

Tenant Handbook

MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR TENANCY



High Peak
Borough Council

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Introduction

This handbook has been produced to provide useful and relevant information to help make the most of your new tenancy. We hope it helps you to settle into your new home, and answers some of the questions you may have.

This handbook also outlines your tenancy conditions, information about your rights and responsibilities as a tenant and our rights and responsibilities as your landlord.

We hope you enjoy reading this handbook and use it as your guide to the services we offer. Please save it in a safe place so that you can refer back to it whenever you need to.

This handbook provides further advice on your tenancy agreement but is not a legal document. It gives guidance on how you can make sure you do not break any of the conditions of your tenancy. We update both the handbook and tenancy agreement from time to time; if there is any difference between the two documents you should follow the information within the tenancy agreement as this will always take priority.

Providing you with a good service

We have a straight forward approach to customer care, service and support. We treat our customers as we would like to be treated ourselves. We are proud that our customers come first and always try to make sure that our customers are treated fairly and sensitively.

We will go that extra mile to ensure that your issues are addressed. One of our main aims is to provide you with an excellent service. We regularly review all our services to ensure that they are efficient, effective and provide good value for money.

We aim to provide a high standard of service whenever you contact us and make sure that everyone is treated in a courteous, polite, efficient and consistent manner.

Equal opportunities

We are committed to fairness and equality to all, operating with professionalism, integrity and openness. We believe that everyone is entitled to be treated with dignity, respect and fairness - regardless of their age, disability, gender reassignment, being married or in a civil partnership, being pregnant, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.

We aim to make all our services accessible, welcoming and appropriate to meet the needs of all our customers in the communities we manage, and treat all our customers fairly and sensitively. In order to meet this aim we are trying our best to do the following:

- Produce information specific to the needs of different groups of customers e.g. young people, elderly people, people fleeing from domestic abuse, people with disabilities etc
- Provide information on our services in alternative formats when you ask us to, such as Braille, large print or audio
- Make sure our offices provide access for all
- Offer to visit you at home if you have circumstances that prevent you from coming to one of our offices
- Provide translation for customers through Language Line
- Ensure our website is accessible.

Harassment and abuse

We will not tolerate:

- Harassment or abuse of any kind, including hate crime based on age, gender, race, disability, sexuality or religion. This includes verbal and physical abuse directed at tenants, residents, staff and our contractors
- We will investigate any such incidents in full. We will take suitable action against people who carry them out and support those affected by them.

You can help us by telling us

- About any incidents of harassment or abuse
- If you have any enhanced needs, such as communication or mobility difficulties
- Or if we are not providing you with services which meet your needs.

In order to meet the diverse needs of our customers, we need to know more about you. We ask you, and everyone in your home, to complete a customer profile form. We use this information to help us tailor services to your individual needs and make sure that we are delivering services to everyone in a fair and equal way.

This information will only be seen by us.

If it will improve our service to you, our contractors may also be given relevant information, but we will not share it with anyone else. The information will be protected by the General Data Protection Regulations 2018.

Data protection

We are committed to comply with Data Protection legislation. Keeping your personal information accurate and secure is a vital part of providing efficient services to you. We always comply with the relevant legislation when handling your personal information. We will only use the information we hold about you for the purpose you provided it and will also only collect the minimum information necessary to fulfil that purpose.

When you provide information you will be told what it will be used for and whom it will be shared with. However, you need to be aware that we are required to share your information, on occasion, between different sections of the Council and with other agencies to help reduce crime or investigate fraud.

You have the right to access any personal data that is being kept about you either on a computer or in structured and accessible manual files. Any person may exercise this right by submitting a fee and a request in writing to:

The Data Controller

High Peak Borough Council
P O Box 136
Buxton
Derbyshire
SK17 1AQ

Freedom of information

The Freedom of Information Act gives everybody the right to information held by a public authority. You are entitled to any information that is not personal information, or that is not exempt under the Act. You can access information that we hold by:

Checking the Council's Publication Scheme which is a list of the information held by High Peak Borough Council and gives details on how to obtain the information.

The publication scheme can be found at www.highpeak.gov.uk or, you can make a request in writing to:

Freedom of Information Officer

High Peak Borough Council
P O Box 136
Buxton
Derbyshire
SK17 1AQ

A great deal of the information that we hold is personal and private to individuals. However, the Freedom of Information Act will not make public, private or confidential information.

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Moving In

Get yourself connected

Now that you have signed up for your new home you will need to register with gas, electricity and water suppliers as a new tenant and make arrangements for connection and payment of bills. It is important to do this as soon as possible, to prevent any disputes about previous tenant bills and how much fuel you have used.

Your Gas and Electric supplier will be discussed with you at the sign up of tenancy.

When you have found out who your suppliers are, contact them direct - it is important before you call to have your meter readings to hand, along with your new address and post code. You will be able to close any accounts at your previous home in the same call.

If you want to change supplier

You don't have to remain with your current utility supplier - you can choose whichever company you prefer to supply your fuel. If you want to change supplier, you must arrange this as it is your responsibility. To change suppliers can take up to four weeks so you should act as soon as possible if you want to change.

Water

The water supply to your home should already be connected when you move in. If you turn on the cold tap and nothing comes out, the water has probably been turned off at the stop tap for safety reasons. To turn your water on, you need to find the stop tap, which is normally under the sink in the kitchen cupboard. Sometimes the stop tap is in the bathroom, in a kitchen cupboard or in the hot water cylinder cupboard.

If you are having trouble finding the stop tap please call our Property Services Team on **0345 129 8075** and we will be happy to help.

When you move into your new home you must register with your water supplier and make arrangements to pay your water bill. You can contact United Utilities on **0345 672 2999** if you have a water meter or **0345 672 2888** if you do not or click onto www.unitedutilities.com.

Water meters

Did you know that when you have a water meter fitted, it cannot be changed back?

If you are having a water meter installed, please tell us first. A water meter may have advantages for some tenants but may disadvantage whoever moves in after you.

Heating

Gas fires, gas heating and pipe work to gas cookers.

We are responsible for ensuring your safety, and so your gas meter will have been capped off to prevent its use until we have carried out all the necessary safety checks.

These can't be done when the property is empty, so as soon as you have the keys and have contacted the gas supply company, please contact us on **0345 129 8075** to arrange for our gas engineer to call.

The gas engineer will call and check your installation including the pipes for the gas supply. The engineer will check your heating and show you how to use the heating system. This appointment needs to be pre-booked, as emergency engineers at the weekend will not be able to carry out this check.

Electric storage heaters

You will not be able to operate your storage heaters until you have your electric supply turned on. Your home may have night storage radiators whilst your neighbours have gas fired central heating - this may be due to a choice of the previous tenant, or lack of gas supply.

Telephone

If you would like to have a telephone at home you should contact the telephone company that you would like to use, they will be able to advise you on the services they provide. If you had a telephone at your previous address you may also be able to take your old number with you, and if there is a telephone line at your new home you may only need to pay one re-connection fee.

Carelink

If your home has the Carelink system provided, a warden will visit you to explain how the system works and take your contact details etc. If you don't receive a visit within the first week of moving in you should contact Carelink on **0345 129 8075**.

Please do not move or disconnect the Carelink equipment as this may affect the service to other people's homes. You will have to pay for any damage caused if you move or disconnect the equipment.

Redirecting your mail

Royal Mail will re-direct your mail from your old address to your new home for a small charge, to arrange this you will need to fill out an application form at the post office.

Changing your address

Even if you get Royal Mail to re-direct your mail, you must remember to give your address to the following people:

- Employers
- Doctor/Dentist
- Bank and Building Society
- Credit Card Companies
- DVLA if you have a car, driving licence or pay road tax
- Benefits Agency/Job Centre
(if you receive benefits)
- Insurance Companies
- Children's Schools

Wheelie bins

There should be a wheelie bin at your new home, if it is missing or damaged, you should visit www.highpeak.gov.uk where you can also find out more about recycling schemes in the High Peak.

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About your Secure Tenancy

Your tenancy

Most of the tenancies we offer are secure tenancies. This means that you have the right to live in your home as long as you keep to the conditions of your Tenancy Agreement. These conditions will have been explained to you when your tenancy started - if you need a copy you can download one from our website. If you are not a secure tenant then your rights and responsibilities will be explained to you at the point you sign your tenancy agreement.

This handbook provides further advice on your tenancy agreement but is not a legal document. It gives guidance on how you can make sure you do not break any of the conditions of your tenancy. We update both the handbook and tenancy agreement from time to time; if there is any difference between the two documents you should follow the information within the tenancy agreement as this will always take priority.

What is a tenancy agreement?

A tenancy agreement is a legal document that all new tenants must sign at the start of their tenancy. It is a legal contract, which sets out the rights and responsibilities of both you as a tenant and us, High Peak Borough Council, as your landlord. By signing the tenancy agreement you have agreed to keep to the conditions of your tenancy. The tenancy agreement is an extremely important document, and you should read it carefully.

