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This handbook is also available to view and download online by visiting our website and searching 'Tenants Handbook'.

Version 1, July 2015

Welcome

Midlothian Council would like to thank you for choosing us as your landlord. We hope you will be very happy in your new home.

We have produced this handbook in consultation with our tenants and registered tenant organisation. Working with tenants is an essential part of our decision-making process and we are committed to making sure there are opportunities for all tenants to participate in the design and delivery of our housing services.

We hope you will find this handbook useful and that it answers the questions you have about your new home.

Your Housing Officer

Your Housing Officer's role is to advise and help you with all matters concerning your tenancy; they are knowledgeable and have the experience to provide you with advice and assistance on a number of issues.

They are your main contact for any housing issues that you may have.

Some of their duties include:

- changes to tenancy
- permission requests
- investigating neighbour complaints and antisocial behaviour
- ensuring the upkeep of communal areas.

Housing Officer
Telephone no
Email address

We will inform you if the Housing Officer for your area changes.

Useful contact details

Midlothian Council

Buccluech House
1 White Hart Street
Dalkeith
EH22 1AE

0131 270 7500

www.midlothian.gov.uk

Follow us on FB



Twitter



Office opening hours:

Monday, Tuesday & Thursday	9.00am-5.00pm
Wednesday	10.00am-5.00pm
Friday	9.00am-3.30pm

Useful contact details continued

Service	Email
Housing (General Enquiries)	housing.enquiries@midlothian.gov.uk
Housing repairs (Office hours)	contactcentre@midlothian.gov.uk
Emergency repairs (Out of hours)	N/A
Rent and other payment enquiries	revenues.enquiries@midlothian.gov.uk
Rent and Council Tax payment line	N/A
Rent arrears	revenues.enquiries@midlothian.gov.uk
Antisocial behaviour	asb@midlothian.gov.uk (Community Safety team)
Mediation	mediation@midlothian.gov.uk
Housing Benefit	revenues.enquiries@midlothian.gov.uk
Council Tax and Council Tax Reduction Scheme	revenues.enquiries@midlothian.gov.uk
Welfare and benefits advice	N/A
Scottish Welfare Fund	N/A
Recycling and waste collection	contactcentre@midlothian.gov.uk
Dog fouling	contactcentre@midlothian.gov.uk
Animal welfare and pest control	contactcentre@midlothian.gov.uk
Environmental Health	environmentalhealth@midlothian.gov.uk
Road services (Office hours)	contactcentre@midlothian.gov.uk
Emergency road services (Out of hours)	N/A
Complaints, compliments and comments	feedback@midlothian.gov.uk
Adult and social care (Social work)	swccenquiries@midlothian.gov.uk
Children and families (Social work)	swc&fenquiries@midlothian.gov.uk
Emergency social work (Out of hours)	N/A
Homelessness (Office hours)	homelessness.enquiries@midlothian.gov.uk
Emergency Homelessness (Out of hours)	N/A

	Visit www.midlothian.gov.uk Search	Phone
	Housing	0131 270 7500
	Housing repairs	0131 663 7211
	N/A	0131 663 7211
	Rents and payments	0131 271 3201
	Pay for it, (Payments can be made online)	0131 660 1845
	Rent arrears	0131 271 3499
	Antisocial behaviour	0131 271 6677
	Mediation	0131 271 3617
	Housing Benefit	0131 271 3201
	Council Tax	0131 271 3201
	Welfare rights	0131 271 3781 0131 270 8922
	Scottish Welfare Fund	0131 270 5600
	Rubbish and recycling	0131 561 5284
	Dog fouling, Dog fouling can be reported online	0131 561 5284
	Animal welfare and pest control	0131 561 5284
	Environmental health	0131 271 3345
	Roads and pavements	0131 663 1103
	Roads and pavements	0131 663 7211
	Complaints, compliments and comments, (Forms can be completed online)	0131 561 5444
	Adult and Social Care	0131 271 3900
	Children and Families	0131 271 3860
	N/A	0800 731 6969
	Homelessness	0131 271 3397
	Homelessness	0131 663 7211

Other useful contact numbers

Police Scotland	Phone	
	Non – Emergency	101
	Emergency	999
Scottish Water Emergencies		0845 600 8855
Scottish Water Enquiries		0845 601 8855
Gas Emergencies		0800 111 999
Electric (power cut)	Landline	0800 092 9290
	Mobile	0330 101 0222
Citizens Advice Bureau	(Penicuik)	01968 675259
	(Dalkeith)	0131 660 1636
Home Energy Advice Scotland		0808 808 2282



SECTION 1

Starting your tenancy

- Your Tenancy Agreement
- Rights and Responsibilities as a Midlothian Council tenant
- Gas, electricity and water
- Checklist

1

Your Tenancy Agreement

The Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement (referred to as 'Tenancy Agreement') you have signed is a legal document that sets out your rights and responsibilities as a tenant and our duties as a landlord. **It is the most important document you have for your new home so keep it in a safe place.**

Your rights

Below is a description of your rights as a Scottish secure tenant.

Security of tenure

Under your Tenancy Agreement with us you have security of tenure. This means you cannot be evicted from your home without a court order.

Assignment (transferring your tenancy)

'Assignment' is the term used for transferring all the rights and responsibilities of your tenancy to another person. You must apply for permission before you can assign your tenancy.

Changing to a sole or joint tenancy

If you want another person to become a joint tenant, both of you must apply in writing.

If you want to change from a joint to a sole tenancy we need a letter from the person leaving to advise that they are terminating their tenancy.

Subletting

Subletting is when an existing tenant lets their home to someone else; this person is known as the subtenant. You must apply for permission before you can sublet your home.

