We must appoint a new contractor and set another time limit. You can then claim compensation of up to £50 if the repair is not carried out within the new time limit.

5.8 Right to improve your home

You can make alterations and improvements to your home but you need to have written permission before you start work. We need to ensure that the work you do is safe, for you, your household and visitors. You also need to check whether you require other approval like planning permission or building regulation approval.

Any work must meet a specified standard and you may be responsible for the future maintenance of the work that you carry out. We will tell you that when you apply for permission. Forms are available on request.

We may need to inspect any work done and you need to know that if your home is damaged while the work is going on, you will be responsible to put it right.

In some circumstances you may be able to apply for compensation for alterations and improvements to your home when you leave Coast & Country. You can ask for more details from your local housing office. Compensation is not paid where you are granted another tenancy with Coast & Country.

5.9 Home visits by our staff and smoking

On 1 July 2007, legislation made it an offence for employers in England to allow smoking in the workplace. The new law was designed to protect workers from passive smoking, known to cause health problems.

Some of the work that we do, repairs or gas checks for example, are carried out in your home. If you, members of your household or visitors to your home smoke then we ask you to take the following steps so that our staff are protected from passive smoking:

- Try to avoid smoking in your home at least one hour before we visit
- Do not smoke while our staff are in your home
- When possible, ventilate your home by opening windows

We appreciate that sometimes you may not get a specific time for your appointment or we may call while in the area but it would still be helpful for you not to smoke during our visit. There may be times when our staff feel that they cannot work in certain environments due to the amount of smoke in your home and if that happens, we will arrange another appointment.

5.10 Staying safe in your home

Gas safety

Help us to help you stay safe! Around 35 people die in the UK each year as a result of faulty gas appliances. Don't let it happen to you.

To ensure your safety, one of your qualified gas engineers needs to carry out a gas safety check on your property once a year. We will make every effort to arrange appointments that are convenient to you so please co-operate with us and allow us access to your property.

The law says that, as your landlord, we have to carry out these checks on all our appliances in our properties, and because we have to do this by law, we can, as a last resort, take legal action to gain access to your property to carry out safety checks, which means additional costs for you.

What to do if you smell gas or fumes

1. Phone Transco **immediately** on freephone 0800 111999. They will deal with any report of a gas escape free of charge
2. Contact Coast & Country on (01642) 771300
3. If possible, turn OFF gas supply at the meter (**unless** the meter is located in a cellar or basement, in which case, DO NOT enter)
4. Do **not** turn back on until the escape has been repaired and you are told to do so
5. Turn **off** gas appliances. Do **not** use until a gas engineer says you can
6. Open all windows and doors to ventilate the property
7. Do **not** use any electrical appliances or switch on or off any switches
8. Extinguish all naked flames
9. Do **not** smoke.

Carbon Monoxide

You cannot smell or taste carbon monoxide but signs that it is present in the home are that you feel the following symptoms:

- Tiredness
- Drowsiness
- Headache
- Nausea
- Chest and stomach pains
- Dizziness

Although these symptoms can be confused with common ailments, if you believe that it could be carbon monoxide poisoning then you should seek urgent medical help.

We fit carbon monoxide detectors in homes that have open flues. It is designed to alert you to levels of carbon monoxide before they reach harmful levels. The alarm will bleep and a red light will flash. If this happens you need to get in touch with us. You need to regularly test your alarm by pressing and holding the test button. You shouldn't paint or use cleaning products on the detector as this may stop it working properly.

If you smell gas or suspect a gas leak

- Open the doors and window to let the gas out
- Don't use any electric switches
- Don't smoke or use any naked flames
- Check that you haven't left any unlit gas appliance on
- If you haven't or you're not sure, turn the gas supply off at the meter
- Get in touch with us straight away on 01642 771300

Fire Safety

Some simple precautions and tips to keep you safe:

- Test your fire alarm regularly, replacing the batteries where necessary
- Remember that closed doors can hold back a fire and prevent it spreading more quickly
- Plan what you will do if there is a fire. You can ask for a home fire safety check from the Fire Brigade
- Follow safety advice from the Fire Brigade and in particular 'Bin that chip pan'!
- If there is a fire, get everyone out and do not go back in for any reason
- Dial 999 from a mobile or your neighbour's phone
- Warn your neighbours if they might be in danger
- Let us know what has happened by ringing us on 01642 771300

