

# Leaseholders' Handbook



**Cambridge City Council**  
Advice and information  
for Leaseholders



# Cambridge City Council Leaseholders' Handbook

## Contents

	<b>Page</b>
Introduction - Director of Community Services	<b>3 - 4</b>
1 Our structure	<b>5 - 6</b>
2 City Homes - Contacting Us	<b>7 - 8</b>
3 Customer Care	<b>9 - 14</b>
4 Your Lease - Rights and Responsibilities	<b>15 - 20</b>
5 Service Charges	<b>21 - 24</b>
6 Repairs and Maintenance	<b>25 - 30</b>
7 Managing estates, shared areas and estate services	<b>31 - 34</b>
8 Nuisance, anti-social behavior and harassment	<b>35 - 38</b>
9 Involving Customers	<b>39 - 40</b>
10 Useful Information	<b>41 - 44</b>
11 Contact telephone numbers	<b>45 - 46</b>

## Introduction

We manage 8500 homes including houses, bungalows, flats, maisonettes and sheltered accommodation. We manage almost 1100 of these homes under a lease.

We have brought this leaseholder handbook up to date to take account of changes in the law brought about by the Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Act 2002. It contains information about the wide range of services we provide, and some useful contact names and numbers. It will also help to answer questions you may have about your lease, your home or your neighbourhood.

Your lease is a legal document and sets out our responsibilities as your landlord and your responsibilities as a leaseholder. You and we are responsible for making sure we both keep to this agreement.

We want our customers to be satisfied and we are committed to delivering excellent services to our leaseholders and other service users. We are committed to continuously improving and we welcome any comments you may have to help us. We would also like you to tell us if you are not satisfied with any of our services.

We aim to provide services that everyone can use.

We support and work with tenants' and residents' associations across the city, together with a range of agencies, including all council departments, the police, the fire service, Citizens Advice, the law centre, the health service and other registered social landlords. We are always keen to encourage residents to get more involved.

If you need any information in large print, in different languages or in another format, please phone 01223 457835 or e-mail [leasehold.services@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:leasehold.services@cambridge.gov.uk).

Our staff will be happy to help you and give you advice on any questions you have. If they cannot answer your question, they will refer you to a relevant department of the council or agency, if this is appropriate.

I wish you every success in your home.



Liz Bisset

**Director of  
Community Services**



# 1

## Our structure

### Committee structures

#### The council

The council has 42 members and will set the budget and agree major strategies and plans.

#### The executive

The executive has seven councillors, including the leader and deputy leader and an executive councillor for each major service area.

#### Scrutiny committees

Scrutiny committees have non-executive councillors who come from the different political parties. They advise the executive councillors and review their decisions.

#### Regulatory committees

The regulatory committees consider planning applications, licensing matters, elections, employee and administrative issues.

#### Standards committee

The standards committee has six councillors and two other members. These are members who live in the city and are



appointed by councillors.

#### Area committees

Each city councillor is a member of an area committee covering their ward.

#### Housing Management Board

The **Housing Management Board** is the committee responsible for running the housing service and making decisions on how to spend available money. The Housing Management Board includes five council tenants and one leaseholder. They are elected every few years by all our tenants and leaseholders. These tenant and leaseholder representatives help us manage your estates

and homes. Cambridge is one of the few councils in the country that has tenants involved in decision-making at such a high level.

All our committee structures are supported by staff who provide professional expertise on the matters considered, and make sure the meetings are run efficiently.

We publicise meetings on our website at [www.cambridge.gov.uk](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk).

#### The 'Leaseholders Consultation Group'

is an important group who meet four times a year to discuss issues of interest to all leaseholders across the city. If you would like more information about becoming involved, please contact us on 01223 457835 or e-mail [leasehold.services@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:leasehold.services@cambridge.gov.uk).

## City Homes - Contacting us

City Homes is the department of the city council, which manages the houses that we own. The Leasehold Services team is part of City Homes who manage properties for leaseholders and tenants. Services to leaseholders are managed across the various teams.

### Leasehold Services

The Leasehold Services team is your first point of contact. They will either be able to deal with your enquiry themselves, or find the right person to help you.

Along with Housing Finance, they work out your service charges. They send you invoices every three months, as well as your yearly estimate and actual statements. They keep records on all leaseholders, including contact addresses, details of any subletting and transfers. They deal with problems if you break your lease or there is any other issue that arises. They are here to give you advice and information. They are also your first stop to help with a complaint or enquiry.



You can contact the team at:

**Leasehold Services  
City Homes  
171 Arbury Road  
Cambridge  
CB4 2YG.**

**Phone: 01223 457835**  
**E-mail: [leasehold.services@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:leasehold.services@cambridge.gov.uk)**

**Cambridge City Council  
Website:  
[www.cambridge.gov.uk](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk)**

**Office opening times**

Monday	9am to 5pm
Tuesday	9am to 5pm
Wednesday	10am to 5pm
Thursday	9am to 5pm
Friday	9am to 4.30pm

### Managing your housing

Our housing officers manage our properties. They are based at our two area housing offices.

#### Housing officers:

- monitor the standard of cleaning;
- look after the caretaking service;
- monitor how rubbish is dealt with;
- monitor the appearance of our estates;
- keep an eye on how the grounds are maintained;
- help with complaints about antisocial behaviour; and
- give permission for alterations.

### City Homes North

Manages properties in the north of the city from their offices at: 171 Arbury Road Cambridge CB4 2YG.

**Repairs Freephone number:  
0800 731 4876**

### City Homes South

Manages properties in the south of the city from their offices at: 89 Cherry Hinton Road Cambridge CB1 7BS.

You can pay service charges and council tax at any of our offices.

**Repairs Freephone number:  
0800 731 5274**

**Housing officers' Freephone number:  
0800 587 2031**

**Outside office hours – emergency number:  
01223 457 457**

You will find other phone numbers and useful contact details in section 11.

## Customer care

### Customer care

We are committed to providing a high standard of service to our customers. We have the following standards.

### Service standards

#### When we receive a written comment (letter, e-mail or fax) from you

We will give you a full response, or let you know how we are dealing with the matter, within seven working days.

We will tell you who is dealing with the matter and tell you their name, phone number and which part of the council they work for.

We will write to you in a way that is easy to understand and use languages other than English if appropriate. We will arrange to reply in Braille, in large print or on audio tape if you ask us to.

If we have been unable to deal with the matter in seven days, we will tell you when you can expect to hear from us. We will also let you know about any changes.



We will let you know when we have dealt with your request.

#### When we answer the phone

We aim to answer all calls within five rings.

We will greet you in a friendly way, giving you our name and section.

If the person you want to contact is temporarily unavailable, you can leave a message and someone will contact you as soon as possible (if it is an urgent matter) or within two days on all other matters.

