

Rented homes Handbook



...welcome to your new home

Contents

Introduction.....	1
Your tenancy.....	2
Your rent.....	5
Repairs and improvements to your home	7
Living in your home.....	10
Moving home.....	13
Moving out.....	15
Resident involvement	16
Our commitment.....	18
Who should I contact?	19

Introduction

welcome to your new home

About Estuary Housing Association

“We are committed to the provision of good-quality housing, care and support services to meet local needs and to contribute to the development of sustainable communities”.

We have over 3,400 properties throughout Essex, some boroughs of London and a handful of homes in Suffolk. We are always looking at ways to increase the number of homes we can offer.

What we do

We provide a range of housing for people;

- The majority of our homes are let to those in most housing need. This can be via a local authority nomination or an applicant from our own waiting list
- We offer a number of homes rented at current market rent, which anyone can apply for
- We offer home ownership schemes
- We sell a number of homes on a shared ownership basis and also for outright sale

- We have a limited number of homes for older people
- We manage two privately-owned retirement schemes
- We have specialist housing for adults including registered care homes and supported living

Who runs Estuary?

Our Board of Management is made up of 12 members including Estuary residents who all have a wide range of professional and personal experience. They shape the strategic direction of the Association and monitor our work through our Executive Team.

We have over 300 employees, two thirds of whom work within Supported Housing and Care.

We also have a dedicated team of people providing a range of services to our residents, such as income and tenancy management, cleaning and gardening of shared areas, advice and

support on anti-social behaviour, community development, repairs and working on projects to build new homes.

Methods of contacting us

See pages 19 and 20 for more details

- Visit our office
- Telephone us
- Write to us
- E-mail us
- Visit our website

Using the handbook

We have a range of information leaflets and service standards that give additional information. Please ask us for a copy where we refer to an information leaflet or service standard. If you are unsure of something please contact us in any way that you prefer.



Your tenancy

the small print – what you agree to

The tenancy agreement explained

Your tenancy agreement is important because it sets out the rights and responsibilities you have as an Estuary resident. It also sets out our responsibilities as landlord.

There are several different types of tenancy and your tenancy agreement will tell you which type you have. It is important you read your tenancy agreement and understand your rights and responsibilities as these differ from one form of tenancy to another. If you would like more information or do not understand something within your tenancy, please contact your Housing Officer.

Changing your tenancy conditions

If we are thinking about changing the terms of your tenancy agreement we will first consult with you.

Information on your tenancy rights is also provided by the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) in their 'Charter for Applicants & Residents'. You should be given a copy of this leaflet when you become an Estuary resident. If you need another copy, or a copy in another language, Braille, large print or an audio tape please ask us.

Your rights - Single Equity Scheme

All of our residents have the right to fair and equal treatment. Estuary has an Equality and Diversity Policy that will tell you more about our approach to providing a fair service. Please see Section 9.

Your right to occupy your home

You have the right to occupy your home without our interruption. You must, however, give us access to your home, with reasonable notice. Access will be needed to undertake repair work, gas servicing or to carry out general inspections.

Your tenancy can only be ended by you, a joint tenant or by an order made in Court. Estuary will apply for a possession order if you have broken or failed to meet the terms of the tenancy agreement or any of the grounds for possession set out in law.

The right to have your home repaired

Your tenancy agreement sets out Estuary's responsibilities in respect of repairing your home. You have the right to claim compensation from us if we do not complete on time certain repairs. Please refer to Section 4 in this handbook 'Repairs and Improvements to your home'.

The right to carry out home improvements

You have the right to undertake improvement work to your home once we have given you permission. Please refer to Section 4.