Burst or leaking pipes: what to do

- Turn the water off at the mains
- If electrics are affected then turn off the electric as well
- Get in touch with us on 01642 771300

Loss of electricity: what to do

- If your neighbours are also affected then call your electric company
- Try resetting the consumer unit. See your repairs handbook for more details or contact us for advice
- If that doesn't solve the problem then get in touch with us on 01642 771300

Asbestos

Where we allocate properties that we know contain asbestos, we will make sure that it is in a safe condition and isn't a risk to your health. Asbestos was used to either provide rigidity, such as in asbestos cement, or to provide heat resistance such as behind gas fires. Asbestos is only a danger when it is disturbed or broken and the asbestos fibres are released into the air.

In the home, the most common use is in cement products. It is found in the construction of garages and sheds, soffit board, roof tiles, fire surrounds, drainpipes, flue pipes and some water systems. Some roof felts, and textured plaster like artex can also contain asbestos as can paints, floor tiles and bath panels. The use of textured coatings was very common in the 1970's and 1980's although the asbestos content was quite low, usually between 3% and 5%.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) recommends that any asbestos should be left in place if of sound quality, sealed with a coat of paint and is not

going to be disturbed. It is also our policy not to remove textured coatings from homes.

To keep you safe remember:

- Don't sand, drill or break off textured coatings as this may release fibres
- If large areas are flaking or damaged due to property defects then let us know
- Don't break up materials that contain asbestos
- Don't attempt to remove any asbestos yourself
- If you ever suspect that you have broken into asbestos you can reduce the risk by wetting the surface to stop fibres becoming air borne

Security at home

- When anyone calls at your home, make sure you check their identify
- Always make sure that you lock you doors and windows when you go out
- Keep any outbuildings securely locked and make sure that tools and ladders, useful to burglars, are locked away
- Don't leave keys in hiding places as thieves know where to look
- Try to make your house look occupied like leaving the radio or lights on while you are out
- Don't leave valuables in view
- Don't forget to cancel your milk or papers if you are going away
- You can get advice from your police crime prevention officer including how you could set up a neighbourhood watch scheme

6. Living in your home

We want everyone to enjoy their home and so this section gives you advice and tips on how you can be a good neighbour. It also reminds you of your responsibilities under your tenancy agreement and what to do if things go wrong.

6.1 Being a good neighbour

We all have a right to live peacefully in our home and with that, we all have a responsibility to be a good neighbour. We all want to get along with each other but it is not always easy and sometimes we need to make a special effort. These are some general tips on how you can be a good neighbour:

- Consider your neighbours and their circumstances and try to be tolerant. Remember that some people cannot easily stop some behaviour, a baby crying for example.
- If you own a pet, take all reasonable steps to keep your pet under control so as not to cause a nuisance or annoyance to anyone in your neighbourhood. Don't leave animals alone for long periods of time and take reasonable care to make sure that your pet does not foul in public places or cause any damage.
- Try to carry out unavoidable noisy activities such as DIY jobs during the hours of 8am to 7pm weekdays/Saturdays and 10am to 5pm Sundays.
- Keep the volume of hi-fi, radios and televisions as low as possible especially at night. Position loud speakers, fridges and freezers well away from party walls.
- If you have a burglar alarm, make sure that it is set to turn off after 20 minutes if it is activated and that a key holder can be contacted if it goes off while you are on holiday.
- Do not burn garden waste or have a barbeque when your neighbour has washing out drying. Position them where the smoke and smell will least likely blow onto their properties. Follow the council's guidance if you intend having a garden bonfire, this is available on the council's website.
- When you park your vehicle, be sure not to block anyone's access, avoid slamming your doors or shining your headlights into your neighbour's windows late at night.
- When your children are playing outside, make sure that you know what they are doing and that they aren't upsetting the neighbours.

