Cheshire West & Chester Council

Council Housing Management Service

Welcome to your new Home



Cheshire West and Chester

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Welcome

Welcome to your new home with Cheshire West and Chester Council. We put tenants at the heart of everything we do, our aim is to provide one of the best social housing services in the Country.

The Together with Tenants Charter guides how we work with you making sure we communicate clearly, take responsibility when thing go wrong, maintain your home to a high standard and involve you in shaping the services you receive.

We want you to feel supported and informed from day one and we are here to help you settle into your home and your community.

Ways to contact us

Download **our app** which is the mobile MyTenancy+App that helps you manage your tenancy with ease. It's the fastest way for you to contact us, the easiest way to manage your rent account, track home repairs, and more. It's safe and secure and gives you access to your account while on the go. To download the app, go to the App Store or Play Store on your mobile device.

Have your tenancy reference number handy to register your account.

By writing: Cheshire West and Chester Council, Council Housing Management Service, The Portal, Wellington Road, Ellesmere Port, CH65 0BZ. Phone: 0300 123 7724.

Online website forms- you can contact us via our web forms on the housing website of Cheshire West and Chester Council.

Outside of office hours always call 0300 123 7724 to be connected to the out of hours service.

Moving in

You can move in as soon as you have received the keys to your home and have signed the tenancy agreement. Our Lettable Standard is our promise to give you a good quality home that you feel safe in, is clean, comfortable and in a good state of repair.

To ensure that you move into your home smoothly, we recommend that you inform service providers of your new address.

Who do I need to let know that I have moved home? Universal Credit

- Housing Benefit
- Council Tax United
- Utilities (Water) TV licence
- GP/dentist/schools - register with local services if have moved area.

- Insurance providers - purchasing home contents insurance is advisable.
- Banks
- Gas and Electric suppliers
- Broadband/telephone suppliers

How do I arrange my gas safety check when I move in?

It is important that you register with a gas and electric supplier and once this has been sorted, ask us for a 'new tenant gas safety turn on and test' to be carried out.

We will require 24 working hours' notice for a turn on and test and 48 hours' notice if a boiler requires reconnecting (some of our boilers are removed when properties become empty for safety).

Before we undertake the gas turn on and test, you need to

Register as new customers with energy suppliers before this date.

Give energy suppliers meter readings.

Pay as you go meters must have been topped up by £5 on each meter before the day of the turn on and test.

Settling into your home

During your sign up, we will inform you of any additional repairs/improvement work to be undertaken and provide you with approximate timescales.

If you do identify any other repairs within the interim period of the first two weeks, please contact our Repairs and Voids Inspectors and the team will arrange a visit or arrange the repairs so you can settle in comfortably during your settling in period.

After the **interim period** of two weeks any repairs required will need to be reported in line with the Responsive Repairs policy.

Decorations

Your home will have been decorated by the former tenant. The Lettable Standard informs that we will leave all walls and ceilings clean and free from graffiti with no major cracks so anything decorative is your own responsibility.

When carrying out your own redecoration, please be mindful of the plasterwork as we will not be aware of the condition of the walls under the existing wall coverings. When stripping off the existing wall coverings, take your time and do one room at a time, rather than all the rooms at once.

If you identify any major cracks and plastering work is required, an inspection will need to be carried out to assess the work. Any plastering work that has been approved will be raised and planned in with our day-to-day maintenance team.

Home Contents Insurance

We know your home and everything in it is important to you. So, when the unexpected happens, it's important that your belongings are covered for loss or damage. As a landlord, it is our responsibility to insure the building, but it's your job to look after your furniture, electronic devices, and anything else that could be damaged in an event such as a fire, flood, or burglary. Please contact us for further information on contents insurance.

Rent

Paying your rent is the most important outgoing you will have. Our Rent section provides you with the different ways to pay and shows how we can support you if you're struggling.

How much is my weekly rent?

The weekly rent you pay at the start of your tenancy can be found on the front cover of your tenancy agreement.

Your rent is charged weekly and **must be paid in advance.** You can choose how often you pay, for example, every week, every fortnight or every month. Whatever payment option you choose, you must make sure your rent is paid in advance.

Who must pay the rent?

The tenant(s) of the home must make sure that the rent is paid. If the tenancy is in two or more names, everybody on the tenancy agreement is responsible and must make sure the rent is paid on time. This is a condition of your Tenancy Agreement.

What are 'non rent' weeks?

We only charge rent over 50 weeks of the year, there are two 'non rent' weeks which are weeks 1 (1st week in April) and week 38 (around Christmas in December).

If you pay your rent monthly, you will pay the 50 weeks split over 12 months.

If you have rent arrears and you have arranged to pay them off, you should continue payments in the 'non rent' weeks. Remember, everything you pay in the 'non rent' weeks will reduce your arrears.

Changes to rent

We look at rent each year to see if it should go up or stay the same. Rent increases are worked out using the rate of inflation (which is provided by the Government) and takes effect from the first Monday in April. We try to keep increases as low as possible and look what is reasonable for all the costs incurred to manage and maintain your home. You will be advised of the rent increases at least one month before the change is made.