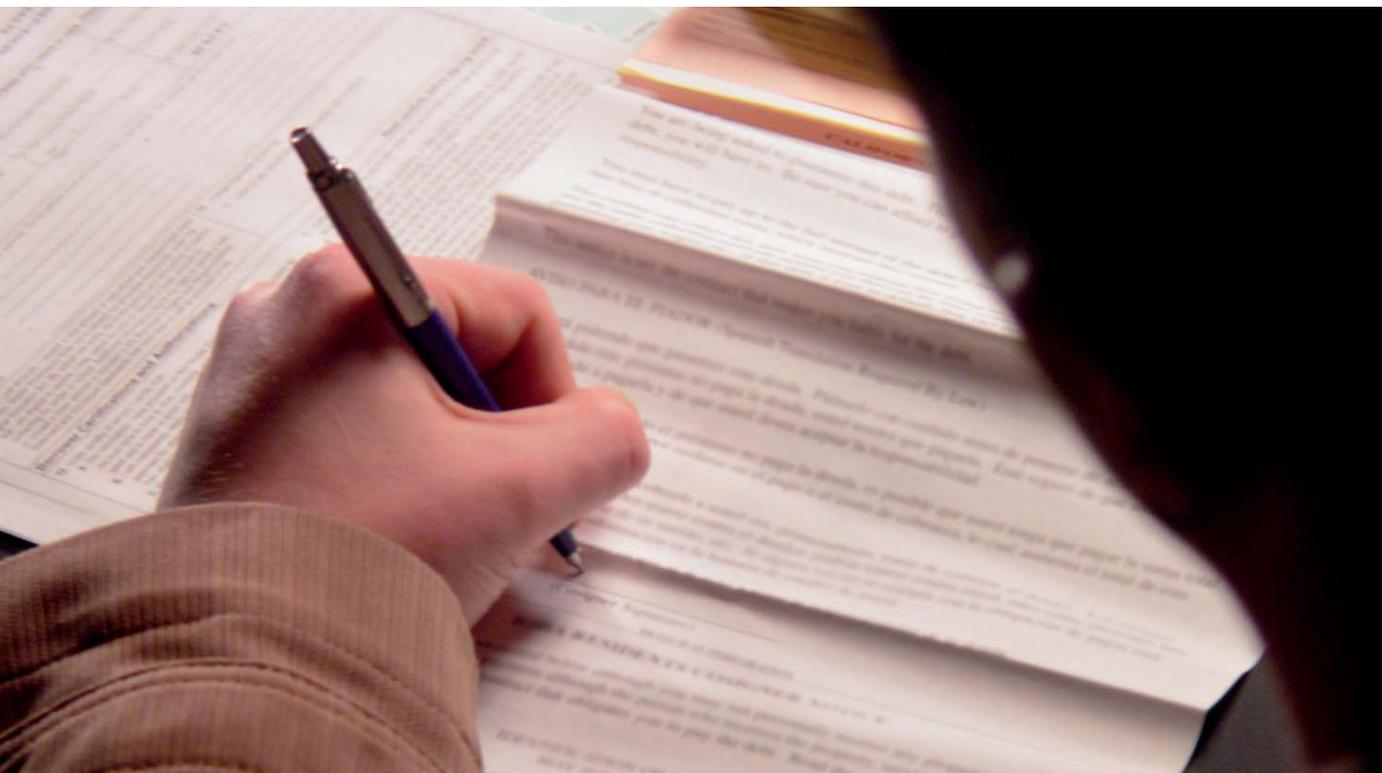
The right to pass on your tenancy (assignment)

You may be able to assign (pass on) your tenancy to another family member following a death of a tenant or due to a relationship break down. However this will depend on which type of tenancy you have. If your relationship with a joint tenant breaks down you should always seek independent legal advice as this is a very complicated issue. If you cannot agree who should remain a tenant then a Court will need to decide and make an order to assign the tenancy. Any changes in your circumstances must be reported immediately to Estuary so our records can be amended and appropriate advice given.

Assignment may also be used when residents do a mutual exchange of properties.