Lodgers

A lodger is someone, other than a member of your household, who rents a room in your home and who may share the bathroom, kitchen and/or living room with you. You will only be able to take in a lodger if you have a spare room. You must apply for permission before you can take in a lodger.

Succession

Succession of tenancy is when the tenant dies and the tenancy can be passed to another qualifying member of the household.

There are certain criteria and conditions that are subject to the above.

For further information contact your Housing Officer or alternatively email **housing.enquiries@midlothian.gov.uk** or call **0131 270 7500**.

Access to personal files

When you become a tenant, we need to know your details and keep a record of them. Under the Data Protection Act 1998, you have the right to view your personal information held by us on computer or paper files, including your personal housing file. If you wish to see this personal information you can download the subject access request form from our website or visit your local office and ask for a subject access request form. The information you request may be sent out to you in a hard copy or an appointment can be made for you to view the information. A fee of no more than £10 may be charged depending on personal circumstances.

1

Your responsibilities

The responsibilities set out in your Tenancy Agreement are to do with the care you take with your home, your neighbours and your neighbourhood. They are intended to make sure you and your neighbours can live in your homes in peace and comfort.

If you or anyone visiting your home break any of the conditions of your Tenancy Agreement we may take legal action against you.

Some of these conditions are:

- The property must be your sole or main residence.
- You must pay your rent and any other tenancy related charges to stay in your home.
- You must keep your home in good repair and decoration.
- You must report repairs immediately to have them fixed.
- You must allow us access to carry out repairs and annual gas safety checks.
- You must not behave in an antisocial manner.
- You must apply for permission before making alterations to your home/garden.
- You must tell us if you will be leaving the property for longer than 28 days.

Below is a summary of your conditions of your Tenancy Agreement.

Rent

Paying your rent is the most important responsibility you will have as a tenant. Failure to pay your rent will result in rent arrears which could put your tenancy at risk and could lead to legal proceedings for eviction which will incur further costs to you.

Your garden

If you have a garden, it must be kept tidy. This includes keeping hedges and trees trimmed and grass cut. You must not leave rubbish bags or any other waste in your garden. You are responsible for the maintenance and repair of mutual fencing or walls between you and your neighbour and any driveways, patios and paved areas other than footpaths.

Storage of materials/liquids

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

Keeping pets

You are given automatic permission to keep one domestic pet. However you require permission to keep more than one domestic pet and any non-domestic pets.

To protect the property, your neighbours and the environment from your pets or any pets who are visiting your property, you must:–

- take all reasonable steps to prevent your pets from causing excessive noise, nuisance, annoyance or danger.
- prevent your dog from fouling in public places, neighbouring properties, communal gardens, public paths, drying areas etc.
- clean up after your pet.
- ensure your pet does not cause damage to your house or neighbours property.

If the reasonable steps you have taken to prevent your pet from causing excessive noise, nuisance, annoyance or danger, fail, we can withdraw the automatic permission for your pet.

1

It is against the law for anyone who is responsible for a dog to fail to clean up after their dog has fouled. **If we have evidence that you have failed to clean up after your dog in your property, garden, public areas like parks and playgrounds and pavements we can withdraw the automatic permission for your dog.**

Free dog bags are available at Council offices, leisure centres and libraries.

Vehicles

If you have a car you must park in your driveway if you have one, or in a space provided, otherwise there are no specific car park spaces provided for you. Please make sure you do not block roads, paths, pavements or parking spaces for people with disabilities.

In your garden, you may carry out minor repairs to vehicles registered to you or any other member of your household, as long as, in our opinion, it does not cause nuisance, annoyance or danger to other people.

Waste and recycling

You are responsible for putting your own bins/recycling box out for collection at the correct time and bringing them back in.

Responsibilities in communal areas

There are specific responsibilities if your house has shared areas with other residents.

- If you share a common stair, you must take your turn in regularly cleaning, washing and keeping it tidy including its windows, etc.
- You must not leave rubbish bags or other items in communal stairs as this is dangerous and a fire hazard.

-
- Please respect other residents' privacy.
 - You must allow access to shared paths.
 - Keep the areas you share in a clean and tidy condition, this includes cleaning up after your pets.
 - Keep shared walkways clear of rubbish, bikes, kids' toys etc.
 - Keep bin storage areas clean and tidy.
 - If you share waste/recycling bins/boxes you must take turns to place them on the kerbside at the appropriate time and bring them back in.

A rota system can be introduced if tenants fail to take turns in cleaning the communal areas.

Our responsibilities to you

- Provide you with a home that is wind, watertight and habitable.
- Keep the structure and exterior of your home in good repair, and the installations such as water, sanitation, central heating, gas and electric in proper working order.
- Ensure repairs for which we are responsible are carried out within the timescales stated.
- Maintain any alarm system provided by us.
- Maintain the boundary fence in your garden, only if the fence is owned by the council.

1

Organising the gas, electricity and water supply

Please phone the numbers below to establish who is currently supplying the property with gas and electricity.

Gas	0870 608 1524	Supplier:
Electricity	0330 1010 300	Supplier:

You must contact the current supplier to notify them that you are now the tenant and provide the meter readings.

If you wish to stay with this supplier, you can arrange a payment method that suits.

If the property has a quantum/card meter, the keys/cards will be obtained by the Housing Officer and you must contact the supplier to get new keys/cards.

Changing your supplier

You may wish to change suppliers. If so, you must first follow the steps above before contacting your preferred supplier.

Water supply

If you are moving to your property in the winter, the water system will have been drained down to avoid water tank or pipe bursts. You will need to call us on **0131 663 7211** to arrange for the water system to be turned on.