What happens if I break my tenancy agreement?

If you break any of the conditions of your tenancy agreement we can take action to end your tenancy. We will usually try to sort out any problems with you first. However, if the problem is serious and we cannot solve it together, we may have to take steps to evict you from your home.

Step 1

If we receive an allegation that you have broken one or more of your Tenancy Conditions, a Housing Officer will contact you. Unless the allegation is very serious, you will usually be given the opportunity to put things right. If the problem stops at this point in the process, no further action will be taken against you.

Step 2

If you continue to break the tenancy conditions, we will consider taking further action against you. We will tell you about any action we intend to take and what you should do to avoid it.

Step 3

If the problems continue after we have given you reasonable warnings, we will apply to the court for an order to allow us to evict you and repossess your home. The court's decision will be based on the evidence presented and the seriousness of the problem. We will have to prove to the judge that you have broken the tenancy conditions and that evicting you is reasonable action to take.

Remember

You are likely to lose your home if you continually break your tenancy conditions. If you are evicted, you will not be able to join our housing register (waiting list for housing) again, and it is unlikely that you will be re-housed because of your homelessness.

What are the tenancy conditions?

The tenancy conditions are set out in your tenancy agreement. The following are just a few examples of behaviour that would break the tenancy conditions:

- Falling behind with your rent
- Behaving in an antisocial way
- Playing very loud music
- Failing to keep your garden in a neat and tidy condition
- Failing to keep your pets under control
- Using abusive, threatening or violent behaviour towards your neighbours or our staff
- Selling illegal drugs at your home

Your rights as a secure tenant

You have the right to live in your home for the rest of your life, as long as you keep to the tenancy conditions.

The right to succession

There can only ever be one succession to a council tenancy. If you have a joint tenancy and the other person dies then you will automatically take over the tenancy.

If the original tenancy was a joint tenancy and one of the original tenants has died the surviving tenant will have already have taken over the tenancy by succession. When that person dies, no-one will be able to succeed the tenancy.

If the person who died was a sole tenant, you can succeed the tenancy if you are their husband, wife, civil partner or someone living with them as their partner, as long as you were living in the home at the time of their death.

If there is no surviving spouse or civil partner, you may be able to succeed to the tenancy if you are another family member, there has been no previous succession and the tenancy began before 1st April 2012. You must have been living in the home of the person who died for at least a year before their death. You will be asked to provide proof of this.

If you succeed a tenancy, you will have the same tenancy as the person who has died.

If you succeed the tenancy, you will be responsible for any existing rent arrears or other breach of tenancy. Only one person can succeed to a tenancy, so for example if you succeed your mother's tenancy your husband, wife, civil partner or someone living with you as your partner cannot become a joint tenant with you and they cannot succeed the tenancy if you die.

If you succeed a tenancy which is too big for your needs, we may ask you to consider moving to a smaller home. In these cases we will help you to find a new home.

Right to take in lodgers

You can take in lodgers without our permission. However, you should remember the following important points.

- You must not let your home become overcrowded
- If you are getting Housing Benefit/Universal Credit you must tell the Revenues and Benefits Team as taking in a lodger could affect the amount of Housing Benefit/Universal Credit you receive.

If you currently live alone, you must tell the Council Tax that you are taking in a lodger. You will lose your entitlement to the 25% single person's discount on your council tax bill. Contact them at:

Council Tax Section

High Peak Borough Council

P O Box 136

Buxton

Derbyshire

SK17 1AQ

Email: counciltax@highpeak.gov.uk

The right to sublet part of your home

Subletting is not the same as taking in a lodger.

- A lodger usually shares your home and may have meals with you. He or she may pay for food, bills and upkeep
- A subtenant has the use of part of your home, and you need their permission to go into those parts. A subtenant does not have any meals provided and he or she would normally do their own cooking and cleaning. You may be able to sublet part of your home, but you should remember the following points
- You need our permission first. Failure to do so is not only a breach of your tenancy but can also be a criminal offence
- You cannot sublet your whole home. If you do, we will end your secure tenancy
- If you are getting Housing Benefit/Universal Credit to help with your rent, you must let the Revenues and Benefits team/DWP know.

The right to buy your home

If you have been a council tenant for at least three years (or as set by government), you will probably have the right to buy your home under the Right to Buy scheme. However, the Right to Buy scheme does not apply to some properties, including sheltered housing and elderly person's accommodation. If we agree that you have the right to buy your home, you will be entitled to a discount on the valuation. The discount depends on how long you have been a council tenant and whether you're buying a house or a flat. For more information, visit our website

www.highpeak.gov.uk

The right to make improvements

You have the right to improve your home (for example, to fit a new kitchen or bathroom, to paint the outside of the property and so on).

Alterations you cannot make

- We will not give permission to make alterations that make your property unsafe. This would include structural changes that do not meet building regulations, changes that can affect fire safety (for example cat flaps in fire doors or dividing bedrooms into multiple rooms).
- We will not give you permission to make alterations that will make it harder for us to manage and maintain the property. This would include installing solid fuel appliances, conservatories and laminate flooring to first floors or higher or to install systems which control your heating or other fixtures remotely.

You must get permission first

- You must complete an online tenant alteration form and wait for our permission before proceeding
- You must comply with current Building Regulations and obtain building control and planning consent if necessary and copies of the approval must be provided to us
- Suitable scaled drawings with specifications must be provided to us if required
- The Party Wall Act 1996 must be complied with
- You must make sure that work does not cause annoyance or nuisance to others and ensure that work is carried out in a competent manner, using industry standard materials. The work must be carried out by a qualified, competent trades person.

- if any of these works involve drilling into or removing walls you, or your contractor, need to make sure the appropriate surveys - for example electrical or asbestos surveys - are completed before any work takes place. Our agreement for you to complete works will only be given if we have seen proof of these surveys. Asbestos surveys must be completed by a UKATA qualified contractor. More information on asbestos can be found on page 32.

The right to compensation relating to repairs

By law, we must carry out certain repairs that might affect your health, safety or security within a set number of days. If our contractor fails to complete any of these repairs (known as qualifying repairs) on time, you can instruct us to appoint another alternative contractor to carry out the work. If the second contractor also fails to do the work on time, you may be entitled to compensation.

If you think this applies to you please contact AllianceNorseRepairsHotline@norsegroup.co.uk

The right to exchange

You have the right to exchange your home for another Council or Housing Association home in the High Peak or, under certain circumstances, in another council area. You must get permission before any exchange takes place. More details can be found at www.highpeak.gov.uk/MutualExchange

The right to be consulted

We must consult you about important changes such as large-scale building work, how your home is managed, or changing how we collect rent.

The right to assign

In certain circumstances, you have the right to assign (legally transfer) your tenancy to someone else. We can only allow you to transfer your tenancy if:

- We have agreed to you exchanging your home with that of another Council or Housing Association tenant, or
- There is a court order to do so, in connection with divorce or child care proceedings.

In some cases, if you want to leave your home, we may let you assign your tenancy to another member of your family. We would only allow you to pass your tenancy on to someone who could take it over by succession after your death (see page 9). You must get our permission in writing before you transfer your tenancy to another person.

Your responsibilities as a tenant

You must:

- Keep to the conditions of your tenancy agreement
- Pay your rent in full and on time
- Be a good neighbour, and
- Respect other people's right to live in peace and quiet.

Joint tenants

If you are a joint tenant, each of you is equally responsible for keeping to all conditions of the tenancy agreement. Here are a few important points to remember about joint tenancies.

- Both tenants are equally responsible for paying the rent and for any overdue rent (rent arrears)
- Either joint tenant can apply for Housing Benefit/Universal Credit
- If one joint tenant dies, the tenancy agreement is automatically succeeded by the other joint tenant
- If your relationship breaks down, it is not possible for one joint tenant to make the other leave the home. You should discuss the situation with us or get legal advice
- If one joint tenant leaves and wants to give up their share of the joint tenancy, they should contact us.

Creating a joint tenancy

If you are the only tenant and you want someone to join your tenancy so that they have the same rights as you, we will agree to this as long as:

- You are not breaking any of the tenancy conditions
- The proposed joint tenant would normally have been a joint tenant if they had been housed with you when you got the tenancy, and
- The proposed joint tenant has lived with you in the home for at least 12 months.

Our rights as the landlord

We have the right to:

- Change the tenancy agreement, the rent or other charges as long as we give you suitable notice beforehand
- Enter the property, without giving you notice, in an emergency or if there is a risk to any person or property, and
- Take legal action against you if you break any of the conditions of your tenancy agreement.

Our responsibilities as the landlord

We must:

- Keep the structure of your home in a good state of repair
- Carry out repairs that we are responsible for
- Allow you to live in your home in peace and quiet, as long as you keep to the conditions of your tenancy agreement, and
- Give you at least 24 hours' notice if we want to inspect your home, carry out repairs or make improvements.