We will only transfer your call once, and only if we are sure who to transfer the call to, otherwise we will call you back.

### Office interviews

If you would like to make an appointment to see someone in person, please phone first and make an appointment. We can see you at either City Homes North or City Homes South office, whichever is most convenient to you.

### Making a complaint

We are always looking to improve our services to reduce the need for complaints. We welcome suggestions from leaseholders on how we can achieve this. However, we know that there will be times when you want to tell us about things you are not happy with. You should set out your complaint in writing and send it to Leasehold Services.

If you disagree with part of your service charge and are thinking of not paying it while we are sorting the matter out, please do not withhold the parts of the charge that you are willing to pay.

We give a breakdown of the estimated costs for each service to each leaseholder at the beginning of each financial year (1 April) – usually sent out in February or March.

## Complaints procedure

### Stage 1

If you think the service charge is wrong, do not believe the cost is reasonable, or the service satisfactory, you should write to the Leasehold Services team with your complaint. We will accept a letter, e-mail or fax.

If the team can deal with the matter themselves, they will send you a reply within seven working days. If they cannot reply in that time, they will write to you to tell you why and when you can expect a reply.

If your dispute is about repairs, major work, or managing the estate, we will give it to one of those teams. We will tell you who is dealing with it. You will get a written reply within seven working days or a letter saying why this is not possible, and when we will send a reply.

If the complaint covers several service areas, the Leasehold Team will co-ordinate a response from the different teams. If we cannot do this within seven working days, we will send you a letter explaining why.

### Stage 2

If you do not agree with the answer you get, you should write to the Head of City Homes. They will decide whether your complaint is valid, and whether we need to carry out further investigation.

If more investigation is needed, a senior manager will carry this out. This may include meeting you at the property to discuss the complaint. We will send a reply within seven working days. If we cannot send a reply in that time, we will send a letter explaining why, and when you can expect a reply.

The senior manager will decide if it is appropriate to pass the matter to our independent review panel. The panel will include at least three people who will be the heads of service (or equivalent). One of them will be from another organisation and independent of us.

The senior manager will send our full reply when everything has been looked into. You will also have the chance to meet our officers.

If the panel does not uphold your complaint, we will expect you to pay your service charge.

### Stage 3

If you do not agree with the senior manager's response, you should write to our independent complaints investigator. The investigator is not our employee, but we may pay them to investigate complaints.

However, we will also tell you that you have a right to appeal to either the Local Government Ombudsman or the right to apply for a decision from a Leasehold Valuation Tribunal. For this, you should get your own legal advice.

Leasehold Valuation Tribunals can now make decisions on all aspects of the duty to pay service charges for repairs, improvements and services. This includes decisions on whether:

- costs are reasonable;
- the standard of work is reasonable; and
- leaseholders have been properly consulted.

The Government has given Leasehold Valuation Tribunals greater powers to look at disputes to do with service charges. They are independent and their hearings not very formal. Usually the panel will have three members – a lawyer, a valuer and a layperson.

You need to apply to the local panel office who will give you the forms to fill in and guidance on procedures. You will need to pay a fee of between £50 and £350 (depending on the amount you disagree with) with your application. If the case cannot be sorted out at an early stage, there is also a hearing fee of £150.

The address of the Eastern region is:

Residential Property Tribunal Service  
Great Eastern House  
Tenison Road  
Cambridge  
CB1 2TR.  
Phone: 0845 100 2616 or 01223 505112  
Fax: 01223 505116  
E-mail: [eastern.rap@communities.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:eastern.rap@communities.gsi.gov.uk)

### The Local Government Ombudsman

The Local Government Ombudsman is appointed by the Government to investigate complaints made against local councils. You can complain to the ombudsman if you think we have treated you unfairly as a result of poor or inefficient administration. In other words, if you feel we have not dealt with the complaint as well or as efficiently as we should have done.

The address is:

Local Government Ombudsman  
2 Westwood Way  
Westwood Business Park  
Coventry CV4 8JB.  
Phone: 024 7682 0000  
Fax: 024 7682 0001  
E-mail: [enquiries.coventry@lgo.org.uk](mailto:enquiries.coventry@lgo.org.uk)

### How do I make comments or suggestions on ways to improve the service?

We welcome all feedback and you can give us your views:

- through our newsletter, 'Open Door';
- at both housing offices;
- through surveys, focus groups, residents' associations, and the resident involvement team;
- by speaking to any member of staff; and
- by filling in a complaints or comments form.

We are always looking at ways to improve the service we deliver and make sure we are meeting the needs of our customers. We can only meet customers' needs by understanding what they want and getting their views.

### How do I know how well you are performing?

We measure all areas of service delivery to make sure we will meet our yearly targets. We report our performance to the Government, the council, and our customers. We set targets each year to improve our performance and make sure we are comparing well against other councils.

### We report our performance:

- in our newsletter;
- at housing offices; and
- on our website at [www.cambridge.gov.uk](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk).

We also carry out a survey of leaseholders to see how satisfied they are with all areas of service delivery.

We measure satisfaction on all repairs we carry out.

### **Quality**

We take quality seriously. We want other organisations to praise us for what we do.

Your housing service holds three national quality awards:

- Charter Mark;
- Supporting People; and
- Investors in People.

### **Equal opportunities**

We believe that everyone has the right to be treated with respect and have equal access to our services. We are determined to tackle discrimination and to promote equal opportunities in our services and in employment. We have the following service standards related to equal opportunities.

### **Service standards**

- We will make sure that all customers receive equal access to services.
- We will make sure all staff are trained on equal opportunities and make sure they can deal with customers' special needs.
- We will offer an interpreting service or British Sign Language

to all our customers who have difficulty communicating in English, or who have a disability.

- We will make leaflets and information available in large print, on audio tape, in Braille or in different languages, when necessary.

## Your lease - rights and responsibilities

### Your rights as a leaseholder

Your rights as a leaseholder are governed by laws, in particular the Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Act 2002.

### Your lease

When you buy a flat or maisonette from us (the council), you buy a leasehold interest in your home. We continue to own the freehold. Your lease will usually be for 125 years from the date the first lease in your block was granted.

Your lease is a complicated legal document. This section gives a basic guide to it. But we cannot give a precise interpretation of the meaning of the lease because we have used various leases since the Right to Buy scheme began in 1980.

**As a result, you should read your own lease for information about your situation and consider getting more legal advice.**

### Your responsibilities



The lease describes the property you own. The plan attached to your lease shows the areas that are included in your home. If your home is on an estate, this will also be shown in the lease and shown on the plan.

You are responsible for looking after everything inside your home or relating only to your home.

You must pay all the charges due for services, repairs, improvements, insurance and ground rent.

You must keep your home in good repair, including decoration, doors and doorframes, inside walls, plasterwork, ceilings, floorboards and flooring.

