

# TENANT HANDBOOK

A GUIDE TO LIVING IN YOUR COUNCIL HOME

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IPSWICH  
BOROUGH COUNCIL



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<b>TENANCY SERVICES</b> tenancy.services@ipswich.gov.uk	<b>01473 432000</b>
<b>REPORT A REPAIR</b> (Monday to Friday 8.30am-5pm)	<b>01473 432000</b>
<b>OUT-OF-HOURS EMERGENCY REPAIRS</b> (5pm-8.30am)	<b>01473 432000</b>
<b>REPORT ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR</b> housingasb@ipswich.gov.uk	<b>01473 433325</b>
<b>OUT-OF-HOURS HOUSING EMERGENCIES</b>	<b>01473 433444</b>
<b>AUTOMATED RENT PAYMENT LINE</b> (24 hours, seven days a week)	<b>01473 937866</b>
<b>GAS SERVICING</b>	<b>0800 533 5630</b> <b>01473 835145</b>
<b>HOUSING BENEFITS</b> (Monday to Friday 8.30am-5pm)	<b>01473 432000</b>
<b>REFUSE COLLECTION</b> Find your collection day on our website	<b>01473 433090</b>
<b>HEARS ALARM SERVICE</b> hears@ipswich.gov.uk	<b>01473 433236</b>
<b>CUSTOMER SERVICES CENTRE</b> Monday - Friday 8.30am-5pm	<b>01473 432000</b>

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# WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

## WELCOME TO YOUR COUNCIL HOME

We want you to be happy in your home and we also want to be a good landlord. This guide sets out what we expect from you and what standards of service you should receive from us.

If you are a joint tenant, please remember you are both jointly and individually responsible for your own and the other tenant's actions.

## TENANCY SERVICES

Tenancy Services is the Council's service area responsible for managing and maintaining your tenancy. We aim to provide the best possible service and have been awarded a number of best practice awards such as the Government Charter Mark and Investors in People. At sign-up stage, we will explain the Tenancy Agreement and aspects of your new tenancy. We will give you an opportunity to meet us and ask any questions.

## MOVING IN - UTILITIES

It is your responsibility to contact water, gas, electricity suppliers and council tax. Normally three days notice is required to contact utilities. The current supplier for Gas and Electric to the property

will be Southern Scottish Electric (SSE). All Pre-payment meters will be on the SSE Standard Tariff and subject to change by SSE. For more information visit [www.sse.co.uk/review](http://www.sse.co.uk/review) or contact to 0800 1928329. It is important you look at what supplier and tariff will provide you with the best rate.

At the property you will find that there is typically one of the following types of meter: Quarterly meters for both Gas and electric or Pre-payment meter (typically a card) for Gas and Pre-payment meter (typically a key) for Electric. A quarterly meter – does not require "topping up" however Pre-payment meter can be topped up at the Post Office or an outlet displaying the purple and yellow Paypoint sign. All meters are in the process of being replaced by Smart Meters which will be in either credit or pre-payment mode. If you are unsure of which type of meter you have, please speak to your chosen energy supplier.

If you have a pre-pay meter and there is no key or card when you move in then you will need to contact SSE (8am-8pm Mon-Fri, 8am- 2pm Sat)  
Gas: 0345 026 7038 Electric: 0345 026 7039



## HOW TO USE THIS HANDBOOK

This handbook supports your Tenancy Agreement. You should keep your agreement in a safe place. You will find the most up-to-date version on our website.

The handbook is a guide and provides contacts for further information. We explain what you can expect from us regarding our standards, aims and performance targets.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

In each section we explain where to go for further advice, help and information.

## HINTS AND ADVICE

We will give you advice to help you enjoy living in your home and find out what services we can provide.

## COMMENTS ON HANDBOOK

If you have any comments on the layout and content of this handbook please contact the Tenant Participation Team on 01473 432000

# YOUR TENANCY AGREEMENT

**The Tenancy Agreement is a legal contract between you and us (the Council). It sets out the terms and conditions required by both you and us. It is an important document, so you should read it carefully and keep it safe. The handbook gives further advice and guidance on what the tenancy agreement means and how to ensure you do not break any of its conditions. We want you to be happy in your home and we want to ensure that, through the tenancy conditions we can prevent or solve many potential disputes and problems.**

## WHAT ARE SECURE AND INTRODUCTORY TENANCIES?

You will have one of two types of tenancies with Ipswich Borough Council. You will either have an Introductory or Secure Tenancy. The signed Introductory Tenancy agreement between you and us is a step towards having a Secure Tenancy. Introductory Tenancies usually last for 12 months, providing you have kept to the terms of your tenancy agreement. If this is the case you will become a secure tenant 12 months from the date of your tenancy starting or from the date you moved in; whichever is earlier. Security of tenure gives you certain rights such as the right to exchange. These rights are described more fully in other sections of the handbook.

## YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

If you are a new tenant, we will go through the tenancy agreement and explain it to you when you are about to sign up for your new home. You will become responsible for keeping to the conditions as soon as you sign your tenancy agreement. During the lifetime of your tenancy a Housing Officer will:

- visit you at home four times in the first year if you are an introductory tenant
- visit you at home at least once every two years if you are a secure tenant
- respond to any written correspondence within five working days

## CHANGING THE AGREEMENT

We may vary the terms of your tenancy but we must follow a legal process to do this. If we change any of the terms, we must serve a Notice of Variation and allow you time to comment on the changes. We can vary the rent by serving you a 28 day notice (See the section 'All about your rent').

## WHAT IF I BREAK THE AGREEMENT?

If you break any conditions of the tenancy, we can take action to remove you from your home. In most circumstances we will talk to you or write to discuss and remedy the problem. Our first aim is to reach an agreed solution. However, on some serious occasions if the problem continues we will go to court to resolve the issue. We can also take action if you break conditions laid out in the Housing Acts of 1985 and 1996. We may also take out injunctions, which are court orders requiring you to do or not to do something. If we take you to court, the judge will decide if it is reasonable to give us possession of your home. This will be based on the evidence presented and the seriousness of the tenancy breach.

## SOME EXAMPLES OF BREAKING THE AGREEMENT

- Abusive, threatening or violent behaviour by you, your family or your visitors towards other people in your neighbourhood
- Allowing domestic pets to foul communal areas on the estate
- Not living in the property on a permanent basis
- Not maintaining the garden in a clean and tidy condition
- Selling or cultivating illegal drugs at the property or on the estate
- Parking heavy goods vehicles or untaxed vehicles on the estate
- Playing very loud music
- Refusing access to carry out the servicing of a gas appliance and electrical repairs
- Threatening, abusing or being violent to housing staff or their contractors
- Making false or malicious complaints about the behaviour of anyone residing, visiting or carrying out their lawful duties in the neighbourhood

## YOUR RIGHTS

- Right to buy\* (after a qualifying period) ✓
- Right to exchange\*\* ✓
- Right to carry out improvements\*\* ✓
- Right to compensation for improvements ✓
- Right to repair ✓
- Right to be consulted ✓
- Right to take in lodgers ✓
- Right of succession ✓

\*After permission is granted \* Secure tenants only

## ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Anti-social behaviour can have a major effect on those who are at the receiving end. The law defines anti-social behaviour as 'acting in a manner that caused or was likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress ...' Tackling this issue has become a high priority for Tenancy Services in recent years and in consultation with our tenants we have improved and continue to improve the way we deal with it.

We want to make sure that all areas of council housing in Ipswich are places where people actually want to live. Our Community Caretaking team work into the evenings, patrolling the estates to ensure any anti-social behaviour witnessed, can be contained or tackled. Our housing staff are able to provide advice and guidance for tenants who are experiencing anti-social behaviour. Our Anti-Social Behaviour Officers are available to monitor problems and coordinate effective responses. There have been major changes in the law recently which means we can tackle the problem of anti-social behaviour effectively, often with the help of the Police and other agencies.

## YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

If you are a new tenant, we will go through the The Tenancy Agreement which sets out the way we expect our tenants to behave and in more serious cases provides the means for us to take legal action:

- you are responsible for the behaviour of anyone living in or visiting your home; you are responsible for them in the home, garden, communal areas and neighbourhood
- you or your visitors must not behave in a way that causes or is likely to cause nuisance, annoyance or disturbance and unreasonable noise to neighbours or anyone living in the vicinity
- you must not use the premises for criminal or unlawful activity
- you must not harass others on the grounds of disability, age, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex or sexual orientation
- you are responsible for damage caused to the property or neighbourhood by yourself or your visitors



## WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Try to deal with the problem yourself as a first step by speaking to the alleged perpetrator.
- Problems may arise because the other person is not aware that their behaviour is causing a nuisance
- If this does not work contact Housing ASB Officer and report the problems.
- You may be asked to keep a log of events which will form the basis of our investigations. In more serious cases you may be asked to give evidence in court.
- In all cases you should remain calm and not act in a way which causes provocation.
- If the problem is noise nuisance contact Environmental Health on 01473 432000 or [environmental.health@ipswich.gov.uk](mailto:environmental.health@ipswich.gov.uk) who will respond to your complaint.
- If you are feeling threatened or in danger call the Police immediately on 999. You can report anti-social behaviour by phoning 01473 433325.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Customer Services, Citizens Advice Bureau or independent legal advice

# ALL ABOUT YOUR RENT

If you are an Ipswich Borough Council tenant your rent is due each Monday. However, you can choose to pay fortnightly, 4 weekly or monthly. Please note that all rent payments must be paid in advance. Help with rent payments in the form of housing benefit and Universal Credit is described in more details on page 10.

If you have difficulty in paying your rent, you should contact Tenancy Services immediately. Don't be afraid to do this - the staff are trained in providing advice and will try to reach an agreement with you to clear the account [www.ipswich.gov.uk/content/problems-paying-your-rent](http://www.ipswich.gov.uk/content/problems-paying-your-rent).

We will also try to make personal contact as often as possible. We have a rent arrears procedure. A brief summary is shown below

Please note: if you owe arrears we may refuse to offer further council accommodation. This means you might lose the rights outlined on page 5.