6.2 Anti-social behaviour

Being anti-social or causing a nuisance or annoyance to our neighbours stops them from enjoying their home. We are committed to dealing with any breaches of tenancy, neighbour disputes, anti-social behaviour, harassment and hate crime and we have a policy and to make sure that issues are dealt with effectively. We have signed up to the Government's Respect Standard for Housing Management showing our commitment to tackling anti-social behaviour in partnership with the Council and the Police and pledge to provide:

- Accountability, leadership and commitment
- Empowerment and reassurance for residents
- Prevention and early intervention
- Tailored services for residents and provision of support for victims and witnesses
- Protection for communities through swift enforcement
- Support to tackle the causes of anti-social behaviour

We also work with a mediation service that provides an impartial and confidential service to help people get on better. This works well where there are no breaches of tenancy but people fall out because of a clash of lifestyles.

The tenancy agreement makes it clear that tenants are responsible for their behaviour and the behaviour of everyone living with them or visiting their home. Where a tenant is found to be causing anti-social behaviour, nuisance or disturbance, we will take a firm approach and may use a range of remedies including:

- Mediation
- Acceptable behaviour agreements
- Notice seeking possession
- Injunction
- Anti-social behaviour order (ASBO)
- Possession

If you make a complaint we will tell you what we can or can't do to help so you are clear from the start.

A copy of the Anti-social Behaviour policy is available on request or can be viewed online at www.cch-online.org.uk

6.3 Harassment

By signing your tenancy agreement you have agreed not to commit or allow any person living with or visiting you to commit any act of harassment either to other residents, staff, contractors or anyone engaging in lawful business in the local area. Examples of harassment include:

- Using or threatening to use violence
- Using abusive or insulting words or behaviour
- Stalking someone
- Damaging or threatening to damage another persons home or possessions
- Writing threatening, abusive or insulting graffiti

If you have suffered any form of harassment contact your local office.

6.4 Hate crime

Hate Crime is a serious criminal offence committed against a person or property due to hatred of that person's gender, race, religion, ethnicity, disability or sexual orientation. Hate crime not only harms the victim or damages their property, but has an impact on the victims family and friends and the wider community.

Hate crime can take on many forms:

Physical attacks
Damage to property
Offensive graffiti
Arson
Offensive letters
Abusive telephone calls
Groups intimidating the victim
Unfounded malicious complaints
Offensive leaflets and posters
Abusive gestures

Hate crime is a serious breach of tenancy and we will take action against anyone found to be involved in hate crime.

If you are a victim of hate crime, then get in touch with us straight away but if you are threatened with danger then you need to contact the police on 999.

6.5 Illegal or immoral use of your home

You, members of your household and visitors to your home must not use your home, or anywhere on your estate for any criminal or immoral activities. For residents of flats this includes anywhere within your block of flats. Some examples of this are:

- Growing, storing, dealing or possessing illegal drugs
- Storing, selling or receiving stolen goods
- Storing or distributing racist material or pornography
- Prostitution

If you are aware that any of these are being carried out in your neighbourhood report them to the Police.

6.6 Damage to your home

If you, anyone living with you or visitors cause damage to your home, estate or anything belonging to us, the council or adjoining owners either accidentally or deliberately, you will be recharged the cost of rectifying the problem and if appropriate, action will be taken against you. This includes theft of fencing, boilers and copper piping. If your home is damaged through anti-social behaviour you must report it to the Police.

6.7 Pets

You can keep small domestic animals such as a cat or dog at your home without asking our permission provided they are kept under control and do not cause a nuisance or annoyance to your neighbours. That doesn't mean though that you can have an unlimited number of pets as too many domestic pets are highly likely to cause a nuisance. If you need more advice then get in touch with us. You are not allowed to keep dogs or cats if you live in a block of flats, if you share access or a garden with other tenants or if the dog is described as 'dangerous' under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991.

Although pigeons are classed as domestic pets, you are only allowed to keep pigeons in certain circumstances. Please contact us for further details if you wish to apply for permission to keep pigeons or erect a pigeon loft, as the Company has conditions that must be complied with.

