

Tenant's Handbook

Repairs



Rent



Good neighbours



On the move



Home ownership



Service standards



Other services



Useful contacts



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About Wiltshire Council Housing

Wiltshire Council owns over 5,000 properties mainly in the Salisbury and South Wiltshire area that are rented to tenants. Each property has a dedicated team of officers to manage all aspects of a tenancy, as well as providing support and advice.

We have designed this handbook to give you information about what it means to be our tenant, including your rights and responsibilities as well as ours.

Along with your tenancy agreement, this handbook will help you answer some of the questions you may have about your tenancy and your home. It also has details of who to contact for information and advice. Our officers will do everything they can to work with you to make sure any problems are resolved.

Contact us

For repairs and maintenance enquiries, or to report a repair

Office hours are 8.30am to 5pm – any calls before or after these times will be diverted to the housing out of hours lines.

Tel: **0300 456 0117 – option 2**

Email: **housingrepairs@wiltshire.gov.uk**

For general or tenancy related enquiries

Neighbourhood (tenancy) team

Tel: **0300 456 0117 – option 4**

Email: **hsgmail@wiltshire.gov.uk**

For enquiries or advice on paying your rent

Income (rents) team

Tel: **0300 456 0117 – option 1**

Email: **housingincome@wiltshire.gov.uk**

Website: **wiltshire.gov.uk/housing-council-housing**

Write to us or visit us:

**Housing Management,
Wiltshire Council,
Council House, Bourne Hill,
Salisbury SP1 3UZ'**

We also have two estate offices that are open on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

**Bemerton Heath Estate Office, 151a Gainsborough Close, Salisbury Friary open
between 9am and 5pm.**

**Estate Office, Whitefriars Road, Salisbury open between 10 am - 1pm Tuesday and 1pm
and 4pm Thursday**



Your tenancy

Your tenancy agreement is your contract with Wiltshire Council. It sets out the responsibilities and rights that both you and the council have.

The tenancy agreement lets you live in a property as long as you pay rent and abide by the obligations it sets out – these are known as the terms of your tenancy agreement. Any breach of these terms may result in the council taking action to end the tenancy and asking you to leave your home.

What you must do:

- Pay your rent in advance as per the conditions of your tenancy agreement
- Live in your home as your only or main/principle home
- Provide access for annual planned maintenance inspections and statutory boiler servicing (where applicable).
- Report any repairs promptly and allow access for them to be completed
- Keep your home and garden clean and tidy
- Put all your rubbish in the bins and put your bin out for collection
- Ask us if you want anyone else to live with you
- Respect your neighbours
- Park your car only in the parking area and only in your space if you have one
- Obtain written permission from the council if you wish to keep non-domestic animals or livestock at the property
- If appropriate, submit a claim for assistance with your rent (housing benefit or universal credit) and provide all the necessary proofs and documentation for your claim to be assessed



What you must not do:

- Put up a shed or outside building without asking us first
- Alter the fabric of your home in any way without asking us first
- Run a business from your home without asking us first
- Cause damage to your home or allow anyone else to
- Use the property for anything illegal
- Smoke in any shared/communal areas. We would also ask you not to smoke in your home prior to or during any visits, inspections or works being carried out by council staff or our contractors.
- Anything which is likely to cause nuisance, annoyance or disturbance to neighbours
- Assign, sublet, or to give away the tenancy or part with it without the written consent of the council (Introductory tenants cannot exchange)
- Carry out any repairs or servicing of motor vehicles except routine maintenance on your own or any member of your household's domestic vehicle.
- Park, or allow any other person to park commercial vehicles or trailers on the property, nor any untaxed or unroadworthy domestic vehicles



What are Wiltshire Council's responsibilities?

- To give you possession of the property at the start of the tenancy and not to disturb you or interfere with your occupation. If the council needs to inspect the premises or carry out repairs, you will normally be given five days notice in writing unless there is an emergency when it may be necessary to gain immediate access.
- To keep the structure, exterior of the property and any communal parts in a good state of repair, including the water supply and sanitation facilities and installations for heating, hot water, gas and electricity.
- To consult you about any housing management matter which may affect you, excluding rent and charges.
- To properly serve upon you any notice required under this agreement or any statutory requirement addressed to the tenant at the premises and either delivered to the premises by hand or sent to the tenant by recorded delivery, other than notice of a rent increase which will be sent by standard post. Notice to quit may be served at a tenant's last known address.
- Address and deal with anti-social behaviour and nuisance efficiently and promptly.
- Deal with complaints.
- Offer all tenants a good level of customer service.

Keep your copy of your tenancy agreement safe



Terminating your tenancy

When you accept your tenancy from the council you agree to give four weeks notice if you wish to leave. Notice should be given in writing and sent to Housing Management, Wiltshire Council, Council House, Bourne Hill, Salisbury SP1 3UZ.

Your neighbourhood officer will make arrangements with you to conduct a pre-end of tenancy inspection at the property. This is to identify any works that need to be done before you hand the keys back. This may include removing carpets, curtains, lampshades, and generally clearing the property and garden of any personal items or rubbish.

On the date agreed for handing the keys back, your neighbourhood officer and repairs surveyor will meet you at the property to collect them from you. At this meeting we will expect the work identified to have been completed and any work that you have failed to address will be photographed and we will charge you for putting it right.

If you are not there to hand the keys back, and have not made alternative arrangements with your neighbourhood officer, you may be held responsible for rent at the property after you have left.



Do we have your correct contact details?

We are constantly trying to improve the ways we communicate with you and in order to do this we need to make sure we have your most up to date contact details.

Please let us know if you change your telephone numbers or email address or let us have your email address if we don't already have it.

It's simple to let us know using any of the following methods:

- **In person** at any of our customer facing offices
- Phone us on **0300 456 0117 – option 4**
- Register for our secure online portal (iHousing)
<https://ihousing.wiltshire.gov.uk>
- Email us at **hsgmail@wiltshire.gov.uk** (we may contact you to validate the information)

Email and text

If you don't have an email address there are plenty of quick and simple email services you can use to create your own email address. Two of the most popular are Outlook.com (a Microsoft product) and Gmail (a Google product). Both are free to set up and use.

If you don't use a laptop or desktop computer regularly, you can access your emails through a mobile app and the advantage being it allows you to receive and read our emails wherever you are. Alternatively, the council offer free computer and internet access in all Wiltshire libraries.

Please make sure we have your up to date mobile number so you can benefit from our free text service. Text messages are used for various processes such as reminders, confirmations and quick contacts but are not suitable for sending out longer information.

Finally, we will never pass your contact information onto anyone outside of Wiltshire Council for marketing purposes. We will only ever pass on your contact details to registered contractors if it is appropriate in the course of doing approved works on behalf of the council.

Paying your rent

The rent money we receive is very important as it pays for all the services we provide and for the upkeep, repair and maintenance of our properties including your home.

It is your responsibility to pay the rent weekly in advance in accordance with the conditions of your tenancy. If you have a joint tenancy, both parties are equally responsible/liable for payment of rent.

Payment methods

We offer a range of payment methods for your convenience. We do recommend wherever possible to pay by Direct Debit as this is the most convenient way to ensure your rent is paid each month. Payment can be made by:



Monthly Direct Debit:

Payments will be collected on either the 1st, 8th, 15th, 21st or 28th of each month.



Credit/debit card:

(by telephone)

Use the 24hour automatic payment line on **0300 456 0119**

Please note: credit card payments will be subject to a 2% fee



Online:

Use our secure online payments service:

wiltshire.gov.uk/housing-council-housing

We now accept PayPal



By post:

Cheques should be made payable to Wiltshire Council and sent to:

**Housing Management,
Wiltshire Council,
Council House, Bourne Hill,
Salisbury SP1 3UZ**

In person at a Post Office:

Use your rent payment card

In person at the housing office

Use your rent payment card, at The Council House, Bourne Hill between 8.30am and 5.30pm, Monday–Friday.

iHousing tenant portal:

Wiltshire Council's iHousing tenant portal gives you access to a secure area where you can order and check repairs, view your rent statements and pay your rent online.

You need a password to access this system. If you do not have one, you can complete a registration form online and we will send your personal login and secure password within five working days.

Direct debits

What is a direct debit?

- Direct debit is the simplest, safest and most convenient way to make regular payments like your rent.
- It saves time and effort as you don't need to remember to make the payment; you don't need to call us or go to the post office as it will be taken automatically.

Monthly direct debits

- Rent payments can be collected on the 1st, 8th, 15th, 21st or 28th of each month; you can choose whichever date suits you.

Direct debit guarantee

- If there are any changes to your direct debit we will notify you 10 working days in advance.
- If an error is made in the payment of your direct debit by Wiltshire Council or your bank, you are entitled to a full and immediate refund
- You can cancel a direct debit at any time

What's the difference between a direct debit and standing order?

- Direct debits give us permission to take money from your bank account on an agreed date.
- Standing orders give the bank an instruction to pay us an exact amount regularly.

