

WELCOME

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT YOUR NEW HOME



DEVELOPING HOMES AND CREATING OPPORTUNITIES
FOR PEOPLE WITHIN WEST NORFOLK

Freebridge
COMMUNITY HOUSING

TITLE

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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
(Also to be used for repairs calls).

Email: enquiries@freebridge.org.uk

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.

THE TENANT WEB PORTAL: HELPING YOU TO HELP YOURSELF

Within the main Freebridge web site we have a secure area where our customers can access details which are personal to their home.

This allows you to contact Freebridge direct from your computer 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days of the year.

Currently you can:

- Log a repair
- Look at your latest rent statement and print it off
- Opt out of receiving postal rent statements
- Contact your Tenancy or Income Advisor
- Make a complaint
- Check we have the right contact details on file for you and change them if not.

You will have a personal log in and password to the area and it is 100% secure so no-one else can see your details.

HOW DO I SIGN UP?

1. Go to our website: www.freebridge.org.uk
2. Click on the 'Secure Tenant Area' banner
3. Follow the on-screen instructions.

DON'T FORGET...

You will need to know your 10-digit tenancy reference number which you can find on your latest rent statement, rent payment card or on other letters from Freebridge.

Once you have done this Freebridge will allocate you a secure password which will be sent to you by letter within 48 hours.

**GOT A SMARTPHONE?
YOU CAN VISIT OUR SECURE
TENANT AREA BY SCANNING
THIS IMAGE WITH
A QR CODE READER**



We are pleased that you have chosen to live in one of our properties and hope you will enjoy your new home.

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: **www.freebridge.org.uk**

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

Facebook - www.facebook.com/freebridge

Twitter - www.twitter.com/freebridge

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

**PLEASE KEEP YOUR HANDBOOK AND
TENANCY AGREEMENT IN A SAFE PLACE.**

Freebridge is the largest provider of housing in west Norfolk, owning and managing around 7,000 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.



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 forms to complete in the post, 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.



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.

For most of our properties Freebridge charge two types of rents: Social and Affordable. This leaflet explains the important differences between the two.

When we advertise our properties we clearly show how much the rent and any service charges will be. It is important that before placing a bid, you carefully consider whether the rent amount is affordable for you. If you are successful in a bid for one of our Affordable rent properties, we will also make a detailed financial assessment of your circumstances, to ensure that you are going to be able to pay the rent, before we proceed with your nomination.

If you would like to know whether the rent advertised is a Social or an Affordable rent, please contact our Lettings Team on 03332 404 444.

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:

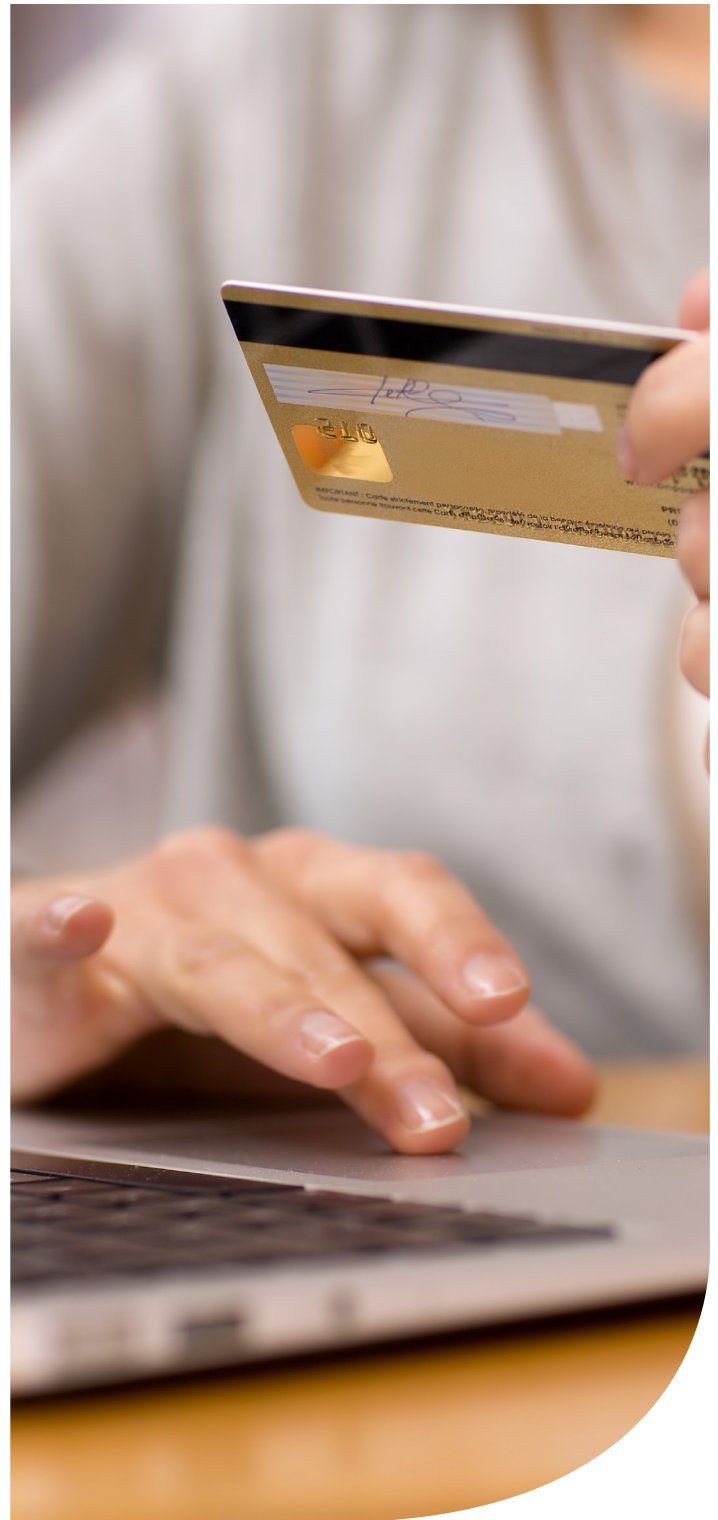
- Direct Debit is the easiest way to pay your rent. Simply call 03332 404 444 and ask for the Income Team. A direct debit is an automatic payment made from your bank account. You will need to provide us with your account number and sort code. It can be set up for any day of the month and payments can 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 404444 during office hours or 01553 666800.
- 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.
- If you wish to pay by Standing Order our bank details are as follows, you will also need to include your tenancy reference with any instruction to your bank.