Checklist

Change of address list	Tick when complete
Midlothian Council	
Council tax	
Housing benefit (where applicable)	
Library account	
Tone zone membership	
Schools/nursery	
Any other service provided by Midlothian Council	
Services	
Electoral Register	
Telephone (landline/mobile)	
Satellite/internet provider	
Post office-redirect	
Clubcards	
Motoring	
Vehicle registration – DVLA	
Vehicle insurance	
Driving license – DVLA	
Breakdown services	

SECTION 1: Starting your tenancy

1

Health	
Doctor	
Dentist	
Optician	
Financial	
Bank/building society	
House contents insurance	
Credit cards	
Loans	
HM Revenue and Customs (tax credit/child benefit) and other business	
Rental/hire purchase	
Pension companies	
Savings/bonds	
Catalogues	
Employer	
Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)	
Refuse collection	Day of collection (must be on kerbside by 7am)
Grey bin	
Blue recycling bin/red recycling box	
Brown bin (garden waste)	

To find out the collection days for your refuse and recycling visit our website and search for 'bin collection service' or call us on **0131 561 5284**.



SECTION 2

During your tenancy

Rent and Council Tax

Help to pay your rent

Problems paying your rent

Repairs

Safety in your home

Permissions

Waste and recycling

You and your neighbours

Antisocial behaviour

Feeling safe in your home and community

Helping you stay in your home

Helpful advice

Moving house

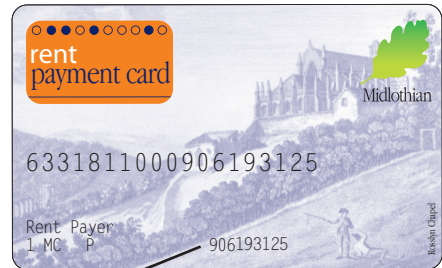
Getting involved (Tenant participation)

Rent and Council Tax

Rent

The rent for your Council house is charged on a weekly basis and the amount will show on your Tenancy Agreement.

You will receive a rent payment card shortly which has your unique nine-digit reference number on it. A direct debit form will also be enclosed with your rent payment card.





Nine-digit rent payment card number

Please take a note of this number as you will need this when paying over the phone and online.

How can I pay and where?

We offer a variety of payment methods in addition to the cash and cheque method. If you are unable to pay by direct debit you must pay your rent on a weekly basis.

- **Direct debit** – we recommend direct debit as the most efficient and cost-effective way to pay your rent. Payments are taken directly from your bank account on either the 1st, 15th, the end of the month, or weekly instalments every Monday.

-
- **Debit card or credit card** – you can pay your rent 24 hours a day, 365 days per year. Call our automated telephone system on **0131 660 1845** and follow the step-by-step instructions or visit our website **www.midlothian.gov.uk/pay** then click housing rent payments.
 - **Payment card** – you can pay your rent using your rent payment card at the post office or any shop that displays the **Paypoint**  or **Payzone**  sign. You can also pay at the Council collection office at Buccleuch House, Dalkeith.
 - **By post** – cheques or postal orders should be made payable to ‘Midlothian Council’ and sent to:

Midlothian Council

P.O. Box 3, Dalkeith, Midlothian EH22 1AQ

DO NOT SEND MONEY IN THE POST

Please remember to put your nine-digit reference number on the back of the cheque.

How do I find out my rent balance?

If you pay in person at Buccleuch House, the balance will be printed on the receipt. If you pay using any other method, you will need to phone **0131 271 3201** and ask for your rent balance.

2

Council Tax

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

For further information on Council Tax visit our Revenues service at Buccleuch House, Dalkeith, or call **0131 271 3201**.

What if I lose my Rent and Council Tax cards?

You can request a new card by visiting our website and searching '**request a new payment card**', or calling **0131 271 3201**.

2 Help to pay your rent and Council Tax

If you are on a low income you may be entitled to Housing Benefit and Council Tax reduction. To check if you qualify you will need to complete a Housing Benefit/Council Tax Reduction form. If you would like help in filling out the form please visit Buccleuch House and ask for assistance from a member of our Revenues team.

For further information and to request a Housing Benefit/Council Tax Reduction form, visit our Revenues service at Buccleuch House, Dalkeith, or call **0131 271 3201**. Alternatively you can download and print the form by visiting our website and search '**how to claim**'.

Universal Credit

In time, Housing Benefit will be replaced with Universal Credit. The transition for people who are receiving Housing Benefit will be a gradual process. Applications for Universal Credit will have to be completed online.

For further information, visit www.gov.uk and search 'universal credit' or call one of the numbers below:

DWP – Department for Work and Pensions	0845 6043719
Citizens Advice Bureau	Penicuik: 01968 675 259 Dalkeith: 0131 660 1636
Midlothian Council Welfare Rights Officer	0131 271 3781 / 0131 270 8922

Problems paying your rent/rent arrears

We understand that people can find themselves in rent arrears for all kinds of reasons.

If you are struggling to pay your rent, you can talk to a member of our rent arrears staff in confidence by calling **0131 271 3499** or visiting Buccleuch House, Dalkeith.

If you have difficulty visiting our office, we can arrange to meet in your own home.

We will make every effort to help you deal with your rent arrears, but if you do fall behind with your rent, the Council has a procedure that it will follow to recover the arrears.

Repairs

We are responsible for repairing and maintaining the structure of your home. This includes all the external parts, any internal fixtures and fittings originally fitted by us, wiring, pipes, fixtures and fittings for heating, drainage, power and lighting. This includes the maintenance and repair of communal areas.

What you must do

- Report all repairs except those for which you are responsible.
- Allow us access to carry out repairs and gas safety checks as it states in your Tenancy Agreement.

- If you are told the repair is classed as 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.
- Repair any damage which you, your family or any visitor has caused.
- Treat our staff with respect.
- Refrain from smoking when staff are in the property.
- When reporting a repair you must give as much detail as possible.
- Be at home at the time of the agreed appointment to provide access. If you are not home the job will be cancelled and you will have to report it again.