## ANNUAL RENT SETTING

The rent is reviewed annually taking government guidance into account and may be increased or decreased from time to time. You will be told of any change in the amount of rent you must pay at least 28 days before the rent changes.

## SERVICE CHARGES

The service charges are set separately by the Council and although these are not regulated in the same way as the rent, increases each year will be kept to a minimum.

## CHECKING YOUR RENT ACCOUNT

You can now access your rent account online with the new Housing Online, My Account portal. This quick and easy online tool can be accessed anytime, anywhere from any device. Sign up and check your rent balance online at [www.ipswich.gov.uk/housingonline](http://www.ipswich.gov.uk/housingonline)

## THE RENTAL EXCHANGE - FAIR PROCESSING NOTICE

The Council have teamed up with Experian to take part in The Rental Exchange. The Rental Exchange is a way to strengthen your credit report without you needing to take on new credit. The scheme enables us to share details about the rent you pay with Experian on a monthly basis. This is then included in your credit report, meaning you will then be recognised for paying your rent on time.

## STANDARD ARREARS PROCEDURE

**REMINDER** - Our initial reminder that rent is owing

**REQUEST FOR CONTACT** - We ask you contact your local Housing Officer \*

**NSP (NOPP+) PRE COURT** - We will invite you in to discuss why you are not paying and may apply to Court for possession of your home)

### COURT

**PRE-WARRANT REVIEW PANEL** - We will invite you in to discuss why you are not paying and may apply to Court for your eviction warrant

### WARRANT

**EVICTION** - The County Court bailiff carries out the eviction. The arrears must still be paid

\* Home or Office appointment will be arranged \*\* Home visits will be made + Notice of Possession Proceedings

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### **What happens if my claim for Housing Benefit or Universal Credit has not yet been assessed?**

You should let Tenancy Services know immediately in order to prevent further action over unpaid rent. They may be able to tell you to pay less rent until the benefit is assessed.

### **Will I get a rent statement?**

You can request one at any time by contacting Customer Services. Tenants in arrears will receive rent statements quarterly.

You can now access your rent account online with the new Housing Online, My Account portal. This quick and easy online tool can be accessed anytime, anywhere from any device. Sign up and check your rent balance online at

[www.ipswich.gov.uk/housingonline](http://www.ipswich.gov.uk/housingonline)

### **If I go to court, will I be charged anything?**

It is likely we will ask you to pay any costs incurred by the Council as a result of us taking you to court. This is in addition to any rent arrears.

### **What will happen if I end my tenancy and have rent arrears?**

We will contact you about the debt and ask you to make arrangements to pay it off. If we do not know your address, we will take steps to locate it. We can still take court action or use a debt collector to recover the debt even if you are no longer our tenant.

### **Can I pay monthly?**

Yes, but payments should be in advance.

### **Advice**

Let us know as soon as possible if you having any difficulties paying your rent. If you are waiting for a benefit claim to be assessed you should let us know.

**For more information about rent or tenancy matters please contact Customer Services.**

### **DIFFERENT WAYS TO PAY YOUR RENT**

- By direct debit. Telephone us on **01473 432000**
- Online pay with your debit card at [www.ipswich.gov.uk](http://www.ipswich.gov.uk) You will need your rent account number
- By telephone call **01473 433777** and pay with your debit card (available 24/7) You will need your rent account number
- Through your bank/building society ask Tenancy Services for more information on this service
- At any post office you can use the barcode on any of your rent letters (or a plastic payment card if you were previously issued with one) to pay by cash or card
- At any Payzone outlet in your local shop or supermarket, or wherever you see the Payzone logo you can use the barcode on any of your letters (or a plastic payment card if you were previously issued with one) to pay by cash or card. **Note: cheques are not accepted**

### **SERVICE STANDARDS**

We will notify you within two weeks of a missed or incomplete payment, if you fall behind with the payment of rent.

We will contact you in person to discuss your rent payments and provide advice, before we decide to take legal action to recover the debt.





## HOUSING BENEFIT & UNIVERSAL CREDIT - HELP WITH RENT

### UNIVERSAL CREDIT

Universal Credit is a benefit that combines living and housing benefits (eg Housing Benefit, Jobseekers Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance, Income Support, Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit). You can only make a claim online and when you make a claim then you must include the details of your rent and Council Tax in that claim. Universal Credit will be paid monthly directly to you. You must then pay your rent from this money. To make a claim for Universal Credit go online to [www.gov.uk/apply-universal-credit](http://www.gov.uk/apply-universal-credit)

### HOUSING BENEFIT

This is a benefit payable according to your income, savings and family circumstances. If you are eligible, benefit is paid directly to your rent account reducing the amount of rent you pay. The benefit amount varies according to circumstances and the rules set out by Government. If you want to apply for housing benefit, you must complete an online claim form and supply proof of your identity, income and any savings. When you apply you will also be assessed for Council Tax benefit [www.ipswich.gov.uk/content/housing-benefit-and-council-tax-reduction](http://www.ipswich.gov.uk/content/housing-benefit-and-council-tax-reduction)

### ON-LINE CALCULATOR

Visit [www.ipswich.gov.uk/calculator](http://www.ipswich.gov.uk/calculator) and use the trial calculation facility to see if you might qualify for help. If you do not have internet access you can visit the Customer Services Centre or ring the Benefits Helpline for advice on **01473 432000**. If you think you may be entitled, apply straight away.

### TO MAKE A CLAIM

If you have used the on-line calculator, just continue from the last page to the on-line claim form. Otherwise visit [www.ipswich.gov.uk](http://www.ipswich.gov.uk) and select Benefits and then Claiming Your Benefits. When you have submitted the claim, an email is sent to you with details of any supporting documents you will need to provide.

### CHANGES OF CIRCUMSTANCES

You must report all changes in circumstances immediately, as you may receive too much or too little benefit. If you are paid too much benefit you will probably have to pay it back and you may have court action taken against you if you do not. Changes are reported online at [www.ipswich.gov.uk](http://www.ipswich.gov.uk).

**There are self service computers available at the Customer Service Centre by appointment Monday-Friday 10am – 4pm.**

### FURTHER INFORMATION

To arrange a face to face appointments at the Customer Service Centre,  
Town Hall, Princes Street, Ipswich  
Telephone 01473 432000 Monday-Friday 8.30am-5pm

### BENEFITS HELPLINE

Telephone 01473 432700 Monday-Friday 8.30am-5pm



# USE OF THE PROPERTY

This section deals with various aspects of how you can or cannot use the property or premises

## PRINCIPAL HOME

You must occupy your property as your only or principal home. This means you cannot live permanently elsewhere. If you do, you may lose your rights as a secure tenant and we can serve a Notice to Quit to bring your tenancy to an end.

## SUB-LETTING

Sub-letting means renting out parts or all of your home. You must not do this without first obtaining our written permission. You must not sub-let the whole of the property as you will permanently lose your secure tenancy and may be subject to criminal proceedings. Sub-letting may also affect any benefits you receive.

## LODGERS

You have a right to take in a lodger(s) but you must ensure your home does not become overcrowded. You can ask us to tell you the permitted number allowed at your home. If you are getting housing benefit or Universal Credit, you must notify the relevant department as soon as you take in a lodger, as it will affect your benefit.

## GOING AWAY FOR MORE THAN THREE WEEKS

We need to know if you will be away from the property for over 21 days. It is useful to give us a contact name and address in case of emergencies. You should take precautions to turn off your water supply to prevent burst pipes and possible damage to your home and others.

One of the reasons we need to know is so we can tell whether a property has been abandoned. If a property appears to be abandoned we will make every effort to contact the tenant. If we cannot contact the tenant we will serve a Notice to Quit and take action to end the tenancy. Given the great demand for our accommodation, we need to ensure that all our homes are lived in.

## ASSIGNMENT

Assignment means passing your tenancy onto someone else. You may not do this except under the following circumstances:

- 1** You exchange your home with another tenant of a local authority or registered social landlord and we have approved the exchange in writing.
- 2** A court has made a Property Adjustment Order in connection with divorce or child care proceedings.
- 3** You assign the tenancy to a person who would be legally entitled to succeed to the tenancy (see the section on succession). We may take action if you wish to assign the property to someone and the property is unsuitable for their needs. If you wish to consider assigning your tenancy, you must seek further advice from your Housing Officer or your own legal advice. Assignment can only happen once.

## BUSINESS/TRADES

You must not use the premises for any business or trade purposes without first obtaining our permission and planning permission. While we would judge every case on its individual circumstances, we would not allow certain businesses.

### Some examples would be:

- carrying out a car-repairing business
- running a taxi service from the premises
- running a business that caused noise or nuisance to neighbours
- running a business that involved many people visiting your home
- running a business that breaks planning consent and requirements



### **KEEPING YOUR HOME CLEAN AND TIDY**

You must keep the premises in a clean, tidy and healthy state. This includes your responsibility for internal decorations. If you live in premises with communal areas, you are also responsible for ensuring these areas are kept clean and tidy.

### **GARDENS**

You must keep your garden, hedges and trees in a tidy and manageable state. You must get our written permission to remove any fence, hedge or tree. You should not park a vehicle on your garden unless there is a properly constructed hard-standing and dropped kerb. You should also make sure hedges and trees do not overhang public footpaths and roads.

### **NEGLECT AND DAMAGE**

You must not allow the premises to be damaged wilfully, recklessly or by neglect. If you do so, we will put right the damage and charge you for doing so. In extreme cases we may also take action to evict you from the property.

### **LOFT SPACE**

For health and safety reasons you should not store items in the loft space.

### **COMMUNAL AREAS**

You must keep entrance doors, stairs, balconies and corridors clear of obstructions eg. bikes, furniture, pot plants, mats etc. This is to allow escape from the building if there is a fire. Do not store personal items in communal store cupboards.

## **RENTING A COUNCIL GARAGE**

### **AVAILABILITY**

Garages are available to rent in many parts of the borough. You should contact the Customer Service Centre or visit the website for further details.

### **CLEAR RENT ACCOUNT**

You should have a clear rent account before a garage is let to you. Remember: if you do not keep up rent payments on your home or garage, we can end your garage tenancy by giving you just one week's notice.

### **INSURANCE**

Please ensure that your vehicle and possessions in the vehicle are insured.

