



Handbook



Contents

1. Introduction	p5
2. Your Rights As A Tenant	p6
3. Rent And Money Matters	p10
4. Respect For Others	p13
5. Repairs And Maintenance	p16
6. Safety And Security	p23
7. Saving Energy	p27
8. Moving House	p28
9. Information And Consultation	p30
10. Data Protection	p31
11. Complaints Procedure	p32
12. Useful Contacts	p34

Contact Details

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Email: info@ayrshirehousing.org.uk

Office: 119 Main Street, Ayr, KA8 8BX

Accessibility

We have tried to make this handbook as easy to read as possible by taking care in the choice of colours and type. On request, we can also supply it in a print size to suit you. We can also provide it in Braille, audio formats and in other languages. Our website also has a number of accessibility enhancements which you may find useful. It can be found at;

www.ayrshirehousing.org.uk

This is the place to get up to date information about what's happening in Ayrshire Housing. You can also gain access to all our key documents including this handbook. You can even tell us what you think of our services by posting a comment on the blog. You can also make repairs requests online and gain access to other services, including rent payment options, the mutual exchange register and our online application form for re-housing.

We have tried to make the site as easy to use as possible. For example, it features a Royal National Institute for the Blind-approved text enhancement feature called Betsie as well as an inbuilt text-to-speech facility to further assist visitors

Photography: Iain Brown, David Cadzow, Christine Ottewill, Mike Scott, and Jim Whiston
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Introduction

Whether you are a new tenant or have been with us for many years, we hope that you find this handbook useful.

It gives you details of the services that you should expect to receive from us. We are committed to providing you with the best possible service. However, if you think that we have failed to do so or could do things differently, we want to hear from you.

Ayrshire Housing is a community controlled, not for profit organisation. Its success depends on a partnership of tenants, the local Council and community volunteers. There are five places for tenants on the Board which runs the association. In addition, there are lots of other ways to get involved. Our staff will arrange regular meetings with you and your neighbours to discuss the management of your estate. If you want to come together in a formal residents group we will give you financial and practical support.

Look out for our quarterly tenants' newsletter. Through this we will keep you up to date with new developments. We will also consult with you on any proposed change to your tenancy agreement including your rent.

We wish you many pleasant years in your home!

Your Rights as a Tenant

You will have been asked to sign a tenancy agreement with us. The tenancy agreement is called the Scottish Secure Tenancy and was introduced as part of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. This is a legal document that sets out both the rights and responsibilities of both yourself and Ayrshire Housing.

As long as you keep to the conditions of the agreement you will have the right to remain in your home. This is known as “security of tenure”.

Changes in Your Household

If you want to:

- Take in a lodger (with or without payment)
- Sublet part of your home
- Transfer (assign) the tenancy to someone else; or
- Change your tenancy to a joint tenancy or from a joint to a sole tenancy

You must first get our permission in writing. We will not refuse permission unless we have a good reason for doing so.

Lodgers and Sub-tenants

If you want to take in a lodger you are still responsible for the rent and the amount of money you charge the lodger must also

be reasonable. Taking in a lodger may affect your entitlement to various benefits.

We will ask you to provide details of who is currently living in the house, the name of the person(s) you propose to allow to live there, how much rent will be charged and a copy of the agreement you will use between you and your lodger or sub-tenant.

We may refuse permission if

- We have served a notice of intention to raise proceedings against you
- We have obtained a court order for your eviction
- The rent or other charges are too high
- The house would be overcrowded

Lodgers and sub-tenants will not have Scottish Secure Tenancies and we will have no obligation to re-house them under any circumstances.

Transferring Your Tenancy (Assignment)

If you decide to leave the house you may be able to pass on your tenancy to someone else who lives in the house, providing they are a qualifying person over the age of 16 years.

The person you want to transfer the tenancy to must have lived in your home for at least six months. If the tenancy is transferred that person becomes responsible for the rent and the conditions of tenancy.

Joint Tenancies

You have the right to ask for a joint tenancy with another member of your household. We will not give our permission if we have served a notice of intention to raise proceedings against you or if we have obtained a court order for your eviction.

Joint tenants have equal and shared responsibility for paying the rent and meeting the conditions of tenancy.

Ending Your Tenancy

Your tenancy can end in a number of ways;

By Written Notice

If you want to end your tenancy you must write to us at least 28 days beforehand. If you are married or co-habiting, your husband, wife or partner must also agree in writing before you can end your tenancy, even if they are not a joint tenant.

Before you move out of your house you must:

- arrange to pay the rent and any other charges due up to the end of the tenancy
- leave the house in a clean and tidy condition
- remove all your belongings
- do the repairs you are responsible for
- make sure any lodgers and sub-tenants leave with you
- give us the address you are moving to
- return your keys on or before the end date of your tenancy

A full list of the things you must do is contained in your tenancy agreement.

By Court Order

We can end your tenancy and evict you if we are granted a Court Order at the Sheriff Court. The reasons why we might seek a Court Order are described in your tenancy agreement, for example because of rent arrears, anti-social behaviour or because you have broken your conditions of tenancy in another serious way.

