



**Solihull**  
Community Housing  
Shaping our neighbourhoods

# Tenants Handbook

## 2021

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# Welcome

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Welcome to your new home. This booklet provides information about the key services we provide and the things we expect from you as a tenant.

Please keep this quick reference guide in a handy place where you can find it at any time. If you have any questions, or need extra information about our services, please visit our website at [www.solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk](http://www.solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk) or contact us using the details on the back page.

## 1. Your rent

We need you to pay us your rent on time. We collect rent from you to help provide services to you.

If we don't collect enough rent money, it will be harder for us to deliver the service that we have promised and the kind of service you expect.

We offer a number of ways to pay your rent and service charges on your housing account. The easiest way to pay your rent is to set up a Direct Debit so that the rent comes out of your bank account automatically.

Direct Debits are convenient and you can choose to pay with an any day monthly Direct Debit or choose to pay weekly or fortnightly on a Friday.

They are safe and secure because you are protected by a comprehensive guarantee, which means you get a full and immediate refund from your bank if an error is made in the payment of your Direct Debit.

To set up a Direct Debit please visit our website or give us a call. When you set up a Direct Debit you will be entered into our free prize draw.

## Managing your money

We are committed to helping you stay in your home and to helping you deal with your arrears or debts.

Our Money Advice Team can help stop customers from becoming homeless due to debt or problems managing money.

If you are having difficulty paying your rent or your circumstances change, please phone us immediately.

## 2. Repairs

As your landlord we are responsible for keeping your property in good repair.

We maintain the shared parts of your home such as corridors, lifts and shared gardens. We also carry out some repairs inside your home.

The lists below shows repairs we are responsible for and repairs you are responsible for.

### Our responsibilities

- Baths, hand basins and toilets (if we fitted them)
- Bath seals and two rows of splashback tiles
- Concrete floors (not including floor tiles)
- Cupboard drawers – unless damaged by tenant
- Cupboard-door catches, handles and hinges, and drawer handles
- Door-entry systems for shared areas
- Doors – internal fire doors unless damaged by tenant (if unrepairable there will be a recharge to the tenant)
- Doors – outside doors (unless damage was caused by tenant)
- Electrical consumer unit (fuse box)
- Extractor fans (if Solihull Council own them)
- Electric shower units (if we fitted them)
- Electric storage heaters (if Solihull Council own them)
- Electrics – standard electrical wiring, sockets and light fittings
- Fences – repairing boundary fencing owned by Solihull Council
- Foundations
- Garages and outbuildings owned by Solihull Council
- Gas fires (but only if we fitted them)
- Gas pipework inside your home

- Gas – servicing appliances every year (if Solihull Council own them)
- Gates, including catches and hinges
- Immersion heaters (if Solihull Council own them)
- Kitchen cupboards (we will replace cupboards that are beyond repair but the new cupboards may not match your existing cupboards)
- Letterbox – replacing front external door letterbox plates
- Locks and hinges on outside doors where you still have the keys
- Locks – repairing faulty locks where you still have the keys
- Paths, steps and other access to the property that Solihull Council own which has been fitted by us
- Radiators, valves, timers and thermostats
- Shared areas such as lifts and stairs, rubbish chutes and shared TV aerials
- Shared gardens
- Shower trays (if we fitted them)
- Sink seal and one row of splashback tiles
- Smoke alarm (mains operated)
- Soil and vent pipes (if the main pipe is blocked) If you are a Leaseholder then we are responsible for the main soil stack but if the damage is in a main drain outside the property then Severn Trent are responsible for this repair.
- Staircase, banisters and handrails fitted by us
- Structural walls inside your home
- Structure and covering of the roof, the chimney, gutters, drainpipes and their clips, and wood or plastic boards on the outside of the building
- Toilet-flushing systems if fitted by us
- Taps, tap washers, dripping taps and stopcocks
- Vinyl floor tiles – replacing floor tiles in our bathroom and kitchen (we will match your existing tiles if possible)

