Sheltered-housing tenant handbook
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Welcome to your new home

Welcome to your new home. This handbook explains what sheltered housing is, what facilities our complexes normally have and the services our sheltered-housing supervisors provide.

We have split the handbook into easy-to-read sections and it covers all areas of our service. We produced it with the help of tenants already living in our sheltered-housing accommodation so we hope that you find it useful and that it helps you to understand our services.

If you need any more information, your sheltered-housing supervisor or local housing officer will be pleased to help you.
General information

This section tells you about sheltered housing, the role of the sheltered-housing supervisor and when help is available.

What is sheltered housing?

Sheltered housing is housing which has been designed for older people. We have nine sheltered-housing complexes – five in Clydebank, two in Dumbarton and two in Alexandria in the Vale of Leven. The complexes are all different and vary from purpose-built self-contained complexes to sheltered-housing flats within our multi-storey flat accommodation in Dumbarton.

Services to tenants living in our sheltered-housing accommodation are provided jointly by West Dunbartonshire Council Housing and Community Safety and the Community Health and Care Partnership.

The sheltered-housing supervisor is the member of staff you are most likely to see on a day-to-day basis. However, you may also have regular contact with a housing officer and the sheltered-housing co-ordinator.

Mobile attendant service

The mobile attendant service provides support and cover when your sheltered-housing supervisor is not on duty or is unavailable. The mobile attendant has the same role as your sheltered-housing supervisor.

The mobile attendant service provides support and reassurance 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. This includes weekends and public holidays such as Christmas and Easter.

The role of the control centre

We have a contract with an external control centre to deal with any calls you make using your alarm system.

If your sheltered-housing supervisor is not on duty, the control centre will pass your call to another member of the sheltered-housing team.

When you call, an operator in the control centre will ask how they can help you. They can:

- arrange for a sheltered-housing supervisor or mobile attendant to visit you;
- contact someone else to come and support you;
- pass on messages to the sheltered-housing supervisor (for example, if you are going out and don’t need a visit); or
- call the emergency services in an emergency or call your doctor if you are not feeling well.
The role of the sheltered-housing supervisor

Each sheltered-housing complex has a team of sheltered-housing supervisors. They work on a rota system and we try to make sure that one of them is on duty every day. The supervisors provide support and advice to help you live independently in your own home as much as possible. They are responsible for a range of duties including the following.

When you move in – they will welcome you and show you around the shared areas. They will explain the alarm system and other facilities, and tell you about local services and social activities.

Once you are a tenant – they will contact you every day to make sure you are alright. If you do not want a daily call we will ask you to confirm this by signing a ‘no contact’ form. Once you do this, the supervisors will keep your personal details up to date and will help you to contact other agencies to make sure that you get the support you need.

If you have an emergency – they will respond, and make sure further help is provided if you need it.

If you are lonely – they will help you stay in contact with your relatives, and with the Community Health and Care Partnership, health and other organisations which can help you.

If you want to talk – they are there and will always respect your privacy and your right to confidentiality. If you want a long talk about something, they will probably arrange a special time for that, so that calls to other tenants are not delayed.

If you have problems with your home – they can provide you with the contact details of the repairs and maintenance service if you have a problem such as a leaking pipe or broken light switch so that you can report it, or they can report it for you. You can also find out how to report a repair on page 22 of this handbook.

If you have to fill in forms – they will be happy to help you fill in forms about housing or benefits.

Shared areas (this includes shared areas such as the lounge, toilets or hallways) – they are responsible for cleaning the shared areas, and they appreciate your help in keeping these areas clean and tidy.

Security – they look after security at each complex and ask that you help with this too. We explain how you can help with security on page 29 of this handbook.

Tenants’ activities – they help organise activities and social events for tenants. They will involve you in discussions about activities and events they would like to take place.

The supervisors cannot carry out nursing, shopping or cleaning for you, but if you need this type of help they can arrange contact with services or family members who can help you.

Supervisors are not allowed to handle your money. They cannot accept money from you for safekeeping or for any other reason.

Despite all the support they give you, sheltered-housing supervisors cannot take the place of your family and friends. We hope you will maintain contact with your family and friends and that they will continue to give you as much care and support as they did before you moved into your new home.
When is help available?

There will be someone on call to provide help 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Help is provided by either the supervisor on duty or the mobile attendant service.

In emergencies the supervisors also have back-up support from supervisors in neighbouring complexes or the mobile attendant service (or both).

Sheltered housing is designed for people who can live independently with support. If you find you need more support than you get in your sheltered housing, you should talk to your sheltered-housing supervisor about it. They can discuss other possibilities with you and help you make contact with the appropriate organisations.

How to get help in an emergency

We have an emergency-help system that gives you peace of mind because you know that you can easily call for help if you need it.

The alarm call system is directly connected to the sheltered-housing supervisors’ office. If the supervisor on duty is not available, your call will be connected to our control centre. This means that you can call for help at any time if you are suddenly taken ill, have an accident or are faced with a problem. Staff at the control centre are always on hand to speak to you and will arrange any help you need. Even if you cannot speak, the staff will know who is calling as each alarm has its own special call number.

Your sheltered-housing supervisor will explain the emergency system to you when you move in, and will show you how to use it. Remember, there is always someone available to help you in an emergency, or if you have a problem, 24 hours a day, every day.

Your personal information and tenant support plans

Within your first few weeks in your new home, your sheltered-housing supervisor will fill in a tenant support plan with you. The support plan helps us to identify the support you need to help you live independently and in safety and comfort. Your sheltered-housing supervisor will help you and your relatives or other people who support you to co-ordinate existing services and identify other services you may need. The sheltered-housing supervisor will review your support plan every six months, or sooner if needed. If you would like a review sooner, please ask your sheltered-housing supervisor.

As well as your support plan, your sheltered-housing supervisor will carry out a risk assessment with you. The assessment balances any risks you may face with promoting your independence.

