

An aerial photograph of a residential development. The houses are arranged in a circular pattern around a central pond. The houses have red brick walls and orange-tiled roofs. The pond is surrounded by a green lawn. In the background, there are green fields and a blue sky with white clouds.

WELCOME

**EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT
YOUR HOME WITH US**

Freebridge
COMMUNITY HOUSING

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HOW TO CONTACT US

MAIN REGISTERED OFFICE IN CENTRAL KING'S LYNN

Freebridge Community Housing
Juniper House
Austin Street
King's Lynn
Norfolk
PE30 1DZ

Main telephone number: 03332 404 444
(Option 1 for Customer Experience, including logging repairs).

Email: For our Customer Experience Team, please email cxsupport@freebridge.org.uk

For email addresses for various departments, please see our Contact Us page on our website.

For all contact with Freebridge you will be expected to provide your Tenancy Reference number.

OFFICE OPENING

Hours: 8.45am - 5.15pm (Monday to Thursday)
8.45am - 4.45pm (Friday)
Closed on Bank Holidays, Saturday and Sunday

OUT OF OFFICE HOURS EMERGENCY CONTACT ARRANGEMENTS

The main number above will automatically divert outside of office opening hours to our out-of-hours service provider.

PLEASE ONLY USE THIS SERVICE IF YOU HAVE AN EMERGENCY WHICH CANNOT WAIT UNTIL THE OFFICE OPENS.

This handbook gives you some useful information about your home, your tenancy and other contacts we think may be helpful.

We are committed to working with you to develop our services.

If you have any comments about the handbook, or how it can be improved, please contact us.

For our latest and most up to date information please visit our website at: **freebridge.org.uk**

You can also keep in touch through our Facebook and X pages at:

Facebook - /freebridge
X -/freebridge

If you need any help to understand this handbook, please get in touch.



ABOUT US

Freebridge is the largest provider of housing in north & west Norfolk, owning and managing around 7,800 homes, and making a real difference to thousands of customers and the wider communities in which they live. Since being set up in April 2006 we have already taken great strides in improving local homes and communities and are now ready to take this even further.

We want to drive Freebridge forward to become a leader in our field, an excellent landlord and an exemplary employer.

Our Building Better Futures 2021/26 strategy explains that in the next few years our mission is to:

“be a top performing provider of housing as measured by our customers, colleagues and stakeholders”

with a vision to:

“provide quality homes and excellent services for current and future generations so that the people and communities of west Norfolk can thrive”

And to achieve this we have identified six key objectives that will direct our path towards achieve this. These are:

- Providing excellent customer service
- Creating homes, communities and local spaces to be proud of
- Offering a balanced local housing market
- Being a great place to work
- Addressing the climate challenge
- To be a strong, sustainable and innovative business.





CUSTOMER SATISFACTION MONITORING

We want to continually improve the services which we provide to you. So it is important for us to know what you think of the quality of our services and for us to gather these views from as large a number of customers as possible.

We do this by carrying out surveys, which means that you may receive surveys via text message or email, or be contacted by telephone so you can give your views as well as suggesting ways in which we might be able to improve.

We would be grateful if you could take time to complete these surveys when you receive them, as without this feedback it is much more difficult for us to make sure that the services we provide are those which you want and need.

FREEBRIDGE COMMUNITY HOUSING'S EMPLOYEES AND CONTRACTORS – STANDARDS OF BEHAVIOUR AND CONDUCT

We expect all of our employees and any contractors who are employed by us, to behave and conduct themselves to the highest standards and in a manner which is consistent with the vision, mission and values of our organisation.

If you feel at any time that you have not been treated properly, please contact us immediately so that we can investigate the matter further.

YOUR RIGHTS AS A FREEBRIDGE TENANT

This sets out the key information that you need to know about your rights as a tenant, as well as our responsibilities as your landlord.

ACCESSING OUR SERVICES

You can contact us via:

- phone on 03332 404 444
- email via cxsupport@freebridge.org.uk
- Messaging via our Facebook page ([facebook.com/freebridge](https://www.facebook.com/freebridge))
- or, our engagement platform, myFreebridge.

You can find all of our relevant team's contact details here on our contact us page.

You can also arrange for us to visit you at your home, or you can meet with us at our office in King's Lynn - which is located at Juniper House, Austin Street, King's Lynn, PE30 1DZ. All you need to do is contact the team you want to meet with and they'll arrange an appointment at a time that suits you.

Please let us know if your circumstances change, so we can ensure our services are tailored to you. You can do this by contacting our Customer Experience team by emailing cxsupport@freebridge.org.uk, or by calling 03332 404 444.

THE SERVICES YOU CAN EXPECT FROM US

Repairs and maintenance: you have a right to repair. We have information on our repairs page about what classes as emergency, urgent and routine repair. We'd also ask you to check our handy repairs & responsibility guide, which clearly states what is our responsibility to repair as your landlord, and what you, the tenant, are responsible for.

Health and safety: we as your landlord have a responsibility to ensure your home is safe and secure.

Tenant-related issues: our Communities Team manage day-to-day queries and issues from tenants, which can include but is not limited to Anti-social Behaviour (ASB).

Tenancy management: Our Allocations Team will manage your tenancy, which includes allocating housing, providing tenancy



agreements, and managing the tenancy process.

Income and Rent management: Our Customer & Communities Team deals with your rent payments. We have information on paying your rent here, If you are struggling to pay your rent, please contact us straight away as there may be ways we can help you.

Support services: we can offer housing support, information, and advice to tenants via our Customer & Communities Teams. This includes in our Sheltered Housing homes.

You can find all of our relevant team's contact details here on our contact us page.

OUR RESPONSIBILITIES AS YOUR LANDLORD

Your tenancy agreement sets out our responsibilities as your landlord and your responsibilities as a resident.

If you have any questions about your tenancy agreement, please contact our Communities Team by calling 03332 404 444.

Freebridge insures the home that you live in, but it's your responsibility to insure the contents of your home. You can find out more about insurance and read through our summary of cover here.

KEEPING YOUR HOME SAFE

It is our priority is to ensure you're safe in your home, and there are specific pieces of law that apply to you as a tenant. Our Head of Safety, James Banks, is our health and safety lead - as detailed in the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023.

James is the nominated Freebridge colleague responsible for monitoring our compliance with health and safety requirements, assessing risks of failure to comply with health and safety requirements, notifying the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) of any risk of failing to meet any health and safety and safety requirements, and any material failings by Freebridge to comply with health and safety requirements. He also provides advice on addressing risks and failures to Freebridge, allowing compliance with health and safety requirements.

You may be aware that Awaab's Law is now in place. This is a result of the tragic death of Awaab Ishak, who died due to damp and mould in his home. This law will require social housing landlords to inspect, make good and/or repair hazards within a timeframe.

To find out more about our damp and mould process, including how to report any issues you are experiencing, you can look at our Damp & Mould page (freebridge.org.uk/freebridge-customer/welfare-and-support/damp-and-mould).

We will also carry out regular safety checks at your home and will give you plenty of notice before we undertake them. We'll arrange a time that is convenient for you and, if we need to change your appointment, will contact you to discuss a time that is suitable for you.

In return, all we ask is that you contact us in advance if an appointment no longer suits you. This is so we can allocate it to another Freebridge tenant.

We also ask that you allow us access to your home to carry out repairs, safety checks and other visits, so we can ensure you and potentially your neighbours, remain safe.

THE DECENT HOMES STANDARD

We are required to ensure that our homes meet the criteria of the Decent Homes Standard - which was introduced by the government for housing provided by housing associations like us, or councils.

This is a minimum standard, and ensures that homes are warm, weatherproof and have reasonably modern facilities. The current standard was created in 2000 and updated in 2006 to include health and safety hazards – and the government is expected to review this again soon. You can find out more here about the current Decent Homes Standard.

As part of ensuring you home meets this Standard, we will undertake a stock condition survey every five years. As part of this, we will also carry out an inspection for any health and safety hazards in your home, using the housing health and safety rating system (HHSRS). You can read more about this here.

This was introduced by the Housing Act 2004, and focuses on the hazards that can be present in homes, such as damp and mould, and aims to avoid or to minimise these. It considers the chance of harm, how serious it would be and if there's any extra risk to residents, such as the elderly or very young.

Serious hazards are called 'Category 1' and include things like loss of electricity, gas leaks and a flood or leak. We will treat these as emergencies. Less serious hazards are called 'Category 2' and we'll contact you to arrange an appointment for this to be resolved.

FITNESS FOR HUMAN HABITATION ACT 2018

Back in March 2019, this new law came into force - which was to ensure rented homes were 'fit for human habitation'. If a home isn't, the resident can take a landlord to court.

The Act applies to tenants who live in social or privately rented houses and flats. Most landlords make sure that the houses and flats they rent out are safe and secure, warm and dry. But some landlords do not, and this means that some tenants live in dangerous or unhealthy conditions. This law help these tenants and make sure irresponsible landlords improve their properties, or leave the business.

If rented houses and flats are not 'fit for human habitation', tenants can take their landlords to court. The court can make the landlord carry out repairs or put right health and safety problems. The court can also make the landlord pay compensation to the tenant.

If you have concerns about any health and safety issues in your home, contact us on 03332 404 444.

HOW FREEBRIDGE ARE REGULATED

We are regulated by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH).

Through the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023, from 1st April 2024, the RSH has set out standards – collectively called the Consumer Standards – for social housing landlords, which are designed to protect residents and improve the services you receive.

- The standards are:
- Safety and quality
- Transparency, influence and accountability
- Neighbourhood and community
- Tenancy

THE HOUSING OMBUDSMAN

The Housing Ombudsman service is set up by law to look at complaints about the housing organisations, such as Freebridge, that are registered with them. Their service is free, independent and impartial.

They resolve disputes involving the tenants and leaseholders of social landlords (housing associations and local authorities) and their voluntary members. Residents and landlords can contact the Ombudsman at any time for support in helping to resolve a dispute. Their service is funded through annual landlord subscription fees, paid by Freebridge and other members.

For more information on the Ombudsman, as well as the complaints and compliments process at Freebridge, please visit our Complaints page.

If you require any of the documents or detail on this page in another language or type, please contact our Communications and Engagement Team by emailing communications@freebridge.org.uk, or by calling 03332 404 444.

REPAIRS AND IMPROVEMENTS

REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE RESPONSIBILITIES - OURS AS LANDLORD AND YOURS AS TENANT

The responsibility for looking after your home and keeping it in a good state of repair and condition is a joint one between us as a landlord and you as a tenant.

HOW TO REPORT A REPAIR TO US – AND THE DIFFERENT CATEGORIES OF REPAIR

During office hours your call will be answered by our Customer Experience (CX) Team, who will log your repair and make an appointment for your repair or inspection.

Outside office hours your call will be dealt with by our out-of-hours provider, which provides an out-of-hours emergency repairs call handling service for us when our office is closed.

When reporting repairs outside of office hours, please make sure that these are a genuine emergency only and not repairs that could wait to be reported to us on the next working day. Examples of what is considered an emergency repair are listed on the next page.

If you give us misleading information to suggest your repair needs emergency attention and we find this is not the case, you may be charged the additional costs for providing an out of hours service.

USE OF THE OUT OF HOURS SERVICE IS FOR EMERGENCIES ONLY.

A full list of Freebridge and tenant responsibility can be found on our website at: freebridge.org.uk/freebridge-customer/repairs, or scan the QR code:



EMERGENCY REPAIRS - WE RESPOND WITHIN 24HRS

An out of hours service is provided for emergency repairs. The emergency repairs service operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and 365 days per year.

Definition: Repairs required that could present a significant and immediate risk of harm and threat to life to our customers (inc. members of their household) and/or damage to their home or community.

Examples:

- Fire or flood
- Gas leaks
- Total loss of electrical power (unless outside of our control such as a power cut)
- Broken communal entrance doors that pose a significant security risk
- Blocked main drains or sewage systems
- Damp and mould that is affecting a customer or a member of their household's ability to breath
- Internal leaks that cannot be contained or inability to access water (where this is Freebridge's responsibility)
- Blocked toilet and there is only one toilet in the property
- Loss of heating or hot water (emergency temporary heating will be provided if unable to sort a temporary or permanent repair) during the months of October - February (or all year in the event of customers with health conditions that require their heating throughout the year)
- Internal leaks that cannot be contained.