You must not make any structural

alterations or additions to your home without our written permission. You can find more information in the Repairs and Maintenance section 6.

You are responsible for the behaviour of your children, other members of your household and any visitors. You must make sure that neither you nor anyone else causes any form of nuisance or harassment to your neighbours or others on your estate.

It is a good idea to insure the contents of your home.

You must tell us if you sublet your property.

### Our responsibilities

We are responsible for the main structure of the building, the shared parts and any shared services to your building or estate. Depending on your property this may include:

- window frames;
- lifts;
- lofts;
- door-entry systems;
- caretaking;
- grounds maintenance;
- estate lighting; and
- block lighting.

We will also:

- arrange insurance for the block; and
- consult you as shown below.

### Subletting

You can let out your flat and become a landlord, as long as you:

- let us know about it, keep us up to date on all the details and any changes to those details; and
- make sure your tenants keep to the conditions of the lease, as you are responsible for their actions.

### Service charges

You have the right to ask a Leasehold Valuation Tribunal to decide:

- whether a service charge is reasonable; and
  - who must pay the charge.
- You can apply to a tribunal, whether or not you have made a payment.

At the end of each financial year, we will give you an analysis of our actual spending on providing services connected with your lease.

### Consultation

The Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Act 2002 changed the way landlords need to consult leaseholders. We must consult you before we begin any major repairs, maintenance or improvements for which you have to pay a share and which will cost any leaseholder in the building more than £250. We must also consult you on certain long-term

agreements, or contracts lasting more than 12 months, which we plan to enter into and which will cost you more than £100 a year.

### **How we will consult you**

We will consult you as an individual leaseholder. If you are a member of a recognised tenants' association, we will also consult you through your association. There are different ways to consult for different kinds of work.

### **Consultation on major work needing estimates**

If we need to choose a contractor by asking different firms to return estimates of their costs, we must first send you a 'notice of intention'. The notice will describe the work we are planning to do, or say where you can see a description of the work. It will explain why the work is needed and will allow 30 days for written comments. If you want, you can name a contractor who you think we should ask to provide an estimate.

We must take account of any comments and must try to get an estimate from one or, in some cases, two contractors suggested by leaseholders.

We will then send a second written notice (called a section-20 notice), setting out the estimated cost from at least two of the estimates. This letter will include a summary

of the comments we received and our responses to them. All the estimates will be available to see. We will invite you to send us written comments on the estimates within 30 days.

We must take account of these written comments. We will then award the contract. Within 21 days we will write to you again to let you know who will be doing the work and why we have chosen them. We will also let you know about any comments we have received and what our response is to them. However, we do not have to write to you again if the chosen contractor has been suggested by a leaseholder, or has sent in the lowest estimate.

### **Consulting you on long-term agreements**

If we want to enter into a long-term agreement with a contractor to provide work or services and the cost to any one leaseholder is more than £100 during the year, we must consult you.

Examples of long-term agreements, or contracts lasting for more than 12 months, might include maintaining:

- lifts;
- door-entry systems;
- fire-safety equipment;
- grounds; and
- shared lighting.

We will send all leaseholders and any recognised tenants' associations, a 'notice of intention'.

The notice will describe the work or services to be provided, or say where you can see a description of them. It will explain why the agreement is needed and will allow 30 days for written comments. If you want, you will be able to name anyone you think we should ask to provide an estimate.

We must take account of any comments and must try to get an estimate from one or, in some cases, two contractors suggested by leaseholders.

Once we have drawn up our proposals for the contract, we will send a notice of the proposals to each leaseholder asking for your written comments within 30 days.

We must take account of these written comments. We will then award the contract. Within 21 days we will write to you again to let you know who will be doing the work and why we have chosen them. We will also let you know about any comments we have received and what our response is to them. However, we do not have to write to you again if the chosen contractor has been suggested by a leaseholder, or has sent in the lowest estimate. If there is a lot of

information to send out, we may let you know where you can look at this information instead.

### **Consultation on major work under long-term agreements**

If we need to carry out work under a long-term agreement we have entered into with a contractor, we must consult you in a different way than if we have to consider estimates.

A long-term agreement is a contract lasting for more than 12 months where a contractor has signed up to carry out, for example, all our day-to-day repairs work.

If the cost of the work is to be more than £250 to any one leaseholder in your building, we must first send all leaseholders a 'notice of intention'.

The notice will describe the work, or let you know where you can see a description of it. It will explain why the work is needed and estimate the total cost. It will allow 30 days for written comments.

We must take account of any written comments we receive and send a reply to anyone who writes in.

### **Urgent work**

The leasehold valuation tribunal

can allow work to go ahead without us consulting you if they think it is reasonable not to follow the usual procedures. This may apply in cases of very urgent work needed to protect health and safety, or for which it is difficult to get more than one estimate.

### **Payment for major work**

We will send you a separate invoice after the work is completed. Depending on the cost of the work, we can make an arrangement with you to pay over a period of up to five years. If you have less than £20,000 savings and are on a low income, there may be help available for major repairs or improvements. You can contact us for information, or phone Cambridge Home Aid on 01223 457945 or e-mail [home.aid@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:home.aid@cambridge.gov.uk)

### **Selling your flat**

You do not need our permission to sell your flat. However, if you do sell it, you must tell us within one month of completion.

If you sell your flat within three or five years of buying it under the Right-to-Buy scheme (depending on when you bought it), you will usually have to pay back some, or all, of the discount given to you when you bought it. The exact terms are set out in your lease.

When selling your property you

or your solicitor may ask us for a standard leasehold information pack (sales enquiry). The pack gives you relevant information about your property and the service charges you pay. The fee for the pack is currently £50. (You do not pay VAT on it.)

You must pay all service charges, loans and so on you owe before the sale. You must make sure that your solicitor has enough money to cover any charges that have not yet been invoiced.

We cannot change the ownership details on the property until we have received a Notice of Assignment from the purchaser's solicitors. You should let leasehold services know about the sale and, if possible, give the name of the solicitors acting on behalf of the purchaser so we can chase the appropriate legal documents if we need to.

### **Right of first refusal**

The Housing Act 2004 introduced the 'right of first refusal' which allows local authorities (or other social landlords) the first opportunity to 'buy back' properties being sold by former tenants who bought the property under the right to buy. The Act came into effect on 18 January 2005.

The legal arrangements are shown in your lease. This is recorded on

the property register held by the Land Registry and also by us as a local land charge.

Your solicitor will let you know about this if you want to sell again within 10 years of buying the property.

### **Improving your home**

Your lease says you must ask our permission before carrying out structural alterations and additions to your home. Examples of this work would be:

- replacing the windows or outside doors;
- installing central heating;
- removing or building walls or chimney breasts;
- laying a driveway; or
- building a conservatory.