Your sheltered-housing supervisor will ask you for information that they or the control centre might need in an emergency, such as how to get hold of your next-of-kin and your doctor. Your sheltered-housing supervisor will ask you to fill in a form with these details.

It’s also important to tell your supervisor about any special health problems you have, such as diabetes or an allergy to certain antibiotics or medication.

Your right to confidentiality is very important to us. We will hold your personal information securely and will not give it to anyone else without good reason.
Your tenancy

A summary of your rights and responsibilities as a Scottish secure tenant is set out below. If you are a joint tenant with another person, you both have equal rights and responsibilities.

You have a Scottish secure tenancy. Full details of your rights and responsibilities are set out in your tenancy agreement, which is a legal contract between you and us. If you want to discuss any part of your agreement in more detail, please contact your housing officer.

Your rights as a Scottish secure tenant

Security of tenure: As a Scottish secure tenant, you have security of tenure. This means that you have the right to stay in your home for as long as you want. You cannot be evicted from your home unless you break the terms of your tenancy agreement, in which case we will need a court order to evict you.

The right to a joint tenancy: Anyone who lives with you (or intends to live with you) can apply for a joint tenancy. We will agree to this unless we have a good reason not to. Anyone applying for a joint tenancy must also meet our conditions for sheltered housing.

The right to take over a tenancy: If you die, other members of your household may be able to take over the tenancy. This is known as succession. Your husband, wife, live-in partner (including same-sex partner), joint tenant or other person living with you can only apply to take over your tenancy by succession if they meet our conditions for sheltered housing. Anyone without special needs who had permission to stay in the property and who would otherwise qualify to take over your tenancy (if you did not live in sheltered accommodation) will have a right to alternative accommodation.

Your right to sublet or take in a lodger: There may be some situations where you will be away from your home for a long period of time.

If this happens, you have the right to sublet your tenancy to someone else, as long as you have our permission in writing.

You also have the right to take in a lodger if you have our permission in writing. In both of these cases, we will only refuse to give our permission if we have a good reason.

The person who will lodge with you or sublet your tenancy must meet our conditions for sheltered housing. If we do refuse to give our permission, you can appeal to the sheriff court.

Your right to apply for a mutual exchange or transfer: A mutual exchange is when you swap your home with another council tenant or housing association tenant. A transfer is when you move to another council property that you are offered from our waiting list.

You must meet certain conditions before we can consider you for either a mutual exchange or a transfer. For example, your rent payments will usually have to be up to date. We will not refuse to give you permission unless we have a good reason. If we do refuse, you can appeal to the sheriff court.

If you apply for a mutual exchange within a sheltered-housing complex you must make sure the person you are asking to exchange with meets our conditions for sheltered housing.
Your right to compensation for improving your home: If you have made certain types of improvements to your home with our permission, you can claim compensation when you end your tenancy, when you give your tenancy to someone else, or if you exchange or transfer your tenancy. You must contact your local repairs centre or housing office before you carry out any work.

Your right to repair: The right to repair scheme allows you to have certain repairs carried out by an approved contractor, if we don’t carry them out within a certain time frame. There are full details of the right to repair scheme in the leaflet ‘The Right to Repair Scheme’, which we gave you with your tenancy agreement. Remember, you must contact your local repairs centre or housing office before you carry out any work.

Your right to buy your home: You do not have the right to buy your home because it is a sheltered-housing property.

Your right to manage: You have the right to form a tenant-management co-operative with other tenants.

Ending your tenancy
Your tenancy can come to an end in any of the following ways.

• You give us 28 days’ notice in writing
• You and we agree, in writing, to end the tenancy
• We get a court order to evict you
• You move out of your home without telling us
• You die and nobody takes over the tenancy
• Your tenancy is converted to a short Scottish secure tenancy

Housing information and advice
We provide housing information and advice from three local offices.

Clydebank One-Stop Shop
Rosebery Place
Clydebank
G81 1TG
Phone: 01389 738 282
Opening hours
• 8.30am to 4.30pm, Monday to Friday

Dumbarton Housing Office
6 - 14 Bridge Street
Dumbarton
G82 1CH
Phone: 01389 738 282
Opening hours
• 8.30am to 4.30pm, Monday to Friday

Alexandria One-Stop Shop
17 Mitchell Way,
Alexandria, G83 0LW
Phone: 01389 738 282
Opening hours
• 8.30am to 4.30pm, Monday to Friday
Your rent and other charges

The amount you pay for your home could be made up of some or all of the following.

Rent

The rent you pay covers the cost of providing your home. For example, employee costs, carrying out day-to-day repairs, costs associated with collecting rent and rent arrears (rent that you owe because you have fallen behind with your payments) and also loan charges for funds borrowed to carry out major work and improvements (such as fitting new kitchens or roofs).

Before you can sign your tenancy agreement you must pay one week’s rent in advance. There are five weeks in the year that you don’t have to pay rent. These ‘rent-free weeks’ are usually:

• the first week in April;
• two weeks in July; and
• two weeks over Christmas and New Year.

We will advertise the actual dates in the local press and in notices at your local housing office. If your rent is up to date, you don’t need to pay anything in the rent-free weeks. But if you are behind with your rent, you must continue to pay rent in these weeks to reduce the amount you owe.

Service charge

The service charge covers the cost of all shared facilities, cleaning the shared areas, maintaining the garden and paying the sheltered-housing supervisors’ wages. These services are funded by West Dunbartonshire Council Housing and Community Safety Services and West Dunbartonshire Community Care and Health Partnership for West Dunbartonshire sheltered-housing tenants.

Heating and hot water

If we provide heating or hot water in your home as part of the service you receive, you will have to pay for this.

Television licence

Some sheltered-housing complexes benefit from a reduced-rate television licence. You may be entitled to a discounted licence – check with your sheltered-housing supervisor.