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Your rent and other charges

Under your tenancy agreement your rent must be paid regularly and on time. Your rent is due weekly in advance on a Monday, except for those weeks that have been designated as 'no collection' weeks. If you fail to pay your rent regularly you are at risk of losing your home.

How much rent should you pay?

The letter that we sent to you when we offered you your home will tell you how much your rent is. You will receive a letter every year advising you how much your current rent is. Please note that you may be entitled to help towards paying your rent, there is more information about this further on in this section.

If you are in rent arrears we will expect you to pay your rent during "no collection" weeks to bring your account up-to-date

How are rents worked out?

The Government now sets the level of rent for all social housing. Some tenants will have heating and other charges added if these are provided communally, or there are service charges.

If this is the case we will explain what these charges are when we tell you how much your rent is.

What does the rent pay for?

Your rent is used to manage and maintain your home. It is kept completely separate from other services provided by the council, which are paid for through the council tax. If your property is designated as a “carelink” property, or you have chosen to receive this service from us, this will either show on a charge on your rental account or in some circumstances you may receive a separate invoice.

Will you get notice of your rent increasing?

We will write to you and tell you about any increases in your rent and/or charges at least 4 weeks before they are introduced. Any change to your Housing Benefit because of a rent increase will be worked out automatically. You will need to tell Universal Credit of any rent changes via your journal as soon as they happen.

How can you pay your rent and Service Charge?

There are several ways to pay your rent. It is up to you to decide which method suits you best. You can choose from any of the following:

Direct Debit

You can pay your rent directly to us from your bank or building society account. We recommend you pay by this method because it is safe and easy, further details and application forms are available from the rents team.

All-pay

You may be eligible to pay your rent by cash or card at your local post office or Paypoint using a special ‘All-pay card’. Visit <https://consumer.paypoint.com/> for more information on local outlets which accept these payments.

Standing Order

You can also arrange to have your rent paid by standing order from your bank or building society account. Our standing order bank details are as follows:

National Westminster Plc Branch:

2 Spring Gardens, Buxton, Derbyshire

Sort code: 60-04-18

For the credit of: High Peak Borough Council

Account number: 10567828

You will also need to quote your rent account reference number.

Online

Pay on-line at www.highpeak.gov.uk

Click the ‘Pay’ icon followed by the ‘Pay your rent’ icon.

By Telephone

You can make a payment over the telephone by debit or credit card, please call **0345 129 8117** (this is an automated 24-hour payment line). Please have your rent reference number ready when you ring, this can be found on the top of any rent letters we have sent to you.

Two annual prize draws

If you pay rent and you keep your account up-to-date all year, you will be entered into two prize draws per year with the chance of winning a real money prize.

Rent Arrears

What happens if you don't pay your rent?

It is important that you do not fall into arrears with your rent payments. If for any reason you miss a payment, you must bring your rent account up-to-date as soon as possible.

If you have any difficulty paying your rent, please contact us immediately so that we can give you advice about benefits which you could be entitled to claim. We can also put you in touch with other agencies that may be able to help if you have problems with your paying your rent.

We can also help you to make an arrangement whereby you can pay off your rent arrears by an agreed amount each week. If you keep to this agreement, no further action will be taken against you.

If you do not get in touch with us to arrange to clear your arrears or fail to keep to a payment arrangement without explanation, we will take legal action against you. The cost of taking you to court will then be added to the amount that you already owe us. If your arrears continue to increase, you may be evicted from your home.

We are here to help

You can contact us by telephone, email or through the Council's website to discuss your rent. You can arrange a private appointment with us to discuss any problems that you are having in keeping up with your rent payments. We will also visit you at home at a time convenient to you to discuss ways that will help you to keep your rent account up-to-date. We can offer help in completing online benefit forms and arrange expert advice on dealing with debt or claiming other benefits.

Rent Credit

We encourage tenants to build a credit on their rental account equal to a months rent by paying a small regular weekly amount. This helps prevent arrears building, for example if financial circumstances change and you need to claim new benefits or you lose your job. It also means that when you move out, your last months rent is already paid, freeing your money up for other expenses.

For all new tenants we ask for a minimum of one week's rent in advance to be paid at the point of sign up, this includes service charges and Carelink charges where applicable. We then ask for a small weekly amount to be paid until the rent account is in credit by one month.

Refunds for rental-credit will only usually be issued to tenants' who are more than four weeks in credit and where there are no other debts on any sub accounts including court costs and former tenant arrears to the Council.

If payments are not kept up-to-date a summary of the action we will take to tackle rent arrears is shown below:

Step 1 - Reminder

We will send you a first reminder letter if your account goes into arrears.

Step 2 - Second Reminder

If you do not contact us after the first reminder letter or you fail to reduce your arrears, we will send you a second reminder.

Step 3 - Notice of Seeking Possession

If your arrears keep increasing, we will serve you with a Notice of Seeking Possession. This explains that, unless your arrears are cleared or reduced within the next four weeks, we may take legal action against you.

Step 4 - Pre-court letter

If you have not cleared your arrears or kept to a payment arrangement during the 4 weeks mentioned at step 3, we will send you a pre-court letter. This letter warns you that court action will be taken if the situation continues.

Step 5 - Court Action

Your case may be taken to court if your arrears continue to rise. We will tell you the date of the court hearing and advise that you attend. We will ask the court for a Possession Order but request that this be suspended if you pay an agreed amount in addition to your weekly rent. In exceptional circumstances we will apply for an immediate possession order.

Step 6 - Possession Order

If you keep to the payments set out in the court order, no further action will be taken. If you fail to keep to the terms of your court order we will ask for permission to evict you from your home.

Step 7 - Warrant

We will apply to the court for a warrant to regain possession of your home.

Step 8 - Eviction

You will be issued with an eviction date. If the required payment is made before the eviction date, the eviction warrant will be withdrawn. If the required payment is not made, the eviction will be carried out and you will lose your home.

Please Note

It is our policy to use eviction only as a last resort, we aim to give you all the help and advice which we can so that you do not lose your home. If you are evicted for rent arrears you may be seen to have made yourself intentionally homeless. This will limit any help that we can give you with housing in the future.

Help towards paying your rent

If you are on a low income you may be able to get help with your rent by making a claim for Housing Benefit/Universal Credit (Housing Costs).

How do you claim Housing Benefit/Universal Credit?

You will need to complete a Housing Benefit/Universal Credit claim giving details of your income, savings and other people who live in your home.

For Housing Benefit apply online by visiting www.highpeak.gov.uk and clicking 'Apply' or through your customer account.

Benefits Service

High Peak Borough Council, P O Box 136
Buxton, Derbyshire, SK17 1AQ
E-mail: benefits@highpeak.gov.uk

You can apply online for Universal Credit by visiting www.gov.uk/universal-credit

You will need to make a claim for Council Tax Reduction in addition to a claim for Universal Credit by visiting www.highpeak.gov.uk

What documents do you need to provide?

When making a claim, you will need to provide original proof (not photocopies) of your national insurance number and income and savings. The online form explains what proof you will need to provide and what kind of documents are acceptable.

It will speed up your claim if you supply all the required information. If you do not provide the correct information it will delay the processing of your claim and may lead to arrears building up on your rent account. If you do not provide the necessary information within a set time frame from the date of your Housing Benefit/Universal Credit claim, your claim may be cancelled.

It is important that you put in your claim for Housing Benefit/Universal Credit as soon as possible. Housing Benefit is usually paid from the Monday after the day when your claim is received. Claims for Housing Benefit are not usually backdated to an earlier date unless there is a very good reason that you didn't apply earlier.

Universal Credit is usually paid from the date of your online claim. However, Universal Credit is always paid in arrears which means you could be waiting up to five weeks for your first payment.

If you are awarded Housing Benefit/Universal Credit you must let the Council/DWP know if your circumstances change (e.g. your income or your household details change) because your claim may be affected. If you are paid too much benefit because you didn't tell us/DWP about a change in circumstances, you will be asked to pay it back.

Help to pay your warden charges

If you are entitled to Housing Benefit/Universal Credit or struggling to pay for the Carelink Service then you may be entitled to funding to cover some of the costs, depending on your financial and or housing support needs. Please contact a member of the Carelink Team for further information.

Recharges

If we have to complete a repair that is your responsibility, we will bill you for the cost of it. If you cannot afford to pay the whole bill we will work with you to agree an affordable payment plan

When you leave your home it must be clean and cleared of all possessions. You are also responsible for putting right any damage caused. If you fail to do this we will recharge you for any work we have to do that you should have completed.

Service charges

A service charge is a payment for the costs of managing, maintaining, repairing and providing specific services in addition to the basic rent you pay for living in your home. Examples of services are:

- Cleaning of communal rooms, hallways, corridors and staircases
- Window cleaning in communal areas
- Door entry systems
- Fire alarm/emergency lighting
- Fire safety equipment
- Landscaping/grounds maintenance
- Laundry equipment
- Lifts
- Electricity, water and gas in communal areas
- Scheme Manager
- Alarm system

You may receive more or less services depending on where you live and the above are merely examples. Residents in sheltered schemes generally receive the most services.