If you are in receipt of Universal Credit, you'll need to report this change on your Universal Credit account. Please ensure you do this on the date your rent changes from as you cannot report your change in advance and the change in your award may not be backdated if reported late.

If you are in receipt of Housing Benefit, we will tell them of your change in rent. We advise you to check your award letters from Housing Benefit, once received, to confirm that they have considered your new rent. If they have not, you will need to let them know of your rent change.

How and where to pay?

Direct Debit – The easiest way to pay your rent and other regular payments is by setting up a Direct Debit. We can arrange for your bank to make weekly, fortnightly, 4 weekly, or monthly payments. Just choose a regular payment day and we'll automatically collect your payment from your bank account call on 0300 123 7724 to set up a direct debit today.

MyTenancy+App - Our mobile app helps you manage your tenancy with ease.

Online – You can pay using your debit or credit card on a secure internet payment facility at any time. Visit www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk and follow the links for 'Pay It'.

Phone – To pay over the phone by debit or credit card, call the Council automated telephone payment system on 0300 123 70 29 available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Please remember you will need to quote your Tenancy Reference Number.

PayPoint – You can use Payment Card or barcode wherever you see the PayPoint logo at many local shops. Please note payments may take 3 working days to reach your account. A list of outlets can be found on www.paypoint.co.uk

Post Office – Pay by cash, cheque or debit card at any Post Office using your Payment Card or barcode. Payments may take 3 working days to reach your account. Please make cheques payable to 'Post Office Ltd' and write your Account Number on the back.

Please think carefully about paying with a credit card as additional costs may be incurred.

What is Universal Credit (UC) and how can I apply?

You may be able to get Universal Credit if you:

- Have a low income
- Are out of work
- Are working but do not earn enough to cover your living costs
- Cannot work because of an illness or disability
- Need help paying your rent or other housing costs

UC is a benefit which is usually a single monthly payment and paid in arrears. Your benefit will be paid to you or your landlord (if you are vulnerable). You can usually claim UC if you are aged 18 to State Pension age.

To apply for this benefit, you must apply online at www.universal-credit.service.gov.uk/start and provide the requested information on time to support your claim. Backdating of this benefit is limited.

If you are currently in receipt of Universal Credit, you need to report your change of address and this is best done through your online account. If you are unable to report your change on your online account, you can contact them on 0800 328 5644 Monday to Friday 8am to 6pm. You can also contact your local Job Centre for advice and support.

What is Housing Benefit (HB) and how I can apply?

Most people cannot make a new claim for Housing Benefit. Instead, they will need to claim Universal Credit for help with their rent.

You can only make a new Housing Benefit claim if:

- You live in temporary or supported accommodation
- You have reached State Pension age. (If you are part of a couple, both members of the couple must have reached State Pension age)
- You already receive Housing Benefit and have moved to another address within the Cheshire West and Chester Council area. If you have moved into Cheshire West and Chester from another council area, you will usually need to claim Universal Credit instead.

If you think you are entitled to Housing Benefit or need to change your address, do not delay completing the form online at www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk. You will need to provide the requested information on time to support your claim. Backdating of this benefit is limited.

If you are not currently in receipt of the above benefits but think you might be entitled, please contact our team on 0300 123 7724 who will support you with a benefit check and how to make a claim, alternatively you can check yourself on websites such as cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk, entitledto.co.uk or www.turn2us.org.uk. You will also need to let us know if you start to receive either of these benefits.

It is your responsibility to make sure your rent is paid on time, regardless of the payment method you use. This includes Direct Debit, standing order, online payments, phone payments or any other method. You should regularly check your bank account and rent account to ensure payments are being made correctly and that your account remains up to date. If you set up or change a payment method, you should check that it has been processed correctly and contact us if you have any concerns. You must also report any changes in your circumstances that may affect your rent or ability to pay.

Supporting You

We understand that everyone needs a helping hand from time to time. We can help with money and debt advice, budgeting advice, support to help you stay in your home, improve wellbeing, support to live independently, digital support and employment and volunteering support.

We also work with like-minded partners to ensure you can access the range of support services available locally.

Money Advice

If you are worried about money, struggling to pay your bills, or have debts, our Money Advice Team can provide free, confidential and impartial advice and support to:

- Manage your budget
- Deal with debts
- Maximise your income
- Check that you are receiving all the benefits you are entitled to
- Access other financial support and assistance

Wellbeing Support

Our Wellbeing Service helps you improve your daily life by offering social, emotional, and practical guidance designed around what matters to you. The service works with you to develop a support plan, giving you the tools to maintain good mental health, physical & financial wellbeing. A key focus of the service is to ensure that you can manage your home and live independently.

What happens if I have a problem paying my rent?

If you are having difficulties paying your rent, it is important that you contact us as soon as possible. Please do not ignore the situation, as it is unlikely to improve without support.

To find out more or speak to a member of the team, please contact us on **0300 123 7724**.

