

Tenants' Handbook

Index

Welcome

Your Tenancy

Being A Good Neighbour

Repairs, Maintenance, Alterations and Improvement

Complaints

Information Leaflets

Welcome

**Welcome to your new home.
We hope you will enjoy living here.**

To contact us:-

The Association's main office is at
Govanhill Housing Association Ltd
Samaritan House
79 Coplaw Street
Govanhill
Glasgow G42 7JG

Our office hours are 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. Monday to Friday. We do not close for lunch. We have a flexi-time system, if you do not have an appointment you will be assisted by a member of staff who is available.

Telephone: 0141 636 3636 (General Enquiries)
0141 636 3669 (Repairs)
Fax: 0141 636 3685
Email: checkin@govanhillha.org
Website: www.govanhillha.org

We also have an office in Merrylee that is open part-time at

Govanhill Housing Association Ltd
53 Ashmore Road
Merrylee
Glasgow G43 2LS

Telephone: 0141 633 0784
Fax: 0141 637 8765

The Merrylee office is open:

Monday: 9.00 a.m. to 12.00 p.m.
Tuesday: 9.00 a.m. to 12.00 p.m.
Wednesday: Closed
Thursday: 9.00 a.m. to 12.00 p.m.
Friday: 9.00 a.m. to 12.00 p.m.

About Govanhill Housing Association

Govanhill Housing Association was founded by a small dedicated group of volunteers who had the foresight and determination to set up the Association back in 1974. From very small beginnings, the Association has grown to become a significant provider of social housing and a major driver for regeneration in the area along with our subsidiaries, Govanhill Community Development Trust and Great Gardens.

The Govanhill Group works with others for the regeneration of the area in partnership with local people. It delivers quality services and invests in sustainable solutions that provide a better place to live.

How the Association Operates

The Association is controlled by a Management Committee made up of local people. They are all volunteers and do not receive payment.

The Management Committee is made up of a maximum of fifteen members who are elected at the Annual General Meeting for three years each, one third standing down each year.

The Management Committee decides the policies of the Association and carry overall responsibility for its work. In order to do this, it appoints staff who report each month on relevant matters to the Management Committee.

Specialist Sub-Committees have been formed too and these are detailed below with their areas of responsibility

Housing Services

This Sub Committee looks after:

- Allocations
- Lettings
- Estate Management
- Tenancy Support and Sustainment
- Welfare Rights
- Arrears
- Maintenance
- Factoring

Development

The role of this Sub Committee is:

- The supervision of rehabilitation and the building of new homes
- Co-ordination and supervision of the Major Repairs programme

Finance & General Purposes

The role of this Sub-Committee is to determine the budget at the beginning of the financial year and to monitor financial progress throughout the year. It also deals with Human Resources.

Audit

This Sub-Committee monitors the Association's activities through the scrutiny of an independent auditor to ensure compliance of all statutory and good practice requirements.

Getting involved and becoming a member

As a tenant you can become a member by purchasing a £1 share in the Association. This entitles you to attend and vote at the Association's Annual General Meeting. In addition, you can stand for election to our Committee and participate in the decisions affecting your local area.

Committee members receive ongoing training and meet with relevant staff on a regular basis to discuss matters and to consider and approve the Association's policies and also monitor performance.

Please contact our office for more information if you wish to get involved by becoming a member of the Association.

Your Tenancy

You have been given a copy of your tenancy agreement. Please keep it in a safe place. Your Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement is a legal document that sets out the Association's responsibilities to you as a landlord and your responsibilities to the Association as a tenant.

Everything you need to know about your rights and responsibilities as a tenant of Govanhill Housing Association can be found in your tenancy agreement. Your Housing Officer or Housing Assistant will be able to assist you by explaining anything that you are unclear about within the agreement.

The tenancy agreement sets out the following:

- Who the tenant(s) is(are).
- Who is entitled to live in the property.
- What the rent is and how it can be varied.
- Any services provided and the cost of same.
- Your rights and responsibilities.
- The Association's obligations.
- How the tenancy can be terminated and the grounds on which the courts may end a tenancy.

The agreement is a very important document and you should read it carefully and keep it safe for future reference. If you have any questions about your tenancy agreement ask your Housing Officer to explain. If you require translation assistance we can organise this.

How your rent is set

Your rent is set in accordance with the Association's rental policy. The Rental Policy takes account of the size and amenity of the property.

The Association rents are, in the main, reviewed annually with any increase in the charge taking effect on 28th April. You will receive at least 28 days' notice of any increase.

However, tenancies which commenced prior to January 1989 are covered by different legislation and are reviewed on a 3 year cycle. These rents are set by the Rent Registration Service.

How to pay your rent

The Association's rents are payable in advance on the 28th of each month. Rent payments can be made using your Allpay card which was issued to you at the start of your tenancy. The card can be used at any Paypoint outlet displaying the Paypoint sign.



Alternatively, you can set up a Direct Debit or Standing Order from your bank account to pay your rent.

The Association does not take cash rent payments at their offices.