A service charge can also be payable in respect of specific items installed within your home which are over and above the normal bricks and mortar and fixtures and fittings you would expect to find in a home which are covered by your rent. Examples of these are:

- Stair lift
- Track and hoist
- Through floor lift
- Clos-o-mat toilets

05

Repairs and Maintenance

As your landlord, we are committed to providing you with an excellent repairs and maintenance service. You share responsibility with High Peak Borough Council (HPBC) for looking after your home. We are responsible for certain repairs and maintenance, but you are responsible for decorating the inside of your home and for some small repairs.

ALLIANCE Repairs are carried out in partnership with our joint venture company
norse Alliance Norse.

Repairs we are responsible for

We are responsible for:

- Keeping the structure and outside of your home safe
- Keeping the essential services to the property safe and in working order
- Keeping communal amenities safe
- Taking care to prevent or repair faults, to keep people reasonably safe and protect property from damage, and
- Make good plasterwork after carrying out any repair

We will not pay for repairs that are necessary if you, or anyone living with or visiting you, have neglected or not taken care of your home. If the problem that needs repairing poses a risk to you or your home, we will carry out the repair, but you will have to pay for this work.

If we need to complete a repair that is your responsibility then you will need to pay for, or agree a payment plan with us before the work can be completed.

We want to maintain your home as best we can and rely on you to help us by reporting repairs promptly and allowing us reasonable access to carry out work. We may also take legal action against you if you fail to let us in when it is reasonable to do so.

Repairs you are responsible for:

- Decorating the inside of your home and floor coverings, except where HPBC have installed safety flooring and safety fencing
- Replacing keys
- Repairing any equipment, fixtures or fittings you provided or fitted yourself (unless we have agreed to take responsibility for them)
- Unblocking plug holes on baths, sinks and wash hand basins
- Repairing any damage caused by you or anyone living with or visiting you
- Replacing fuses and plugs
- Maintaining your garden, including lawns, plants, bushes and trees
- Replacing television aerials and satellite dishes (other than ones we have provided), and
- Replacing toilet seats and plugs and chains on baths, sinks and wash hand basins
- Any damage caused by someone gaining access to your home with a warrant
- Replacing light bulbs.

Also, if we are coming to you to carry out repairs, you are responsible for clearing the area of work, which includes removing furniture, carpets and personal belongings, before we arrive. If you are elderly or have a disability and would have difficulty doing this, please tell us this when you report a repair.

How to report a repair

You can report a repair in the following ways.

By calling Alliance Norse on **0800 030 8666**.

Via www.highpeak.gov.uk/Repairs
(non-emergencies only)

By calling our out-of-hours phone line **0800 030 8666** so you can report emergency repairs that are needed when our offices are closed.

The types of repairs that we will deal with outside normal working hours are as follows.

- Electrical: where there is no power to the property (excluding when there is no money on the meter) there is water on the electrics following a burst, or lifts or fire alarms (not including smoke alarms) are not working
- Fire: repairs needed when the fire service has come out to your home
- Heating: if there is a water leak from your central heating system or your central heating system has broken down (An engineer will only attend up to 10pm, depending on the season)
- Water: burst water pipes
- Break-in: making ground floor windows and doors safe.

When you report a repair

When you report a repair it is important that you give us as much information as possible to help us arrange the right work as quickly as possible. When reporting a repair, please tell us the following.

- Your full name, address and up to date phone number
- A detailed description of the problem and where it is
- Whether the fault has been reported before
- When we can get into your home (any morning, specific mornings, afternoon only and so on)
- Any other important information (for example, a crime reference number if the repair is needed after a break in to your home that you have reported to the police).

Where the repair is inside your home, there must be someone over the age of 18 present at all times during the repair.

Under data protection laws, we will keep any information we have about you confidential. We will not give your phone number or any other information to anybody outside High Peak Borough Council without getting your permission first.

Out of Hours Repairs Service

We provide an out of hours repairs service for emergency repairs that cannot wait until the next working day.

Some emergency repairs carried out outside of normal working hours may be temporary ones carried out to make the property safe. We would then carry out a permanent repair at a later date.

Our staff and contractors try to come out to emergency repairs on the day they are reported. Please don't report a repair that is not an emergency at night or at weekends.

If you call us out to an emergency repair and are then not in or it isn't an emergency we will charge a £50 call-out fee.

These calls will delay us going out to genuine emergencies. If you call us out and your repair is not an emergency, we may not carry out the work, and we may charge you for the call-out. If your emergency is life-threatening, call the emergency services on 999.

How soon will the repair be carried out?

We will carry out repairs as quickly as possible. Repairs are prioritised according to the type of work that is needed.

The priorities are as follows.

Priority 1

Emergency repairs (carried out within 24 hours) These are repairs of any faults that could kill, injure or damage the health and safety of any person, or cause serious damage to property. Examples of such faults include:

- Collapsed floors or ceilings
- Having no heating or hot water during the winter
- Leaks or bursts causing damage to the property
- Having no electricity at all in your home
- Problems that could cause a fire
- Making doors secure after someone has used force to enter your home
- Renewing locks to make the property secure
- Serious water leaks in the roof, and

- Sewage overflowing in the home from blocked drains or damaged toilets (we may charge you for the repair if the damage was caused by you or anybody living with or visiting you).

We may carry out other repairs as emergencies, but charge you for them.

Priority 2

Urgent repairs (carried out within seven days) these are repairs of any fault that affects you, but does not put your life or health in danger, or make your home insecure. Examples of such repairs include:

- Seriously broken toilet flush or ball valve
- Damaged sinks
- Damage to the roof or a ceiling, and
- Having no hot water.

Priority 3

Non-urgent repairs (carried out within three weeks) These are repairs to problems that need to be put right but are not likely to cause serious damage to the property.

Examples include:

- Leaking showers
- Cracked toilets
- Faulty light fittings, and
- Broken locks on windows and doors.

Priority 4

Planned repairs (carried out within 16 weeks) these are repairs which are part of a programme of work, such as:

- Plastering work
- Updating baths and wash basins, and
- Improving the outside of properties.

Further details can be found on our website, and you can ask us for details. We may group together some repairs, such as clearing gutters, replacing misted double glazed units and so on, to reduce costs and provide better value for money.

What happens when you report a repair?

We will offer you an appointment for work that needs to be carried out on the inside of your property. You can choose from four appointment slots – all day, morning, afternoon, or Avoid School Run (10am to 2pm)

If we agree an appointment with you and you do not keep it, we may charge you the cost of us coming out to you and you would need to make another appointment - this is usually £50. In some cases we may need to inspect a fault you have reported. If this is the case, we will make an appointment with you for either a trades person or a surveyor to call and inspect the problem and if any work is required we will notify you when this work will be carried out.

All our staff and contractors carry photo ID. Please ask to see ID if you are not sure who the caller is.

Servicing gas appliances

By law, we must carry out an annual inspection to your home. This includes checking that any gas supply present in the property is maintained in a safe condition whether there are gas appliances connected to the supply or not.

We will check any gas heating appliances. This includes a service to any tenant owned gas fire, however we will not provide any repairs or replacements to tenant owned appliances. If any faults or repairs are recorded, the engineer will inform you and disconnect the appliance. You must then arrange for a suitable repair or replacement with a qualified contractor.

We will write to you when the inspection is due and you must make arrangements to allow the engineer into your home. He will make a visual check of your gas cooker for safety. If it is faulty, the engineer will inform you and disconnect the appliance. You must then arrange for a suitable repair or replacement with a qualified contractor.

We will provide, where possible, a gas supply in your kitchen for a cooking appliance. This will be a capped gas supply pipe and you will have to arrange for a suitably qualified contractor to supply the necessary components to your gas cooker. We will not repair any cooking appliance in your home or provide the components required for you to repair your own cooking appliance.

If your home contains a solid fuel burning appliance we are required to gain access to your home to check it at 6 monthly intervals. We have not allowed the installation of such appliances since 2016.

The first visit will be to service the appliance and sweep the chimney. The second visit will be to sweep the chimney 6 months later. We will write to you when this is due and you must make satisfactory arrangements to allow us into your home.

If you own your own solid fuel appliance we will provide a chimney sweep service in the interests of safety to yourselves and neighbouring properties; however we will not provide any repairs or replacements to these appliances. If any faults or repairs are recorded you will be informed and the appliance will be shut down, you must then make the necessary arrangements for a suitably qualified contractor to carry out this work.

Electric storage heaters

If you have a fault with your electric storage heaters you can report it to us via www.highpeak.gov.uk or by emailing enquiries@highpeak.gov.uk

Gas, water and electricity supplies

You are responsible for arranging and paying for gas, electricity and water supplies. If you have a prepayment meter and you run out of credit, we cannot provide an emergency supply. We will charge you for unnecessary call-outs that result from your supply being cut off by the gas, electricity or water company.