## Our responsibilities (continued)

- Walls – outside walls and rendering
- Washing lines and posts in shared areas
- Water pipes, overflow pipes and water tanks
- Window vents, catches and handles
- Window frames and outside window sills
- Worktops (we will replace worktops that are beyond repair but the new worktops may not match your existing units)

## Your responsibilities

- Bath panels
- Bathroom—repairing cracks or chips in sinks, baths and so on (If we repair this there will be a recharge to the tenant)
- Blocked sinks and basins (if we repair this there will be a recharge to the tenant)
- Deliberate damage that you, or people living with you, have caused
- Disconnecting and reconnecting cookers (unless Solihull Council own them) although when we turn on your gas supply after you move in we will reconnect your cooker (as long as it is safe)
- Doors – door handles, door frames and carpet strips
- Doors – internal doors
- Dustbins and removing household rubbish
- Electricity meter and the electricity supply
- Fences—repairing or adding new fencing that divides gardens
- Garden – your own garden
- Gas meter and the gas supply
- Keys – replacing (or getting extra) keys to your home
- Keys – replacing (or getting extra) keys or fobs for shared doors in low-rise blocks (there is a £10.00 recharge per key or fob)

- Lightbulbs and Fluorescent lighting – for bathroom lightbulbs, you can get a replacement by taking your old light bulb into Connect where they will exchange it
- Locks – extra locks for doors or windows
- Locks and keys – the cost of replacing locks or keys for homes, garages or alley gates
- Pest control (other than communal areas)
- Plasterwork for patches and cracks, plaster air vents
- Plumbing in washing machines
- Security chains for front doors
- Shower curtain and rails, shower hose and shower head (we are responsible if these have been fitted with disabled home adaption work)
- Sink plugs and chains
- Spyholes for doors if fitted by you
- Toilet Seats
- Washing lines and posts – your own

## Repairs you pay for

There are some repairs you may need to pay for. We will ask you to pay if:

- we have to repair something that you have damaged on purpose. You will have to pay for repairing damage caused by people living with you.
- we have to repair something that is broken because you have been careless or have failed to do something you should have. For example, if you don't report a leak straight away and the leak damages your home.

In certain circumstances you may not have to pay.

If you feel you have a good reason why you shouldn't pay, please tell us about it when we tell you we plan to charge you.

All tenants will be made aware of any rechargeable costs to repairs before they are applied to their rent account.

### Reporting a repair

You can report a repair to us by:

- My SCH Account
- Phone
- Email
- Facebook
- Twitter

If you think your repair is an emergency, you should phone us to report it.

### 3. Making changes to your home

You have the right to make improvements and alterations to your home, but you must get written permission from us before you make any changes.

If the changes you want to make seem reasonable to us, we are likely to give permission. But we will ask you to make sure the improvements meet certain standards.

You can request permission by contacting us. We will respond in writing to you within 10 days.

You must not start making the alterations or improvements to your home until you have received our permission in writing.

### 4. Home contents insurance

We offer a home contents insurance scheme specifically designed to protect your home contents and belongings against fire, theft, storm, flood and more.

Some of the benefits for tenants and leaseholders are:

- No admin or cancellation fees
- Favourable premiums and levels of cover for tenants and leaseholders
- No minimum security requirements
- Various payment options to include, weekly, fortnightly, monthly etc.
- Small excess of £50.00 that will be discussed with you only and if a claim is made

To sign up to our insurance scheme, visit [www.solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk](http://www.solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk).

### 5. Antisocial behaviour

We would like everyone living in our homes to get on and have a great quality of life but sometimes this isn't possible due to antisocial behaviour (ASB).

ASB can range from playing music too loudly, parking and littering, to committing a serious criminal activity – such as domestic abuse, vandalism, drug dealing and hate crime.

ASB is also a breach of your Tenancy Agreement, which means that in extreme cases we can take court action or even evict the offender.