Account name: Freebridge Community Housing

Account number: 66560683

Account sort code: 53-61-38

PLEASE MAKE SURE YOU INCLUDE YOUR RENT REFERENCE.



WHAT ARE RENT FREE WEEKS?

Each rent year runs from the first Monday in April to the Sunday prior to the following first Monday in the next April. 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'.

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 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, as the total weekly rent for 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 'rebasings') to make sure it remains no more than 80% of a current private 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.

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.

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 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.

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.eslco.co.uk

Alternatively you can contact our Income team on 03332 404444.

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

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. Detailed here is 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 to 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 with no pieces missing. The skirting will have a glossed white finish.

DOORS (INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL)

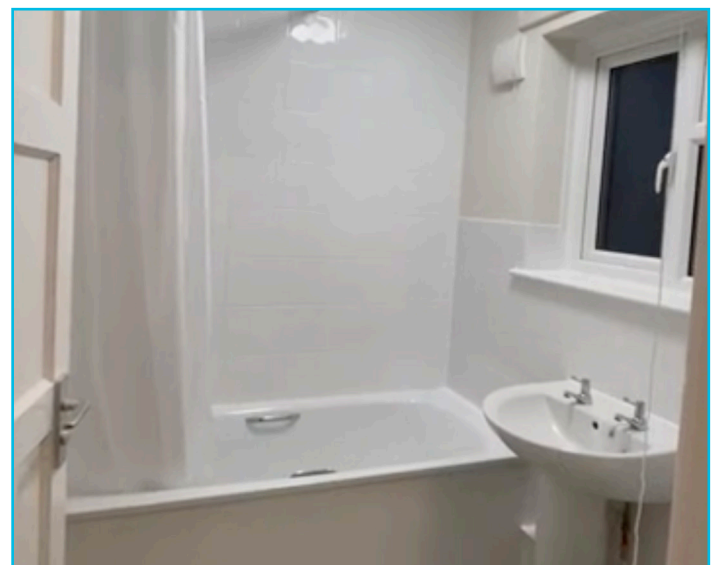
- All rooms will have internal doors which will be lubricated and free from squeaks and damage. The internal doors will open and close with ease.
- All door frames will be free from damage.
- Each external door will have had a lock change and you will be provided with the new keys.
- External doors will 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.

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.

We will take you through the tenancy agreement when you sign up to the tenancy and will be able to explain what each section means. 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.

Please note any initial repairs need to be reported to Freebridge within 7 days of the tenancy start date.

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 paid from the start.

INSURANCE – WHAT YOU NEED TO DO AS A CUSTOMER

We have full insurance for the building you live in as your home.

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 or visit www.freebridge.org.uk/Home-Contents-Insurance.html.

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. Your Lettings Advisor will provide you with a map outlining the boundary of the property and garden which you are responsible for maintaining.

If you are elderly and/ or disabled, 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 living in the Borough of King's Lynn and West Norfolk. To find out more please speak to your Tenancy Advisor or Customer Services on 03332 404 444.

COMMUNITY RESPONSIBILITY AND SHARED FACILITIES – HOW YOU CAN HELP

As a landlord, we are responsible for maintaining the shared areas around your home, like stairways/ stairwells, bin storage cupboards and walkways. We aim to keep them in a good condition for all in the community and to do so we also need your support.

If you live in a property with shared areas we expect

you to keep them clean, tidy and clear of rubbish or bulky items. It is important you do this to avoid the risk of fire and also to keep escape routes clear in the event of such an emergency.

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. If you are unclear about this, West Norfolk Borough Council can provide you with further guidance.

Discarded items such as soft furnishings, electrical goods and other large items should not be left outside your home unless you have arranged for paid collection through the Borough Council Bulky Items collection service (contact Kiers 01553 776676).

WHAT YOU CAN KEEP IN SHARED AREAS

You are not permitted to keep anything in the shared areas. All shared areas and communal areas 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.

MOBILITY SCOOTERS

If you own a mobility scooter you must ask our permission to store and charge it either within your property, externally in a shared yard or garden.