How do I set up a direct debit?

- Simply contact the income team to complete a direct debit mandate form; their details are on page 12
- Be aware that if there is not enough money in your account to cover the direct debit your payment may be refused and you may get charged up to £25 by your bank.
- Some banks may not accept a direct debit instruction from certain types of accounts so check with them first if unsure.

Problems paying your rent?

If you are having difficulty paying your rent or general affordability issues please contact us immediately. We can help you and make sure you have the advice and assistance you need in order to deal with any issues and maintain your tenancy. We do not want to take legal action against anyone, which is why, if you are struggling to pay your rent, you should contact the income team as soon as possible on **0300 456 0117 – option 1**.

The dedicated team of income officers are responsible for rent collection, and whilst part of their work is taking formal action against those in rent arrears, the focus of their role is actually arrears prevention. They have knowledge and access to sources of advice and support to which you can be referred. This can range from a referral to specialist debt team or training courses on budgeting and money management. We also have two tenancy sustainment officers within our income team who you can be referred to for some additional support. They can help with any financial worries, debt or budgeting difficulties and can offer advice on income maximisation and welfare benefits. This can be extremely helpful for those who are struggling on a low income or those in debt. It has proved effective for many tenants, not only maintaining their tenancy but also improving their general financial position.

It is important that you contact us if you have any concerns about paying your rent. If you miss rent payments or do not keep to repayment agreements, you will be in breach of your tenancy agreement and run the risk of losing your home. As soon as arrears appear on your account we will start our rent arrears procedure. We will remind you of the rent due but you should be aware that if you fail to make provisions to pay your rent we will take action through the courts to recover the arrears.

The court can:

- Make a County Court Judgment (CCJ) against you which may affect your ability to get credit in the future, including a mortgage, credit card or loan, and you will also have to pay court costs on top of the rent arrears that you owe
- and, or;
- Grant a Possession Order (PO) on your home which could lead to you losing your home and you could also be liable for court cost.

Tenancy sustainment service

This service provides comprehensive in-house support to tenants who would otherwise be at risk of failing in their tenancies. Specialist tenancy sustainment officers work with tenants who may have financial worries, debt issues or vulnerabilities to help them to sustain their tenancies and encourage and facilitate their independence.

They can provide practical financial and budgeting advice as well as information and support on a wide range of issues including housing, welfare rights, personal finance and life skills. Officers will be happy to arrange home visits, meet tenants in council offices or offer support over the phone.

They offer one-to-one case management in key areas such as debt, income maximisation, banking and welfare benefits. This is especially beneficial at a time where there is a lot of change taking place, for example, the implementation of Universal Credit, the 2015 Budget announcements on welfare reform such as The Benefit Cap, and also the ongoing matters such as the Spare Room Subsidy (Bedroom Tax).

The service also supports prospective tenants through pre-tenancy assessments to maximise the success of tenancies that are taken up, including the delivery of pre-tenancy training. We want our tenants to know from the start what can be expected from Wiltshire Council as their landlord, and also what is expected of them as a tenant.

Further information

If you would like more information on the new tenancy sustainment service, or would like to take advantage of the support on offer;

Tel: **0300 456 0117 – option 1**

Email: **housingtso@wiltshire.gov.uk**

Write to us or visit us: **Housing Management, Wiltshire Council, Council House, Bourne Hill, Salisbury SP1 3UZ**

We also operate drop-in sessions at the Friary Estate Office and the Bemerton Heath Estate Office every Wednesday 9am – 12pm.

The Rental Exchange

We believe our tenants should get recognition for paying their rent on time, the same way people who pay their mortgage do. That's why we've teamed up with Big Issue Invest, part of the well-known Big Issue group of companies, and Experian the UK's biggest credit reference agency, to bring you the Rental Exchange.

The exchange helps tenants to:

- Create an online proof of identity – increasingly important when applying for goods or services
- Build a positive credit history to help increase access to mainstream credit

A higher credit score means it may become easier to:

- Open or change bank accounts
- Shop online
- Receive better mobile phone rates
- Receive better gas and electricity rates

You don't need to do anything to join the scheme, and you can opt out at any time. We will share your rent account details with Experian and your payment history will be added to your credit file in a secure and compliant way. When an application you make requires a credit or identity check you will have the best chance of your rent history being available to improve your credit score, and increase the chance of approval.

Sharing your tenancy record will enable Experian to assist other landlords and organisations to:

- Assess and manage any new tenancy agreements you may enter into
- Assess your financial standing to provide suitable products and services
- Manage existing accounts and review their suitability
- Contact you about accounts you hold and recovering debts you may owe
- Verify your identity to help them make decisions about services they offer
- Help prevent crime, fraud and money laundering

We understand that in some circumstances there may be situations where you have fallen behind with your rent payments and where this is the case we will work with you to provide advice and support to help you get back on track.

Section 3

Paying your rent on time will help you to build up a better credit history, which will make it easier for you to apply for cheaper products, services or bank accounts in the future.

For more information or to opt out of the scheme please contact the income team.

For more information on paying your rent, The Rental Exchange or to set up a direct debit please contact our income team;

Tel: **0300 456 0117 – option 1**

Email: **housingincome@wiltshire.gov.uk**

Write to us or visit us: **Housing Management, Wiltshire Council,
Council House, Bourne Hill, Salisbury SP1 3UZ**

Other sources of information and advice

Citizen's Advice Bureau

If you need advice on benefits or specialist debt advice, please contact the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) to get free confidential assistance with:

- Help to deal with your debts
- Information on what benefits you may be entitled to
- Help with budgeting/income maximisation
- Sign-post you to your local credit union to assist with safe saving and affordable borrowing
- Advice on welfare reform/dealing with the bedroom tax, council tax and universal credit
- Applying for assistance from charities

For practical, reliable information to help you solve your problems 24/7 visit: **www.citizensadvice.org.uk**

Tel: **03444 111 444**

Address: **Wiltshire Citizens Advice, Five Rivers Health and Wellbeing
Centre, Hulse Road, Salisbury SP1 3NR**

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday – 10am to 3pm

Housing and council tax benefits

Revenues service

Please send your enquiries to: **Revenues service, Wiltshire Council, Collections — Council tax, P.O. Box 4385, Trowbridge, BA14 4DS**

Tel: **0300 456 0109**

Email: **counciltax@wiltshire.gov.uk**

Benefits service

Please send your enquiries to: **Benefits service, Wiltshire Council, Monkton Park, Chippenham, SN15 1ER**

Tel: **0300 456 0110**

Email: **benefits@wiltshire.gov.uk**

National Debt Line

Freephone helpline open from
9am – 9pm Monday to Friday and 9.30am – 1pm on Saturday

Tel: **0808 808 4000**

Website: **nationaldebtline.co.uk**

Shelter

Free housing advice helpline: **0808 800 4444**

Website: **england.shelter.org.uk**

The Money Advice Service

Free impartial advice service – an independent service set up by government

Tel: **0300 500 5000**

Website: **moneyadviceservice.org.uk**

Wiltshire Savings and Loans

Credit unions are community based local savings and loan schemes. Managed and run by trained volunteers, credit unions offer people who live or work in the area a chance to save regularly, by cash, standing order, payroll deduction or at a collection point, and to borrow at a reasonable rate of interest.

Tel: **01722 421881**

Website: wiltshiresavingsandloans.org.uk

Turn 2 Us

Make sure your tenancy is sustainable by ensuring you maximise your income. You can check you are receiving all the benefits you are entitled to by looking on the Turn2Us website.

Turn2us is a free service that helps people in financial need to access welfare benefits, charitable grants and other financial help – online, by phone and face to face through partner organisations.

Tel: **0808 802 2000**

(9am – 8pm Monday-Friday)

Website: turn2us.org.uk



Repairs and maintenance

We know that our repairs service is very important to you. We aim to do all necessary repairs to your home quickly and, whenever possible, complete the repairs in one visit.

Any repairs that are the council's responsibility must be reported promptly. In many cases this may stop the matter becoming more serious for you and more costly for the council.

Wiltshire Council is responsible for keeping the structure, exterior of the property and any communal parts in a good state of repair, including the water supply and sanitation facilities and installations for heating, hot water gas and electricity.

You are responsible for minor work and repairs like decorating the inside of your home, changing light bulbs, unblocking sinks and arranging the replacement of broken window glass.

Further information on repairs reporting and handy hints can be found in the repairs reporting guide for tenants. If you do not have one please contact us and we will send one to you.

How to order repairs

Repairs can be reported in a number of ways:

Tel: **0300 456 0117 – option 2**

Please note that emergency repairs should always be reported by telephone.

Report a non-urgent repair:

Email: **HousingRepairs@wiltshire.gov.uk**

Website: **<https://ihousing.wiltshire.gov.uk>**

For further details on how to register for iHousing Tenant Portal please see page 30.