Your tenancy

the small print – what you agree to



Succession (passing on your tenancy)

If you have a joint tenancy with a partner and they die, the tenancy will continue for you. However when you die there are no further rights to pass the tenancy on. This means anyone left in the property will be asked to move out. There are legal differences between tenancies and individual circumstances will need to be discussed with your Housing Officer. However, in most cases a partner would have the right to take over the tenancy providing that they live with you and there has been no previous

succession. Succession to a tenancy does not always mean remaining in the same home. If you would substantially under occupy the property Estuary would offer alternative accommodation suitable for your needs.

Changes to named tenants

There are times when changes are needed, for example after a relationship breakdown or marriage. Please speak to your Housing Officer for further information.

The right to have a lodger or sublet part of your home

You have the right to take in a lodger as long as you have permission from us, do not overcrowd your home or allow them sole use of the property. Where you do take in a lodger you should provide us with their name, date of birth and tell us when they wish to move in and when they move out.

Please remember taking in a lodger may affect your benefit entitlement.

The right to acquire

You may be eligible to buy your home through the 'Right to Acquire' scheme.

If you would like more details on the Right to Acquire please contact us.

Your right to access personal information

You have the right, with some restrictions, to see the information held on file about you. Any data from a 3rd party such as a doctor or social worker will be removed before the file is copied or made available to view.

Any request should be made in writing to your Housing Officer. We will make the necessary arrangements, upon request, within 20 working days, or advise you if this is not possible within this time. However the information will only be provided once your identity has been confirmed and a payment of £10 to cover administration costs is received.

If you disagree with the accuracy of the information held, a written record of this dispute will be kept on your file.

Please request a copy of our Confidentiality, Data Protection and Disclosure of Information Policy for more details.

Your responsibilities

You must keep to the terms of the tenancy agreement. You must also ensure that anyone living with you or visiting you also keeps to the conditions.

Your tenancy agreement tells you what your responsibilities are.

- You must live in your home as your only or main home
- You must not operate a business from your home, unless you have received our express written permission
- You must pay all the charges due - rent, service charge etc
- You must not harass, be abusive or threatening to any neighbour, other resident, member of staff or contractor
- You must take responsibility for the behaviour of family members and visitors to your home. This includes behaviour in the wider community
- You must be 'neighbourly' - see Section 5 Living in your home
- You must obtain consent before keeping any type of animal, bird, reptile etc - see Section 5 Living in your home
- You must report faults and repairs and carry out repairs that are your responsibility and not damage your home
- You must allow us and our contractors access to your home to carry out inspections, repairs, especially gas servicing
- You must not allow your home to become overcrowded

Not keeping to your responsibilities

With minor breaches of tenancy we will tell you exactly what needs to be done and give you a reasonable time to sort out the problem.

However where breaches are more serious or you don't deal with the minor breaches we will take legal action against you. For example seek possession of your home or obtain an injunction, which may include a power of arrest.

Your rent

it's easiest to pay by direct debit

How to pay your rent

All rent is due in advance. For most residents, rent is due weekly on a Monday. Those residents who have a monthly tenancy, rent is due on the 1st of each month.

There are a number of ways you can pay your rent:

- Direct debit or standing order through your bank
- Through the internet at www.estuary.co.uk or www.allpayments.net
- By post, using a cheque or postal order payable to 'Estuary Housing Association Limited'
- At any post office and some nominated shops using your payment card
- By cheque at any of our offices

- By text
- By debit or credit card over the telephone

Please refer to our leaflet 'Paying your rent' for more information on ways to pay.

Setting your rent

Your rent is calculated according to regulation. If you want more information about this please contact us. If you disagree with the rent proposed you have the right to appeal to an independent Rent Assessment Committee.

Reviewing you rent

If you are an assured tenant, your rent will not be increased more than once a year and this will normally be at the beginning of April each year.

Secure tenants will receive an increase in rent every two years, once it has been registered with the local rent officer as a "Fair Rent". The fair rent is the maximum rent we can charge.