### **VAT**

VAT is not payable by council tenants.

### **WATER**

A water rate is charged if the garage block has a water supply.

### **DISABILITY DISCOUNTS**

If you have a disabled badge for your vehicle, you may qualify for a garage rent discount. Please ask your Housing Officer for further details.

### **PURPOSE OF RENTAL**

Garages are for the purpose of storing vehicles only. Storing items other than vehicles could result in you losing your garage tenancy.

### **ENDING YOUR GARAGE TENANCY**

You need only give one week's written Notice to Quit, ending on a Monday. Remember to ensure the rent is up-to-date, all the keys are returned and all your possessions are removed.

## IMPROVEMENTS AND ALTERATIONS

### For secure tenants only

You have the right to carry out improvements and alterations but only if you receive our written permission first. In some cases permission to alter the property will require work done by certified tradesman and proof of sign-off, eg. electrical work will need certification on completion by an accredited electrician.

We can refuse permission if we consider work to be dangerous, unsightly, if it reduces the property value or gives us an obligation to repair (you may be expected to return the property to the original condition at the end of your tenancy). You may also need to get permission from Building Regulations and Planning to go ahead with your alterations. You will also need to check if any asbestos-containing materials are present in order to avoid these being disturbed. You can do this by contacting Customer Services.

If you carry out works without our written approval, we will give you notice to put it back the way it was. If you do not comply, we can carry out the work and charge the cost to you.

At the end of your tenancy you will either be required to remove unauthorised alterations or put unacceptable DIY work right. We will accept the improvement as our responsibility if you seek written approval and follow the guidance given.



## YOU MUST SEEK APPROVAL BEFORE

### ERECTING

- Sheds
- Garages
- Greenhouses
- Satellite dishes
- TV aerials
- Conservatories
- Porches
- Ponds

### REMOVING

- Walls, floors, ceilings
- Heating fittings
- Fences/hedges/trees
- Fixtures/fittings
- Doors/windows
- Electrical fittings
- Outhouses
- Structural supports
- Property components

### INSTALLING

- Electrical sockets/fittings/fans
- Kitchen units/vents
- Bath fixtures, showers, water meters, water softeners
- Hard-standings/dropped kerbs
- Windows/doors
- Fireplaces/fires, heating appliances
- Extensions
- Floor linings (except carpets)
- Outside taps
- Cat flaps

## STAGE 1

### COMPLETE AN ONLINE APPLICATION FORM

Describe the alteration giving as much detail as possible.

Forms are available from the Customer Service Centre, website or your Housing Officer.

## STAGE 2

### AWAIT WRITTEN APPROVAL/ CONDITIONS

You must not carry out any work until you have written permission.

Sometimes we will need to visit you before giving approval.

## STAGE 3

### INSPECTION

Let us know when the work has been completed.

We may visit to check that the work has been carried out properly.

## STAGE 4

### END OF TENANCY

When you move, depending on the type of alteration, you may need to return the property to how it was when you moved in.

### FURTHER INFORMATION ON IMPROVING YOUR HOME

TENANCY SERVICES - any aspect of improvements.

BUILDING CONTROL - about work involving structural alterations.

PLANNING - about building additional rooms/porches etc.



# BEHAVIOUR AND CONDUCT

## RESPONSIBILITIES

**You are responsible for your behaviour at all times on your premises and on the estate. You are responsible for your family, other people living at your property or anyone visiting your property. For example, you are breaking your tenancy conditions if you are creating a nuisance to other residents on the estate. If you are a joint tenant, you are jointly responsible for the actions of the other joint tenants.**

## NUISANCE OR ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Problems caused by nuisance and disputes are often called anti-social behaviour (ASB). We want to prevent anti-social behaviour. We rely on you to help us by ensuring that you do not create any form of nuisance to others but also by reporting anti-social behaviour to us and other relevant agencies.

## PREVENTING DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT

Harassment on the grounds of race, colour, religion, sex, sexual orientation, disability or any other reason that may interfere with the peace and comfort of, or cause offence to other persons residing, visiting, working or otherwise engaging in lawful activity in the neighbourhood or to any tenant, agent, employee, Councillor or contractor of ours whether in the neighbourhood or elsewhere (eg at our offices). Nor must you allow, fail to prevent or incite anyone living with you (including children) or your visitors to do any of these things.

If you experience any difficulties with anti-social behaviour or nuisance your ASB Officer will:

- contact, meet or visit you within 72 hours (24 hours in instances for racial or hate harassment)
- agree a plan of action with you within five days
- keep you informed of progress

NUISANCE	SOURCE OF HELP	CONTACT
<b>Running a business from home without consent</b>	Tenancy Services	Customer Services
<b>Disputes &amp; ASB</b>		
Harassment	Tenancy Services/Police	Customer Services
Garden disputes	Tenancy Services/Planning	Customer Services
Threatening behaviour	Tenancy Services/Police	Customer Services
Unreasonable noise levels	Environmental Protection	Customer Services
<b>Pets</b>		
Barking	Environmental Protection	Customer Services
Fouling	Cleaner Ipswich	Cleaner Ipswich Hotline
Strays	Environmental Protection	Customer Services, RSPCA
Cruelty	RSPCA	RSPCA
<b>Pollution</b>		
Bonfires	Environmental Protection	Customer Services
Filthy/verminous properties	Environmental Protection	Customer Services

## PETS

You can keep domestic pets with permission (dogs, cats, small birds etc.) but you should not keep non-domestic animals (horses, poultry etc.). If in doubt, please ask Tenancy Services first. You must ensure the number of pets is appropriate to the size of your home. You must also ensure any pet is kept under control at all times, does not cause any nuisance or noise to neighbours and does not foul communal areas or the estates. You should also ensure pets are under adequate control and supervision when staff or contractors visit your premises. These rules do not apply in sheltered housing schemes.

## DOG FOULING - BYLAWS AND STRAY DOGS

It is an offence to let your dog foul communal land, roads and public footpaths. Please make sure that any mess is cleared up. For further details contact the Cleaner Ipswich Hotline on 01473 432000.

## CAR PARKING/CARAVANS/TRAILERS

If you park a vehicle on your premises, you must have a properly constructed hard-standing and dropped kerb. Most communal parking areas are not specifically for individual properties. The areas are provided for the parking of taxed and roadworthy vehicles. Caravans, trailers and lorries

should not be parked in communal parking areas. If a vehicle is abandoned on our land we will serve a seven day notice on the vehicle and arrange its removal. If we contact the owner, a charge may be made for the costs of the removal.

## VEHICLE REPAIRS

Minor repairs to your own vehicles are allowed provided they cause no nuisance to neighbours.

## LIVING IN FLATS

If you live in a flat or maisonette, you have special responsibilities to other neighbours living close by.

### Please remember:

- to keep communal areas clean and tidy; (your Housing Officer can tell you what areas are your responsibility)
- to keep all pets under control and not allow them to foul communal areas
- to report any faults or repairs to communal areas - for example - communal doors, lights and door entry systems
- not to create too much noise especially at night or early in the morning
- not to create nuisance to other neighbours
- not to keep any dangerous substances such as petrol or welding equipment



## STEPS OF ACTION - DEALING WITH NUISANCE

### REPORT

We will respond to your written or verbal complaint.

### DIARY INFORMATION/ACTION PLAN

If we agree a nuisance is being caused, we will draw up an action plan. Part of this may be asking you to complete a diary of incidents. We will liaise with other council services or Police if necessary.

### MEDIATION

We will arrange mediation where appropriate.

### NOTICE SEEKING POSSESSION

If the nuisance is serious and continues despite our efforts to resolve it, we may consider serving a Notice Seeking Possession/Notice of Possession Proceedings on Introductory Tenancy or Absolute Ground for Possession on secure tenants based on serious breach of tenancy conditions.

### COURT ACTION/INJUNCTION

If the problem continues, we may take the case to court for possession. We may also take out a court injunction to prevent the nuisance.

If we go to court, we need to provide enough evidence to the judge to win our case. This often involves witnesses attending court or giving written statements.

## **GARDENS**

If your home has a garden, you will be responsible for ensuring it is kept clean, tidy and manageable. If you live in a flat with a communal garden, we may be responsible for grass cutting and ground maintenance. If you are unsure, please check with your local Housing Officer.

You must not remove any trees, hedges or fencing without permission. Trees and hedges should not obstruct public footpaths or interfere with a neighbour's property. If a tree in your garden needs attention, please contact Tenancy Services who will arrange for our Tree Officer to visit and assess any work that may be needed. You will be responsible for any trees, shrubs or hedges you have planted.

## **STAFF**

Our staff are available to help and advise you. We are committed to customer care but we are also committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of our staff. It is therefore a condition of your tenancy that you do not threaten or abuse our staff physically or verbally. This includes using bad language or visiting council offices while under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

## **NOISE**

Noise, especially loud music, can be distressing for your neighbours. Our Environmental Protection Team operate an out-of-hours service to monitor noise and can take legal action if necessary to deal with a problem.

## **ADVICE**

Try talking to your neighbour first - it often works and prevents disputes.

## **NUISANCE OF ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR**

Anti-social behaviour can have a major effect on those who are at the receiving end. There are many types of behaviour which could be considered anti-social - the law defines it as "acting in a manner that caused or was likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress ..." Tackling anti-social behaviour has become a high priority for Ipswich Borough Council in recent years and in consultation with our tenants we have improved and continue to improve the way we deal with it.

Please note: if you are evicted for anti-social behaviour we may refuse to offer further council accommodation.

## **WHAT CAN BE DONE ABOUT IT?**

Tenancy Services takes its responsibilities to its' tenants very seriously. If you are an Ipswich Borough Council tenant, you will receive sound advice and assistance from our staff. However, it is important to remember that most problems relating to anti-social behaviour can be sorted out by a friendly word with those who may be causing you a problem. Tell them politely what it is troubling you and ask if they can change what they are doing. It may be that a little give and take is required on both sides.