Tenancy Agreement

Your Tenancy Agreement is a contract between you and us as your landlord. Under the Housing Act 1985, most council tenants are secure tenants. This means you can keep your tenancy for as long as you live in the home provided it is your only or principal home, and you keep to the conditions of the Tenancy Agreement.

During your sign-up interview you will have signed your tenancy agreement. This is a formal, legal agreement between you and us as your landlord and sets out both parties rights and responsibilities. You will have been given a copy of your tenancy agreement, please read this document and keep it safe.

What is an Introductory tenancy?

An introductory tenancy runs for a 12-month trial period, which could be extended to 18 months in cases where the tenancy has not been conducted satisfactorily. If there are no problems during that time, an introductory tenancy automatically becomes a secure tenancy.

All new tenants are given an introductory tenancy unless they are:

- transferring from another council home and are already a secure council tenant OR

- an assured tenant transferring from a housing association.

If you do not keep to the terms of your introductory tenancy and we take court action, once the action has been started the judge has no power to adjourn your case or make an order to allow you to make payments off the arrears. A Possession Order will be secured, and you'll be given a date to move out.

What does it mean to be a secure tenant?

Signing a Secure Tenancy Agreement means you can keep your home for as long as you want, unless the court agrees that there is a legal reason to repossess the home.

The reasons for ending secure tenancies (grounds for possession) are laid down in law and include missing rent payments and neighbour nuisance. A summary of the grounds for possession can be found on pages 17-18 of your Tenancy Agreement.

Tenant's Rights

Legal Right	**Secure tenants**	**Introductory tenants**
Right to succession	Yes	Yes
Right to repair	Yes	Yes
Right to be consulted on housing management issues	Yes	Yes
Right to assign	Yes	No
Right to take in lodgers	Yes	No
Right to carry out improvements	Yes	No
Right to exchange	Yes	No

What is a joint tenancy?

Joint tenants are jointly and individually responsible under the Tenancy Agreement. You have equal rights and responsibilities and will be responsible for paying the whole rent (not just your share of it), for clearing any missed rent payments (again, not just your share) and for keeping to the tenancy conditions.

Who can take on your tenancy if you die?

The tenancy can be passed to a married partner, registered civil partner or another family member (non-married partner or a same sex couple living together as civil partners are included as family members) if they are able to meet the legal requirements. This is called 'succession'. Only one succession is allowed to a tenancy. The successor will have the same tenancy conditions you had.

There are some rules we must follow when someone wants to succeed to the tenancy. These are some of the most important:

- If you are a joint tenant, your surviving joint tenant will succeed to the tenancy and can stay in the same home.
- If you are a sole tenant, your married partner or registered civil partner can succeed to the tenancy and can stay in the same home.
- A non-married partner, same sex couple living together as civil partners, or another family member can succeed to the tenancy if they can prove that they have lived there for 12 months before the death of the tenant as their only or main home. They will however have to move if the home is larger than they reasonably need. If they refuse to move to smaller accommodation, we will take legal action to seek possession of the home and enforce the move.
- If there are two or more family members who can succeed, they must decide between themselves who will take over the tenancy. If they cannot agree, we will decide.

Can you pass your tenancy to someone else?

The conditions of tenancy allow you to transfer your secure tenancy to someone else. This is called an “assignment” You are only allowed to do this in following circumstances:

- If you wish to move to another home and find another tenant who is willing to swap. This is usually known as a mutual exchange. A move cannot take place without our written permission. Tenants can register with the HomeSwapper scheme to try to find suitable exchange partners. Your Housing Officer can provide you with more information.
- By a court order following a relationship breakdown or orders relating to children.
- With our written permission, you can transfer to someone who would succeed in the event of your death. We will not give permission where the assignment would result in under – occupation.

You can discuss any assignment request with your Housing Officer.

Repairs and Maintenance

Our Repairs and Maintenance section provides you with information on the repairs service and explains your rights & responsibilities. It also outlines our responsibilities in ensuring you are provided with a safe and well-maintained home.

What repairs am I responsible for?

You must take reasonable care of your home and report any repairs or faults to us straight away. You are responsible for repairs such as:

- Unblocking sinks
- Cupboard catches.
- Plugs and chains.
- Internal decorations
- Replacing bulbs
- Doorbells
- Lost keys

- Small cracks in plasterwork

If we carry out repairs or replacement because of damage to or neglect of your home, the costs may be charged to you, and we will keep you informed should these occasions arise. If you are not sure if a repair is your responsibility, please contact us to discuss it.

What are my rights?

You have the right to:

- Have your home maintained and repaired to an acceptable standard
- Carry out improvements to your home if you have our permission in writing
- Ask for a repair to be carried out by a second contractor if the first contractor fails under the 'right to repair regulations' for more information on this ask when you contact us.

How should I report a repair?

For the quickest, easiest way of reporting a repair visit our website. Our repairs reporter is a step-by-step tool to help you request the correct repair. We'll respond to you within 24 working hours to arrange an appointment date and time to suit you. You can also contact us via telephone on 0300 123 7724 to report your repair.

We work in partnership with contractors to deliver our repairs and maintenance services, we will keep you informed of who is calling so you can be on the lookout for the vans, uniform and identity cards.

