Midlothian

TENANTS' HANDBOOK

www.midlothian.gov.uk/council-housing

Updated Jan 2026

Welcome

We want to provide you with the best possible level of service during your tenancy.

This handbook has information about the housing services we provide, contacts and your rights, and responsibilities as a tenant of Midlothian Council.

Service	Email / web	Phone
Housing	housing.enquiries@midlothian.gov.uk	0131 271 3394
Housing Repairs	contactcentre@midlothian.gov.uk	0131 663 7211
Council Tax and rent	revenues.enquiries@midlothian.gov.uk	0131 271 3201
Arrears	arrears@midlothian.gov.uk	0131 271 3499
Temporary accommodation	temporary.accommodation@midlothian.gov.uk	0131 271 3969
Scottish Welfare Fund	www.midlothian.gov.uk/welfare-fund	0131 270 5600
Recycling and waste	contactcentre@midlothian.gov.uk	0131 561 5284
Homelessness	Homelessness.enquiries@midlothian.gov.uk	0131 271 3397
Emergency Homelessness (out of hours)		0131 201 0450
Environmental Health	environmentalhealth@midlothian.gov.uk	0131 271 3345
Feedback	www.midlothian.gov.uk/feedback	
Adult Social Care	swcontactofficers@midlothian.gov.uk	0131 271 3900
Child Protection	cfrerrals@midlothian.gov.uk	0131 271 6674
Dog fouling	contactcentre@midlothian.gov.uk	0131 561 5284
Emergency - Scottish Water	help@scottishwater.co.uk	0800 0778 778
Emergency - Power Cut		105
Emergency - Gas		0800 111 999

Moving in Checklist

To do	Complete
Keys for main entrance door and security door	
Location of bin storage	
Location of gas meter	
Location of electricity meter	
Contact gas/electricity supplier	
Location of heating timer	
Location of stopcock	
Location of fuse box	
Organised rent and council tax payments	

Who to update about your new home

Midlothian Council

- Council Tax
- Housing benefit/Universal Credit
- Schools/Nursery
- Library/Gym

Services

- Electoral Register
- Internet provider
- Post office-redirect
- Club cards

Car

- Vehicle registration - DVLA
- Vehicle insurance
- Driving licence - DVLA

Health

- Doctor, Dentist, Optician

Money

- Bank/building society
- House contents insurance
- Credit card
- Loans
- HM Revenue and Customs (tax credit/child benefit)
- Rental/hire purchase
- Pension companies
- Savings/bonds
- Employer
- Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)

Home contents insurance

We do not insure your furniture, belongings or decoration against theft, fire, vandalism and burst pipes. You will need to take out home contents insurance, this can be your own or the council insurance.

For council tenants the cost of the insurance is payable weekly with your rent.

To request an application form contact:
0131 271 3394
housing.enquiries@midlothian.gov.uk

Gas, electricity and water supply

Contact the current supplier to notify them that you are the new tenant and provide meter readings.

The contract is between yourself and the supplier and so you can choose to use a different supplier.
Gas – 0870 608 1524
Electricity – 0330 101 0300

If the property has a quantum/card meter, you must contact the supplier to get new keys/cards.

If you are moving in the winter, the water system will have been drained. To turn the water system back on contact:
0131 663 7211
contactcentre@midlothian.gov.uk

Your tenancy agreement

Your tenancy agreement is a legal document that sets out your rights and responsibilities as a tenant and our duties as a landlord. **It is very important so keep it safe.**

It covers:

- Your rent
- Use of the house and the common parts
- Respect for others-being a good neighbour
- Sub-letting, assignation and exchange of your tenancy. Please notify the Housing Service directly of any changes to the people living in your home. If you do not it can affect assignations, sub-letting, succession and joint tenancies.
- Repairs, maintenance, improvement and alterations
- Information and consultation
- Complaints
- Ending the tenancy

Data Protection

Midlothian Council uses the personal data you provide for the delivery of our services. For more information see **www.midlothian.gov.uk/privacy**

Our staff are here to help you

We will contact you after you sign your tenancy agreement to arrange a visit to see how you are settling into your new home.