Ways to pay

By standing order or direct debit
You can arrange to pay by standing order or direct debit. This means that your rent is paid automatically from your bank account. You can collect a standing order or direct debit form from any of the local housing offices.
In person
You can use your swipe card to pay at any local one-stop shop by cash, cheque, credit card or debit card. You can also pay in this way at any post office or PayPoint outlet.

By phone or internet
You can pay using your credit card or debit card by:

• calling our automatic telephone payment service on 0845 303 9487 at any time;
• calling our income management officers on 01389 738 282 during working hours;
  or
• logging on to our website at www.wdcweb.info and clicking on the ‘Pay your way’ button to go to our payments page.

By post
You can post your cheque or postal order to any area housing office.

If you lose your swipe card, contact your local housing office and we will send you a new one. Whichever way you decide to pay, you must make sure that your payment reaches us on time.

Rent and service charge reviews
If we are going to increase your rent, we will give you at least 28 days’ notice in writing. We will review the rent we charge after consulting tenants and registered tenant organisations.

Help to pay your rent
You may be entitled to claim Housing Benefit to help you pay your rent and service charges. Housing Benefit cannot be used to pay for water, gas or electricity charges including hot water and heating we provide.

If you are not sure whether you would get Housing Benefit, claim anyway. If you have to pay Council Tax, you can also claim Council Tax Benefit at the same time. Contact your local housing office and ask for a form. If you need help filling in the form, one of our housing advice officers or your sheltered-housing supervisor will be happy to help you.

By law, we must review your Housing Benefit every so often. To do this we will automatically send you a renewal claim form. It is important that you fill in and return your renewal form so you don’t lose out on Housing Benefit. Once we start paying you Housing Benefit, you must let us know about any changes to your circumstances. If you don’t, we could pay you too much or too little benefit. If you receive too much benefit, we can ask you to pay it back.
Problems paying your rent

If you have a problem paying your rent, contact your sheltered-housing supervisor or the local housing office immediately. Our staff can give you advice and see if you are entitled to Housing Benefit and any other benefits. If you don’t contact us, we can’t help you.

If you fall behind with your rent, we will ask you to agree to pay off your arrears by regularly paying a set amount. The amount we ask you to pay will be based on your financial circumstances. We will also offer you money advice and information on state benefits. If you don’t try to reduce your arrears, or if you do not pay the amount you agreed with us, we will take legal action against you. This is a last resort, but it may result in you losing your home. Deal with your most important debts first. For example, it is important to pay your rent to avoid losing your home and to pay your gas and electricity bills to avoid being cut off.

You can also get help from the following.

- West Dunbartonshire Council Welfare Rights Service, 6 - 14 Bridge Street, Dumbarton. Phone: 01389 737 050
- Citizens advice bureaus. Phone: 0141 435 7590 (Clydebank) Phone: 01389 604 705 or 01389 744 690 (Dumbarton and Alexandria)
- Independent Resource Centre, 627 Dumbarton Road, Dalmuir, Clydebank. Phone: 0141 951 4040
Your sheltered-housing complex

Within our complexes, each home is self-contained with its own front door. This allows you to live as independently as possible. Each complex has a team of sheltered-housing supervisors who work seven days a week to provide help to people who need it. Help is available 24 hours a day from the sheltered-housing supervisor or mobile attendant service. Each home is fitted with an alarm system so that you can call for help immediately in an emergency.

The spare key

The sheltered-housing supervisor keeps a spare key to your home in case they need to get into your home in an emergency (for example, if you have had a fall and cannot get to the door to open it). It is a good idea for a friend or relative who lives nearby to also hold a spare key (and for the sheltered-housing supervisors to know about this). You need to get our permission before fitting new locks to the door.

Visitors

You are responsible for your visitors’ actions while they are in or around your home. If they cause a nuisance or harass anyone in your neighbourhood, we may hold you responsible.

Noise

We understand that daily activities create some level of noise, but there are some types of noise that are unacceptable, and there are certain times of the day and night when noise may cause a nuisance. We expect all tenants to consider their neighbours. If your neighbours complain, please take their comments seriously and try to solve the problem with them.

Pets

You must get our permission before you keep a pet. If we give you permission, you will be responsible for keeping your pet under control. You should take reasonable care to make sure it does not cause a nuisance or danger to anyone in your neighbourhood.

You should take reasonable care to make sure that your pet does not foul or damage your home, garden or shared areas. This includes making sure that your pet does not damage your neighbours’ property or any part of the neighbourhood.

Neighbour disputes and antisocial behaviour

Your neighbours may not realise that they are causing a problem. A friendly word with them may be enough to sort out the problem. If you can, try to solve the problem between yourselves. More often than not, disputes between neighbours can be avoided simply by talking to each other. If you feel that you can’t deal with the situation on your own, contact your local housing officer who will investigate your complaint and keep you informed of any action they have taken. Trained mediators from our Neighbourhood Mediation Service can help tenants to settle their disputes by reaching a solution they are both happy with.
Our Antisocial Investigation and Support Team (ASIST) is a team of officers who tackle and solve problems of antisocial behaviour in the West Dunbartonshire area. We investigate serious complaints about neighbours and antisocial behaviour. This includes problems caused by young people, loud music, drug dealing, assault and threatening behaviour.

**Using your home for illegal purposes**

You must not use your home for illegal purposes. If you or a member of your household is convicted of an offence, you will have broken your tenancy agreement and we can ask the sheriff for permission to evict you.

**Harassment**

Harassment is any behaviour or threatened behaviour that alarms or distresses another person. It includes discrimination against someone because of their race, colour, nationality, sex, sexuality, disability, age, religion or other reason. If we find that you, or anyone who lives with you or visits you, are causing harassment, we can ask the sheriff for permission to evict you.