URGENT REPAIRS - WE RESPOND WITHIN 7 DAYS

Definition: Repairs that do not present a risk of harm, threat to life to our customers or a risk of damage to their home but are required to prevent significant inconveniences.

Examples:

- Partial loss of electrical power
- Minor leaks that can be contained

- Blocked pipes
- Blocked toilet and there is more than one toilet in the property
- Loss of heating or hot water during the months of March to September
- Continuously running overflow pipes.

ROUTINE REPAIRS - WE RESPOND WITHIN 28 DAYS

Definition: Repairs required that do not pose a risk of harm to our customers (inc. members of their household) or further damage to their home or community.

Examples:

- Dripping taps
- Loose tiles
- Cosmetic damage (e.g. wall cracks)
- Repairs to kitchen units or doors

RIGHT TO REPAIR

By law you have the right to have certain repairs which are our responsibility as landlord carried out within set timescales. If we fail to meet those timescales on any defect which falls into this category of 'Right to Repair' you can request us to appoint another contractor to complete the repair job at no cost to you. You may also be able to claim financial compensation.

If you think you have the basis for a claim please contact our Feedback Team on 03332 404 444.

DELIBERATE PROPERTY NEGLECT AND/OR DAMAGE – TENANT RESPONSIBILITIES AND THE RECHARGING OF COSTS

Sometimes tenants don't look after their homes as we would hope and carry out deliberate damage or neglect to the property where they live.

If a repair request is as a result of neglect or deliberate damage we will charge for the full costs of the repair. This is known as a 'rechargeable repair'.

If the damage and/or neglect is considered deliberate and is of a serious nature we may take legal action against you for breaking the conditions of your tenancy.

REGULAR SERVICING AND TESTING OF INSTALLATIONS

You must allow us, or contractors employed by us, reasonable access to your home in order to carry out regular servicing and testing. Your tenancy agreement details why we would want access, but the most important reason is to ensure your own and your neighbours' safety, particularly relating to gas installations. It is a legal requirement for us to undertake a gas safety check every year.

FAULTY GAS INSTALLATIONS HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO CAUSE SERIOUS HARM AND POSSIBLY EVEN DEATH BY CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING. THIS IS WHY BEING ABLE TO PROMPTLY AND REGULARLY CARRY OUT THE ANNUAL GAS SAFETY INSPECTION AND TESTING IS SO IMPORTANT.

You will be provided with a copy of your gas safety certificate when you move into your property.

If you repeatedly fail to provide us with access we will use legal enforcement action to gain entry to your property. Any tenant who regularly refuses to allow us reasonable access may face possession proceedings because they are breaking the conditions of their tenancy.

All staff and contractors employed by us who visit your home will have identification badges. Please ask to see their badge before letting them into your home, and if you are in any doubt about their identity please contact us immediately.

MAJOR EMERGENCIES – THE HELP WE WILL PROVIDE TO YOU

If a major emergency occurs, such as a serious flood, fire or accident involving chemical spillage which means that it would be unsafe for you to continue to stay in your home, we will provide you with temporary alternative accommodation.

If such a major emergency occurs you should, in the first instance, contact and notify the relevant agencies - the Police, Fire Service, Cadent, Anglian Water. See the Useful Contacts section at the back of this handbook.

If events then mean that you must leave your home and be accommodated elsewhere, either you or the agency involved in the emergency can contact us at any time using our out-of-hours service.



LANDLORDS PERMISSION

We understand that part of making a house your own home is to put your personal stamp on it. We're here to help you with this, and we've simplified the process into three categories:

1. No Permission Needed

Feel free to make certain changes within your home without needing our permission.

2. Seek Permission First

For specific alterations, it's important to get our approval before making any changes. We're here to guide you through this process.

3. Not Allowed

There are some changes that cannot be made to your home. Please refer to our guidelines for more information on what falls into this category.

There are also a lot of rules around CCTV, which we've also included information about on our website freebridge.org.uk/freebridge-customer/landlord-permissions. This includes guidance around Ring doorbells.

WATER METERS

If you live alone you may wish to consider having a water meter fitted to reduce your water bills. You will need permission from Freebridge, please contact us on 03332 404 444.

IMPROVEMENTS AND CUSTOMER COMPENSATION

If you are a full assured tenant (see your tenancy agreement) you have the right to carry out improvements or alterations to your home but you need to get our permission first. If the works need planning consent you will be responsible for making the application and paying the costs.

You need our written permission before starting any works and we will make sure that the works will be carried out to a satisfactory standard and will comply with all of the necessary regulations. We will also want to know that you are considering your neighbours when undertaking any work and that you understand you must carry out all future repairs to any alterations you have made.

You may be able to receive compensation at the end of your tenancy for any approved improvements you have made. Please ask us for details.

As a tenant you must act responsibly.

SAFE AND SECURE

DEALING WITH EMERGENCIES

We want you to feel safe and secure and we will do all we can to make sure that your home is a safe place to live. If you are faced with an emergency, here are some simple steps to take to avoid a major disaster:

GAS LEAKS

If you smell gas call Cadent emergency service immediately.

Telephone Number: 0800 111 999

Do:

- Open doors and windows
- Check to see if the gas has been left on unlit or if the pilot light has gone out
- Leave the property until the gas engineer arrives
- Tell your neighbours and our customer experience team (03332 404 444 option 1)
- Only use a Gas Safe registered contractor to fit and service your gas cooker and any other gas appliances you have.

Don't:

- Smoke
- Use electrical switches or your mobile phone in the property
- Use naked flames.

IF THERE IS A FIRE:

- Get everyone out of the property immediately
- Close as many doors as possible on your way out
- Do not use the lift
- Call the Fire Service (999).

IF A CHIP PAN CATCHES FIRE:

- Turn off the heat immediately
- Cover the fire with a damp cloth or fire blanket
- Do not use water to try and put the fire out and do not move the pan.

BURST WATER PIPE

If we have a long spell of cold weather you could have a burst pipe. If this happens:

- Turn off the main stop cock
- Switch off your immersion heater (if you have one)
- Switch off the time clock on the boiler
- Turn on all your taps to drain off as much water as possible making sure all the sink plugs are out
- Try to find out where the water is coming from and contain it if possible using rags, a bucket, containers and so on
- Do not use lights if water is dripping through a light fitting
- Report the problem to us on 03332 404 444.

You can help prevent pipes freezing by:

- Keeping your home fairly warm at all times, even if you are not there. Leave the heating on a low setting
- Know where your stop cock is and make sure you can turn off the main water supply if you need to

TO HELP YOU IN THE CASE OF AN EMERGENCY PLEASE FIND THE:

- **Cold water stopcock** - Usually found under the sink or in a downstairs toilet or cupboard
- **Hot water valve** - Usually found in the airing cupboard
- **Gas meter/tap** - Usually found in a box on the outside of the property or in a cupboard downstairs
- **Fusebox** - Usually found downstairs, often in the hall or under the stairs

DAMP AND MOULD

As you may have seen, there have been a lot of reports in the media over the past few months about damp and mould. We understand that for some of our customers this will be very concerning, so we want to let you know how Freebridge can help.

There are a few things that may be helpful to you in trying to cut down on the amount of moisture in your home, all of which can contribute to mould growth. For handy hints and tips please see our guide on our website: [freebridge.org.uk/freebridge-customer/welfare-and-support/damp-and-mould](https://www.freebridge.org.uk/freebridge-customer/welfare-and-support/damp-and-mould). If you would prefer a printed copy, then please get in touch.

For some customers though we know this won't be enough to eliminate mould in their homes, and there will be repair or improvement works that we need to do. If you are worried about damp and mould in your home, please let us know.

To decide on the best solution for you and your home, our team will listen carefully to your concerns and carry out a detailed assessment over the telephone. We will then follow this up with a home visit, so that we can agree a plan of action.

Please be assured that we will listen to you and your concerns about damp and mould and will do all that we can to sort the problem. Please do get in touch with us on 03332 404 444 (press 1) or via email at cxsupport@freebridge.org.uk

We have a video on our webpage (link mentioned above) or for ease you can scan this QR code using the camera on your phone:



FIRE SAFETY

Freebridge have a duty to ensure fire safety in the communal areas of our residential buildings, and we all have a responsibility to minimise fire risk and to take reasonable steps to ensure fire safety during our day-to-day activities. By responding positively and embracing fire prevention, particularly in blocks of flats, we all have a crucial role to play in reducing the number of fire related incidents.

YOUR TENANCY AGREEMENT

The Freebridge Tenancy Agreement highlights the obligations and responsibilities of customers in relation to potential fire risk and prevention.

You have responsibilities on how to use your home and use communal areas safely, as it states in your tenancy agreement. You are:

- Not to store flammable or explosive material in your home, other than items stored for normal household use.
- To report to us quickly any repair or defect for which we are responsible in your home or the common areas.
- To allow Freebridge or contractors acting on our behalf access, at reasonable times and subject to reasonable notice, to inspect the condition of your home or any installations or to carry out repairs or other works to your home or adjoining property.
- Regardless of whether a caretaking or cleaning service is provided, to keep clean (together with other residents) communal areas (including stairs, landings, entrance halls, lifts, bins areas, communal paths and similar shared areas) and keep these areas tidy and free of litter, rubbish, obstruction and hazards.
- You are advised to insure the contents of your home, your possessions and, in particular, any items you are responsible for under this agreement (such as internal redecoration following fire, flood or similar)
- To inform us in writing, and if possible in advance, if you are, or expect to be, absent from your home for four weeks or more.

TESTING YOUR SMOKE AND CARBON MONOXIDE ALARM

For your safety please always allow us access to your home to check and test your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.

Freebridge have an annual programme for testing and servicing these alarms, both in your home and any communal areas. However you should also ensure that you:

- ✓ Dust your alarms regularly
- ✓ Check your smoke alarm weekly to make sure it is working by pressing the test button (**Test it Tuesday** is a great reminder)
- ✓ Replace the battery if the alarm bleeps for any reason other than smoke or fire in your home
- ✓ Contact us if you have any problems with your alarms
- ✗ Never remove a working battery from your alarms
- ✗ Never paint over, deliberately damage, disconnect or remove the alarms. **It could cost you or your family your life.**

Your home should have a working smoke alarm fitted on each floor. If not, let us know straight away and we will fit them for you.

FIRE PREVENTION AND SAFETY ADVICE

For more information on how to prevent fires, as well as what to do in the event of a fire, please see our 'Fire Safety' booklets available on our website or from our office.

Head to freebridge.org.uk/freebridge-customer/about-my-home/looking-after-your-home for up-to-date fire safety booklets and a handy video guide for fire prevention. Or you can scan the QR code:



E-SCOOTERS AND E-BIKES

The London Fire Brigade has recently warned that they have seen a huge spike in fires as a result of electric bikes and e-scooters. We recognise that electric bikes and e-scooters are becoming common modes of transport, and we request that these are stored and charged within your homes.

If you own a mobility scooter, it is advised that if they have to be charged inside, they should be placed on a hard surface, away from escape routes, in a room with a smoke alarm, and only charged when the user is awake and within the premises. If we see electric bikes or e-scooters in communal areas, they will be removed and disposed of immediately without prior notice. This is to keep all those living in the building safe.

Mobility scooters will only be allowed to be stored inside a property where a tenant can safely store and charge the scooter without hindering safe escape in the event of a fire.

Permission to store a scooter in this way must include details of which room the scooter will be stored and charged in, and the tenant must also seek permission, and arrange to carry out, any other necessary alterations that may be required to the property.

IF YOU ARE IN A BLOCK OF FLATS OR A HOME THAT SHARES COMMUNAL AREAS

Outside bins must be at least 3 metres away from the building (unless stored in allocated bin sheds) and if provided placed on concrete pads.

No tumble dryers are to be used in external sheds where there is a boiler or a heat source.

STAY PUT

Stay put if the fire alarm sounds and the fire is not in your flat, and you are in your own home.

If you are in a communal area, you must evacuate to your fire assembly point. The Fire Notices in the communal areas reflect this.



RENT AND SERVICE CHARGES

WHAT DOES MY RENT PAY FOR?