In all cases you will be given at least one months (for monthly tenancies) or four weeks (weekly tenancies) notice of any change to your rent.

Other charges

Your tenancy agreement will tell you what additional charges you have to pay with your rent.

Service charges

Most of our service charges are "fixed" and are based on the costs of providing services. For example, communal cleaning, gardening or where we employ a caretaker. There are often charges built into this amount



to pay for major repairs and replacement of equipment, like door entry systems.

The service charge is reviewed annually and based on what we believe will be the cost of these services for the following year.

We will tell you in writing at least one month (monthly tenancies) or four weeks (weekly tenancies) before we propose to increase your service charge.

Help with paying your rent

Some residents will be able to get help with paying their rent through a Housing related payment.

If you think you may be entitled to help you should apply directly to the local council. It is very important that you claim as

soon as you feel you may be entitled - claims will not be backdated.

You will be responsible for providing all the information that is required for assessing your claim. You are also responsible for telling them when your circumstances change or your rent changes.

Where you receive a housing related payment you still remain responsible for ensuring that the rent is paid.

Arrears

Regardless of how you pay your rent or other charges, you are responsible for ensuring that they are paid in full and on time.

If you fall behind with your payments you must speak to us immediately.

You should ensure that you

make every effort to pay your rent and other charges. If you have several debts you may need help from a debt counselling service or the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB). We can give you their contact details. Please speak to us about budgeting and debt advice.

We have a leaflet giving you more information. See 'Paying your rent'.

Remember, debt won't go away, don't ignore it.

If you do not pay charges that are due, and do not pay off arrears we will ask the County Court for possession of your home.

If you are evicted from your home you are unlikely to be offered another tenancy by any other Council or housing provider.



Repairs and improvements to your home

repairs reporting 0800 783 0496



Repairing responsibilities

Most repairing responsibilities are Estuary's, but there are some repairs that you are expected to undertake. The information below gives you some detail. Please refer to the booklet 'Repair handbook for residents' for more information.

We are responsible for:

- The upkeep of the structure and outside of the building including the roof, chimney, window frames, external flues, outside walls, gutters and downpipes
- Keeping repaired and in working order the installations for the supply of water, heating, gas and electricity and for sanitation within the home. (this does not include fixtures, fittings

and appliances for making use of the supply of water, gas or electricity i.e. cooker)

- The upkeep of communal areas that we own or manage

You are responsible for:

- Anything that belongs to you
- Lost keys and replacement of locks
- Broken windows
- Internal decoration, including minor cracks and holes in plaster
- Bathroom accessories (like mirrors, cabinets, toilet roll holders, towel rails, toilet seats, shower heads)
- Bleeding radiators
- Unblocking sinks and basins
- Sink, bath and basin plugs and chains

- Washing lines
- Maintaining your garden or balcony
- Providing and maintaining dustbins if not communal
- Taking precautions to prevent damage to the property by fire, frost, frozen pipes or blocked drains
- Any fittings, appliances or alterations supplied or carried out by you, including TV aerials, plumbing to washing machines and dishwashers and adapting doors to accommodate carpets or other flooring

We rely on you to report any faults promptly and to provide access to both Estuary staff and contractors to ensure that the repair can be inspected and undertaken within agreed timescales.

Reporting repairs

Report repairs by:
telephone Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm 0800 783 0496 or by using our website.
For emergencies outside office hours please ring 0800 783 0496 and your call will be diverted to our out of hours service.

When you report a repair you need to tell us the following information;

- Your name, address and contact telephone number

- As much information about the problem so that we can try to get the repair done on the first visit
- Convenient times for our staff or contractor to call to carry out the repair

Responding to a request for a repair

When you tell us about a repair we will give a response time for completing the work.