6.8 Gardens

If you have a garden it is your responsibility to make sure that it is maintained in a reasonable state of cultivation and in a neat and tidy condition, free of litter and unwanted bulky items.

All gardens are inspected on a regular basis and classified as red, amber or green. Action will be taken where a garden is classified as red or amber as this fails to meet the required standard. If we have to remove rubbish from your garden after giving you notice to remove it, you will be recharged and if you persistently refuse to maintain your garden we may apply to court for an injunction or put you onto the compulsory garden maintenance scheme which will include a weekly charge.

We are responsible for maintaining your access paths to your front and back doors and garden washing line where the path has been installed by us. Any additional paths and patios are your responsibility.

You can erect a shed or greenhouse if you have your own garden as long as you have our written permission.

6.9 Estate Services

Our estate services team provide a number of services to help you and to make sure that your estates are kept clean and tidy. The team also improve the areas through the planting of trees and flower beds.

There are teams that work within estate services, taking care of grassed areas, trees and flower and shrub beds and keeping areas free of litter, graffiti and fly tipping. If there is a problem in your area then contact your local office.

We have the Garden Service Team. If you are on the scheme we carry out garden maintenance twice a month during the summer and once a month in the winter. If you are elderly or disabled and have nobody to assist you with your garden, please contact your local office as we may be able to help you.

The Pest Control Team will arrange for the control of wasps, bees, rats, pigeons and mice. If you have an insect infestation in your home, such as fleas or ants, it is your responsibility and you must deal with the problem yourself. We can, though, offer you advice on how to deal with it. In some cases we can carry out the work but there will be a charge. Just get in touch for more details.

6.10 Refuse collection

The local council are responsible for collecting household rubbish and recyclable waste on a regular basis. All properties have either an individual bin or a communal bin shared with other tenants. Please put your bin out on the morning of collection day and bring it back in after it has been emptied. If you require a refuse bin then you need to get in touch with your local council.

Local councils usually have a free junk job service for the collection of large unwanted items and recycling centres/rubbish tips that you can use to dispose of excess household or garden rubbish. Please contact your local council for further details.

6.11 Parking

You cannot park vehicles on open spaces such as grassed areas, paved areas or other land owned by Coast & Country. You are not allowed to park a vehicle in your garden unless you have been given permission and have a properly constructed driveway and a dropped kerb installed by the council.

You need to ask permission to park a caravan or boat at your property and comply with the company's conditions.

You cannot park heavy goods vehicles in residential areas.

If you wish to build a garage or car port you must seek permission first and you will need to check whether you need planning permission from the local council.

You can rent a garage from us if there is one available in the area. If there are no spare garages, we can put your name on a register. If you would like to apply for a garage please contact the local office.

If you think a car has been abandoned, please let us know so that we can investigate.

6.12 Aerials/satellite dishes

You may install a TV aerial to your property providing you do not damage the structure, window or door frames of the property.

If you wish to install a satellite dish to your property, you must seek our permission to do so and comply with the Company's conditions. In certain cases you may need to apply for planning permission from your local council, if you live in a block of flats or the National Park, for example.

6.13 Running a business from your home

Lots of people are looking at ways of working from home to beat the recent recession and this is something that we actively encourage. You may for example want to set up an ironing service or turn a hobby such as jewellery making into a business or you may be thinking about becoming a child minder or setting up a catering business.

If you would like to run a business from your home then you need to let your local housing office know of your plans and they will ask you to confirm in writing. If your plans are approved then our Community Investment Team will be able to put you in touch with agencies offering business start up advice and funding. Obviously we couldn't allow you to work from home if your business would cause a nuisance or be a danger to the property or the local environment.

Don't forget to let your local council know of your plans as they may need you to apply for planning permission depending upon the nature of the business that you run from your home.