There are three categories of repairs: Routine, Urgent and Emergency:

Routine repairs (Priority R)

We will carry out this type of repair within 20 working days of the order being placed. Examples include Repairing or replacing floor tiles and boards

- Broken wall tiles
- External boundary walls and fences but not dividing walls and fences
- Broken kitchen units
- Plastering to internal walls
- Broken door and window handles
- Repairs outside your home
- Broken or uneven flagging which we installed.
- Repairs to doors and windows

Urgent Repairs (Priority U)

We will carry out this type of repair within seven working days of the order being placed. This includes:

- Defective external door locks where you are still able to secure the home.
- Minor leaks not affecting the structure.
- Loss of hot water

- Partial loss of heating
- Faulty toilet
- Running overflow
- Urgent plastering work
- Minor repairs to windows and doors

Emergency repairs (Priority E)

We will be there within two hours to carry out the repair (or at least make it safe) and wherever possible, complete the repairs within 24 hours. Here are some examples of emergency repairs.

- Total power cut
- Total heat loss (in winter months)
- Blocked drains causing raw sewage to enter the home.
- Serious leaks which can cause damage to the home.
- Dangerous structures
- Dangerous electrical faults
- Loss of drinking water
- Security of home (unless the damage is caused by you, your family, or a visitor)

To report a gas leak, ring the Transco emergency gas contact number on 0800 111 999.

Making improvements to your home

You can make improvements to your home; however, you must get our permission in writing first. You need to be a secure tenant with a clear rent account. We do not allow introductory tenants to carry out improvements to their home. Please contact us and tell us what you want to alter. Please provide as much detail as possible to help us reach our decision. We may need to come out and visit you to discuss your plans. Any improvements you make will not affect your rent. If we do give permission, it will be conditional on you obtaining planning and building control approvals if these are necessary. Please keep any permission letter safe as you may need in future to prove that permission was granted.

Please note: If you have carried out improvements with our permission and later decide to buy your home, the work you have done will not increase the price of your home. If you move, you may be asked to reinstate items that you changed without our permission. If you have carried out improvements with our permission and want to move, you might be able to claim compensation under the Government's compensation for improvements scheme. Please contact us to discuss this.

What work do I need permission for?

The following type of work needs our permission:

- Laying wooden flooring (include laminate)
- Fitting kitchens or bathrooms
- Fitting gas or electric fires

- Conservatories, sheds and garages
- Any electrical additions or alterations
- Removing or filling walls
- Installing showers
- Installing burglar alarms
- Fencing and walls
- Built-in wardrobes and cupboards
- Installing satellite dishes

Fences

Under your tenancy agreement, you are responsible for keeping any hedges and dividing fences forming part of your home in good order and repair.

Your tenancy agreement states:

It is your responsibility to maintain any fence that divides your home from your neighbour's as per your tenancy agreement

- You agree to keep any yards, paths, and garden (where they form part of your home) tidy and in good order and the grass cut and keep any hedges, dividing fences forming part of your home in good order and repair.

A dividing fence as a rule of thumb:

- If it divides your home from your neighbour's, then you are responsible for maintaining it
- If it divides your home from a public area, then we are responsible for maintaining it: A public area is a road, footpath, park, or other area that is open to members of the public.

If you are reporting the fence is damaged and dangerous we may visit to 'make safe' the area.

A 'make safe' is a quick, temporary fix to remove any health and safety concerns and prevent further loss or damage after an event has occurred. This might mean that we remove the damaged fence piece and you may be left with a gap in your fence

Dividing fences

- If a fence divides your home from your neighbour's property, you are responsible for maintaining it.
- If a fence divides your home from a public area, the Council are responsible for maintaining it.

- A public area is a road, footpath, park, or other area that is open to members of the public.

Where a dividing fence is made safe, responsibility for permanent repair or replacement remains with the tenant in accordance with the tenancy agreement.

Where a non-emergency repair has been requested and it is evident that this is due to tenant damage, work will not be carried out unless the tenant pays for the full cost of the works in advance of the works being carried out in line with our rechargeable repairs policy. Affordable payment plans are available to assist tenants in financial hardship.

Where it is established that materials or parts have been ordered for works which is of a specialist nature and the tenant fails to allow access to undertake the work, we will proactively seek to recover the costs incurred from the tenant.

Laying wooden flooring (including laminate)

If you live in a flat, you must use the correct underlay to eliminate sound transmitting through the floor to the properties below. Permission will not be granted for laminate floor coverings on or above the first floor in flats. If we receive complaints regarding excess noise because of your new flooring or laminate, you will be instructed to remove it within 28 days of receipt of a notice. Failure to do so could affect the security of your tenancy.

If the flooring needs to be lifted so that we can make repairs, we can't take responsibility for any damage that may occur to the floor during the repair. If we grant permission, it will be conditional upon your acceptance of these terms.

Damp and Mould

The Council has clear service standards for the inspection and resolution of damp and mould. These standards meet the requirements set out in legislation, including Awaabs Law (2025)

If you think you have damp or mould please report to this to us immediately, either online or by calling 0300 123 7724, you can also speak to your housing officer. Once you report a concern, we will survey the damp within the time scales set out within the legislation more details of this can be found on the website.