Damp and Mould

If you suspect your home is suffering from damp or mould it is essential that you report this to us straightaway so we can arrange an inspection and carry out any works needed. Advice on preventing condensation mould can be found in section 8 of this handbook.

Customer satisfaction

Your feedback helps us to improve our services. Each time we carry out a repair we will give you a tenant satisfaction survey. If the comments you make are negative, the repair will be inspected, and we may have to come back if necessary. We also welcome compliments, which we pass on to the person who carried out the work.

If you disagree with our decision

If we tell you that you are responsible for a repair, and you do not agree, please contact us on Repairs.Queries@highpeak.gov.uk

06

Improving your Home

Planned maintenance

Planned maintenance is major improvement work that we carry out on a group basis, for example to specified groups or types of properties or to a whole neighbourhood or area. Planned maintenance schemes can cover the installation of central heating, new kitchens and bathrooms, replacement windows and doors, and major repairs to roofs and chimneys. Such schemes help us to reduce costs and enable us to carry out more improvements overall.

Capital programme

We issue an annual programme showing the work that is to be done in different areas, this is sent to all tenants in the newsletter, and is available to download from our website www.highpeak.gov.uk.

Disruption

All work entails some disruption. We will work with you to minimise this and provide you with as much notice as we can of works to be carried out and choices that will be available to you.

We are not normally able to provide decoration or allowances to assist after these improvements have been carried out. If these improvements are part of a structural or health and safety concern then the work must be carried out as instructed.

All improvement works are designed to provide you with a better standard of living; only in exceptional circumstances would a request to not have the work carried out be considered.

Health and safety

Work may involve disturbance, site cabins, materials, scaffolding and deliveries. We cannot relocate customers whilst work is in progress and we will take care to remove any risks to you. However, you must ensure that you adhere to any notices and ensure children and pets are kept well away from works in progress. Please help us by reporting any vandalism.

07

Living in Harmony

Everyone has the right to the quiet enjoyment of their home and its surroundings. Under your tenancy agreement you must not behave in a way that causes nuisance to your neighbours. You are responsible for your behaviour at all times, both in your home and in your neighbourhood. You are also responsible for the behaviour of the rest of your household (including children) and visitors to your home.

Nuisance and anti social behaviour

We want to prevent problems caused by nuisance and anti social behaviour and ask that all tenants and their families are considerate towards their neighbours. You should keep the peace by making sure that you don't create any form of nuisance to others. You can help us to deal with any problems by reporting incidents of anti-social behaviour to us and other agencies. We treat all neighbour nuisance complaints seriously and will take whatever action is necessary to solve the problem

Some examples of anti social behaviour:

Noise

Such as loud music, loud dogs, rowdy parties, and persistent car and burglar alarms. Please ensure noise is kept at a reasonable level.

Drug and alcohol abuse

Anti social behaviour can be associated with drug and alcohol abuse, late night rowdy behaviour and a constant stream of visitors can disturb your neighbours.

Full details of what can be a breach of tenancy can be found in your Tenancy Agreement, however here are some of the more common examples that we deal with.

Pets

We ask that you contact us prior to getting a pet, in case we have any queries. Dogs should not be allowed to roam free or foul the grass verges, paths or communal areas. No animals may be kept without our prior written permission.

Car Parking

You must not park any vehicles on any verge or land used for recreation that is maintained by the Council. Any large vehicles including caravans and lorries must not be parked on driveways, in parking areas or on garage sites without written permission.

Our neighbourhoods were designed when very few people had cars, and nowadays some households have 2, 3 or even 4 vehicles. Please have respect for your neighbours when parking your car.

Mediation services

As our main aim is to resolve your problem with your neighbours amicably we often use mediation (this involves talking problems over either face to face with a third party or through a third party if you don't feel able to be in the same room to reach an agreement which suits all parties' needs). This can be done either by our staff or, in more complex cases, by our independent mediators.

Safe places to live

We work in very close partnership with the Derbyshire Constabulary to tackle issues of crime and anti social behaviour in our neighbourhoods; together we are determined, with your help to deal swiftly and effectively with the perpetrators of crime and anti social behaviour.

We have forged very close links with local beat officers and together we are targeting the perpetrators of crime and antisocial behaviour. We rely on you to help combat crime and anti social behaviour in your area; you can help us to make your area a safer place to live. If you have information about crime or incidents of anti social behaviour you can speak in confidence to your Housing Officer or Housing Assistant or the Police.

Taking care of where you live

As well as looking after your home, you are expected to take good care of the area where you live. To help keep your area a pleasant place to live, you should let us know if something needs doing or if you see someone dumping rubbish or carrying out acts of vandalism or graffiti.

We carry out improvements in our neighbourhoods, including putting in flower beds, benches and parking areas, we also deal with issues relating to crime and safety such as improved lighting and closing of alley ways.

Gardens

It is your responsibility to keep your garden clean and tidy. Grassed areas should be cut regularly and trees and hedges should not obstruct public footpaths or interfere with a neighbour's property.

Storage

Some properties may include loft spaces and other internal storage. Items stored in lofts are more susceptible to damage through damp or mould and so storage of items in these areas should be kept to a minimum. You should also ensure that these items can be easily removed should access be required to maintain or improve your property.

08

Health, Safety and Security

The guidance below is designed to inform you of how we aim to keep you safe in your home. It focuses on a few key areas which we want to remind you about.

Please read this carefully and if you need any further advice or assistance, please contact your Housing Officer, for guidance on statutory servicing schedules please contact Alliance Norse on **0800 030 8666**

Gas safety

If you smell gas...

- Turn the gas supply off at the meter
- Open the windows and doors to get rid of the gas
- Phone National Grid immediately on **0800 111 999** (free phone number)
- Do not smoke or use matches or cigarette lighters
- Do not turn lights or electrical switches on or off
- Do not try to solve the problem yourself.

Installation of gas appliances

You must always use a 'Gas Safe' registered gas engineer when installing any gas appliance, including gas cookers. To check if a gas engineer is registered call Gas Safe on **0800 408 5500**. You need our written permission to fit any gas appliance, except gas cookers.

Servicing of gas heating equipment

By law we must service and check the safety of all gas appliances every year. When you are notified that a gas safety check is due to be carried out, you must provide us with reasonable access to your home. We will make an appointment with you, and if you need to change it, please contact us beforehand, the correct maintenance of these appliances is vital to your safety. If we are unable to gain access to your home after reasonable attempts, we may seek court action to arrange access to your home. Once we have completed the safety check we will give you a safety certificate. Different types of boiler will take different amounts of time to service. The engineer will also make a visual check of your cooker and disconnect it if it is dangerous. It will be your responsibility to repair or replace the cooker.

Portable heaters

You must not use an oil, paraffin or gas cylinder heater in your home.

Ceiling fans

Did you know that it can be extremely dangerous to use ceiling fans at the same time as gas fires or gas boilers? Air disturbance from the fan can cause toxic fumes to be released from the heating appliance and enter the room instead of being drawn up by the flue.

Electrical safety

For your safety

- Do not remove, install or repair any electrical fixtures or fittings, unless completed by a qualified electrician, you must also get our permission first
- Make sure your electrical appliance contains the correct fuses. The manufacturer will be able to advise you
- Check flexes and plugs regularly to make sure there are no loose or bare wires
- Do not overload electrical sockets
- Do not touch fittings or exposed wires with anything wet
- Make sure you know how to turn off the supply at the mains

Water safety

Make sure you know where the stop tap is to turn off the main water supply in case of a leak it is usually under the sink. If you are unsure where it is then look for the yellow label on the inside

of the kitchen sink unit. This will tell you where the stop tap is located. It is important that you check your stop tap is working properly on a regular basis - always turn it slowly. We recommend that you turn off your water supply at the stop tap if you go away on holiday. Never paint a stop tap as it becomes extremely difficult to turn on and off.

It is important that you regularly run all taps within the property and ensure your shower head is cleaned and disinfected as part of your usual cleaning routine.

Asbestos

As mentioned on page 12 of this handbook, as a secure tenant you have the right to make improvements to your home, as long as you gain our written permission first.

If you are carrying out any "intrusive works", for example replacing a bathroom or kitchen, you need to consider whether there may be asbestos within the property. You can do this by ensuring your contractor obtains an asbestos survey from a UKATA surveyor prior to starting any works. This will also be something we would need you to do before any permission for improvements was granted.

In the past, asbestos was used as fire protection or an insulation material. It was banned in 1999, but where it already exists it can be left in place if it is safe; this means that it is not damaged or releasing fibres into the air that could be breathed in.

Please remember that if there is asbestos in your home it does not necessarily mean that you will be exposed to these fibres unless it is damaged.

If asbestos is found in your home and we think it is likely to be a

problem we will take all necessary steps to ensure that it is safely removed or made safe so that there is no risk of fibres escaping into the air.