Repairs are prioritized into three categories:

- Emergency (to be completed within 24 hours)
- Urgent (to be completed within 5 working days)
- Routine (to be completed within 20 working days)

We inspect a proportion of repairs once they are completed to ensure work is done satisfactorily. You can help us identify work that is unfinished by returning your Feedback Form, which is on the reverse of the repair confirmation letter. Please refer to our leaflet 'Repairs' for service standards.

Planned work

Where maintenance can be planned in advance we arrange, where possible, to do groups of homes at the same time. It is more efficient to do it this way. Examples include replacement windows and doors and

external painting. Please refer to our leaflets 'Major Work' and 'Redecoration Works' that give you more information.

Your right to repair

You have the right to have repairs carried out by us and if we fail to respond to certain emergency or urgent repairs on time you may be entitled to compensation.

There are set criteria which apply to compensation - please refer to the leaflet 'Compensation and Redress'.

Charging for repairs

Sometimes we will charge you for a repair that we have undertaken. We will not normally carry out work that we intend to charge you for until we have advised you of the cost. However, this will not apply if the repair is an emergency. We will in most cases ask you to pay in advance.

Examples of where we charge for repairs:

- If we have had to clear your belongings or rubbish once you have moved out
- Where we have had to carry out a repair that was your responsibility and you have failed to do so, or there was a health and safety concern
- If you, someone living with you or your visitor has damaged a communal area

- Where you have moved home and left damage for us to repair

Gas safety regulations

Where there is gas central heating or gas appliances that are Estuary's responsibility to maintain, we must carry out an annual gas safety check.

We will arrange an appointment that is convenient for you. However if you fail to allow us access to carry out the servicing work, we will take legal action to gain access into your home.

If you have obtained our permission and installed your own gas appliance you must provide us with a copy of your annual inspection certificate. For more information please refer to our leaflet 'Gas servicing'.

Vandalism and criminal damage

Please report vandalism and criminal damage to the police immediately and then inform us as soon as you can. Don't assume someone else has reported the problem. If the incident occurs outside of Office hours please leave a message for us on our dedicated Anti-Social Behaviour answerphone 0800 731 6976 and an Officer will contact you the next working day.

Repairs and improvements to your home

repairs reporting 0800 783 0496

Home improvements

You have the right to carry out improvements and alterations to your home once we have given you written permission.

You will not need permission to decorate or carry out very minor work. However, you should seek permission for anything else.

In some cases you will also need to obtain planning permission or building regulation approval. Please contact us if you are unsure.

When you wish to carry out a home improvement, please contact your Housing Officer. You will then be forwarded an Improvement Application Form, which should be completed and returned to your Housing Officer along with any supporting documentation you may wish to provide. We will then begin the process of reviewing your application and will come back to you, in writing, with approval or rejection of your application, along with reasons and/or conditions.

Examples of common alterations/improvements for which permission is needed:

- Removing or fitting built in cupboards or doors
- Replacement of kitchen units, bathrooms and windows
- Fitting different light switches or fittings
- Adding or moving electrical points
- Building patios or decking
- Installation of a conservatory
- Knocking down walls
- Additional fencing

You will also need to get permission for:

- Erecting a garden shed, summer house or aviary
- Installing a satellite dish
- Building a fish pond or swimming pool
- Planting a conifer hedge
- Installing any security or personal surveillance equipment (CCTV or audio). We will only give permission for equipment that fully complies with the data protection act, human rights act and any other relevant legislation

In some circumstances you may be entitled to compensation at the end of your tenancy where you have undertaken improvement work. Please refer to our leaflet 'Home Improvements Compensation'.

Code of conduct for contractors

We require contractors to ensure that work is carried out in your home with the minimum disruption.