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 fire.

Permission to store the 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 stored externally, scooters must only be charged from an external socket with the necessary residual current device protection.

We suggest that if you are likely to need a mobility scooter you should contact us so we can give you the appropriate advice first.

Freebridge wants you to enjoy your home, however if you live in a property which has areas which you share with others we have a few words of advice which will help you to live safely and in harmony with your neighbours.

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 kinds of domestic rubbish in your communal area (bagged or otherwise).

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

INTERNAL COMMUNAL AREAS WHICH INCLUDES STAIRWELLS, COMMUNAL BALCONIES, CORRIDORS AND WALKWAYS

- These areas should be kept clear of personal property at all times. Items left or stored in these areas will be removed. We will store these items for 28 days before disposal. We consider items left in communal areas a risk to safety in the event of an emergency
- A door mat should be located within your property so that it does not present a trip hazard and should be constructed of non-combustible material
- No items are to be hung over or suspended from handrails or bannisters.

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.

PRIVATE BALCONIES

Items that are not permitted on your balcony:

- Barbeques (lit or otherwise), 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.

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.

SMOKING

- Smoking within any sheltered communal areas including stairwells is not allowed.

- Whilst smoking within open communal areas is allowed this should not cause nuisance e.g. smoking by a window or discarding cigarette butts incorrectly.
- Cigarette butts should be disposed of correctly.

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.

MOBILITY SCOOTERS

If you wish to have a mobility scooter you must seek our guidance first as Freebridge has a policy as to how they are stored and charged. This is to ensure they do not cause a fire or safety risk to your neighbours.

- Mobility scooters and mobility aids should not be stored within internal communal areas and walkways.
- Mobility scooters should not be charged within communal areas and walkways.

REMOVAL OF ITEMS

We will make every effort to communicate with you if there are items that need to be removed or disposed of. If however you failed to do what has been agreed, we will remove the items ourselves and after 28 days they will be disposed of.

Items left in Communal areas and walkways may be removed at any time and without prior notice if they pose a risk to health or safety.

If it is necessary to remove security devices such as locks, chains or shackles. These will be removed and will not be replaced or compensated for.

There are times when it may be necessary to post an estate notice through your door raising or highlighting any concerns we may have. We would request that you act to resolve the problem as quickly as possible to limit the impact this may be having on your neighbours.

Any further questions please contact us on:
03332 404 444

Useful contacts:

Kiers (Borough Council Refuse Collectors):
Tel: 01553 776676
www.west-norfolk.gov.uk

Find your local Recycling Centre:
www.norfolk.gov.uk/recyclingcentres

RSPCA:
<https://www.rspca.org.uk/whatwedo/yourlocal>



GROUNDS MAINTENANCE – THE SERVICES FREEBRIDGE PROVIDES

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.

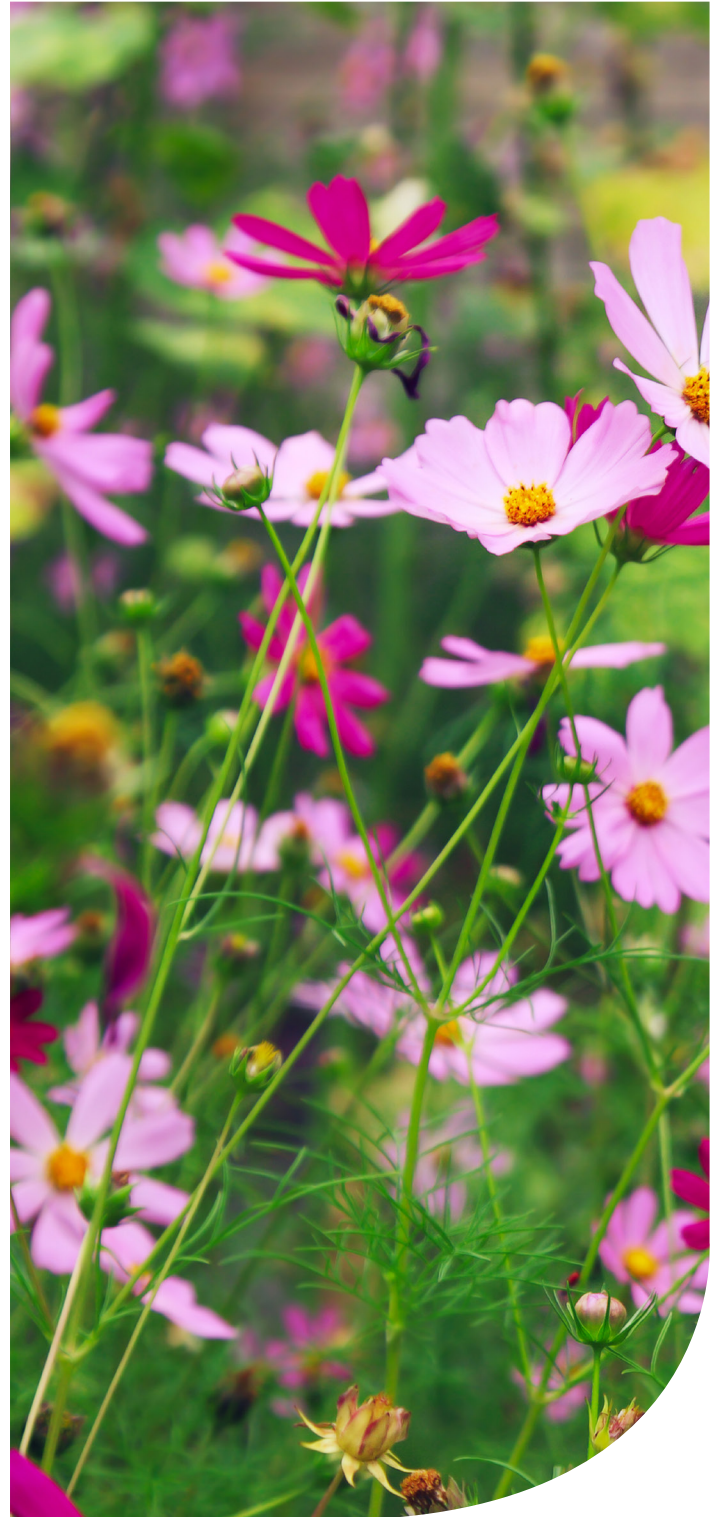
We always aim to provide high quality grounds maintenance services, if you find that this is not the case, please contact us so we can take action and correct this.

