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## WELCOME TO YOUR NEW HOME

As a tenant of West Dunbartonshire Council (WDC) we hope that you will enjoy living in your new home.

Most of our tenants have a Scottish Secure Tenancy. The tenancy agreement is the legal contract which allows you to occupy your home. Please make sure you keep this document in a safe place as it lays out the terms and conditions between you and us.

This handbook gives you important information about being one of our tenants. It is provided in addition to your tenancy agreement.

We don't expect you to sit down and read it all in one go; however it is a handy source of bite size information about the services available to you as a WDC tenant.

If you can't find the answer to your query please call the Contact Centre on 01389 738282.



You should by now know who your housing officer is. It is their job to help and advise you on all matters concerning your tenancy.

Your Housing Officer must ensure that all tenants adhere to the terms and conditions of the tenancy agreement. Please read it carefully so that you are aware of your rights and responsibilities. If you require information in other languages or formats also please let your housing officer know this. We aim to ensure that everyone has equal access to our services.

Yourhousing officer should be your main contact for any housing issues you may have. Our housing officers are knowledgeable and understanding and will have the experience to provide you with the advice you need on main issues including:

- Paying Your Rent
- Garden Maintenance
- Cleaning Responsibilities
- Antisocial Behaviour

- Tenant Participation
- Changes to your Tenancy
- Allocations

My housing officer is

My house is in Ward

Mobile Phone Number

**Fmail** 

If you cannot make contact with your housing officer, please call the Contact Centre on 01389 738282.

# YOUR HOME

#### **Moving in Checklist**

Organise rent payment method: standing order, direct debit, universal credit or housing benefit
Pay one weeks rent in advance
Take gas and electric readings
Contact utility companies for Gas & Electricity supply
Contact City Tech to commission your central heating system
Connect your telephone and internet
Ask if your house is connected to a communal satellite dish
Change your address with school, bank, and doctors.
Arrange contents insurance
Register for Council Tax with West Dunbartonshire Council
Confirm bin collection day

### STAFF TEAMS

There are 35 housing officers working to provide tenants with a good housing service.

Housing Operations is split by ward area across the local authority and delivers an area based housing service. The ward in which your home is located is noted on Page 7.

The following housing co ordinators are responsible for the management of the 6 wards.

Scott McLelland 07772 442950

Suzanne Marshall 07816171285

David Lynch 07940 077306

The following link takes you to the council website which has details on Housing Officers for the streets and areas for which each ward covers. Wards for which officers and their co ordinators cover can change from time to time, so the most up to date information can be found on the website.

https://www.west dunbarton.gov.uk/housing/council housing/how to contact your housing officer/

### YOUR LOCAL HOUSING OFFICE

At your local housing office you can have face to face contact with knowledgeable staffthat can help you with a range of advice from managing your tenancy, to paying your rent, reporting repairs and applying for a new house.

There is no need to make an appointment just pop in and we are there to help and answer your questions.

#### **Clydebank Town Centre Office**

Clydebank Shopping Centre 10 Sylvania Way South Clydebank G81 1FA

#### **Opening Hours**

9.30-4.30pm Monday - Thursday 9.00 - 4.00pm Friday

#### **Alexandria Town Centre Office**

17 Mitchell Way Alexandria G83 0LW

#### **Opening Hours**

9.30 - 4.30 pm Monday - Thursday 9.30 - 4.00 pm Friday (Closed for lunch - 12.20-1.15 pm)

#### **Dumbarton Town Centre Office**

16 Church Street Dumbarton G82 1QL 9.30-4.30pm Monday – Thursday 9.30-4.30pm Friday

### YOUR RENT

Your rent is paid weekly in advance and is reviewed annually. We will only review the rent after consulting tenants and registered tenant organisations. We will always consult with you over any proposed changes, the consultation period for reviewing the rent commences in November with any rent increases being notified in February and applicable from April. If we are going to increase your rent, we will give you at least 28 days' notice in writing to enable you to re-budget or make an application for benefits.