As well as getting our permission, you may also need to get building control approval and planning permission from us.

### **Buying the freehold of the building your flat is in (leasehold enfranchisement)**

Enfranchisement is a collective right for a group of leaseholders of flats to buy the freehold of the building they live in. Leaseholders have this right if they, and the building they live in, qualify. After buying the freehold, you can decide how to manage the property – either doing it yourselves or appointing a manager to do it for you.

You have this right even if the freeholder, or landlord, does not want to sell.

To have the right to enfranchisement, you must be what is called a qualifying tenant. This means you must be a long leaseholder who has held the lease for more than 21 years. To qualify, you (and the building your flat is in) must meet the following conditions:

- The block must have two or more flats in it.
- No more than 25% of the floor area inside the building must be used for non-residential purposes – for example, as an office or a shop.
- At least two-thirds of the flats in the block must be owned by leaseholders.
- At least half of the leaseholders must want to buy the freehold.
- The group of leaseholders buying the freehold must be constituted (have a written set of rules) in line with the law.

If your block does not meet any of the above conditions, you will not be able to buy the freehold. These details are meant to be a very rough guide only. For more information, phone Leasehold Services on 01223 457835. You must get legal advice if you and the other leaseholders want to buy the freehold of your building.

## Service charges

### What are service charges?

These are the charges you pay to us as your share of the cost of managing, maintaining, repairing, insuring and providing services to the block or estate you live in.

We divide service charges into four areas. We charge all leaseholders for:

- block services;
- block repairs;
- block insurance; and
- management costs.

You may have to pay **extra charges** if you buy a property in a certain block of flats because you have extra facilities, for example:

- caretaking services;
- a service to clean shared areas;
- a window-cleaning service to shared areas;
- lift services;
- street cleaning within the boundaries of the block;
- electricity and shared



- lighting;
- a door-entry system; and
- a shared TV aerial system.

### Block services

Services vary from one block to another and one estate to another. Generally this will cover maintaining any grassed area and shared gardens, cleaning the estate, caretaking or cleaning shared areas.

### Block repairs

We are committed to making sure your home is in a good state of repair, and we aim to carry out regular maintenance to make sure the structure of the outside of your home is secure and weatherproof. We want you to enjoy living in your home but the

responsibility is a joint one. The information in section 6 explains:

- your rights and responsibilities for repairs;
- what level of service you can expect;
- how you can report repairs;
- how we will respond to your requests for repairs; and
- how we prioritise repairs.

We will estimate the amount we think it will cost to maintain your block of flats over the coming year. We will adjust this amount when we know the actual amount.

### Buildings insurance

We insure you against loss of (or damage caused to) the buildings. You can ask us for a summary of this cover.

For all claims, the insurance company will rely on the cover and wording in the policy booklet. You must let us know if there are any changes because this may affect your claim. Here are some examples.

- If you no longer live in the property and you have decided to rent it out.
- If the property will be empty for more than 30 days in a row.
- If you carry out

alterations inside the property.

### Management costs

The management costs cover your contribution for:

- the costs of managing the service, including the staff on hand to answer any questions you may have;
- the costs involved in working out your service charges;
- the administrative costs to send out your invoices every three months and to collect your payments;
- the administrative costs of dealing with any repairs to the block; and
- the administrative costs of dealing with insurance claims.

### Reviewing service charges

We review your service charges every year. The amount you pay is based on the services associated with your flat and the block.

We will send you your service charge estimates in March. This is how much we expect the services to cost for the coming year.

We invoice you for this amount for the three months just gone.

We send the invoices in June, September, December and March. You should pay these invoices promptly.

In September of the following year, we will send you a summary of the actual costs of providing

each service for the previous financial year.

### **Ground rent**

As well as your service charges, we also charge ground rent to every leaseholder. You must pay this every year for the year to come. The amount, usually £10, is shown in your lease.

### **Major repairs**

If there is any major shared or structural work needed and your contribution will be more than £250, we will let you know by sending you a Section-20 Notice, as needed by law. Once the work is completed, we will send you an invoice separately for the work.

### **What if I have paid too much or too little?**

**If you have paid too much,** we will pay an amount into your account to cover the difference.

**If you have paid too little,** we will ask you to pay the difference.

You have the right to inspect

accounts, receipts and other documents relating to service charges. You also have the right to a written summary of the costs relevant to service charges.

You can find more details of your rights in the Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Act 2002.

### **What happens if I do not agree with the charges?**

If you do not agree with the service charges, please contact Leasehold Services on 01223 457835 or e-mail [leasehold.services@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:leasehold.services@cambridge.gov.uk)

If you are not satisfied with the outcome, you can appeal to a Leasehold Valuation Tribunal.

### **How do I pay my service charges?**

#### **By direct debit**

The easiest way to pay is to set up a direct debit through your bank. You can pay on either the 1st or 15th of each month for the three months just gone.

#### **By leasehold payment card**

You can pay by cash, cheque or debit card at any local housing office or at the council offices in Regent's Street. You can also use the payment card at any outlet

displaying the *PayPoint* logo.

### **By post**

You can pay your service charges by post. We accept cheques, which you should make payable to 'Cambridge City Council'.

### **Other methods**

**Online** – if you have internet access, you can log on to [www.cambridge.gov.uk](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk) and follow the instructions. A 24-hour system is operated by *allpayments.net* on our behalf – and is a secure and convenient way to pay.

**Phone 0870 243 6040** and you will be asked to enter the 19-digit number on your payment card. Simply follow the instructions.

If there are any changes to the Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Act 2002, we may change service charges in the future. (We will tell you about any changes we plan to make.)

### **What if I cannot afford to pay my service charges?**

If you are having financial difficulties, please contact us immediately. We can offer help,

advice and practical support.

### **What happens if I do not pay my service charges?**

We will first write to you to tell you that your account is 'in arrears' (you have missed payments). We will ask you to contact us to discuss ways to pay the arrears. If you do not contact us, the leasehold officer will call to discuss your arrears.

If you fail to make a payment, you will be breaking the main contract term of your lease agreement. We may take legal action to recover the money you owe by issuing court proceedings. If we take you to court and you still do not pay the money you owe, you may end up losing your home.

### **Other useful contacts**

The Cambridge Law Centre  
41 Mill Road  
Cambridge  
Phone: 01223 712 222

Citizens Advice Bureau  
72 – 74 Newmarket Road  
Cambridge  
Phone: 01223 222 660

## Repairs and maintenance

### Repairs and maintenance What repairs are you responsible for?

We are responsible for repairing the structural and shared parts of the building you live in. We will ask you to pay your share of the total costs to the block. The type of repairs we carry out include:

- structural – to walls, foundations, chimney stacks, roofs and gutters;
- to shared areas such as stairways and corridors;
- to shared drains, gutters and pipework;
- to paintwork in shared areas;
- to shared outside sheds and stores marked on the plan in yellow; and
- to shared services such as lifts, door-entry systems, rotary driers, play areas, lighting and shared laundry equipment.