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.



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.

PRESERVED RIGHT TO BUY

If you previously had the 'Right to Buy' with the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk, you have a 'Preserved Right to Buy'. This allows you to buy your home from us with a discount on the sale price under similar rules to those which applied when you were a council tenant, providing it is not an 'exempt property'.

RIGHT TO ACQUIRE

New tenants to us do not have the 'Preserved Right to Buy' but may, in certain circumstances, be entitled to the 'Right to Acquire'. You can get an application form and information booklet from our offices.

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

APPLICATION FORMS AND INFORMATION ABOUT THE RIGHT TO BUY OR THE RIGHT TO ACQUIRE ARE AVAILABLE FROM OUR OFFICES.



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 customers, 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 staff 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 have adopted the following definition of a racist incident: -

'Any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person.'

(Macpherson Report 1999, Recommendation 12)

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 effecting 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

- We will use starter tenancies in our properties to help establish good behaviour before converting tenancies to assured status after a year. We may end any tenancies as appropriate anytime after six months and before the tenancy becomes assured
- Use the sign-up process and visits during starter 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.

1. 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

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.

Your Tenancy Agreement sets out in detail which repairs we are responsible for and which items you will be expected to deal with as a tenant.

In summary, we will repair the:

- Structure and exterior of your home including the roof, walls, ceilings, window frames, outside doors, drains, gutters and external pipes
- Installations in your home for the supply of water, gas, electricity and sanitation including basins, sinks, baths and toilets
- Installations in your home for supplying heat and hot water
- Shared/communal areas like stairways, landings, lifts, shared lighting, shared gardens and rubbish chutes.

You are responsible for:

- Small repairs such as unblocking sinks, replacing sink and plug chains
- Making good damage to door handles, replacing lost keys to the property, and changing light bulbs and fluorescent tubes
- All internal decoration, including the repair of minor damage to plaster work decorative effects such as coving
- Your own fixtures and fittings, including the plumbing-in and installation of items such as cookers, washing machines and dishwashers
- Ensuring that your property retains a supply of gas, electricity and water so that your supply is not cut-off for non-payment of bills resulting in the need to relight boilers or check installations
- Any replacement of glass due to accidental breakages
- Any pest control that is needed in the property.

You can request that we undertake repairs that you are responsible for but we may charge you.

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

During office hours your call will be answered by our Customer Services 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 staff from our out of hours provider, which provides an out-of-hours emergency repairs call handling service for us.

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.

WHEN REPORTING REPAIRS OUTSIDE OF OFFICE HOURS PLEASE ENSURE THAT THESE ARE GENUINE EMERGENCIES ONLY.



EMERGENCY REPAIRS - WE RESPOND WITHIN 24HRS

Definition: Repairs to remedy any defect which puts the health, safety or security of a tenant or third party at immediate risk or which affects the structure of the building.

Examples:

- Blocked flue to open fire or boiler
- Toilet not flushing (where there is no other toilet in the property)
- Blocked foul drain, soil pipe or toilet (where there is no other toilet in the property)
- Total loss of heating or hot water during the heating season from 31 October - 1 May
- Serious leaking from water or heating pipe, tank or cistern
- Unsafe electrical fittings like exposed wiring
- Insecure external window, door or lock
- Unsafe stairs
- Severely leaking roof.

URGENT REPAIRS - WE RESPOND WITHIN 7 DAYS

Definition: Repairs to remedy a defect that does not cause immediate risk to the health, safety or security of a tenant or third party and although therefore not an emergency, still needs to be carried out quickly to ensure that the risk does not increase.

Examples:

- Leaking or faulty radiator valve
- Faulty extractor fan
- Defective cistern or overflow
- Faulty communal TV aerial.

ROUTINE REPAIRS - WE RESPOND WITHIN 28 DAYS

Definition: Repairs carried out to remedy a defect which can be deferred without causing discomfort, inconvenience or nuisance to the tenant or a third party or the long term deterioration of the building.