You can contact us if you have any questions about your tenancy or home and garden e.g.:

- Changing your tenancy
- Altering your home or garden
- Investigating neighbour complaints and antisocial behaviour
- Ensuring the upkeep of communal areas

Contact us

- 0131 271 3394
- Estates housing officers – housingofficers@midlothian.gov.uk
- Tenancy Management Housing Officers – housing.enquiries@midlothian.gov.uk

Compliments, complaints and comments

We are committed to providing quality services. We follow the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman's standard complaints handling procedures.

If you have a concern let us know and we will do our best to resolve it. We will keep any complaints confidential – only people who need to investigate it will see the details.

To make a compliment, complaint or comment contact your Housing Officer or fill in a form at www.midlothian.gov.uk/feedback or pick one up from any council building.

Our complaints procedure has 2 stages.

Stage 1 – Frontline resolution

We aim to resolve complaints quickly and close to where we provided the service. This could be an on-the-spot apology, explanation and immediate action to resolve the problem.

We will give you our decision in 5 working days, unless there are exceptional circumstances. If we can't resolve your complaint we will explain why and tell you what you can do next.

Stage 2- Investigation

We will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within 3 working days and discuss it with you to understand why you are dissatisfied and what outcome you are looking for.

We will give you a full response in 20 working days. If our investigation will take longer, we will agree revised time limits with you and keep you updated on progress.

If you feel the issue is not resolved you can take your appeal to an adjudicator and ask for the matter to be investigated. In our response we will tell you who the relevant adjudicator is.

Significant Performance Failure

The Scottish Housing Regulator has information for tenants to report a significant performance failure. This would be something we have done, or failed to do, that puts the interests of our tenants at risk – for example failing to carry out health and safety requirements such as an annual gas safety check.

- **www.housingregulator.gov.scot/for-tenants/**

Housing Standards

We aim to provide you with a high-quality home. We must provide you with a home that is wind and watertight and habitable and keep your home in good repair by doing repairs we are responsible for within the timescales. As a tenant you have rights and responsibilities to take care of your home and neighbourhood.

Your home and garden

Gardens, gates, fencing

- We will ensure communal boundary gates, fences, walls or railings are in safe condition.
- Before you move in we will make sure your garden is in an acceptable condition.
- Once you move in it is your responsibility to maintain your garden, lawn, trees and hedges and dispose of garden waste appropriately.
- You must not store gas cylinders in your home or garden, without permission from us.

If your garden is over-grown, untidy or causes a nuisance you are breaching your tenancy agreement. We will decide what needs to be done and ask you to do it. If you do not, we may do it ourselves and charge you for it.

Pest Control

The council provides a pest control service.
www.midlothian.gov.uk/pest-control

Cars, motorbikes, caravans

- You can park a car or motorbike in your driveway but not in your house, common stair, pathway or pend.
- You cannot leave a car abandoned. We will investigate reports of abandoned cars and work with Police and DVLA to remove them.

If you park any vehicle in your garden, other than a car or motorbike, without our permission you are breaching your tenancy agreement. You may be given a tenancy warning.

Pets

- You are allowed one domestic pet.
- You can ask us for permission to have more than one domestic pet and/or a non-domestic pet.

If you allow your pet to make excessive noise, do not keep it under control, or do not clean up after it you are breaching your tenancy agreement. We may withdraw the permission for your pet.

Alterations

If you want to carry out alterations to your home, you need permission from us before you start.

Alterations include:

- Changing the kitchen or bathroom
- Changing the floors
- Adding new light fittings
- Installing CCTV
- Installing a satellite dish
- Installing EV car charging
- Erecting a garage, shed, greenhouse, driveway, pigeon loft, fence, dog kennel, wall or any other structure in your garden.

You can apply by writing to:

Midlothian Council, Permission request,
PO Box 28974, Dalkeith, EH22 1WX

What happens next?

Once we receive your application we may visit you at your home to discuss your request. We will give you our decision, in writing, within one month of receiving your request.

You must keep to the conditions detailed in the permission letter or permission may be withdrawn.

You must notify us when you have completed the work so that we can check it is acceptable.

You are responsible for the costs and for obtaining Planning Approval and a Building Warrant if necessary.

Adapt your home for disability

If you are disabled, we may be able to provide equipment and adaptations to support you with everyday tasks such as eating healthily, going to the toilet, washing or dressing yourself and staying safe.

www.midlothian.gov.uk/adaptations

If you make alterations to your home or garden without permission you are breaching your tenancy agreement. You may be given a tenancy warning, asked to repair any damage and return your home or garden to its original state.