6.14 Living in flats

If you live in a block of flats or share a communal area with other tenants you should:

- Use laundry and drying areas correctly
- Keep noise to an acceptable level
- Make sure rubbish is stored in communal bins provided or properly deposited in rubbish chutes where provided
- Keep communal areas, stairs and corridors clean and tidy where it is a tenancy condition to do so. Some blocks receive a cleaning service paid for by a service charge included in the rent
- Keep communal areas clear of belongings or rubbish at all times
- Keep entrances and exits clear and unobstructed at all times
- Do not throw anything from any landing, balcony, corridor or window
- Do not smoke in any communal areas as this is now a criminal offence
- Do not allow entry into the building to non residents who are not your visitors
- Do not use fire exits as a general means of access
- Report repairs to any communal area, through your 'Local Voice' or if you don't have one then report repairs needed directly to us. If you don't have a 'Local Voice' and are interested in knowing more, then get in touch.

Some blocks of flats have a door entry system operated by a key fob. You will be issued a key fob at the start of the tenancy. If you require any extra fobs then you can request these although we make a small charge for this service.

6.15 Community centres and community rooms

We have a number of community centres and community rooms across the Redcar & Cleveland area that are available for hire for events. They can be hired for meetings, training events and conferences or for social events such as weddings or children's parties. A small charge is made to cover the costs of running the centres and rooms.

To check availability, book a centre or for more details, get in touch with the Community Investment Team on 01642 771308.

7. Support to live independently

7.1 HomeCall and Telecare Services

We provide a number of services within HomeCall to meet the needs of tenants and other customers.

Our HomeCall Community Alarm Service provides direct access to our 24 hour customer contact centre. Using either a pull cord or a pendant, you can alert us to any emergencies that you need help with. We can then make contact with your relatives, call the emergency services or arrange for a Homecall Warden to call to see you.

HomeCall Plus is a personalised service helping to meet the needs of individual customers, providing one to one support and companionship. The service is ideal for people living on their own or for couples who need extra help to support independent living. The service is a visiting service, with the level of support assessed and agreed with you at the start.

Telecare is a service that uses electronic sensors linked to the Customer Contact Centre to monitor a range of potential problems or emergencies that may affect people living safely and independently in their own homes. Telecare sensors can alert us to a number of situations such as fire, flood, falls and carbon monoxide levels.

More information is available on the Homecall website www.homecall.me, or you can email at enquiries@homecall.me or you can contact our Homecall Team on 01642 771300.

7.2 Adaptations

We can help you to live more comfortably by adapting and improving your home and by giving advice on other housing choices to meet your needs. Adaptations are works carried out to improve access to and mobility around your home. We can install items such as:

- Grab rails
- Hand rails
- Banisters
- Half steps
- Stair lifts
- Door entry systems

Some requests may need an assessment from the Council's Occupational Therapy Service and we will work with the Council to do this. Some adaptations can be undertaken more quickly and may not need a formal assessment.

For more information email us at enquiries@cchousing.org.uk or contact our Adaptations Team on 01642 771441

7.3 Floating Support

This service provides practical and emotional support to help you if you are experiencing problems living independently or you need support to set up your new home. Support can be for a short time or it can be up to two years. We can provide support in a number of ways such as:

- Finding somewhere to live
- Help with claiming the right welfare benefits
- Advice on how to manage your money
- Support with medical issues
- Advice and information on employment, training and education
- Assistance to access further support from a range of other agencies

The type of support that is offered will be agreed between you and your Floating Support Worker and a plan developed to help you achieve what you want. You can access the service by contacting us but you can also be referred from another organisation.

You can get more information by emailing us at enquiries@cchousing.org.uk or by contacting the Floating Support Service on 01642 771433 or 01642 771437

7.4 Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse is not only about being physically abused or beaten but can be verbal, sexual or emotional abuse, being treated without respect or being restricted to where you can go or who you can see.

The fear of being without a home is often a reason for not taking steps to stop the abuse. If you do decide to leave your partner or you find yourself suddenly homeless then get in touch. We work with the council to make sure that you are helped when threatened with or are suffering from domestic abuse. The council offer a sanctuary scheme for example. We can also contact EVA (Emerging from Violence and Abuse) who will be able to help you. Email them at www.eva.org.uk or telephone their national freephone number 0808 2000 247

When you get in touch with us we can promise that you won't be asked to provide proof of the abuse and you can ask for an interview with an officer of the same sex or cultural background who will be sympathetic and supportive. We will then advise you of the options available including financial advice especially relating to housing benefit while you are away from your home.

