Tenant Handbook

WELCOME TO YOUR NEW HOME
WITH LANCASTER CITY COUNCIL

LANCASTER
CITY COUNCIL
Promoting City, Coast & Countryside

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1 Moving In

Your Housing Officer:

Name:

Email:

Phone:

Your Income Officer:

Name:

Email:

Phone:

Setting Up Your Utilities

You will have been given the meter readings for your new home when you signed the tenancy and details of who your current supplier is. We will pass your details onto the current energy supplier, but you will still need to set up accounts with them.

Once you have set up accounts with the current energy supplier, you can then change to any supplier of your choice.

This can take between five to fifteen days to complete, so you will still get a bill from the current supplier. There are many different price comparison sites online that you can use to choose the best provider for your needs.

If you are moving from another property where you are paying for utilities, you should also let your existing suppliers know that you are moving and keep copies of the meter readings on the day that you move out.

Electricity

You will need to set up an account with the current supplier. If you want to check who your current supplier is, you can find out by visiting www.enwl.co.uk/forms/who-is-my-supplier. Depending on the type of meter, you may also need to supply a meter reading.

Gas

You will need to set up an account with the current supplier. To find out who your current supplier is, you can check at www.findmysupplier.energy.

Once you have set up your account with your gas supplier, you will need to contact OCS (our gas contractor) to arrange for your gas to be recommissioned (uncapped).

Before you arrange for OCS to come, check that you have at least £5 credit on your gas and electricity meters.

If you don't have the money for this, let us know by phone or email and we discuss how we can help.

Let them know you have moved into your new home and ask for an appointment for them to recommission your gas supply so you can use your gas boiler and central heating system. They will also show you how to use your boiler and provide you with a gas safety certificate.

If you have any problems after you move in with your gas boiler, you will need to ring OCS on **0800 111 4521** (free from land lines).

Water

United Utilities are the suppliers of water in the North West. If you are currently a customer or you need to set up a new account to pay your water bill you can visit www.unitedutilities.com/my-account/moving-home to find out what you need to do.

You may have a water meter at your new home. If you have, you should take a meter reading when you move in. You can find out more about water meters by visiting www.unitedutilities.com/my-account/all-about-water-meters/i-have-a-water-meter/information-about-meters

If you are having problems with your gas, electric or water meter, you will need to contact your supplier directly.

Connecting Your White Goods

If this is your first home, you may not know that you need someone who is qualified to connect your cooker. It is important that you use someone who is qualified to connect your cooker, for example an electrician or gas engineer. You are provided with a plug socket, water connections and waste pipe for your washing machine. You can cause damage to your kitchen units and flooring if these are not connected properly. There are lots of good videos on YouTube that show you how to do connect your washing machine.

If you have a vented tumble drier, you may not have a vent fitted in your property. You are not allowed to drill a hole for a vent, without our permission in writing first. If you have arranged for a furniture package, they will fit any white goods that you have delivered and are qualified to do so.

Lancashire County Council have a Safe Trader Scheme you can use to find locate a qualified professional to help you to fit your cooker, available at: **www.safetrader.org.uk**

Paying Your Rent

For all income and rent related queries, you can speak to your Income Officer. Your rent will usually change every April. The Tenant's Voice vote on the proposed changes before they are implemented. If you want to become involved with the Tenant's Voice, you can find out more by visiting www.lancaster.gov.uk/housing/council-housing/my-neighbourhood/tenants-voice.

How To Pay Your Rent

Before you move into your new home, your Income Officer will have contacted you to discuss how you can pay your rent and offered you a benefit check to make sure you are getting all the help you are entitled to. If you get help to pay your rent from Housing Benefit or Universal Credit, your Income Officer will let you know what action your need to take. We have a range of payment options that you can use including Direct Debits, Standing Orders, Payzone, Online and the Post Office.

Visit www.lancaster.gov.uk/housing/council-housing/my-home/my-rent/how-to-pay-your-rent to find out more about these different payment methods.