What happens when I report a repair?

When you report a repair, we will let you know if it is a qualifying repair under the right to repair scheme. You will also be informed if the repair is classed as a rechargeable repair, which means you will incur the cost of the repair. If the repair is not classed as an emergency, we will arrange with you a time and day to suit. However, this must be within the timescale required.

Type of response	Timescale	Typical example
Emergency	24 Hours	Overflowing toilets – Roof leaks or falling slates/ tiles – Doors or windows cannot be secured
Priority repair	7 days	Broken toilet seat – No heat in a radiator – Faulty electric socket or light
Planned/routine	28 days	Worn taps – Damaged internal door – Damaged kitchen units

You will be given a unique reference number for your repair; you will need to take a note of this number if you are phoning to discuss the repair.

Right to repair

If your repair is categorised as a qualifying repair and it is not repaired within the timescale given you will be entitled to compensation. If the work is not completed by the last day we will pay you £15 plus £3 for every day until the work is completed subject to a limit of £100.

If you wish you can have the work carried out by another contractor. However, they have to be on our list of contractors. This should only happen if the Council fails to meet the timescale.

We review all repairs falling into this category. If compensation is due, we will advise you and arrange for it to be sent to you. If you owe us money as a result of your tenancy, we will use any compensation to reduce your outstanding debt.

Repairs in communal areas

You should report it in the same way that you would report a repair in your home, and advise us that it is in the area you share with your neighbours. We may not own all the properties in your block. Before we carry out any priority or routine work we may need to consult and obtain the agreement of the other owners.

What repairs/maintenance am I responsible for?

In your home, you are responsible for:

- the fittings you have installed or accepted at the start of the tenancy such as laminate flooring, carpets, shelves, built-in furniture etc.
- fitting additional locks and their repair.
- bleeding radiators.

- resetting tripped switches.
- weekly testing of smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.
- repair of handles and locks on the internal doors.
- repairing of minor cracks and holes in walls and ceilings that can be filled before decoration.
- all internal decoration.
- television aerials and reception equipment except where it is fitted by us.
- plugs and chains to baths, sinks and basins.

Outside your home, you are responsible for:

- grounds and garden area designated to the property.
- dividing fences, gates, driveways and garden structures not erected by the Council – you could have a shared responsibility.

What should I do if I go on holiday in the winter?

If the heating is not on and it gets cold the pipes can freeze causing them to burst. If you are leaving the house for any time between November and March you should turn off the heating, turn off the stop valves and drain down both the hot and cold systems by opening the taps.

When you return you should open the taps, turn the stop valve back on and turn off the taps when the water has a steady flow. You can then turn on the heating.

Alternatively we will do this service for free. If you require this service, contact the repairs line on the number below. You should be aware that you will be charged for work arising from burst pipes if precautions have not been taken.

How do I report a repair?

Call the repairs line **0131 663 7211** (emergency and non emergency). If the repair is not an emergency, please call during office hours. You can also email **contactcentre@midlothian.gov.uk** with a non urgent repair.

Safety in your home

Gas safety

If you smell gas or your carbon monoxide detector activates you should:

- open windows and doors to get rid of the gas
- turn of the gas supply at the meter
- call the National Gas Emergency Service on **0800 111 999**.

Don't

- ✗ Turn electrical switches on or off
- ✗ Smoke
- ✗ Use any naked flames

The engineer from the National Emergency Service will advise you what to do next.

Gas safety checks

We have a legal responsibility to service gas heating systems within a 12-month period and carry out other checks. We will require access to your home once a year to carry out the service. The service is carried out by our contractors who will contact you to advise when they will visit your home. If this time is not suitable this can be rearranged, but this date must be within the deadline of the service

date. If these appointments are not kept we will force entry, carry out the gas service and change the locks. There will be a significant cost incurred for the forced entry and the changes to the locks which you will be liable for. The keys for the new locks will be available at Dalkeith Police station.

If you have installed a gas cooker or other appliance, you are responsible for ensuring it operates properly. If during the check we find this is the source of a fault we will advise you, have the supply to the appliance capped and charge you for doing so.

Smoke detector

If the alarm keeps sounding continuously

- Identify the source of the smoke as quickly as possible.
- Take action to turn off or extinguish the source.
- If this is because of fire, close your doors and windows if you can and leave the house along with everybody else as quickly as possible.
- Call the emergency services on **999**.

If the alarm bleeps from time to time

There is likely to be a fault with the unit and you should report this as an emergency repair. Do not tamper with the unit.

Asbestos

Asbestos is a natural material, which has been used as a building material for many years. It has now been found that the fibres – when breathed in – can be harmful.

Asbestos can be found in:

- textured coatings and paints on ceilings.
- boards forming enclosures to vertical pipework.

-
- boards lining heating cupboards and their doors.
 - insulation in storage units and warm air heating units.

If you suspect asbestos is present in your property and you are carrying out work to your house **stop work and seek advice**.

Condensation & dampness

Condensation occurs when moist air contacts a cold surface. For example, you can see it on windows and mirrors as tiny droplets of water when you have a shower or bath.

To prevent this from occurring you can:

- open windows when showering.
- vent tumble dryers directly to the outside.
- turn on extractor fans where fitted.

Excessive condensation can lead to dampness and mould growth on walls and furniture and mildew on clothes.

What will I do if I have damp or mould?

- If you have mould on walls make a solution of chlorine bleach and water – usually 1-part bleach to 3-parts water.
- Using a stiff-bristled brush, scrub the blackened area.
- Rinse thoroughly and dry.

If the mould and dampness keeps returning, and you have done all of the above, then report it as a repair.

For further information and to report concerns regarding your gas appliances or asbestos, call **0131 663 7211**.