Keeping condensation to a minimum reduces the risk of dampness and mould growth. Condensation occurs with warm moist air meets colder surfaces such as windows or walls. Everyday activities such as cooking, boiling a kettle, showering and drying clothes indoors can produce moisture. Water droplets can then form on cooler surfaces. This can be managed with simple ventilation and temperature control.

In order to keep moisture to a minimum open a window when cooking or bathing and use extractor fans. Dry clothes outside where possible or keep a window slightly open if drying indoors. Leave a small gap behind furniture to allow air to circulate. Never cover airbricks or vents.

Investing in your Home

Each year we plan and deliver a capital investment programme ensuring our homes comply with the Decent Homes Standard, that they are of good quality, fit for purpose and energy efficient.

The programme of works is divided into several individual projects which could include:

- Internal upgrades - kitchens and bathrooms replacements
- Energy efficiency measures - heating, windows/door replacements
- Major repairs – re-roofing
- Electrical rewires.
- Internal & external improvements within neighbourhoods
- Adaptations

The Decent Homes Standard is the main measure of housing quality that is used to estimate if properties reach the required minimum standard. We also consider the age of properties, budget availability and the efficiency measures required.

If we identify that your home needs major improvement works and will be part of an investment programme, we will always write to you first to inform you of our plan. Prior to any work being undertaken, we will arrange a survey to identify your needs as well as improvements needed to make sure your home is as secure and comfortable as possible.

Saving Energy, Saving Money

Energy Efficiency saves you money and helps the environment. Here are some ways in which you can make savings at either no cost or low cost.

- Replace your light bulbs with energy saving ones: just one can reduce your lighting costs by up to £100 over the lifetime of the bulb – and they last up to 12 times longer than ordinary 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 a kettle, only boil as much water as you need (but remember to cover the element)
- Fix leaking taps and make sure they are fully turned off.
- Defrost your fridge and freezer regularly to keep them working efficiently.
- If you have a hot water thermostat, set it at 60°C
- Turning down your central heating thermostat by just 1°C could cut your heating bills by up to 10% and save you around £40 per year.
- Wait until you have a full load to use your washing machine; or use the half load or economy setting.
- Always turn the lights off when you leave a room.
- To get the most heat from your radiators, fit heat reflective radiator panels behind them (you do not have to remove your radiators to do this.
- Don’t leave appliances on standby or on charge unnecessarily.

- We waste more than a quarter of the energy we pay for when cooking food in pans with the lids off – so put a lid on it! This will also help reduce condensation in your home.
- Eliminate draughts and wasted heat by installing a cheap easy-to-fix brush or PVC seal on your exterior doors. Letterboxes and key holes should be covered too.
- An insulating jacket for a hot water tank costs only a few pounds and pays for itself within months.

Home Safety

We want you to feel safe in your home and community. This section provides you with useful advice and information on how you can help to ensure the safety of your home and family.

When someone knocks on the door

If you have a door viewer, check to see who it is before opening the door. If you have a chain keep it on when you open the door until you are confident about the identity of who you are letting in. Genuine callers always carry an identity card and will not mind waiting for you to check this. Only let someone in if you are sure they are who they say they are. Normally we make appointments if we need to come out to see you. Occasionally we may come without an appointment. If this happens, we will provide identification and wait while you verify the information.

Security Equipment

You must not interfere with any security equipment on the home. This includes any closed-circuit TV(CCTV) equipment and door entry systems. This equipment is there to increase resident's security, and this could be threatened if, for example, you wedge open security doors or allow people to enter a block without identification.

Shared areas

You must not obstruct any shared areas in your block, such as leaving bicycles, mobility scooters or bulky items in shared passageways. This could inconvenience other residents, be dangerous or a fire hazard. Please see out Communal area management Policy for further details.

Flammable substances

You must not keep liquid petroleum gas or other flammable or explosive substances in the home or shared area or balcony.

Gardens and yards

If you have a garden or yard, you must keep it tidy. You must not obstruct any emergency exits in your home.

Asbestos

If your home was built before 2002, there may be asbestos present in your home. You must not disturb or damage any part of your home during DIY or home

improvement. When materials that contain asbestos are disturbed or damaged, fibres are released into the air.

When disturbed asbestos can be dangerous to your health as it can cause serious diseases, such as lung cancer. Should the asbestos in your home be damaged or disturbed, contact us for assistance.

If you wish to make any alterations to your home, you must contact us for permission before starting work. To make sure you're not at risk, we will always conduct an asbestos check before approving any home improvement works. This may be a simple search through our records or could include a new survey. Remember, if you carry out work on your home without permission, you and those living around you could be at risk, for example of releasing asbestos fibres from asbestos containing materials. If you would like more information on asbestos, visit our website.

Fire Safety

Should you discover a fire in your home, do not tackle it yourself. Get out of the home and call for the fire service. Do not re-enter the home until the fire service gives you permission. Any fire related incidents should be reported to us.