Abandoning the Tenancy

If we believe you have moved out of the house without telling us we can repossess your tenancy by serving a 4 week notice. During that period we will try to contact

you but at the end of the 4 weeks if there has been no response from you we will serve another notice and end the tenancy.

If you are a joint tenant and you have abandoned the house leaving the other joint tenant still living there, we will also serve notices to end your tenancy. 4 weeks after the first notice is served we will serve another notice giving you 8 weeks to respond. At the end of those 8 weeks, if you haven't contacted us and confirmed that you want your tenancy to continue, it will end and the remaining joint tenant will become the sole tenant.

Passing on the Tenancy to Someone Else (Succession)

If you die, your tenancy would normally pass on to the remaining joint tenant, co-habitee or partner (including same sex partner). In the case of co-habitees and other partners they must also have lived there for at least 6 months.

If there are several adults living in your home when you die, there is a particular order that can be used to determine who becomes the tenant. Further advice on this order is available from the association's staff.

If the property has been designed or adapted for someone's special needs and there is no one with such needs eligible

to succeed to the tenancy we may offer suitable alternative accommodation.

Right to Buy

Some tenants who were previously tenants of Scottish Homes in their current homes continue to have the right to buy. All other tenancies are exempt from the right to buy. Please check with our office to establish whether or not you have the right to buy.

Please remember if you buy your property, you will be responsible for all ongoing repairs, building insurance, general maintenance work and contributing towards the upkeep of your estate.

Right to Repair

If we do not carry out certain repairs within a specific time you can contact one of our approved contractors (you can't use any contractor that you choose) and instruct them to do the work. Please contact our office for further information regarding this scheme.

Right to Compensation for Improvements

If you carry out certain types of home improvements you may be able to get compensation for them when you end your tenancy. These would include

installation of central heating, new kitchen or bathroom but would not apply to minor works. You must get permission from us to carry out the improvement and the work has to be completed to the standard we require. Further information on this is available from our office.

Alterations and Improvements

You have a right to carry out alterations or improvements to your home (for example, fitting an electric shower or laminate flooring). However, you must get our permission in writing before starting the work. This includes the erection of garden sheds, fences and satellite dishes.

We will not unreasonably refuse permission, but we may insist on certain conditions being met, for example if the work involves alteration to the gas or electric supply we may insist that you provide a certificate from a qualified tradesman to confirm the work has been done to acceptable standards.

If you are thinking about making any alterations, contact us and we will discuss your plans and give advice.

After the work has been done, contact us and we will arrange to inspect it.

If the work has not been authorised we may insist that you re-instate the property to its original condition.

Money Matters

Paying Your Rent

You must pay your rent in advance on or before the 28th of each month.

- You can pay at the Post Office, any branch of Woolworths in the UK, or anywhere that you see the Paypoint logo, using the “swipe card” which we will give you, or;
- By monthly Direct Debit.

Please note that we do not accept cash payments at the office.

If you are in any doubt as to what method you can use, please contact the association staff.

If you have any problems paying your rent, contact your Housing Officer immediately.

Housing Benefit

Housing Benefit can help people on a low income to pay their rent.

Many people who are entitled to Housing Benefit do not claim it so it can be worthwhile applying even if you don't think you will get it.

Housing Benefit reviews are carried out on a random basis, and it is essential that you complete and return your review form to South Ayrshire Council, otherwise your

Housing Benefit will stop and you will fall behind with your rent. You will then be held responsible for arrears that arise if you do not return the review form.

Changes in your circumstances, such as a change to any member of the household's income or a change in occupancy (i.e. anyone moving into or out of your home), may affect the amount of benefit you are entitled to receive. You must inform the Housing Benefit office and Ayrshire Housing of any changes to your income as it is an offence to withhold information about changes to your circumstances.

Income Support

If you, or your partner, are on Income Support you will still need to fill in a Housing Benefit form. You should get the maximum amount of benefit unless you have other adults living with you. In this case an amount might be deducted from your benefit for each one, unless you are in receipt of Disability Living Allowance (Care Component) or Attendance Allowance.

Rent Arrears

We believe that paying your rent in full and on time should be your first priority. If you are having difficulty paying your rent on time, please contact us immediately.

Rent arrears can be cleared by agreeing an arrangement to pay off the arrears by instalments over a reasonable period of time. We will ask that you pay at a level you can afford, taking account of your income and the amount you owe.

If you do not contact us or co-operate with our efforts to make an arrangement to reduce your arrears, we will take legal action to end your tenancy and to recover the debt. Before we do this we will give you, and every other qualifying person over the age of 16 who lives in the house, a formal legal warning.

If we obtain a Decree of Possession we will then decide whether to proceed to evict you.

It is worth bearing in mind that if we do take legal action against you the following could happen:

- You could get a poor credit rating which could go against you, for example, if you need a reference for a loan to buy a house or if you are asking for credit for some other purchase

- Your chances of being re-housed could be affected
- You could have your wages arrested
- You could lose your home

We will also seek to recover from you the legal expenses involved in taking action against you.