Write to us or visit us: **Housing Management, Wiltshire Council,
Council House, Bourne Hill, Salisbury SP1 3UZ**

What happens next?

This will depend on the nature and severity of your repair. If the repair is fairly obvious and straightforward to remedy, the job will be recorded on the computer system and a works order issued to the contractor.

Where the repair is more difficult or extensive to rectify it may be necessary for a repairs surveyor to visit the property to assess the problem to confirm what work needs to be ordered. Once this has been done the work will be recorded on the computer system and a works order issued to the contractor.

At the same time that the order is issued to the contractor, confirmation will be sent to you.

When will the work be done?

How long a repair will take will depend on the urgency of the repair. You will be advised of the priority of your repair when you report it.

Emergency repairs are dealt with within 24 hours of being reported to us.

An emergency repair is anything that puts your health and safety, or security at immediate risk, or something that adversely affects the structure of the building. Some, but not all, repairs in this category will be done out of hours. Our contractors may have to make the area safe by doing a temporary repair, and will let us know if they need to do further work to complete the repair.

All other repairs are prioritised according to the level of discomfort, inconvenience or nuisance that's caused.

For example; water coming from the overflow of a toilet will be repaired within 5 working days, where as repairing a kitchen cupboard could take up to 20 working days.



Section 4

What you can expect from us

We will...

- offer flexible appointments for all non-emergency jobs; morning, afternoon and avoiding school runs
- make sure workers are neat and tidy and show their identity cards
- try and complete the repair at the first visit with minimal disruption
- leave your home clean and tidy after the work has been completed

What we ask from you

- to keep appointments and let us know as soon as possible if you have to cancel
- to make sure our workers can get into the property and safely access the work area
- to keep children and pets away from the work area
- to refrain from smoking inside while our workers are in the property

Rechargeable repairs

The rent you pay each week covers the cost of repairs unless they are due to damage or neglect by you, your family, visitors or pets. If the repair is the result of neglect or damage we may do the work and charge you for it.

Handyperson service

A handyperson service is available to council tenants for some types of work which is not covered under the council's repairs service or tenancy conditions. For example, gardening, tiling, hanging curtains and repairs to fencing.

Work is currently charged at £10 an hour and limited to four hours a year, although an exception may be made for decorating or gardening work. Tenants receiving housing benefit will not be charged for the first four hours. If you would like the council to provide the materials for the work, these will be charged for.

Section 4

Where a charge is to be made for the service we will provide you with a quotation and payment must be made before the work is done. This is to help us keep costs down and enables us to provide the service at a subsidised rate. You can pay by credit / debit card over the phone, by cash or cheque at the post office, or you can send us a cheque.

For further details of the handyperson service, or to book a job, you can contact us;

Tel: **0300 456 0117 – option 2**

Email: **housingrepairs@wiltshire.gov.uk**

Write to us or visit us: **Housing Management, Wiltshire Council,
Council House, Bourne Hill, Salisbury SP1 3UZ**

Health and safety testing and inspections

Whilst we want you to be able to enjoy your home, we also want your home to be a safe place for you and your family to live. As a landlord we are required by law to carry out certain inspections and servicing. You will be contacted in advance to make a convenient appointment for our inspectors or contractors to visit.

You must comply with any request to inspect, test or service as these are legal requirements and are there for your safety. Failure to allow access on or before the service due date will result in the council taking action through the courts to gain immediate access to your home, which will involve either an Injunction Order or a Court Warrant. Any costs incurred by the council in gaining access will be recharged to you.



Gas safety inspection and service

As a landlord we are required by law to carry out an annual gas safety inspection to ensure gas heating appliances in your property are working correctly. We also carry out a service to these appliances which will ensure they run efficiently and are cost effective to run.

It is your responsibility to ensure you provide access for our contractor. You will be written to with an appointment, if this is inconvenient or you miss an appointment please ring British Gas on **01722 413344** to rearrange.

Please note:

- Wiltshire Council works to a 10 month servicing programme to ensure compliance. In some cases heating appliances will be serviced twice a year
- The service of a gas appliance is vital for your safety
- The service is **free of charge**
- Gas and electric prepayment meters must be in credit, otherwise the service visit will be aborted and you will need to re-arrange an alternative appointment
- Gas meters – are the responsibility of your gas supplier.

If you smell gas or suspect a gas leak then call Transco immediately on 0800 111 999.

- Turn off the gas at the meter.
- Put out all naked flames, including cigarettes.
- Open windows to ventilate the area.
- Do not turn any electrical switches on or off, including doorbells.

Failure to allow access on or before the service due date will result in the council taking action through the courts to gain immediate access to your home, which will involve either an Injunction Order or a Court Warrant. Any costs incurred by the council in gaining access will be recharged to you.

Electrical test and inspection

As a landlord we are required by law to carry out, on a regular basis, electrical testing and inspection of our properties to ensure the electrical system remains safe.

Oil fired and air source heating appliances

It is our policy to have all oil fired and air source heating appliances inspected and serviced annually to ensure they are safe and efficient.

Solid fuel safety

All solid fuel heating appliances will be serviced annually, which will include sweeping the flue servicing the appliance. Sweeping of individual flues not serving a solid fuel appliance is the responsibility of the tenant. Every room containing a solid fuel appliance will have a carbon monoxide alarm in it. If you think there may be a problem with alarm please contact us as a matter of urgency.

- Do not use petrol, paraffin or any oil to ignite a solid fuel appliance.
- If you have an enclosed room heater or boiler follow the manufacturer's instructions and brush the smoke outlet every month.
- Burn only the recommended fuels.
- Ensure there is adequate ventilation and do not block or obstruct fresh air ventilators.
- Draught proofing helps cut fuel bills but do not seal off the air supply to the room in which the fire is located. Fumes may build up and cause you to become ill or in extreme cases can be fatal.

The Right To Repair

The government's Right to Repair Scheme gives council tenants with a secure tenancy additional rights when requesting repairs to their home.

Section 4

The scheme covers small urgent repairs, costing up to £250, that are likely to put a tenant's health, safety or security at risk. If qualifying repairs are not carried out within the specified timescale, compensation may be payable. A list of qualifying repairs can be supplied on request.

How does it work?

A tenant reports a repair; if the repair has not been completed within the target time stated the tenant can ask the council to appoint a second contractor to complete the repair.

What happens then?

The second contractor has the same amount of time to complete the repair as the first contractor. If the second contractor fails to complete the repair within the time limit the tenant is entitled to compensation of £10, plus £2 a day until the repair is carried out. The most compensation you can get for any one job is £50. The council will pay you compensation unless you already owe it some money. If you do owe money to the council it will take away the amount you owe from your compensation.

How do I know when the repair should be completed?

Under the right to repair scheme local authorities are required to notify tenants of the appointed contractor and the target time when a qualifying repair is reported. Wiltshire Council does this by sending a receipt for every repair.

What about the second contractor?

The council already uses second contractors under its existing system. When the work has been issued to a second contractor you will again be sent a card indicating who the contractor is and the target date for completion of the work.

For further details of the Right to Repair Scheme you can contact us;

Tel: **0300 456 0117 – option 2**

Email: **housingrepairs@wiltshire.gov.uk**

Post: **Housing Management, Wiltshire Council, Council House,
Bourne Hill, Salisbury SP1 3UZ**

Garages

In some areas there may be garages that can be rented out to residents for a separate weekly charge. There is usually a waiting list for these. If you do wish to rent a garage you will need to prove that a member of your household owns a vehicle, that it is registered to your address and that it is taxed and insured.

For more information on renting a garage you can contact us;

Tel: **0300 456 0117– option 4**

Email: **hsgmail@wiltshire.gov.uk**

Write to us or visit us: **Housing Management,
Wiltshire Council, Council House,
Bourne Hill, Salisbury SP1 3UZ**

Parking

Parking is often very limited and not guaranteed so please don't assume there will be somewhere for you to park when you move into your new home. We ask all tenants to be considerate of their neighbours and park only in the designated areas and not on grassed areas or verges. If you are expecting visitors be sure to explain the parking arrangements to them.



Anti-social behaviour

We want all of our tenants to be able to enjoy their homes and live peacefully without fear of anti-social behaviour. It is important to be a 'good neighbour' and to show consideration to others.

The tenancy agreement prohibits 'anything which is likely to cause nuisance, annoyance or disturbance to neighbours'

This includes:

- Playing loud music
- Arguing and door slamming
- Dog barking and fouling
- Offensive drunkenness
- Selling drugs and drug abuse
- Dumping rubbish
- Playing ball games close to someone else's home
- Using foul and abusive language

Neighbours causing a nuisance?

In the first instance we would expect residents to discuss their disagreement between themselves and come to an amicable solution to their problem before Wiltshire Council begins investigating and getting involved.