**Using shared areas**

If your home shares areas (such as stairs and bin areas) with other homes, please respect other people’s privacy and keep the areas you share clean and tidy. Under the terms of your tenancy agreement, tenants in Hogan Court, Mill Road and Westbridgend Sheltered Housing Complexes are responsible for cleaning the close and landing. If you cannot come to an agreement with your neighbours, we will send out a rota so that you know when it is your turn.

**Waste and recycling services**

Your housing officer will let you know which day your household rubbish will be collected. If you have a wheelie bin, you must put the bin out for emptying, and take it back afterwards. You must put all rubbish in the bin and not leave it in bags or boxes. If you are unable to put your bin out because of a disability, you can apply for an ‘assisted pullout’ (this is where the bin men will pull your wheelie bin out, empty it and return it to where you normally keep it each collection day). We can send you an application form if you phone us:

Clydebank area: 01389 738542
Dumbarton and Vale of Leven area: 01389 738725

The waste and recycling services available to you will depend on where you live and the type of property you live in. If you live in a detached, semi-detached or terraced property, there is a fortnightly collection for dry items (papers, cans, plastic bottles and cardboard) and for garden and food waste.

If you who live in a flat or tenement, there is a fortnightly collection service for dry items, which Greenlight runs on our behalf.

There are also over 40 small recycling points and three household-waste recycling centres across West Dunbartonshire. Anyone can recycle a range of waste material (aluminium, batteries, glass bottles or wood) at these points. If you want us to collect a large item such as an old cooker, bed or fridge from your home there is a £16.22 charge for this, which
you must pay beforehand. For this charge we will collect a number of items (usually up to the contents of one room). If you do not live on the ground floor, you will need to bring the items downstairs yourself. We will only collect items that are left outside. If you need this service, call the Contact Centre on 01389 738282.

There is a higher charge for goods we do not consider to be household waste. This includes items resulting from home improvements, repairs or alteration work. The minimum charge for collecting this type of waste is £47.50, which you must pay beforehand. We will not collect rubble, bricks, stone, soil, slates and tiles, timber or demolished buildings.

If you prefer, you can take your bulky household waste to a household waste and recycling centre, free of charge. For more information about the services available, or for tips on preventing and reducing your household waste, please contact 0845 111 0500.

Running a business from home
If you, or anyone living with you, want to run a business from your home, you must get our permission in writing first.

Smoking in shared areas
It is against the law to smoke in indoor shared areas in your complex. This includes corridors, stairwells, lifts, shared lounges, the sheltered-housing supervisor’s office, dining rooms and shared bathrooms. We would prefer it if you didn’t smoke when staff are visiting you in your home.

Common room or lounge
The common room or lounge usually has a small kitchen attached. This is the centre of the social life at your complex. Talk to your sheltered-housing supervisor to find out what takes place there. In some complexes you can use the common room for a private party if you arrange it with your sheltered-housing supervisor. Sometimes our staff may need to use the common room for meetings or training, and sometimes we allow other people to use it too – but tenants’ planned activities take priority.

Shared laundry room
Some complexes (Young Street, Second Avenue, Melfort Avenue, Hogan Court, Mill Road, Gray Street and Westbridgend) have washing machines and tumble dryers that you can use. Your sheltered-housing supervisor will show you how to use them. These facilities are for your own personal washing and not for anyone who is not a tenant.

The other complexes may be able to provide help with washing in an emergency (for example, if you have a broken washing machine).

Gardens and grounds
Housing and Community Safety Services look after the gardens and grounds at your complex. If you would like to help maintain the gardens and grounds, this is normally possible and welcomed (even if you just want to potter about in the garden). Speak to your sheltered-housing supervisor or housing officer.
Who is responsible for repairs?

This section tells you about our responsibilities for repairs and maintenance to your home and to the shared areas in your complex. It also tells you about your responsibilities as a tenant.

Our responsibilities

We are responsible for making sure your home is windproof and watertight, and we must maintain the fixtures and fittings that supply gas, electricity, water and drainage.

Your responsibilities

You are responsible for cleaning and caring for the inside of your home, including decorating it when necessary. You are also responsible for some minor repairs.

You are responsible for any repairs needed as a result of damage caused by you or a member of your family or anyone you have invited into your home, even if the damage was accidental. Your contents insurance policy should cover accidental damage.

How to report a repair

You can let your sheltered-housing supervisor know about any repairs you may need. They will then report your repair to one of our repairs centres. Or you can report the repair direct to us.

If you live in Clydebank, you can contact the Clydebank Repairs Centre on Freephone 0800 073 8708. It is open from 8.30am to 4.15pm. If you live in Dumbarton or Alexandria, you can contact the Dumbarton and Alexandria Repairs Centre on Freephone 0800 073 8707. It is open from 8.30am to 4.15pm. If you need to report a repair to your gas central-heating (or hot-water) system, contact our contractor direct. Call City Technical on 0800 073 0341. You can report non-emergency repairs by filling in an online repair form (www.west.dunbarton.gov.uk/housing/council-tenants/housing-repairs).

We keep a record of all calls on our computer system. All calls are recorded for monitoring and training purposes. We aim to make sure that the person who visits you first about your repair will be the person who carries it out. However, some repairs will need to be looked at by an area maintenance officer who will then pass the repair to a contractor. When we pass details of the repair to a contractor we will send you a receipt to show that we are dealing with your repair. If you need an emergency repair when your local repairs centre is closed, phone the emergency repair service on 0800 197 1004. The emergency repair service will come out to you if:

- you have no gas, electricity, or water supply (unless your supplier is already dealing with it); or
- your property has been damaged or broken into and we need to make it safe and secure.

This service is for emergencies only. If you call out the emergency repairs service for a general repair, we may charge you the cost of the work and a call-out fee.
Our targets

We set challenging targets for responding to any repair and maintenance problems in your home. Our response times run from when you report a problem to us until the time the repair is completed.