There are five weeks in the year that you don't have to pay rent. If your rent is up to date, you don't need to pay anything in the rent free weeks, this can help tenants with budgeting and saving. If you are behind with your rent, you must continue to pay in these weeks so that the amount you owe is reduced.

#### If your rent is up to date there are 5 rent free weeks

- The first week in April
- Two weeks in July
- Two weeks over Christmas and New Year

If you do not make payments towards your rent you could be in danger of losing your home. We will however work with you to try to help resolve your financial difficulties, so that if possible you do not have to leave your home.

# WAYS TO PAY



#### By Standing Order or Direct Debit

You can arrange to pay by direct debit or standing order. This means that your rent is paid automatically from your bank account. You can collect a direct debit or standing order form from one of our town centre offices or contact Finance at 01389 738 282. These forms are also available on the Councils website.

#### **In Person**

West Dunbartonshire Council no longer accepts cash at any location. If you wish to pay cash or in person you can visit any Post Office or one of the many PayPoint locations scattered throughout West Dunbartonshire Council Area. Find out your nearest PayPoint outlet by visiting: www.paypoint.com/en gb/consumers/store locator Apayment card can also be ordered for you by your Housing Officer after you sign for your tenancy.

#### **By Telephone**

Call our contact centre on 01389 738 282 or call our automatic telephone service 0161 6226948 and have your rent reference number to hand.

#### **By Internet**

Go to www.west dunbarton.gov.uk on the right hand corner of the screen you will see the option Pay It, this will take you to a menu of items which can be paid online, scroll down until you come to rent.

## CLAIMING HOUSING BENEFIT

If you want to claim Housing Benefit (HB) you must provide the information and proof needed to process your HB claim. If you are getting HB at your current address, your household details and financial circumstances are remaining the same, we can arrange to transfer your HB claim to your new address.

If you are making a new HB claim you must bring proof of identity for example a passport, driving licence, birth certificate, proof of savings (a recent bank statement for example) and proof of earnings (2 pay slips if you are paid monthly) with you to the arranged sign up so that your HB claim can be processed.

We need the same proof for your partner, if you have one, and proof of income for any other adults (aged 18+) moving with you.

Normally, HB is only paid from the date you actually move into the property. Therefore, it is important that you do not delay moving in. There are a few exceptions to this and if you want to claim HB before you move in, you will need to apply and give reasons why you did not move in when your tenancy started.

We must see original documents, not copies. Your Housing Officer will be able to give you the most up to date advice on what documents, proof of identity and income you will need to produce. Remember that your circumstances may change and you may be entitled to HB in the future.



For most working age tenants, Universal Credit (UC) replaced housing benefit and your rent in most cases will be paid directly to you instead of the Council. If you struggle to manage money or have other difficulties, you could choose to have your rent paid directly to the Council.

Tomakea claimfor Universal Credit you must complete an online form at www.gov.uk/apply-universal-credit

You are responsible for your rent even if you are entitled to having it covered in part or full by benefits.

Working 4U can help answer any other questions you may have on housing benefit or universal credit.





### WE CAN HELP YOU

Painy day

We know it can be hard finding enough money to go round, but please don't be tempted to skip a rent payment.

We offer a range of support services which will help you manage your money and prevent you getting into debt.

If you do have rentarrears, we can still help you, but you need to talk to us.

#### We may be able to give you advice on:

- Help with repayments we can get you back on track with an affordable repayment plan.
- Help with money welfare advisors can get you on top of debt and help you budget your money.
- Help with benefits and Universal Credit you may be entitled to more benefits and we can help you access them.
- Help with fuel bills fuel advisors can help you switch to lower tariffs and access low payment plans.

Our Working 4UTeams and welfare rights partners can give you advice.

### **COUNCIL TAX**

This is a tax on domestic dwellings by local authorities throughout Scotland and is based on the estimated value of your dwelling and the number of persons living in it, single person households are entitled to a council Tax reduction for example.

Council Tax includes water and waste charges which are collected on behalf of Scottish Water.