### What repairs am I responsible for?

Your lease tells you exactly which parts of your home you are responsible for. You should maintain and insure these areas yourself. The following are examples.



- The door furniture (letterbox and handle)
- All glazing to windows and doors
- The heating systems and meters
- The electric circuits, meter and fittings
- All plumbing pipework
- Fittings and sanitaryware inside the flat (other than shared pipes and drains)
- All services including water, gas, electricity and the phone (if any) from where they enter the flat
- Boundary hedges or fences as marked on the plan in yellow.

### Repairs priorities

#### Priority 1 - Emergency repairs

We will be there within 24 hours. Here are some examples of emergency repairs.

- Total power cut (shared areas)
- Serious leaks from other property or your roof
- Dangerous structures
- Blocked drains outside
- Fixing locks (shared)
- Broken-down lifts

In certain circumstances we will only be able to make this repair

safe and carry out a temporary repair.

#### Priority 2 - Urgent repairs

We will carry out this type of repair within three working days. Here are some examples of urgent repairs.

- Emergency repairs we have made safe
- Electrical repairs to the door-entry systems
- Roof leaks
- Electrical faults where there is no risk of injury We will class some of these repairs as a result of a priority-1 emergency if we have carried out a temporary repair.

#### Priority 3 (Non-urgent repairs)

We will carry out this type of repair within 20 working days. Here are some examples of non-urgent repairs.

- Outside repairs
  - Broken vents and air bricks
- These repairs are normally minor. If these repairs identify that a full replacement is needed, we will add them to the renewal programme for future replacement and carry out a temporary repair.

#### What happens when a repair can't be fixed?

We will carry out a temporary repair and add it to the planned maintenance work. It is more cost-effective to carry out certain types of work at the same time.

#### What is planned maintenance?

We aim to visit homes in all areas to carry out planned maintenance. The sort of work covered may include:

- decorating outside;
- painting shared areas inside;
- repairing the outside of the property, often including roof repairs, pointing brickwork and repairing front and back shared doors;
- replacing shared windows;
- renewing roofs;
- repairing gutters and pipework; and

environmental improvements such as fencing work.

We aim to carry out this work regularly (about every seven years) and we will always consult you before we do any work.

#### How should I report a repair?

Call City Homes North  
Freephone **0800 731 4876**

Call City Homes South  
Freephone **0800 731 5274**

#### You can also report repairs by:

- calling at any local housing office;
- writing to us;
- passing the details to any officer who may visit your home; and
- e-mailing us at [leasehold.services@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:leasehold.services@cambridge.gov.uk).

#### What should I do in an emergency?

During office hours you should report emergencies to the repairs

Freephone numbers above. Out of hours, you should call **01223 457 457**.

### **Our office hours are shown below**

Monday 9am to 5pm

Tuesday 9am to 5pm

Wednesday 10am to 5pm

Thursday 9am to 5pm

Friday 9am to 4.30pm

### **What if I am out when the worker calls?**

If you are out when the worker calls, they will leave you a card telling you that the order has been cancelled. You will need to phone the number on the card to arrange another appointment. If you are not able to keep your appointment, please let us know as soon as you can.

### **Who carries out the work?**

City Services carry out all of our day-to-day repairs. If the repair is being completed as part of the Decent Homes contract, it can be either City Services or Apollo (London) Ltd. If the work needs a specialist contractor (for example, for roof repairs or damp-proofing), we will let you know.

### **What if I want to carry out improvements or alterations to my home?**

If you are planning to carry out repairs or improvements to your home for which permission is needed under the terms of your lease, you must get permission before starting work. You can get an alterations form from your local area office or from Leasehold Services. You will need to tell us what work you are planning to do, what contractor you are using, and possibly provide a sketch. You can find full details of the information you need to give us, together with the obligations you must keep to in the lease, but they include:

- installing gas or electric fires;
- replacing the windows or outside doors;
- installing central heating
- installing fencing and walls;
- removing or building walls;
- any electrical additions or alterations; and
- building conservatories, sheds and garages.

You are responsible for maintaining any alterations or fittings you have made to your home. If the previous leaseholder made these alterations, you will also have to maintain them.

### **Gas safety – good sense**

Using gas as a fuel in the home is normally very safe. However, gas can cause serious damage to health, and put people's lives

at risk. Gas leaks can lead to explosions, which could kill. Faulty gas appliances and lack of ventilation can lead to carbon-monoxide poisoning, which can be deadly. For your and your family's health, safety and wellbeing, don't take risks.

### **What happens if I have a gas leak?**

Leaking gas can cause an explosion. If you smell or suspect a gas leak, report it immediately to National Grid on **0800 111 999**.

- Turn off the gas supply at the main gas meter.
- Open the doors and windows.
- Do not switch anything electrical on or off, including the lights, as this could cause an explosion.
- Do not smoke, strike matches or light candles.

### **As part of some leasehold agreements you must arrange for your gas appliance to be checked every 12 months.**

### **Carbon monoxide – the silent killer**

About 30 people a year die from carbon-monoxide poisoning related to gas appliances. Many more (over 200) suffer from the symptoms of carbon-monoxide poisoning. Carbon monoxide is produced by gas appliances which are badly installed or not maintained properly, or which

do not have enough ventilation. Carbon monoxide is invisible and has no smell or taste. Even small amounts can lead to a variety of serious health problems, including brain damage.

### **Gas safety – your responsibilities**

We will be responsible for many aspects of gas safety, but as a leaseholder you also have certain responsibilities. Some of these are set out in the gas safety regulations, the others are common sense.

- You must make sure your gas appliances are checked each year to make sure they are working correctly and safely.
- Report gas leaks and try to prevent more gas from leaking (for example, by turning your gas supply off at the mains).
- Don't use gas appliances that you know or think are unsafe.
- Don't block any ventilation or flues needed for gas appliances to work safely.
- Don't do work on gas appliances or pipes by yourself. By law, anyone doing gas work must be trained to do it safely. The easiest way to be sure of this is to only use CORGI-registered engineers
- Don't paint the casing to your fire or any appliance.
- Always use a CORGI-registered contractor to install and service your gas cooker and fire.

- Never sleep in a room which has an open-flue appliance (such as a back boiler).
- Never install a ceiling fan in a room which has a gas appliance.

### Subletting and gas safety

#### Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations Act 1994

If you sublet your property and it has a gas appliance, you become a landlord. Under health-and-safety laws you must make sure the gas appliances in your home are serviced every year. And, you must give your tenants a gas-safety certificate. If you don't, your tenants could be at risk from potentially faulty appliances and carbon-monoxide poisoning. You could be prosecuted by the Health and Safety Executive.