Fire prevention

To prevent fire in your home follow these simple steps:

- Test your smoke detectors weekly.
- Never leave candles unattended.
- Take extra care in the kitchen and never leave cooking unattended.
- Do not overload electrical sockets and watch out for faulty and over-heating electrical equipment and wiring/cables.
- Stub cigarettes out properly and dispose of them carefully.

In the event of a fire in your home you should:

- close the door of the room where the fire is in if you can.
- call the emergency services **999**.
- make sure everyone in the house leaves through a safe route as quickly as possible.

If you use oxygen in your property, please inform your Housing Officer. 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.

Arranging a home safety visit

You can request a free home fire safety visit from the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service. They will visit you in your home to give you advice and assistance with fire safety in your home.

To arrange a visit, either speak with your Housing Officer or contact the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service – text 'fire' to 80800, call **0800 0731 999** or visit: **www.firescotland.gov.uk**.

Water

If you get a burst pipe:

- If possible, fill your bath with water for flushing the toilet and for washing.
- Turn off the water at the stop valve (usually under your sink).
- Switch off the electricity at the mains.
- Switch off any water heaters.
- Switch off the central heating system. If you have a solid fuel fire or system let the fire die down. Do not attempt to drain the boiler unless the fire has gone out.
- Open all taps to sinks and baths.
- Call emergency repairs: **0131 663 7211**.

If your pipes freeze:

- Turn of the water at the stop valve.
- Open all sinks and bath taps.
- Call emergency repairs: **0131 663 7211**.

Contents insurance

For your own peace of mind, we recommend that you take out contents insurance to protect your furniture, belongings and valuables.

We offer all Council tenants a contents insurance policy which can be paid weekly, and premiums can be paid along with your rent.

You can request an application form from your Housing Officer, or visit our website and search 'home insurance' to download and print the form.

Permissions

If you want to carry out any improvements or alterations to your home and garden you must get our written permission first. We will not unreasonably refuse permission.

What do I need permission for?

- Any alterations to your home other than internal decoration.
- Adding new fixtures or fittings – fitting of satellite dishes, installation of new kitchen and bathroom, laminate flooring, light fittings and internal/external doors.
- Any work to the garden ie erecting a garage, shed, greenhouse, driveways, pigeon loft, fence, dog kennels, walls or other structure.
- Running a business from your home.
- Take in lodgers, sublet, assign your Tenancy Agreement, mutual exchange and adding or changing a joint tenant.
- Keeping more than one domestic pet or any other non-domestic pet within your home or garden.
- Parking large vehicles such as a caravan or a boat in your garden or in a communal area.

This is not an exhaustive list. Please speak with your Housing Officer if you are unsure if you require permission.

How do I apply for permission?

You must put your application in writing and send it to:
Midlothian Council, Permission request, PO Box 28974
Dalkeith Midlothian EH22 1WX

What happens next?

Once we have received your application a member of staff may visit you at the property to discuss your request. We will give you our decision in writing within one month of receiving your request.

If you are making alterations to your home, you will have to notify us when the work is complete so that we can check that it is acceptable.

You will be responsible for all the costs and for obtaining Planning Approval and a Building Warrant where necessary.

Where written permission has been given for any of the permission requests, you must keep to the conditions detailed in the permission letter or permission may be withdrawn.

If you have carried out improvements to your home, having first obtained our permission, you may be eligible for compensation when you leave.

To apply you must contact us 28 days before and up to 21 days after your tenancy ends. We require the following information;

- Your name and address.
- What improvements you have made.
- How much each improvement costs – include invoices/receipts.
- The date when the improvement was completed.

For further information call the Building Services Manager on **0131 561 5310**.

Waste and recycling

You have been provided with the bins/box shown below, which have to be used for the correct type of waste. All waste must be placed in the bins/box provided. It is your responsibility to put your own bins/box out for collection and to bring them back in.

Quick guide to sorting your waste



Blue bin mixed recycling materials	Brown bin garden waste	Grey bin non-recyclable waste	Red box glass bottles and jars
Your materials are separated, sorted and sent to outlets to be made into new products	Your garden waste is processed into compost	All waste placed in your grey bin is sent to landfill	Your glass is recycled into new glass bottles and jars
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Paper and card✓ Plastic bottles✓ Tins and cans✓ Foil✓ Plastic pots, tubs, punnets and trays✓ Cartons✓ Aerosol cans	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Grass cuttings✓ Hedge trimmings✓ Leaves✓ Small branches, bark and twigs✓ Plants and flowers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Nappies✓ Bathroom bin waste✓ Polystyrene✓ Crisp packets and sweet wrappers✓ Plastic film✓ Cat litter	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Wine bottles✓ Cooking sauce jars✓ Jam jars✓ Beer bottles✓ Baby food jars

Kerbside recycling

Your blue bin is for the collection of mixed recycling. Use this bin to recycle your paper, card, plastic bottles, tins and cans, cartons, aerosol cans, plastic pots, tubs, punnets and trays and foil.

Flatten cardboard boxes and rinse food residue from pots and tubs before placing into your blue bin. Do not place recycling in your blue bin using plastic carrier bags.

Your red box is for the collection of glass bottles and jars. Rinse containers before placing them into your red box.

You can request a larger blue bin for recycling and large families can request a bigger grey bin for non-recyclable waste.

For further information and to request a larger blue or grey bin, visit our website and search 'recycling', email recycling@midlothian.gov.uk, or call **0131 561 5284**.

Bulky uplift service

A special collection service is available for items that are too big to fit into your grey bin. For further information and to arrange an uplift on line, visit our website and search '**special uplift service**' or call **0131 561 5284**.

Recycling centres

We have two household waste recycling centres to allow residents to recycle a wide range of materials and dispose of excess household waste.