# COMPLAINTS AND CUSTOMER CARE

Ipswich Borough Council strives to provide high quality services. Sometimes things go wrong. When this happens we need to know so that we can take steps to put it right. We regard the handling of complaints as part of our policy of looking after you and treating you properly. You have the right to complain and your complaint will be taken seriously. We are committed to an equal opportunity policy and want to make all our services available on a fair and equal basis. [www.ipswich.gov.uk/complaints](http://www.ipswich.gov.uk/complaints)

## COMPLAINTS - WHAT TO EXPECT

- We will acknowledge your complaint within three working days and investigate it and provide a full reply within 20 working days
- Each complaint will get a log reference number
- If we have done something wrong we will write to you to apologise and offer a solution.

## OUR INFORMATION

We will maintain confidentiality and comply with the Data Protection Act and the Freedom of Information Act with any information we hold on you or your tenancy.

## DATA PROTECTION

For information on how we process and protect your personal information, please visit [www.ipswich.gov.uk/privacy](http://www.ipswich.gov.uk/privacy)

## OUR SERVICE STANDARDS OBJECTIVES:

- produce service guarantees for all our services
- prioritise customer care
- give you accessibility to our services and staff
- deal with complaints
- provide training for our staff
- provide value for money
- provide quality systems
- give equal opportunities
- provide good communication between you and us

**If you feel your complaint is not being taken seriously, you can contact the Citizens Advice Bureau, local solicitors, local Councillors or the Housing Ombudsman Service.**



## STAGE 1

### INFORMAL

Talk to us: we aim to solve most complaints at this stage

## STAGE 2

Complete an official complaint form and we will acknowledge within three working days and we will investigate and reply within 20 working days

## STAGE 3

If you are not satisfied with the outcome a senior officer will look at your complaint

## STAGE 4

If you are still not satisfied you can appeal the decision to a designated person; being a local Councillor or any Member of Parliament

# CONSULTATION AND INVOLVEMENT

**We actively encourage tenant consultation and involvement. This involves telling you about anything that affects your home and by giving you opportunities to express your views and opinions.**

## AREA HOUSING PANELS

These are groups of tenants, local councillors and housing staff who meet every three months to address housing issues. There is a panel for East, Northwest and Southwest Ipswich each with a community improvement budget to spend in the local area.

## TENANT GET-TOGETHER

We have two get-togethers a month. These are an informal gathering where tenants can share their news from their area panels, ask advice and make plans for events or training.

## COMMUNITY TRAINING PROGRAMME

We offer free training for tenants, which range from getting the most out of meetings such as minute taking and chairing skills, through to training in housing law and related developments. The programme varies each year depending upon what tenants tell us they want.

## SHELTERED IMPROVEMENT PANEL

The sheltered panel meets regularly to discuss the performance of the sheltered services. Each scheme is represented by tenants from that scheme.

## HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?

Simply contact the Tenant Participation team and we will arrange to talk to you about ways to be more involved.

## SERVICE STANDARDS

### We will consult you on:

- policy making and changes
- monitoring services
- service improvements
- estate improvement projects
- tenancy conditions

### We will:

- actively support tenant and resident groups
- give practical help and assistance with printing costs and room hire
- provide training opportunities for tenants
- use plain language in all our publications
- offer a free translation service
- make information available in audio form 20

## CAN MY EXPENSES BE COVERED?

Yes - examples are travel expenses, child care costs, car parking costs.

## WHAT HAPPENS IF I DON'T FEEL ABLE TO PARTICIPATE?

There is no need for you to become involved if you don't want to. However, we do offer tenants training and support. We can also arrange for other tenants to talk to you about their experiences with tenant involvement.

## TENANCY SERVICES

Tenants have represented the Council at national events and have sat on government initiative groups.

## ANNUAL REPORT

Each year we will produce a copy of our annual report containing details of our performance and other useful information.

## TENANT SURVEYS

We will carry out regular surveys to find out your views and give you the opportunity to comment. If you are sent a survey form, please complete and return it. We usually supply a freepost return envelope or you can return the form to Grafton House or your local sheltered scheme.

## REPAIR SURVEYS

Every repair receipt includes a survey form giving you an opportunity to give valuable feedback. It is free to post back. We may also carry out telephone surveys following completion of a repair you requested.

## TENANTS' TIMES NEWSLETTER

We send all our tenants a copy of the Tenants' Times twice a year, with an online monthly edition. This newsletter is full of local news and information.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

Contact the Tenant Participation team on 01473 432000 or your Housing Officer.

You can also contact a tenant representative member of the Area Housing Panel.

We can give you details of Tenant Associations and Resident Associations in your area

# REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE

**Both the Council and you have repair obligations. The Council's obligations fall under S11 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985. Before you started your tenancy your home was inspected to check it was safe and that installations were in good working order. We rely on you to help us by reporting repairs and allowing us reasonable access to carry them out.**

## TENANTS' OWN RESPONSIBILITIES

Tenants own repairing responsibilities include:

- removing radiators for decorating
- replacing plugs and chains to sinks, basins and baths.
- maintaining tenants own fittings and fixtures
- re-hanging doors after carpets or other floor coverings have been laid
- maintaining floor tiles or laminate flooring fitted by the tenant
- clothes posts, lines and fittings (excepting communal facility)
- internal decoration - including minor cracking to plasterwork
- changing and replacing light bulbs (except in communal areas)\*\*
- clearing all surface water gully gratings\*
- changing batteries in battery operated smoke alarms
- replacement toilet seats\*
- broken window glass - in cases where glass is broken due to tenants' negligence
- cleaning the inside and outside of your home.
- replacing fuses in own electrical appliances
- repairing damage caused by members of your family and visitors

- floor coverings (excluding kitchen and bathroom floor coverings)
- TV aerials and sockets (unless communal aerial or socket)
- cleaning mould from windows/walls and ceilings
- ventilating the property
- skimming of walls/ceilings for aesthetic purposes
- removal of tenants items/goods to carry out repairs
- replacing lost keys
- extra locks for doors and windows
- plumbing in washing machines and dishwashers
- disconnecting and reconnecting cookers
- report any faults causing damage to the property for example a water leak

\* if the tenant is older (over 60) or disabled (in receipt of DLA/PIP) it is reasonable for the Council to carry out these repairs for the tenant if requested.

\*\* some enclosed light fittings installed by us mean that if the tenant is older or disabled (as above) it is reasonable for the Council to carry out these repairs for the tenant if requested.

## OUR OBLIGATIONS

We are responsible for repairs to the structure and outside of your home:

- surface water drains, gutters and external rainwater pipes
- foul water waste pipes above ground\*
- electric wiring, gas and water pipes
- roofs, chimneys, walls, floors, ceilings, window frames, external doors
- broken window glass - in cases where glass is broken due to burglary or vandalism only (you will need to provide a crime reference number)
- kitchen and bathroom fixtures - basins, sinks, toilets, baths and showers
- heating equipment
- garden paths to the perimeter of the property
- communal areas around your home - stairs, lifts, landings, lighting, paving, shared gardens, parking areas, rubbish chutes and collection areas

## PLEASE NOTE:

We are not obligated to repair or replace fencing, however fencing will be judged on a case by case basis, depending on the circumstances, resources and funds available.

Kitchen cupboards and worktops will be replaced if these are beyond repair but we may not be able to match existing units/cupboards.

We do not repair tenants' sheds, garden features or DIY structures such as porches.

\* Foul drains and sewers are the responsibility of the utility, Anglian Water Authority.



## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### WILL THE COUNCIL HAVE TO VISIT BEFORE DOING A REPAIR?

Yes, if measurements are needed or the work is complicated. You can help to prevent some inspections by giving as much accurate information as possible. Every contractor and council employee carries an identification card with his/her photograph on it. Please ask to see this before you allow access to your home.

### WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE REPAIR?

Please complete the repair satisfaction questionnaire to tell us about our performance. If necessary, follow-up work can be done. We sometimes use specially trained 'tenant inspectors' to check on the standard of work and your satisfaction levels. Your feedback enables us to improve the service to you.

### WILL I EVER BE CHARGED FOR REPAIRS?

Yes. If the repair arises from damage, neglect or misuse; for example, if you lose your house keys and require access or if you deliberately break fixtures or fittings. We also rely on your help to prevent repairs, for example keeping drain gratings around your home free from blockages.

### I WAS OUT WHEN THE CONTRACTOR CALLED. WHAT SHOULD I DO?

A card will be left indicating the date and time we attended your home. You should call the number on the card to rebook another appointment within five working days or the repair will be cancelled.

**Where a second appointment is missed by the tenant a £30 recharge may apply.**

### SERVICE STANDARDS

- We aim to ensure that the work is done on time, to our repair standard and to your satisfaction. We measure your satisfaction of the repairs service through your comments on the reply slip attached to the ticket receipt and using telephone surveys
- We will offer appointments on all non-urgent repairs

### REPAIR REQUESTS

**Normal repairs Monday to Friday  
08:30 - 17:00 - 01473 432000**

**Emergency repairs phone cover 24/7  
01473 43210**

### EXAMPLES

- complete loss of electricity
- insecure locks
- serious leaks and structural damage
- fires

We will also consider your individual circumstances, for example if you are elderly or living on your own. Sometimes, we may only be able to carry out a temporary repair. The work will then be completed during normal working hours. Please give the Standby Operator as much information as possible. We will refuse some requests if your behaviour makes it unsuitable to send a tradesperson to carry out the repair. We will charge you for repairs that result from damage caused by you, your family or visitors.

### GAS HEATING REPAIRS

When your gas service is due we will write to you with an appointment. If the appointment is inconvenient then call the number on the letter to rearrange. We are legally obliged to carry out a yearly inspection of your boiler and failure to arrange a service could result in legal action. You would be liable for any court charges incurred. **For gas repairs to Council owned gas appliances you must contact the heating contractor Aaron Services direct on 01473 835145/0800 533 5630 or via their website [www.aaronservices.co.uk](http://www.aaronservices.co.uk)**

When a repair is ordered you will be sent a repair receipt. If you wish to comment on the repair, please complete and return the tear-off slip at the bottom of the repair receipt form. We operate an appointment system to allow you to have the work done at a time that suits you.