Communal areas

We will ensure the area outside your home is kept to a high standard that you can be proud of. We visit our estates regularly to make sure communal areas owned by the Council are safe and maintained. You are welcome to attend one of **our neighbourhood walkabouts**.

Drains and gutters

- We ensure drains are clear and drainage manholes are free from obstruction
- We will ensure gutters and downpipes are free from leaks or blockages

Stairs and landings

You are responsible for the area outside your door down to the next floor tenant or main door.

- We will ensure main doors are secure. You must keep them closed.
- You must not store anything on the stairs and you must ensure they are washed and swept at least once a fortnight.
- We will remove chemicals or hazards that are a fire risk within 24 hours

Waste, recycling and fly tipping

- You must use the correct bin for waste and recycling or arrange a bulky uplift.
- You must put your bin out on time.
- We will investigate irresponsible use of communal bin stores (such as messy bin areas or waste left on the floor instead of in the bin) and fly tipping within 10 working days.

If you do not dispose of your waste properly you are breaching your tenancy agreement. We will ask you to remove any waste. If you do not, we will remove it within 10 working days and ask you to pay.

Lighting

- We will ensure lighting is working.

Clothes drying

- We will provide, where possible, clothes drying facilities

Anti-Social Behaviour

Everyone has the right to enjoy peace in their home.

- We will investigate reports of anti-social behaviour and neighbour complaints in council tenancies. We work with Police Scotland and other partners. **Don't suffer in silence** - report any acts of criminality to the Police on 999 or 101.
- We will remove offensive graffiti within 24 hours and remove other graffiti as soon as possible. Please contact the contact centre.
- We will not get involved in disputes that are not related to housing – e.g. family disagreements or parking on public roads.

If you behave in an antisocial way (e.g. playing loud music, shouting, swearing, verbal abuse, vandalism or violence) you are in breach of your tenancy.

Abandoned homes

We will investigate reports of abandoned homes. Let us know if you think a home is empty.

We will investigate reports of council tenancy fraud.

Safety in your home

Gas Safety checks

We have a legal requirement to ensure all gas appliances and flues in your home are checked and certified as safe every year.

If you have installed a gas appliance you are responsible for ensuring it operates properly. If we find it is faulty as part of our checks we will advise you, cap the appliance and charge you.

Electrical safety checks.

We must check the electrical safety of your home every 5 years. The inspection covers electrical installation, wiring, fuse box, sockets and fittings.

If repairs are identified, we will complete these within 28 days. You must allow access for these safety inspections, it is a legal obligation and for your safety.

If you do not let us in after 2 attempts for these checks we will force entry to your home and change your locks. You will be charged for this and will need to pick up your new keys from Dalkeith Police Station.

Smoke detector

If the alarm bleeps continuously:

This might be because of a fire so:

- Close the door of the room where the fire is to stop flames and fumes spreading
- Get everyone out of the house
- Call 999
- Do not go back into the house

If the alarm bleeps from time to time:

This might be because of a fault with the unit.
Do not tamper with the unit.
Report this as an emergency repair.
0131 663 7211.

To prevent fire in your home:

- Test smoke detectors every week
- Never leave candles unattended
- Never leave cooking unattended
- Do not overload electrical sockets and watch out for faulty and overheating electrical equipment and wiring/cables
- Stub cigarettes out and dispose of them carefully
- Contact the Fire and Rescue Service for a free safety check.
  0800 0731 999
  www.firescotland.gov.uk

If you use oxygen at home, let us know. You must not store replacement gas cylinders, petrol, any other flammable liquid or any materials which may pose a risk to health and safety in your home, garden, common staircase or communal area.

Asbestos

DO NOT saw, drill, sand or break up any material that might contain asbestos e.g.:

- Floor tiles
- Artex finishes or textured coatings
- Some plaster finishes and wall boards
- Internal windowsills
- Corrugated cement roofing sheets

If you think you have asbestos in your home and you are carrying out work please stop and call our repairs service on 0131 663 7211.

Condensation and dampness

Excessive condensation can lead to dampness and mould on walls, furniture and clothes. To prevent condensation you can:

- Open windows when showering.
- Vent tumble dryers outside
- Turn on extractor fans

Report dampness to the contact centre on 0131 663 7211.