We are here to help if you are struggling to pay your rent or have money worries.

Please let us know as soon as possible as there is help available and we want to work with you to find a solution.

Support

If you are having difficulty paying your rent or think you may in the future, do not hesitate to let us know so we can work together to find a solution. Further information and support is available by visiting www.lancaster.gov.uk/housing/council-housing/my-home/my-rent/having-difficulty-paying.

Money Matters

Your Income Officer can support you with any money concerns you may have and can also signpost you to local support or make a referral, with your consent.

We are aware that many residents are struggling with rising living costs. You can find out more about support available locally by visiting www.lancaster.gov.uk/sites/cost-of-living.

Who Else Do I Need To Tell That I Have Moved?

To help your move go as smoothly as possible, it is important to let various organisations and service providers know that your address has changed. This section outlines who you need to contact, ranging from your landlord and the Council Tax team to your utility providers.

Current Landlord

If you are currently renting another property you will need to let them know that you are moving, confirm the date when your tenancy will end and how much rent is due up to this date. If you paid a tenancy deposit for your property, Citizens Advice has information available about how to get your tenancy deposit at www.citizensadvice.org.uk/housing/deposits/getting-your-tenancy-deposit-back.

Council Tax

If you currently live in the Lancaster district and are responsible for paying council tax at another property, you will need to let our council tax team know the date you are moving out of your current home and the date when you are moving into your new Lancaster City Council home. Even if you receive a benefit to help pay your Council Tax bill, you still need to let them know this information. You can report a change of address to our council tax team by visiting www.lancaster.gov.uk/council-tax/report-a-change-of-address.

If you don't currently live in the Lancaster district and are responsible for paying council tax at another property, you will need to let the local authority you pay know when you are moving. You will then need to let Lancaster City Council's Council Tax team know the date you are moving into your new home.

You can contact Lancaster City Council's Council Tax team by ringing **01524 582905**, or by visiting our contact portal at www.lancastercc-self.achieveservice.com/service/contact_us.

If you are receiving help from Universal Credit to pay your rent, you may also want to apply for Council Tax Support. For further information, visit www.lancaster.gov.uk/benefits-and-support/council-tax-support.

Electoral Register

If you are already registered to vote, you can re-register here at www.gov.uk/register-to-vote to let them know your new address or you can register for the first time. It should only take a few minutes and you will need to know your National Insurance number.

Tax & Benefits

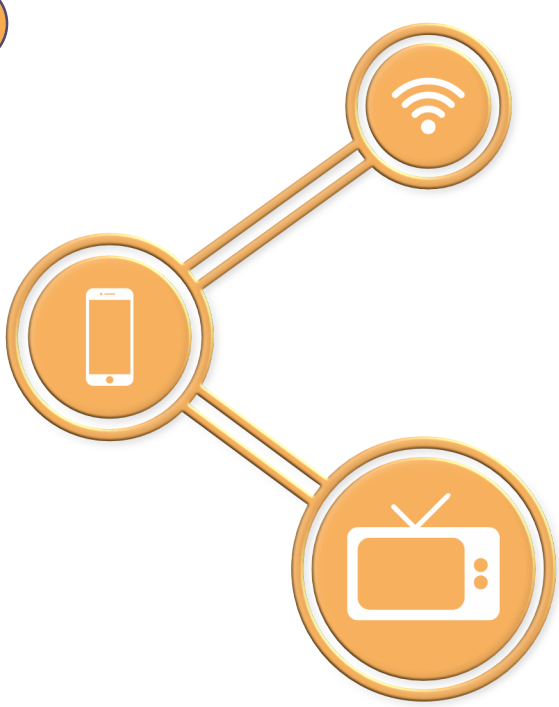
If you are in receipt of any benefits or pensions, you will need to let the Department of Work and Pensions know that you have moved. You can find out more by visiting www.gov.uk/report-benefits-change-circumstances.

You can contact the Pension Service here to let them know that you have moved by ringing **0800 731 0469**, or by visiting www.gov.uk/contact-pension-service/report-changes.