Paying your rent is one of the most important parts of your tenancy agreement. If you do not pay your rent, you could lose your home and it will also make it financially difficult for us to repair and maintain all of our properties. Rent must be paid a week in advance.

We will clearly show how much the rent and any service charges for your home will be.

WHEN MY RENT INCREASES, WHAT DO I NEED TO DO?

If you receive Housing Benefit then we will tell the local Council that we have increased your rent. If you receive Universal Credit, you will need to update the DWP. They will then work out your entitlement and write to you to let you know.

If you pay by Direct Debit then we will automatically increase your payments and you do not need to let your bank know.

If you pay by Standing Order then you will need to contact your bank to let them know the new amount that your standing order must cover.

If you pay by card, cheque, post, over the internet or over the phone then you will need to start paying the new amount from the date it takes effect.

HOW CAN I PAY MY RENT?

Ways to pay your rent:

- **Direct Debit** is the easiest way to pay your rent. **Simply call 03332 404 444 and press option 3 and we'll help you set this up.** A direct debit is an automatic payment made from your bank account. You will need to provide us with your account number and sort code. It can be set up for any day of the month and payments can be made weekly, fortnightly, every four weeks or monthly. If you pay monthly the number of weeks for which you pay rent are divided into 12 equal monthly payments.
- **By phone** please call 03332 4044 44 and press option 3 during office hours.
- **At any Post Office.** You can make payment using your Freebridge payment card. You can pay by cash, debit card or cheque.

- **At any PayPoint outlet.** You can make payment using your Freebridge payment card. You can pay by cash, debit card or cheque.
- **Send a cheque** made payable to Freebridge Community Housing – Juniper House, Austin Street, Kings Lynn PE30 1DZ.

PLEASE MAKE SURE YOU INCLUDE YOUR RENT REFERENCE.



HOW AND WHEN WILL MY RENT CHANGE?

Each year our Board will confirm the increase to be applied to all rents. For both domestic properties and garages this will typically be by CPI (Consumer Price Index) + a maximum of 1%.

Shared ownership properties will increase annually by no more than inflation (Retail Price Index) + 0.5%.

Your new rent is payable from the first Monday in April each year. We will write to you at least one calendar month before the new rent is due.

WHAT CAN I DO IF I DISAGREE WITH THE RENT THAT YOU HAVE SET FOR MY HOME?

You can ask us to explain in more detail how we have calculated the rent and to check that it is correct. If you are still not happy some tenants can appeal to an independent tribunal; Citizens Advice can assist you to do this.

WHAT ARE RENT FREE WEEKS?

Dependent on the type of tenancy you hold with us, you may be entitled to four rent-free weeks throughout the year.

Each rent year runs from the first Monday in April, through to the day before the first Monday in April the following year. Depending on where the first Monday in April falls, this sometimes means that the rent year runs for 53 weeks before the rent is increased again.

In 52 week years we charge over 48 weeks, in 53 week years we charge over 49 weeks. This means that there are always 4 weeks each year where we make no charge - 2 at the start of April and 2 over Christmas and the New Year.

If you are in arrears at these times you should continue to make your normal payments.

SOCIAL RENTS:

HOW DO YOU WORK OUT MY RENT?

Since 2001 we (and all other social landlords - housing associations and local councils) have been required to use a Government formula to set your rent.

The formula is based on:

- The average earnings for the area you live in compared to the national average
- The number of bedrooms in your home
- The value of your home (or what it would have been) in January 1999

The rent calculated in this way is called the 'Formula rent'.

WHAT ARE SERVICE CHARGES?

If you live in a property with shared facilities, such as a block of flats or a sheltered scheme, you may have to pay additional charges to cover the cost of maintaining the communal areas.

If you do have to pay a service charge, you will receive a separate statement each year showing you how much you have been charged, and how much the services cost.

We will only make a reasonable charge for these services in addition to the net rent; the total of both the net rent and any service charges will be treated in our Tenancy Agreements, and as part of our collection processes, within the total rent charge of the property.



AFFORDABLE RENTS: HOW DO YOU WORK OUT MY RENT?

We charge affordable rents to fund the building of new homes in our area, and the rent is calculated to be:

- Up to 80% of what a similar type of property would cost to rent from a private landlord

For example, if a home similar to yours was rented by a private landlord for £100 per week, we would only charge you a maximum of £80 per week.

Every time an affordable rent property is re-let the rent will be recalculated (known as 're-basing') to make sure it remains no more than 80% of a current private rent.

WHAT PROPERTIES WILL BE LET AT AN AFFORDABLE RENT?

Freebridge Community Housing charge affordable rents (which are typically higher than our 'social' rents) on properties which have often had improvement works.

An affordable rent is set when a property is first advertised, so you will know before you choose to bid for a property how much the rent is. Current Freebridge tenants who choose to move to another home should also consider this when bidding.

If you are successfully nominated to us by West Norfolk Home Choice for a property on an affordable rent then we will also make a detailed assessment of your finances, to make sure that you can afford the rent, before proceeding with an offer of a tenancy.

If we feel that you will not be able to afford the rent then we may decline your nomination, or we may offer you an alternative property at a 'social' (lower) rent.

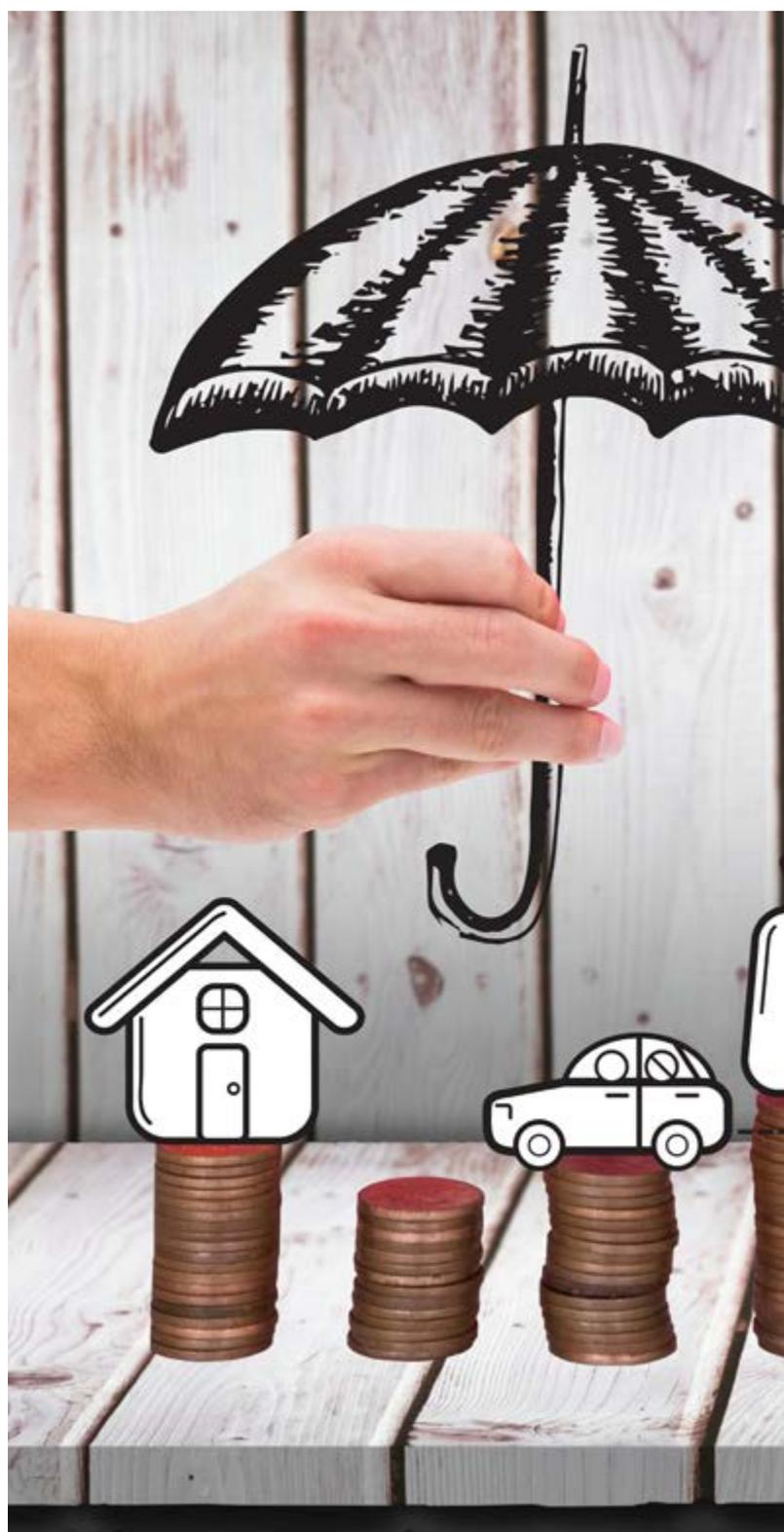
SERVICE CHARGES CALCULATED AT AFFORDABLE RENT

If you live in a property with shared facilities, such as a block of flats or a sheltered scheme you may have to pay additional charges to cover the cost of maintaining the communal areas.

If you do have to pay a service charge you will receive a separate statement each year showing

you how much you have been charged, and how much the services cost.

We will only make a reasonable charge for these services in addition to the net rent; the total of both the service charges and the net rent will together not exceed 80% of the market (private) rent equivalent, and both together will be treated in our Tenancy Agreements, and as part of our collection processes, as the total weekly rent for the property.



DIFFICULTIES IN PAYING RENT

Please contact us immediately if you have problems paying your rent. If you fall behind with payments and you don't tell us, we can take legal action, which could mean you would lose your home. You may have other debts to pay but payment of rent should be your first priority.

Don't let your debts build up. Once we know you have a problem with paying, we can often help you and have dedicated staff to do this by:

- **Giving advice** on entitlement to welfare benefits – to help you claim everything you are entitled to
- **Agreeing special arrangements** to make payments – we can make arrangements for instalment payments that are affordable to you and will reduce your debt
- **Help with multiple debt problems** – if we can't help you we can refer you to an organisation that specialises in debt advice.

If you do not pay your rent we will:

- Write to you to tell you that you are in arrears
- Make an agreement to clear your arrears
- Discuss any problems you are having in paying your rent
- Monitor your account to ensure regular payments are received in future
- Carry out visits to your home if contact is not made via telephone or letter.

WE ARE HERE TO HELP – SO IF YOU ARE EXPERIENCING DIFFICULTY IN MAKING YOUR RENT PAYMENTS PLEASE CALL OUR INCOME TEAM ON 03332 404 444.

CITIZENS ADVICE

Citizens Advice provides advice and assistance on a variety of subjects, from relationship breakdowns to civil disputes and money problems. The CAB can also give debt counselling and benefit advice.



SAFE SAVING AND LOW COST LOANS

EASTERN SAVINGS AND LOANS

Eastern Savings and Loans is a credit union established in 2001 who serve over 5,000 members around Suffolk, Norfolk and Cambridgeshire. They offer a range of savings accounts, pay as you go debit cards and loans to their members.

If you live, work, study or volunteer inside the boundaries of Norfolk, Suffolk or Cambridgeshire, you are eligible to join Eastern Savings and Loans Credit Union. If you are employed by one of our Payroll partners you will also be eligible to join.

What do Eastern Savings and Loans accounts offer?

- Savings
- Dividend Savings Accounts
- Christmas Savers
- Junior Saver
- Pay as you go debit cards
- Loans
- Starter loan (borrow up to £1,000)
- Flexible loan (borrow from £1,000 to £3,000)
- Advantage loan (borrow from £3,000 to £7,500)
- Child benefit Savings and Loan Plan

To enquire about the different types of accounts and loans to make an appointment to join Eastern Savings and Loans please contact them directly on 03336 000690 or visit www.eslcu.co.uk

Alternatively you can contact our Income team on 03332 404 444.

Services & features	EASTERN SAVINGS CREDIT UNION PREPAID CARD
Accepts Universal Credit and other benefit payments	Yes
Accepts other forms of income, such as wages from work	Yes
Allows Direct Debits and standing orders	Not always (check with the provider)
Overdraft facility	No
Cash card with PIN for cash machine	Yes, although you may be charged
Debit card	Most prepaid cards can be used in all the same places as a debit card
Cheque book	No
Credit checks needed when you open the account	No
Fees and charges	Charges vary, can include fees for set-up, to top-up and for withdrawing cash

MOVING IN PROPERTY STANDARDS

At Freebridge we aim to make moving into your new home as easy and comfortable as possible. When you move into your home it will be safe and secure and works will have been carried out.