We put repairs into categories — emergency, urgent, general urgent and general non-urgent. When you report a repair we will tell you what category it is in. How long it takes to carry out your repair depends on the category the repair is in.

Emergency repairs (within 24 hours)
- Burst pipes causing flooding
- Dangerous electrical faults
- Gas leaks or faulty gas fires

Urgent repairs (within five working days)
- Restoring partial loss of electricity
- Reglazing single-glazed windows
- Dripping pipes and water tanks or cylinders

General urgent (within 10 working days)
- Repairing individual electrical sockets where there is no power
- Reglazing double-glazed windows
- Replacing taps

General non-urgent repairs (within 40 working days or, if suitable, as part of our yearly planned work scheme)
- Replacing a washer on a tap
- Regular repairs such as non-urgent path repairs or cleaning gutters
Can you charge me for repairs to my home?

We can charge you for any repair that is needed because:

• the police or another emergency service had to force their way into your home because you would not let them in; or
• you or someone who lives with you has been careless, or has neglected or misused the property.

Our staff or contractors working on our behalf will not ask you to give them cash or to make any form of payment direct to them. If they do, please report this immediately to us (call the whistle-blowing hotline on 01389 737 272).

The right to repair scheme

The Government introduced the right to repair scheme to make sure that we do certain repairs within set timescales. The scheme allows you to have certain repairs done by an approved contractor if we don’t do the work on time. If we don’t finish the work on time, you may also be entitled to compensation. Contact your repairs centre for more information or ask for our leaflet ‘The Right to Repair Scheme’.

Alterations and improvements

You must not make any changes to your home without our permission in writing. We will not refuse to give our permission unless we have good reason.

• You should not fit locks that would prevent access to your property in an emergency.
• You don’t need permission to decorate the inside of your home, but please don’t use Artex as we may charge you the cost of removing it when you leave.
• You must not replace any doors without our permission in writing. We do not allow glass doors.
• You must not remove kitchen or bathroom fittings without our permission in writing.
• You must not carry out any electrical work (including installing showers, dimmer switches, or extra sockets) without our permission in writing.
• You must not remove any walls, bannisters or cupboards. If we give you permission to carry out the work, a competent tradesperson (registered where necessary - for example with Gasafe or NIEEIC and so on) must carry out the work to our standard.
• You must not lay laminate flooring without our permission in writing. We will only grant permission if you live in a house (detached, terraced or semi-detached) or a ground-floor flat.

If you don’t get our permission, or if you don’t carry out the work in the proper way, we may charge you the cost of bringing the work up to our standard. You may also be putting your family and your neighbours at risk if the work makes the property unsafe.

If you alter or improve your home with our permission, you must maintain the work you have done.
Compensation for improving your home

If you have carried out certain types of home improvements, you may be entitled to claim compensation at the end of your tenancy. But you must have had our written permission to carry out the improvements in the first place and you must have all your original receipts. Contact your repairs centre for more information or ask for our leaflet ‘The Right to Compensation for Improvements Scheme’.

Gas maintenance

We will service the gas central-heating system in your home once a year. This is to make sure that it is safe and to repair any faults. We will contact you before the service is due. You must let the contractor into your home to do this work. If there is a gas leak, you must:

- put out all cigarettes and not light any matches;
- not use electrical switches;
- switch off all gas equipment;
- turn off the pilot light and main gas supply; and
- call National Grid UK on Freephone 0800 111 999.

The main gas tap is normally near the gas meter. If you are not sure where it is, please contact us and we will be pleased to help you.

Protecting your home from frost

There are two main things you can do to prevent frost damage and burst pipes:
- set your heating to at least 15º Celsius to keep your home reasonably warm; and
- leave the doors to each room slightly open.

If you have a burst pipe:
- turn off the water at the stopcock;
- switch off the electricity at the mains if the water comes into contact with electrics;
- switch off boilers or other water heaters;
- switch off the central heating;
- turn all taps on to drain the pipes; and
- contact your local repairs centre and tell your neighbours.

If the water pipes freeze:
- turn off the water at the stopcock;
- switch off the boiler or slowly dampen down the coal fire if you have a back boiler;
- switch off the immersion heater;
- turn all the taps on; and
- contact your local repairs centre.
Preventing condensation

Condensation happens when there is a lot of moisture (such as steam from cooking, washing or drying clothes, and baths and showers) and there is not enough ventilation. You need to let the moisture out by opening the windows, especially if your home is well insulated against heat loss. Keep doors to rooms where condensation develops closed to prevent the moisture spreading around your home. If you keep your home warm and well-ventilated, you are less likely to get condensation. Use any extractor fans that have been fitted.

Mould

Mould normally grows because of condensation. You can remove the mould by first washing the affected surface with a fungicidal or weak bleach solution, and then washing it again a couple of days later to remove the mould. Dry the areas thoroughly — especially if you plan to decorate. Do not use gloss paint on external walls. If the problem continues, contact your local repairs centre. They will arrange for a maintenance officer to visit you.

Lomond and Clyde Care and Repair

If you are over 60 or have a disability, you might qualify for home-safety improvements or for help with small repair jobs that we are not responsible for. Call Lomond and Clyde Care and Repair on 01389 734 188. This is not a council service.
Home safety and security

Insurance
We insure our buildings against risks such as fire. However, we do not insure tenants’ property and belongings such as furniture, so you should take out contents insurance against burglary or damage by fire or flood. We offer all our tenants home contents insurance at competitive prices. If you would like to apply for this, please contact your local housing office. As with any insurance policy, you must make sure that you keep your payments up to date to avoid your policy being cancelled.

Smoking
You are not allowed to smoke in any of the shared or public areas, such as the lounge, attached kitchen, hallways or the shared toilets. You and your visitors may smoke in your own home, but we would advise that you don’t smoke in bed. You may also smoke outdoors in the gardens and grounds, as long as this does not annoy others, and as long as you do not leave cigarette ends, used matches and so on.