If you're experiencing antisocial behaviour you should:

- See what happens: if someone is playing music loudly, this could just be a one-off and might not happen again
- Have a chat: speak to your neighbour to try and resolve the problem. They may not have realised that they were being a nuisance.
- If the issues continue then you can contact us for advice.

## Neighbours

Everyone is entitled to enjoy their home in peace. Your tenancy agreement says that neither you, nor anyone living with you, or visiting your home or the area including children, may cause a nuisance, annoyance or disturbance to others.

Be considerate towards your neighbours. Try not to make a lot of noise when people are likely to be sleeping.

Tips to be a good neighbour:

- Co-operate if a neighbour asks you to reduce noise.
- If you have pets, you must make sure they don't cause a nuisance to your neighbours.
- Try to be tolerant towards your neighbours and their lifestyles.
- Don't use your property for business or illegal purposes, including drug dealing.
- Don't harass other people in any way.
- Don't be violent or abusive towards other people.

If you are having problems with a neighbour, talk to them to see if you can sort the matter out between you in a friendly way. They may not know their behaviour is causing a problem.

If that doesn't work, you can ask for help. Our Antisocial Behaviour team works to try and prevent nuisance and ASB.

## 6. Estates

We take great pride in keeping your estates and communities well maintained. You can also help to maintain a good environment for you, your family and your neighbours to enjoy.

This is an important part of your Tenancy Agreement. By following a few simple rules, you can make your area cleaner, greener and safer for you and everyone else to enjoy.

## Fly-tipping

Fly-tipping means dumping rubbish illegally.

You must get rid of your rubbish correctly; if you are found responsible for fly tipping we will report you to Solihull Council's Environmental Compliance Team and you could receive a fine of £400 for a Duty of Care offence.

If you have a bulky item that needs removing, please contact us to book in with our Bulky Waste Service. We may be able to remove this item for a small charge.

Please report any fly-tipping you witness or any dumped rubbish you find. If it is on land we manage on behalf of Solihull Council we can take action. Please report to us where it is, what it is, how much rubbish there is and, if possible, details of who has dumped the rubbish.

## Waste and Recycling

Solihull Council collects your rubbish and recycling. You can register to receive an email reminder which tells you when your bin is being collected and what bins are being collected.

To register, visit the council website [www.solihull.gov.uk](http://www.solihull.gov.uk).

## Pet nuisance

If you, or your visitors, own a pet, you are responsible for making sure you clear up any mess left by the pet immediately.

Please **do not**:

- leave your dog unattended in your garden or property for long periods of time.



- leave your dog to bark continuously, causing disturbance to other residents.
- allow your dog to roam and foul in communal areas; dogs must be on a lead at all times in communal areas, internal and external.

### Cleaning in high and low rise buildings

We are responsible for keeping the communal areas of our high and low-rise buildings (like corridors, stairways, landings and entrance halls) clean and tidy. We employ contractors to do this work for us.

We will:

- inspect every high-rise once a month act on the results of inspections within two working days (or within 24 hours if there is a risk to health and safety)
- send our contractor out to clean up within two hours when people report a mess in a shared area that could affect the health of others i.e. blood or vomit.

If you occupy a flat you must also co-operate with us and your neighbours to keep communal areas clean, tidy and clear of obstacles as per your Tenancy Agreement.

## 7. Safety in your home

We are committed to improving the health and safety of all our properties.

Health and fire safety very important and we encourage everyone to report defects, dangerous conditions and dangerous actions to help us identify and reduce poor practices.

### Fire safety in your home

Smoking, cooking, faulty electrical items and portable heaters are some of the common

causes of fires.

There are some simple and easy things you can do to prevent fires. Remove any unnecessary materials, such as old newspapers, cardboard boxes, and so on from your home to reduce the spread of a fire if one started.

### Smoke Alarms

Check your smoke alarm every week by pressing the test button. Don't climb to reach it – you can use a sweeping brush, a garden cane or a walking stick.

