

Tenants' Handbook







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The beginning of your tenancy

When you move in

After the previous tenant has moved out and before you move into your home we will carry out general repairs and maintenance to make sure that it meets our lettable standard. The amount of work that we have to do depends on the condition of the property when it is handed back to us. We do not include any white goods (fridges, cookers, washing machines etc.) or soft furnishings with our properties, so it will be down to you to supply and maintain them. There are specific loan schemes and charities that offer help to those who are on a low income or may struggle financially to purchase these items.

It is important to move in to your new home within 14 days of the start of your tenancy. If not, we may think that you do not need it or have abandoned the property.

Also, if you are eligible for housing costs you will not be entitled to it when you are not living in the property.

We want you to be happy and comfortable in your new home. You can decorate and personalise it to make it your own, but you cannot make any changes to the structure, fixtures or fittings without getting our written permission first.

Shared areas

If you live in a property where you share doors, stairs, gardens or any areas with other people, then this is part of your home. It is your responsibility, along with the other tenants living there, to keep these communal areas secure, clean and tidy. Please do not let anyone into the flat block that you do not know, or is not there on official business such a postal worker, as this keeps you and your neighbours safe. Please also note all our internal communal spaces are no smoking areas, as required by law.

Visiting you after your tenancy begins

Within the first six weeks of your tenancy starting your tenancy officer will visit you at home. They will check:

- 
- ✓ you have settled in and are not having any difficulties
 - ✓ all repairs we agreed when you accepted the tenancy have been carried out
 - ✓ no further repairs are needed
 - ✓ you understand the conditions of your tenancy
 - ✓ you don't have any problems paying your rent

Costs of running a home

There are quite a lot of expenses associated with running a home, which you are responsible for, including:



Insurance

There are two types of household insurance policies:

- **buildings insurance** to protect against damage to the structure of your home together with its fixtures and fittings
- **home contents insurance** that protects you against damage or loss of your possessions

We recommend **that you arrange your own home contents insurance**. You need to make sure you have enough cover for your possessions.

Luton Council does not insure your furniture, belongings or decorations against theft, fire, vandalism and burst pipes. You need to take out your own household insurance with this special scheme through Aviva or by making your own arrangements.

By arrangement with Aviva, we are able to offer a scheme that provides insurance cover for our tenants at a competitive rate, which you pay for with your rent. If you are on Housing Benefit or Universal Credit this charge will have to be paid separately.

If you wish to apply for the insurance scheme please contact the Housing Commercial team on 01582 547346 or email RighttoBuyEnquiries@luton.gov.uk and ask for our booklet on home contents insurance. We cannot accept any tenants onto the scheme that are in rent arrears. If you fall into rent arrears and are on the scheme then your policy will be cancelled.

The scheme is open to all tenants and leaseholders of Luton Council*. We cannot guarantee that this scheme provides the cheapest insurance cover available or that it provides the widest cover. You are recommended to seek alternative quotations

*Subject to satisfactory application form

Your tenancy

When you signed your tenancy agreement, you made a legally binding contract with us to keep to the terms and accepted the responsibilities of the agreement.

To meet your responsibilities we will expect you to:

- pay the rent
- look after your home
- behave appropriately
- be a responsible householder



The rest of this section explains your tenancy agreement in more detail.

The main parts of your tenancy agreement

Different agreements give you different rights. This part of the handbook highlights the main parts of your tenancy agreement and how they affects you. You need to ensure you are aware of what agreement you have and see what applies to you. If you are unsure, then you should contact your tenancy officer who will confirm what your agreement says.

Antisocial behaviour, domestic abuse and harassment

There are clauses in your tenancy agreement which commit you to not taking part in antisocial behaviour, including domestic abuse and harassment. This is explained in more detail further in the handbook.

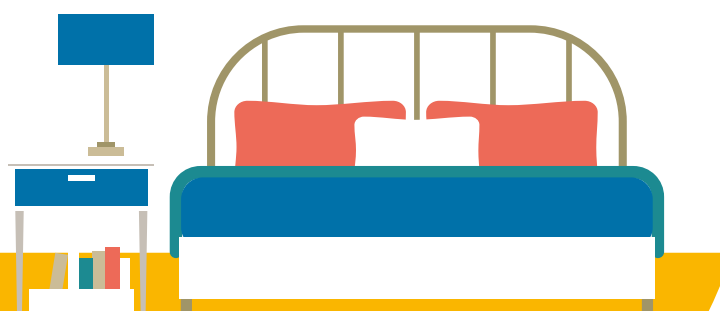
Bedroom eligibility

A separate bedroom will be allocated to a household for the following:

- single or joint applicants
- a couple
- an adult where that adult has no same sex sibling with whom they can share
- two children of the same sex (regardless of age)
- two children of opposite sex where both are under 10 years
- child aged 10 years or over where the child has no same-sex sibling with whom s/he could share.