Examples:

- Dripping/leaking taps or shower units
- General joinery repairs like floor boards, work tops, internal doors
- Kitchen fittings
- Easing of doors and windows and repairs to door/window furniture (handles and so on)
- Plaster work
- Tiling (including floors)
- Fencing/gates/garage doors
- Blocked or broken guttering.

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 Customer Services on 03332 404 444.

DELIBERATE PROPERTY NEGLIGENCE 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.

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.



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 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.

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.

WATER BURST

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

PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF CONDENSATION IN THE HOME

It can be easy to confuse condensation in your home (caused by warm, moist air coming into contact with colder surfaces) with rising damp (caused by water penetrating the property from the ground upwards often due to the property's damp course barrier failing) or water penetration from leaking pipes, gutters or roofs.

Condensation can produce mould growth on walls and other surfaces. This can be a particular problem in properties occupied by large families who, just by normal daily activities such as washing and cooking, can produce large amounts of moisture.

An average family of five can produce up to 14 litres of water vapour every day.

You can help to minimise and prevent condensation, and as a result mould, by taking some basic steps as detailed below:

Reduce the amount of moisture you are creating by:

- Covering pans when cooking
- Not drying wet clothes on radiators or on airers indoors
- If you have a tumble dryer making sure this is vented to the outside of the property
- Keeping the bathroom door shut when the room is filled with steam
- Opening the windows to remove large amounts of steam.

Properly ventilate your home to remove moisture by:

- Opening windows to allow air to circulate through the property, especially in the kitchen and bathroom when in use
- Keep internal doors within the property open in order to allow air to circulate
- Avoid placing large amounts of furniture directly against walls so that air can circulate
- Open the air vents / trickle vents on your windows.

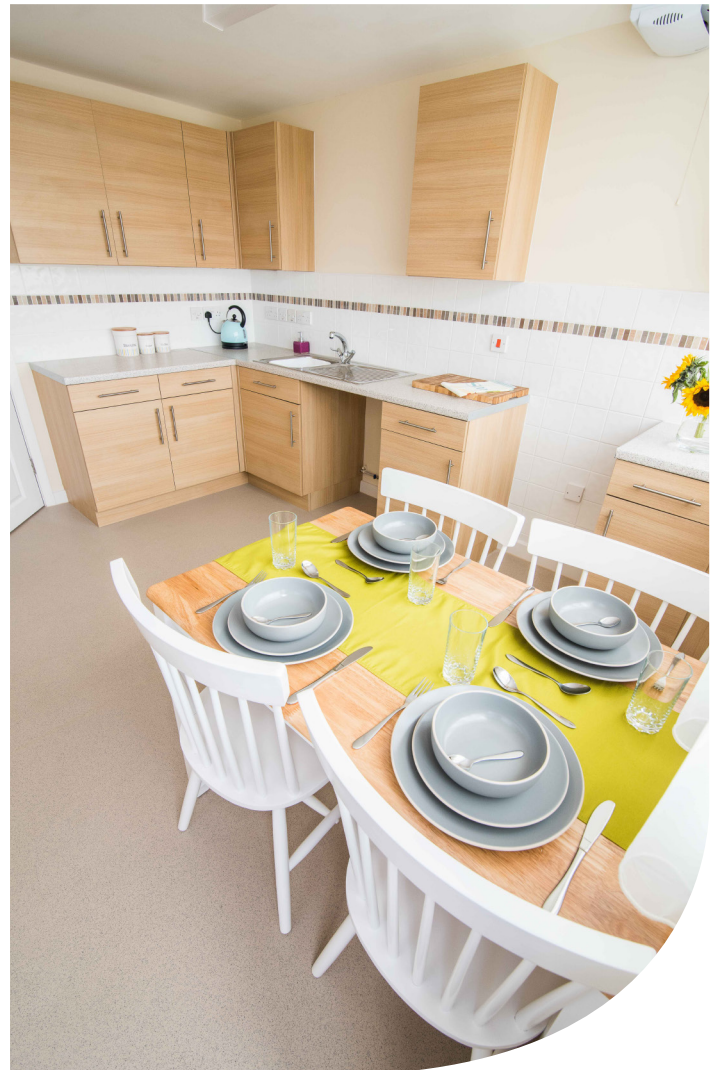
- Switch on your extractor fans when bathing and cooking.

Properly heat your home:

- Try to ensure that your home is kept warm and at a reasonable temperature. Air can hold moisture - if moist air is cooled by contact with cold surfaces such as walls or windows it will create condensation.

If you still experience problems after taking the above steps, please contact our Customer Services on 03332 404 444.

We will be able to provide you with more information and if the problem continues we can arrange for someone to visit you at your home.



PROTECTING YOU IN YOUR NEW HOME

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

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.

In relation to the use of a home and use of communal areas the tenancy agreement states that you are:

- Not to store flammable or explosive material in your home, other than items stored for normal household use.
- To report to us promptly any repair or defect for which we are responsible in your home or the common areas.
- To allow our employees 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 prompt 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
- 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:

FIRE SAFETY



FCH 0256

DEVELOPING HOMES AND CREATING OPPORTUNITIES
FOR PEOPLE WITHIN WEST NORFOLK



**FIRE SAFETY
FOR SHELTERED SCHEMES**



FCH 0255

DEVELOPING HOMES AND CREATING OPPORTUNITIES
FOR PEOPLE WITHIN WEST NORFOLK



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.