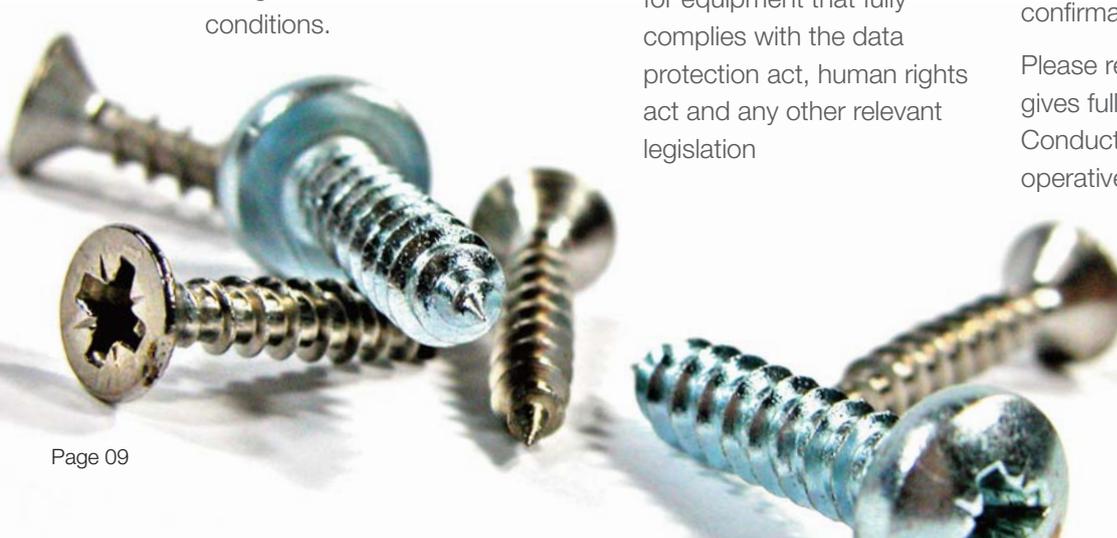
There are a minimum set of standards that Estuary require for the conduct of any operative.

These include:

- Showing and wearing visible identification
- Being polite and courteous
- Being clean and tidy and leaving the property as they find it

We measure the performance of contractors in this area by the information you supply on the Feedback Forms on the back of your repair confirmation.

Please refer to our leaflet which gives full details on the Code Of Conduct for maintenance operatives.



Living in your home



Being neighbourly

You must make sure that you, your family, anyone else living with you, or your visitors do not cause a nuisance or annoyance to your neighbours.

- Use rubbish areas provided, do not dump furniture or appliances
- Don't park your car or other vehicle inconsiderately
- Don't work on or repair vehicles in our communal car parks and forecourts
- Don't play music loudly or make excessive noise
- Don't use your home for illegal or immoral purposes
- Make sure pets don't cause a nuisance to others
- Respect your neighbours

Anti-social behaviour and harassment

We have a published approach to tackling anti-social behaviour and harassment. Copies of our policies and leaflets are available on request. Estuary believes that everyone has the right to quiet enjoyment of their home. You can live the way you want on the understanding that it does not affect the quality of life for others.

We will work with residents, and other relevant community groups, the police, probation and local authorities, taking every practical and reasonable step to ensure that anti-social behaviour and harassment is effectively tackled.

Estuary recognises harassment as any incident or act of intimidation that is perceived to be prejudiced in motivation. This particularly refers to acts or incidents that are motivated by race, colour, nationality, ethnicity disability, sexual orientation, age or gender.

Estuary believes that everyone has the right to live without harassment. Abuse, harassment, intimidation to residents, contractors and staff will not be tolerated. Where this does occur then appropriate action will be taken including legal proceedings.

Remember to report all acts of harassment or anti-social behaviour to your Housing

Living in your home

Officer, Police and if appropriate Environmental Health Department. Out of office hours you can leave a message on our dedicated Anti-Social Behaviour answerphone 0800 731 6976.

We have a series of leaflets available that explain more. Please ask us for an Anti-Social Behaviour pack.