Here we have noted down the standard that you should expect when you move in. Some other works may be carried out after you have moved in, and you would have been told about this when you went to look at your new home.

GENERAL

- The property and garden will be clear of rubbish.
- Any asbestos will have been checked. You will be given a certificate to tell you more about this and where it is.
- Any fire alarms and door entry systems will have been checked and left working.
- An Energy Performance Certificate will be provided with an information leaflet.

HEATING

Your heating source is to be in working order, heating the entire property along with thermostats in working order to control temperature. The radiators will heat up consistently and be free from rust.

WALLS AND CEILINGS

- All cracks and holes in the walls and ceilings will be filled and the walls will be free from fixtures and fittings.
- The walls and ceilings will be decorated in a neutral colour and will be free from wall paper.
- All walls and ceilings will be free from damp and mould.
- All plaster will be flat and smooth. Artex acceptable on ceilings if patching can be disguised and in good condition. Any polystyrene ceiling tiles will be removed.
- Skirting boards will be free from damage, matching and with no pieces missing. The skirting will have a glossed white finish.

DOORS (INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL)

- All rooms will have internal doors which will be lubricated and free from squeaks and damage. The internal doors will open and close with ease.
- All door frames will be free from damage.
- Each external door will have had a lock change and you will be provided with the new keys.
- External doors will be lubricated and free from squeaks, opening and closing with ease and free from any type of damage.
- The front entrance will have a letter box with draft excluder, and there will be a spy hole and security chain fitted on one entrance door to the property.
- The main entrance door will be numbered and all intercoms on blocks of flats are in working order.

WINDOWS

- All glass and frames will be sealed inside and out, and open and close with ease.
- The glass and frames will be free from damage and window keys will be provided for lockable windows.
- Window restrictors will be fitted to all appropriate windows within the property.
- Any new build properties will have trickle vents.

BATHROOM AND TOILETS

- Bathrooms should either have a recently installed bathroom or a customer fitted bathroom that is practical and useable.
- All tiles, basin toilets and showers will be damage free in working order and an extractor fan fitted to either the external wall or ceiling.

KITCHENS

- Kitchens should either be a recently installed kitchen or a customer fitted kitchen that conforms to health and safety and property standards.
- All cupboards, doors, drawers and worktops should be free of damage and all matching, and in good working order with an extractor fan fitted to either an external wall or ceiling.

ELECTRICS

All sockets, plug sockets and switches will be firmly attached to the wall with no wires showing. All sockets should turn on and off with ease. No sockets or switches will be present in the bathroom or toilet (exception of shaver socket). Any light switches in the bathroom will be pullcords.

GARDEN AND EXTERNALS

- The external and garden area of the property will have a tidy lawn that is stirmed/mowed. All hedges and bushes will be tidy, cut back and any trees will be removed where they are within 3 metres of the property.
- The garden will be free from decking and all trip hazards will be removed.
- Sheds and outbuildings will be removed unless in good condition.
- All gates and fences will be free from rot and in working order, marking all boundaries of the property with fencing or a chain linked fence.
- Any garages or sheds will have doors that are secure and operational.

FLOOR COVERING

Flooring in the bathroom and kitchen will be in good condition and free from damage. Flooring in both of these rooms will be provided prior to re-letting the property.



YOUR HOME

You signed a tenancy agreement when you became our tenant. The agreement sets out what we must do as your landlord to keep your home in good repair and to look after you as our customer. It also gives you details of your rights as a customer.

There are certain responsibilities that you have living in one of our properties. The main things we ask are that you:

- Pay your rent on time
- Live with consideration for your neighbours
- Keep the inside of your home in good order and report repairs promptly
- Be respectful of the facilities you share with your neighbours.

If you break the conditions of the agreement we may have to consider ending your tenancy.

If you have any queries or would like more information about the agreement, please contact your Tenancy Advisor who will be pleased to help.

PLEASE READ YOUR TENANCY AGREEMENT CAREFULLY AND KEEP IT IN A SAFE PLACE.

MOVING IN

You should move in by the start date of your tenancy where possible. Customers are expected to be in residence within the first two weeks of the tenancy. Please note that if you do not move in by the start of your tenancy you may not get housing benefit or Universal Credit paid from the start.

INSURANCE – WHAT YOU NEED TO DO AS A CUSTOMER

We have full buildings insurance for your home.

This does not include your belongings. You are responsible for arranging insurance cover for your own personal possessions and property like electrical goods, furniture, clothing, soft furnishings, floor coverings, jewellery and any other valuables.

In order to help you with this we work in partnership with an insurance provider. They have low cost insurance cover for your own personal property and possessions. You can also pay for the cost of this in affordable instalments. Please call the Income Team for more details

on 03332 404 444 and press option 3, or visit freebridge.org.uk/freebridge-customer/about-my-home/looking-after-your-home

PRIVATE GARDENS – RESPONSIBILITIES AND OUR ASSISTED GARDENING SCHEME

If your home has its own private garden you must keep this tidy. This includes not allowing any hedge to grow to more than two meters high.

If you need help maintaining your garden, we operate an Assisted Gardening Scheme to provide practical help and assistance in maintaining your garden.

It is only available to tenants who have no family in the local area. To find out more please speak to your Tenancy or Support Advisor or call us on 03332 404 444.

DISPOSAL OF HOUSEHOLD RUBBISH AND BULKY ITEMS

It is important that all customers act responsibly to dispose of general household rubbish and bulky items. Please ensure that your domestic rubbish is properly sorted and that you use your household waste and recycling bins correctly.

Discarded items such as soft furnishings, electrical goods and other large items should not be left outside your home.

WHAT YOU CAN KEEP IN SHARED AREAS

You are not permitted to keep anything in shared areas. All shared areas and communal areas that need to be completely clear.

PETS - FOULING

Allowing dogs and cats to foul in shared areas is not allowed under any circumstances. Dogs should not be allowed to roam free within shared areas and should be kept under the control of owners at all times.

If you persistently allow your pets to foul or you do not keep them under proper control Freebridge may take legal action which may result in you having to re-home your pet.

PARKING AND GARAGES

As a customer you must act responsibly when parking your vehicle and give consideration to your neighbours and anyone else visiting.

Please do not:

- Cause an obstruction when parking
- Park any vehicle, whether at your home or in a communal area, which is illegal, unroadworthy and/or untaxed (we will arrange for such vehicles to be removed if you do this)
- Carry out major repairs to any car, motorcycle or other vehicle at your home, in communal/shared areas, on forecourts, in landscaped areas or on the road
- Park any vehicle, caravan, boat or trailer at your home unless there is a properly made hard-standing or garage together with a dropped kerb crossing.



COMMUNAL AREA GUIDANCE AND HOW IT EFFECTS YOU

Freebridge wants you to enjoy your home and the area in which you live. This section will give guidance on communal areas you may share with other residents, such as walkways, courtyards and communal bins sheds.

We have a few words of advice which will help to ensure you live safely and in harmony with your neighbours.

Failure to comply with the advice may result in breaching your tenancy or your lease conditions.

WHAT YOU CAN DO AS A RESIDENT

If, as part of your home, you have access to communal areas, your tenancy agreement or lease will state that you should not store items in communal areas and that we will treat any items left as a breach of your tenancy or lease.

Communal areas include stairways, lifts, landings, hallways, and any other spaces that you share with other residents. It also includes service or meter cupboards in your building. If you currently have items, including but not limited to prams, buggies, bicycles, plants, furniture, shoes or other household items, stored or left in these spaces, please remove them immediately.

Please also be mindful that uninvited visitors may be able to access communal areas and use or take items they find. The best way to look after your possessions is to keep them inside your home.

WHAT WE WILL DO AS THE LANDLORD

If we find any items in communal areas, we will remove them and store for 28 days, before throwing them away, which means you will no longer have access to them.

We do not have the storage space to hold onto items for you. Your building has a TORT notice displayed in communal areas to let you know the type of items that are commonly stored in these areas which should not be stored there. This list has some examples, but is not exhaustive. If any Tort notices within blocks are found to be missing on inspection, we will replace them.

- Any items in the communal area will be removed with immediate effect, in accordance with Fire Safety and the terms of your tenancy

- If you fail to contact Freebridge about the items within 28 days of removal, we intend to dispose of or donate to charity the goods after that date.

Let's work together to keep you, your family and neighbours safe. We'll ensure we follow through with our zero-tolerance approach to items we find in communal areas, and you can help us by making sure you do not leave items in communal areas, even if it's just temporarily.

KEEPING COMMUNAL AREAS CLEAR AND SAFE

We have a responsibility for the area where you live, and this includes making sure all communal areas in your building (if you have them) meet fire and safety requirements. Items stored or left in communal areas, which are shared spaces, are a hazard as they can prevent people from leaving the building safely in the event of a fire.

It's important we all do what we can to prevent hazards which is why we have a zero-tolerance approach to items left in communal areas. This means we will remove and throw away any items we find in these spaces without notice.

We want to keep you and your neighbours safe and can only do this with your help. The Fire and Rescue Services outline that storing belongings in these shared spaces can pose a real risk to everyone's safety as it could stop you escaping a building and prevent the fire fighters from doing their job in an emergency.

Residents must not store any hazardous materials or equipment within their private storage area located in any of the communal areas, that could pose a risk to other tenants or potentially compromise the escape routes should the cupboard or its contents become involved in fire. Should you have any queries regarding the storage of items, then please contact the fire safety team on Fire.Safety@freebridge.org.uk for further advice.

BARBEQUES

Barbeques present a significant risk of fire and risk to personal safety. Balconies on blocks of flats may seem an ideal place to relax during the summer

but under no circumstances should they be used for barbecues due to the risk of falling embers, made worse by stronger wind speeds at height.

BULKY ITEMS

Furniture, electrical and other household items should not be left in your communal area as this creates a fire hazard or risk to residents and children.

Before you take ownership of any new large household items you should arrange a suitable method for disposing of the old ones.

SMOKING

Smoking within any communal areas including stairwells is illegal.

Whilst smoking within open communal courtyard areas is allowed, this should not cause nuisance, for example smoking by a window or discarding cigarette butts.

DISPOSAL OF DOMESTIC RUBBISH

If you do not dispose of your domestic waste correctly this can cause a health and safety risk to you and your neighbours.

Use your refuse and recycling bins correctly and ensure they are put out for collection.

Don't leave any black bin bags outside of your door or any other rubbish in communal areas. Leaving waste in communal areas is considered a breach of your Tenancy Agreement.

Do not leave bags or waste by your front doors overnight, as these can become trip hazards. In the event of a fire, this waste could prevent you being able to escape your home easily.

INTERNAL COMMUNAL AREAS

Which includes stairwells, communal balconies, corridors and walkways

If you have a doormat, it should be located inside your property so that it is not a trip hazard and it should be constructed of non-combustible material.

No items are to be hung over or suspended from handrails, bannisters or balconies.

Any item shackled to the stairs, bannisters or railings (such as bicycles) or situated within a stairwell, will be removed including any locks used to secure.

EXTERNAL COMMUNAL AREAS

COURTYARDS

Items not permitted in the communal courtyard:

- Trampolines, large pools, climbing frames, bouncy castles, swings, slides, climbing frames, domestic furniture such as sofas and armchairs.

Items that are permitted in the communal courtyard:

- Paddling pools not exceeding 1 metre in diameter and as long as supervised and emptied/removed after use.
- Children's toys are allowed providing they are cleared when not in use and the quantity and type does not present a danger to other residents or persons.
- Barbeques, providing they are not left unattended when lit and are stored safely once properly extinguished. BBQ's should also not be used within 2 metres of any building and lit with materials or liquids specifically for use on a BBQ.
- Cycles, pushchairs, paddling pools, cat litter trays, tables, mobility scooters or any other items which may cause a potential danger. No items to be hung over or suspended from handrails or the balcony.