You can get more information by emailing us at enquiries@cchousing.org.uk or by contacting the Support Services on 01642 771433 or 01642 771437

8. Your rights

8.1 The tenancy agreement

The tenancy agreement is a legal contract between us that gives us both rights and responsibilities. We usually let houses on an 'assured tenancy' basis, although there may be times when we offer a different form of tenancy such as an 'assured shorthold tenancy'. The type of tenancy that you have will be explained when you sign your agreement.

This section is about the rights that you have as an assured tenant.

8.2 Security of tenure

As an assured tenant you have the right to live in your home for as long as you wish to provided that you keep to the terms of the agreement. We can end your tenancy if we obtain a court order against you or if it stops being an assured tenancy.

If you are not going to be living in your home for a length of time, we need to know. You may be going to hospital for example and we need to know how to get in touch with you and who will be looking after your home while you are away.

8.3 Right to succession

If you are the only named tenant and you have not already taken the tenancy over from someone else, when you die your tenancy will automatically pass to your spouse, partner or other joint tenant.

If you do not have a spouse, partner or other joint tenant, the tenancy may pass to another member of your family who is at least eighteen and has lived in the home for at least twelve months prior to your death. If there is more than one member of the family who has a right to the tenancy, they should agree who will claim it. If they cannot agree, they should all make a claim and we will decide who will succeed to the tenancy.

Although the tenancy may pass to a family member other than a spouse or partner, if the property is unsuitable because of its size or type, the tenant succeeding to the tenancy will be offered alternative accommodation. Where alternative accommodation is refused then we may take legal proceedings.

Tenancies can only be passed through succession once.

8.4 Right to assignment

You can sometimes transfer your tenancy to another member of your household who would have qualified to succeed to the tenancy upon your death. This is called an assignment of tenancy. You must always make sure that you have our written permission before you assign your tenancy.

8.5 Joint tenancies

If you are the only tenant of the property and want to add another person then we will consider granting you a joint tenancy for the following reasons:

- Marriage or civil partnership
- Long term relationship

You will need to provide proof of the marriage or civil partnership or where you request a joint tenancy for a long term partner; you need to show us that your partner has lived with you for at least twelve months.

You need to apply in writing but we won't grant a joint tenancy where you have broken the terms of your tenancy agreement.

Granting a joint tenancy may have implications for you and we will advise you of these when you apply.

8.6 Relationship breakdown

With any joint tenancy, either tenant can end the tenancy without the other tenant's agreement. If, though, one tenant wishes to remain in the home, we will decide if we can grant a new sole tenancy. The decision will be based on the circumstances including the family size and the suitability of the accommodation.

Where a marriage or civil partnership breaks down and separation, divorce or dissolution is granted then the courts can decide who should get the tenancy of the home. If there are any arrears outstanding, then an arrangement will be made. If you are the person who is not granted the tenancy but require accommodation then you would need to make an application for re-housing.

8.7 Right to exchange

You have the right to exchange your home with another home owned by a council or housing association under the 'mutual exchange' scheme. Further details of this scheme are in the section, moving home.

8.8 Right to take in lodgers or sub-let your home

You can take in lodgers without telling us so long as you are not overcrowded as a result. A lodger is someone who lives in your home and shares your home and facilities with you.

You can sub-let part of your home so long as you have our permission but you cannot sub-let the whole of your home. A sub-tenant is usually someone who has their own room/s to which you don't have access but they may share some of the facilities with you. Sub-tenants should have a rent book.

Where you take in lodgers or sub let your home then you need to let the council tax section of the council know. If you receive housing or council tax benefit, you will need to let the benefit section know as well. It may affect the benefit that you receive making you financially worse off so it is worth checking this before you agree to another person moving in.

8.9 Right to buy

If you were a tenant of Redcar & Cleveland Council at the time your home was transferred to us and you live in a general needs home (this is a property that is not for elderly or disabled people) then you may have a preserved right to buy. This means that you can buy your home at a discounted price.