Overriding medical and welfare factors will be taken into account when determining any additional bedroom requirement. Guidance will be sought from a medical practitioner or involved professionals.

Eligibility will also be dependant on whether the property can accommodate a household size, for instance properties with very small bedrooms may not accommodate larger households.



Sheltered housing

What is Sheltered Housing and what is its purpose?

The aim of our Sheltered Housing schemes is to promote independent living, to provide a safe, secure environment and an environment, which promotes inclusion for all.

It is also an environment, which provides the offer of guidance and support via one of our sheltered housing officers where necessary.

The most important thing to understand is that Sheltered Housing is not a care home – it is all about having your own home and you having the power to be as independent as possible.

What we offer

Luton Council offers 22 Sheltered Housing schemes across the borough, which includes two extra care schemes, offering a variety of easy to manage properties for older persons.

Our common features include:

- your own home
- access to a sheltered housing officer for advice and tenancy related support
- 24 hour emergency alarm and response service connected to every property and communal areas
- secure door entry system connected to every internal property
- shared communal areas including common rooms, activity rooms, kitchens, laundry and garden areas

Features and activities within our Sheltered Housing schemes can and do vary slightly from scheme to scheme.



What is extra care Sheltered Housing?

We have two extra care sheltered schemes, Colwell Court and Abigail Court.

These schemes are typically provided for people with more complex support needs and do have the added support of carers operating onsite 24 hours a day although these carers will not serve all tenants.

The facilities onsite at our extra care schemes remain the same as all other Sheltered Housing schemes.

The process of application for an extra care sheltered housing property does differ from an application for a general sheltered housing property.

Contact us - general enquiries regarding sheltered housing in Luton

If you have any general enquiries about sheltered housing in Luton then please use the contact details provided below.

Email: shelteredhousing2@luton.gov.uk

Area north: 01582 571298

Area south: 01582 734653

Appello Lifeline (24 hour and Out of Hours phone number – 15.30 to 9.00am); 0333 321 6451



What is a good tenant?

A good tenant

- pays their rent on time
- uses the property as their main home
- keeps the council up to date on who is living in their home
- does not overcrowd their home
- keeps their home clean and well decorated
- makes sure their home is well ventilated
- keeps their garden neat and tidy
- disposes of their rubbish correctly
- reports repairs quickly to the council
- gives the council access for gas and electrical safety checks, repairs and inspections
- looks after any pets they have permission to keep in a responsible way
- will not cause damage to their home or communal areas
- will not carry out any alterations to the structure or fixtures and fittings in their home without asking for permission first
- protects their home from damage caused by smoking
- will ensure that they, their visitors or anyone living with them do not cause a nuisance or harass neighbours
- will give at least four weeks' notice in writing if they decide to end their tenancy
- does not sub-let their home



A good council landlord

- allows you to stay in your home unless you have broken the conditions of your tenancy
- makes sure certain types of repairs are carried out within a reasonable time
- provides you with information about your tenancy
- consults you about any possible substantial change to the housing services or tenancy agreement
- helps you if you need help with any part of your tenancy

You can expect council staff to:

- be polite and attentive
- carry official identity cards displaying their names and photographs
- be sensitive to your needs and honest about how they can help
- be well informed and trained in their duties
- carry out their work fairly and without discrimination



Keeping pets and animals



We do allow tenants to keep pets, however this is within reason and subject to the below tenancy clauses:

- you must not keep illegal animals
- you must look after your pets, keep them under control and ensure they do not cause noise or other nuisance to others by their behaviour
- you must not use the premises for the purposes of breeding animals of any kind
- you must ensure that your pets do not foul shared areas, any part of the estate or any other public area. If they do you must clean up after them
- if any animal on your premises causes harm or nuisance to other people or causes damage to property, we will require you to remove it permanently from your home

Transferring your tenancy (assignment), lodgers and subletting

You are not allowed to assign your tenancy (transfer your tenancy rights to another person), without our written permission or the permission of a court.

Some tenancies forbid lodgers so you will need to check what your agreement says. Before taking in a lodger you must let us know.

! You must not sublet (rent out) your home. This is a criminal offence and is likely to result in you losing your home. You may also end up with a criminal conviction. !