Council Tax is used to part fund services provided by the Council.

#### Council Tax Discounts

If you live alone, or with people who are under the age of 18, you may be entitled to a Single Person Discount. You should contact the Council Tax Office on 01389737444 for an application form.



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### YOUR RIGHTS AS A TENANT

You have a Scottish Secure Tenancy (SST) and full details of your rights are set out in your tenancy agreement, which is the legally binding contract between you (the tenant) and West Dunbartonshire Council (the landlord).

Occupancy requirement for certain tenant rights — Under your SST, tenants have certain rights, some of these are ones that can be requested, such as assignation, sub-letting and a joint tenancy, whilst others are clear rights which apply in certain situations such as succession. The Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 attaches a clear requirement for the tenant and potential assignee/joint tenant to have resided in the property for at least 12 months before these rights can be exercised. Currently there are only limited occupancy requirements, whereas the new Act makes it clear that not only is there this 12 month period, but that the landlord has been notified of the change in the household. If we have not been notified of who is living in the property then we will have grounds for refusal.

Your tenancy gives you the right to stay in your home for as long as you want, as long as you do not break the terms of the tenancy agreement. If you have any problems with your home please contact your housing officer, who will be happy to discuss matters with you.

Anyone who lives with you, or intends to live with you, can apply to be a joint tenant. We are happy to agree this unless there is good reason not to give our approval. This is again subject to the 12 months occupancy rule as mentioned above.

If your relationship with your partner or joint tenant breaks down, you may need to decide who is going to live in and take over the tenancy of your home.

When tenants are married to each other, they both have a right to the stay in the home, even if it is not a joint tenancy. If there is not a joint tenancy the husband or wife of the tenant has occupancy rights.

In some special circumstances, tenants may be placed on a reduced tenancy called a Short Scottish Secure Tenancy. Your Housing Officer will make it clear to you that you are being placed on a Short Scottish Secure Tenancy and the reasons for being placed on this reduced tenancy will be laid out to you. You will receive support over the period of your Short Scottish Secure Tenancy with the aim being for you to be able to move to a Scottish Secure Tenancy.

# WHO CAN TAKE OVER MY TENANCY?

If a tenant dies, other members of the household may be able to take over the tenancy (known as succession).

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 made some changes to the right of succession.

A person must have lived in a tenancy as their main and principle home for 12 months and up dated their household information to reflect this, if they wish to be eligible to be considered to succeed the tenancy. Therefore, it is important that tenants keep us up to date with information on their household. If you don't let us know we can't ensure that these rights will apply to you in the future.

However, if your house has been designed or adapted for a person with a disability the remaining householders may not qualify to succeed, unless that person has special needs requiring that type of accommodation.

Your housing officer can provide you with further information.



Tenants who are having mobility problems or who find it difficult to make use of their kitchen or bathroom should contact The Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) at West Dunbartonshire Council. The team can assess and provide guidance, rehabilitation and, if needed, suitable aids or adaptations. We aim for minimal intervention to facilitate independence.

They can be contacted on 01389 776499 if you live in Dumbarton or Alexandria or if you live in Clydebank call 01389 811760.

Families with children who face similar difficulties please call 0141 562 8800.

# KEEPING SAFE AND SECURE IN YOUR HOME

#### **GAS SAFETY**

If you smell gas, think you have a gas leak or are worried that fumes containing carbon monoxide are escaping from a gas appliance, please call the free Scotland Gas Network on 0800 111 999.

### GAS APPLIANCE SERVICING

Gas Servicing is Compulsory!

If you do not allow us access to your property to carry out an annual safety check you will be in breach of your tenancy agreement and we have the right to force access to carry this out and recharge you.

We have a legal duty to service all ourgas appliances and heating systems every year. Our agent, City Technical, will contact you If you have any concerns about your gas appliance please call City Technical on 0844 5796493.

#### **ELECTRICITY**

If your electricity goes off, first check if other houses in your area are affected. If you smell burning or unusual smells coming from your appliances or the fuse box, switch off the appliance immediately and call emergency repairs available 24 hours 0800 0738708.