You need to complete a right to buy claim form and we will then arrange for your home to be valued. We then send you an offer letter telling you how much it will cost you to buy, along with the terms and conditions that apply to the sale.

You can get an information pack from us for more details.

8.10 Right to acquire

If you don't have the preserved right to buy, then you may still qualify to buy your home through the right to acquire scheme. Tenants with the preserved right to buy can also use this scheme but currently the discounts under this scheme are less favourable.

Right to acquire packs are available on request.

8.11 Right to improve, make alterations and the right to repair

See the Property maintenance section in this handbook for further details of these schemes.

8.12 Access to personal information

All information that we hold about you, information that may include details of your family members, medical condition and family circumstances, is treated in confidence, in a sensitive way and in line with the Data Protection Act 1998.

The act does not prevent us from releasing information, called disclosure, where we have a legal obligation to do so. We may for example have to provide unedited copy of service charges applied to tenants in a block or we may provide a reference to another landlord where the tenant has been advised in advance by the landlord requesting the information. We may also pass details of new tenants or forwarding addresses to utility companies as the act wasn't intended as an obstacle to releasing information under these circumstances. Where tenants have left leaving rent arrears, we may pass details onto tracing agents or debt collection companies.

Before we release any information we always consider the following:

- Whether the information is personal information
- Whether we have told you we may give this information out
- Who we are giving it to and what they want it for
- Is it really necessary for the person to have the information?
- Is there a legal obligation to give the information out?

There are other times when we will be obliged to give information about you such as where we feel that a child is in danger, to prevent a crime from taking place or if we ordered by a court to release information.

If you want more information on when information can be released you can contact the Information Commissioner's Office on 08456 306060 or visit their website www.ico.gov.uk. You can also ask to see any information that we hold about you and you can tell us if you think that we have someone wrong.

9. Customer service

9.1 Feedback

We try to provide you with the best possible customer service at all times.

It is only by you telling us how you feel about the service and your experiences that we can make sure you get the service that you want. Let us know if it is something we have done well, something that we haven't done so well or an idea that you have to improve service.

Sometimes we will ask you what you think through the surveys that we carry out. You might see a 'scorecard' where we ask you score a service or we may send you a 'status' survey to complete.

We have customer service standards agreed with our customers: you can ask for a copy of the service standards.

We know that there are times when we don't get it right. Your first step should be to get in touch with us and we will try our best to make sure that we put it right quickly where we can. There may be times when you feel that you need to make a formal complaint.

9.2 Complaints

All complaints made are treated confidentially and taken seriously. If you need help to make your complaint then we will give you the help that you need and we will advise you of the other steps that you can take if you are still not happy.

This is a brief guide to the formal complaints procedure:

Stage one

Your complaint will be acknowledged within 5 days of receipt. Following that you will receive a response to your complaint within 15 working days. If the complaint is more complex and will take longer to investigate, you will be advised of that. If we do not meet our response target, then you are able to apply for compensation.

Stage two

If you are unhappy with the response, then you can, within 28 days, state why you are unhappy and move your complaint onto stage two. You will receive a response, again within 15 working days, from the manager of the service.

Stage three

If you are still unhappy with the response, you have right to proceed to stage three, again by writing to us within 28 days. Your complaint will then be heard by the review panel. You will be given a date for the hearing within 10 days and you are welcome to bring another person to the hearing that can, if you wish, speak on your behalf. The Panels decision will be final and will end the internal complaints process.

If your complaint is about a company policy then your complaint cannot proceed to the review stage. Your complaint, will however, be considered during a review of that policy. You could also consider getting involved in service focus groups that are involved in reviewing policies. Contact the Community Investment Team for more details.

9.3 Independent Housing Ombudsman

If you are a tenant or housing applicant with Coast & Country, you can ask the Ombudsman to look at your case. They require you to have gone through all three stages of the formal complaints process. Details are available on their website www.ihos.org.uk or any Coast & Country office and you can contact them by:

Writing to:
Housing Ombudsman Service
81 Aldwych
London
WC2B 4HN

Telephone on:
020 7421 3800
084 5712 5973
020 7404 7092 (Minicom)

Fax to:
020 7831 1942

Email to: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

9.4 Collective disputes and petitions

We have a procedure for dealing with collective disputes or petitions that are sent to us. A collective dispute or a petition is where two or more households are signatories to a complaint. The complaint is usually one around the service that we provide rather than a complaint about the actions of a third party – these are usually dealt with under separate policies. You can ask us more advice.