Stobhill – Stobhill Road, Newtongrange, EH22 4NU

Penicuik – Bellman's Road, Penicuik, EH26 0AA

If you intend to bring household waste items to the recycling centre in a van or large vehicle you must book a van appointment.

You can do this by visiting our website and searching for '**recycling centres**' or calling **0131 561 5284**.

Other options for disposal

If your items are in good condition, then you may wish to consider donating them to charity or online swap shops such as freegle or freecycle. Alternatively, you can donate your unwanted items to a re-use organisation. To donate your unwanted items, or for advice and more information call the National re-use phone line on **0800 0665 820**. The phonenumber is a **FREE** service to make it easier to donate quality, unwanted goods like furniture, white goods, working electrical goods and other bulkier items.

Food waste

We are introducing kerbside collections of food waste. You will be provided with a 5L kitchen caddy, a 23L kerbside caddy and a supply of caddy liners. You will be able to recycle all types of uncooked and cooked food waste as part of this service, as well as uneaten cooked food and out-of-date food from your fridge or cupboards.

For further information visit our website and search '**food waste**' or call **0131 561 5284**.

Assisted pull out

If you are elderly or disabled and physically unable to move your wheelie bin to your presentation point then an assisted collection can be organised. This is only offered when there is no one else living at your address who is physically capable of doing so.

For further information visit our website and search '**assisted pull out**' or call **0131 561 5284**.

You and your neighbours

Being a good neighbour means understanding and respecting the different lifestyles of others. Everyone has the right to enjoy life in their own way, provided they do not upset other people living near them. By signing your Tenancy Agreement you have agreed to certain conditions. These conditions are intended to allow you and your neighbours to enjoy living in your homes in peace.

Here are some tips for being a good neighbour:

- Speak with your neighbours in passing.
- Keep noise levels to a minimum including dogs, music and television.
- Be considerate when using certain appliances such as vacuum cleaners and washing machines – make sure you use them at an acceptable time of the day.
- Let your neighbours know if you will be undertaking DIY and try and do it during the day.
- Keep pets under control and clean up after your dog.
- Ensure visitors to your home act in an appropriate manner both in and around your home.
- Show tolerance and respect for other people's lifestyle. There is not a one-way fits all model as to how people and households should live.

Neighbourhood disputes

Mediation

The Midlothian Community Mediation service offers a free and independent service to help:

- Resolve neighbourhood disputes – whether you are an owner-occupier, Council tenant, private or housing association tenant, our service can provide you with an alternative way to resolve disputes.
- Parent(s) and young people to improve communication, understanding and resolve conflict.

For further information on the Midlothian Mediation Service, email **mediation@midlothian.gov.uk** or call **0131 271 3617**.

You can also write to:

Midlothian Community Mediation

Midlothian Council

PO BOX 28974

Dalkeith

EH22 1WX

Antisocial behaviour

Antisocial behaviour is any behaviour that causes, or is likely to cause, alarm or distress to others. Midlothian Council work in partnership with the Police and other agencies, and are fully committed to tackling antisocial behaviour as we believe that everyone has the right to the peaceful enjoyment of their home.

In addition to the clauses in your Tenancy Agreement, the Antisocial Behaviour (Scotland) Act 2004 provides a range of enforcement methods for local authorities to manage their areas, ranging from; Warnings to Notices as well as the power to apply to the court for an Antisocial Behaviour Order (ASBO).

The phrase ‘Antisocial Behaviour’ covers a wide range of issues, such as:

- loud music/noise/parties.
- threatening or abusive behaviour.
- vandalism/graffiti.
- drug dealing and drug cultivation from a property.
- shouting, swearing and general rowdiness.

If you or someone in your household receives an ASBO, your Scottish Secure Tenancy may be reduced to a less secure form of tenancy, a short Scottish Secure Tenancy (SSST), which gives the local authority more powers to have antisocial tenants evicted from their property upon breaches of the ASBO, which is also a criminal offence.

Be aware that allowing antisocial behaviour can affect your tenancy.

How do I report antisocial behaviour?

To report antisocial behaviour and for further information please contact the Community Safety Team by calling **0131 271 6677**, emailing **asb@midlothian.gov.uk**, or alternatively you can report antisocial behaviour through our online form by visiting our website and searching '**report antisocial behaviour**'.

Feeling safe in your home and community

Door step crime

Some criminals will impersonate other people in order to enter your home. This could be someone pretending to be on official business from a utility company. If in doubt, keep them out.

If you feel threatened, unsafe or suspicious of a caller call the Police immediately on **999**.

If you would like more advice on doorstep crime, contact our Trading Standards team on **0131 271 3549**. Alternatively, you can call the Police non-emergency number, **101**.

2

Nominated neighbour

Midlothian has a Nominated Neighbour Scheme which we hope will reduce doorstep crime against older and vulnerable members of our community, helping them to feel safe in their home. A nominated neighbour means that you will act as a deterrent to bogus callers, who could be anyone who attempts to enter your neighbour's home by tricking or confusing them.

For further information contact the Community Safety Development Officer on **0131 271 3335** or visit your local Police station.

MIDSAFE – Midlothian Community Safety – resident's consultation and engagement group

The aim of this group is to work in partnership with the Community Safety Partnership and other local organisations that contribute towards making Midlothian a safe place to live, grow up in, work and visit.

The group works to make sure:

- fewer people are victims of crime, abuse or harm
- people feel safe in their neighbourhoods and homes
- our communities take a positive role in shaping their future.

MIDSAFE members join the group on a voluntary basis.

For further information on MIDSAFE, visit our website and search '**midsafe**' or contact the Community Safety Development Officer on **0131 271 3335**.

Helping you stay in your home

At some stage in your life, you may find that your Council home is no longer suitable for you. This may be because you find the layout of the house difficult if you are ill, elderly or disabled.