Anyone Else?

- GPs, Dentists, and Opticians
- Banks, Credit Cards
- Student Loan Providers
- Insurance Providers
- Retail Loyalty Schemes
- Online Shopping Accounts
- Catalogues
- TV Licence
- TV Subscription Services
- DVLA
- Home & Mobile Phone Providers
- Broadband Providers
- Employers, Schools or Colleges
- Pet Microchip Companies

Television, Telephone & Broadband



You will need to arrange your own telephone and broadband connections when you move into your new home.

If you live in a flat, there will be a communal television reception system. You will have been given a leaflet that explains how to use this.

If you live in a house or bungalow, you are responsible for arranging your own television service.

We do not provide a television aerial, and you are responsible for this and any repairs to it.

You need a TV licence if you:

- Watch or record live TV on any channel or service
- Use BBC iPlayer

You can apply for a television licence by visiting www.gov.uk/find-licences/tv-licence.

However, if you live in one of our Independent Living Schemes you may be eligible to join the concessionary licence scheme (please speak to your Independent Living Officer for further information). You may also be able to get a free or discounted TV Licence if you're 75 or over and get Pension Credit, or if you're blind.

Recycling & Rubbish

You will have been provided with the correct bins for non-recyclable waste and recycling at your new home.

This will have been checked when you signed up for the property.

You can find out your bin collection date by visiting the following page:

www.lancaster.gov.uk/waste-and-recycling/household-waste/bin-collection-calendar

You can find out what each bin is for by visiting the following page:

www.lancaster.gov.uk/waste-and-recycling/household-waste/recycling

2 Your New Home

Repairs

The upkeep of your home is a shared duty between us, as your landlord, and you as the tenant. It's our job to maintain the building's structure and permanent fixtures, and you have responsibility for interior decoration, furnishings, and detachable installations such as clothes lines, TV aerials, curtain rails, light bulb replacements, and other similar tasks.
By working together, we can help maintain homes that are safe, secure, warm and well maintained. Visit www.lancaster.gov.uk/housing/council-housing/my-home/repairs/r-m-services-explained to find out more about repairs and maintenance.

To report any repairs, you can either contact us directly by calling **01524 582929**, or alternatively, you can visit www.lancaster.gov.uk/housing/council-housing/my-home/repairs/report-a-repair.

Emergency Repairs

Emergency repairs are when there is a immediate risk to the health, safety or security to you or that affect the structure of your home and are normally attended to within 24 hours: These include:

- The entire loss of electricity or water supply
- The main drain to the property being blocked
- Serious structural issues including storm damage
- Securing a property and boarding up broken windows
- Out of service passenger lifts (including stair-lifts)
- A customer being locked out of home
- The removal of obscene or offensive graffiti
- A blocked toilet where only one toilet is installed in the property.
- A defective mains-operated smoke alarm or carbon monoxide detector.
- A water burst or a serious plumbing leak where the structure of the property is in danger of damage
- The entire loss of heating or hot water (between 1st October – 31st March)
- A loss of hot water facilities where the customer's health condition requires regular bathing (and where there is no electric shower installed)
- Repairs to communal door entry systems where access is required

! If you smell gas, call the Gas Emergency Services immediately on **0800 111 999.**

- You should turn off the gas supply if possible
- Do NOT switch anything electrical on or off
- Extinguish any naked flames in your home, (including candles or cigarettes)
- Do NOT smoke, light matches or do anything which could cause the gas catch fire
- Open your windows and doors

Rechargeable Repairs

If a repair is required where there has been deliberate damage or neglect, then there may be a recharge to you for this. This includes damage or neglect by family members and visitors. Common rechargeable repairs include lost keys and blocked sinks and toilets. You may therefore want to get additional sets of keys cut for your property and ensure that nothing is flushed down the toilet or poured down the sink that will cause a blockage. You will be advised at the time of reporting the repair if there will be a recharge.