There should be a working smoke alarm fitted in your home, if not contact us for this to be fitted. You should test your smoke detectors every week.

Make sure you have an escape plan and that everyone in your home is aware of it. You can help to prevent fires in your home by:

- Ensuring that cooking is not left unattended.
- Keeping tea towels/loose clothing away from naked flames.
- Ensuring that cigarettes are fully extinguished before disposing of them.
- Keep the oven, hob and grill clean and in good working order. A build-up of fat and grease can ignite a fire.
- Don't overload plug sockets or extension leads.
- Keep candles away from curtains and blinds and don't leave them unattended.
- If your home is within a communal area, you should follow the guidance provided on your fire action notice.

If you are concerned about fire safety in your home, you can complete an online fire safety check by visiting Cheshire Fire and Rescue service website who will offer advice or arrange a home visit. You can also get more information and advice about fire safety in your home on our website.

Legionella

Legionella is a bacteria which causes legionnaires disease, a serious lung infection. It is usually caught by breathing in small droplets of contaminated water. You can significantly reduce the risk of legionella in your home by running your taps if they have been unused for over a week and making sure shower heads are disinfected regularly (at least once a month). Your boiler temperature should be set to above 60°C.

Gas Safety

If you smell gas or think there's a gas leak, the first thing to do is to make sure that you stay safe, please:

- turn off your gas supply at the safety valve adjacent to the gas meter.
- don't smoke.
- don't light matches or cigarette lighters.
- don't turn light switches or anything electrical on or off.
- put out any naked flames such as candles.
- open all the doors and windows.
- **Call the National Gas Service Emergency Line on 0800 111 999 to report a suspected gas leak. They'll sort out the problem and tell you what to do to stay safe.**

How do I arrange my yearly gas safety check?

We work in partnership with Liberty Group to deliver our gas maintenance services. A gas engineer from Liberty Group who is registered with Gas Safe will carry out a gas safety check and service your gas appliance at 10-12 monthly intervals.

If you own any of the gas appliances in your home, the engineer will carry out a visual inspection of your appliance. If a fault is suspected, the operative will carry out the appropriate tests, if a fault is then identified you will be advised of what action you must take.

When your service inspection is due, we will inform you we are coming by sending you an appointment letter giving you the date and time. If this appointment is not suitable, you can contact us to rearrange the appointment We also offer evening and weekend appointments. It is essential that you allow access to your home for this work.

What will happen if I don't allow access to carry out the yearly gas safety check?

Your landlord has a legal responsibility to carry out this safety check, therefore we must gain access to your home every year, whether you currently use your gas supply or not.

Failing to allow us to carry out these essential checks will result in the following action:

- We will start legal action by sending you a 'notice of proposed court action'.
- The Court can grant us a warrant to force entry to your home to carry out checks.
- We will refuse to carry out any repairs or improvements (other than emergency repairs) to your home.
- We may refuse to allow you to go onto the waiting list for a transfer.
- The court may award us possession of your home, for breaking your tenancy agreement. You would then incur significant court costs and recharges associated with the cost of forcing entry to your home.

Electrical Safety

We will carry out electrical testing at your home every 5 years. This is necessary because all electrical installations deteriorate due to a few factors such as damage, wear, tear, corrosion, excessive electrical loading, ageing and environmental influence. It is also a statutory landlord requirement for us to complete this check.

Our contractor will inform you via letter when the next electrical safety check is due at your home. We have two contractors who currently provide this service, Liberty & BES Electrical. You will be notified via letter advising you of when they intend to visit your home to complete the safety check. You must provide access for this service to be completed.

Failing to allow us to carry out these essential checks will result in the following action:

- We will start legal action by sending you a 'notice of proposed court action'.
- We will refuse to carry out any repairs or improvements (other than emergency repairs) to your home.
- We may refuse to allow you to go onto the waiting list for a transfer.
- The court may award us possession of your home, for breaking your tenancy agreement. You would then incur significant court costs and recharges associated with the cost of forcing entry to your home.

Blinds/Cords/ Windows

Blind cords can present a hazard to children as the cord can get caught on the child's neck which can limit the ability of the child to breathe. If there are blinds in the home, cords should be kept short and out of reach of the child. Children should not be able to easily access windows as these may be open, allowing the child to fall. Keep windows locked where possible and ensure the child cannot easily climb up to window level.

Being a good neighbour

We want you to enjoy living safely and peacefully in your home and community.

Once you have moved into your home your Housing Officer will arrange a follow up visit with you to ensure you are settling in, looking after your home and that you are getting any help you may need or are entitled to.

The information below outlines how we deal with neighbourhood issues should they arise and how you can contribute to being a good neighbour.

Anti-social behaviour (ASB)

We have a dedicated anti-social behaviour officer to deal with serious ASB, domestic abuse and threats of violence. If you have a complaint of this nature, your Housing Officer will be the first point of contact, who will then refer to the ASB Officer if necessary.

We are firmly committed to tackling nuisance and anti-social behaviour (ASB) We expect our residents to accept a certain level of noise from day to day living and be tolerant of other people's lifestyles. We actively promote ways to prevent ASB but will use our enforcement powers in appropriate circumstances.