#### How do I know where I can turn the services on or off?

You will need to know where things like stop taps and fuse boxes are in your home. They are in different places in different properties, so it is important that you know where they are so you can turn them on and off when necessary. You can make a note of where they are in the box opposite. This will help you respond more quickly in an emergency.

### Subletting and energy performance certificates (EPCs)

**From 1 October 2008, all residential properties which go up for sale or rent will need to have a certificate which reveals the property's energy rating and is designed to help people take energy efficiency into consideration when deciding to rent or buy a new home.**

Landlords and property sellers must legally provide an energy performance certificate (EPC) showing the property's official energy efficiency and ratings for the environmental effect. Properties will be rated on a scale of A to G, with A being the most efficient and G the least efficient.

**Private landlords and property owners, including leaseholders, will have to pay for their own surveys when a property changes hands. They will have to provide a copy of the EPC to the new private tenant. For rented properties, the EPC will be valid for up to 10 years.**

#### Asbestos

We take managing asbestos in our homes seriously. Asbestos is a widely used product and if it is not disturbed it does not have any risk to health. Asbestos is a natural fibre in

glassy rock and is found in different parts of the world. The rock is made up of strands and fibres which, when processed, can split down in size until they are invisible to the naked eye. Asbestos has been widely used in homes because it is very strong, does not catch fire easily and has excellent insulation properties.

#### Where is asbestos in my home?

The following list shows the usual places you may find materials containing asbestos in your home. (This is not a full list.)

#### The outside of your home

- Roof sheets and tiles
- Fascia boards
- Cladding
- Gutters and drainpipes

#### Surfaces inside your home

- Boilers
- Panels covering heating pipes
- Panels above, below or next to doorways and windows
- Floor tiles
- Suspended ceiling panels
- The underside of stairs

The likelihood of you coming into contact with materials containing asbestos in your home will be very low. However, you do need to be careful when carrying out DIY work, particularly when using power tools and cutting equipment (for example, drills, saws, and so on) on

any material that you think may contain asbestos.

If you find material which you think may contain asbestos, or have any questions, please phone 01223 457835 and we will arrange for someone to inspect your home. We will keep you up to date with our progress on the sample we take from your home in line with the guidelines and health-and-safety regulations.

#### Emergency numbers

Emergency repairs  
01223 457 457

Gas Emergency Services  
(emergency line)  
0800 111 999

Cambridge Water  
01223 403000

Electricity:

.....

(Write in the phone number of your supplier.)

#### Item Where it is in the house:

Stop taps  
Fuse box  
Gas tap  
Trip switch  
Water tank  
Boiler

## Managing estates, shared areas and estate services

### Managing the estate and service standards

We have developed service standards with the Residents' Standards Group.

#### Cutting the grass

- We will cut the grass 14 to 16 times a year after removing any litter.
- The method we use will mean there will be very few cuttings on the footpath. We sweep cuttings which fall onto paths or other hard surfaces onto the grassed areas next to them.
- We will cut grass which is planted with bulbs between six and eight weeks after the bulbs have finished flowering.
- We will weed spray areas around obstacles for example, benches, litter bins (not trees) and fences once in early spring and then twice more through the year.
- We will cut the grass between 7am and 6pm. We may cut grass



on Saturdays if we need to.

- We will strim round obstacles (for example trees) at least five times during the grass-cutting season. We will use smaller machines on areas where we cannot use ride-on mowers within one week of the main cut.

#### Clearing litter

- We will empty litter bins and remove dangerous litter, such as broken glass, when reported. There may be a charge to the block for this type of work.

#### Shrub beds and hedges

We try and maintain planted areas by using as few chemicals as possible. For this reason, we will not carry out pest and disease control.

- We will maintain planted

areas to make sure they do not spread onto nearby areas.

- We will carry out any extra or replacement planting as long as funding is available.
- We will carry out pruning depending on the type of plants and their health.
- We will keep plants at a reasonable height to help prevent crime (so they do not provide cover to burglars, for example).
- We will weed shrub beds and kill off the weeds up to three times a year.
- We will not cut the hedges during the nesting season.
- We will treat hedge bases with weedkiller in early spring and rake them out once a year.
- If we use herbaceous plants in shrub beds, we will use mulch rather than weedkiller to control weeds.

We carry out all work in a way that causes as little disturbance as possible to the public. And all work depends on the weather being OK. In bad weather, we may not cut the grass as often and will do so when conditions allow.

#### Is there anything I can do to help?

##### You should:

- let us know if something needs doing;
- ask for permission before planting in shared areas;

- ask for permission if you want to make changes to your shared areas;
- make sure your rubbish is secure and left in the correct place;
- always make sure you leave your rubbish bins in the correct place on the correct collection day for your area;
- always try to divide your rubbish correctly into things that can be recycled and things that cannot be recycled (use any recycling facilities available at your block);
- get rid of any extra rubbish;
- always let us know as soon as possible if someone is dumping rubbish; and
- always let us know if there is any graffiti in your shared area. There may be a charge to the block for this type of work.

**You can contact Street Scene on 01223 458282.**

#### How do I report a repair in a shared area?

You can report repairs needed to shared areas or facilities in the same way as you report repairs to your home. We will respond promptly, depending on how urgent the problem is.

#### Cleaning shared areas in the building



Depending on your lease and which flats you live in, we may clean the shared area if you live in a block of flats or a maisonette. This will include:

- brushing and sweeping the landings;
- mopping landings (depending on the type of flooring);
- wiping away dust and damp;
- spraying disinfectant;
- washing inside windows on staircases, landings and entrances;
- cleaning shared bin stores;
- removing rubbish (if the rubbish has been dumped, we will charge the tenant who dumped it);
- removing scuff marks from walls;
- picking up litter; and
- cleaning windows.

We will adapt the cleaning tasks to the type of building you live in. Please contact us if you want more details about cleaning the shared areas in your building.

# Nuisance, Antisocial behaviour and Harassment

## Introduction

Antisocial behaviour can cause a lot of misery and stress to residents and their families. We and the council are committed to dealing with disputes fairly and quickly.

## What is antisocial behaviour?

Antisocial behaviour is 'behaving in a manner which causes or is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to one or more persons not of the same household'. This is the definition given in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

Here are some examples.

- Noise
- Verbal abuse
- Harassment
- Vandalism and graffiti
- Untidy gardens
- Alcohol and drug abuse
- Noisy pets
- Cars and vehicles, such as inconsiderate parking or repairs in the street
- Children and youths



misbehaving.