FCH 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



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 certificate 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.

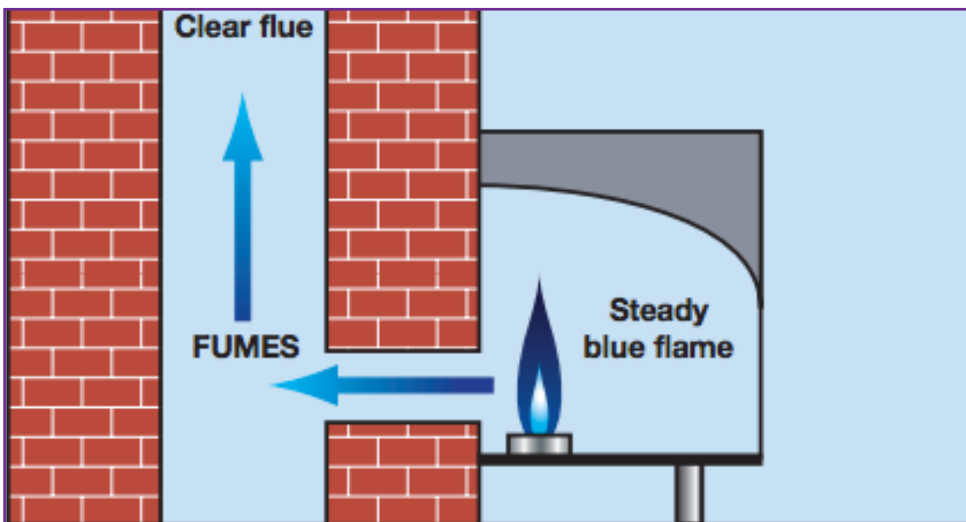
Our heating contractor will contact you direct with an appointment 8 – 10 weeks before your service inspection is due to ensure the safety check is completed before the current annual gas certificate expires. If this appointment is not

convenient, please contact Freebridge or the heating contractor to rearrange the appointment.

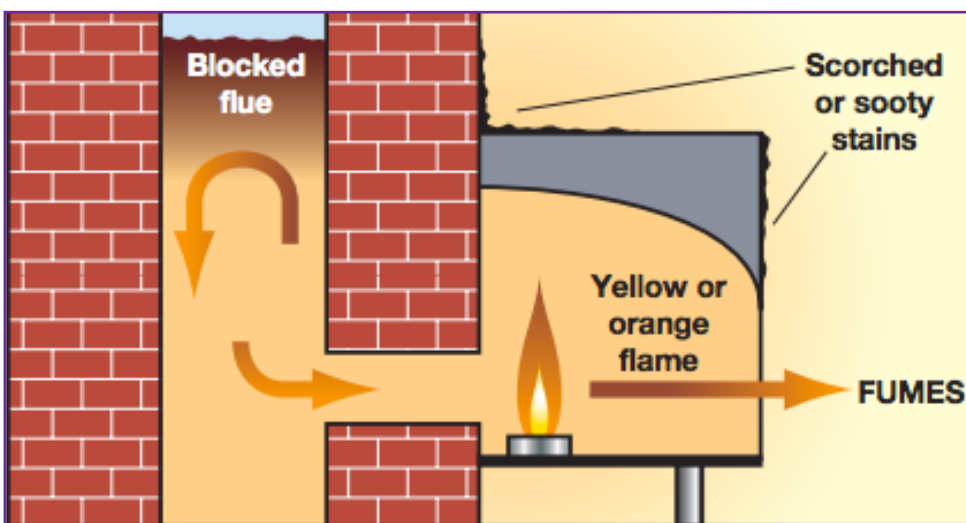
You must allow us access into your home to carry out the safety check. If you do not allow us access, you may be putting your life and those of your family and neighbours at risk, this is also a breach of your tenancy and you could lose your home.

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.

A SAFE GAS APPLIANCE



A DANGEROUS GAS 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.

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.

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 both the annual maintenance, which must be completed by a qualified person, and the safety of the equipment. 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.



WHAT IS AN ENERGY PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE?

The Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) is a European Union (EU) initiative as part of the drive to improve energy efficiency across the EU member countries. An EPC provides two key pieces of information:

- The energy efficiency of a property
- The environmental impact of a property

You will be provided with an EPC certificate when you move into your home. The EPC provides a rating of a property's energy efficiency and displays this as a graph, similar to those found on kitchen appliances.

Ratings come on a scale of A-G, with A being the best rating. This means that home owners and occupiers can compare the energy efficiency of different properties in a similar way to comparing the energy performance of fridges or freezers.

The EPC also includes a Recommendation Report which lists the potential improvements that can be made to a property in order to:

- Cut fuel bills
- Improve energy efficiency
- Help cut carbon emissions

The EPC is split into the following four sections:

1. The performance and environmental impact of the property
2. Estimated energy use based on standard occupancy assumptions
3. A summary of energy performance features
4. The recommendations for improving the energy efficiency

WHEN IS AN EPC REQUIRED?

Since 2009, as part of the Energy Performance of

Buildings Directive (EPBD) issued by the EU, all buildings in the UK that are constructed, sold or offered for rent need an EPC.