Using the premises

You must live in the property as your only or main (principle) home and you must not allow any illegal activities to take place in it or from it.

You must get our written permission if you wish to run a business from your property.



Your rent

Rent

You must pay your rent weekly in full and in advance. It is very important to do this, and we will take failure to pay your rent very seriously.

This is explained in more detail, further on in the handbook.

Your rent explained

The rent covers:

- the cost of providing the building
- the cost of maintaining the property
- our management costs
- charges (where applicable)



It is very important that you pay your rent. If you do not you could lose your home, and would struggle to be rehoused by another local authority or housing association.

There is more information about managing your rent further on in this section.

Some properties have a service charge for services provided to your home and not charged for in your rent. These may be things like:

- communal heating
- lighting and cleaning communal areas
- landscape maintenance
- All service charges are detailed on your tenancy agreement.



How to pay your rent

If for any reason you think you will have difficulty in paying your rent, please contact us as soon as possible so we can offer you advice and assistance.

If you miss a payment, your account will be in arrears and we will act in accordance with our Rent Arrears policy.

Below is a list of ways in which you can make payments.

Direct Debit – please contact our rents department and ask for a direct debit form if you do not already have one. Please phone 01582 547982/547983.

Post Office or Pay Point outlets – we will issue a rent payment card on request to let you pay at any post office or outlet showing “Pay Point” signs. Payments will normally take 3 days to reach your account.

Internet banking – if you bank online, you can set up either a standing order or a one off payment. Please quote your 10-digit reference number when making the payment. Please ask your Tenancy or Income Officer for this reference number, if you do not know it.

Our bank details are as follows:

Account name: Luton Borough Council

Sort code: 30-66-76

Bank account number: 17256862



Debit/credit card – you can pay your rent by debit or credit card via www.luton.gov.uk/payit

Please note that if you do not pay your rent this can lead to you being evicted from your home

Universal credit and housing benefit

Universal Credit has replaced a range of benefits:

- Income based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
- Income related employment and support allowance (ESA)
- Income Support
- Child Tax Credit
- Working Tax Credit
- Housing Benefit (housing element for those of working age)



Universal Credit is administered by the [Department for Works and Pensions](http://www.gov.uk/universal-credit). You can claim Universal Credit on www.gov.uk/universal-credit. Universal Credit is a payment to help with your living costs, which is paid monthly directly to you. You may be able to get it if you are on a low income, unemployed or you cannot work.

Please be informed that Universal Credit account is self-managed and it is your responsibility to notify Universal Credit of any changes to your circumstances.

You will need to claim [Housing Benefit](#) from us for help with your rent if you:

- live in temporary or supported accommodation
- are old enough to get State Pension Credit

Remember it is your responsibility to ensure your rent is paid, if you receive either Universal Credit or Housing Benefit.



Repairs and tenants' responsibilities

You have a responsibility to keep your home in good condition by:

- keeping it clean and tidy and well decorated both inside and outside
- keeping the garden and dividing fences, walls and hedges in good condition
- putting your rubbish out regularly and securely, on the day of the bin collection
- parking considerately
- repairing at your own cost, any damage caused by you, your family or visitors
- reporting all repairs promptly
- only making alterations with our permission



Your responsibilities

You are responsible for repairing any fixtures and fittings that you install. There are also some minor repairs and problems that are your responsibility.

These include (but may not be limited to):

blocked drains and toilets 	replace lost keys 	damage caused by your own appliances (such as a washing machine) 	replacing tap washers, toilet seats, fuses, bath and sink plugs, and light bulbs 	fixing loose or broken door handles on inside doors 	replacing damaged internal doors 
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For further information regarding repairs, and your responsibilities, please refer to our repairs handbook at <https://m.luton.gov.uk/Page/Show/Housing/Information%20for%20council%20tenants/Pages/Repairs-and-servicing.aspx#report>

Areas outside of your home

We always aim to make sure that the shared areas of your home and any gardens that we are responsible for are maintained to a high standard. We want your home to be a nice place to live.

How do I know if I should be receiving this service?

Many of our tenants who live in flats or communal block receive a cleaning or gardening service (or both) from us. If you are entitled to receive this service, you will already be paying a service charge for this on top of your weekly rent.