Domestic Abuse

If you, or someone you know, is experiencing abuse or causing harm please ask for help.

www.midlothian.gov.uk/domestic-abuse

Doorstep crime

Some criminals pretend to be someone else – e.g. someone from a utility company to enter your home.

If you feel threatened, unsafe or suspicious don't let them in and **call 999.**

Repairs

We are responsible for maintaining the structure of your home and communal areas (e.g. external parts, internal fixtures and fittings fitted by us, wiring, pipes, heating, drainage, power and lighting.)

Reporting a repair

Type	Description	Time for response	How to report
Emergency	Overflowing toilet, leaking roof, no hot water or heating, not able to secure doors or windows.	4 hours	0131 663 7211
Priority	No heat in a radiator, faulty electric socket or light	7 days	0131 663 7211 contactcentre@midlothian.gov.uk
Routine	Damaged internal doors or kitchen units	28 days	0131 663 7211 contactcentre@midlothian.gov.uk

Emergencies

Issues that put the health and safety of you or others at immediate risk or are likely to adversely affect the structure of the building should be **reported immediately**.
We aim to respond within 4 hours.

A burst/frozen pipe

- Turn off the water at the stopcock
- Turn on every tap
- Turn off your heating system (if there is a burst pipe)
- Turn off your electricity (if there is a burst pipe) DO NOT TOUCH ELECTRICS IF THEY ARE WET

Smell of gas/gas leak

- Open windows and doors
- Do not smoke or use anything electrical
- Turn off the gas at the mains tap – usually near the meter
- Go outside to call National Gas Emergency on 0800 111 999. Wait outside for the gas engineer.

During a repair

- If you are told the repair is an emergency stay in your home or make sure there is a responsible adult (over 16) who will wait until someone comes to carry out the repair.
- Report criminal damage or vandalism to the police and get an incident number.
- Try to prevent further damage.
- Clear the area before we arrive – e.g. lift carpets, flooring, clear cupboards, move furniture. If we have to do this we may charge you.
- Keep children and pets away from the area.
- Do not smoke while our staff are in the property.
- Be at home at the agreed time to provide access. If you are not home the job will be cancelled and you will have to report it again.

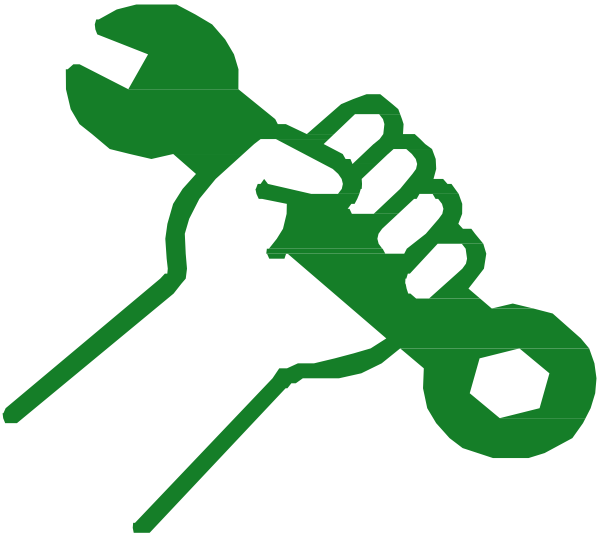
In your home, you are responsible for:

- Fittings you have installed or accepted at the start of the tenancy such as laminate flooring, carpets, shelves and built in furniture.
- Bleeding radiators
- Resetting tripped switches
- Internal decoration
- Repairing minor cracks and holes in walls and ceilings
- Repairing or fitting handles and locks on internal doors
- Television aerials and reception equipment
- Plugs and chains to baths, sinks and basins

If you are away overnight during cold weather you must keep the heating on (on a timer) to prevent burst pipes. If you are away for a number of weeks call 0131 663 7211 to have your heating system drained. **You will be charged for work arising from burst pipes if precautions have not been taken.**

Outside your home, you are responsible for:

- Grounds and garden area designated to your home
- Dividing fences, gates, driveways and garden structures not erected by the council – you could have a shared responsibility.



Modernisation programme

When your home is due for modernisation, we will write to let you know what is proposed, and when the work is likely to be carried out.