If you do feel that you are unable to speak to your neighbour, you should report the issue to your neighbourhood manager as soon as possible so that we can work to resolve the situation

When you report an incident of anti-social behaviour it helps if you can provide as much information as possible, such as dates, times and the people involved. In some cases we may ask you to keep a log of recurring incidents to help our investigation.

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Wiltshire Council is committed to tackling tenants who cause serious nuisance, or who are responsible for anti-social behaviour. We will:

- promote estate walkabouts with tenants' representatives to identify areas for improvement
- maintain a database to record all significant reports of anti-social behaviour affecting our tenants
- make contact with complainants within five days of their complaint and keep them informed at least every four weeks
- take firm action where necessary to control anti-social behaviour, including the use of injunctions, acceptable behaviour contracts, parenting orders using the new tools and powers contained within the anti-social behaviour crime and policing act 2014.

Anti-social behaviour can be reported in a number of ways:

Tel: **0300 456 0117 – option 4**

Email: **hsgmail@wiltshire.gov.uk**

Write to us or visit us: **Housing Management,
Wiltshire Council, Council House,
Bourne Hill, Salisbury SP1 3UZ**

In emergency situations call 999



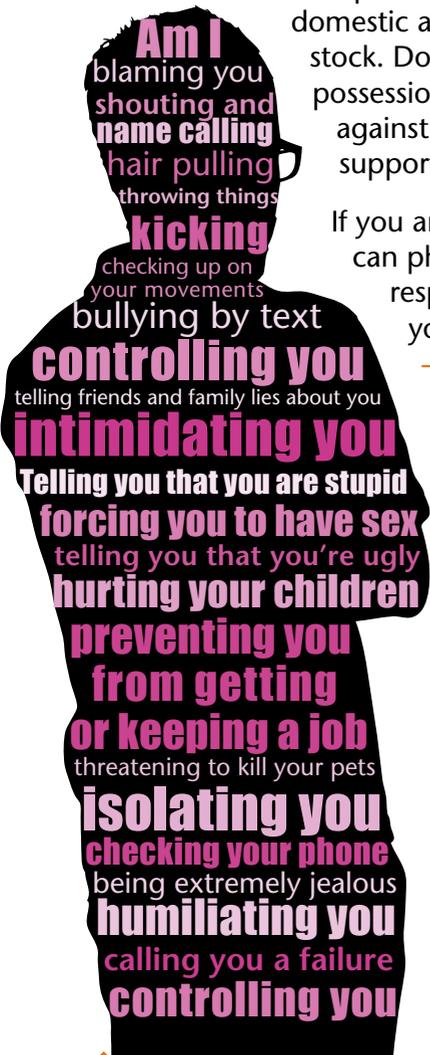
Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse is any violent or abusive behaviour used by one person to dominate and control another within a close personal or family relationship. It can happen to anyone of either gender, in all kinds of relationships – heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender. People experience domestic abuse regardless of their social group, age, class, lifestyle, disability or sexuality. It can begin at any time – in a new relationship or after many years together.

As a responsible landlord, the council will not tolerate domestic abuse occurring in any of its housing stock. Domestic abuse can be used as grounds for possession. The council will not hesitate to take action against perpetrators when appropriate, and to offer support and advice to victims.

If you and your family are in immediate danger, you can phone the police on **999** and they will always respond. For non emergencies please contact your neighbourhood officer on **0300 456 0117** – **option 4** or the police on **101**.

Your neighbourhood officer will be able to give you advice or direct you to other agencies and services that can assist you. It is also possible that, in certain cases, the council can take action against the person who has been violent.



Getting involved

As a tenant of Wiltshire Council why not get involved and have your say on how we deliver our services to you?

Your views and experiences are important and help us to understand what matters most to you. We are keen to work with our residents to help improve the neighbourhoods and communities they live in.

We're committed to making sure you have the opportunity to participate in shaping and improving our housing services, at a level that is meaningful to you.

We have a number of different ways you can become involved and we want to make it easy for you to get involved and have your say.

We will support you to do this by:

- Providing support or training to help you develop the skills and confidence to get your views across.
- Provide clear information in a suitable format, e.g. large print, audio, Braille and in other languages if required.
- Provide the staff, skills and resources to allow you to participate.

We have a range of involvement opportunities at all levels that can take up varying amounts of time. Whether you can spare an hour occasionally or can commit more time on a regular basis, your say counts and can make a difference. We understand that meetings are not for everyone, which is why our options are so flexible. You don't even have to leave your home to have your say.

Why get involved?

Your views really matter to us and can help us to improve our services and the way we work to meet your needs.

By getting involved you can:

- Address local issues and create a sense of community spirit
- Make a positive difference for tenants where you live
- Help us to provide better quality homes
- Help us to design policies and procedures that meet your needs
- Hold us, as your landlord, to account

What's in it for me?

Getting involved in your local community is a great way to meet new people and make a difference at the same time. You can gain a range of skills and experience that will be useful for your CV. When you get involved you will also learn a great deal about Housing Services and the way we work and you will be helping us to improve the quality our services for all our tenants.

We've included a list of some of the activities you can get involved with but new opportunities are happening all the time so please call us on **0300 456 0117 – option 5** and we can chat through the options.

Get involved by:

Attending community events

Have fun and have your say at the same time

Every once in a while

Attending an estate inspection (walkabout) in your area

Accompany the neighbourhood officer, repairs surveyor and other officers to inspect the estate where you live and identify issues like graffiti, fly-tipping and anti-social behaviour.

Two hours once a year

Coming along to a Local Housing Panel in your area

Your opportunity to have a greater say in the way services and local issues are managed. Work with us to improve and strengthen the community spirit in the neighbourhood you live in.

Two hours four times a year

Attending the Borough Wide Residents Group

Brings together the local groups and looks at the overall picture.

Two hours twice a year

Completing questionnaires and surveys

Completing short questionnaires on a range of topics, to help us understand what our tenants want

A few minutes, a few times a year.

Joining the Magazine Panel / Readers Panel

Read and comment on our Housing Matters magazine, suggest articles. Read and evaluate our standard letters, leaflets etc

About an hour, up to a few times a year

Attending a focus group

Help us to develop and improve key service areas such as repairs and maintenance and tenant services

Two to three hours periodically

Becoming a tenant inspector / mystery shopper

Carry out reality checks of our services to make sure we are delivering them to the levels set out in our service standards

Two to three days, up to four times a year.

Joining the Customer Complaints Panel

Work in partnership with us to resolve complaints and improve our services

A few hours a month

Becoming a member of the Housing Assurance Panel

Help us to improve our services by taking a detailed look at the services we offer and make recommendations on how we can improve those services

A few hours a month

Joining the Housing Board

Working alongside Councillors and independent experts help us to set the strategic direction of our housing services

Several hours a month

For more information, or if you'd like to get involved in these activities, please contact us:

Tel: **0300 456 0117 – option 5**

Email: **tenantparticipation@wiltshire.gov.uk**

Write to us or visit us: **Housing Management,
Wiltshire Council, Council House,
Bourne Hill, Salisbury SP1 3UZ**

iHousing online tenant portal

The iHousing portal allows you to manage and pay your rent and request repairs through a secure online account. You can view your rent payment history, make online payments, request repairs and monitor the progress of them.

You can register for iHousing in the following ways:

Tel: **0300 456 0117 – option 4**

Email: **hsgmail@wiltshire.gov.uk**

Write to us or visit us: **Housing Management,
Wiltshire Council, Council House,
Bourne Hill, Salisbury SP1 3UZ**

Online: Complete the online registration form at:
<https://ihousing.wiltshire.gov.uk> or follow the iHousing link from the main council housing page: **wiltshire.gov.uk/housing-council-housing**.

You need a valid email address to register and as this is a secure service, we may need to verify your identity before your personal login is sent to you.

Automated tenant services

Wiltshire Council Housing offers an automated account balance service for tenants using SMS text and email messages. You do not need to be registered for iHousing to use these services; all we need is your current mobile telephone number and/or email address. Whenever you want to know your account balance and the latest transactions all you have to do is text or email us and we'll send you the information within minutes.

Text the word 'account' to **07860 035349** or email: **hsgenquiries@wiltshire.gov.uk** with the word 'account' in the subject field.

To register a mobile number or email address, or to update the details we already hold for you, please call us on **0300 456 0117 – option 4**

Alternatively, if you want a regular update on your balance without having to contact us, we can automatically send you a text message on a Tuesday or Friday each week. If you'd like to receive these reminders please call us on **0300 456 0117 – option 1**. To stop receiving text messages from Wiltshire Council Housing, either text **STOP** to **07860 035349** or contact us and let us know.

Moving home

If you want to move to another property there are a number of different ways in which you can do this. In all cases you will be required to give four weeks' notice and you must pay any outstanding balance on your rent or other charge accounts. Please see 'terminating your tenancy' on page 5 for further information.

Mutual Exchange

If you want to move you could think about moving by mutual exchange. This means you will need to find another local authority or housing association tenant to swap properties with. You can go online to [homeswapper.co.uk](https://www.homeswapper.co.uk) to find tenants who live locally and nationally and who want to move. It's free for you to register on this site.