We also have group of Tenant Inspectors who welcome any comments that you have to make on services provided and especially our performance in delivering those services. The group has a scrutiny role, along with other groups and can look at your issues so that we can collectively improve the service and our performance. Contact the Community Investment Team if you require more information.

10. Moving home

10.1 Transfers

You can apply for a transfer under the 'Compass Choice Based Lettings Scheme'.

We, along with councils and other registered providers of housing in the Tees Valley advertise our empty homes. You need to complete an application form to be included in the scheme and you are then able to bid (express an interest) for the properties you would like to live in.

You can visit the website for more details www.compasscbl.org.uk or call into our offices for help.

10.2 Mutual Exchange

You have the right to swap your home with a tenant of any other housing association or council within the country so long as you have:

- Kept your home and garden to a good standard
- Have no outstanding rent arrears or other charges owing to us
- Made sure that the exchange will not mean that you are overcrowded or under occupied

We might refuse permission if the property isn't suitable for either tenant. This could be if one home is an adapted home for people with disabilities for example.

Any alterations or improvements that have been made by either tenant would become the responsibility of the exchanging tenant.

Each tenant wishing to exchange must get the permission of the landlord. If you want to exchange then you can register your details at your local housing office and we will add you to the exchange list. You can also view the exchange list for possible exchange partners.

If you were a tenant with the council before the homes were transferred to Coast & Country then you may have rights such as the Preserved Right to Buy. In some circumstances you may lose these rights when you transfer and you need to check this before agreeing to the exchange.

10.3 Ending your tenancy

If you are ending your tenancy, we hope that it is because you are moving into another Coast & Country home. If not, then we are sorry that you are leaving us. Please get in touch if there is anything that we could help you with so that you can stay with us.

If you do wish to end your tenancy, then you need to give four weeks notice in writing and your tenancy will end at midday on a Monday.

Please remember that you need to leave the property you are leaving in a clean and tidy condition in order to avoid being charged for work that we have to carry out after you leave.

Unfortunately there are a minority of tenants who do not follow these principles. Repairs to our properties are paid for by current tenants who regularly pay their rent. It is therefore unfair that responsible tenants should have to pay for wilful damage caused by others.

We will give you clear and up front information about recharge costs. We will also carry out an inspection of your home and then give you advice and support so that you have the opportunity to leave the property in an acceptable condition and with no rent arrears.

We will need to carry out an inspection of your home. If you move out before the notice ends you still have the responsibility to look after your home until the notice period ends. You need to make sure that your rent and any other charges are fully up to date. Outstanding charges may prevent you from applying for a property in the future and you will be given a poor reference by us.

When you move out don't forget to:

- Let us know where you are moving to
- Advise your gas and electric suppliers that you are moving
- Take meters readings
- Have your post redirected
- Have your telephone disconnected
- Inform the council that you are moving
- Leave the property in a clean and tidy condition, taking all of your belongings with you as you may be charged for the removal of anything left
- Leave your keys with your local office before midday on the day that your tenancy ends

10.4 Where a tenant dies:

Where a tenant dies, we ask that the family let us know as soon as possible. We know that this is a distressing time for families and we will deal sensitively with any questions you may have about making arrangements to end the tenancy. We will do all that we can to help you through the process. We offer you a rent free week and of course, the four week notice period doesn't apply under these circumstances.

11. And finally...

If there is something that we haven't covered in this handbook, we'd like you to let us know so that we can include it within future editions. We hope that you enjoy your home and services provided by us and that you stay with us. We aim to give you an excellent service and we can only do that when you let us know what you think about our services.

We would love you to get involved as we are really committed to putting you at the heart of all that we do.

If you have anything to tell me whether good or bad, you can email me at chief_executive@cchousing.org.uk

Iain Sim
Chief Executive