You can visit www.unitedutilities.com/help-and-support/wastewater-services/stop-the-block to find more useful information about preventing blockages.

Damp, Mould & Condensation

When you sign up for your new home, it will be free from damp and mould. to learn more about practical steps to prevent condensation, damp and mould in your new home and how we can support you with this, you can visit www.lancaster.gov.uk/housing/council-housing/advice-support/damp-mould-condensation.

Decorating & Making Changes To Your New Home

You are allowed to decorate your new home using paint and wallpaper on the walls and ceilings and paint on the internal doors, skirting boards and architraves. You are not allowed to apply any texture coatings to the walls or ceilings. You are also not allowed to paint or apply adhesive coverings to any of the fixtures and fittings, including the kitchen units, bathroom, tiles, windows and external doors. If you use very bright or dark paint or wallpaper, we may ask you to repaint this to a neutral colour if you were looking to move from your new home.

After you have moved into your new home, you will need to request written permission before undertaking any alterations or improvements to your home or garden. For example, you may be thinking about putting a shed in your garden or changing the fencing in your garden or you may be thinking about changing the internal doors, changing the internal lights or creating a media wall in your lounge. These all require our written permission before being undertaken.

If you are unsure if you need permission, it is always better to ask first. We will not usually refuse permission, unless we have a valid reason for example, it will damage the structure of the building. You should email any requests to chreception@lancaster.gov.uk.

Adaptations

f you require adaptations to your new home such as additional handrails, ramp or wet-room, you will need to be referred by an Occupational Therapist. To do this, you need to either complete the Lancashire County Council referral form at www.lancashire.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/adult-social-care/getting-our-support, or contact Social Care directly by ringing **0300 123 6720**.

If you require adaptations to you home for a child, then please speak to a health professional for your child and they will be able to advise you further. If the cost of the adaptations for an adult is more than £1000, you may have to contribute towards this. We will advise you further when we get a referral from the Occupational Therapy team. There are no costs for adapting your home for a child. You can visit www.lancaster.gov.uk/housing/council-housing/my-home/repairs/adaptations to find out more about adapting your home.

Floor Coverings

We currently only provide floor covering in the kitchen and bathroom. If it was possible to leave the carpet from the previous tenant, we will have done this and gifted this to you.

You are not permitted to remove or place additional flooring over the one we provided in the kitchen or bathroom without requesting our permission first. If you live in an above ground floor flat, you cannot put laminate, wood or other hard flooring down.

3 Your Tenancy Agreement

Before you get the keys for your new home, you will have been given a copy of your tenancy agreement and had an opportunity to read this and ask any questions.

Your tenancy agreement sets out your rights and responsibilities as a tenant, and our obligations as a landlord.

You are responsible for the behaviour of every person (including children) living in or visiting your home. You are responsible for them in your home, on surrounding land, in communal areas and in the locality around your home.

Most new council tenants are "introductory tenants". This is a twelve-month trial period, at the end of which, the tenancy will become a secure tenancy, unless there have been issues with the tenancy. In some circumstances, the introductory period may be extended.

The tenancy agreement sets out the differences between introductory and secure tenants. To learn more, please visit www.lancaster.gov.uk/housing/council-housing/my-home/my-tenancy/available-support.

If you are looking to change your tenancy from a joint to sole or sole to joint, then let us know and we can advise you of what the steps are.

Your Neighbourhood

Your new home may be in an area where you have not lived before. You can learn all about what is going on in your new community here by visiting www.lancaster.gov.uk/housing/council-housing/my-neighbourhood/tenants-voice/whats-going-on-in-your-community.

Good neighbours are essential for building successful communities. When we're considerate and understanding of each others lifestyles, we create a friendlier atmosphere, enhance neighbourhood safety, and improve our overall quality of life. You can find out more about how to be a good neighbour by visiting www.lancaster.gov.uk/housing/council-housing/my-neighbourhood/community-safety/playing-your-part/how-to-be-a-good-neighbour.