Once you have found someone who would like to swap properties with you, you need to notify your neighbourhood officer. They will assess whether or not your application can be approved and will confirm in writing if consent is given. You cannot swap homes without getting our agreement.

You will not be able to move if you have an introductory tenancy or if you have any rent arrears. If you are considering applying for an exchange please make sure you clear any arrears first and that your home is in good condition. If you exchange your home with someone else please be aware that in exchanging you are agreeing to accept the property in its current condition, including all its fixtures and fittings. You will become responsible for any alterations or work carried out by the tenant you have exchanged with.

Choice based lettings

You can apply for another council or social housing property in Wiltshire using the Homes 4 Wiltshire scheme. This scheme is managed by the council, and by working in partnership with other housing organisations and associations we are able to provide a single housing register covering all of Wiltshire, except Swindon.

Once you have registered for the scheme you will be given a priority band according to your housing need and you will be able to bid for suitable properties as they become available.

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The property listings are accessible in a number of ways;

- Via the Homes 4 Wiltshire website: www.homes4wiltshire.co.uk
- At your local Council Offices
- At your local Library
- Some local shops and agencies have the property listings displayed.
- You can request to have the listings emailed to you.
- If you do not have access to any of the above, you can request a hard copy of the listings to be sent direct to your address each week.

You can register for the scheme, or request further information, by contacting the Home 4 Wiltshire team;

Tel: **0300 456 0104**

Website: homes4wiltshire.co.uk

Email: homes4wiltshire@wiltshire.gov.uk

Post: **Homes 4 Wiltshire, County Hall, Bythesea Road, Trowbridge, Wiltshire, BA14 8JN**

Downsizing to sheltered accommodation

Independent living with added support

Have you considered downsizing, but been put off by the name of sheltered accommodation or think that it is not for you? Sheltered accommodation has changed over the last few years and we no longer have wardens that manage our schemes. Our properties are aimed to offer independent living with the added benefits of some communal facilities and floating support that can be engaged with if needed and hard wired life lines just in case.

For general information about any of our sheltered schemes please contact us:

Tel: **0300 456 0117 – option 4**

Email: hsgmail@wiltshire.gov.uk

Write to us or visit us: **Housing Management,
Wiltshire Council, Council House,
Bourne Hill, Salisbury SP1 3UZ**

Moving home checklist

Rent and council tax:

- Have your first week's rental payment ready - this is due at sign up and will be explained in the offer letter.
- Inform council tax of your new address.
- Inform housing benefit and the department of work and pensions if applicable.

Utilities:

- Tell your existing supplier that you are moving gas/electricity/water etc
- Check you are getting the best rates by using an impartial comparison website
- Take meter readings as you move out of your current property and when you move into your new property.

Health:

- Notify your doctor/dentist/optician/hospital of your change of address

Redirection of mail/other services:

- Transfer TV licence by calling TV Licensing **0300 790 6131** or online at tvlicensing.co.uk
- If you have contents insurance tell your provider that you are moving and arrange cover for your new address. If you do not have a policy we can help you arrange this through our tenant's insurance scheme. See page 38
- Redirect mail – you can get a form at the Post Office.

Other:

- DVLA – vehicle registration and driving licence
- Car insurance
- School/college/nursery
- Bank/building society



Right to Buy

First introduced in 1980, the Right to Buy allows most secure tenants to buy the home they rent from the council. Tenants must have at least three years tenancy with a public sector body.

Some properties are exempt from Right to Buy. These include dwellings occupied in connection with a tenant's employment, and housing specially provided for older people. Sheltered properties are exempt from Right to Buy and in most cases bungalows, if they're deemed particularly suitable for occupation by the elderly. In certain cases properties specifically designed or adapted for the disabled may also be exempt

Tenants qualifying for the Right to Buy receive a discount on the market value when buying their home based on the number of years they have been secure tenants. This discount has, however, been capped by the government. The maximum discount that will be granted in the South West region is £77,900, increased annually according to the Consumer Price Index.

If you would like more information on the Right to Buy scheme or would like to proceed with an application, please contact the housing office:

Tel: **0300 456 0117 – option 6**

Email: housingincome@wiltshire.gov.uk

Write to us or visit us: **Housing Management, Wiltshire Council,
Council House, Bourne Hill, Salisbury SP1 3UZ**

Are you interested in buying a home at low cost?

Low cost home ownership schemes

High property prices have meant that many people simply cannot afford to buy their own home, and have to rent instead. Shared ownership and other low cost home ownership schemes can help people on lower incomes to buy a home of their own. There are several different low cost home ownership schemes, the most popular of which is called Help to Buy shared ownership, but is more commonly known as shared ownership or part buy/part rent.

What is Help to Buy Shared Ownership?

Help to Buy Shared Ownership is a form of property purchase in which you buy a share of the property from a housing association, and pay rent to the housing association on the remaining share.

Rents will be reasonably low, as you will have responsibility for the maintenance of the property.

How does the scheme work?

- You buy an initial share in a property offered by a housing association involved in the scheme. The minimum share you can purchase may vary from one scheme to another. The minimum could be as low as 25% of the property value, but is usually 40% or 50%.
- You pay an agreed rent to the housing association for the remaining share of the property. The rent is reviewed every year.
- Later, if you can afford it, you can purchase further shares of the property until you own the maximum allowable share of the property. This is normally 100%, but can be restricted to 80% in rural locations. The purchase price of further shares is based on the market value of the property at the time you apply to buy the extra share. If the value of the property has gone up since you purchased your original share, the purchase price of the further share you wish to purchase will also have increased accordingly.

Who is eligible?

To be eligible for a home under the Help to Buy Shared Ownership scheme



you must:

- Have a regular income to be able to pay a mortgage and rent. The household income must be less than £60,000 per annum. It is recommended that there should be a minimum household income of £18,000 per annum (if you earn less than this but have substantial savings/equity then there may be other schemes to help).
- Be a first-time buyer, unable to afford a mortgage for a property at full value on the open market (in certain circumstances applications can be accepted from a previous property owner, although priority will still be given to first-time buyers).
- Be able to access at least £2,500 to cover legal costs and other associated costs, and have a good credit history.
- Register on the council's housing list, and register with the Help to Buy Agent known as Help to Buy South. To register with Help to Buy South you need to call **0845 604 1122** to request an application pack, or you can apply online at: www.helptobuysouth.co.uk. Alternatively you can visit their facebook page at "Help to Buy South". To register on the council's housing list you will need to call **0300 456 0104** or apply online at: www.homes4wiltshire.co.uk

Existing council and housing association tenants who meet all necessary criteria for a property (including having a local connection to the area), and who can raise the necessary mortgage, will take higher priority over other applicants.

How does the process work?

When a shared ownership property is available for sale, it will be advertised on the council's Homes4Wiltshire website and on the Help to Buy Agent's website. The Help to Buy Agent will also send marketing material to applicants who have registered for schemes in that area. All suitable applicants with relevant levels of affordability will be considered by the housing association selling the property, and the applicants will then be prioritised in line with the council's Allocations Policy.

Top priority will be given to those who have a local connection to the town or parish in which the development is situated, subject to them meeting the relevant affordability criteria. Then first priority will go to existing tenants who meet those criteria.

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For further information on all types of low cost home ownership schemes, and properties currently available for sale please visit the Help to Buy South website at www.helptobuysouth.co.uk or call them on **0845 604 1122**.

Low cost home ownership may be the solution for you.

Useful Contacts

Help to Buy South

Tel: **0845 604 1122** (Customer Services)

Website: helptobuysouth.co.uk

Email: info@helptobuysouth.co.uk

Facebook: [/HelpToBuySouth](https://www.facebook.com/HelpToBuySouth)

Wiltshire Council (Homes4Wiltshire Team)

Tel: **0300 456 0104**

Website: homes4wiltshire.co.uk

Email: homes4wiltshire@wiltshire.gov.uk



Making the most of your home

We hope that you will enjoy living in your new home and becoming part of your new community. There are a few things to bear in mind which will help you to keep safe, manage your tenancy properly and be kind to the environment too.

Home Contents Insurance

Wiltshire Council offers a tailored home contents insurance policy, created specifically for its tenants. Although the council is responsible for the structure of all its properties, the responsibility for the contents rests with the tenant. We do not insure your furniture, belongings or decorations against theft, vandalism or burst pipes.

We offer a special service for our tenants, arranged by Aon through Aviva. You can get a minimum of £9000 worth of protection for as little as 81p per week or a minimum of £6000 for 54p per week if you are over the age of 60. The cost of insurance is payable weekly along with your rent.