We will not pursue legal action if you make and keep to an arrangement for paying what you owe.

Dealing with Other Debts

If you are having problems keeping up other payments (apart from your rent), you must get help as soon as possible. Don't ignore the problem. The sooner you face the problems the easier they will be to solve.

You can get help with your debts from:

Consumer and Business Advice Centre
South Ayrshire Council

5-7 River Terrace

Ayr

01292 616060

Money Advice Unit
South Ayrshire Council

5-7 River Terrace

Ayr

01292 616060

Respect for Others

Welfare Rights Office
Social Work
South Ayrshire Council
67 Kyle Street
Ayr
01292 281993

North Ayr Resource Centre
1 Mainholm Road
Ayr
01292 286785

Housing Aid Centre
3A Holmston Road
Ayr
01292 288111

All of these offer a confidential and sympathetic service. They will give you practical advice and will help you sort out your problem.

You could also help yourself by following these steps:

Step 1: Work out a budget

Add up all the money you have coming into the house every week or month. Work out how much you pay during that period for important bills like rent, food, electricity and gas, and any other regular spending. Take away what you spend from what you have coming in and the amount that is left is what you can use to pay off your debts.

If there is nothing left, try to cut back on some things which are less important and make sure that you are claiming all the benefits you can. You can get further information on benefits from the Benefits Agency office on 01292 666000.

Step 2: Arrange to pay off your debts

Contact the organisations you owe money to. Deal with the most important debts first. Most important is keeping a roof over your head then electricity and gas supplies.

Don't offer to pay more than you can afford. You could ask to pay back smaller amounts over a longer period.

If you are threatened with court action get legal advice immediately.

Legal Action

We will try and help you if you come to see us about falling behind with your rent. But if you don't contact us or keep to your arrangement for repayment we will take legal action against you, as a last resort.

We will not pursue legal action if you make and keep to an arrangement for paying what you owe.

Like you, all our tenants should be able to fully enjoy living in their home. This means that you should respect other tenants and do not behave in a way which would offend or annoy those living around you. Examples of unacceptable behaviour include:

- Being very noisy
- Being inconsiderate when parking your car
- Allowing your dog to cause nuisance by loud barking or by you not clearing up its mess
- Not controlling the behaviour of your children
- Not maintaining your garden

Under the terms of your tenancy agreement you must ensure that anyone who lives in or visits your home does not behave in an anti-social way. We will hold you responsible for the behaviour of your visitors and members of your household.

Noise

Too much loud music, particularly at night from parties, or noise from visitors can annoy neighbours. Similarly, hi-fi's and machines such as washing machines and tumble driers can also annoy neighbours if used at certain times.

Please show some consideration and courtesy to your neighbours. If you

frequently disturb your neighbours and behave in a seriously anti-social manner we may take legal action against you.

Pets

You are responsible for any nuisance caused by your pets, including fouling and noise.

Permission to keep a pet may be refused if your pet continually causes nuisance or annoyance to your neighbours or causes damage to property.

We will not give permission to keep an animal classed as a "dangerous breed" in the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 or requiring a license.

Please report stray dogs to either South Ayrshire Council's dog warden (01292 618222) or to the Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SSPCA): 01292 265975.

Gardens and Shared Areas

Unless we maintain your garden and charge you for the service you are responsible for keeping it clean and tidy. You should ensure that the grass and hedges are cut regularly during spring and summer.

In some developments we provide a cleaning service for shared areas such as closes and landings. Tenants in these developments are charged for this service. In other developments you must take your turn to sweep and clean your stairs, landing or close, bin areas and windows.

Dumping Rubbish and Furniture

If you need to get rid of bulky rubbish such as old furniture, contact South Ayrshire Council to arrange for a “special uplift” on 08457 697 520.

To avoid foul smells and avoid attracting vermin, put all your household rubbish in a bag and place it in the bins provided. Never leave rubbish bags in closes or out in the street.

Neighbour Disputes and Anti-social Behaviour

If you are having problems with a neighbour, you should try to solve the problem yourselves by talking to each other about the problem. Your neighbours might not have realised that they are annoying you. If this does not solve the problem, or you think it is too serious for you to deal with yourself, contact us at our office. We will then investigate the complaint. We will talk to you and your neighbour about the disagreement. We may also talk to other tenants.

Disagreements between neighbours can be very difficult to sort out and often lead to claims and counter-claims between neighbours without any independent witnesses, evidence or corroboration. However we will try and resolve such disputes where possible.

If you report serious anti-social behaviour to us it is essential that you also report it to the police.

It is important to have an accurate record of the behaviour nuisance. Keeping a record of information such as:

- times and dates of incidents
- where the incident happened
- what actually happened
- names of witnesses
- details of whether you reported the incident to the police
- name and badge number of police officer you spoke to

This information is particularly important if we decide to take court action against a neighbour. Where a case goes to court it is possible that you would be called as a witness therefore accurate and reliable information is very important.