- An EPC is required whenever a property is marketed
- The EPC is valid for 10 years
- This applies to all sellers hoping to sell their property and to landlords offering a property for rent

HOW IS AN EPC PRODUCED?

An EPC can only be produced by a Domestic Energy Assessor (DEA) or a Home Inspector (HI) who is a member of an approved Government Accreditation scheme. The energy assessor will visit the property to determine the energy related features. These are then entered into a computer program which has a calculation model developed by the government and is known as Reduced Data Standard Assessment Procedure (RDSAP).

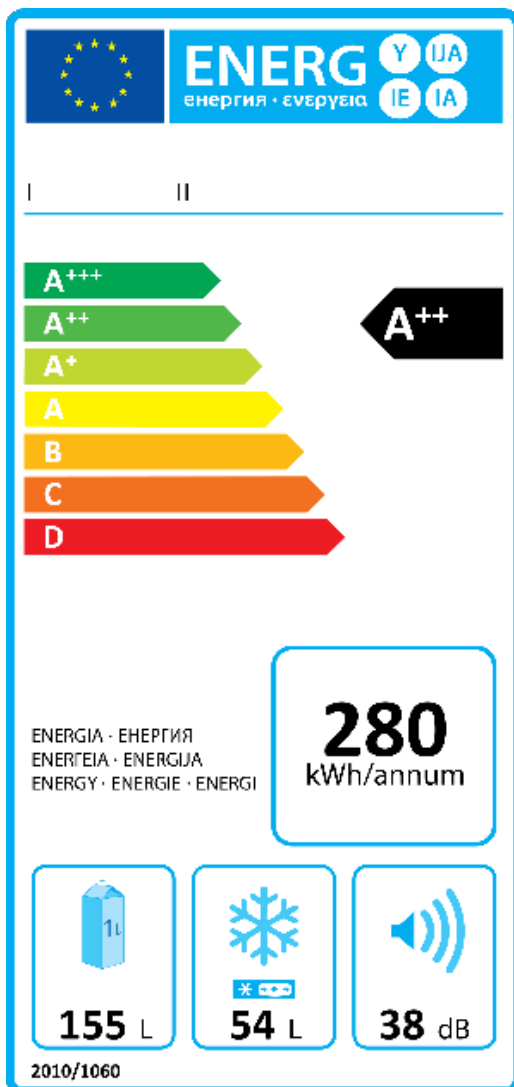
RDSAP is a cost-based rating system which uses pre-determined assumptions. It does not look at the appliances, but rather the performance of the building itself in areas such as heating and lighting. In other words, it provides an energy efficiency rating for the property itself rather than an occupancy rating.

When collecting the RDSAP data the energy assessor will need to determine the following:

- Property type
- Age of property
- Type of construction
- Property dimensions
- Room and water heating systems
- Insulation levels
- Windows and glazing types
- Types of lighting

This information will be entered into the calculation software and an EPC will be produced.

PERFORMANCE RATING



The EPC displays the Energy Efficiency Rating and Environmental Impact Rating as shown below.

The performance of a property is rated in terms of the energy used per square metre of floor area; the energy efficiency based on fuel costs; and the environmental impact based on CO₂ emissions. The numbered arrows show the current rating based on the existing energy performance of the

property and the potential rating if the suggested improvements are implemented.

ESTIMATED ENERGY USE

The estimated energy (see table below) shows the estimated energy use, CO₂ emissions and fuel costs of the dwelling.

The figures in the table are based on standardised assumptions about occupancy, heating patterns and geographical location. This means that the figures displayed will be different to the **actual** fuel cost.

The reasons for this are:

- RDSAP uses a standard heating pattern of 9 hours each weekday and 16 hours a day at the weekend. It further assumes that the main living area is heated at 21°C and the remainder of the dwelling at 18°C. This may be different to the actual heating pattern of the person living there, but it enables properties to be compared on a like for like basis
- The model assumes that the number of occupants is proportional to the floor area of the dwelling and hot water usage is calculated using the same proportions. Therefore, if a single person is living in a five-bedroom house, the energy used for hot water in the model and displayed on the EPC will be higher than the actual usage. This procedure allows all properties to be compared on an equal basis
- The model assumes that all properties are based in the middle of England and uses the average outside temperature of that region for the heating calculations. A property in the southwest of England is likely to require less energy for heating than a comparable property in the northwest and this would be reflected in the actual energy bills
- If the property has two space heating systems (a main heating system such as a gas boiler

with radiators) and a secondary or 'top-up' heating system (e.g., an open coal fire), the model assumes that up to 15% of the space heating is provided by the secondary system. The efficiency of the secondary system is likely to be much lower than that of the main system and will therefore push the energy costs up. It may be that the secondary system is rarely used and would not contribute to 15% of the space heating, but so as to compare properties fairly, these are the standard assumptions made in the model

- The energy use displayed in the EPC includes the energy consumed in producing and delivering the fuel to the dwelling, and thus will be greater than the energy actually used in the dwelling

SUMMARY OF ENERGY PERFORMANCE RELATED FEATURES

The summary of energy performance related features section of the EPC shows the most crucial energy related elements of the property in the form of a table. The table is broken down into the different elements of the property such as:

- Wall construction type
- Roof construction type
- Floor construction type
- Windows and glazing
- Main Heating system present
- Main heating controls
- Secondary heating system
- Water heating
- Low energy lighting

The table then shows how each of the different elements of the property are performing in terms of their current energy efficiency and environmental

performance. The descriptions provided are based on the data that has been collected specific to the property's thermal and heating elements. These descriptions are shown as stars where 1 star means least efficient and 5 stars means most efficient.