To request a quote or to arrange cover please speak your neighbourhood officer, or contact us;

Tel: **0300 456 0117 – option 4**

Email: **hsgmail@wiltshire.gov.uk**

Write to us or visit us: **Housing Management,
Wiltshire Council, Council House,
Bourne Hill, Salisbury SP1 3UZ**



Fire safety advice

- Plan an escape route and make sure everyone knows how to escape.
- Always allow access for us to service your fitted smoke alarm.
- Keep matches away from children. If you do keep matches in your house, make sure they are in a place children cannot reach them.
- If you smoke, make sure all cigarettes and matches are put out properly and ensure you check ashtrays before retiring to bed.
- Do not leave pans on the cooker unattended, especially pans of oil.
- Avoid using bottled gas heaters and paraffin heaters; they are not allowed at all in buildings which are more than three stories tall. If you do have to use these types of heater, follow the manufacturer's instructions. Store and dispose of gas bottles properly. Do not store flammable liquids in your property.
- Do not dry or air clothes near heaters, cookers or open fires. Make sure that open fires have fireguards.
- Switch off and pull the plug out of the socket of any electrical appliances that are not in use. Some appliances, such as freezers, are meant to be left on. Please refer to manufacturer's instructions.
- Close doors especially at bedtime to prevent fire spreading.
- Keep passages and hallways clear of obstructions, flammable material or naked flame heating, e.g. gas or paraffin heaters.
- Do not store rubbish or belongings below the stairs.
- Do not remove any internal doors as they are there to reduce the risk of fire spreading



What to do if there is a fire:

- Try to be calm and don't panic.
- Get everyone out as quickly as possible, closing doors as you leave to prevent the spread of fire.
- Do not use the lift under any circumstances.
- Call the fire brigade (**999**) from somewhere safe to do so, e.g. a neighbour's house, public phone or shop. Do not re-enter the house for any reason until you are told it is safe to do so by the fire brigade.
- Remember even if your 'pay as you go' mobile phone has run out of credit it will still allow you to call **999**.

If you become trapped in your home by a fire you should:

- Close the door to the room you are in.
- Try to seal any gaps under the door with clothes or a towel, to stop smoke entering.
- Where possible cover your face to prevent inhaling the smoke.
- Shout for help out of the window asking passers-by to call the fire brigade.
- Remember that if you live in a flat or maisonette and a fire breaks out in another part of the building it should be safe to stay in your home. Many purpose-built blocks have fire safety measures built into them. However, if your home is affected by heat or smoke, follow the advice above: 'What to do if there is a fire.'
In both cases, call the fire brigade when it is safe to do so.

You should test your smoke alarm regularly. Advice on how to test and re-set smoke detectors can be found in the repairs reporting guide for tenants.



Electrical safety

- Know where your meter is located and ensure you have an access key.
- Switch off any appliances when not in use and pull out any plugs.
- Never take electrical appliances into the bathroom.
- Do not overload sockets.
- Do not touch electrical appliances with wet hands.
- Get to know your fuse board and how it works.
- Keep sockets safe from children by fitting socket covers
- Report all broken switches, plugs and light fittings or any exposed wiring to our repairs service.

Advice on what may cause your electricity to go off, and how to re-set the trip switches, can be found in the repairs reporting guide for tenants.

Heating and hot water

Communal heating or hot water supplies:

- Some council properties have a communal heating and/or hot water supply. If you are not sure, please contact us. The council will carry out any repairs to these communal systems. Please remember some communal heating systems are turned off during the summer months.
- You are advised to keep your own electric heater for emergencies.
- If you are elderly, disabled, or have a baby and your heating has broken down during the winter months (1 October to 30 April), the council can provide you with a temporary heater until we carry out the repair.

Individual heating and hot water systems:

- If you are unsure how to operate your heating and hot water system please contact us.
- If your heating or hot water stops working, please check that your gas or electricity meter has not run out of credit before you report the breakdown.

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- If you are elderly, disabled, or have a baby and your heating has broken down during the winter months (1 October 30 April), the council can provide you with a temporary heater until we carry out the repair.

Water supplies and plumbing

Stopcocks

All tenants should know where their mains stopcock is located in case of a major leak. It is usually located under the kitchen sink or near the front door. If you cannot find it or are unsure, please contact us.

When your water supply has been turned off you will not be able to draw off any hot water once your tank is empty. You should, therefore, damp down or turn off the boiler straightaway to prevent damage to the cylinder and boiler.

There are also other stopcocks/ servicing valves in your house and you should be familiar with what they do in case of emergencies.

Once a year, stopcocks and servicing valves should be turned once and then back again to stop them seizing up.

Back boilers

If you have a back boiler and hear it bubbling or boiling, damp down the fire and let it go out. You should telephone our repairs service immediately

Taps

Over-tightening of taps causes the washer to wear out more quickly than necessary. Remember to turn the water supply off at the appropriate stopcock before replacing the washer.

Frozen pipes

Winter weather can bring problems for all householders. Here are some simple steps you can take to protect your property from frozen or burst pipes.

Before winter sets in:

- test your mains stopcock
- check you do not have any dripping taps and replace the tap washers when necessary
- check that any pipes near outside walls and external taps are lagged.

If you are away from home during the winter period:

- turn off the stopcock
- turn on the bath/sink cold-water taps empty the toilet cistern by flushing it
- if you have central heating, leave it on a low or frost setting.

On returning home, make sure you turn off your bath and sink cold-water taps, before turning the stopcock back on. If you suspect a pipe has frozen please contact our repairs service.

Burst pipes

To stop water flowing from a burst pipe, shut the main stopcock and open all taps to run off water from the pipes and tank.

If you have a burst pipe you should:

- turn off the electricity at the mains switch on the fuse board as long as there is no water near your mains switch; the fuse board or box will usually be located near the front door or under the stairs
- turn off the stopcock
- turn off the central heating/hot water boiler
- put a container under any leak to try to catch the water, if you can
- contact our repairs service.

Overflow pipes

Overflow pipes remove excess water from your toilet cistern or heating/hot water system. These do not normally drip unless there is something not working properly. Therefore, please report any dripping overflow pipe to our repairs service.

If you have a loss of water supply

If you discover that your water supply has stopped for any reason, make sure all your taps are turned off (clockwise) and inform our repairs service.

Blockages

Advice on how to unblock a bath, basin, shower, sink or toilet can be found in the repairs reporting guide for tenants.

Keep your home free from damp and mould

Damp conditions can cause mould to grow on walls and furniture. Damp cold housing encourages the growth of mould and mites, which can increase the risk of respiratory illnesses in some people.

Some damp is caused by condensation and here are some tips on how you can keep it to a minimum, so reducing the risk of dampness and mould growth.

What is condensation?

It starts as moisture or steam that is produced by cooking, washing or drying clothes indoors. Condensation occurs mainly during cold weather as the moisture turns to water (condenses) on cool surfaces such as mirrors, wall tiles, windows and even some clothes. It appears in places where there is little movement of air such as corners as well as in or behind wardrobes and cupboards.

How to avoid condensation

These steps will help you reduce the condensation in your home.

Produce less moisture:

- Cover pans when cooking
- Dry clothes outdoors whenever possible, otherwise use well ventilated rooms
- Vent your tumble dryer to the outside
- Avoid using paraffin or flueless bottled gas heaters – the gas produces a lot of moisture

Control excess moisture:

- Close kitchen and bathroom doors to prevent steam going into other rooms
- Open kitchen and bathroom windows when cooking or washing (and for a while after) so that steam can escape; use an extractor fan if you have one
- Open some windows in other rooms for a while each day to allow a change of air
- Prevent mould forming by wiping down surfaces where moisture settles.
- Do not block air vents

Keep your house warm:

- If possible, keep low background heat on all day, with background ventilation
- Take steps to prevent heat escaping, taking care not to block air vents
- Is it condensation?
- Condensation is not the only cause of damp. It can also come from:
- Leaking pipes, wastes or overflows.
- Rain seeping through the roof where a tile or slate is missing, spilling from a blocked gutter, penetrating around window frames, or leaking through a cracked pipe.
- Rising damp due to a defective damp-course or because there is no damp-course.
- These causes of damp often leave a 'tidemark' and if your home is affected you should contact the repairs team so this can be investigated.

First steps against mould

To kill and remove mould, first wipe down walls and window frames with water to remove the surface mould then apply a specialist mould treatment which you can get from a hardware shop or DIY store. Follow the manufacturer's instructions precisely. Do not use bleach or washing up liquid to remove mould.

After treatment redecorate using a good quality fungicidal paint to help prevent mould. Note that this paint is not effective if overlaid with ordinary paints or wallpaper. When wallpapering, use a paste containing a fungicide to prevent further mould growth.

Dry-clean mildewed clothes and shampoo carpets as disturbing mould by brushing or vacuum cleaning can increase the risk of respiratory problems.

The only lasting way of avoiding severe mould is to eliminate dampness.