### KEEPING YOUR HOME SECURE

# Home security is the best way to reduce your chances of being burgled. Some safety tips to keep your home secure:

- Make sure all doors are locked even when you are in the house or garden.
- Keep all keys in safe place and make sure all family members kn where they are.
- Close and lock all windows and do when you go out.
- Fix a timer to a light if you are away from your home overnight or during holiday periods.

- Fit a security chain
- Fitaspyhole.
- Tella neighbour if you are going away for a long period.
- In order to protect against identity fraud, shred all correspondence which includes your personal data.



The communal areas around you are designed and intended to be escape routes and it is essential that they are not used for the storage of combustible materials. Keeping these areas clear will both reduce the risk of deliberate fire raising and help you to escape safely in the event of an accidental fire in yours or a neighbouring house.

If you have any items of furniture or other waste materials that cannot be disposed of by the normal collection method, you must discuss your requirements with our waste collection team (Tel: 01389 738282).

Forboth your own safety and that of your neighbours Do Not store combustible materials in the close or other communal areas of your building.

Housing Officers inspect these areas on a regular basis and where they come across prohibited items they will discuss this with the tenants involved. Where we cannot identify the owner/s, we will discuss the matter with all of the residents within the building and if we have to remove the material/s

we may have to recharge all tenants if the owner of the material cannot be identified.

Everybody'shome is a trisk of fire, so it is important to know how to protect yourself if a fire starts in your home:

- Have an emergency plan on how you would leave your house in the event of fire.
- Keep low as the air is cleaner and cooler near the floor.
- Never open a door if it is warm to touch.
- If there is a lift, never use in the event of a fire
- If your clothing catches fire, stop, drop and roll.
- Donot stop for valuables
- Remember get out, stay out and dial 999.

To book a free home safety visit call the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service on 0800 0731 999 or visit www.firesscotland.gov.uk



As your landlord, West Dunbartonshire Council have arranged buildings insurance for the structure of your home but you must insure the contents, your personal belongings and decorations.

If you don't insure your belongings you risk having to pay the full cost of repairing or replacing them if they are damaged or stolen.

The cost of household insurance is small compared with the cost of replacing all your possessions.

It is recommended that you take out your own insurance. Under a special scheme arranged with Allianz Insurance plc, it's easy for you to protect your belongings. You can arrange your insurance at a special low cost rate. The scheme is open to all the tenants.

### Payment of the premium

Premiums can be paid weekly alongside your rent. You can pay your premiums either weekly or over longer intervals.

When you take out this insurance most of your household goods and contents will be insured in your home. The insurance also covers replacement of external locks if your keys are lost or stolen and the contents of your freezer. There is also cover for personal liability, and cover for damage to your landlords fixtures and fittings, which you may be legally responsible for under the terms of your tenancy agreement. Full details of the policy cover applying are available on request.

Your housing officer can provide you with more details or please call 01389 737 867 for further information.

## LOOKING AFTER YOUR HOME

Maintenance staff and our approved contractors are here to help you and to provide a repair service you are happy with.

As your landlord we are responsible for making sure your home is windproof and watertight and we must maintain gas, electricity, water and drainage.

We also maintain all common area and facilities in blocks of flats or maisonettes, as well as open areas around our properties.

The Housing (Scotland ) Act 2001 gives West Dunbartonshire tenants the rightto have small urgent repairs carried out within a given timescale. This is called the Rightto Repair Scheme.

Section 5.17 of your Tenancy Agreement states:

'You are responsible for taking reasonable care of the house. This responsibility includes carrying out minor repairs and internal decoration. It also includes keeping the house in a reasonable state of cleanliness. However, you are not responsible for carrying out repairs which are due to fair wear and tear.'

Therefore as a tenant, you should:

- Keep your property clean and in good decorative order
- Keep your garden tidy



- Take precautions to prevent further damage once a repair has been identified and to report it to us promptly
- Repairdamage caused by you
- Maintain appliances you have installed e.g. a fire, shower or cooker
- Report any criminal damage or vandalism to the police.