## Discussing the problem with your neighbour

With all antisocial behaviour complaints, we will ask if you have discussed the problem with your neighbour. Making your neighbour aware of your concerns in a reasonable way can usually sort out problems quickly. We can refer cases to an independent mediation service to try to solve problems between neighbours. This will involve talking about the issue and coming to an agreement. You can arrange this through our housing officers if the issue is to do with a council tenant or you can contact the Antisocial Behaviour Team if it is about leaseholders and other

people who own and live in their homes. It can be very successful. It is important to remember that once you make the complaint official to us, it can sometimes make the problem worse before it gets better. We will try to keep your complaint confidential wherever possible, but very often this is not possible because of the nature of the complaint.

## How do I make a complaint about a neighbour?

You can report incidents and make a complaint by contacting your housing officer or by contacting the Antisocial Behaviour Team on 01223 457950, in person or in writing with full details of your complaint. You can fill in a neighbour nuisance incident diary, which is available from all housing offices.

## What happens next?

An officer will contact you within seven working days of your complaint.

The officer will fully discuss your complaint and ask for your permission to contact your neighbour. When you and your neighbour have had the opportunity to put your cases forward, the investigating officer will tell you the outcome in writing.

## When problems continue

We will ask you to fill in neighbour nuisance incident record forms regularly and return these to us. On these forms you must record, in full, the details of the incidents, and the times they happened. Please remember to keep a copy of this information (you must do this if the matter is to continue further).

## Mediation

We use an independent mediation service to try and solve disagreements between neighbours before the problems become more serious. We encourage both sides in a disagreement to use mediation. This is because disagreements solved informally are more likely to stay that way than disagreements where we have to take formal action. Our mediation service is run by independent, professionally trained mediators.

## Supporting information

Antisocial behaviour can often be very complicated, and it is important that you provide as much information as possible. We will, if appropriate, contact:

- the police;
- other council departments (such as children's services);
- the probation service; and
- our youth offending team.

## Professional witnesses

If it is difficult for you to collect evidence to prove who is causing the antisocial behaviour, we may consider using or installing hidden cameras to gather evidence.

### **Supporting victims and witnesses**

We will help and support you if you are suffering antisocial behaviour or are a witness for someone who has suffered it.

### **When we take legal action**

#### **We will take legal action as a last resort, but only after we have given the people causing the antisocial behaviour the opportunity to change their behaviour.**

When we take legal action, the most important thing is having enough evidence to go to court to be able to prove the case. This means gathering information carefully, and usually showing that the problem has happened over a period of time. It is likely that the person making the complaint will have to go to court and give evidence.

### **Here are some examples of what a court can order:**

#### **Injunctions**

The court can issue an 'injunction'. This is a legal order to make the behaviour stop. If it doesn't stop, the tenant can be arrested and

sent to prison. The court can issue an injunction quickly – 24 hours for serious issues and about four weeks for less serious issues. These orders are usually used in cases where there has been violence or threats of violence.

#### **Antisocial behaviour order (ASBO)**

The police or local authority can apply for an order in a magistrates' court to stop the antisocial behaviour of anyone aged 10 or over. The person an ASBO applies to must have behaved in a way that is likely to have caused harassment, alarm or distress to at least one person who does not live in their home.

#### **Can any other action be taken?**

This will obviously depend on the circumstances, but other legal action is available to deal with:

- dog nuisance;
- noise;
- litter;
- filthy homes and gardens or ones with vermin (rats and so on);
- children who are not being supervised;
- abandoned vehicles;
- repairing vehicles as a business; and
- malicious phone calls.

We cannot take all of the action mentioned, but we will work closely with other agencies that can take this action to help sort

out the problem.

**For more information, phone our Antisocial Behaviour Team on 01223 457950.**

## Involving customers

### How can I get involved?

We want to deliver an excellent service to all our customers. To do this, we believe that the people who use our services should be making the decisions alongside us.

Involving residents is all about getting customers to share views and ideas, and to take part in managing the housing service and making decisions.

We are always looking for new ways to involve customers at a level that suits them. So, if you are interested in getting involved and would like to discuss how you can do so, please contact us for advice on 01223 458323 or 458325. You can also e-mail us at [yourhomeyoursay@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:yourhomeyoursay@cambridge.gov.uk). We will help you to get involved at a level that suits you. Here are some of the ways you can take part. Please let us know if you are interested in any of these, or any other way in which you can contribute.

### Housing sounding board

You may prefer to get involved by giving your views by post,



e-mail, phone or text. We regularly consult customers by questionnaire about our performance. We need a panel of tenants who will give us regular feedback on how well we are doing, and where the problems are. We also have a database of customers who give their views by e-mail. Visit our new web page at: [www.cambridge.gov.uk/yourhomeyoursay](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/yourhomeyoursay).

### Meetings with us

You can get involved in the housing service by going to specific meetings with customers and our staff. At the moment, there is a leaseholders' consultation group, which meets once every four months. We try to meet at different venues across the city to give as many people as possible the chance to get

involved.

### Residents' associations and groups

Many of our customers choose to get involved by joining their local residents' association or group. There are many associations in Cambridge, so please get in touch to find out about one in your area. If there isn't an association near you, or one that relates to the issue you are interested in (for example, environment, disability or antisocial behaviour), we may be able to help you and other residents in the area to set one up. Associations usually meet regularly to discuss issues and may also hold community events.

### Surveys and satisfaction cards

We often survey our customers on a range of specific issues. Please send us your views to help us shape our services to meet your needs. When we carry out a repair or an improvement to your home, we send out satisfaction forms for you to assess the service you received.

### Seminars and consultations

To develop services we often have special events where we consult customers to get their views on specific issues. These events are always advertised in 'Open Door', and we can often help with transport and other costs.

### Yearly event

To celebrate the achievements of our customers and to encourage residents to get involved, we also hold a tenants' and residents' festival each year. Please come along to one.

### Informal chats

You can contact a member of staff, or a resident involvement officer, who will be happy to discuss your concerns and suggestions, or advise you on ways in which you can get involved.

### How would you like to be involved?

If you want to get involved or give your views in a different way that is not listed above, please let us know. It is important to us that you can get involved at a level that suits you!

### Skills and knowledge

Don't worry if you think you don't have the right skills to get involved. You don't need any previous experience in housing. Your skills and knowledge will build with your involvement and you will be fully supported by staff and the training we offer.

If you would like to know more about getting involved or if you want to let us know how you would like to be involved at a level that suits you, please phone us on 01223 458323 or 458325 or e-mail [yourhomeyoursay@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:yourhomeyoursay@cambridge.gov.uk).

## Useful Information

Here are a number of tips, which we recommend you follow.

### Frost

In cold weather, try to keep your home reasonably warm (day and night). If you are going away and leaving your home empty, even for a few days, turn off the water at the stopcock and drain all water out of the system by turning on all the taps and flushing the toilet. Make sure that all water has stopped running before you leave home. Or, you could leave your heating on low. This will help to prevent damage caused by pipes freezing.