Security of your home
Do not let anyone into your home or the shared areas unless you know who they are and why they are calling. Ask to see their identity cards if they say they are coming for a specific purpose. Keep doors locked and ask your visitors to do the same.

There are a number of things you can do to make your home more secure.

• Lock all doors and windows every time you leave your home.
• Remove any items from outside which burglars could use to help them break in such as ladders or tools.
• Leave a light on in your bedroom or living room.
• Cancel any milk or newspaper deliveries if you are leaving your home for a period of time.

Also, beware of bogus callers. Thieves often try to get into homes by pretending to be officials or tradespeople. Never let a stranger into your home unless you are sure they are who they say they are. To protect yourself from bogus callers you should do the following to check who is calling before you fully open the door.

• Look through the peep hole. If you don’t have a peep hole, get one fitted. (If you are elderly or disabled, you may be able to get this done for you. Call Lomond and Clyde Care and Repair on 01389 734 188.)
• Ask to see an identity card. (All council staff have one.)
• Ask the person to call back if they do not have an identity card, and then check with the organisation that they claim to be from.
• Phone the police if you are suspicious.
Safety in your home

Fire
To help prevent a fire:
• never leave a chip pan on the cooker without an adult watching it;
• don’t put too many plugs in sockets;
• use socket adapters as little as possible;
• don’t leave cigarettes burning;
• never use a damaged flex;
• don’t use light fittings for any other purpose;
• keep matches away from children; and
• make sure there is a guard around any open fires.

You should also plan what to do in case of a fire. For example:
• plan an escape route out of your home; and
• make sure your family, and anyone else who lives with you, know what to do.

If there is a fire, you should:
• close the door of the room where the fire is to stop the flames spreading;
• get everyone out of the house; and
• phone 999.

Smoke alarms
Your home should be fitted with a mains-wired smoke detector connected to the alarm system. If you don’t have one, or you have problems with a detector, contact your sheltered-housing supervisor or the control centre.

Going away
Tell your supervisor when you are going away for a while, especially if you will be away overnight, so they do not think you have disappeared unexpectedly. You do not want them to spend time looking for you if there is a fire alarm or the building has to be evacuated. They may also need to come into your home if there is an emergency (for example, a burst pipe).
Getting involved

It is important to us that our tenants are supported and encouraged to tell us what they think about the services they receive and to get involved in making decisions about our services. We use a number of different methods to share information with you and to ask you for your views.

Filling in surveys or questionnaires

From time to time we use satisfaction surveys to ask tenants about our housing service and will use your responses to make changes to our services.

Housing News

Every three months we give all our tenants a Housing News magazine. This will give you up-to-date information and invite you to get involved in consultation when it is happening. You should receive a copy of the Housing News direct to your door.

Monthly newsletter

The supervisors within each complex produce a monthly newsletter which they give to all tenants. This helps to keep you up to date with events and various news from within your complex and the surrounding area.

Conferences and events

Every year we hold information and fun days or conferences designed to encourage tenants to get involved with housing services. These events raise awareness about our services, ask tenants and other customers for their views on different areas of the housing service and provide an opportunity for tenants to ask questions.

Focus groups and public meetings

Occasionally we hold focus groups or public meetings which look at a particular part of the housing service. For example, we will do this if we review our allocations policy, develop our tenant participation strategy or build new homes. We let tenants know about these meetings by publishing the details in the Housing News magazine or in the local press, by putting information on our website or by putting up posters.

The interested-tenants’ register

Many of our tenants are not able to go to regular meetings or in some areas there simply isn’t enough support for a tenants’ and residents’ association. Because we want all tenants to have an opportunity to have their say on our services, we have set up an interested-tenants’ register.

We give tenants on the register similar information to our tenants’ and residents’ associations and we invite them to get involved in consultations or other activities. They don’t have to go to regular meetings but can still keep up to date with what’s happening in housing services and can be involved in topics that they are interested in.
Tenants’ and residents’ associations

Tenants’ and residents’ associations are made up of local tenants and residents who are elected to represent their area to bring about improvements in housing and other services. There may already be a tenants’ or residents’ association in your area. If you are interested, you could ask them what they do and how you can get involved.

If there is no tenants’ or residents’ association in your area and you would like to set one up, we will help you do this. If there are other people in your complex who are also interested, you could set up an association or informal group to represent your complex. We will provide support, training and grants to help you do this.

Sheltered Housing Forum

The Sheltered Housing Forum represents all sheltered-housing tenants. The forum provides tenants with the opportunity to meet our staff and influence decisions that affect the way we manage their homes and deliver our services.

We invite two representatives from each complex to attend the forum meetings on behalf of their complex.

Tenant scrutiny

There are opportunities for tenants to get involved in different scrutiny activities such as tenant-led inspections, a scrutiny panel or mystery shopping (where you pretend to use a service to measure how well it is provided). These scrutiny activities give tenants greater influence and ability to hold housing services to account. They help staff and tenants to work together to achieve better performance and improved outcomes for tenants.

Tenant participation strategy

We have a tenant participation strategy which sets out how we will consult you and what we will consult you about. It is important that you have a say in the way we provide services in your area. If you would like a copy of the tenant participation strategy, or are interested in getting involved, please phone the Tenant Participation Team on 01389 737 281.

Social committee

You may find that your complex has a social committee which organises social activities and outings. The activities the committee organises may also be open to your family and friends.

Shared lounge and other activities

Almost all complexes have a shared lounge where tenants can gather for informal activities such as watching television, playing cards or just chatting.

We encourage you to organise as many activities as you like. If you have a hobby or a special interest, why not see how many other people are interested and set up a group.
Making a complaint

Our complaints procedure

We are committed to providing high-quality customer services. We value complaints and use the information we get from them to help us improve our services. If something goes wrong or you are not happy with our services, please tell us. Our complaints procedure also tells you about our complaints service standards and what you can expect from us.