If there is found to be asbestos in your home which isn't harmful then you should follow these asbestos do's and don'ts:

- DO keep away from any damaged products which may contain asbestos
- DO inform us straight away if you have concerns about any products in your home
- DON'T carry out DIY works including drilling, sanding or stripping of any products known to contain asbestos or if you suspect something might contain asbestos
- DON'T wipe, sweep or vacuum dust or debris that may contain asbestos
- REMEMBER, asbestos material in good condition should be left alone

Fire safety

To prevent starting a fire:

- Make sure all fires are guarded
- Do not smoke in bed
- Never leave matches or lighters lying around
- Do not leave chip pans unattended. If a chip pan catches fire, turn off the heat and cover with a damp cloth
- Do not leave candles unattended or left to burn - if you use candles around your home, always ensure they are in a suitable holder, on a safe surface and never leave to burn unattended.

Fire Doors

To a certain extent all closed doors will hold back smoke, flames and heat from a fire should one occur. This will provide you with the time needed to escape from the premises. Fire doors, or more accurately fire-resisting or fire-rated doors, are specifically designed, manufactured, and tested to be able to withstand a fire for a certain amount of time – usually 30 minutes.

They should not be confused with final exit doors, which are the doors designed to allow you to exit from a building and which often are fitted with push bars or push pads.

Fire doors may be found in common areas, such as across corridors or on staircases, or as flat front doors.

They can be recognised as they:

- Will have a seal fitted round either the edge of the door or in the frame, and letter box where one is fitted.
- Will be fitted with a self-closing device, unless it is a cupboard door etc.,
- Will have at least three hinges and a positive latching mechanism, enabling the door to close to the rebate of the door frame
- If it is a cupboard door, will be fitted with a notice advising it must be kept locked shut
- If it has any glazing this will be fire resisting to BS6026

You can help us to keep you safe – never:

- Remove, disengage, or tamper with self-closing devices
- Prop or wedge fire doors open
- Damage fire doors or try to repair or fit them yourself

- Drill or cut into your flat entrance door or alter or repair it yourself
- Allow others, including visitors etc, to damage or tamper with fire doors

A flat fire door inspection and improvement programme, for retirement living complexes and general needs accommodation where two properties share a communal area, commenced during 2023, follow up inspections will take place annually.

Please allow our contractors access to carry out the inspections, replace doors, and please report any faulty or damaged fire doors or self-closing devices to your Housing Officer immediately on **0800 030 8666**.

Cladding

In late 2018 the Government changed building regulations to ban the use of combustible materials in the external walls of buildings over 18m in height. They introduced a requirement that all materials in new high-rise buildings must achieve an A1 or A2 rating under European classifications.

High Peak Borough Council does not have any housing accommodation over 11 metres high and our Assets Team have confirmed our housing properties do not have any cladding of concern as part of their construction.

The Council is engaging specialist assessors to undertake what is termed a fire risk appraisal of the external wall construction and balconies in accordance with Publicly Available Specification (PAS) 9980.

External wall inspections will take place in year 1 and thereafter every three years unless there is a fire or change to the building.

Such inspections will take place late 2023/early 2024.

Retirement Living Complexes and Purpose-built General Needs accommodation

If you live in a Retirement Living Complex or purpose-built General Needs accommodation to reduce the risk of fire spreading the walls, doors and floors are all sturdily built and designed to stop fire and smoke spreading. This is known as compartmentation and each dwelling becomes its own fire-resistant box.

Given the age of some of our properties, the Council is also planning to carry out intrusive compartmentation surveys to confirm compartmentation standards in the older general needs blocks, and in those general needs blocks that are not purpose-built flats.

The Council undertake annual fire risk assessments and monthly fire safety checks of communal areas.

Electrical Safety

Portable electrical appliances in communal areas of General Needs Accommodation and Retirement Living Complexes are checked annually by a competent person.

Fixed electrical installation checks (the hard wiring) are carried out every 5 years, we have a legal responsibility to carry out an electrical inspection in your home to make sure your wiring is safe.

A qualified electrician will carry this out, and we will write to you to in advance to let you know the date of the safety check. If this is unsuitable for you, you can arrange a more convenient time.

Help us to help you by giving us access when we need it to ensure that your wiring is safe.

Failure to allow us access to your home to carry out this check is a breach of your Tenancy Agreement and may result in legal action being taken against you.

Passenger Lifts

There are lifts within some of our properties. To ensure that our lifts are kept in good working order, they are serviced twice a year to ensure that they are safe for you to use.

Help us to help you by using the lifts responsibly and reporting any lifts that aren't working. If the lift breaks down when you are in it, press the alarm button and you will be connected to a responder.

Emergency Lighting

Emergency lighting is provided in the communal areas of Retirement Living Complexes, and General Needs accommodation. Emergency lighting enables the safe, prompt, and efficient evacuation of spaces and buildings, not only in cases of blackout caused by power outage but when mains lighting may still be available.

Emergency lighting is checked monthly by Housing staff, a 6 monthly 1 hour check, and annual 3 hour drop down test is carried out by Alliance Norse or their agent.

If you highlight any emergency lighting that is faulty then please report this to Alliance Norse on **0800 030 8666**.

Fire and Smoke Alarms

We are currently upgrading the fire alarms in our Retirement Living Complexes. If your home is not already fitted with a smoke alarm let us know, we install them free of charge in hallways and landings.

In domestic properties we recommend that you test your alarms once a week, by pressing the button until the alarm sounds on all of the units. If there is no sound from any of your alarms, please contact your Housing Officer as soon as possible.

Fire alarms are tested quarterly where there is a linked system connected to a fire panel. Annual for domestic smoke alarms are tested as part of the gas safety check. Servicing is carried out by Alliance Norse or their agent.

Please do not tamper with any fire or smoke detection.

Fire Proofing-Roof Voids

When High Peak Borough Council carries out major roofing works, (through our contractor Alliance Norse) we engage with contractors who are members of the 'Competent Roofing Scheme'. This government licensed scheme allows roofing contractors to self-certify that their work meets the requirements of The Building Regulations.

This also includes checking to ensure the fire proofing in the roof voids is not compromised, and a guarantee for the work carried out is given.

Gas Safety

If you smell gas, you should immediately phone the Gas Emergency Service on **0800 111 999**.

We have a legal requirement to carry out annual checks on appliances such as boilers, cookers, and gas fires in your property.

By law, only engineers registered with Gas Safe are qualified to carry out these checks. All of those carrying out the gas safety checks will have an ID card. You should always be satisfied that the person is who they say they are before letting them enter your home. If you have any concerns, do not let them in, and can contact us to check if they are a genuine caller, we will be able to verify their identity.

We will write to you in advance to advise of the date of your annual safety check. If this date is unsuitable for you, you can arrange a more convenient time. If you do not provide us with access to your property, we will instruct our contractor to isolate the gas supply to prevent the use of potentially unsafe and unserviced appliances. This may involve forcing entry to your property and you will be responsible for any costs that are incurred. Please help us to help you by giving us access when we require it to ensure that your appliances are safe.

It is a requirement of your Tenancy Agreement that you provide access for these inspections.

Please do not tamper with any gas appliance, and if you highlight any faults with your gas appliances then please report this to your Housing Officer.

Tenants are no longer permitted to install solid fuel fires within their properties.

Existing fires will receive a 6 monthly chimney sweep but it remains the tenant responsibility to arrange for a competent engineer to service the fire. Any repairs relating to the fire highlighted during the sweep or repair will be arranged and paid for by the tenant.

Please ensure the correct fuel is being burnt as per your smoke control area rules

Ground Source Heating

Where provided, ground source heating is serviced annually through Alliance Norse.

Fire extinguishers and blankets

These are provided in communal areas of our Retirement Living Complexes and General Needs Housing accommodation. These must only be used by trained staff, labels endorsing this fact are attached to the fire extinguishers.

An annual service of fire extinguishers, and check of fire blankets take place by external contractors.

Please do not tamper with any firefighting equipment, and if you highlight any damage or removal of these please report this to your Housing Officer.

Your responsibilities as a tenant

In your tenancy agreement there is information on your role in maintaining and reporting fire and structural safety issues.

This includes:

- not leaving obstructions in corridors, walkways, or an entrance/ exit to a building, or in front of fire doors
- not blocking lifts or staircases
- removing rubbish promptly
- not putting flammable items in bin chutes or internal bin storage areas
- not keeping fire doors open
- not keeping or charging mobility scooters in common areas
- not placing furniture or electrical equipment in corridors and common areas
- not smoking in common areas
- knowing the fire evacuation arrangements for your property (General Needs/Retirement Living Complex)
- Not storing or charging motorbikes, mopeds or their batteries in your property.

Evacuation

We recommend you plan an escape route in advance should fire break out in your home and that all household members know what to do. In sheltered blocks the Scheme Manager will discuss this with you. Close all the doors on your way out to prevent the fire spreading.