### Condensation

Every property gets condensation at some time, especially when the weather is cold or when lots of moisture and steam are being produced (for example, when cooking).

### To reduce condensation and prevent mould, try the following.

- Keep your home reasonably warm most of the time.
- Do not use liquid-propane gas

heaters.

- Provide ventilation by keeping some of the windows open. In winter, open windows a little but only for as long as they are misted up.
- Whenever possible, dry your clothes outside.
- Keep bathroom and kitchen doors shut and keep windows open, especially when cooking, washing or bathing.
- When cooking, do not allow pans or kettles to boil any longer than you need.
- Avoid putting beds and wardrobes against outside walls.

### Electricians in the home

You are responsible for making sure that the electricians in your property meet **NIC/IEE regulations. Any electrical work must be carried out by a qualified electrician.**

It is important to remember to take enough precautions when using electricity.

- Do not touch electrical items with wet hands, and always report to us water leaks that come into contact with electrical supplies.
- You should regularly check flexible cables to appliances to make sure they do not become frayed and damaged and to check there are no loose or bare wires.

### What if I have problems or

### loss of power to my sockets or lights?

#### Check:

- whether the problem affects more than one room;
- whether, at the time of the power cut, a particular appliance is being used (for example, a kettle or an iron);
- the fuse in the plug to the appliance (to make sure your appliances contain the correct type of fuse, details of which should be in the leaflet provided by the manufacturer); and
- if the fuse has blown in the consumer unit (fuse box).

### To replace the fuse, you should:

- switch off the electricity at the fuse box;
- unplug the appliance from the source of the supply;
- check the fuse;
- replace the fuse wire or cartridge fuse with the correct-sized fuse.

### If you have no power at all, you should check to see if:

- your prepayment (card) meter has run out of credit; and
- the power is off in the neighbourhood. (If so, you should contact your electricity supplier.)

### What happens if I have problems with my water services?

- Make sure you know where to turn off your water supply at the mains, and turn the water off immediately if you have a burst pipe.

### How can I make savings and be more 'energy efficient'?

To help you save money and to help the environment, it is important that you try to save energy. Here are some ways in which you can make savings at either no cost or a low cost.

- Use energy-efficient light bulbs.
- Don't waste hot water. Use a plug in your basin or sink.
- Have a shower rather than a bath, as they use less hot water.
- When using the kettle, only boil as much water as you need.
- Defrost your fridge and freezer regularly to keep them working efficiently. Don't put hot food straight into the fridge or leave your fridge door open longer than necessary. To reduce running costs, place empty boxes inside to keep cold air in.
- If you have a hot-water thermostat, set it at 60°C.
- Turn down your central-heating thermostat by just 1°C.
- Close your curtains at dusk to stop heat escaping and open them during the day to allow warm air in.

- Wait until you have a full load to use your washing machine.
- Turn off any lights you do not need.
- To get the most heat from your radiators, fit radiator panels behind them (you do not have to remove your radiators to do this).
- When you are not using your TV, video or music system, switch them off rather than leaving them on stand-by.

### **If you smell gas**

- Open doors and windows to get rid of the gas.
- Check to see if the gas has been left on unlit or if a pilot light has gone out on the boiler.
- Turn off the gas at the meter.
- Don't use anything electrical, such as doorbells, switches or even your phone.
- Don't smoke or light a flame.
- Call National Grid on 0800 111 999 from a phone outside your home.

### **Door-entry systems**

We put in door-entry systems to control who comes into buildings with shared entrances.

### **To keep your building safe:**

- make sure that the door always locks behind you;
- never leave the entrance door open or propped open;
- try not to allow other people to follow you into the block even if they appear genuine (they should

press the button for the flat they are visiting); and

- report any faults to us immediately.

### **When someone calls at your door**

- If you have a door viewer, check to see who it is before opening the door.
- If you have a door chain, keep it on when you open the door.
- If you do not know the caller, ask to see their identity card and check it carefully.
- If you are not sure about the person, ask them to stay outside while you phone the organisation they claim to be from so you can check who they are.
- Phone us if it is a contractor who has come to carry out some repair work.

### **Security checklist**

- Be careful not to open your front door to anyone you do not know, and always ask to see the identity cards of our staff. If you are in doubt, contact us to check whether the person is genuine.
- Do not leave cash or valuables around your home.
- Mark valuable items with your postcode and house number, or keep a note of serial numbers.
- When you go out in the evening, draw the curtains and leave a light on in a room (not just the hall).
- When you go away, fit a timer device to a living-room lamp to

make the house look as if someone is in. Tell the police and your housing officer if you are going away for a long time, and don't forget to cancel your newspapers and milk.

- Arrange with a neighbour to keep an eye on each other's houses.
- If you fit extra door locks, make sure that they can be opened easily from inside in case you need to get out in an emergency.
- When you go out, check that all windows and doors are closed.
- Do not leave your keys or any money where a stranger might find them, or see them or reach them through the letter box.
- Keep your shed locked - a thief might use tools from your shed to break into your home.

## Contact telephone numbers

### Cambridge City Council

Main council switchboard 01223 457000

Leasehold Services 01223 457835

Housing repairs - North Freephone 0800 731 4876

Housing repairs – South Freephone 0800 731 4878

Home Aid – 01223 457945

Housing Advice Centre (Housing Aid) 01223 457918

Resident involvement: 01223 458325

Council tax 01223 457 790

Citizens advice bureau – 01223 222 660

Environmental health – 01223 457 890

Street Scene (refuse collection) 01223 458282

### Other organisations

Cambridge Law Centre: 01223 712 222

Age Concern: 0800 288 9488

Gas Emergency Services: 0800 111 999

Water (supplies and problems): 0800 330033

Police: 0845 456 4564

Victim Support: 0845 30 30 900

Local Government Ombudsman: 024 7682 0000

Leaseholder Valuation Tribunal 0845 100 2614

Leaflets can be made available in large print and in some other languages, including the ones listed below. If you need an interpreter or would like this document translated for free, please phone the number below.

Если Вам требуется эта информация на русском языке, звоните по номеру телефона, указанному ниже.

Jeżeli chciałbyś otrzymać te informacje po polsku, zadzwoń pod numer telefonu podany poniżej.

若您需要本信息的简体中文版本，请拨打以下电话号码。

Bu bilginin Türkçesi için lütfen aşağıdaki telefon numarasını arayınız.

এই তথ্য আপনি বাংলায় পেতে চাইলে, দয়া করে নিম্নোক্ত নম্বরে ফোন করুন।

**01223 457835**

If you have any questions or concerns about housing services in Cambridge, please contact our staff using the contact information in this leaflet.

Cambridge City Council website:  
[www.cambridge.gov.uk](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk)



# Leaseholders' Handbook



**Cambridge City Council**  
**Advice and information**  
**for Leaseholders**