What is a complaint?

We treat a complaint as any expression of unhappiness about our action or lack of action, or about the standard of service we have provided (or a contractor has provided on our behalf).

What can I complain about?

You can complain about things such as:

- a delay in responding to your enquiries and requests;
- if we fail to provide a service;
- our standard of service;
- council policy;
- the way a member of staff has treated you or their attitude; and
- if we fail to follow proper procedure.

Your complaint may involve more than one council service or be about someone working on our behalf.

What can’t I complain about?

There are some things we can’t deal with through our complaints procedure. These include:

- a routine first-time request for a service, for example a first-time request for a housing repair or action on antisocial behaviour;
- requests for us to pay compensation; and
- things that are covered by a right of appeal. Here are some examples.

If you are not satisfied with the level of priority you have been given when applying for a property, you have the right to appeal against the decision.

If we have refused your planning application, you have the right to appeal to the Scottish Ministers within six months of the decision.

If you believe your home is incorrectly valued for council tax, you can appeal to the assessor.

If other procedures or rights of appeal can help you deal with your concerns, we will give information and advice on these.
Who can complain?
Anyone can make a complaint to us, including a representative if you want to use one. We will confirm the details of the representative and check you are happy for us to discuss information with them. Please also read the section ‘Getting help to make your complaint’.

How do I complain?
You can complain using our online complaints form, by email, by phone, in person at any of our offices or by writing to Customer Relations at Rosebery Place, Clydebank, G81 1TG. It is usually easier for us to sort out complaints if you make them quickly and direct to the service concerned. So please speak to a member of staff within the service you are complaining about. They will try to sort out your problem there and then. When you make your complaint, tell us:

• your full name and address;
• as much as you can about the complaint;
• what has gone wrong; and
• how you want us to deal with the matter.

Online complaints form: www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk
By email: customer.relations@west-dunbarton.gov.uk
By phone: 01389 738273
Write to: Customer Relations, Rosebery Place, Clydebank, G81 1TG

How long do I have to make a complaint?
Normally, you must make your complaint within six months of:

• the event you want to complain about; or
• finding out that you have a reason to complain, but no longer than 12 months after the event itself.

In exceptional circumstances, we may be able to accept a complaint after the time limit. If you feel that the time limit should not apply to your complaint, please tell us why.

What happens when I have complained?
We will always tell you who is dealing with your complaint. Our complaints procedure has two stages.

Stage one – Sorting out the problem face-to-face
We aim to sort out complaints quickly and close to where we provided the service. This could mean an on-the-spot apology and explanation if something has clearly gone wrong, and immediate action to deal with the problem. We will give you our decision at stage one within five working days, unless there are exceptional circumstances. If we can’t sort out your complaint at this stage, we will explain why and tell you what you can do next. We might suggest that you take your complaint to stage two. You may choose to do this immediately or some time after you get our initial decision at stage one.
Stage two – Investigation
Stage two deals with two types of complaint – those that have not been sorted out at stage one and complicated complaints which need detailed investigation.

When using stage two we will:

• acknowledge, within three working days, that we have received your complaint;
• discuss your complaint with you to understand why you are still not happy and what outcome you are looking for; and
• give you a full response to the complaint as soon as possible and within 20 working days.

If our investigation will take longer than 20 working days, we will tell you. We will agree new time limits with you and keep you updated on our progress.

What if I’m still not satisfied?
After we have fully investigated your complaint, if you are still not satisfied with our decision or the way we dealt with your complaint, you can ask the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) to look at your complaint.

The SPSO cannot normally look at:

• a complaint that has not gone through our complaints procedure (so please make sure it has done before you contact the SPSO);
• events that happened, or that you became aware of, more than a year ago; or
• a matter that has been or is being considered in court.

You can contact the SPSO in the following ways.
In person: SPSO, 4 Melville Street, Edinburgh, EH3 7NS
By post: SPSO, Freepost EH641, Edinburgh, EH3 0BR
Freephone: 0800 377 7330
Online: www.spso.org.uk/contact-us
Website: www.spso.org.uk
Internet on your mobile: http://m.spso.org.uk

Complaints about social work
The procedure for complaints relating to social work is slightly different from our general complaints procedure as it follows specific laws and guidance. This legislation and guidance is being reviewed by the Scottish Government.

The Community Health and Care Partnership (CHCP) deliver health and social-care services together, but must keep to two separate sets of complaints policies, procedures and governance arrangements.

These two sets of policies and procedures are under one process for managing complaints. Please follow this link to see this process.

http://www.wdchcp.org.uk/publications-policies/
Complaints about care

If your complaint relates to a care service we provide, you can choose whether to complain to us or the Care Inspectorate. You can find out more about the Care Inspectorate’s complaints procedure, or make a complaint, by contacting them.

The Care Inspectorate has several offices around Scotland.

Please visit http://www.scswis.com/ for an online complaints form. Or, you can contact them in the following ways.

By phone: 0845 600 9527
By fax: 01382 207 289
By email: enquiries@careinspectorate.com

Getting help to make your complaint

We understand that you may be unable, or reluctant, to make a complaint yourself so we are happy to accept complaints from someone else on your behalf. This could be a friend, relative or advocate (representative), as long as you have given them permission to complain for you. You can find out about advocates in your area by contacting the Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance.

Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance

Phone: 0131 260 5380
Fax: 0131 260 5381
Website: www.siaa.org.uk

Customer relations

We are committed to making our service easy to use for all members of the community. In line with the duties we have by law relating to equal opportunities, we will always make sure that we make reasonable adjustments to help customers use our services.

If you prefer to make your complaint in writing and need help to do this, please contact us for more information. Our contact details are below. Please choose the option that suits you best.