Pets

If you are thinking about getting a pet, check your tenancy agreement or ask your housing officer if you are not sure if you can have one in new home.

You can find out more about our current pet policy by visiting our website.

Keeping You Safe

We are committed to creating safe, peaceful communities for all our tenants. You can find out more about what anti-social behaviour is, how we handle it and what we can do if you experience it by visiting www.lancaster.gov.uk/housing/council-housing/my-neighbourhood/community-safety/what-is-anti-social-behaviour.

Call **999** is you or someone else is in immediate danger.

If it is not an emergency, you can contact your local neighbourhood policing team for support on **101**.

If you are experiencing domestic abuse and please let us know so we can offer you advice. You can find out more how we can help at www.lancaster.gov.uk/housing/council-housing/my-neighbourhood/community-safety/different-types-of-anti-social-behaviour/domestic-abuse.

You can also contact the National Domestic Abuse Hotline on **0808 200 0247** - lines are open 24 hours a day.

4 Support To Thrive In Your New Home

We want you to thrive in your new home and we are here to provide you with the support you need to do this. We can help with a wide range of issues from finding employment, energy efficiency to accessing medical services.

If you are struggling to manage your home or garden, let us know and we can provide you with advice and assistance. Visit www.lancaster.gov.uk/housing/council-housing/advice-support/household-support to find out more.

5 Getting Involved

Your views and opinions have a big impact on the work that we do. Giving us your feedback and sharing your thoughts, ideas and suggestions with us helps us to continuously improve how we provide our services to you.

We aim to provide services that make a difference to you and your community, and we can only do this with your help. We want to encourage and support you to get involved, to make it as easy as possible for you to do that in a way that meets your needs.

We want to keep you informed about how your involvement has shaped and improved what we do. We aim to be inclusive and accessible to all of our customers and offer a variety of ways to keep you informed about how we are doing, to share your feedback with us, or to be involved in more depth through collaborating and decision-making opportunities.

We offer a wide variety of ways for customers to give us their feedback or get involved on a deeper level and help us to make the right decisions for your community. You can find out more about getting involved by visiting www.lancaster.gov.uk/housing/council-housing/my-neighbourhood/tenants-voice.

6 Moving Home

We understand that circumstances change and that in the future you may want to move to an alternative property either within the Lancaster district or further afield.

Normally, you will not be able to reapply to join the housing register until you have been in your new home for twelve months. However, if there are exceptional circumstances please get in touch and speak with us. Find out more at www.idealchoicehomes.co.uk/choice.

The quickest way to move is usually by finding another social housing tenant to swap with, also known as a mutual exchange. You will need to be a secure tenant to have the right to swap your home with another social housing tenant. You can look for social housing tenants to swap with both locally and throughout the UK as well as post an advert for your own home on the HomeSwapper website at www.homeswapper.co.uk.

7 Feedback & Complaints

We welcome feedback when things have gone well and also when things have gone wrong and we have failed to meet our standards.

Council Housing views all complaints positively as an opportunity to listen and learn. By visiting our website at www.lancaster.gov.uk/housing/council-housing/about-us/complaints you can find out more about how we resolve and learn from complaints.

Contact Information

Customer Services

Telephone: 01524 582000

Contact Form: lancaster.gov.uk/information/contact

Website: lancaster.gov.uk

Useful Telephone Numbers:

Benefits: 01524 582965

Business Rates: 01524 582920

Cemeteries: 01524 582635

Council Housing: 01524 582929

Council Tax: 01524 582900

Elections: 01524 582905

Environmental Services: 01524 582491

Health and Housing (inc. homelessness): 01524 582257

Ideal Choice Homes: 01524 582005

Licensing: 01524 582033

Markets: 01524 414251

Parking: 01524 582972

Planning: 01524 582950

Public Protection/Environmental Health: 01524 582935

Salt Ayre Leisure Centre: 01524 847540

If you are unsure which department you need to speak to ring our switchboard on 01524 582000 and they will direct you to the department you require.

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