BALCONIES

Items that are permitted on your balcony:

- Any other property such as plants, pots and garden chairs, as long as they are positioned or stored in a way that does not present a potential danger. Pots and plants must be facing into the balcony, and not hanging over the railing facing outwards. No paint or combustible items to be stored.

GROUNDS MAINTENANCE

There may be areas of shared space including grassed areas, plants and courtyards around your home.

We will maintain these areas, and this includes the cutting of the grass, as well as trimming of hedges/bushes/trees and the spraying/removal of weeds from courtyard areas.

We always aim to provide high quality grounds maintenance services, if you find that this is not the case, please contact us so we can take action and correct this.

PETS

- Dogs are to be supervised at all times and not allowed to roam freely.
- You should not allow your dog or cat to foul in any communal area. If this does happen it should be immediately picked up, double bagged and put into your general waste bin.
- In certain circumstances permission is required to keep dogs and certain kinds of pets. Please contact your Tenancy Advisor for further advice before taking ownership.

RIGHT TO BUY

WHAT IS 'RIGHT TO BUY'?

'Right to Buy' is a UK government scheme that allows eligible council and housing association tenants to purchase their homes at a discounted price, based on how long they've been a tenant.

WHAT IS 'RIGHT TO ACQUIRE'?

The 'Right to Acquire' is a UK government scheme that allows some tenants of housing associations to buy their rented homes at a discounted price, similar to the Right to Buy, but with a smaller discount.

More information on Right to Buy and Right to Acquire can also be found on our website at freebridge.org.uk/freebridge-customer/about-my-home/owning-your-own-home



ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR, HARASSMENT AND HATE CRIMES

OUR POLICY STATEMENT

Freebridge Community Housing believes that everyone has the right to live the way they want to, providing it does not spoil the quality of life for others.

This means we expect tenants, those who live with them and their visitors, to be tolerant, accepting and respectful of the needs and choices of other people. We will investigate all allegations of anti-social behaviour, harassment and hate crimes and take swift and appropriate action to prevent problems from getting worse.

We want to make the places where our tenants live peaceful and secure.

This policy applies to all of our tenanted, shared owner and leasehold properties, and to those living in them. It covers anti-social behaviour and all forms of harassment and hate crimes. We have a separate policy covering domestic abuse.

WHAT IS ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR, HARASSMENT AND HATE CRIME?

ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

We will categorise incidents of anti-social behaviour, harassment and hate crimes according to severity and respond accordingly within agreed timescales.

Cases may often involve several different types of behaviour, in which case our team will use their discretion when categorising cases to ensure the matter is dealt with in the most appropriate way.

Anti-social behaviour in practice can be anything from graffiti, to physically attacking someone. We will record all incidents which we investigate and believe to be anti-social within the definition given on this page.

HARASSMENT

Harassment is persecution or intimidation by tenants, members of their household or their visitors, of a person or group because of their race, ethnic or national origin, gender, sexuality, HIV status, religious beliefs, and

disability, age or family circumstances.

Incidents of harassment can include sexual comments or gestures, offensive graffiti, abusive language and behaviour, violence or threats of violence towards people of all ages, and damage to homes or possessions because of their race, gender, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, disability, age or family circumstances.

HATE CRIMES

Hate crimes are when a victim is targeted because of his or her membership of a certain social group, usually defined by race, religion, sexual orientation, disability, age, gender or political affiliation.

A hate crime generally refers to criminal acts which are seen to have been motivated by hatred of one or more of the listed conditions.

Incidents may involve physical assault, damage to property, bullying, harassment, verbal abuse or insults, offensive graffiti or letters/emails.

We will apply the same criteria to hate crimes so that, if anyone - the victim, a witness, the Police or our staff - perceives an incident to be a hate crime or racist incident, it will be recorded as such.

Incidents of racial harassment and hate crimes, for monitoring purposes are recorded in such a way to make them easy to distinguish from anti-social behaviour and other forms of harassment. We will work closely with other agencies to prevent and deal with racial harassment and hate crimes, including acting as a recognised reporting centre.

OUR COMMITMENT

We will work with tenants, residents and other agencies to:

- Respond to complaints of anti-social behaviour, crime and harassment quickly and aim to resolve them in an efficient, sensitive and fair manner
- Take a victim centred approach to dealing with complaints, provide support to tenants and residents and take account of victims wishes when deciding on appropriate action
- Take action when appropriate against those responsible for anti-social behaviour, harassment and hate crimes

- Introduce preventative measures, enforcement, and rehabilitative action to stop anti-social behaviour and harassment of any kind
- Ensure all reports of anti-social behaviour, harassment and hate crimes are taken seriously, including any anonymous reports
- Support and empower witnesses and communities to take a stand against problems by working with a range of other agencies
- Work closely with other local Housing Providers and partners to tackle problems affecting residents on an estate or village wide basis
- Provide residents with opportunities to develop and continually improve our service.

We will ensure that we meet our duties under all relevant existing legislation and regulations.

OUR APPROACH

1. Preventing Anti-Social Behaviour, Harassment and Hate Crimes

- Use the sign-up process and visits during tenancies to ensure that all new tenants are aware of their responsibilities and our approach on anti-social behaviour, harassment hate crimes and have adequate support in place to conduct their tenancy in a satisfactory manner
- Make it easy for people to contact us about any problems that they are experiencing
- Have published timescales for responding to complaints of anti-social behaviour, harassment and hate crimes and ensure these take into account the seriousness of the situation
- Alert people to complaints of anti-social behaviour as soon as we are aware and clarify what they need to do to stop the situation escalating
- Encourage individuals and communities to communicate with each other directly and develop their own resolutions to disputes
- Offer mediation where appropriate
- Consider how we can prevent anti-social behaviour when we are designing our properties
- Work with other agencies to deliver diversionary activities and promote community cohesion.

2. Rehabilitative and Enforcement Action

When we do take enforcement action we will make decisions on what is appropriate on a case by case basis. We will try to balance the wishes of the victim(s) and other residents against any support needs or vulnerabilities that the perpetrator has.

Our Housing Tenancy Team are responsible for investigating cases involving breaches of Tenancy. Legal action is seen as a last resort and will only be taken after careful consideration. The Tenancy Team Managers are responsible for ensuring that any action taken is reasonable and proportionate.

Tenancy Managers will:

- Ensure that we have complied with our Anti - Social Behaviour Policy and Procedure.
- Ensure that we have tried and investigated alternative options before considering taking legal action.
- That when necessary we have adopted a joint working approach by involving other agencies as a means of resolving issues and supporting vulnerable tenants.
- Ensure that we have followed a victim led approach at all times by ensuring we deal with their complaints in a timely manner, explain our actions fully, whilst at the same time managing expectations.
- Ensure that we give clear guidance to victims as to the level of evidence we require when considering legal action.

TENANCY ENFORCEMENT

As a landlord we will consider taking legal action if other approaches have not worked or to complement other action.

These include:

- Demotion orders which affect the security of the tenancy
- Injunctions to prevent certain activities or behaviours in our properties
- Possession proceedings which could lead to eviction.

We would not normally offer a tenancy or licence to anyone who has been evicted from a previous

tenancy for anti social behaviour, harassment or hate crimes.

3. Support to the person making the complaint and witnesses

When we are dealing with anti-social behaviour and harassment we will give the wishes of the person making the complaint the highest priority. We will ensure they are kept informed of progress throughout the case, including gaining their approval to close cases. We will ensure witnesses are given appropriate support.

Some of the ways in which we will provide support include:

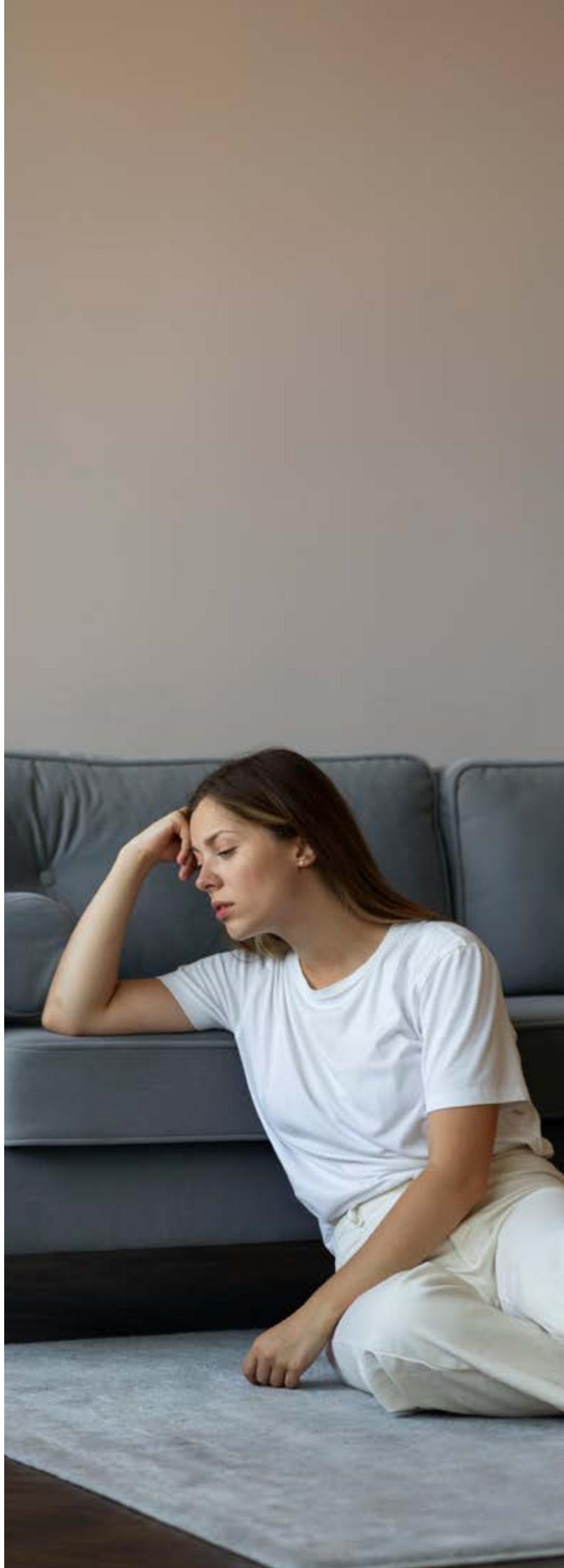
- Security improvements
- Considering temporary or permanent re-housing
- Using professional witnesses to gather evidence
- Providing practical help with gathering evidence in different formats i.e. audio diaries
- Arranging for witnesses to be supported through and during any court hearings
- Providing financial support to those effected as a result of assisting with legal action.

MONITORING AND REPORT

We will separately monitor all cases of racial harassment and hate crimes.

We will complete satisfaction surveying victims in order to allow us to continually develop our services.

If you have a problem you have been unable to resolve yourself, please contact your Tenancy Advisor on 03332 404 444, we will work with you to help resolve it. Alternatively you can email full details to: asb@freebridge.org.uk



LEGIONNAIRES' DISEASE

PROTECTING YOU IN YOUR NEW HOME

Freebridge is committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of our customers and colleagues. We recognise that a risk from Legionella bacteria may arise in customers' homes. Please read this section carefully.

WHAT IS LEGIONELLA?

Legionella are bacteria that are common in natural rivers and lakes and artificial water systems, (e.g. hot and cold water systems, storage tanks, pipe work, taps and showers).

Legionella are usually associated with larger water systems, (e.g. in factories, hotels, hospitals and museums, and cooling towers), but they can also live in smaller water supply systems used in homes and other residential accommodation.

Other potential sources of Legionella include spa and whirlpool baths, humidifiers, drinking water systems, water features and garden hoses. Legionella can survive in low temperatures, but thrive at temperatures between 20°C and 45°C. Temperatures in excess of 50°C will kill them.

Legionnaires' disease is a potentially fatal form of pneumonia caused by the Legionella bacteria.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO REDUCE LEGIONELLA RISK IN YOUR NEW HOME

The risk of Legionella is minimal; however you should take the following actions when you move in to your property:

- Please run your shower and all taps for a minimum of 5 minutes when you move in to flush through any form of bacteria.
- Please flush any toilet in the property when you move in to flush through any form of bacteria.
- Please keep your water cistern covered, insulated, clean and free of debris.
- Please ensure that your pipe work is insulated and if not, ask us to do it for you.
- Remember to run your hose pipe or pressure washer for 5 minutes before use, after any prolonged period without use i.e. at the start of each summer.