Radon

Radon is a colourless, odourless radioactive gas. It's formed by the radioactive decay of small amounts of uranium that occur naturally in all rocks and soils. In some areas of the Borough, the levels are higher than normal and we undertake regular testing to identify homes with higher levels.

If we install a meter in your home to read radon levels please ensure no-one touches or moves it as this can effect the readings. Once we have collected and looked at the meter we may need to install a fan or pump to help control the levels of radon in your home. This is usually a precautionary measure but its important that if you do have a fan or pump fitted that it has an active power supply at all times.

Extractor fans

If your home is fitted with extractor fans in the kitchen and/or bathroom, it is your responsibility to clean them out every few months. A build up of dirt and dust can cause them to set on fire. If a fire starts get out, stay out and call the Fire Brigade by dialling 999.

Home security

Most burglaries happen during the daytime when people are out and the house looks empty. Potential burglars look for signs that tell them that you are out and there is something worth stealing. You can take some simple, but effective, measures to prevent your home being an easy target for burglars.

- Leave a light on at night when you go out and draw the curtains so it looks like someone is still at home
- Do not leave windows and doors unlocked or leave keys in doors even when you are at home
- Do not leave valuables visible through windows
- If you have a door chain, peep hole or entry phone, make sure you use it when answering the door
- Ask unknown callers for identification and check it carefully, for your safety all our staff carry photo ID
- If you are going away, cancel milk and newspapers etc, and ask a trusted neighbour to keep an eye on your home whilst you're away. It is advised that if you are away from home during the cold weather, to leave your heating on low to reduce the risk of frozen pipes
- Do not leave empty boxes outside your home that advertise you have just bought an expensive piece of equipment
- If you live in a block of flats, do not let people into the block unless you know them.

Crime reduction officers

Derbyshire Constabulary has a team of crime reduction officers who cover the whole of the High Peak. They offer free advice on how to improve security of your home and prevent crime. They can also give details on Neighbourhood Watch schemes in your area. If you wish to contact a Crime Reduction Officer in your area, call the Derbyshire Constabulary's non emergency number **101**.

Home contents insurance

The structure of your home is insured by High Peak Borough Council against fire and other damage. However, we are not responsible for the contents of your home (e.g. furniture, carpets, personal belongings and decoration etc.) For this reason, we strongly advise you to insure your personal possessions against fire, flood, theft, burst/leaking pipes and vandalism.

We have a competitively priced home contents insurance scheme for tenants that you can apply to join. Details of the scheme and an application form are included in your new tenants pack. You can get further information on the scheme on our website www.highpeak.gov.uk.

Preventing Damp & Mould

Keeping your home free from condensation and mould, especially during winter months.

1. Condensation – This is caused by water vapour or moisture from inside the home coming into contact with a cold surface in your home, such as a window or wall, the resultant water drops (condensation) may then soak into wallpaper or plaster or paintwork, in time the affected damp areas then attract black mould that grows on its surface, condensation mainly occurs during winter months.
2. Produce less moisture – Dry clothes outdoors, don't dry clothes indoors, or if you must dry them indoors use as dehumidifier, vent tumble drier outside or use a condensing type.
3. Ventilate to assist in removing moisture – it is important to ventilate your home, by opening windows slightly or opening trickle vents that can be often found on UPVC windows, this allows warm air (but moist) air to escape to the outside and let in cool (but dry) air, always ventilate or open windows when using kitchen and bathroom and close the doors to prevent moisture in the air from spreading to other parts of your home.
4. Remove excess moisture – always wipe down windows and sills of your home, just opening windows is not enough.
5. Warmth versus ventilation – By opening windows or ventilating your home it may appear that you are losing some heat, but what you are actually doing is allowing warm moisture laden air to escape and permitting cool dry air to enter your home, dry cool air is actually cheaper to heat than moist warm air.
6. Condensation turns into black mould if not wiped away.

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Supporting Independent Living

We offer a number of services to help keep your independence and make sure you can remain in your home as long as possible. We also provide accommodation that has been designed to make life a little easier and more secure for you.

If we cannot provide what you need to allow you to live independently, we will be able to provide you with information on other agencies that may be able to help.

The following services are available to help you remain in your current property and to keep your independence.

Adaptations

Adaptations are permanent alterations that can be carried out to your home which can enable you to live life as fully as possible. Adaptations include simple things such as grab rails and ramps. In some cases, if we cannot provide suitable alternative accommodation then we may fit specialist walk in showers or stair lifts. Alternatively, we can consider your application for a move to accommodation which may better suit your needs.

If you are an elderly person or have a disability and think that you may benefit from having an adaptation made to your home, you should contact Derbyshire County Council Social Services on **01629 580000**. There is a waiting list for adaptations.

We will only usually complete adaptations if they have been recommended by an Occupational Therapist working with you.

Unfortunately, there is a limit on the number of adaptations we can complete each year, however we will take all your household circumstances into account when deciding when and how adaptations will take place.

Carelink

Our Carelink service supports tenants to live independently in their own homes. We provide an alarm unit in the property that is linked to our 24-hour control centre. A call can be made anywhere in the home and garden by pressing a lightweight pendant.

All calls are answered by trained control operators who will provide the appropriate advice or assistance, and send someone to help you if needed. If your property has the Carelink system provided, we aim to visit you within the first week of moving in. We will explain how the system works and take details of your emergency contacts and any health problems. We will also complete a support plan and help you access any other services you need. You will also receive a Carelink handbook that provides useful information about the service.

Please do not move or disconnect the Carelink equipment as this may affect the service to other people's homes. You will have to pay to any damage caused if you move or disconnect the equipment.

Carelink is a member of the Telecare Services Association, and you can be assured that we provide a professional, reliable service.

The charge for the Carelink Service (or warden charge) is collected on a monthly basis and there are several ways you can pay for the service. It is up to you to decide which method suits you best. You can choose from any of the following:

Direct Debit

You can pay your service charge directly to us from your bank or building society account. We recommend you pay by this method because it is safe and easy, further details and application forms are available from the Carelink team.

All-pay Card

You may be eligible to pay your service charge by cash or cheque at your local post office or shop using a special 'All-pay card'. Contact a member of the Carelink team for more information on local shops which accept these payments.

Standing Order

You can also arrange to have your service charge paid by standing order from your bank or building society account. Contact a member of the Carelink team for further details.

By Telephone

You can make a payment over the telephone by debit or credit card, please call 0345 129 8117 (this is an automated 24-hour payment line). Please have your Carelink Customer account number ready when you ring, this can be found on the top of any statements / invoices we have sent to you.

If you are entitled to Housing Benefit/Universal Credit or struggling to pay for the service then you may be entitled to funding to cover the costs of the Carelink Service. Please contact a member of the Carelink Team for further information.

Carelink Plus

Carelink Plus is ideal for the times when you need a little extra help for a short period of time - such as coming out of hospital or when your family is away. We can arrange short pop in visits or longer visits to provide specific services such as shopping, light household tasks or preparing a simple meal. There is an additional charge for Carelink Plus, for which you would be invoiced monthly.

Accommodation

We also provide different types of accommodation to suit differing levels of needs and independence.

Housing for elderly people

We have a number of flats and bungalows that are specifically for people over retirement age. All these properties have the Carelink service. We can also install an alarm unit at any property with a phone line, please contact us on **0345 129 7777**.

Sheltered accommodation

All the flats have self-contained accommodation with their own kitchen and bathroom. There are communal lounges, laundries and lifts to all floors.

The main benefits of sheltered housing includes:

- Keeping your independence
- Living in a safe and secure environment
- Social activities, if you wish to join in

Sheltered Housing is designed for people, usually aged 55 and over, who can live independently or may need some form of support to live independently. It provides a secure and friendly environment in a community setting.

- Being part of a community, reducing the fear of isolation and loneliness that many older people experience
- Peace of mind for you and your family, knowing there will be help for you in an emergency

Each flat has 24 hour emergency alarm system linked to a control centre. They will send the appropriate person / service should you require assistance. Someone visits the scheme between 8.45am – 4.30pm Monday to Friday (except bank holidays) to carry out well-being checks, complete support plans with tenants and carry out building checks.

We have onsite housekeepers who keep the communal areas clean and tidy.

Should you want to apply to move to housing suitable for elderly people or sheltered accommodation you need to complete an application form at www.home-options.org

You are responsible for paying all rent, service charges, council tax, water rates and any other utility bills while a tenant of your home. Service charges usually contribute to costs such as communal cleaning, scheme management, etc. You may be eligible to claim funding to cover some of these costs, depending on your financial situation and support needs, we will be able to assist you with this.

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Heating and Energy Advice

This section tells you how to control and get the most out of the heating system and your home. Also included are tips and advice on how to control mould and condensation.