**Job number • Date ordered • Priority or speed of work • Work ordered and location**

## PRIORITY OF JOBS

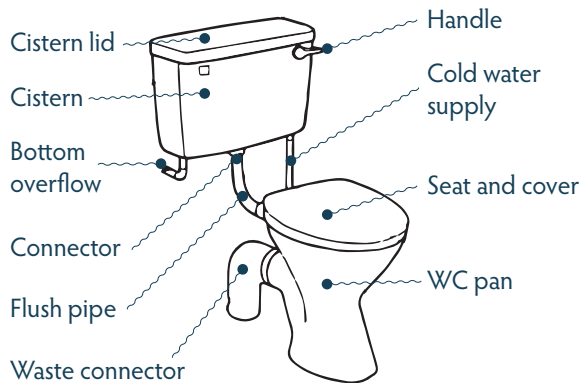
TRADE	REPAIR	PRIORITY	
Bricklayer	Clear gulley and/or rod blocked drain	Day	<b>D</b>
	Renew gulley	Appointment	<b>A</b>
	Renew drain pipe	Planned	<b>P</b>
	Repair concrete step	Planned	<b>P</b>
	Repair, repoint brickwork or blockwork	Appointment	<b>A</b>
	Repair minor leaks in roof including repointing	Urgent	<b>U</b>
	Renew roof tile/slate	Urgent	<b>U</b>
	Clean gutters	Planned	<b>P</b>
	Repair gutters/downpipes	Planned	<b>P</b>
Carpenter	Repair internal door and/or frame	Appointment	<b>A</b>
	Renew carpet step	Appointment	<b>A</b>
	Repair lock	Day	<b>D</b>
	Repair PVCU double glazed window	Appointment	<b>A</b>
	Renew floorboard/chipboard (patch repair)	Appointment	<b>A</b>
	Renew handrail (including bracket) or backing board	Appointment	<b>A</b>
	Repair kitchen unit (base/wall or sink)	Appointment*	<b>A</b>
Plumber	Renew water pipe	Urgent	<b>U</b>
	Renew overflow pipe	Appointment	<b>A</b>
	Repair soil pip	Urgent	<b>U</b>
	Repair wc pan	Urgent	<b>U</b>
	Repair bath fittings	Urgent	<b>U</b>
	Unblock wc	Emergency	<b>E</b>
	Bath, basin, sink, shower, soil pipe	Day	<b>D</b>
	Repair tap or stop tap	Urgent	<b>U</b>
	Repair hot water cylinder - any type	Day	<b>D</b>
Electrician	Investigate major electrical fault	Emergency	<b>E</b>
	Repair/refix fittings	Day	<b>D</b>
Metalworker	Repair garage door (up and over metal)	Appointment	<b>A</b>
	Repair metal gate (including lock)	Appointment	<b>A</b>
Glazier	Re-glaze single pane	Day	<b>D</b>
	Renew double glazed panes	Appointment	<b>A</b>
Plasterer	Renew ceiling - board plaster	Appointment	<b>A</b>
	Plaster wall	Appointment	<b>A</b>
	Plaster/artex ceiling	Appointment	<b>A</b>

**E = EMERGENCY** Attend within four hours **U = URGENT** Complete within five working days  
**D = DAY** Complete within 24 hours **A = APPOINTMENT** Complete within 15 working days  
**P = PLANNED** 60 working days

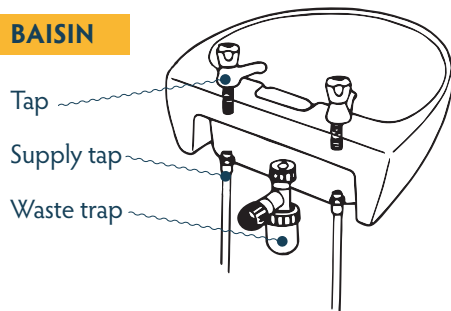
# HELP WITH REPORTING A REPAIR

When you report a repair to us please give the most precise information you can. This will help us to get the repair completed sooner. The diagrams may help to explain the problem to us.

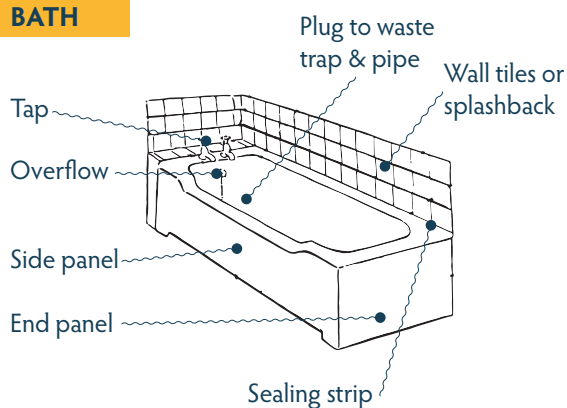
## TOILET



## BAISIN



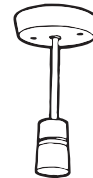
## BATH



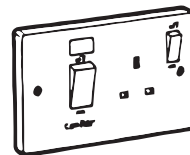
## ELECTRICAL



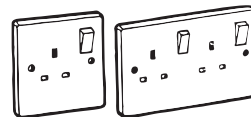
Ceiling pull switch



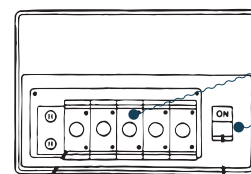
Pendant lamp holder



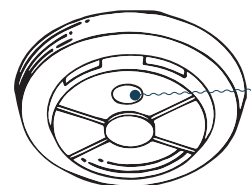
Cooker control panel socket



Single and double switched power sockets



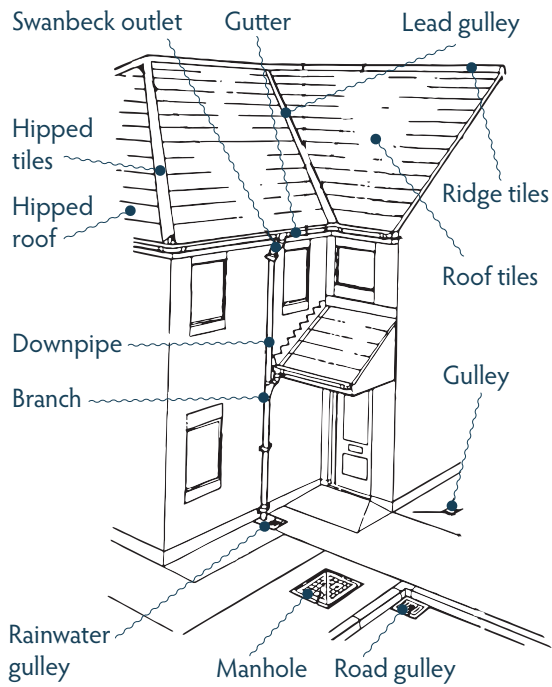
Fuse box  
Fuses or circuit breakers  
Main on/off switch



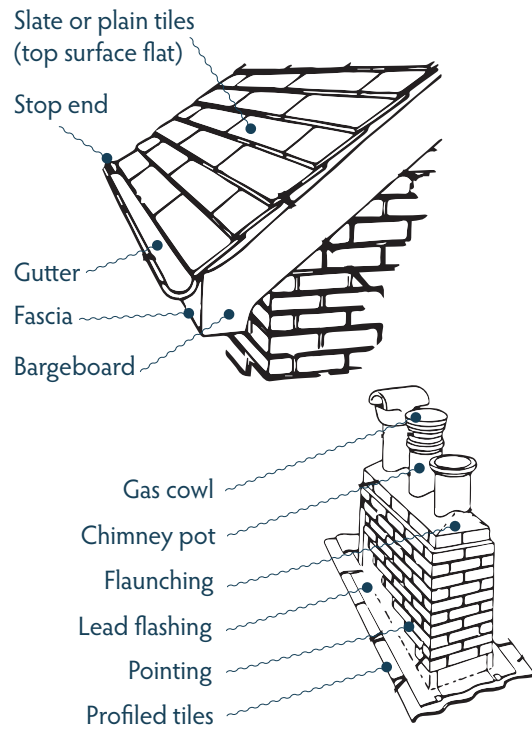
Smoke alarm  
Test button

# HELP WITH REPORTING A REPAIR (CONTINUED)

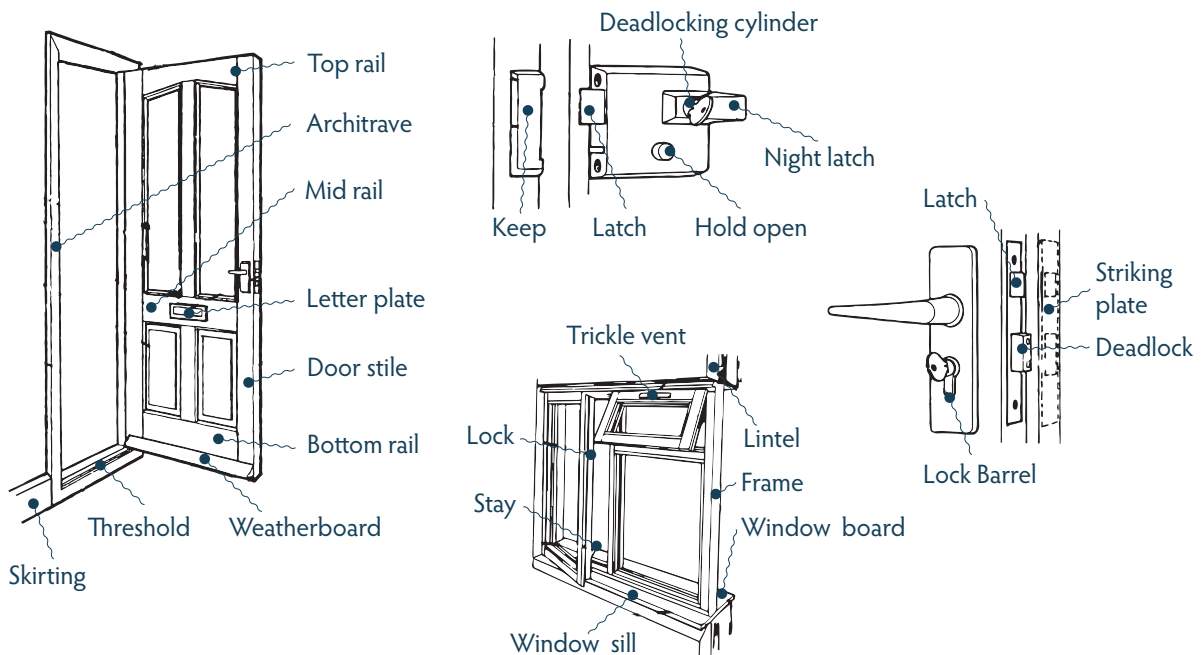
## GUTTERS AND DOWNPIPES



## ROOFS AND CHIMNEYS



## DOORS AND WINDOWS AND LOCKS





## RIGHT TO REPAIR

If we fail to do certain jobs within the target time stated or fail to keep to an agreed appointment, we will at your request:

- instruct our contractor to do your repair within 24 hours or
- instruct an alternative contractor to do it
- in the unlikely event that our contractor or new contractor fails to respond, you may be entitled to compensation.