Difficulties in paying your rent

If you have any difficulties in paying your rent you should contact the Association's Rent Advice Team at the earliest opportunity. The Team will advise you on your entitlement to Benefits.

The Association also has a dedicated Welfare Rights Team who can provide advice and information on a wide range of issues. They can also act as an advocate for tenants who have to approach Government Agencies or who have to go to a Tribunal in connection with benefits claims or appeals against decisions.

The Rent Advice Team and the Welfare Rights Team are based at our office at Samaritan House, 79 Coplaw Street, Govanhill, Glasgow, G42 7JG. Either call in or phone our reception team on 0141 636 3636 to make an appointment.

Moving to another property

We currently operate a transfer policy as part of our main allocation policy. Like our general waiting list this is based on housing need.

We also allow our tenants to exchange homes with another tenant (our tenant or a tenant of another social housing landlord) in certain circumstances. The Association subscribes to Homeswapper which is a national mutual exchange matching service. Tenants who are looking for a mutual exchange can register for free, please visit www.homeswapper.co.uk for more information.

Should you have a requirement to move or are considering a mutual exchange please contact your Housing Officer who will guide you through the process.

Changes in Circumstances

You are obliged to inform the Association if there are changes in your household circumstances. If there are any additions to your family or if someone moves out. You should also contact us if your financial circumstances change.

Ending your tenancy

If you want to end your tenancy you must give us at least four weeks notice in writing. Please call into the office to complete a Termination of Tenancy Form.

- You must agree an arrangement with the Rent Advice Team to clear any outstanding rent arrears.
- You must leave the property clean, empty and in good condition.
- You must repair or replace any broken fixtures and fittings you are responsible for before you leave the property. If we have to carry out repairs which you are responsible for, need to clean your property or have to arrange for items to be removed from the property we will charge you.
- You must also tell your gas and electricity suppliers that you are leaving so that they can finalise your bills. Please provide us with final meter readings on the day the keys are handed in.

Being A Good Neighbour

Respect for others

It is important that all our residents are able to enjoy a peaceful, safe environment in which to live. It is part of your tenancy agreement that you, your household members and your visitors must not harass or disturb your neighbours or act in an anti-social manner.

Communal living

Everyone should take care to avoid unnecessary disturbance of their neighbours and it may be helpful to warn them, in advance, about any potential exceptional noise, e.g. if you are planning a family celebration. People who keep anti-social hours should take extra care to avoid causing a disturbance late at night or in the early hours of the morning. Anyone experiencing a noise disturbance should speak to the person causing the disturbance and / or contact the Police, Environmental Health or Govanhill Housing as appropriate.

Pets

Your tenancy agreement allows you to keep one domestic pet. If you wish to keep more than one domestic pet you must contact the Association and get written consent from us.

Refuse

It is important that residents dispose of refuse properly by ensuring that all rubbish is put into the correct bins provided. Do not put general waste in the recycling bins and always ensure that the correct items are put in the correct recycling bins.

Do not leave rubbish bags in the close or landings or on the public footpaths.

Close cleaning

If you live in a flat you must clean your section of the close, stairs, landing and close windows in accordance with your tenancy agreement. You must also keep your backcourt in a clean and tidy condition.

Gardens

If you live in a house and have sole use of a garden it is your responsibility to ensure it is maintained in a satisfactory condition.

Housing Services

The main aim of the Association's Housing Management staff is to manage the Association's housing stock. We achieve this by:

- Assisting you to settle into your new home.
- Explaining the terms of your tenancy.
- Providing advice on Welfare Benefits including help with housing costs through our dedicated Rents Advice Team and Welfare Rights Team.
- Assisting you with any problems you experience regarding your tenancy.
- Working closely with other agencies and community groups who also have a responsibility to ensure our tenants live in a clean and safe environment.

Repairs, Maintenance, Alterations and Improvements

The Association is responsible for most repairs. If you are in doubt contact your Maintenance Officer. We aim to provide all tenants with an efficient, quality service to carry out repairs in your home and to meet legal and safety requirements.

What are our responsibilities?

- Structural elements and exterior of the house (in co-operation with any other owners).
- Internal fabric, fittings and fixtures and installations for space and water heating and sanitation.
- Along with the appropriate authorities, the facilities for gas, electricity, water and sewerage.

What are your responsibilities?

- Replacing lost keys and costs involved in forcing entry through keys being lost.
- Keeping the interior of the property clean and in good decorative order
- Repairing any fixtures and fittings damaged through neglect or carelessness by you or a member of your household or your visitor(s).
- Garden ground. Where there is a communal garden area, all residents have a joint responsibility to maintain it. If your home has an exclusive garden, you are solely responsible.
- Reporting repairs or defects to the Association and giving access to enable the repairs to be carried out
- Giving access annually to enable the Annual Gas Safety inspection to be carried out within your home.
- If you wish to carry out any alterations or improvements to your home you will, in most cases, require the Association's prior, written consent. You may be entitled to compensation for these improvements at the end of your tenancy. Contact your Maintenance Officer for advice before considering any such work.