Legal Action

In more serious cases legal action can be taken against a tenant who has broken the rules of their tenancy agreement. Where a case goes to court the neighbours affected may be asked to go to court to give evidence as witnesses.

If we are taking legal action against you we will give you and every other adult who lives in the house a formal legal warning that we plan to do this. Legal action may lead to you losing your home. We consider harassment of neighbours or criminal behaviour such as drug dealing to be totally unacceptable and we will take legal action if there is proof that you have carried out such activities.

In addition to taking action to end your tenancy we may also consider going to court to get an Anti-social Behaviour Order issued against you. This could eventually lead to you being found guilty of a criminal offence if you were in breach of the order which might result in imprisonment, a substantial fine or both.

Repairs and Maintenance

Responsibilities for Repairs

We aim to set high standards of maintenance and repair for all of our properties. Procedures are in place to ensure that repairs are carried out to a high standard and within set timescales.

Most of the repairs that will be needed in your home will be our responsibility, although there are some repairs which you will require to carry out yourself.

Reporting Repairs

You should report repairs by doing the following:

- Calling into our office at 119 Main Street, Ayr
- Phoning us on 01292 880120 or use our lo-call number 0845 271 2327 (local rates apply)
- Writing to us at our office
- E-mailing our office at info@ayrshirehousing.org.uk
- Contacting us via our website at www.ayrshirehousing.org.uk
- For out of hours emergencies call 0845 719 0019

When you report a repair please remember to give the following information:

- Your name, address and phone number
- A description of the repair needed, in as much detail as possible
- Times when you are usually available to allow access to your home so that the work can be carried out
- If you are not sure when you will be at home, please give a phone number so that the contractor can contact you to arrange a suitable time to carry out the repair.

How long will a repair take?

Emergency repairs: 4 hours

Emergency repairs are those where there is a hazard to life, a risk to safety or where there is the potential for more extensive structural damage to the property.

Examples of emergency repairs are:

Burst pipe
No heating / hot water
No power to all sockets
Choked w.c.
Board up broken window

We aim to respond to all emergency repairs within 4 hours.

Urgent Repairs: 3 working days

Urgent repairs are repairs that need to be done quickly but are less serious than emergencies.

Examples of urgent repairs are:

Repair door locks
Faulty light fitting
Faulty socket
Repair to overflow
Repair radiator
Repair to cistern
Leaking pipes (where leak can be contained))
Faulty door entry system
Repair faulty smoke detector

We aim to complete urgent repairs within 3 working days.

Routine Repairs: 15 working days

Routine repairs cover most other repairs and we aim to complete these within 15 working days.

Repairs to Newly Built Properties

If you have moved into one of our newly built properties the builder is responsible for repairing any defects that arise during

the first 12 months. If you find any faults that need repairing, let us know in the usual way during working hours. If the fault occurs when the office is closed we have given you a list of the appropriate phone numbers to call.

Please contact the office if you cannot find the contractors' numbers but please remember, these are only to be used during the first year from when the house was built.

Quality of Completed Work

Prior to paying our contractors, we carry out regular inspections of work that has been completed to check that:

- The work has been completed to our satisfaction and to the tenant's satisfaction
- The correct repair work was carried out
- The work was completed within the target timescales
- The tenant has no complaints with either the work or the tradesman

The following tables (over) provide details of various repairs and show who is responsible for them.

If the repair is required because you have not taken care of the property or have damaged it then you will have to pay the cost of the repair.

Repair Responsibility

Who is responsible?			
Kitchen	Us	You	Comments
Kitchen units		•	
Sink tops	•		
Switches	•		
Sockets	•		
Cookers		•	

Who is responsible?			
Bathroom	Us	You	Comments
Bath	•		
Sink or wash hand basin	•		
Toilet	•		
Toilet seat		•	

Who is responsible?			
Plumbing	Us	You	Comments
Blocked sink, wash hand basin, bath or toilet	•		If the blockage was caused by the tenant the cost of the repair will be recharged to the tenant.
Cold water supply	•		
Downpipes	•		
Drains and gutters	•		
Hot water supply	•		
Sink plugs and chains		•	
Washing machine fittings		•	

Who is responsible?			
Heating	Us	You	Comments
Chimney and flues	•		
Chimney sweeping		•	
Gas fires	•		
Gas central heating	•		
Electric heating systems	•		
Heating installed by you.		•	

Who is responsible?			
Windows	Us	You	Comments
Glass		•	Unless you can show that the glass was broken by vandalism
Window frames	•		
Window handles	•		
Window catches	•		
Window locks	•		Only if fitted by us

Who is responsible?			
Doors	Us	You	Comments
Doors to the close	•		
Doors to house	•		
Locks	•		If fitted by us
Internal doors		•	
Door entry systems	•		
Door bells		•	
Door chains		•	
Keys		•	

Who is responsible?			
Electrical	Us	You	Comments
TV aerial	•		Only if installed by us
Immersion heater	•		
Light fittings	•		If fitted by us. Does not include bulbs, shades, table lamp
Extractor fans	•		
Smoke detectors	•	(•)	Tenant responsible for battery replacement
Sockets	•		
Switches	•		
Plugs		•	
Close and stair lighting	•		
Wiring	•		
Electric fires		•	Unless fitted by us