IMPORTANT NOTICE:

Raising the temperature of the warm water is one way to control Legionella growth, but could also increase the risk of burns and scalding. Please take care of the risk of scalding and burns, especially if you have children.

ASBESTOS IN THE HOME

All Landlords have a responsibility to tenants and their visitors, contractors and staff, to manage the risk of exposure to asbestos.

If asbestos is present in any building it will have been there for many years. While it remains undisturbed and in good condition it presents no hazard whatsoever.

If you have asbestos in your home, you'll be provided with a certificate/survey which tells you where the asbestos is located.

Freebridge takes this responsibility very seriously and has and will continue to gather information through surveys, inspection and testing to determine the presence or non presence of Asbestos Containing Materials in our homes.

WHAT IS ASBESTOS?

Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral made up of many small fibres. Asbestos fibres are very strong and resistant to heat and chemicals. Over the years it has been used in a wide range of building materials and products.

WHY MIGHT ASBESTOS BE A PROBLEM?

When Asbestos Containing Materials age, are disturbed or become damaged they can release fibres into the air. Inhalation of these fibres may cause damage to your health.

It is very unlikely that the levels of Asbestos Containing Materials in your home will be harmful but you must seek advice on what action to take if you think Asbestos is damaged.

WHERE MIGHT YOU FIND ASBESTOS IN YOUR HOME?

The following are examples of areas and appliances where Asbestos may be found:

- Domestic equipment e.g. Ironing boards and oven gloves
- Warm air heating systems
- Some textured coatings
- Some ceiling tiles
- Vinyl or thermoplastic floor tiles
- Eaves/soffitt
- Rainwater pipes

- Corrugated cement sheeting - usually found on garages/sheds
- Flue pipes
- Some old WC Cisterns

HOW DO YOU KNOW IF A MATERIAL CONTAINS ASBESTOS?

It is not always easy to tell whether a product in your home contains Asbestos as modern Asbestos-free materials often look similar - it is usually older products that contain Asbestos.

The use of Asbestos in most products has been banned since 1993. If you think a product contains asbestos but are unsure, the manufacturer or supplier should be able to help you.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU HAVE OR THINK YOU HAVE ASBESTOS IN YOUR HOME?

Asbestos containing materials in good condition cannot easily be damaged are best left where they are.

Asbestos containing materials that are slightly damaged can sometimes be repaired by sealing or enclosing the material. Never try to do this yourself.

Badly damaged asbestos containing materials can release dust and should be reported immediately. We will arrange for a specialist contractor to carry out any work that may be found necessary.

DO IT YOURSELF?

If you suspect that you have asbestos material in your home extra care must be taken when undertaking DIY.

Seek advice from Freebridge before undertaking any work and especially where your home has textured coatings on the walls or ceilings. Some textured coatings contain asbestos fibres.

They are normally well bonded and the fibres are not easily released. Newer types of textured coatings do not contain asbestos but these and the older versions look the same.

Therefore where you have a textured coating in your home **DO NOT** attempt to remove, sand, scrape, wire brush or drill it.

Cleaning and re-painting asbestos coatings is safe as long as the surface is in good condition and is not sanded down.

HOW SHOULD YOU DISPOSE OF ASBESTOS?

You should never be in a position where you have asbestos to dispose of. Asbestos waste is extremely dangerous and must be disposed of properly. It is against the law to put any asbestos waste in a dustbin - seek advice from the council about making arrangements for collection and disposal at a designated site.

YOU ARE NOW RESPONSIBLE FOR DISPOSAL OF YOUR OWN DOMESTIC ASBESTOS ITEMS

PLEASE CONTACT NORFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL WASTE MANAGEMENT ON 0344 800 8020



GAS APPLIANCES

GET THEM CHECKED, KEEP THEM SAFE

THE PROBLEM

Every year about 14 people die from carbon monoxide poisoning caused by gas appliances and flues which have not been properly installed or maintained. Many others also suffer ill health. When gas does not burn properly, as with other fuels such as coal, wood or oil, excess carbon monoxide is produced, which is poisonous.

You can't see it. You can't taste it. You can't even smell it. But carbon monoxide can kill without warning in just a matter of hours.

You are particularly at risk when you are asleep because you cannot recognise the early symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning. These include tiredness, drowsiness, headache, nausea, pains in the chest and stomach pains. These symptoms can mimic many common ailments and may easily be confused with flu or simple tiredness.

If you or your family experience the above symptoms, and you believe carbon monoxide may be involved, **you must seek urgent medical advice.** Your doctor will need to test a blood or breath sample. Carbon monoxide quickly leaves the blood and **tests may be inaccurate if taken more than four hours after exposure has ended.**

You are at risk of carbon monoxide poisoning if:

- Your appliance was poorly installed
- Your appliance is not working properly
- Your appliance has not been checked for safety or maintained regularly
- There is not enough fresh air in the room
- Your chimney or flue gets blocked up
- You allow an engineer who is not on the Gas Safe Register to install or maintain your appliance(s)

There is a particular risk if you sleep in a room where an appliance that is not of the room-sealed type (eg conventional gas fire) is left burning at night. (Flue outlets for room-sealed appliances are commonly located on an external wall at a low level protected by a cage rather than at or above roof level.)

THE ANSWERS

NEVER use a gas appliance if you think it is not working properly. Signs to look out for include yellow or orange flames (except for fuel-effect fires which display this colour flame), soot or stains around the appliance and pilot lights which frequently blow out.

NEVER cover an appliance or block the convection air vents.

NEVER block or obstruct any fixed ventilation grilles or air bricks.

NEVER block or cover outside flues.

CAUTION whenever draught exclusion, ceiling or extraction fans, double glazing or conservatory extensions are fitted to a room containing a gas appliance, the appliance should subsequently be checked for safety.

GAS APPLIANCES

If you would like to install a gas appliance within your property, you need to seek Freebridge's permission. This must be carried out by a Gas Safe registered engineer and you will be required to send us a copy of the safety certificated that is produced at the time of the installation.

GAS COOKERS

You do not require to request permission from Freebridge to obtain a gas cooker if there is provision for one to be connected within your home. If you would like to have one installed you must request permission and installed by a Gas Safe registered engineer.

FREE ANNUAL GAS SAFETY CHECKS

Within your property, all gas heating and appliance need to be serviced every year. If they are in poor condition or not serviced they can be extremely dangerous. To ensure your gas heating and appliance are safe, Freebridge will carry out a free annual gas safety check.

As your landlord we must by law ensure an annual safety check and service is carried out within your home. This check is carried out on all gas fired appliances such as, gas boilers, cookers

and fires. The safety check will also test any smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors.

Our heating contractor will contact you direct with an appointment 8 – 10 weeks before your service inspection is due to ensure the safety check is completed before the current annual gas certificate expires. If this appointment is not convenient, please contact Freebridge or the heating contractor to rearrange the appointment.

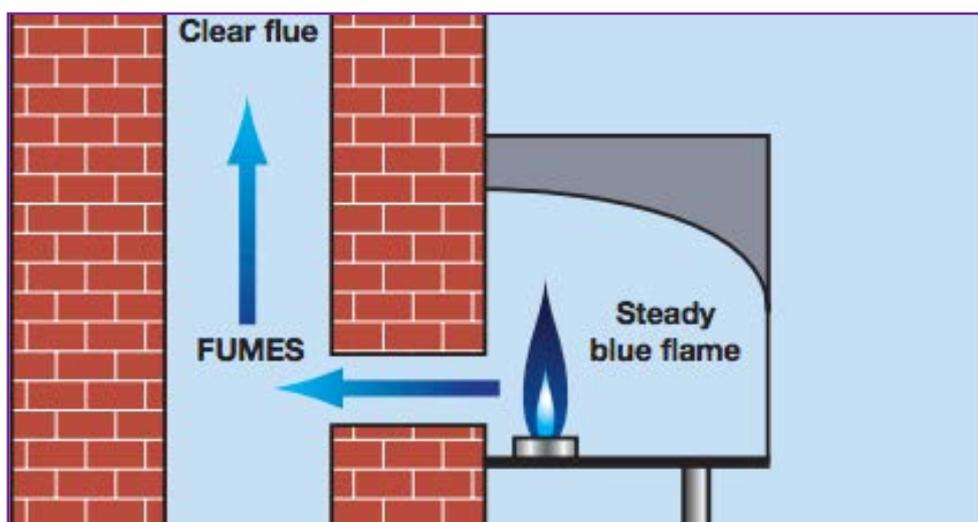
You must allow us access into your home to carry out the safety check. If you do not allow us access, you may be putting your life and those of your

family and neighbours at risk, this is also a breach of your tenancy and you could lose your home.

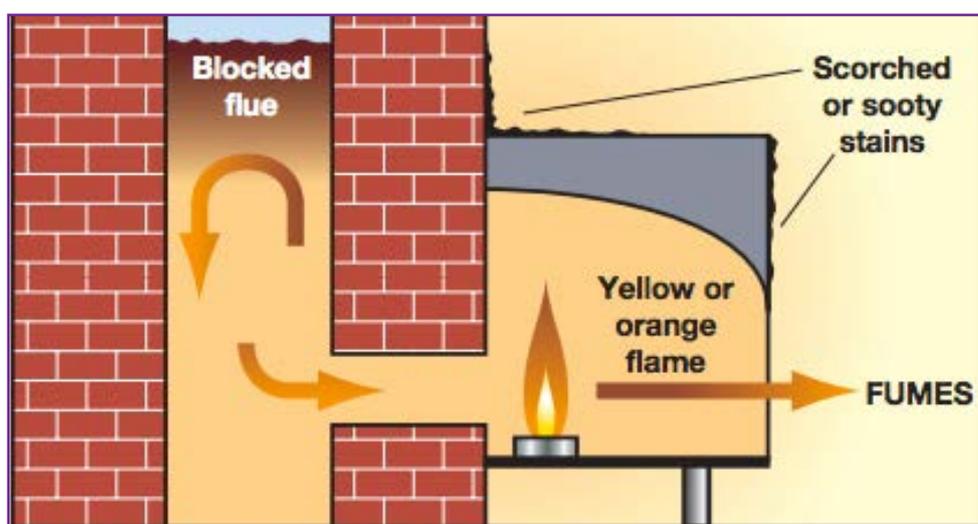
Any gas appliances that belong to you, will be inspected by the heating contractor. However you are responsible for the repairs and maintenance of the appliance.

If the contractor finds a safety concern with any appliance within the home, they are required by law to make it safe, this can include disconnecting the appliance. The contractor will advise you of the next steps if this is the case.

A SAFE GAS APPLIANCE



A DANGEROUS GAS APPLIANCE



GAS SAFETY ADVICE

Important advice to help you improve and manage gas safety.

Do:

- Arrange your free annual gas safety check
- Test smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors every month. If there is an issue, please call Freebridge to arrange a repair.
- Look out for damaged gas fittings.
- If you think there is a problem with your gas heating or appliances, turn them off immediately and contact Freebridge.

Don't:

- Use any appliance if you don't think they are working correctly
- Block or cover any flues or chimneys
- Obstruct or block any air ventilation

GAS LEAKS

If you smell gas please take immediate action, call Cadent emergency service immediately.

Telephone Number: 0800 111 999

Do:

- Open doors and windows
- Check to see if the gas has been left on unlit or if the pilot light has gone out
- Leave the property until the gas engineer arrives
- Tell your neighbours and our customer service centre
- Only use a Gas Safe registered contractor to fit and service your gas cooker and any other gas appliances you have.

Don't:

- Smoke
- Use electrical switches or your mobile phone in the property
- Use naked flames.



LOG BURNERS

In support of Government targets to reduce carbon emissions, we no longer provide permission for customers to install log burners in their homes.

If you have a question regarding the running or efficiency of your current heating, or wish to know more about alternative greener forms of energy then please contact us on 03332 404 444.

If you have previously been given permission by Freebridge to install a log burner, we would like to remind you that these appliances can produce carbon monoxide if they have been poorly installed, have been poorly maintained or used incorrectly.