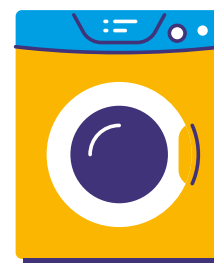


Abandoned vehicles

Suspected abandoned vehicles can be reported via the Love Clean Street App and the website (<https://m.luton.gov.uk/Page/Show/Environment/Pages/manage-your-environmental-reports-online.aspx>) if you wish to enquire further you can email abandoned.vehicles@luton.gov.uk or contact them on **01582 510333**.

Bulky refuse

If you have any large items of furniture or domestic appliances (for example beds, fridges or wardrobes) that you want to get rid of, you should contact our customer service centre on **01582 510333**, or complete the online form at https://myforms.luton.gov.uk/service/Bulky_item_collection?noLoginPrompt=1 which will arrange collection of the items at a small cost. Please do not use shared areas for storing personal items. We may remove or dispose of any personal belongings stored in shared areas.



Estate and flat block inspections

The Concierge and Inspections team will carry out routine estate inspections, including communal blocks, gardens and garage sites. These help to:

- identify repairs that need to be done in shared areas
- make sure there are no health and safety issues
- generally make sure that the area is being looked after and cleaned to a satisfactory standard



If however, you have any issues that you feel require urgent attention, please report these directly to your area's concierge and inspections officer by sending an email to conciergeandinspectionsteam@luton.gov.uk or by calling **01582 547304**.

Garages

We have a number of garages that are available for letting to both our tenants and non-residents. Please be aware that we do have waiting lists for all our garage sites.

To apply for a garage please go to <https://m.luton.gov.uk/Page/Show/Housing/Information%20for%20council%20tenants/Pages/Renting%20a%20garage.aspx>.

For any queries related to garages please contact housing commercial team on **01582 546960** or email RighttoBuyEnquiries@luton.gov.uk.

Graffiti

We will remove offensive or obscene graffiti within 24 hours of being told about it and 7 days for all other graffiti. You can report graffiti by contacting the customer service centre on **01582 510330**.

Parking

If your property does not have its own driveway, and you own a vehicle, which you park in a bay we have provided, you must make sure it is roadworthy, properly taxed, licensed and insured.

You must not park commercial vehicles, caravans, boats and trailers on any of our properties.

You must also not:

- park in places that are not authorised spaces or on the grass
- block roadways, access areas, garages, footpaths or cause any other obstruction
- attempt to "reserve" or block parking spaces
- park in spaces that are reserved for people who are disabled unless you have a disability

Action may be taken against tenants who continually park inconsiderately on council land.

Please note that some of our car parks are covered by a parking scheme. Where this is the case, please ensure that you comply with the terms of the scheme or you could be subject to parking enforcement.



Antisocial behaviour and domestic abuse

When you signed your tenancy, you agreed that you, members of your household and/or visitors and guests would behave in a responsible way and respect other tenants and residents in your local area.

We will consider action if you or members of your household, visitors or guests do not behave appropriately i.e. cause nuisance, act in an antisocial manner or are involved in criminal activity.

Unacceptable behaviour includes:

- harassment/nuisance towards other residents
- drug dealing
- dumping rubbish
- shouting, swearing, offensive gestures, etc.
- creating excessive noise
- using parking areas for non-authorized use
- allowing pets to be a nuisance
- criminal activity in the vicinity
- domestic abuse
- abuse towards staff or contractors
- any other behaviour that causes or is likely to cause nuisance or annoyance



We want to prevent unacceptable behaviour, nuisance, anti-social behaviour and/or criminal behaviour. If you feel that you are suffering as a result of this type of behaviour you should report it to your tenancy officer or antisocial behaviour officer and we will work with you, and if appropriate, other agencies to resolve the problem. If appropriate, you should always report issues to the police either on 101 or in the case of an emergency 999. It is important to note that noise nuisance is dealt with initially by the Environmental Protection Team and this can be reported by dialling **01582 510330**.

There are not always instant solutions but we do have a procedure for dealing with situations as they happen. It is also important to note that any legal action we take against your tenancy is civil.

Once we have been informed of an issue there are a number of different approaches we may take and these could involve your and other agencies. Any safeguarding concerns for either an adult or children will be reported through to social services and the police if appropriate. Some of the tools we have to assist are listed below. This list is not exhaustive but the relevant allocated officer should keep you updated on any action they are proposing to take:

- mediation
- acceptable behaviour contracts (ABC's)
- antisocial behaviour injunctions
- notices of seeking possession
- possession action to evict the tenant
- closure orders
- community protection notices (CPN's)



It is important to note that each case is different and in some cases we may consider supportive solutions rather than enforcement. If you require any further information on any of the above please do not hesitate to contact your tenancy officer.