Who is responsible?			
<i>Structure</i>	<i>Us</i>	<i>You</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Walls, floors, ceilings	•		
Roof	•		
Damp proof course	•		
Plasterwork	•		Excluding damage to artex

Who is responsible?			
<i>Other</i>	<i>Us</i>	<i>You</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Clothes poles	•		
Rotary driers		•	
Footpaths	•		
Paving slabs	•		Unless laid by tenant
Bin stores	•		
Fences and gates	•		Unless built by tenant
Internal decoration		•	Even if damaged during a repair to the property
External paintwork	•		
Lock-ups	•		
Garages		•	

Gas Repairs

If you smell gas:

- Turn off all gas appliances
- Switch off the gas supply at the mains
- Put out cigarettes and do not light any matches
- Do not use any electric switches
- Open doors and windows to get rid of gas

Phone National Grid Gas on the emergency number 0800 111 999.

If you have gas heating in your home it is essential that a gas safety check is carried out once every year to ensure that it is safe and does not cause any harm to your health. The association has a legal obligation to make sure this check is carried out and we would be grateful for your co-operation and assistance. If our contractor contacts you with a date that is not suitable please contact them or us immediately to make an alternative arrangement. Please remember that we have a legal obligation to carry out this check in the interest of your safety.

Electricity

Your house may be fitted with circuit breakers instead of fuses. These are devices designed to switch off the electricity supply if there is a fault.

If your power fails and you do not know what caused it:

- Switch off everything, including lights
- Set all the circuit breaker points to the “on” position
- Switch the lights and appliances on one at a time

If a faulty appliance has caused the power failure, unplug it and have it checked by an electrician.

If you have a faulty light, turn it off and report the repair to our office.

If you cannot find out what is causing the problem, or there is another major fault, report it to our office.

Frost Precautions

You can reduce the possibility of frost damage:

- Keep your home warm during the day and night.
- Make sure you know where the main stopcock is for your cold water supply and make sure that it works. This can greatly minimise the damage if you have a burst pipe. If you cannot find it please get in touch with us

Safety and Security

Burst Pipes

Most pipes in our properties are well insulated. However, in very cold spells they can freeze and burst. To prevent burst pipes, keep your home warm. If you are going to be away from your home for any length of time switch off the water supply and drain down your hot water cylinder.

If you do have a burst pipe or notice any signs of flooding:

- Turn off the water supply at the stopcock
- Fully turn on all the taps as quickly as possible to drain the system
- If you find the leak, bind it tightly with a towel and place a bowl underneath to catch any drips
- If the water is likely to come into contact with any electrical fittings, switch off the electricity supply
- Warn neighbours who might also be affected
- Contact us or phone the emergency repairs number

Condensation

Too much moisture in your house can cause condensation. When moisture in the air meets a cold surface like a window or a wall, it condenses (turns into water). If this happens regularly, mould will start

to grow. This usually appears on cold outside walls and surfaces, and in areas where the air does not circulate well. It can also damage clothes and furnishings.

You can get rid of mould on the walls by wiping it with a damp cloth soaked in a solution of one part bleach to four parts water. You can also buy special paint which may stop the mould growing.

To reduce condensation you can:

Make the house warmer:

- You will cut down on condensation if you keep your home warm

Increase the ventilation:

- All houses need ventilation to allow stale, moist air to escape and to allow fresh air to enter.
- Make sure all wall and window vents are kept open
- Use extractor fans if they are fitted

Cut down on the amount of moisture produced:

- If possible, dry clothes outdoors
- If you use a tumble drier, make sure it is either vented to the outside or it is “self condensing”
- Do not use bottled gas heaters or paraffin heaters. These produce a pint of water for every pint of fuel they burn

Gas Repairs

If you smell gas:

- Turn off all gas appliances
- Switch off the gas supply at the mains
- Put out cigarettes and do not light any matches
- Do not use any electric switches
- Open doors and windows to get rid of gas

Phone National Grid Gas on the emergency number 0800 111 999

If you have gas heating in your home it is essential that a gas safety check is carried out once every year to ensure that it is safe and does not cause any harm to your health. The association has a legal obligation to make sure this check is carried out and we would be grateful for your co-operation and assistance. If our contractor contacts you with a date that is not suitable please contact them or us immediately to make an alternative arrangement. Please remember that we have a legal obligation to carry out this check in the interest of your safety.

Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Faulty gas appliances may cause carbon monoxide poisoning. Symptoms may include tiredness, drowsiness, headaches and chest pains.

To reduce the risk, each year we check and maintain the gas appliances we have fitted to make sure they are safe. That is why it is essential that you allow access for this check to be carried out. You can help reduce the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning by:

- Never cover an appliance or block air vents in the house
- Never block or cover outside flues
- Never use an appliance if you think it is not working properly. (Signs to look out for include yellow or orange flames, soot or stains around the appliance and pilot lights which frequently blow out)

If you have any doubts about the safety of your gas appliances please contact our office.