Online complaints form: www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk
By email: customer.relations@west-dunbarton.gov.uk
By phone: 01389 738273
Write to: Customer Relations, Rosebery Place, Clydebank, G81 1TG
We are committed to delivering excellence in customer service at all times. In order to achieve and maintain excellent service, we have developed service standards with the help of our sheltered-housing tenants. If you feel our service has fallen short of these standards, please let us know.

**Sheltered-housing service standards**

We use a quality-control system which makes sure that you are:

- kept fully informed and involved in the way we deliver our services, by newsletters and consultation;
- kept safe from abuse;
- treated fairly, professionally and with respect;
- given independence and choice; and
- provided with a response service, when your supervisor is not on duty.

We will provide a high-quality sheltered-housing service to our sheltered-housing tenants which supports and encourages you to live independently.

We will provide a range of housing support services tailored to meet your needs by offering the following three levels of service.

- A daily visit or call (or both) from your sheltered-housing supervisor, and full access to the community alarm service
- A weekly visit or call (or both) from your sheltered-housing supervisor, and full access to the community alarm service
- No daily visit or call from your sheltered-housing supervisor, but full access to the community alarm service and all the services agreed in your tenancy

We will:

- be polite and respectful, and treat everyone fairly;
- provide a person-centred approach to assessments and providing support, working with partner agencies when appropriate;
- provide a service which has tenants’ dignity and right to privacy at its centre;
- make sure that all tenants are kept informed and have access to information about their rights and choices;
- agree a support plan with you and review it every six months or more frequently if there are any changes in your circumstances;
- aim to answer 85% of emergency calls within 60 seconds of the call reaching the control centre;
- respond to all emergency calls quickly and appropriately, for example by visiting your home, calling the emergency services if you ask us to do this or contacting a family member so they can visit your home to check that it is safe and secure;
• collect your prescription if a GP has issued an urgent prescription during a home visit and you have no relative or friend who can collect it for you;
• help with social activities throughout the year at individual complexes, for example trips and days out;
• regularly test all alarm systems and pendants in all our sheltered-housing complexes;
• test the fire alarms in our sheltered-housing complexes every week (except Westbridgend);
• test the lifts in sheltered-housing complexes (where these are installed) every three months;
• carry out risk assessments in sheltered-housing schemes every year;
• keep you up to date on what’s happening with our services;
• meet the Sheltered Housing Forum every two months to discuss our services;
• tell you how we have performed each year;
• invite you to meetings every six months to discuss how we run your complex and how we could improve our services;
• arrange for the Care at Home Co-ordinator to visit each complex every two months and carry out checks with a tenant and the supervisor on duty (for example, this may involve a them walking through the complex with the tenant and supervisor to discuss any concerns);
• ask you what you think of our services and use what you tell us to help improve those services; and
• arrange for the local housing officer to visit your complex regularly, to meet with the tenants so that you can raise any housing issues you have.

Your responsibility
We work hard to provide our customers with the best-possible service. We will not tolerate verbal or physical abuse or damage to our property. These circumstances are very rare, but we do not expect our staff to stay in situations where they:
• feel threatened, either verbally or physically; or
• fear for their own safety, or the safety of colleagues or members of the public.

Review
We will review these service standards every year with members of the Sheltered Housing Forum.
Useful phone numbers

Contact centre
01389 738 282

Housing
General enquiries - Dumbarton 01389 738 282
General enquiries - Clydebank 01389 738 282
General enquiries - Alexandria 01389 738 282
Homeless emergency (24-hour Freephone) 0800 1971004

Repairs
Dumbarton and Alexandria (Freephone) 0800 073 8707
Clydebank (Freephone) 0800 073 8708
Emergency out-of-hours repairs (Freephone) 0800 197 1004
Gas heating repairs (City Technical) 0800 073 0341
Sold Property Team 0141 562 2442
Tenant Participation 01389 737 281
ASIST 01389 772 048
(you can contact all antisocial behaviour services through this number)

Social Work
General enquiries - Dumbarton 01389 737 020
General enquiries - Clydebank 0141 562 8800
General enquiries - Alexandria 01389 608 080

Financial Services
Council tax 01389 738 282 or 01389 737 444

Housing, Regeneration and Environmental Services
Special (bulky) uplifts - contact centre 01389 738 282
Grass cutting 01389 608 412
Litter hotline 01389 772 059
Environmental Health 01389 738290
Pest Control (contact centre) 01389 738 282
Waste Aware (recycling) 0845 111 0050
Consumer Direct 0845 404 0506
Trading Standards 01389 738 552
Caretaking Service:
Dumbarton and Alexandria 01389 778910
– Clydebank 01389 738604

Councillors – general enquiries
Clydebank 01389 738 782
Dumbarton and Alexandria 01389 737 540

General
Citizens advice bureaus:
Dumbarton and Alexandria 01389 604 705 or 01389 744 690
Clydebank 0141 435 7590
Community Transport Service 0141 333 3252
HOME from HOME 01389 733 733
Energy advice (Energy Saving Trust) 0800 512 012
Samaritans 0845 790 9090
Welfare Rights 01389 737 050
Lesbian and Gay Switchboard 0141 847 0447
RELATE (Relationship Scotland) 0141 248 5249
Victim Support Scotland 0141 952 2095
Dog warden 01389 738 652
Greenlight 01389 721 012

Women’s Aid
Dumbarton and Alexandria 01389 751 036
Clydebank 0141 952 8118

Police
Clydebank 0141 532 3300
Dumbarton 01389 822 000
Alexandria 01389 823 000
Crimestoppers (Freephone) 0800 555 111
Other formats
This document can be viewed as a pdf on our website: http://www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk
It can also be provided in large print, Braille or on audio cassette and can be translated into different community languages.

Please contact:
Corporate Communications,
Council Offices,
Garshake Road,
Dumbarton,
G82 3PU

Telephone: 01389 737000