In some cases, due to the RDSAP calculation methodology, some of the elements have to be assumed. Floors are a typical example of this as it is usually not possible for the energy assessor to identify whether any additional floor insulation is present. This is because the survey is non invasive and the assessor cannot use a drill to lift floorboards or pull back carpeting.

Some of the descriptions could lead to concern for the homeowner and it is important to understand the reasoning behind these. For example, the energy efficiency of the hot water system may be given a single star rating because of the cost associated with electricity compared to the cost of gas. The environmental impact may also rate as a single star due to the carbon emissions associated with electricity generation. This **does not** mean that the system is of poor quality, poorly manufactured or poorly installed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations section lists measures that can improve the energy efficiency and therefore the SAP rating of the property. The recommendations are separated into:

- Lower cost measures—below £500 installation cost
- Higher cost measures—above £500 installation cost

The measures are assessed cumulatively in a predetermined order and are only included if they make a measurable change to the energy efficiency of the building.

The recommendations section also displays typical savings per year and shows the energy efficiency and environmental impact ratings as a result of these improvements.

Finally, there is a description of each recommendation and explains how it can be used to improve the energy efficiency of the home. It also gives advice on how the recommendation can be applied/ installed.

For example, if a recommendation was given to replace an existing boiler with a more energy efficient Band A condensing boiler, the accompanying text would read as follows:

“Band A condensing boiler

A condensing boiler is capable of much higher efficiencies than other types of boiler, meaning it will burn less fuel to heat this property. This improvement is most appropriate when the existing central heating boiler needs repair or replacement, but there may be exceptional circumstances making this impractical. Condensing boilers need a drain for the condensate which limits their location; remember this when considering remodelling the room containing the existing boiler even if the latter is to be retained for the time being (for example a kitchen makeover).

Building Regulations apply to this work, so your local authority building control department should be informed, unless the installer is registered with a competent persons scheme, and can therefore self-certify the work for Building Regulation compliance. Ask a qualified heating engineer to explain the options.”

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

1. Take a shower instead of a bath; this can save around 40% of the water that you use.
2. Ask us to fix dripping taps - it'll waste around 90 litres of water every week!
3. Turn off the tap while brushing your teeth, shaving, or washing your face – and use cold water if you don't need hot.
4. Wash up in a bowl, it uses much less water than in the sink.
5. 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.
6. Give your clothes a day in the sun. Clothes dried in the fresh air feel great, and there are drying days in winter too.
7. 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.
8. Defrost your freezer regularly to help it run more efficiently.
9. Fit draught-excluders to your front door, letter box and key hole, and draw your curtains at dusk to keep the heat in.
10. Only fill the kettle with as much water as you'll actually use (but make sure you cover the metal element at the base).
11. 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.
12. 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.



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

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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 404444 or email enquiries@freebridge.org.uk

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 include a number of seats available on our board that are allocated to our tenants and a chance to sit on our tenant panel.

The Tenant Panel has been set up to look at key areas of our work. The Panel meets on a regular basis to look at different projects and consider ways of improving key areas of work, it 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 a similar group 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 magazine 'Streets Ahead'.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED AND WHO TO CONTACT

Please contact us by telephone on 03332 404 444, or by writing to our Juniper House address or by e-mail at enquiries@freebridge.org.uk.

WE WANT TO INVOLVE TENANTS TO ENSURE THAT OUR SERVICES ARE EFFECTIVE, EFFICIENT AND RELEVANT TO ALL OUR CUSTOMERS.



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.

We are registered with the Financial Conduct Authority (Interim Permission No. 643796) to provide financial services to our customers, and every member of our Income Team is also registered with the Institute of Money Advisors. We only work with free debt advice charities; we will never refer you to a debt management company, or other organisation that charges for their services. We are not able to recommend debt solutions and we do not offer any advice or information regarding insolvency.

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 email enquiries@freebridge.org.uk or benefits@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.



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 enquiries@freebridge.org.uk.
- By writing to us at Juniper House, Austin Street, King's Lynn, Norfolk, PE30 1DZ.
- Via the Tenant Web Portal - once they have registered tenants will be able to send a comment/ complaint directly to us from here as well as report a repair and view their rent statement.
- Via our social media accounts.

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 all of our offices and through our website.



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 Homechoice, the housing register operated by the Borough of King's Lynn and West Norfolk and 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.

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 www.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

Over time if 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 **28 days notice**. Your tenancy will end on a Sunday.

Please be sure that you definitely want your tenancy to end before giving us notice. If you wish to end your tenancy contact us and we will give you a form to complete called '**Ending your Tenancy**' or you can write to us telling us you are leaving, the date that you want the tenancy to end, (this must be at least 28 days after the date we receive the letter) and the address that you want to leave.

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 in order 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 King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council's Council Tax and Housing Benefit 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 Monday after the tenancy has ended date. 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 he/she qualifies. 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.

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 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.

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.