We may delay some repair requests if we know the component is due to be replaced and will let you know. Typical modernisation work involves replacing kitchens and heating systems. We will liaise with you while this work is planned and carried out, to keep any disruption to a minimum.

If you have a Passivhaus Home

Your new home is designed to stay warm or cool with very little energy. It keeps heat in through thick insulation, airtight walls and good windows, so it doesn't need much heating. The electric radiators warm the air to support the building to provide a constant temperature all day, rather than traditional boilers turning on and off. The ventilation system provides clean fresh air. To make this work, your new home has the following design features:

Heating & Water

- **Radiators**: Electric panel type, the temperature is set around 18°C. Your windows can be opened if needed for cooling.
- **Hot water**: Is set to come on between 1–5am winter and 1–6am summer.
- **Surestop**: It turns off mains water in an emergency.

Radiator Timer

Radiator Heat

Plumbing

Air & Ventilation

Do not switch off the ventilation system and keep the vents clear. You can boost ventilation if you are showering or cooking. We will change the filters every year.

MVHR (1)

MVHR (2)

MVHR (3)

Carbon monoxide detector

- **Carbon monoxide**: please test this alarm monthly on the wall controller. Ventilate if alarm sounds and contact our contact centre 0131 663 7211

Fire safety

- **Fire Suppression:** a high-pressure water mist fire suppression system, using minimal water to fight fires. Do not touch.

IMIST (1)

IMIST (2)

Electricity & Solar Panels

Solar Panel Info

Money

Help with the cost of living

If you are struggling with the cost of living there are many organisations who may be able to help. Find out more at **www.midlothian.gov.uk/cost-of-living.** If you are struggling to pay your council tax or rent call us on 0131 27 13499. You may also be eligible for a reduction in your council tax – find out more at **www.midlothian.gov.uk/ctr.**

Rent and Tax payment Card

Your rent and tax payment card has a unique reference number. You will need this to pay rent and council tax. You can request a new card at
www.midlothian.gov.uk/new-payment-card
0131 271 3201.

Paying your rent

Your rent is charged on a weekly basis. How much you pay is in your tenancy agreement.

How to pay

- **Direct Debit** – payments are taken directly from your bank on the same day each month.
- **Online or by phone** – if you are unable to pay by direct debit you must pay in advance. You can use a debit or credit card to pay 24 hours a day.
  www.midlothian.gov.uk/pay
  Call 0131 660 1845
  09:00am - 17:00pm Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday.
  10:00am - 17:00pm Wednesday
  09:00am - 15:30pm Friday.
- **Payment Card** – pay at the post office or any shop that displays a Paypoint or Payzone sign.

Paying Council Tax

You are responsible for paying the Council Tax, water and waste water rates for your home.

How to pay

- **Direct Debit**
  - Download an application form **www.midlothian.gov.uk/pay**
  - Call 0131 271 3201
- **Online or by phone** – You can use a debit or credit card to pay 24 hours a day.
  Call 0131 660 1845
  09:00am - 16:00pm Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday.
  09:00am - 15:30pm Friday.
  www.midlothian.gov.uk/pay
- **Payment Card** – pay at the post office or any shop that displays a Paypoint sign.

Welfare advice

Housing Benefit

In most cases, if you are working age and need help with housing costs you must claim this through Universal Credit from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP)

www.gov.uk/apply-universal-credit
0800 328 5644

Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)

Citizens Advice Bureau provide free, independent advice on welfare benefits, money and debt.

Penicuik - 01968 675 259
Dalkeith - 0131 660 1636

Midlothian Council Welfare Rights Officer

0131 271 3781

Changeworks – energy advice

0800 870 8800
9am-5pm, Monday-Friday

Scottish Welfare Fund

Help for people aged 16 and over on low incomes.

Crisis Grant – for help after a disaster (e.g. fire or flood) or an emergency (e.g. losing your job or unexpected expense).

Community Care Grant – for help to live a settled life in the community.

0131 270 5600
www.midlothian.gov.uk/welfare-fund

Tenant Participation

How to get involved

Our tenants can influence decisions made in the housing service by:

- **Joining or setting up a local Tenant's group**. These groups can register with the council as a "Registered Tenants Organisation".
- **Joining our Tenant's Panel.**
- **Joining a walkabout** to raise any concerns about problems in your area.
- **Registering as an 'Interested Tenant'** to get housing related information and invites to housing events.