You can:

- apply to move house which is more suited to your households needs. For further information, contact the Community Health Specialist by emailing housing.enquiries@midlothian.gov.uk or calling **0131 271 3248**.
- have your home adapted to meet your needs. To discuss your circumstances please contact adult & social care services by emailing **swccenquiries@midlothian.gov.uk** or calling **0131 271 3900**.

Every effort will be made to help you stay in your home. We offer the following services, which may help.

Midcare alarm

This service enables you to continue to live independently in your own home for as long as possible, allowing you to feel safe, secure and supported. It gives you a direct link to help and assistance 24 hours a day, seven days a week. There is small cost involved for this service.

Home care service

At some point you may need help around the house with daily living tasks such as help with meal preparation through to personal care. We can work with you to assess your needs and whether they can be met by a care at home service.

For more information on the above services contact Adult & Social Care Services by emailing **swccenquiries@midlothian.gov.uk** or calling **0131 271 3900**.

2

Tenancy support

Can help if you require help with tasks such as:

- setting-up home.
- managing your money better.
- dealing with any debts or rent arrears.
- filling in forms to apply for benefits or jobs.
- accessing other local services.
- handling any difficult situations.

If you feel you would benefit from tenancy support, contact your Housing Officer and they can make a referral on your behalf.

Alternatively email **housing.enquiries@midlothian.gov.uk** or call **0131 270 7500**.

Helpful advice

Energy efficiency

There are a number of things you can do to save energy and lower your utility bills:

- If you turn your central-heating thermostat down by 1 degree you could cut your heating bills by up to 10%.
- Close your curtains at night to prevent heat escaping through windows.
- Always turn off the lights when you leave a room, and adjust your curtains or blinds to let in as much light as possible during the day.
- Do not leave appliances like the television on standby and do not leave appliances like mobile phones on charge unnecessarily.
- Do not leave the fridge door open for longer than necessary, as cold air will escape.
- Allow hot food to cool down first before putting it in the fridge.

For further information on energy efficiency, visit **www.energysavingstrust.org.uk** or call Home energy Scotland on **0800 512 012**.

Welfare and Benefits advice

The Welfare Rights Service in Midlothian offer assistance to the general public regarding problems with the complexity of the benefit system. They provide residents with advice advocacy and oral representation at all Social Security Tribunals. They represent at 1st Tier and 2nd Tier Tribunals and ensure Midlothian residents receive free, impartial advice.

For further information and advice, call the welfare rights service on **0131 271 3781** or **0131 270 8922**. You can also visit our website and search for 'welfare rights'.

Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)

The Citizens Advice Bureau provides free, independent, confidential and impartial advice on welfare benefits, money and debt.

For further information contact CAB, by calling **01968 675 259** (Penicuik), **0131 660 1636** (Dalkeith) or by visiting their website **www.cas.org.uk**.

Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF)

If you find yourself in a crisis caused by a disaster such as fire or flood, or an emergency because you have lost all your money or are having to visit a sick child in hospital, you may be able to get a Crisis Grant or Community Care Grant if you are getting one of these benefits:

- Income Support
- Income based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income related Employment and Support Allowance
- Any type of Pension Credit

2

How do I apply?

The simplest and quickest way to make your application is by calling **0131 270 5600**.

There is a phone in Buccleuch House which can be used free of charge solely for applications for SWF.

Midlothian Area Resource Coordination for Hardship (MARCH)

This project aims to coordinate and improve the resources available for people experiencing hardship in Midlothian to ensure:

1. People have improved access to welfare advice through increased local and targeted provision.
2. People seeking welfare advice have more effective support.
3. People experiencing hardship are better able to manage their finances, minimise their fuel costs, and avoid food waste.
4. People experiencing hardship receive support more quickly and effectively due to improved coordination and awareness of sources of hardship support.

For further information, contact the hardship coordinator by emailing **hardship.midlothian@gmail.com** or calling **0131 271 3951**.

Garden maintenance scheme

We offer a garden maintenance scheme which is a grass and hedge-cutting service. There is a fee for this service.

For further information on the garden maintenance scheme visit our website and search 'garden maintenance scheme', call into Buccleuch House, Dalkeith or call **0131 561 5284**.

Getting involved (tenant participation)

Tenant participation is a way for tenants and Midlothian Council to share information, ideas and power to improve housing services. It gives tenants a say on how housing and other related services are run.

Effective tenant participation benefits both our tenants and us, the landlord. It gives our tenants the opportunity to influence decisions about the housing service they receive and gives us, the Council, better links to the community and more satisfied tenants.

There is a legal requirement for us, as your landlord, to actively develop and support tenant participation. You can view and download our 'Tenant Participation Strategy' from our website and search 'tenant participation and customer engagement strategy'.

Midlothian Council tenants can work with us to influence how we make decisions about your housing services. There are a variety of ways for you to become involved:

- **Set up a tenant group.** Many tenants make their views known through a tenants group and these groups can register with the Council as a 'Registered Tenants Organisation' (RTO). Registering as a RTO allows the group to apply for funding, which can be used for administration costs and training.
- **Join an existing group.** We have an existing group called 'the Tenants and Prospective Tenants Action Group' (TAPTAG), who represent all Midlothian tenants and waiting list applicants. There are also more localised tenants groups in Bonnyrigg, Dalkeith and Penicuik.
- **Come along to the annual 'Midlothian Tenants Day'.** Each year we hold a fun, family event with children's entertainment, good food, a crèche, prize bingo and housing related discussions.
- **Register with the 'Register of Interested Tenants'** and you will be sent information by email or by post with housing related information and invites to housing events.

2

- **Fill in and return the tenant satisfaction surveys.** The Council carries out a tenant satisfaction survey every two years to ask tenants for their views on housing services.
- **Attend an estate walkabout.** The walkabouts give tenants the opportunity to raise any concerns about problems that exist on their estate, particularly with regards to the physical environment. They are held on a monthly basis in different areas of the county.
- **Mystery shopping.** Mystery shoppers use a housing service as if they are a normal customer and then report on their experiences. We use this information to measure our quality of service.