The repairs covered by the RIGHT TO REPAIR are urgent works that are our responsibility. Total loss of power, heating and hot water, loose handrails (stairs) are examples. **You can find a full list of repairs covered by the right to repair at [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk).**

The urgency of this work is reflected in our appointment schedules. If you believe you have cause for complaint under the Right to Repair then call the Customer Service Centre on 01473 432000 in the first instance. If you feel that you have further cause for complaint you may need to raise an official complaint using the complaints form available on the website. The Customer Service Centre can provide one on request.

### PLANNED MAINTENANCE

Planned maintenance is when we ensure the outside of your home is well looked after. For this reason we aim to repair and paint your home every seven years through the 'planned maintenance' programme. This work

may also include repairs to or replacement of roofs, chimneys, doors and windows.

If you wish to know in what year your planned maintenance work is due, please contact Tenancy Services or visit our website at [www.ipswich.gov.uk](http://www.ipswich.gov.uk)

### INTERNAL IMPROVEMENTS

We also have a programme of internal modernisation of kitchens and bathrooms, installation of central heating and/or replacement of electric wiring system.

We have developed the Ipswich Standard in consultation with tenants, leaseholders and others. This is the standard Ipswich Borough Council aims to maintain.

### IF YOU HAVE A REPAIR REQUEST

Try and identify what the problem is: the more information the better - such as size, quantity, colour. Please remember that we may need to inspect some repairs before ordering them.

As well as your name, address and current contact number, please provide details of when the contractor can visit.

Please remember the contractor will only carry out the repair we have ordered.

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS - PLANNED MAINTENANCE

### WHAT INFORMATION WILL I BE GIVEN?

Before work starts, you will be given the name and telephone number of the site manager supervising the work. A Customer Liaison Officer will be available to answer your questions.

### WILL IT AFFECT MY RENT?

Planned maintenance work will not affect your rent.

### WHAT HAPPENS IF I AM NOT SATISFIED WITH THE WORK?

Our Technical Officer will visit regularly during the work and the Tenant Liaison Officer will also be available. To assist you should tell them if you have any problems. After the work is finished, you will also be sent a satisfaction survey. Please return the survey to help our services improve.



## THE IPSWICH STANDARD

### INSIDE YOUR HOME

#### KITCHENS - 20 YEAR CYCLE

Modern fitted kitchen units with space for appliances, food preparation, safe flooring, tiling and extractor fan.

#### BATHROOMS - 30 YEAR CYCLE

Modern bathroom with shower, tiling and extractor fan.

#### ELECTRICAL SYSTEMS - 30 YEAR CYCLE

Modern wiring including adequate supply of sockets, outside light by front door and consumer unit. Central heating boilers to be under 15 years old. Fully controllable central heating that is A rated for efficiency. Where not already present to be in place by 2020/21.

### HEALTH, SAFETY AND SECURITY

#### HEALTH

Disabled adaptations, safe steps, paths and handrails.

#### SAFETY

Hardwired smoke alarms, removal of asbestos, fire prevention works.

#### SECURITY

Window and door locks, front or side gates.

### COMMUNAL AREAS

#### INCLUDING

Secure door entry to communal flats, CCTV and modern lifts for sheltered housing, communal aerial upgrades, safe flooring and security in communal areas and compliance with the Equality Act.

### ENERGY EFFICIENCY

#### DOUBLE GLAZING

High quality PVC windows with secure locking handles.

### IMPROVING NEIGHBOURHOODS

#### INCLUDING

Improved car parking, improved lighting, fences and walls, improved maintenance and communal facilities.

### HOUSING SERVICES

Improved repairs service including appointments. Increased resources to tackle anti-social behaviour. Improved levels of grounds maintenance and estate management services

### OTHER MAINTENANCE

#### ROOFS/CHIMNEYS - 57 YEAR CYCLE

Safe and watertight including rainwater goods.

#### DOORS - 40 YEAR CYCLE

Secure and modern GRP type entrance doors to 'secure by design'.

#### OTHER WORKS

Better use of the stock including conversion of sheltered bedsits, regular maintenance of the home every seven years, upgrading drains, water supplies and key building components.

## HEALTH AND SAFETY

### ACCESS TO YOUR PROPERTY

We may have to gain access to your premises/property. We will let you know in advance, eg. when carrying out roof repairs to an adjacent property. However, we have a legal duty of care to protect all our tenants and in emergencies we may have to force entry without advance warning, for example to repair a burst pipe in an upstairs flat or to deal with a fire or gas leak. If this happens, we will arrange for your property to be made secure. If the locks have to be changed we will leave a note explaining how to get the new keys. During office hours call the Contact Centre and outside of office hours call the emergency line. For security reasons before we hand over the keys you will have to prove you are the tenant by providing ID or verifying personal details.

### GAS SAFETY CHECK

We have a legal responsibility to service and inspect all council-owned gas appliances annually. Our contractors will write to you when the service is due. If the appointment is inconvenient, please call the phone number on the letter to rearrange it. We may also visit if you have your own gas heating appliances. This work is vital to your safety. In extreme cases, if we cannot gain access after reasonable attempts, we will take legal action against you or stop the gas supply.

### YOUR GAS APPLIANCES

If it comes to our attention that your own gas appliance is unsafe, it is our practice to condemn the appliance. This means it cannot be used until it is repaired.

### REPORTING PROBLEMS

If National Grid tells you there is a problem with our gas heating appliance - **contact Aaron Services direct on 0800 533 560/01473 835145 or via their website [www.aaronservices.co.uk](http://www.aaronservices.co.uk)**

### ELECTRICITY

Electricity can be dangerous. Please do not remove, install or repair any electrical fixtures and fittings unless you are using a qualified electrician. You must also seek written permission first. We have a legal obligation to test the electrical installation every five years, we will write to you to arrange a mutually agreeable appointment.

### SMOKE ALARMS

Smoke alarms are installed in all our homes. If you do not have one, please report it to Repairs straight away. If we rewire your home, we will install a mains-operated alarm. In some cases the alarm will be battery operated. Your tenancy conditions require you to check and test your alarm on a regular basis and replace the battery as necessary. If you are elderly or disabled and have no one who can carry out this work, please contact Tenancy Services. **Please remember a smoke alarm may help to save your family's life. Make sure they work at all times.**

### GAS SAFETY

#### IF YOU SMELL GAS:

- Turn off the meter
- Open doors and windows
- Call National Grid Freephone 0800 111999
- Do not turn lights or electric switches on or off
- Do not light matches or cigarettes
- Do not attempt to remedy the problem yourself



## SECURITY

Remember to take security measures by ensuring doors are locked and windows shut whenever you go out. For more details on Neighbourhood Watch in your area, please contact Suffolk Constabulary. We welcome suggestions for improving security on our estates. We actively promote Community Safety and Security Improvements in our homes and on our estates.

## FIRE SAFETY

If you are currently using or are planning to use an open fire or solid fuel appliance then you must ensure that we have been made aware and that you have received written permission from us to use them:

- make sure all open fires are guarded
- if you have to use a chip pan, never fill it more than half full. Never leave it unattended. If it catches fire, turn off the heat and cover the pan with a damp cloth or lid. Call the Fire Brigade
- do not let children play with matches
- do not smoke in bed

## OUR INSURANCE

Our insurance policy covers the structure of the property. We are also insured against injury and damage caused by our own negligence. If you feel that you have a claim against us or our contractors, you must send us a written application stating why you are making a claim, the damage caused and the cost involved. We will pass it to our insurers for a decision.

## YOUR OWN INSURANCE

It is very important you arrange your own insurance to cover the contents of your home. The cost can be very low in comparison with the cost of replacing your contents. Most insurances cover fire, theft and flood. You should seek independent advice on the best policy to suit your needs. We have also negotiated a special insurance scheme for Ipswich Borough Council tenants. **If you are interested please contact Customer Services or visit [www.ipswich.gov.uk/content/contents-insurance](http://www.ipswich.gov.uk/content/contents-insurance)**



Graffiti	Cleaner Ipswich Hotline 01473 432000
Pot holes in roads	SCC Highways 0345 6066171
Uneven pavements	SCC Highways 0345 6066171
Street lights	SCC Highways 08456 066067
Overgrown/damaged hedges and shrubs in communal areas	Cleaner Ipswich Hotline 01473 432000
Blocked street gullies	Cleaner Ipswich Hotline 01473 432000
Litter/dumped rubbish	Cleaner Ipswich Hotline 01473 432000
Abandoned vehicles	Cleaner Ipswich Hotline 01473 432000
Overflowing dog bins	Cleaner Ipswich Hotline 01473 432000
Bulky refuse	Waste & Environmental Services 01473 432000

## ASBESTOS IN COUNCIL HOUSES

### A GUIDE FOR TENANTS

Ipswich Borough Council takes the potential risks posed by asbestos very seriously, while recognising that if asbestos is not damaged/disturbed it poses no risk to health.

In a domestic situation you are most likely to find asbestos in very small concentrations in textured coatings such as artex, textured paints, in asbestos cement sheets used in panels and other sheet materials.

Everyone should take care when they are doing repair work or DIY around the home, especially if drilling or using power tools. If you come across any material you think may be asbestos, do not disturb it. The main danger from asbestos comes from breathing in the dust or fibres.