Smoke Detectors

All our houses are fitted with smoke alarms. This will give you an early warning if a fire breaks out, by making a loud noise. It could make all the difference to your family's safety.

You should never:

- Disconnect the alarm
- Paint over it
- Move it

When the alarm is working properly a red light should flash every 40 seconds.

Check that the alarm is working at least once a month. You can do this by pressing and holding the test button until the alarm sounds. This may take up to 10 seconds. When you press the button the red light should flash continually. The alarm should stop soon after you take your finger off the button.

Clean the alarm regularly to keep it dust free and improve its efficiency.

Fires

Fires can be caused by the slightest thing such as a dropped cigarette, sparks from matches, faulty electrical appliances, chip pans and so on.

To reduce the risk of fire in your home:

- Keep matches where children cannot reach them
- Be careful when using a chip pan and never leave it on the cooker while no one is in the kitchen
- Put out all cigarettes, especially at night
- Never smoke in bed
- Unplug appliances and do not overload sockets
- Have your electric blanket serviced at least every three years

Fire Escape Plan

Think about what escape route you would use if a fire broke out in your home and make sure everyone who lives with you knows what to do if fire breaks out. Make sure everyone knows where the house keys are kept.

If a fire breaks out:

- Close the door of the room where the fire is to stop the fire spreading
- Get everyone out of the house
- Phone 999 and ask for the fire brigade

Chip pan fires:

- Switch off the cooker
- Do not move the pan
- Do not pour water over the pan
- Cover the pan with a damp cloth

Insurance

We insure the structure of your house but this does not cover your personal belongings or damage to the décor inside the house. Many tenants believe that we insure their furniture, belongings and décor against fire, theft, vandalism or burst pipes. This is not the case but unfortunately some people only realise this after the damage has been done. Even if the damage was caused, for example, by a neighbour's washing

machine or bath overflowing, we are not responsible for any damage to your belongings.

We strongly recommend you to take out home contents insurance with a reputable insurer.

South Ayrshire Council offers an easy way for you to insure your belongings under a special Household Contents Insurance Scheme. This is arranged with a major insurance company and is available to ex - South Ayrshire Homes tenants.

In addition, the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations also provides competitively priced insurance.

Both of these schemes provide the opportunity for tenants to pay the cost of the insurance in instalments.

Please contact our office for further information.

Home Security

We try and provide you with a safe and secure home and in return we ask that you do what you can to support us and help to protect your home and environment.

Most burglaries are carried out by opportunist thieves but you can reduce

the chances of damage to your home by taking a few precautions.

- If you are going out do not leave notes stating, for example, "back in 30 minutes" or "key next door"
- When you are out, always make sure that all doors and windows are closed and locked
- Never leave your key under a door mat or hanging behind the letter box
- Keep garden huts and garages locked
- Don't leave ladders lying about the garden
- Check the identity of all callers before you let them in to your home. All of our staff and the contractors we use should carry identity cards. If you are in any doubt do not let them in
- Door entry systems should never be left unlocked. This defeats the purpose of having the system and puts at risk the security of all the tenants in the close

Saving Energy and Keeping Costs Down

Going on Holiday

Try to avoid making it obvious that you are on holiday:

- Stop the milk and paper deliveries
- Leave a key with a friend, relative or neighbour and ask them to keep an eye on your home. They could make sure that mail is not lying in your letter box or is visible and they could also put a light on and close curtains at night
- Let us know if you are going to be away for any length of time and tell us who we should contact in an emergency
- You may also wish to remove any valuable items such as jewellery and let the police know that you are to be away

Crimestoppers

Much has been achieved by the efforts of the management and the voluntary members of Ayrshire Housing in improving the quality of affordable housing for rent. But improvements are costly. Time, effort and money, spent unnecessarily dealing with criminal activity causes delay in achieving our goals and consequently leads to frustration for many.

A Common Problem

In order to maintain what has already been achieved, and to provide for the future, your help is needed. Have you ever been the victim of a crime, or been aware of potential criminal activity but did not know what to do, and still remain anonymous?

An Easy Solution

Crimestoppers is there to help. Crimestoppers is not part of the UK national police force nor any other governmental organisation. Crimestoppers is a registered charity whose objectives include greater public participation in the prevention and solution of crime. If you are aware of information which might be of interest, then all it takes to help is a simple untraceable telephone call. Take advantage of this unique opportunity and thereby help your community.

Crimestoppers Free Telephone Number Is:

0800 555 111

Be assured that nobody can trace the origin of the call, nobody will contact you without your consent and nobody will know that you have called unless you agree to the same. The system works and is completely anonymous

Your house is built or has been modernised to keep electric and gas costs to a minimum.