You are responsible for the annual chimney sweep which is to be carried out by a company registered by HETAS (Heating Equipment and Testing Approval Scheme) or NACS (The National Association of

Chimney Sweeps). Once the annual service has been completed you must provide Freebridge with details confirming it has been done.

If you fail to do this Freebridge retain the right to remove the appliance at your expense.

If you have a log burner installed without Freebridge's permission, you must contact us immediately to request retrospective permission with a copy of the latest test certificate.

If a log burner is found to be in your home without our permission, we will ask for you to remove it at your own expense.

Finally, if you live in a home that has a log burner fitted and are intending to move through mutual exchange you will need to arrange for it to be removed by a qualified person (at your own expense) and provide appropriate certification to us.



COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT

Communications and Engagement is at the very heart of what we do. We want to involve tenants and we are committed to making our services effective, efficient and relevant to all our customers. Becoming involved in working with us can offer you real benefits by providing opportunities to increase confidence, self esteem and personal skills.

Opportunities are available for tenants to join our Board, where we actively seek to include tenants with lived experience. We also have positions for tenants to participate in our Service Champions and Customer Ambassador forums.

The Service Champions and Customer Ambassadors were set up to look at key areas of our work. The Panels meet on a regular basis to look at different projects and consider ways of improving key areas of work and is linked to the Freebridge Board by giving and receiving feedback.

The tenants involved come from a wide range of backgrounds, and from the different communities that we serve. Panel members do not have to have any experience of working for similar groups as full support is given. It's a great way to learn new skills and play a real role in improving our services. Involvement in monitoring us covers areas such as our repairs service, disabled adaptations, sheltered housing services and our performance in tackling anti-social behaviour.

There are other ways for you to get involved, these will be promoted through our Streets Ahead magazine or on our website.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED AND WHO TO CONTACT

If you are interested in joining our panels, please drop an email over to our Customer Voice Lead at customervoice@freebridge.org.uk.

We want to involve tenants to ensure that our services are effective, efficient and relevant to all our customers.



myFreebridge has been born due to customers who have voiced their desire for Freebridge to start strengthening communities and so in 2023, the platform was created. This platform differs from our website and other social media platforms as it is designed to:

1. Engage with our Customers on topics that matter to them
2. Offer the opportunity for Freebridge tenants to share information, tips and ideas with each other
3. Enable our Service Champions and Ambassadors to use the constructive feedback you give us to improve Freebridge Services and Communities

You will see that there are a variety of pages, articles, surveys, polls, forums and idea pages all ready for you to engage with. This really is only the start as this is a platform that will grow as its membership does. Follow our pages and be the first to be updated on topics that matter to you, for example keep up to date on what your Customer Ambassadors and Service Champions are up to as soon as they post their updates or be one of the first people to try out the latest recipe.

The more you engage the more useful this platform becomes. Head over and register by going to freebridgecommunityhousing.uk.engagementhq.com

TENANT SUPPORT AND SHELTERED HOUSING

Our Tenant Support Services offer free and confidential advice. We can help you to manage your money, claim benefits and tackle your debt problems.

All of our Income Team can help you with money matters in different ways, and if you need specialist advice that we can't provide, we can signpost you to a range of other organisations.

Our Tenancy Support Advisor can also provide more specialist support with many things including:

- Mental health issues
- Applications for grants
- Referrals to other support agencies
- Help with setting up home
- Assistance with furniture

If you need help with benefits, managing your money, debts or anything else financial, we are here to help. You can contact the Income Team by phone 03332 404 444 or by income@freebridge.org.uk or even drop into our Juniper House office.

SHELTERED HOUSING SCHEMES

We have a number of sheltered schemes. Sheltered Housing provides a high quality housing support service to older tenants which enables, supports and encourages them to live independently.

For more details about our Sheltered Housing and scheme locations, please contact our Support Team on 03332 404444.

DO YOU NEED FINANCIAL SUPPORT?

We have a dedicated Support Fund to help customers who find themselves in financial difficulty. We will work with customers to provide further assistance with vouchers for energy payments, food, or specialist items such as school uniforms.

If you need additional help please do contact our Tenancy Support Team at tenancysupport@freebridge.org.uk

or call us on **03332 404 444**, hold the line and then ask to speak to our Tenancy Support Team.

COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS

At Freebridge we want you to be happy with the service you receive from us, and to help us understand how we are doing we would like your feedback. We want you to tell us when we do something well, when we get something wrong, or any ideas you have for how we can improve what we do.

We monitor compliments, comments and complaints so that we can learn and improve and provide you with high quality services that you are happy with.

Customers can contact us in the following ways:

- In person at any of our offices.
- By phone 03332 404 444.
- By e-mail feedback@freebridge.org.uk.
- By writing to us at Juniper House, Austin Street, King's Lynn, Norfolk, PE30 1DZ.
- Via our Facebook account.

When complaints, comments and compliments are made to us via social media we will move the matter offline as soon as we are able to ensure privacy is maintained.

In addition to making contact with Freebridge you can also contact the Housing Ombudsman Service direct at any time and speak to their dispute support advisors who will provide assistance throughout the life of a complaint.

We define a complaint as follows:

An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents.

Further information about our making a compliment, comment or complaint can be found in our leaflet 'Compliments, Comments & Complaints' which is available from our reception and through our website (freebridge.org.uk/freebridge-customer/your-feedback).

WHO IS THE HOUSING OMBUDSMAN?

The Housing Ombudsman Service is set up by law to look at complaints about the housing organisations, such as Freebridge, that are registered with them. Their service is free, independent and impartial.

They resolve disputes involving the tenants and leaseholders of social landlords (housing associations and local authorities) and their voluntary members. Residents and landlords can contact the Ombudsman at any time for support in helping to resolve a dispute. Their service is funded through annual landlord subscription fees, paid by Freebridge and other members.

WHAT CAN THE HOUSING OMBUDSMAN DO?

The Housing Ombudsman can:

- Provide advice and guidance to you while complaints are still within Freebridge's own complaints procedure
- hold us to account if we do not follow our published procedures and respond in a timely manner by issuing complaint handling failure orders to require action on individual cases
- offer additional support and conduct intervention work with Freebridge to improve complaints handling
- act as the initial point of assessment for cases that have exhausted our complaints process
- undertake formal investigations into cases that have been referred and remain unresolved following completion of our internal complaints procedure

You can contact the Housing Ombudsman Service direct at any time and speak to their dispute support advisors who will provide assistance throughout the life of a complaint.

UNDERSTANDING THE COMPLAINTS PROCESS - FROM THE HOUSING OMBUDSMAN

The Housing Ombudsman helpfully sets out the complaints process as follows, to help make navigating the process of making a complaint easier:

Step 1 Tell your landlord about the problem

The first step is to report the problem to your landlord. They may be able to put things right. If you are having difficulty reporting the issue or are dissatisfied with the service you received in response, we can help you and your landlord resolve the issue. All landlords have complaints procedures that should be easy to use, fair and designed to put things right. If you think your complaint is not being dealt with correctly, for example if you receive delayed or no response, we can help ensure your complaint is responded to by your landlord.

Step 2 Escalate your complaint to the Ombudsman

If you are unable to resolve your complaint through your landlord's complaints procedure you can refer your complaint to the Ombudsman. We will deal with each complaint to find the best outcome for your individual circumstances. Once we receive your complaint we may:

- Refer the case to a different organisation if it is an issue we cannot make a decision about because it is not in our jurisdiction
- Work with you and your landlord to resolve the dispute under our mediation procedure.

For example, we can use our experience of resolving complaints to make suggestions to the landlord and/or the resident if we believe there is a way to resolve the complaint

- Carry out an investigation; we only do this for those complaints where we decide an investigation is proportionate to the circumstances and evidence before us, for example complex complaints involving many issues

HOUSING OMBUDSMAN CONTACT DETAILS

ADDRESS:

Housing Ombudsman Service
PO Box 1484
Unit D
Preston
PR2 0ET

TELEPHONE:

0300 111 3000

(9am-5pm Monday to Friday - Lines will be closed for staff training every Thursday from 3.30pm to 5pm)

FAX

020 7831 194

EMAIL

info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

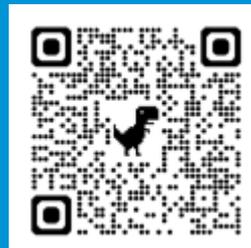
WEBSITE

housing-ombudsman.org.uk

ONLINE COMPLAINT FORM

housing-ombudsman.org.uk/residents/make-a-complaint/

We've put together a video explainer that simply explains our complaints process, you can find it on our page here freebridge.org.uk/freebridge-customer/complaints-compliments or you can scan the QR code:



MOVING ON

There may come a time when your home is no longer suitable for your needs. It might be too big or too small, or you may need to move to another area. Please talk to us if you are considering moving for any reason and we will be able to give you advice about what options are open to you.

TRANSFER

You can apply for a transfer to another Freebridge home which is more suitable for your needs. We will only agree to transfer a tenant who is keeping to the conditions of their tenancy, which includes being up to date with rent payments.

You will need to register with West Norfolk Homechoice, the housing register operated by the Borough of King's Lynn and West Norfolk, or the Housing Options Service with North Norfolk, through which we let our accommodation. Your application will be given a priority and you will need to bid for properties that you wish to live in.

We may also need to ask you to move if the property you are living in needs to have significant repairs or is being redeveloped. We will work with you in these circumstances to find a new and suitable home.

IF YOU ARE CONSIDERING MOVING FOR ANY REASON WE WILL BE ABLE TO GIVE YOU ADVICE ABOUT WHAT OPTIONS ARE OPEN TO YOU.

MUTUAL EXCHANGE

Another option if you are looking for a new home is a mutual exchange of tenancies, which is swapping your home with someone else. All of our tenants who have a full Assured Tenancy Agreement have the right to exchange their accommodation with other Assured Tenants of any Housing Association or Secure Tenants of Local Authorities.

Both landlords have to give permission for the exchange, but generally we are keen to help you. Some of the reasons that we or the other landlord might prevent this would be if you were not keeping up to date with your rent, not maintaining your home in good condition or because the swap would result in overcrowding or under occupation.



If over time members of your family have grown up and left home, we will encourage applications to transfer to a smaller home. If you think you need a smaller home, please contact us for details.

Some of our properties may be reserved for people with special needs because they have been adapted or are designed for elderly people. We wouldn't accept a swap with people who didn't need that type of property.

IF YOU WANT TO EXCHANGE

We have a system where you can register your property and look to see if there is anything of interest for you. This website can be found at freebridge.houseexchange.org.uk or you can go to our Juniper House office where you can register with House Exchange.

When you have found a person to exchange with you need to complete a mutual exchange application form and return it to us along with payment to cover the relevant gas and electric checks (For more information, speak to our Customer Services on 03332 404 444). We will arrange for an inspector to visit your home to check that it is in a reasonable condition. Your tenancy details and rent account will also be checked.

It is important to understand that you have to accept the property you are moving into in its current condition. We will not accept responsibility for any damage caused in the process of moving, or for removing any rubbish left by the outgoing tenant. You should also be careful to note any poor DIY work. It will be your responsibility to correct this work and you will be treated as though you had done the work yourself. If it isn't done properly Freebridge will not make repairs without charging you.

UNDER OCCUPATION AND OVERCROWDING

If over time your flat becomes larger than you need, perhaps members of your family have grown up and left home, we will encourage applications to transfer to a smaller home. If you think you need a smaller home please contact us for details.

Overcrowding is where there is a shortage of bedrooms for the family. We base this on the age and gender of the people having to share a bedroom. If your home is overcrowded you can apply for a transfer. If you are not sure whether you are overcrowded contact your Tenancy Advisor who will be able to help you.

ADAPTATIONS

In time you may find it's difficult to manage in your home because a member of your household is elderly or has a disability. We want to support our tenants to live independently in their homes if they wish to and it may be possible to adapt your home to make it easier for you to manage.

There are aids and adaptations available which could help, like replacing a bath with a level access shower to assist with washing or fitting a stair lift in order to allow easy access to the first floor of your home if you have mobility difficulties which make internal stairs difficult.