Materials containing asbestos are safe if sealed and left undisturbed and they should be left that way.

Anything that you think might contain asbestos should be checked for damage. If you find damaged or broken material that may contain asbestos then leave it alone, keep away from the area and call the Customer Services for advice.

### ASBESTOS REGISTER

The Council has set up an Asbestos Register for all its own buildings, with information from surveys carried out by specialist asbestos surveyors.

This register will help the Council to alert tenants, contractors and people who work in or visit council buildings as to where there is asbestos.

Ipswich Borough Council and its contractors involved in work which may bring them into contact with asbestos have been trained to recognise suspect materials and to know how to deal with them. Asbestos removal is only carried out by specialist contractors appointed by the Council.

**ANY  
QUESTIONS?  
FOR ASBESTOS IN COUNCIL  
HOUSING CONTACT:**

Customer Services on  
01473 432000

[www.ipswich.gov.uk/contactus](http://www.ipswich.gov.uk/contactus)

For out of hours emergencies  
(such as fire damage to asbestos)  
contact 01473 433444

# PREVENTING DAMP, MOULD AND CONDENSATION

## WHAT WE WILL DO IF YOU REPORT DAMP OR MOULD

If you report a damp/mould/condensation problem we will ask you to follow the advice given in the 'keeping your home free from damp and mould' leaflet before you receive an appointment, if after this time there is no improvement you will need to contact us again so that we can make an appointment.

## WHAT IS DAMP?

Damp is a place where moisture collects but does not have a chance to fully dry out. Damp is very common in the UK and is nearly always due to condensation. Damp usually builds up in areas where there is not much air movement. See our leaflet to find out more about the types and causes of damp.

## WHAT IS MOULD?

The number one cause of mould in homes in the UK today is under-heating. You will get less mould if you keep your home warm, ventilate properly and minimise the amount of moisture you release into the air. If rising energy costs mean you are struggling to pay for heating, ask your energy supplier about ways to spread the cost. Mould grows and multiplies in moist areas, slowly at first then quicker and quicker. It is normal to have some mould growth in winter but, you need to stay on top of it to prevent it getting more serious. In most cases black mould is caused by condensation. See below for advice on steps you can take.

## WHAT IS CONDENSATION?

Condensation comes from cooking, cleaning, bathing, even breathing. Condensation will form on the coldest surfaces in the room first; these cold areas are usually around windows, the corners of the room, and external walls. Condensation occurs mainly during cold weather, whether it is raining or dry. Condensation is not necessarily a problem, as long as the surface has time to dry out every day. It is the residents' responsibility to deal with mould caused by condensation.

## STEPS YOU CAN TAKE

### Minimise the amount of moisture in your home

- dry clothes outside, or in a room with a window open or extractor fan running and doors closed. Use a tumble dryer venting outside, or a condenser
- never put wet clothes on a radiator - they fill the room with moisture in seconds
- keep lids on saucepans when cooking
- don't use paraffin or other bottled gas heaters - they release large amounts of water vapour
- always run the extractor fan or open a window when showering or cooking
- keep trickle vents open
- put cold water in the bath before adding hot

### Improve air movement around areas prone to mould

- pull all furniture away from walls, including beds
- leave a gap between the curtains and the wall during the day
- keep air bricks open and clear
- don't draught proof kitchen and bathroom windows or rooms that are prone to damp
- don't over-fill cupboards and shelves.

### Minimise the number of cold surfaces by heating your home to a reasonable level of warmth.

**Wipe down small patches of mould with an anti-fungal spray before they spread.**

**Wipe down condensation from windows and other areas each morning and open the window for a while.**

**Treat bad outbreaks of mould and redecorate using fungicidal paint.**

# MOVING

## MOVING IN

When you move into a new home, make sure you know:

- where the water stop tap is
- where the electric fuse box is
- where the gas meter is
- familiarise yourself with any heating controls
- contact electric, water and gas companies to have supplies put in your name

## EMPTY HOME SERVICE STANDARDS

We will ensure all empty properties are secure, have essential repairs carried out including gas and electrical safety checks.

## EMPTY PROPERTY STANDARDS

If you move into one of our empty homes, we will have carried out an inspection to make sure it is up to our empty home property standard.

## MOVING OUT

As an introductory or secure tenant, if you want to end your tenancy, you must give us at least four weeks written Notice to Quit, ending on a Sunday. In exceptional circumstances we may accept a shorter period.

If you are a joint tenant, the tenancy can end if one of the tenants gives Notice to Quit. If this is to happen, you should seek housing advice immediately.

During the notice period we will arrange to visit your home and carry out a Notice to Quit inspection. If you have damaged the premises or carried out alterations and adaptations, you will be given a chance to put the work right. If you do not, you may be charged for the cost we will incur in doing this work. This may include lost rent from not being able to let the property more quickly to another tenant.

You may be entitled to compensation for approved improvements that you have made to your home. You will need to apply during the period 28 days before and up to 14 days after the tenancy ends. If you think you qualify please speak to your Tenancy Services.

## ENDING TENANCY CHECKLIST

### MAKE SURE YOU HAVE:

- Removed all your possessions and property from home, loft and garden
- Left no-one in occupation
- Left all the premises clean and tidy
- Notified the water, gas and electricity companies
- Returned to us all the keys to the premises by the tenancy end date
- Reinstated any council fixtures and fittings, making good any damage and any tenants alterations
- Cleared the rent account
- Given us a forwarding address (in case we have to send on post or make further contact)
- Left the internal decorations in a good condition
- Notified the benefits department of a change of circumstances (if you are claiming)



## SUCCESSIONS TO TENANCY

If you die your tenancy can be passed on to your husband, wife or civil partner provided they are living with you and it is their only home. This process is called succession and the person succeeding you will continue the same tenancy. Succession can only take place once; the tenancy will not be passed on from the person succeeding you if they die. If your husband, wife or civil partner is a joint tenant the tenancy will become a sole tenancy in their name. If succession results in under occupation then the Council may offer to rehouse the surviving tenant somewhere more suitable.

If you are not married and your tenancy began before 1st April 2012, the tenancy can pass to another close relative such as a son or daughter or someone you have been living with as partners. For this to happen they must have been living with you permanently for the last 12 months and have no other home. If succession of your relative or partner results in under occupation then the Council has the right to rehouse them somewhere more suitable.

If your tenancy began after 1st April 2012 there is still a right of succession for your spouse or civil partner but not for relatives or partner. They can still request succession from the Council.

**For further information please contact your Housing Officer.**

## GOING INTO A NURSING HOME

If you are going into a nursing home, even for a temporary stay, you should tell Tenancy Services. The length of stay may affect your Housing Benefit.

## KEEPING A WILL

We recommend you make and keep a Will. An executor of your Will has the power to end your tenancy after your death. If you die and no Will exists, we may have to bring the tenancy to an end by serving a Notice on the Public Trustee Office. This can delay the process of allocating the property to someone else in need.

We will treat your family and executors with dignity and provide them with advice and help in dealing with the property and tenancy.

**Further information on what to do when a tenant dies is available from Tenancy Services.**

## RELATIONSHIP BREAKDOWN

If you have a joint tenancy and your relationship breaks down and then one party moves out, we may not be able to create a new tenancy in the name of one partner unless:

- the court orders a transfer of the tenancy
- both tenants agree to the new tenancy by assignment or deed of release. Wherever possible, we would try and keep children in their family home
- a court order is granted by the court where one tenant is suffering from, or is in fear of, violence
- one tenant has not lived in the home for a considerable time and has not been traced

All offers of accommodation have to be made through the Council's Housing Register. In all circumstances, you should also seek housing advice from Tenancy Services, or an independent source.

## USEFUL CONTACTS FOR HOUSE CLEARANCE

### BULKY REFUSE SERVICE (collection of refuse)

**Telephone 01473 432000**

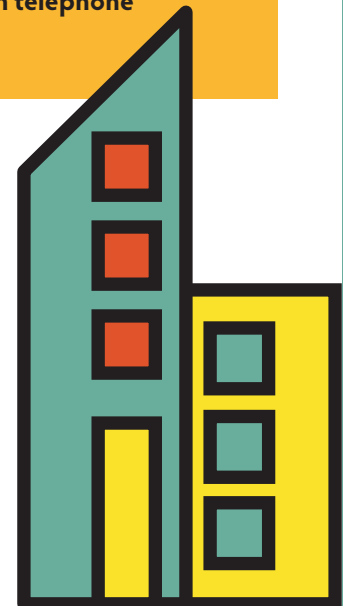
(there will be an answerphone after hours).

**Please give seven days' notice.**

### IPSWICH FURNITURE PROJECT

**May be willing to provide or collect good quality furniture.**

**For more information telephone 01473 404004.**





## WAYS OF MOVING

### CHOICE BASED LETTINGS

Gateway to Homechoice is the way of allocating council and housing association properties for rent in the local authority areas of Ipswich, Babergh, Braintree, Colchester, Maldon, Mid-Suffolk, Suffolk Coastal and Waveney. The scheme has been designed to make the allocation of social housing more transparent and offer customers more choice.

Full details of the scheme are available at [www.gatewaytohomechoice.org.uk](http://www.gatewaytohomechoice.org.uk) where you can also:

- register and apply
- search for available properties
- bid for properties
- view results of previous lettings

You can visit [www.houseexchange.org.uk](http://www.houseexchange.org.uk) to advertise for an exchange - where you 'swap' homes with another council or registered provider tenant

### JOINING THE REGISTER

In most cases anyone over the age of 16 can apply to join the Gateway to Homechoice Register. Once you have applied online, we will assess your application and tell you which band you have been placed in. Band A is the top priority band, band E is the lowest priority band.

### CHOOSING A PROPERTY

Properties are advertised each week on the website and in newsletters which can be sent to applicants in the higher bands. You can express an interest ('bid') for up to two properties each week. All bids will be put in priority order and the top three applicants for each property will be invited to view it. The applicant in the highest band who has been on the register the longest will normally be offered the property.