Contact our tenant participation officer tenantparticipation@midlothian.gov.uk

Our performance

We report on how well we are doing each year on our **Strategy and Performance pages on our website.**

- **Landlord report to tenants**
  This tells you how we performed on issues like repairs, rents, energy efficiency and improvements. It shows we are meeting the requirements of the Social Housing Charter.

- **Annual assurance statement to the Scottish Housing Regulator**.
  Social homes are expected to meet certain quality and energy efficient standards including the Scottish Housing Quality Standard and Energy Efficient Standard for Social Housing.

Ending your tenancy

We're sorry to hear you're thinking of leaving us. Your Housing Officer may arrange to visit the property to check it is in a good condition or if your home or garden need work before you leave. If you need to carry out any work and don't do so we will do the repairs and charge you for them.

You must write to us at least 28 days before you wish to leave. This should include a signature, your name, contact detail, tenancy address, new address, email and telephone number.

- Use our Termination of Tenancy Form at **www.midlothian.gov.uk/tenancy-agreement**

Things to remember:

- Ensure any arrears have been settled
- Continue to pay utility bills and council tax up to your tenancy end date
- Empty your home, including furniture and floor coverings. If you leave any personal belongings, fixtures or furniture, we will charge you for removal costs
- Leave everywhere – inside and out – neat, tidy and clean
- Remove anything installed without our permission, and repair any damage
- Ensure everyone living with you leaves too
- Take meter readings as you leave and report these to your energy company
- Inform relevant people, agencies and any organisations that you're moving
- You may need to pay for repairs or the replacement of damaged fixtures and fittings
- Remove any medical equipment e.g. hoists, hospital beds, stair lifts and oxygen tanks.
- Return all keys on or before the last day of your tenancy
- Provide a forwarding address

Abandonment

If we have reasonable grounds to think you have left the property without telling us and do not intend to return we can take action to end your tenancy by serving a "notice of abandonment" to your property.

Eviction

Your tenancy will end through the eviction process if we obtain a court order to repossess your home. This might be because of breaches of your Tenancy Agreement.

Homeless

If you think you are about to be made homeless, contact us. Please do not wait until you have nowhere to stay, as we may be able to prevent you becoming homeless.
www.midlothian.gov.uk/homeless

Death of a tenant

We realise that this may be a sad and difficult time for you and your family but unfortunately there are things that you, as the next-of-kin or executor, are required to do to ensure that the tenancy is correctly ended. We want to make this as easy as possible for you or anyone who is dealing with the tenant's estate.

We may have already been notified of the death through Midlothian's Tell Us Once service, however please do still contact us to report the death and discuss arrangements for clearing and returning the keys to the property.

- **Succession** - you or someone else may be legally eligible to succeed to the tenancy.

- **Death Certificate** – send us a copy of the death certificate. The tenancy legally ends on the date of death and all housing benefit or universal credits payments will cease from that date.

- **Time to Clear the Property and Returning the Keys** – you have 14 days from the date of death to clear the property, no charges will be applied during this time.

- **Rent Due or Overpayment of Rent** - when everything is concluded we will review the rent account. If any monies are due to us we may make a claim against any estate.

Moving house

Whether it's for a new job, you need more space, a family change or downsizing, a home swap can be the ideal solution.

Incentive to move grant

We offer grants to Midlothian Council tenants who move to a smaller property owned by the council through normal letting or by mutual exchange. This helps to release family homes.

If you have an outstanding debt with us we will have to offset this against the grant before any payment is made.

Moving to an adapted house

If you have difficulties with day-to-day tasks you may be able to apply to move house to one which is more suited to you.

housing.enquiries@midlothian.gov.uk
0131 271 3248.

Mutual exchange

A mutual exchange is where tenants swap their properties. It can be quicker than waiting for a housing transfer through the normal waiting list.

You can find a property to exchange on **House Exchange**, or by word of mouth, through friends or family.

If you wish to go ahead with the exchange, you must get permission from both landlords and then **apply online.**

After you apply for an exchange, you must not carry out any more alterations or improvements to the property or remove any fixtures and fittings until we have inspected the properties involved.

Once all tenants involved in the exchange have applied, we aim to complete the process within 28 days.