How we deal with nuisance and anti-social behaviour

We recognise that there are often no easy answers and no single solution that will work for everyone. There are several ways the housing team can deal with individual problems. They will ask you questions to find out the cause, what has happened, for how long and how often the nuisance happens. They will discuss with you the best way to deal with the problem. A decision may be to visit the person concerned, arrange for someone to work with you and them to resolve it (mediation) or take legal action. You may be asked to keep a record of the nuisance, and you may need to be a witness at court.

Enforcement action is normally only considered when all other options have been exhausted. The tenancy conditions make it very clear that nuisance and anti-social behaviour will not be tolerated in our neighbourhoods. Nuisance problems often occur when people act without thinking about their neighbours and other residents.

Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse is any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence, or abuse between those 16 or over, who are or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender of sexuality. We will not tolerate domestic abuse. Some forms of domestic abuse are criminal offences. Domestic abuse can be:

- Physical
- Sexual
- Emotional
- Psychological
- Financial
- A combination of some or all of these

It is often a repeated act and has a long-term effect on the victim and any dependent children. Your Tenancy Agreement says that you or any member of your family "must not use or threaten to use violence by using physical, mental, emotional or sexual abuse against anyone legally entitled to live either in your home or in another of our properties".

We are committed to working closely with other agencies to support victims of domestic abuse and, where possible, take action against those responsible. We also recommend that you get independent general advice from a solicitor, law centre or Citizens Advice Bureau. If you are suffering because of domestic abuse, you should let the police know. They have specialist workers to help. If you are in immediate danger, call 999.

Pets

If you live in a flat or maisonette and you would like to keep a pet, you must first get our written permission. We will look at each case on its own merits but please note you will only be given permission if you live in a suitable home. Permission will not be granted for cats and dogs at Joseph Groome Towers or Churchill Court.

Permission will not be granted for any animals listed under the Dangerous Wild Animal Act 1976 or for any dog listed under Dangerous Dogs Act 1991.

If you do have a pet, you are responsible by law for its welfare, as defined by the Animal Welfare Act 2006. It is an offence for anyone responsible for a pet not to look after it properly. You must ensure that your pet has a suitable environment to live in, a suitable diet and is safe from harm.

If your pet causes a nuisance

We work closely with the police to ensure that any nuisance caused by pets is addressed quickly.

If it comes to our attention that an animal is causing a nuisance, we will withdraw our permission for you to keep a pet and take enforcement action. This may include requiring the pet to be rehomed and taking legal action.

Dogs

In addition to the conditions stated above, there are further rules relating to the keeping of dogs, specifically:

- You must immediately clean up after you dog if it fouls your garden, communal yards or shared areas of the estate.
- You must keep the dog on a lead with a name tag and not allow it out without a responsible adult. **The dog must** be micro chipped and have identification in public areas bearing the owners name, address and/or telephone number. These are the legal requirement and failure to comply could result in a heavy fine.
- Be always kept under control and not cause a nuisance or a danger to anyone.
- Be kept on a lead when outside in shared areas of the council's estate.
- Not foul your home, garden, or any communal areas. Dog faeces can carry diseases which can be harmful to people. It is an offence for a dog owner not to clean up immediately after their dog in public places such as road, estates, footpaths, and parks.
- Not cause any other nuisance to other people such as barking or making excessive noise.

Pest Problems

Many of us periodically suffer from insect problems such as wasps and ants, especially in the summer months. If pests or vermin do get in your home, you will be responsible for the cost of getting rid of them. Common household pests can now be treated with products available from hardware stores, garden centres etc. You can

contact any pest control service or enquire with us about pest control services on phone 0300 123 8123.

If you live in a block of flats/communal building, we recommend that you contact us in the first instance so we can determine if it is a widespread issue and provide further assistance.

Bulky Waste

If you have any items that you cannot dispose of yourself, you can call Bulky Waste collection 0300 123 8123

Flytipping

If you want to report flytipping please contact 0300 123 8123

Recycling and Waste collection

Recycling and waste collection is undertaken by us, see the website for further details.

https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/residents/waste-and-recycling/your-bincollection

Greenspaces

We undertake grounds maintenance within neighbourhoods such as cutting grass, pruning hedges, and weed control. Further information on the standard of service can be found on the website.

https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/residents/streets-and-openspaces/green-spaces-ground-maintenance

Together with Tenants Charter

The Together with Tenants Charter sets out what you can expect from us as your landlord. It is built around six themes agreed with tenants. These commitments guide how we work, how we communicate and how we involve you in decisions.

Our Commitments to you

Communication- We will keep you informed, provide clear updates and make it easy for you to contact us.

Responsibility -We will use your rent responsibly, be transparent in how we work and publish information about our performance

Your Community- We will work with you and local partner to support safe, clean and well-maintained neighbourhoods.

Quality of your home- We will maintain your home to a good standard, complete repairs on tine and clearly explain any planned improvements.

Your Safety- We will carry out all required safety checks, act quickly when we identify a risk and support you to report any concerns

Your Voice- We will listen to you, act on your feedback and show you how your views shape our services.