If you want to further reduce your bills, you could follow some of these tips:

- Switch off the TV at the on/off button. A TV left on stand-by with red light on still uses up to 25% of full power
- Draw the curtains in the evening when its cold and the heating is on
- Put aluminium foil behind any radiators fitted to outside walls and save up to £10 a year
- Put shelves above radiators and save £5 - £10 per year
- Keep large items of furniture away from radiators
- Turn off lights when leaving a room
- Use your washing machine sensibly
- Wait until you have a full load and select a cool wash cycle of 40°C for most washing
- Don't leave the fridge or freezer door open for long periods
- Put the fridge and freezer in a cool place

- Choose the right pan for cooking and use a lid. Choose the correct size ring to fit the pan or turn down the heat
- Only boil as much water as needed
- Check that the thermostat on your hot water tank is set to about 60°C (140°F)
- Turn the boiler thermostat down by 1°C and save £15 - £30 a year
- Low Energy Light Bulbs (CFLs) use about a 1/4 of the electricity that a normal bulb uses, lasts about 8 times as long and will save about £8- £10 per annum. Grants may be available to assist.

If you want more information contact our staff or;
Donald Hendrie Building
Auchincruive
Ayr
KA6 5HW

Tel: 01292 521 896

Moving House

Transfers

You can ask us for a move to another one of our houses. We will try and assist if your present home does not meet your housing needs; for example, if you need a larger house due to overcrowding, or if you need a different type of house due to medical circumstances.

There may also be other reasons for wanting to move, such as moving to be closer to work or to receive or provide support for a relative.

We may turn down your request for a transfer if you owe us more than one month's rent or if we have served a notice relating to you breaking any tenancy condition (for example, poor condition of your property or anti-social behaviour).

Special Needs Housing

We are particularly keen to help you if you have housing needs which require particular types of accommodation. This may include housing for wheelchair users or for tenants who require "wet floor" shower facilities.

Please contact us if you have a need to be re-housed for such reasons.

Mutual Exchanges

Ayrshire Housing keeps a register of people who are looking for a Mutual Exchange, which you can look at both in our office at 119 Main Street, Ayr, and by visiting our website at www.ayrshirehousing.org.uk.

If you want to swap homes with another tenant you must apply to us in writing. You can apply to swap with tenants of other housing associations or local authorities.

We have an exchange application form that you can fill in to ask for permission to swap and we will respond to your request within one month.

Reasons for turning down a request for an exchange include the following:

- A Notice of Intention to Raise Proceedings has been served on you because you have broken your tenancy conditions
- We have a Court Order that allows us to evict you
- Our property would be either overcrowded or under-occupied after the exchange

- You have rent arrears or you, or the tenant who would be exchanging with you, has a poor tenancy record
- Your home is suitable for someone with special housing needs and there would be no-one living in the house with those needs

If we refuse permission we will tell you why, if the reason refers to an issue with your tenancy.

When you exchange, you must accept the house in the condition you find it. If the decoration is poor, or if the other tenant has damaged the property, we will not repair or redecorate it.

Online and national services

A number of online services are available to tenants wishing to conduct a mutual exchange.

One such scheme is HOMESWAPPER, a mutual exchange service for council and housing association tenants wishing to exchange locally or nationally. Tenants need to register on to the scheme online via www.homeswapper.co.uk, and permission must be sought from us before this can proceed, as stated above.

Information about this and other such schemes can be found by accessing www.direct.gov.uk/socialhousing.

Your Right to Information and to be Consulted

Right to information

We want to keep you informed about our activities and give you the opportunity to comment on what we are doing and planning to do.

If you ask for it we will provide further information about a number of our activities, including:

- Setting your rent and service charges
- Housing allocations, transfers and exchanges
- Repairs and maintenance
- If you have the right to buy your home and the terms on which you can buy it.

You are also free to attend Board meetings and to see non-confidential Board papers.

Right to consultation

We will consult you on issues affecting you including:

- Policies on managing housing
- Standards of service
- Setting rents and service charges

Right to be involved

All tenants are automatically members of Ayrshire Housing. This entitles you to attend the Annual General Meeting and to seek election to one of the five guaranteed tenant places on the Board which runs the association.

There are plenty of other opportunities to get involved at a level that suits. Our tenant participation strategy provides a framework for tenants to become more involved in the organisation's activities.

As part of that strategy we will ask your opinion when we are reviewing a major policy or procedure and will provide you with an opportunity to comment on housing management issues which may affect you.

If you want a full copy of our tenant participation strategy please ask at the association's office.

Data Protection

We will keep to the Data Protection Act 1998

You have a right of access to information which we hold if it identifies you and is in connection with your tenancy.

This right covers information which is held on either our computer systems or paper files.

In some cases we will refuse to give you access to the information. This could include the following situations:

- Where someone else could be identified from the information. In such a situation we would ask the other person if they object to being identified. If they do we will refuse to let you see all or part of the information held about you
- If allowing you to view it could cause harm to your, or someone else's, physical or mental health
- Information about your health has been provided by a health professional and that professional believes that you could be harmed by seeing it
- Refusing you access would help to prevent or detect a crime

- The information was provided in confidence between a lawyer and a client

We will make sure that any information we hold about you is:

- accurate
- up to date
- secure.