Security

Crime reduction

If you would like advice concerning the security of your home there are crime reduction officers at your local police station. Telephone 101 for your local crime reduction officer. They will be able to give advice over the telephone and can visit you in your own home. The crime reduction office also has a range of useful leaflets which give general advice on all aspects of crime prevention in your home. Otherwise, you can look at their website at www.wiltshire.police.uk which has a more detailed range of advice and information.

Most burglaries are committed by opportunist thieves. Remember one quarter of all burglaries committed don't use force to enter a property.

Think like a burglar – would there be an easy way to break into your home?



Windows and doors

- Make sure you close your doors and windows when you are not at home.
- Make sure the locks on your doors and windows are in good condition and that you use them. For safety reasons, if you have window locks, hang the key near the window, but out of sight of burglars.
- When you leave your home, even for a short time, make sure you lock your door properly. Remember that on some modern doors, the key needs an extra turn, sometimes lifting the door handle up at the same time.
- Make sure that people cannot open your door or take a key out of the lock by putting their hand or a tool through the letterbox; fit a deflector to stop people doing this.

Keys

- Do not hide spare keys near your front door; instead leave a set with a trusted neighbour, relative or friend.
- Try not to have anything on your key ring that will identify where you live.
- If you do lose your keys it is wise to change the locks.
- The council will not pay for new locks or keys if you lose them. If the council has to gain entry to your property, you will usually have to pay for any repairs or new locks.

Answering the door – bogus callers

Always make sure you are satisfied with someone's identity before letting them into your home. Remember bogus callers can be men, women or children. They can be dressed smartly or be in uniform.

- Use your viewer or look through a window before opening the door.
- Always put a chain on before opening the door.
- If you are unsure, talk to the caller through the letterbox or a window.
- If a caller claims he is from the gas, electric, water board or the council,

ask to see his name badge with his photo on it. Don't let him/her hurry you by telling you it is an emergency; all genuine callers will carry ID badges. Close the door and telephone their company using the number from your phone book (not from his ID card) to check he is genuine. If you are unsure, telephone a friend or neighbour to help you. Many utilities companies operate a password system that any caller from these companies will use when they call at your door. Telephone them to agree a password.

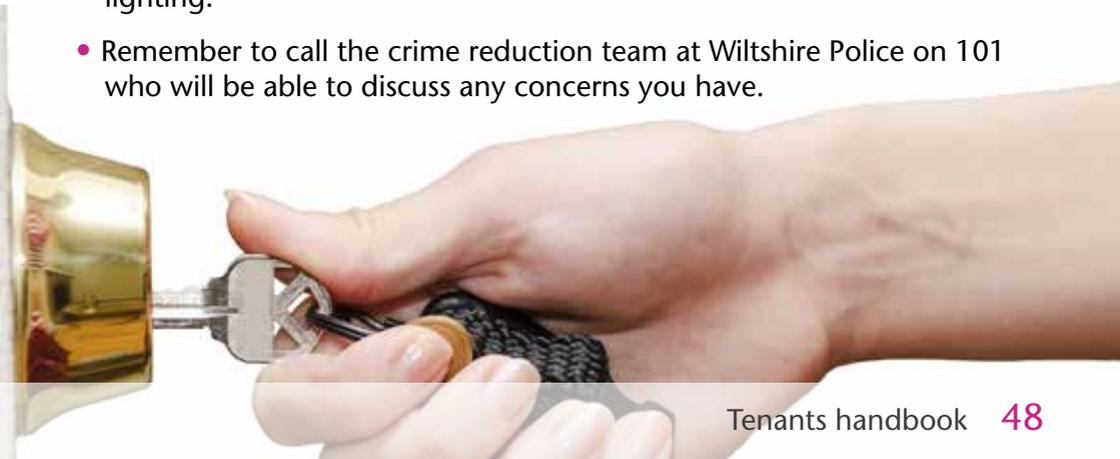
- Close your door if you have to get something for a caller, otherwise someone might sneak in behind you.

Sheds and gardens

- Make sure your shed has a secure lock on it. Use a battery powered alarm. These can be obtained from hardware stores.
- Always permanently mark, with your postcode and the number of your house or flat, any large items of value. Marking them will make them of less value to burglars. Where possible secure these items with a chain. Remember your tools and ladders can help a burglar get into your home.

Lighting

- If you are out and likely to return after dark, leave a light on.
- Use timer switches on lamps (these can be bought from DIY stores) when you are out for longer periods.
- Consider using energy saving bulbs on inside and outside security lighting.
- Remember to call the crime reduction team at Wiltshire Police on 101 who will be able to discuss any concerns you have.



Going away?

- Do not leave notes or messages on your answer machine suggesting that you are going away.
- Arrange for a trusted neighbour to keep an eye on your home whilst you are away. Leave any contact details with this person.
- Ask them to open and close curtains, turn lights on and off and take mail out of the letterbox.
- Leave a battery-operated radio tuned into a 'talking' station.
- Remember to cancel deliveries.

Energy advice

We aim to make sure that the housing stock within the county area is energy efficient to minimise greenhouse gas emissions in line with the council's climate change policy. With regard to the council's own housing stock, we will aim to keep the energy rating in the top quarter of all local authorities.

So much of the power we pay for is power we do not even use. Appliances on standby, lights left on in unused rooms and computers that never get switched off are putting pounds on your bill. Switching off and maintaining your household items will soon make savings and help you to be more energy efficient.



Top tips:

- Make sure you are using energy saving light bulbs
- Turning down your thermostat by one degree can cut your fuel costs by 10%
- Close your curtains at dusk to keep heat in
- Wait until you have a full load before using the washing machine
- Turn lights and other electrical items off when leaving a room
- Don't leave the fridge door open for longer than necessary
- Don't leave your TV and other appliances on 'standby'
- Only boil the water you need in the kettle, don't fill it up if you are only making one hot drink
- Some of our properties run off the landlord heating system which is energy efficient, helps save you money, and spreads the cost over the year
- Another way to cut down your fuel bill is to check with other energy suppliers whether you can get a better deal. You can also look for suppliers who provide energy from more sustainable sources ('green' energy).

Citrus Energy

Citrus Energy is a free and impartial switching service that helps home energy users to find the best deals for your gas and electricity. With energy bills on the rise you can call their freephone number to find the best price for your gas and electricity.

Freephone: **0800 221 8089**

Please note that if you call from a mobile you will be charged at your Network Provider's rate



Waste and Recycling

The average household in Wiltshire produces over one tonne of waste a year, but most people should be able to recycle over half the contents of their bin.

You can recycle a wide range of materials from the kerbside and at the household recycling centres. This helps us to reduce the amount of waste we send to landfill and means we are working towards recycling 50% of all Wiltshire's waste.

You can recycle your waste by using your:

- Black box collection* – paper, tins, glass and textiles.
- Plastic bottle and cardboard collection*
- Optional garden waste collection service (charges apply)

(Facilities may vary at flats that have communal collection points)

If you have larger items such as furniture, fridges or washing machines you can arrange a large item collection, or if they are in reasonable condition can be donated to various furniture recycling charities.

*** In August 2017 a new recycling service is being introduced. This will involve a change to what you can put in the bins.**

For further information, including checking your collection dates, ordering a new/replacement bin or to request assistance with your collections please contact the waste service;

Call: **0300 456 0102**

Website: wiltshire.gov.uk/waste



Are you hearing footsteps in the night?

Have you got furry uninvited visitors?

Are there things flying around which are stinging you?

Then the Wiltshire Council pest control service can help. They treat:

- rats
- mice
- squirrels
- cockroaches
- bedbugs
- fleas
- carpet moths
- cluster flies, and
- wasps



They have highly experienced, friendly officers and can offer fast appointment times. Discounts are available for residents in receipt of means tested benefits.

For more details, or to arrange a visit from a member of the pest control team;



Web: www.wiltshire.gov.uk/pestcontrol

Tel: 0300 456 0100

Email: customerservices@wiltshire.gov.uk

Write to us or visit us:

**Public Protection Service
Wiltshire Council, Council House,
Bourne Hill, Salisbury SP1 3UZ**

Adaptations to your council home

What funding is available?

Funding is available to help council tenants continue to live in their home when disabilities cause difficulties in day-to-day activities.

What types of adaptation can be undertaken?

This funding may be provided for several purposes, for example:

- Installing a stair lift or floor lift
- Help in bathing e.g. adapting a bathroom with a level access shower or a shower over the bath
- Installing ramps to front or rear doors
- Widening doors
- Adapting kitchens for easier use
- Improving or providing a better heating system.

Funding for tenants can be provided up to £30,000 and in exceptional circumstances other funding can be made available.

The council has the right to refuse a grant where the property is unable to be satisfactorily adapted. In these circumstances support will be given to tenants to move to more suitable accommodation.

Am I eligible for funding?

The government sets the rules for funding. If you receive the following benefits you will be eligible for funding up to a maximum of £30,000.

- Housing or Council Tax Benefit
- Tax Credits with an income below £15,050 per year.

The funding provided will only cover the cost of the proposed adaptation as referred by an Occupational Therapist from the Adult Care Department.