If you fail to maintain your tenancy in accordance with above and the terms and conditions of your tenancy agreement, this may result in you being recharged for any work the Council has to carry out to your property.

For further information on repairs refer to the Repair Handbook.



# MOVING HOME

We understand that your circumstances may change and that you may want to move to another property. This section of the handbook explains your options.

#### **TRANSFER**

If you need more or less bedrooms, you could apply for a larger or smaller house, within West Dunbartonshire Council. Your housing officer can advise you on this.

#### **MUTUAL EXCHANGE**

A mutual exchange takes place when two tenants want to exchange houses with each other.

The website www.homeswapper.co.uk is an online service, which holds details of mutual exchanges within West Dunbartonshire and throughout Scotland.

Amutual exchange can take place between Scottish secure tenants regardless of location. Council tenants can also swap with housing association tenants.

Your housing officer is the best person to advice on this process.

For both Mutual Exchange and Transfers the tenant must have lived in the property for 12 months before applying.



All tenants must use the property as their only or principle home. If you move out of your home without telling us, we may end your tenancy and let it to another applicant. If it is suspected that you have abandoned your property, the housing officer will serve an abandonment notice on you, giving you 28 days to respond. During this time we will carry out investigations to find out if you are staying at your home.

If, after 28 days, it appears you have abandoned the property, the house will be repossessed by serving a second notice and the locks will be changed. Please talk to us, we are always here to help you.

If you are planning on being away from your home for longer than 28 days you should inform us of this.

# TERMINATING YOUR TENANCY

Your tenancy can come to an end in any of the following ways:

By giving us 28 days' notice in writing. You can download a copy of the notice of termination from our website or picking one up from one of our housing offices

Both tenant and landlord agreeing, in writing, to end the tenancy

By abandonment, if we believe you have abandoned your property

The landlord can ask the court to evict you; for example for non payment of rent. If you want more information, please read your tenancy agreement or contact your housing officer.

# CHECKLIST FOR ENDING YOUR TENANCY

- Receive written agreement
- Arrange a maintenance inspection
- Remove any fixtures and fittings you have installed without our written permission and put right any damage caused
- Check you have made all payments to us
- Re-direct mail
- Provide final meter readings
- Arrange to have your phone and internet disconnected
- Contact Council Tax and provide information on date you will move and your new address
- Clear out your home and remove all your belongings
- Make sure any lodgers or subtenants leave with you
- Leavethehouseinacleanandtidyorder
- Return keys to your local housing office before 10am on the day your tenancy ends
- Provide West Dunbartonshire Council with a forwarding address If you fail to remove any fixtures, fittings or belongings, or put right any damage you have caused to the property, you could be recharged for any works the Council has to carry out.

### NO HOME FOR DOMESTIC ABUSE

**No Homefor Domestic Abuse** is housing services' zero tolerance approach to domestic abuse occurring within our properties. It provides victims/survivors of domestic abuse with access to practical help, legal assistance and support to allow them to remain if this is what they want. Council tenants who are victims of domestic abuse are offered a range of housing advice based on their circumstances to support them. This includes:

- Supporting victims to remain in their own home including transferring the tenancy into their own name where possible. Support includes making the victim feels safe and security measures such as lock changes
- Supporting victims to gain legal information and advice
- Supporting victims to access specialist domestic abuse support
- Providing suitable alternative safe and secure accommodation via the homeless service

#### The council

- will use the full scope of Anti Social Behaviour powers in conjunction with Housing and Matrimonial Homes Legislation to legally remove perpetrators if we need to.
- recognise that in order to support victims to stay in their own homes and to make them feel safer we must also address the housing needs of perpetrators. Those found guilty of committing domestic abuse will be offered short term tenancies appropriately distanced from the victim.
- will partner with Police, Courts and Community Justice partners to coordinate swift action against perpetrators.