For further information on tenant participation and to find out how you can get involved contact the tenant participation officer by emailing: **tenantparticipation@midlothian.gov.uk** or calling **0131 271 3611**.

2

The Annual Return of the Social Housing Charter

By law, the Council must report on how well we are doing in comparison to other similar sized local authorities in Scotland. This yearly report is called the 'Annual Return of the Social Housing Charter' (ARC). We rely on evidence from the tenant satisfaction survey for our return, which is why it is vital that you complete the survey and return it back to us.

Our most recent report can be viewed online at **www.midlothian.gov.uk** search '**ARC**'.

If you wish to see the full reports go to **www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk**.

Moving house

You can apply to move house if your housing requirements change, for example, your family has grown and you need more bedrooms.

For further information contact your Housing Officer, or alternatively email **housing.enquiries@midlothian.gov.uk** or call **0131 270 7500**.

Mutual exchange

A mutual exchange is when tenants agree to swap their houses. This must be agreed by both parties' landlords.

You can exchange your home with another Midlothian Council tenant, a housing association tenant or a tenant from another Council area.

Mutual exchange is co-ordinated through homeswapper. For further information and to register visit **www.homeswapper.co.uk**

Housing options guide

In partnership with, East Lothian, West Lothian, Falkirk, Scottish Borders and City of Edinburgh Council, we have created a standalone website to help home hunters explore their housing options.

The website has 2 functions:

1. A self assessment tool, which asks you to complete a brief set of questions about your current housing situation before generating a personalised housing action detailing housing options matched to your needs
2. A property search portal, allowing you to search for good quality private rented accommodation across the whole of East Central Scotland

For further information please visit the East Hub website **www.eastscotlandhousingoptions.co.uk**.

2

Incentive to move scheme/downsizing

We offer a grant to Midlothian Council tenants who move to a smaller property (2 bedrooms or more) owned by Midlothian Council or a registered RSL within Midlothian through normal letting or a mutual exchange.

This grant payment is designed to encourage Midlothian Council tenants living in under-occupied situations to downsize, freeing up much-needed family accommodation. This payment will be offset against any outstanding debt to the Council or outstanding work to the property prior to payment.

There are certain criteria and eligibility for this scheme.

For further information contact your Housing Officer or alternatively email: **housing.enquiries@midlothian.gov.uk**, call **0131 270 7500** or visit our website and search '**incentive to move scheme**'.



SECTION **3**

Ending your tenancy

Moving out

Abandonment

Death of tenant

Eviction

Complaints, compliments and comments

Moving out

If you wish to end your tenancy, you must give us 28 days' notice in writing or you can complete a termination of tenancy form online by visiting our website and searching for 'termination of tenancy'.

What happens next?

Your Housing Officer will arrange to come and visit the property to check that the property is in a good condition. We will let you know if the property/garden requires any work before you leave. If you are required to carry out any work and you fail to do so, we will do the repairs and charge you.

Abandonment

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

Death of tenant

If a tenant dies, the tenancy for the property ends. If there is no succession to the property, there is a two-week rent free-period from the Monday after death to allow belongings etc to be removed.

Eviction

Your tenancy will end through the eviction process if we obtain a court order to repossess your home.

Breaches of your Tenancy Agreement can result in eviction from your property.

Grounds for eviction include:

- rent arrears
- antisocial behaviour
- you or anyone in your household has been convicted of using the house or allowing it to be used for illegal or immoral purposes.

For further information on ending your tenancy contact your Housing Officer or alternatively email housing.enquiries@midlothian.gov.uk or call **0131 270 7500**.

Compliments, complaints and comments

We are committed to providing high-quality customer service. We value complaints and use information from them to help us improve our services. If something goes wrong or you are dissatisfied with our services, please tell us.

Positive feedback is also very important for us, so please compliment us on services you think we are getting right.

How do I make a compliment, complaint or comment?

You can fill in our online complaints form by visiting our website and searching for 'complaints and comments' or pop into any Council building and ask for a feedback form.

What happens next?

Our complaints procedure has two stages.

Stage 1 – frontline resolution

We aim to resolve complaints quickly and close to where we provided the service. This could mean an on-the-spot apology and explanation if something has clearly gone wrong and immediate action to resolve the problem.

We will give you our decision at Stage 1 in five working days or less, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

If we can't resolve your complaint at this stage, we will explain why and tell you what you can do next. We might suggest that you take your complaint to Stage 2. You may choose to do this immediately or sometime after you get our initial decision.

Stage 2 – investigation

Stage 2 deals with two types of complaint: those that have not been resolved at Stage 1 and those that are complex and require detailed investigation.

When using Stage 2 we will:

- acknowledge receipt of your complaint within three working days
- discuss your complaint with you to understand why you remain dissatisfied and what outcome you are looking for
- give you a full response to the complaint as soon as possible and within 20 working days.

If our investigation will take longer than 20 working days, we will tell you. We will agree revised time limits with you and keep you updated on progress.

Confidentiality

Your complaint will be kept confidential. Details will only be given to those people who need to know for the purpose of investigating your complaint.

What if I am still not satisfied with the outcome?

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. This will normally be the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). They do not usually accept complaints that have not been the subject of the Council's own complaints procedure first.

For further information contact the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman.

Call free on: **0800 377 7330**

Visit: **[www.spsa.org.uk /online-contact](http://www.spsa.org.uk/online-contact)**

Write to: **SPSO
Freepost EH641, Edinburgh EH3 0BR**

In person: **SPSO
4 Melville Street, Edinburgh EH3 7NS**