If you want somebody else to act for you we will need your written permission before we can deal with that person.

In general, we have to give you the information requested within 42 days, however, we will try and provide it to you within 15 days of receiving your request in writing. We will also not levy a charge although we are entitled to do so.

If you think any of the information is factually wrong you can ask us to correct it.

Complaints Procedure

We aim to provide a high quality service to all our tenants and to our other customers, including applicants and sharing owners.

However, we accept that problems can arise from time to time and, as a result, you may feel dissatisfied with the service we have provided. In these circumstances you should first talk to the member of staff who was involved in providing the service that you are now dissatisfied with.

If you do not want to speak to that member of staff, or if you are dissatisfied with their response, you can make a formal complaint to us preferably by writing to us. It may help if you use the complaint form which is available at our office. (see next page).

We aim to advise you of the outcome of the complaint within 10 working days. If we have made a mistake we will apologise and put the matter right as soon as possible.

There are a number of stages at which the complaint can be dealt with by the association. However, ultimately if you are still dissatisfied you can refer the matter to The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman.

Further details regarding our complaints procedures are available at our office.

Complaints Form (Please photocopy)

Name:

Address:

Telephone:

E-mail:

Please tell us, in the space below what you wish to make a complaint about. Please tell us what has happened and why you are dissatisfied with the situation.

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.....

If you need more space, continue on an attached sheet of paper.

Please tell us what you would like us to do to put it right.

.....
.....
.....
.....

If you need more space, continue on an attached sheet of paper.

Please return this form to:

The Housing Manager
Ayrshire Housing
119 Main Street
Ayr
KA8 8BX

Useful Numbers

Ayrshire Housing	Tel: (01292) 880 120
	Fax: (01292) 880 121

Emergency Services:

Emergency Repairs (office hours)	(01292) 880 120
Emergency Repairs (out-of-hours service)	(0845) 719 0019
Electricity Power Loss (Scottish Power)	(0845) 272 7999
Gas Leaks (National Grid Gas)	(0800) 111 999
Police/Fire/Ambulance	emergency 999
Domestic Abuse Helpline	(0800) 027 1234

Local Police Stations (Non-Emergency Calls):

Prestwick & Troon	(01292) 478 587
Ayr	(01292) 664 000
Maybole	(01655) 889 467
Girvan	(01465) 712 917

General Contact Numbers:

<i>Social:</i>	
South Ayrshire Women's Aid	(01292) 266 482
Multi Agency Partnership (Domestic Abuse)	(01292) 612 721
Age Concern	(01292) 265 304
Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services	(01292) 262 23
Ayr Rape Crisis Centre	(01292) 611 301
Ayr Housing Aid Centre	(01292) 288 111
Voice Advocacy	(01292) 264 396
Social Work Emergency Standby Service	(0800) 811 555
Samaritans (Ayrshire)	(01563) 531 313
Relate (Relationship Counselling)	(0845) 130 4016
National Parentline	(0808) 800 2222
Adult Learning	(0800) 389 8320
Kyle Adult Resource Centre	(01292) 612 091
Throughcare	(01292) 612 092
CASS for Learning Difficulties	(01292) 268 873
Careers Scotland	(01292) 281 421
Criminal Justice Team	(01292) 289 749

<i>Financial:</i>	
Benefits Agency	(01292) 666 00
Benefit Enquiry Line For People With Disabilities	(0800) 882 200
National Debt Line	(0808) 808 4000
Trading Standards	(01292) 616 060
Money Advice	(01292) 616 073
Citizens Advice Bureau	(01294) 467 848
Department of Social Security	(01292) 666 000
Job Centre	(01292) 666 333
Uniform Grants (Ayr, Prestwick, Troon & Surrounding Villages)	(01292) 284 988
Uniform Grants (Girvan, Maybole & Surrounding Villages)	(01465) 712 894

Environmental:

Special Uplift	(0845) 769 7520
Water & Sewage (Scottish Water)	(0808) 169 3985
Roads & Lighting	(01292) 612 302
Environmental Health	(01292) 618 222
Environmental Health 24 Hour Noise Helpline	0800 73 10 4 10

South Ayrshire Council Numbers:

<i>Ayr</i>	
Ayr Housing Office	(01292) 616 000
Social Work Department	(01292) 267 675
Landsburgh House (Homeless Hostel)	(01292) 288 333
Housing & Council Tax Benefit	(01292) 616 009

Prestwick

Prestwick Housing Office	(01292) 671 666
Social Work Department	(01292) 470 099

Troon

Troon Housing Office	(01292) 313 555
Social Work Department	(01292) 316 666
Secession House (Homeless Hostel)	(01292) 318 558

Maybole

Maybole Housing Office	(01655) 882 124
Social Work Department	(01655) 883 293

Girvan

Girvan Housing Office	(01465) 712 299
Social Work Department	(01465) 712 299

Contact Details

Telephone: 01292 880120

Email: info@ayrshirehousing.org.uk

Office: 119 Main Street, Ayr, KA8 8BX