If you believe that you may benefit from such an adaptation please contact us for advice. We will be able to put you in touch with organisations that may be able to help and will ask you to contact the Norfolk County Council Social Services on 0834 800 8014 and request a visit by an Occupational Therapist on 03448 008 014 who will talk to you about what options are available to you.

If the Occupational Therapist feels that you would benefit from having aids or adaptations they will contact us to discuss how to move things forward. For more details about aids and adaptations please contact our offices or visit our website.

If your home needs lots of changes we may suggest that moving to something more suitable should be considered and we will talk to you about this.

ENDING YOUR TENANCY

If you wish to end your tenancy with us you must give us 4 weeks notice. Tenancies can end on any day of the week.

Before giving notice, please ensure you want to end your tenancy. To proceed, contact us for an 'Ending your Tenancy' form or write to us with your leaving date (at least 28 days from when we receive your letter) and the address you are vacating.

If you change your mind you can only stay with our permission so contact us as soon as possible if you have a problem.

If you are a joint tenant you should note that either of the joint tenants can give notice and end the tenancy and this is fully and legally binding upon the other tenant, even if they are not aware. In a joint tenancy it is assumed that either party can act on behalf of both, a principle known as 'joint and several liability'.

When we receive your Ending your Tenancy form our Lettings Team will:

- Contact you to confirm the date on which your tenancy will end
- Check what rent will be due
- Give details about how to return your keys
- Arrange for an inspector to visit your property before the end of the four week period to check any repairs required and to advise you of any works you are responsible for. If you fail to complete any work the inspector has advised you to do to a satisfactory standard we will charge you to correct it.

On returning the keys to the property you must have left the property, its fixtures and fittings in a clean and tidy condition and have removed all your personal possessions and effects.

If you do not we will charge you for any costs which we incur as a result of work required to clean, clear and repair the property before it is next let.



OTHER THINGS TO DO

- You must notify your local authority and Benefits Teams (if you receive benefit from them)
- Notify DWP if claiming Universal Credit
- You must return your keys to us before 9.00am on the day after the tenancy has ended. If you do not return the keys the locks will be changed and the cost charged to you
- You must give us details of your forwarding address
- Please remember to take readings of any meters for your own records as you have a legal obligation to pay your water, gas and electric bills up to the day you move out
- You should arrange for your mail to be redirected to your new home as we will not be able to collect and return any mail delivered after you leave
- You should remember to cancel deliveries of milk or newspapers etc and tell everyone else who calls on you regularly that you are leaving
- You must make sure that any lodger leaves the property at the same time as you.

If you leave your property without giving notice we will take legal action to regain possession of the property. This could result in a charge being made against you which may lead to difficulty in gaining future accommodation with us and partner housing associations of West Norfolk Homechoice.

If you are unsure of any details surrounding ending your Tenancy, please contact us.

DEATH

In the sad event of a death please let us know as soon as possible. We will also require an original copy of the Death Certificate. If there was a joint tenancy the tenancy will pass to the other tenant upon death. If it was a sole tenancy, but there is a close relative living in the home, in some circumstances, the tenancy may be transferred to them as long as they qualify. Please see our Allocations and Letting Policy.

Following a tenant's death, the tenancy agreement doesn't come to an end, it must be ended by either:

- The Executor of the will, or
- The Administrator under Letters of Administration

If you believe that the tenant died with no will or that nobody has applied for Letters of Administration, please speak to us to discuss how to end the tenancy. We may be able to accept notice from the tenant's next of kin.

ABSENCE FROM YOUR HOME FOR A LONG PERIOD

If you are going to be away from your home for more than four weeks you should notify your Tenancy Advisor. If possible you should provide the name and telephone number of a friend or relative that we could contact in case we need to carry out emergency repairs at short notice.

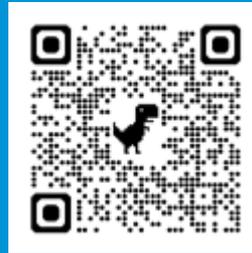
If you intend to be away from your home for a longer period you should contact your Tenancy Advisor to discuss the matter further. If you do not advise us that you are going to be away you may lose your rights under the Tenancy Agreement.

ENERGY ADVICE & EPC'S

Now you are living in your home, here are some top tips for lower energy bills!

- Take a shower instead of a bath; this can save around 40% of the water that you use.
- Ask us to fix dripping taps - it'll waste around 90 litres of water every week!
- Turn off the tap while brushing your teeth, shaving, or washing your face – and use cold water if you don't need hot.
- Wash up in a bowl, it uses much less water than in the sink.
- Make sure that washing machines are full. It's much more cost-effective to do a full wash once every two days, than a half-full wash every day.
- Give your clothes a day in the sun. Clothes dried in the fresh air feel great, and there are drying days in winter too.
- Don't leave your phone on charge all night. It only needs three hours – and try not to leave the TV and other equipment on stand-by.
- Defrost your freezer regularly to help it run more efficiently.
- Fit draught-excluders to your front door, letter box and key hole, and draw your curtains at dusk to keep the heat in.
- Only fill the kettle with as much water as you'll actually use (but make sure you cover the metal element at the base).
- Make sure all the lights are turned off when you go to bed, or use a low-wattage night light if you do need to leave one on.
- Turn your heating down by one degree. You'll hardly notice the change in temperature, but it'll make a big difference to your heating bill.

For information about Energy Performance Certificates (EPC's) and efficiency, you can find it on our page here freebridge.org.uk/freebridge-customer/about-my-home/energy-in-your-home or you can scan the QR code:



GAS & ELECTRIC METERS

You will be given information about the type of gas/electric meters in your property. The Lettings Advisor will talk you through the steps you need to follow when you move in.

MY PROPERTY HAS A CREDIT METER YES NO

A credit meter allows you to use electric or gas before you pay and you will receive a bill from the supplier once you have registered.

Please follow the steps below to register your details with the energy company.

This will make sure that your meter are working and that you are charged correctly.

MY PROPERTY HAS A PRE-PAYMENT METER YES NO

Both gas and electric meters can be used with either a pre-payment card or a key.

Please follow the steps below to register your details with the energy company.

This will make sure that your meters are working and that you are not paying off someone elses debt on the meter.

STEP ONE

Take your meter readings

Gas Electricity

Date Date

STEP TWO

Ring your current suppliers

(Freebridge advisor to complete information below)

Current Gas supplier is

Telephone number to call is

Current Electric supplier is

Telephone number to call is

STEP THREE

They will need the following information:

- Your name
- Address and postcode
- Date tenancy started
- Meter readings for all meters *(Gas and Electric)*

If you need help to read the meter then your supplier can tell you how to do this.

STEP FOUR

(CREDIT METER) Choosing how to pay your bill

You will be able to discuss your bill type with the energy provider at this point (monthly direct debit, quarterly bill)

(PRE-PAYMENT METER) To buy gas or electric you will need a top up key/ card. If there is no top up key/card for the meter ask the supplier to send one to you or tell you where you can collect one from.

STEP FIVE

(CREDIT METER) If there is a debt on the meter, tell the supplier you want it cleared. This will make sure that you do not take over any debt from the previous tenant. If the debt cannot be cleared, your energy supplier may be able to refund any money you spend to clear the previous debt. *(You will need to keep your receipts)*

(PRE-PAYMENT METER) FOR GAS ONLY – when your gas and electric supply has been confirmed *(step three)*

Call Freebridge on 03332 404 444

We will arrange an appointment for the gas to be uncapped within 24 hours of your call. You will need at least £5 credit on the gas meter and at least £5 credit on the electric meter.

STEP SIX

(PRE-PAYMENT METER) When you have your gas and electric top up key/ card you will need to register these in the meter. To register them insert each into the meter and then remove.

Then take them to your nearest pay point to top up.

(These are normally in local shops or supermarkets)



STEP SEVEN

(CREDIT METER) FOR GAS ONLY – when you have completed all the steps above
Call Freebridge on 03332 404 444

We will arrange an appointment for the gas to be uncapped within 24 hours of your call. You will need at least £5 credit on the gas meter and at least £5 credit on the electric meter.

You will not be able to use your gas until your gas and electric supply has been confirmed. You will be charged for the uncapping appointment if:

- any of the above steps have not been completed
- there is no access to the property for the appointment to uncap the gas
- there is not a supply of gas at the property when the engineer visits.

You can change your energy provider if you want to do this. It will normally take around 28 days to transfer to the new energy provider so you will need to pay the current supplier until this happens.

If you would like any more information about changing supplier then please contact our Energy Advisor on 03332 404 444 or email cxsupport@freebridge.org.uk

USEFUL CONTACTS & INFORMATION

The following telephone numbers and information relate to outside organisations and services we do not provide. Here are a few details that you may find useful while you are settling in.

USEFUL CONTACTS

POLICE NON EMERGENCY - 101

101 is the number to call when you want to contact your local police - when it's less urgent than a 999 call. 101 is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU - 08444 111444

Free Advice and help for a variety of subjects such as disputes, money problems, debt counselling and benefit advice.

BOROUGH COUNCIL OF KING'S LYNN & WEST NORFOLK - 01553 616200

For all West Norfolk Council enquiries.

NORTH NORFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL - 01263 513811

For all North Norfolk Council enquiries.

EMERGENCY

ELECTRICITY – 0800 783 8838

If power supply to your area is lost.

GAS – 0800 111 999

If you ever smell gas, whether in your property or in the street, or lose your supply.

WATER – 0845 714 5145

Anglian Water plc.

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY – 0800 807060

To report pollution incidents.

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY - 0845 988 1188

Floodline – flood warnings.

POLICE/FIRE/AMBULANCE – 999

Only for when an immediate response is required and there is a danger to life, use or threatened use of violence, serious injury to a person or serious damage to property.

Please let us know at the start of a call with us if you need a translator and we can arrange one for you. This goes for any printed material too - we want speaking with us to be easy, language should not be a barrier.

Ar jums reikia vertėjo, kad galėtumėte su mumis kalbėtis? Telefoninio pokalbio pradžioje pasakykite mums, ar jums reikia vertėjo, ir mes tuo pasirūpinsime. Tai taikoma ir bet kokiai spausdintinei medžiagai: mes norime, kad jums su mumis kalbėti būtų lengva, ir kad kalba nebūtų kliūtis.

Vai jums ir nepieciešams tulkotājs, lai sazinātos ar mums? Lūdzu, zvana sākumā paziņojiet mums, ja jums nepieciešams tulkotājs, un mēs to nodrošināsim. Tas attiecas arī uz drukātiem materiāliem - mēs vēlamies, lai sarunāties ar mums būtu viegli, un valodai nevajadzētu būt šķērslim.

Czy do rozmowy z nami potrzebny jest tłumacz? Prosimy o poinformowanie nas na początku rozmowy, czy potrzebują Państwo tłumacza, a my zapewnimy jego obecność. Dotyczy to również wszelkich materiałów drukowanych - chcemy, aby rozmowa z nami była łatwa, a język nie powinien stanowić bariery.

Precisa de um tradutor para falar conosco? Por favor, informe-nos no início da chamada se precisar de um interprete e nós arranjaremos um. Isto aplica-se também a qualquer material impresso - queremos que seja fácil falar conosco e o idioma não deve ser uma barreira.

Você precisa de um tradutor para falar conosco? Por favor, informe-nos no início da chamada se você precisar de um tradutor e nós providenciaremos um. Isto vale também para qualquer material impresso - queremos que seja fácil falar conosco e a linguagem não deve ser uma barreira.

Нужен ли вам переводчик для разговора с нами? Пожалуйста, сообщите нам в начале разговора, если вам нужен переводчик, и мы его предоставим. Это касается и любых печатных материалов – мы хотим, чтобы разговор с нами был легким, и язык не должен быть препятствием.

IF YOU NEED ANY HELP TO UNDERSTAND THIS HANDBOOK, PLEASE GET IN TOUCH

Freebridge Community Housing
Juniper House
Austin Street
King's Lynn
Norfolk PE30 1DZ

Email: lettings@freebridge.org.uk

Main Switchboard Telephone: 03332 404 444

Office Opening Hours:

8:45am - 5.15pm (Mon-Thurs)

8:45am - 4.45pm (Fri)

Bank Holidays, Saturday and Sunday Closed

Out of Office Hours:

The main telephone number (03332 404 444) will divert to our 24 hour emergency service.