If you are not in receipt of the benefits noted above the funding will be provided based on a 'means assessment'. For information, the following may apply:

- The applicants' weekly income, taking into account any savings above a certain limit, but ignoring certain state benefits, including those which specifically recognise a person's disability. This income is then set against an assessment of basic needs, which are recognised by a range of premiums and allowances.
- If the person's resources are less than this assessment, then they will not normally need to contribute to the cost of the works.
- If the person's resources are more than the assessment, then a proportion of their income will be used to calculate the size of their contribution
- Any referral received for a child is exempt from 'means assessment'.

How can I apply?

Enquiries should be made to Social Care Helpdesk for adults: **0300 456 0111**.

Enquiries for supporting children to live at home contact: **01722 327551**.

Help and advice will be given by a customer services advisor and if needed a referral will be made to an occupational therapist (OT) who will visit you and discuss the various options for supporting you to live at home.

In many cases advice and guidance will enable you overcome some of the barriers to living at home, or equipment may be supplied to support you. If a solution is still not found the occupational therapist will complete an assessment of your needs and will make a referral to the housing contracts department. The housing contracts department will review the referral with regards to the particular property to determine if what is proposed is 'reasonable and practical' and progress accordingly.

Designs will be drawn up, with your support, to address your needs. When all parties agree to the designs, work will commence at a date that is acceptable to you (subject to funding being available).

Service standards

We are always looking for ways to improve our services and welcome suggestions or comments on how we can do better.

We will:

- Ensure our services are accessible to all
- Offer appointments and home visits
- Give you options for how and when you contact us
- Treat you with dignity and respect
- Use language that is easy to understand
- Be open and honest
- Maintain customer confidentiality
- Listen to your views
- Provide an interpretation service if English is not your first language

When you contact or visit us we aim to:

- Answer telephone calls within 20 seconds
- See you within five minutes of arrival
- Acknowledge emails and letters within five working days and provide a full response within 10 working days. If this is not possible we will keep you informed



Measuring our performance

We want to provide a high standard of service to you.

We monitor and then compare our performance with other landlord's on:

- How good we are at repairing and maintaining properties
- How good we are at collecting your rent
- How good we are at managing your neighbourhood
- How good we are at re-letting properties
- How efficient we are as a landlord at providing value for money services.

We have been set challenging targets to meet, and details of our performance are published four times a year in the Housing Matters tenants' magazine.

Complaints and compliments

We aim to provide the best service possible for you but we know that from time to time things go wrong. If you think we have let you down, we want you to tell us so that we can put things right. Alternatively you may have ideas about how to improve our service or you may be pleased about the service you have received and wish to tell us.

Where complaints do arise we use the council's corporate complaints procedure, which can be viewed on the council's website or is available in printed form on request.

You can make a complaint by phone, email, letter, in person, or using the online form at www.wiltshire.gov.uk/complaints. Please provide as much information as possible, including the names of any officers you may have already spoken to about the matter.

We hope that most complaints can be resolved when you first contact us, but if further investigation is needed we will respond within 20 days. If you are not happy with the response we provide you can ask for your complaint to be put through to the council's corporate complaints team. If you are still unhappy after they have investigated it, you can contact the Local Government Ombudsman.

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If you are unsure about making a complaint, or want to talk to someone for general advice, please contact the customer complaints team:

Tel: **01225 718400**

Email: **complaints@wiltshire.gov.uk**

Post: **Wiltshire Council, County Hall, Bythesea Road,
Trowbridge, BA14 8JN**

Property Letting Standard

What to expect in your council home

Please note: This standard does not apply where tenants have moved by mutual exchange. See page 31 for more details

General condition. We will:

- Ensure that gas, electric and energy efficiency checks have been made and that certificates will be given to you at the start of your tenancy
- Ensure that the property is structurally sound and weatherproof
- Ensure that the locks are changed to the main doors and that the doors operate correctly and that windows are secure and all keys are provided
- Check any glazing for cracks and replace them before you move in
- Check any smoke alarms and ensure they are in working order
- Ensure that all floor surfaces are sound
- Check handrails and balustrades to ensure they are sound
- Check that there is a means of heating and that this is in working order
- Test stop cocks and label them

Cleanliness. We will:

- Ensure that the property is cleaned throughout
- Ensure that all sanitary ware is clean
- Make sure there is no vermin or pest infestation
- Check that all the previous tenants effects have been removed
- Give decoration vouchers where appropriate and in accordance with relevant policies



Kitchen

- There will be a sink and drainer over a base unit and at least one double base and wall unit in place
- There will be 2 rows of tiles above the sink top and work surface
- A plug and chain will be provided to the sink
- A gas or electric cooker point will be fitted
- If there is an extractor fan this will be in working order
- Water connections to washing machine pipes and hot and cold taps will be checked and free of leaks
- Waterproof flooring will be fitted
- Sealant around the work surface and flooring will be in good condition

Bathroom and toilets

- All sanitary ware will be in good condition and free from cracks
- A new toilet seat will be fitted to each toilet
- Plugs and chains will be fitted to the bath and basin
- All pipes and taps will be checked and free of leaks
- If an extractor fan is fitted it will be in working order
- Waterproof flooring will be fitted and in good condition
- Sealant around the bath, toilet and washbasin will be in good order

General internal

- All internal doors will operate
- Any defective plaster will be repaired
- Any polystyrene tiles will be removed and surfaces made good

General external

- Some minor external works i.e. minor leaks to roofs and guttering may be repaired once you have moved in.
- Any ponds or other large holes in the garden will be filled and levelled
- Gardens will be free from rubbish
- Any garage or shed that belongs to the property will be empty and secure
- The grass will be trimmed and shrubs will be cut back if necessary

You will receive

- Electric safety certificate
- Gas safety certificate
- Energy certificate
- Instructions on how to use the heating
- Two sets of door keys
- Window lock keys

Section 10

- Details of service providers
- Where appropriate a decoration allowance of £30 towards decorating tools and sundries, then £40 for the first room and £30 for each subsequent room including hallway, with an additional £20 if the property has a hall, landing and staircase. To a maximum of £250
- Details of who to contact and our opening times/out-of-hours emergency repairs service

What if your new home does not meet this standard?

If you feel that your new home does not meet these standards, please let us know.

Telephone: **0300 456 0117 – option 4**

Email: hsgmail@wiltshire.gov.uk

Write to us or visit us: **Housing Management,
Wiltshire Council, Council House,
Bourne Hill, Salisbury SP1 3UZ**

Section 11

Useful contacts

Wiltshire Council – Council Housing

For general or tenancy related enquiries

Website: wiltshire.gov.uk/housing-council-housing

Neighbourhood (tenancy) team

Tel: **0300 456 0117 – option 4**

Email: hsgmail@wiltshire.gov.uk

For enquiries or advice on paying your rent

Income (rents) team

Tel: **0300 456 0117 – option 1**

Email: housingincome@wiltshire.gov.uk

To report a repair

Tel: **0300 456 0117 – option 2**

Office hours are 8.30am to 5pm – any calls before or after these times will be diverted to the housing out of hours lines.

Email: housingrepairs@wiltshire.gov.uk

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iHousing tenant portal – to manage your account, pay rent and report repairs

Website: <https://ihousing.wiltshire.gov.uk>

Follow Wiltshire Council Housing on Facebook

visit: www.facebook.com/WiltshireCouncilHousing

Wiltshire Council – Council tax enquiries

Tel: **0300 456 0109**

Email: counciltax@wiltshire.gov.uk

Wiltshire Council – Housing Benefits and Council Tax Reduction

Tel: **0300 456 0110**

Email: benefits@wiltshire.gov.uk

Southern Electric Power Distribution

Use this number to find out who supplies your electricity:

Tel: **0845 026 2554**

National Grid

Use this number to find out who supplies your gas:

Tel: **0870 608 1524**

For information and advice on home security

Wiltshire Police

Tel: **101**

Website: wiltshire.police.uk

For information and advice on fire safety

Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Manor House, Potterne, Devizes, Wiltshire, SN10 5PP

Tel: **01380 723601**

Fax: **01380 727000**

Website: www.wiltsfire.gov.uk

Citizens Advice Bureau

Salisbury and District Citizens Advice Bureau,
Five Rivers Health and Wellbeing Centre, Hulse Road,
Salisbury SP1 3NR

Tel: **03444 111 444**

Website: citizensadvice.org.uk



Information about Wiltshire Council services can be made available in other formats such as large print or audio and languages on request.

Please contact the council on **0300 456 0100**,
or by email on **customercare@wiltshire.gov.uk**

Housing Management,
Wiltshire Council,
Council House,
Bourne Hill,
Salisbury,
Wiltshire, SP1 3UZ

Direct line: **Tel: 0300 456 0117 – option 4**
Email: **hsgmail@wiltshire.gov.uk**
Website: **wiltshire.gov.uk/housing-council-housing**