Do not, under any circumstances, check the alarm using a naked flame.

If you discover a fire, your evacuation procedure will depend on whether you live in a house, bungalow, high rise or low rise.

If you live in a high rise or low rise please refer to the high rise building document on our website which will highlight the 'stay put' policy.

If you live in a house or bungalow, raise the alarm by calling 999 and leave by the nearest safe exit.

### Electrical

It is important to look after the electrical items in your home.

Make sure all electrical items are used correctly according to the manufacturer's guidelines and make sure sockets are not overloaded.

Never use portable heaters to dry clothes and do not place them too close to soft furnishings

All cooking appliances should be in good repair. Items such as chip pan fryers and toasters should not be left unattended.



## Electrical testing

By law we must make sure your electrical fittings are safe. Even if you think your appliances are working fine, you must still allow us access.

We will check for damage to fittings, wear and tear and any exposed live wires that could cause injuries or fires.

If you need to rearrange your appointment, please contact us.

## Oxygen

You may need oxygen cylinders for medical purposes. Once you know that you will be using oxygen, you should tell us by calling the Contact Centre on 0121 717 1515 so we can make a record of the type of equipment that you will be using.

We need to be aware of any oxygen cylinders or other equipment you have when we carry out fire risk assessments, as this equipment is extremely explosive.

You must not leave oxygen cylinders (full or empty) outside your flat or home, including on a mobility scooter.

Keep your oxygen equipment in a well ventilated area away from direct sunlight, sources of heat (radiators, storage heaters and so on) or large quantities of material that will easily burn, such as paper or cardboard.

Air alone, and medical oxygen can build up unnoticed on your clothing, hair and bedding. As a result, you shouldn't carry or use portable medical oxygen equipment under your clothing.

You should never smoke or let anyone else smoke near you while you are using your oxygen equipment. You should not use oxygen equipment near open fires, candles, gas fires, cookers and so on.

## Gas safety and servicing

Gas servicing checks are to keep you, your family and your neighbours safe.

We have a legal duty to carry out safety checks on gas appliances that we are responsible for, every year.

Our gas contractor Dodd Group will write to you with an appointment date and time, giving you at least seven days' notice. If you need to rearrange your service appointment, please contact us.

### If you smell gas:

- Put out any flames or cigarettes immediately.
- Don't create flames or sparks, or turn on electrical switches or appliances.
- Don't use any sort of phone inside your home, not even your intercom system. It could make a spark that could cause an explosion.
- Turn off the gas at the meter by putting the lever in the horizontal position.
- Open doors and windows to let fresh air in.

Phone the National Grid/CADENT gas emergency number free on 0800 111 999 from outside your home. Phone us on 0121 717 1515 and we will send Dodd Group out to you within two hours.

## Carbon Monoxide

Carbon Monoxide is a gas that is produced when natural gas or other fuel does not burn fully. It is usually caused by gas appliances that are not properly fitted, maintained or ventilated.

Carbon Monoxide can kill. You can't see or smell it. Symptoms of Carbon Monoxide poisoning include tiredness, drowsiness, headaches, giddiness, nausea, vomiting, chest pains, breathlessness, stomach pains, erratic behaviour and problems seeing.

If you have a Carbon Monoxide alarm, test it regularly. Don't paint it or cover it up.

If you think your appliance may be leaking Carbon Monoxide switch off the appliance. Don't use it again until you have had it checked and repaired, or replaced. Phone us on 0121 717 1515 and we will send Dodd Group to check the appliance.

Open all doors and windows to ventilate the room the appliance is in. Do not sleep in the room. Make an urgent appointment with your doctor or visit an accident and emergency department

## Water Hygiene

Bacteria can grow in water that is left standing. Sometimes this can develop into Legionella bacteria. Legionnaires' is a disease which affects the lungs and can be contracted if droplets of water containing bacteria are inhaled.