Controlling the heating in your home

Adjusting the thermostat

You can control the temperature in your home by adjusting the room thermostat. This is usually located in the hall or living room. You should set the temperature between 18 and 21 degrees centigrade. To save energy you could set the room temperature as low as comfortably possible. Turning down the thermostat by just 1 degree can cut fuels bills by up to 10%.

Using radiator controls

You can also control the temperature in individual rooms by using the controls on the side of your radiators (called 'thermostatic radiator valves'). This allows you to keep different rooms at different temperatures i.e. keep rooms that you don't use at lower temperatures than those you do. If you do not have radiator controls, you may still be able to turn a radiator off by closing the ordinary radiator valve.

Setting the timer

A timer allows you to set your heating and hot water to come on and go off when you want it to. You should set the system to come on about half an hour before you want the house to become warm and go off half an hour before you want the house to cool off completely. You probably won't need your heating and hot water to be switched on all the time, therefore you should avoid using the 24-hour constant setting.

Energy saving tip

It is better, especially in winter to keep your heating on low for long periods rather than on high for short periods. This will keep the structure of your house warm, help prevent frozen/burst pipes and be more economical in the long run. If you are leaving your home unoccupied for more than a couple of days you should leave your heating on low. You should turn your water off at the stop tap, please contact us for further advice.

Remotely controlled systems

Please note that we do not allow the installation of systems that allow your heating system to be controlled remotely or via your smart phone.

Electrical storage heaters

Electric storage heaters charge up during the night when electricity is cheaper then release stored up heat the next day. Most storage heaters have 2 controls:

- An Input control (sometimes called 'charge' or 'auto' set control). This controls how much heat is stored and how much electricity is used. The lowest setting is suitable for spring, autumn or a cool summer. To stop the heater storing any heat, switch off at the wall.
- An Output control (sometimes called 'boost' or 'room temperature'). This controls how quickly heat leaves the heater. On its highest setting, the stored heat is used up faster. Some storage heaters have an automatic output control. This means a thermostat controls how quickly the heat is released.

Gas warm air heating

Warm air systems usually have a thermostat and a timer/ programmer to control the temperature (similar to gas central heating). The grills in each room can also be opened and closed manually to increase or decrease the amount of heat needed.

Hot water

A hot water thermostat is fitted to your hot water tank or cylinder, which you can turn up and down according to how hot you want your water. 60 degrees centigrade should be adequate for washing and bathing.

Reporting repairs and faults

For faulty heating contact gas.queries@highpeak.gov.uk unless there is a gas leak in which case you should call **0800 111 999**.

Cromford Court

At our sheltered accommodation at Cromford Court, we have installed 'Ground source heating.' If you live at Cromford Court, the Scheme Manager will explain the system to you and give you further instructions.

Controlling mould and condensation

If your home is damp or you find mould patches on walls, furniture or clothing, the likely cause is condensation. Condensation occurs on cold surfaces - this may be the window glass in mild cases, or walls, ceilings or even the floor tiles. Condensation occurs when moist air cools on these surfaces, leaving dampness, which may show as black spots, green mould or have a musty smell. Here are some handy tips to help reduce moisture:

- Open windows for a while each day to allow a change of air
- Do not cover up any air vents
- Leave your heating on a low level all the time in very cold weather
- Dry clothes outdoors whenever possible, otherwise use well ventilated rooms and avoid drying clothes on radiators
- Keep your home clutter free so that air can circulate in your home
- Close kitchen and bathroom doors to prevent steam going into other rooms
- Open windows or put a fan on when cooking or washing to allow steam to escape
- Cover pans when cooking and do not boil for any longer than necessary
- Vent any tumble dryers to the outside
- Wipe down any surfaces where moisture settles to prevent mould

If you continue to have problems with damp or mould check www.highpeak.gov.uk or contact us at enquiries@highpeak.gov.uk

Energy efficiency

The energy saving trust can provide more information on energy efficiency and possible energy saving grants which may be available to you. For more information call the Energy Saving Advice Service on **0800 512 012**.

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Getting Involved

What is tenant involvement?

Put simply 'tenant involvement' are the opportunities that you, our customers, have in helping to shape the decisions made by High Peak Borough Council.

We want our customers to be at the heart of everything we do. By working together we can improve the way we deliver our services both now and in the future. We are committed to involving tenants when making decisions about your home and the neighbourhood you live in. It is important to us that we keep you informed. We know that your involvement will make a difference.

By getting involved you can:

- Make your area a better place to live
- Provide your opinion on what home improvements should be made
- Give us your views on the services you receive
- Help us to better understand the needs of all our customers
- Help us provide better quality customer focused services
- Make a difference to housing in the High Peak
- Develop your own skills, knowledge and experience

How can you have your say?

There are a variety of options for you to become involved. We want you to provide us with your views, opinions and experiences. You can choose the level of involvement that suits you best depending on how much time you have to spare and your interests.

One off focus groups

These meetings are held when required to get your views on specific topics and we will ask you to come along for your input. The topics that we have previously covered are: Tenancy Agreement review, Anti Social Behaviour, Moving Support Grant and our Recharge Policy.

Would you find it easier to provide your views from home?

Customer feedback surveys

We carry out various customer satisfaction surveys. These are usually multiple choice questions and provide us with a snapshot view of tenants' opinions on a particular service area. A pre-paid envelope is enclosed with our postal surveys, or we may ring you and ask for your opinion over the telephone. We may also leave a pre-paid postcard survey for you to complete and return. This is your opportunity to help us improve our service, by telling us how good services really are, if they are meeting your needs and what improvements we should make.

Tenant consultation questionnaires

We carry out regular consultations to find out your opinions and give you the opportunity to comment on changes to housing related policies and the delivery of housing related services.

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Ending your tenancy

If you are thinking of moving and ending your tenancy with High Peak Borough Council, there are important things that need to be done.

- You must give the Council at least 4 weeks' notice in writing if you plan to leave your home and end your tenancy. This is a condition of the tenancy and gives us time to make arrangements for a new tenant without too much delay.
- You can give notice by going to www.highpeak.gov.uk/Ending-Tenancy-Moving-House or searching "ending your tenancy" on our website. We will need the address you are moving to and the date when you want your tenancy to end.
- When we receive your notice we will send you a letter or email confirming this and giving details of any rent which is due. We will also contact you to arrange an inspection of your property before you move. This is so we can see if any repair work is needed before the property is empty. We will also install a keysafe for you to leave your keys in on the day you vacate the property.
- **Tenancies must end on a Monday** - you must pay rent up to that day.
- You must contact us by 10am on the Monday when your tenancy ends to confirm the keys are in the keysafe. You can contact the Neighbourhoods Team by email neighbourhoods@highpeak.gov.uk or phone 0345 129 8077.

- **If we do not hear from you by 10am on the Monday that your tenancy is due to end, you will be charged an additional week's rent for each extra week (or part week) that you have the keys for.**

Before you leave the property

You must make sure that:

- The property has been left clean and tidy;
- All furniture, carpets and your belongings have been removed;
- You have cleared any rubbish and unwanted items from the house and garden.
- You can arrange for large items to be removed for a small charge – phone 0345 129 8077 or go to High Peak Borough Councils website and search for Bulky Refuse Removal.
- Any necessary repairs which are your responsibility (as defined in your tenancy agreement) have been carried out.
- You will be charged for the cost of putting right any repair which is your responsibility, and the removal of any rubbish or unwanted items left at the property.
- Before you leave the property, remember to turn the water off at the stop tap, and the gas and electricity off at the meter.

Other things to remember

- You should contact your Gas and Electricity Suppliers to arrange to have your meters read before you hand your keys in. They usually need at least 48 hours' notice. Look in the phone book or on your bill for their local number. It is also important that you tell us who your current suppliers are please fill in these details in on the Termination form.
- If you have a telephone, the company that provides your telephone line should be told that you are moving so that they can disconnect it.
- The Royal Mail will re-direct your mail to your new address for a charge - for advice email at royalmail.com or call into any Post Office for an application form.
- If you receive Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit you will need to make a new claim for your new property. Contact the Benefits Section on **0345 129 8075** or email them at Rents@highpeak.gov.uk and COUNCILTAX@highpeak.gov.uk
- If you receive any other benefits, you will need to tell the Benefits Agency or Universal Credit of your move so that you they can up-date their records.

Checklist of things to do:

What?	When?
Hand in Notice	4 weeks before leaving
Inform Gas & Electricity Suppliers	48 hours before leaving
Inform Telephone Company	7 days before leaving
Inform Water Company	Once date of move known
Inform Benefits Agency	Once date of move known
Inform Bank/Building Society	Once date of move known
Inform Insurance Company	Once date of move known
Inform TV Licensing	Once date of move known
Inform DVLA	Once date of move known
Re-direct Mail	7 days before leaving
Turn off water, electricity & gas	Before leaving the property
Dispose of any unwanted items	Before handing keys in
Hand in Keys	12 noon on day tenancy ends



High Peak Borough Council
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www.highpeak.gov.uk

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