If we consider that you are responsible for a repair, you will be advised of this and you will be given an estimate of the cost. You will be requested to pay the cost prior to the work being done or agree to an instalment arrangement.

Some of these rechargeable costs could be covered by house contents insurance. The Association encourages all tenants to ensure that they have appropriate contents insurance and will provide advice on how to obtain low cost insurance, if required. Tenants are responsible for paying any Building Insurance excess.

Reporting repairs

- Call into or write to the office or telephone the direct repairs line on 0141 636 3669.
- For Emergency repairs, outwith office hours, phone our call handler on 0141 552 8647. This service will enable contact to be made with the relevant contractor who will be able to provide assistance or advice on the matter.

Categories of Repairs and Response Times

Repairs are carried out by way of the priority system. The repairs priorities reflect the urgency of the works, and the need to ensure continuity of service delivery.

Emergency Repairs will be started within four hours of notification to make safe / carry out minor repair, with full completion by the end of the following working day.

Urgent Repairs will be completed within three working days of issue to our contractor.

Routine Repairs will be completed within ten working days of issue to our contractor or by prearranged appointment made by an appropriate contractor of the Association.

If we fail to meet these specified times, it may be possible for you to claim compensation.

Maintenance tips

There are many ways that cold weather can be prevented from causing damage to your home and its contents. Try and avoid burst pipes and damage to your home in winter by keeping your home reasonably warm day and night. In particularly cold weather keep the heating on during the night at a low temperature.

If your water supply becomes frozen

- Turn off the water at the Mains Stop Valve (this is generally located at the incoming supply pipe to your home, usually in the kitchen area).
- Turn all cold taps on to drain the system.
- Do not open the hot taps as the pipes feeding your central heating system might have frozen.
- Turn off the central heating system and immersion heater.
- Collect water in the bath for washing and flushing the toilet.
- Contact the Association at the earliest opportunity.

If you have a burst pipe

- Turn off the Mains Water Stop Valve.
- Switch off the electricity at the mains.
- Switch off any water heater.
- Turn off the central heating system.
- Turn all taps on to drain your system.
- Collect water in your bath for washing and flushing the toilet.
- Warn neighbours who may also be affected.

- Contact the Association immediately to arrange an emergency plumber.

Are you going to be away from home? If so, here are a few basic steps to follow to protect your home and your tenancy.

- Let us know that you are going away, how long for and who your appointed keyholder will be in your absence. Tell your Senior Housing Officer or Housing Officer.
- Arrange for a friend or family member to check your property regularly.
- Ensure that you have made arrangements to pay your rent while you are away. Remember you may not be entitled to Housing Benefit while you are away.

It is a condition of your tenancy that you tell us if you are going to be away for more than 4 weeks. If you haven't told us you are not going to be at home, we may assume that you are no longer living there and begin a legal process to formally end your tenancy within a 28 day period. Even if you are only going away for a couple of weeks it's still a good idea to let us know.

Home safety

As a tenant you must take all reasonable precautions to prevent risk to yourself and others. These risks can include fire and explosions arising from the use and or storage of flammable or dangerous substances in and around your house. Remember, the use of heaters fired by paraffin or LPG is not permitted in your home nor is the storage of paraffin, petrol or Liquid Petroleum Gas containers permitted in your house or any common parts of the property.

Gas safety

If you smell gas in your home:

- Make sure all gas appliances and the burners on your cooker are turned completely off.
- Do not use cigarettes.
- Open all doors and windows.
- Do not use matches or naked flames.
- Turn gas off at the meter.
- Do not operate any electrical switches or appliances including door entry system.
- Call Transco free on 0800 111 999

Remember by law you must allow the Association access to your home to carry out the Annual Gas Service visit. This check protects you, your family and the property.

Bogus callers

Bogus callers can cause serious emotional and financial stress. To avoid this please follow some simple rules.

- Always ask for proof of identification and check it carefully – it must have a photograph of the caller on it. Never be persuaded or bullied to let someone

into your home or worry about seeming rude. If in doubt – keep them out!

- Never give keys to contractors.
- If you think you may have received a visit from a bogus caller please call the Police, on 101, immediately.
- All members of the Housing Association staff carry photographic identification.

Complaints

There may be occasions when you are not happy about something, and if this is the case it is important for you to tell us. The Association takes complaints very seriously and fully investigates all complaints that are made. If you have a complaint regarding any aspect of the Association's activities you should speak to a member of staff at the earliest opportunity.

We will always try to deal with complaints sympathetically, but there are some things we will not be able to give you information about. For example it would be wrong for us to discuss with you someone else's housing application, as this would be a breach of confidentiality, but we can of course talk to you about how our allocations procedure works.

Please refer to our Complaints Handling Procedure for more information.

Information Leaflets

The Association will provide you with the information leaflet relevant to your enquiry. Please contact the office if you require more information about any aspect of your Tenancy Agreement. We should be able to give you a leaflet that sets out your rights and obligation.

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