To prevent bacteria from growing, it is extremely important to maintain good water hygiene in your home. This is especially important in the summer months as standing water will be in the temperature range that the bacteria prefers.

Top tips:

- Always run taps when you return from a holiday or if you move into a new property
- Taps and showers that are not used often should be run for at least two minutes each week
- Clean and descale taps and shower

heads at least every three months

- Leave water heaters and boilers on to avoid

## 8. Mobility scooters

Mobility scooters have the potential to be a fire hazard and we have strict guidelines for storing them.

You must make sure that you have permission to store a scooter in the building. If have a scooter you must keep it in good condition with regular maintenance.

Do not charge scooters overnight or store them in communal areas.

To make sure mobility scooters are being stored safely we have introduced a registration scheme for all scooters used by tenants and leaseholders. You can view the policy on our website.

## 9. Asbestos in your home

Asbestos is a fibrous natural mineral. Materials which contain asbestos but which are in good condition will not release asbestos fibres. There is no danger unless the fibres are released and breathed into the lungs.

Most asbestos in housing is low risk and unlikely to harm your health.

Materials containing asbestos cannot be identified simply by looking at them. To find out whether a material contains asbestos, you need to have a sample taken of the material and have it analysed by an accredited laboratory.

If you want to carry out any DIY work to your property that might affect materials which contain asbestos, please contact us.

Only a trained specialist contractor can remove the material (and for some products they also need to be licensed). If material containing asbestos is damaged, it may need to be removed or sealed. We will arrange any work to do this.

## 10. Condensation

Condensation happens when moisture in warm air comes into contact with a cold surface and turns into water droplets.

Condensation can be caused by:

- Too much moisture in the air, often created by steam from cooking and washing
- Not enough ventilation
- Drying clothes inside the home, especially over radiators

Simple things you can do to reduce levels of condensation in your home:

- Dry your windows and window sills
- Don't dry wet items on a radiator or in front of a heater
- Always cook with pan lids on and turn the heat down once the water has boiled
- When filling your bath, run the cold water first then add the hot. This will reduce the amount of steam by 90%
- Don't use your gas cooker to heat your kitchen
- Keep your home at a constant heat level, ideally between 17°C and 21°C which helps control condensation

Ventilation can help reduce condensation in your home by allowing moist air to escape and drier air from outside to come in.

## 11. Wellbeing

Our Wellbeing team offer a range of handy gadgets and services to help you to live independently in your own home.

They are designed to keep you safe and give you and your loved ones' peace of mind knowing that in an emergency help can be called on at any time.

Some of the services we offer include:

- Home adaptations
- Safe and Sound service which includes a pendant alarm
- Home Hazard checks
- Fire safety package
- Handyperson service

For more information about these services, please visit our website.

## 12. Getting involved

Engaging with you, our residents, is at the heart of everything we do. We want to make sure we are providing you with as many opportunities as possible to share your thoughts and make your voice heard.

We are committed to making sure you can get involved and help us make important decisions about the services you receive. We want to make sure no decision about you, is made without you.

There are lots of ways you can share your feedback, including using digital platforms where you can share your comments from the comfort of your own home!

If there is a particular subject that is of interest to you, let us know and we can tell you how to get involved.

The best way to contact us is by emailing [engagement@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk](mailto:engagement@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk)

# Get in touch

## Join us on social media:

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Solihull Community Housing



@solihullhousing



solihullcommunityhousing



Solihull Community Housing

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### Freepost RLSS-UEBA-RTUZ

Solihull Community Housing  
Endeavour House  
Meriden Drive  
Solihull  
B37 6BX

**Phone:** 0121 717 1515

**Typetalk:** 18001 0121 717 1515

**Text:** 07781 474 722



**Website:** [www.solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk](http://www.solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk)

Visit the contact us page on our website to complete an online form with details of your enquiry.

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Contact us if you need this document in a large print, different language or alternative format.  
For details about how we use your information please refer to our Privacy Notice on our website.