### FEEDBACK

We will publish information about homes that have been successfully let. We will tell you the number of applicants who bid for each property, which band they were in and their effective date. This will give you a better idea of how popular a particular property or area is and how long you would normally have to wait. Don't forget all this information is available at [www.gatewaytohomechoice.org.uk](http://www.gatewaytohomechoice.org.uk)

### EXCHANGES

The law gives council and housing association tenants the right to do a mutual exchange. Tenants must have their landlord's permission and be eligible to exchange. Exchanges are often a quick way for you to move. All properties on the 'Exchange Register' can be viewed on [www.houseexchange.org.uk](http://www.houseexchange.org.uk). When you find someone to exchange with you must contact your Housing Officer. You have a right to exchange but approval will depend on the following:

- both parties having a clear rent account
- satisfactory inspections of your home
- both properties being suitable to their new tenants. For example, not too big or small, or adapted or built for special needs such as disabled or sheltered accommodation

You can advertise to exchange locally but you must not make any financial arrangements with a possible exchange tenant. We will not be responsible for any work needed after the mutual exchange, except for our normal repairing obligations. You will still be responsible for such things as internal redecoration or moving kitchen units to fit your appliances. You must not move until you have received written approval from us.





## ADDITIONAL SERVICES

### COMMUNITY CARETAKERS

These are groups of tenants, local councillors and The Community Caretakers have an important role in creating and maintaining clean, attractive and safe estates. They are able to provide helpful and friendly advice about amenities and community initiatives in these areas as well as offering practical help with keeping the estates clean and tidy, carrying out simple repairs and checking on the health and safety issues in the communal areas. They wear a uniform so that they can easily be recognised and spend most of their time out and about looking after housing schemes and estates.

#### Among other duties their work includes:

- clearing litter and instigating the removal of bulky waste items
- identifying, reporting and where appropriate carrying out repairs to communal areas
- checking communal lighting and security
- removing graffiti
- identifying and reporting unauthorised parking and abandoned vehicles
- reporting incidents of crime and nuisance

### YOUR CARETAKING SERVICE

We would like to have your views on the Caretaking Service. Our Caretakers regularly leave freepost questionnaire cards for tenants to complete and forward comments. The cards are used to identify possible areas for improvement and to gauge overall satisfaction levels. We will continue to review and improve this service and would be pleased to hear from you. **If you would like to contact the Caretaking team please contact Customer Services 01473 432000.**

### ASSISTED GARDEN MAINTENANCE SCHEME

We understand that some of our tenants may have physical difficulty maintaining their gardens to an acceptable level. Our Assisted Garden Maintenance Scheme is available to older and disabled tenants who have difficulty with their gardens and whose friends, neighbours or family cannot help them. The scheme provides a basic grass cutting and hedge trimming service. **If you need more information, please contact Customer Services.**

### DISABLED ADAPTATIONS

If you need an adaptation to your home because of a disability, for example if you have difficulty standing or with steps, then you may be able to get help. Major changes such as a ramp or walk-in shower/wet room first need to be assessed by an Occupational Therapist. **You can request an assessment by calling the County Council's Customer First service on 0808 800 4005.**

### HEARS SERVICE

HEARS is a Home Emergency Alarm Response Service that is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The HEARS service, with its experienced team of first aid trained responders, has been helping people live independently in their own homes for over 20 years. The service is available to anyone of any age who would like to feel safer, reassured and independent in their own home. The service provides numerous benefits for:

- Older or disabled people
- Individuals who have been discharged from hospital and require additional support
- People of any age that live alone

#### How does it work?

You are supplied with a personal mobile button, which you can wear as a pendant or wrist strap. An alarm unit is also provided. This is connected through your home telephone socket to our Ipswich based 24-hour control team.

You can use your alarm 24 hours a day if you have an accident or emergency, such as a fall. All you need to do is press either the button on your pendant/wrist strap or the red button on the alarm. There is a small on-going fee for this service but no minimum contract is required. The service allows for peace of mind in your own home 24 hours a day.

**To find out more go to [www.ipswich.gov.uk/hears](http://www.ipswich.gov.uk/hears) or call 01473 433236.**



## SHELTERED ACCOMMODATION

We provide specialist accommodation in 15 schemes for the older tenant, our aim is allow tenants to live as independently as possible and offer help as and when required.

Each of Ipswich Borough Council's sheltered housing schemes offers residents a safe, secure and comfortable environment, with its own unique identity.

Our experienced Scheme Managers are available to help and support tenants who need support or are in difficulty and the Council's HEARS service supply a 24-hour emergency cover when the Scheme Manager is not on site.

Every sheltered flat has its own front door giving residents the privacy of their own flat. Flats in purpose-built schemes have the extra security of a camera on the front door that can be viewed on the resident's own television. This gives peace of mind that residents know who they are letting into the premises. All flats have:

- One bedroom, lounge, kitchen and bathroom;
- Access to a communal lounge, kitchen and laundry facilities;

**For further information please contact the Customer Service Centre and ask to speak to the Sheltered Housing Team.**

## TENANCY SUPPORT SCHEME

The Tenancy Support Scheme offers help and support to adults living in our properties, giving them the opportunity to improve their quality of life by enabling them to live more independent lives in the community.

### Who can apply?

You can apply if you are already an Ipswich Borough Council tenant or have been offered a tenancy.

### How do I know if I am eligible for support?

You are eligible if you require support with any of the following:

- you need help in setting up home or tenancy
- you require assistance with filling in forms and other such correspondence
- you need advice on managing your finances
- you have drug or alcohol related problems
- you suffer with mental health issues
- you are new to the area and need help accessing local services
- advice on managing your finances, personal budgeting and debt counselling
- assistance accessing benefits/welfare rights
- assistance accessing other services if you have a disability ie sight/hearing

### How does the scheme work and what will it cost?

The Tenant Support Scheme is free. Support can be provided by us and by external agencies who closely liaise with Tenancy Services.

### How long is support carried out?

Support is carried out for a maximum of 12 months. The support you receive will be individually tailored to meet your needs and your support officer will agree a support plan with you. Your support is reviewed every three months and will discuss any further needs that have been identified and decide whether support is to continue.

### What happens if I decide I no longer want the support?

You discuss this with your support worker and can terminate the arrangement by mutual agreement.

### What do I do next?

If you feel you would benefit from the Tenancy Support Scheme and would like further details then please contact **Tenancy Services**. [www.ipswich.gov.uk/contactus](http://www.ipswich.gov.uk/contactus)



## USEFUL CONTACTS

### COUNCIL

Housing anti-social behaviour	01473 433325	Housing Benefits	01473 432000
Automated rent payments	01473 433777	Repairs Centre	01473 432000
Car Park enquiries	01473 432840	Cleaner Ipswich Hotline	01473 432000
Council Tax	01473 432000	Parks and Open Spaces	01473 433512
Emergency out-of-hours	01473 434444	Pest Control	01473 432000
Environmental Health	01473 432000	Planning	01473 432913
Gas (Aaron services)	0800 533 5630	Refuse Collection	01473 432000
HEARS Alarms	01473 433236	Sheltered Schemes	01473 432000
Housing & Homelessness advice	01473 432000	Tenancy Services	01473 432000

### AGE UK

[www.ageuk.org.uk](http://www.ageuk.org.uk)

Advice for elderly  
14 Hillview Business Park IP6 0AJ  
Information Line 01473 359911  
Benefits Advice Line  
01473 674222

### ANGLIAN WATER

[www.anglianwater.co.uk](http://www.anglianwater.co.uk)

Blocked sewer  
08457 145145  
Report a leak 0800 771881  
Billing enquiries 08457 919155

### BANGLADESHI CENTRE

Support and advice  
19 Tower St IP1 3BE  
01473 400081

### COUNCIL FOR RACIAL EQUALITY

[www.iscre.org.uk](http://www.iscre.org.uk)

Advice and support  
01473 408111

### CAB

[www.citizenadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizenadvice.org.uk)

General advice  
19 Tower St IP1 3BE  
0300 3301151

### COUNTY COURT

Civil court cases  
8 Arcade St IP1 1EJ  
0344 892 4000

### CUSTOMER FIRST

Social Care Services  
0808 8004005

### DISABLED ADVICE BUREAU

Disabled advice  
19 Tower St IP1 3BE  
01473 217313

### FURNITURE PROJECT

Reusable items  
4-10 St Matthews St IP1 3EU  
01473 404004

### JOBCENTRE PLUS

[www.gov.uk/contact-jobcentre-plus](http://www.gov.uk/contact-jobcentre-plus)  
Benefit claim  
0800 0556688

### IPSWICH BUSES

[www.ipswichbuses.co.uk](http://www.ipswichbuses.co.uk)  
Local bus company  
7 Constantine Road IP1 2DL  
0800 919390

### IPSWICH HOSPITAL

Local NHS hospital  
Heath Road IP4 5PD  
01473 712233

### NATIONAL GRID

[www.nationalgrid.com](http://www.nationalgrid.com)  
Smell gas? 0800 111999  
General enquiries 0345 070 0203

### NHS NON EMERGENCY

[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)  
General health advice 111

### RSPCA

[www.rspca.org.uk](http://www.rspca.org.uk)  
Animal welfare  
Report cruelty 0300 1234 999  
Mill Lane IP12 4PD  
0300 999 7321

### SAMARITANS

[www.samaritans.org.uk](http://www.samaritans.org.uk)

Support and advice  
116 123 (Free)

### SHELTER

[www.england.shelter.org.uk](http://www.england.shelter.org.uk)  
Housing advice 0808 8004444

### SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL

[www.suffolk.gov.uk](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk)  
General enquiries  
Endeavour House IP1 2BX  
0345 6066067

### SUFFOLK POLICE

Non-emergency 101  
HQ Martlesham Heath IP5 3QS  
01473 613500

### TRAFFIC LIGHTS FIXED, NOT TEMPORARY

Dynnig 0808 1689 111

### VICTIM SUPPORT

[www.victimsupport.org.uk](http://www.victimsupport.org.uk)  
uk  
Help following crime Suffolk  
01473 220 770

### WOMEN'S AID

[www.lighthousewa.org.uk](http://www.lighthousewa.org.uk)  
Domestic violence support  
01473 745111  
Helpline (24 hrs) Leave a message  
and get a callback within 15  
minutes 01473 745111