Aids and Adaptations

To support our customers in their homes, we can install minor and major adaptations according to individual needs. We work in partnership with Occupational Therapy, who will carry out an assessment and help us to establish the adaptations needed. You may not need an assessment for minor adaptations.

For more information on aids and adaptations, please contact an Occupational Therapist on 0151 337 6400. If your circumstances change, you may want to consider making a new application with West Cheshire Homes to find a more suitable home for your needs, for example a ground floor flat. For more information, please call West Cheshire Homes on 0300 123 2442.

Getting Involved

We are passionate about working together with you to provide services that make a positive difference to you and your community. By listening to you, acting on your feedback, we can shape the way we do things and continuously improve.

We value your engagement, and our staff are on hand to support you in any way you choose to get involved. You can choose to be involved in as little or as much as you would like

- From the comfort of your home
- By taking part in one off or regular activities
- In your neighbourhood

There are many ways to get involved depending on what suits you, this can include

Becoming a Resident Champion-helping to share information locally and raising issues that matter to your area. Resident Champions receive an annual £100 voucher for taking part in at least four activities a year.

Becoming a Tenant Board Members- contributing directly to decision making that shapes housing services:

- Sharing your views through surveys or online feedback
- Local community events and walkabouts
- Taking part in service improvement events

Comments, Complaints and Suggestions

We know we can always do better. By working with you, to listen to your opinions and feelings we will make positive changes, to make sure you feel satisfied with our services and trust us to deliver on promises. We realise that things can occasionally go wrong. If this happens to you and you are unhappy about our service delivery,

then we want you to let us know so we can fix it as quickly as possible. On dealing with complaints, we offer and deliver, using this process.

Stage 1 – We will acknowledge and log your expression of dissatisfaction within 5 working days of receipt. You will be allocated a named Complaint Handler who will contact you to get the details of the complaint so they can investigate and provide a written response within 10 working days of the acknowledgement.

Stage 2 – If you are not satisfied with how the complaint was dealt with you can ask for it to be escalated. We will acknowledge and log your request within 5 working days of receipt. The complaint will be handled by our central Customer Feedback and Improvement function to ensure there is no conflict of interest. They will consider whether your complaint was fully dealt with and will let you know the decision within 20 working days of the escalation request. Your complaint will need to have completed Stage 1 before it can be escalated to Stage 2.

We assess ourselves against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code once every year to make sure that we are applying it properly.

To make a compliment, suggestion or complaint use the form on our website.

If you have downloaded the My tenancy + app, you can report a complaint and will be redirected to our website to log the details of your complaint.

Website: Contact our Council Housing Team
By writing: Cheshire West and Chester Council, Council Housing Management Service, The Portal, Wellington Road, Ellesmere Port, CH65 0BZ.
Phone: 0300 123 7724
In person: The Portal, Wellington Road, Ellesmere Port

Moving On

If you're planning to move out, just let us know by giving four weeks' notice and fill in a tenancy termination form. You must complete this form in full, giving your new address and times when it would be convenient for one of our officers to call and inspect the home. We'll arrange a visit before your tenancy ends.

When you leave, you must take all your belongings with you and make sure nothing is damaged. We may charge you if you have damaged the home or if you leave any rubbish or belongings in the home or garden.

Before you leave, make sure you have:

- taken all readings – gas, electricity, and water.
- informed your utilities company.
- told Cheshire West and Chester Council Tax office the date you are leaving.
- asked the Post Office to redirect your mail.
- paid your rent up to date.
- left the home clean and tidy and put right any damage.

We'll fit a key safe to your home so you can return your keys easily. We request that the keys are returned before 12 noon on a Monday to avoid another week's rent charge. Your housing officer will provide you with further information at the time of moving on.

Boost energy	0330 102 7517
British Gas	0333 202 9802
Cheshire Fire – Emergency	999
Cheshire Police – Emergency	999
Cheshire Police – non- emergency	101
Cheshire West and Chester Council	0300 123 8123
Citizens Advice Bureau	0808 2787 806
Economy Energy	0330 102 7517
EON	0345 052 0000
National Gas Emergency Helpline	0800 111 999
Npower	0800 073 3000
Octopus Energy	0808 164 1088
OVO	0330 303 5063
Robin Hood Energy	0800 030 4567
Sainsbury Energy	0843 903 3758
Scottish Power	**0800 027 0072**
SSE	0345 026 2658
Total Energy	0800 977 7111
Utilita	0345 207 2000

Getting in touch

We're all for keeping things simple. You can contact us by:

Website: www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

Telephone: 0300 123 7724

0300 numbers are charged at local rate from both landline and mobile phones and can also be deducted from any inclusive free minutes you may have. This means it should cost you less to call us from a mobile.

Accessing Cheshire West and Chester Council information and services

Council information is also available in audio, Braille, large print or other formats. If you would like information in another format or language, including British Sign Language, please email us at: **equalities@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk**

You can also telephone: **0300 123 8 123**
or textphone: **18001 0300 123 8 123**
website: **www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk**