Who do I contact?

From time to time, issues may arise and you may not be able to speak to someone from the council about it, please use the emails below to contact the team you require and we will respond back to you within five working days.

Below is a list of useful contacts, showing you which department you should contact for each issue.

Tenancy Services – **01582 547304** or email HousingOfficers@luton.gov.uk

Mutual Exchanges – **01582 546528/546228** or email BusinessSupport@luton.gov.uk

Street Cleansing – **01582 510333** or can be reported via the Love Clean Street App and the website (<https://m.luton.gov.uk/Page/Show/Environment/Pages/manage-your-environmental-reports-online.aspx>)

Housing Repairs (BTS) – **0800 014 7333** or email Housing.Repairs@luton.gov.uk

Pay My Rent: **01582 546620** or email HousingRent@luton.gov.uk

Allocations – **01582 546646** or email Housing.Allocations@luton.gov.uk

Right to buy – **01582 547346** or email RighttoBuyEnquiries@luton.gov.uk

Customer Services – **01582 546000**

You can also report issues relating to repairs and street cleansing online at <https://m.luton.gov.uk/Page/Show/Pages/Report-it.aspx>



Reporting housing related issues

Is this issue regarding ASB against you or a member of your household?

Contact housing support on **01582 547304** or send email to HousingOfficers@luton.gov.uk

Is this an issue about repairs? Contact BTS directly on **0800 014 7333** or send email to Housing.Repairs@luton.gov.uk

Is your issue about litter or fly-tipping? Contact street services on **01582 510333** or report via the Love Clean Street App and the website (<https://m.luton.gov.uk/Page/Show/Environment/Pages/manage-your-environmental-reports-online.aspx>)

Is your issue related to your tenancy and/or property contact business support on 01582 546528/546228 or send email to BusinessSupport@luton.gov.uk

Contact customer services on **01582 546000** for any other issues.



Exchanges and ending your tenancy

If for any reason, you wish to move property, or find that your property is no longer suited to your needs, then you may wish to consider the following:

Mutual exchange (house swap) - when two or more tenants, housing association or local authority, swap homes by legally assigning their tenancies to each other.

Transfer – when you move to another council property.

Each transfer request is dealt with on an individual basis. Please contact your tenancy officer if you are considering either of these options.



Ending your tenancy

To end your tenancy you need to:

- give four weeks' notice, by signed letter
- allow access for a property inspection before your tenancy ends. We will tell you if you need to do any repairs or reinstate alterations, before you move out
- repair any damage you are responsible for – please note that you will be recharged for any repairs that are considered to be your responsibility
- remove all your belongings and rubbish from the property and garden, removing sheds, greenhouses and filling ponds, making sure that any fish are rehomed
- ensure your rent account is up to date
- inform the Council Tax office and Housing Benefit/Universal Credit office that you are moving
- arrange to return all the keys and sign a disclaimer, to confirm you have left the property

When Luton Council may end your tenancy

The Housing Act 1985 and the Housing Act 1996 detail the situations when a secure or introductory assured tenancy may be terminated.

The main reasons are:

- not paying your rent
- breaking the conditions of your tenancy
- causing damage to the property
- being involved in antisocial behaviour
- death of the tenant
- not living in your home



If we want to end your tenancy we will serve a notice to quit (NTQ) or notice of seeking possession (NOSP). If you do not leave we will apply to the County Court for a possession order. It is important that you contact your tenancy officer as soon as you receive either of these notices.

Some Luton residents have found it quicker and more affordable to get their own housing by moving to another council or housing association in another area.

You can do this via [Homefinder](#)

How to get involved

We welcome and encourage tenants to get involved in the way we work, in managing their homes and the neighbourhood where they live. There are many ways and opportunities for you to have your say and influence decisions that are taken.

Some of the ways you can get involved include:

- joining a Tenants' and Residents' Association (TARA) - or helping to set one up
- joining our group of Key Customers, to partake in discussions or consultation
- attending walkabouts around your community
- emailing us with your ideas at TenantParticipationTeam@luton.gov.uk or scanning the QR code
- visiting our website from time to time, to learn about the different activities that will be happening at www.luton.gov.uk/tp
- completing phone and postal surveys and/or questionnaires
- contacting us for any exciting functions you wish for us to partake in.



Tenant Participation Team
Housing Operations
Town Hall Extension
George Street
Luton
LU1 2BQ

Phone: +44 07850 974893 / 07803 814326

Email: TenantParticipationTeam@luton.gov.uk

Website: www.luton.gov.uk/tp