### GETTING INVOLVED

#### You could help improve our housing service

At West Dunbartonshire Council we have a long history of tenant involvement and once you have settled into your new home perhaps you will think about becoming involved in tenant participation. This would allow you to become directly engaged in decision making which will influence housing service decisions for the future.

There are many ways to participate - as an interested tenant, joining a community group or being part of a scrutiny panel.

We will consult with you on issues which affect the management of your home such as proposed rent increases or changes to any of

our policies which may have a significant effect on you.

Tofind out more please contact Tenant Participation on 01389 737281.



**Housing News** is a quarterly newspaper which is distributed to all West Dunbartonshire Tenants. It provides up to date news on housing issues in West



Dunbartonshire, including information on new builds, tenant consultations, staff profiles and information on tenant and residents group.

Housing News is delivered to your door, is available online, or a copy can be picked up at your local library.

If you have a story you would like to share with Housing News please call Jane Mack at Tenant Participation on 01389 737281.



### AND CUMPLIMENTS

We aim to get things right first time. However, despite our best intentions and efforts, problems may arise from time to time. We want to know about this in order that we can put it right and make sure it does not happen again. If you are dissatisfied with our services, you may want to make a complaint.

In the first instance, you can raise a complaint with any member of staff, who will try and resolve your complaint straight away. If for some reason you are not happy with the outcome, please ask and we will tell you how to complain to senior manager.

If you do not wish to complain to the Service Area you may feel more comfortable calling the Customer Relations Team on 01389 738 273 or fill in an online complaint form which you can find on West Dunbartonshire website. The easiest way to find this is to google West Dunbartonshire complaint form.

Or you can email customer.relations@west dunbarton.gov.uk

Orwriteto **Customer Relations** 

**West Dunbartonshire Council** 

Bridge Street
3rd Floor

**Dumbarton G821NT** 

If you are still unhappy, you can complain to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman, who is happy to receive and investigate complaints by phone, post or email.

Phone **0800 377 7330** 

Email www.spso.org.uk/contact us



If you have had a great service from any West Dunbartonshire Council staff, you can nominate any of our staff, project or team for an employee recognition award.

For further information please email **communications@west-dunbarton.gov.uk** or call **01389 738282** 



We will use your personal details (known as Personal Data) to provide you with the service(s) which you or someone else (with your consent) have asked us to provide as part of a contract or where we are under obligation to do so (public task or legal obligation). We will also use your personal details for purposes of crime prevention and crime detection and/or when required by law and will share it with other public bodies for that purpose. For a fuller description of how we handle your data please see our Privacy Notice on our website.



# USEFUL WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL PHONE NUMBERS

General Housing Enquiries	01389 738 282
Homeless Emergency 0800 1	97 1004 (Out of hours)
Reporting a Repair	0800 073 8708
(8.30-4.30pm Mor	n-Thurs, 8.30-4pm Fri)
Reporting a Repair (Out of hours)	0800 197 1004
Gas Heating Repairs (City Technical)	0800 073 0341
Council Tax	01389 737 444
ASIST (antisocial behaviour) and dog for	uling 01389 772 048
Grass cutting	01389 608 412
Environmental Health	01389 738 290
Litterhotline	01389 772 059
Pest Control	01389 738 282
Caretaking Service	01389 738 282
Cleansing(uplifts)	01389 738 282
Cleansing (missed bin)	01389 738 203
Greenlight and care of the garden	01389 721 012
Welfare Fund	01389 737 640
Home from Home	01389 733 733
TV Licence	0300 7900 6055

Twon emergencies
Emergency

999

### **Working4U**



Can assist with a variety of issues that could help with tenancy sustainment.

Contact on Mon Friday 9am 4pm 01389 738296



#### **West Dunbartonshire Contact Centre**

01389 738 282

#### **Council Tax enquiries**

01389 737 444

# Housing Benefit and Council Tax discount (Clydebank)

01389 738 555

# Housing Benefit and Council Tax discount (Dumbarton)

01389 737 163