Extra responsibilities where you live in the flat

- You must co-operate with our on site staff and contractors so that they can do their work
- Don't store things in corridors or on balconies
- Use the bin stores and areas provided appropriately
- Don't throw things from landings balconies or windows

If you do dump furniture or household appliances, or anti-socially dispose of your rubbish you will be breaking the terms of your tenancy. Formal action will be taken that may result in the loss of your home.

Looking after your home

Your tenancy agreement gives you some responsibility for keeping your home in good condition. You are responsible for internal decorations, balconies, gardens, including hedges (except communal

gardens). You are responsible for keeping your home clean and tidy and doing minor repairs - see section 4.

Keeping 'pets'

You should ask permission to keep any pets. Estuary defines pets as any animal, bird, reptile, insect or fish. You will also need to request permission if you wish to erect any form of pet home, for instance a bird aviary or fish pond. Where permission is given to keep a pet you must ensure that it does not cause a nuisance or annoyance to your neighbours. This includes the fouling of amenity and grassed areas, and causing a nuisance or annoyance to other residents. If you do allow, or fail to stop your pet causing a nuisance you will be breaking the terms of your tenancy. You will be asked to rehome your pet and if you fail to do this we will obtain an Injunction to allow Estuary to remove the pet.

Insurance

Estuary has buildings insurance for your home but we do not insure the contents, your belongings or glass to windows and doors. We strongly advise that you take out household contents insurance that includes these. Your policy should cover you and your belongings in the case of fire, theft or other accidents and any damage caused by others.

Locks and keys

You will be given a full set of keys when you move into your new home. If you need more keys you should get these cut yourself. Where we have door entry systems you may be able to buy additional key fobs. If you lose keys you will be responsible for their replacement and for any locks.

Gas safety inspection

We are required by law to annually inspect our gas installations. You must by the terms of your tenancy agreement allow us access. Please see section 4 for more information, or refer to our leaflet 'Gas servicing'.

Fire safety precautions

Smoke detectors - please ensure that you regularly check all smoke detectors fitted in your home and replace batteries when required.

Reduce fire risk by not storing flammable substances in your home, garage or other outbuilding. Make sure children cannot reach matches, never leave candles burning unattended and use a fire guard. Please see our 'Fire safety' leaflet for more information.



Frozen or burst pipes

You are responsible for taking precautions to prevent frozen and burst pipes.

Precautions should include:

- Checking that pipes that could freeze are insulated
- Knowing where the stopcock is
- Keeping your home warm and the heating on low when you are away during winter

Energy efficiency

- Reduce your heating bills by turning your thermostat down 1 degree

- Set your heating to go off 30 minutes before you leave the house, and come on again 30 minutes before you expect to return
- Use energy efficient light bulbs which use less energy and last up to ten times longer than standard bulbs
- Turn off household appliances when not in use, as they continue to use energy when they are left on standby
- Use 'off peak' electricity where you can
- Use a saucepan which is the same size as the cooker ring to prevent heat loss
- When using a kettle, only boil as much water as you need
- If you have a standard shower it will use around 40% of the water required for a bath

Pest control

Any pests i.e. fleas, cockroaches, wasps etc within your home will normally be your responsibility to deal with. Estuary will only deal with this on very specific occasions. Please speak with your Housing Officer.

Moving home

how we can help you

Our homes are allocated to those with the greatest housing need with applicants from both Local Authority and Estuary waiting lists. The length of time it will take to move will depend on the area you wish to move to, the amount of homes we have in that area and the size of property you require.

You should initially speak to your Housing Officer if you need or want to move home. They will be able to give you advice on your options.

Transfers

A transfer is when you move home but remain an Estuary resident. If you want to move to any area where we don't own property you will need to apply to the local council or seek an exchange through dedicated websites. Residents on starter tenancies cannot apply for a transfer or exchange, please see our leaflet 'Starter tenancies explained' for more information.

You should remember that demand for our homes is very high and in some areas we may have a limited supply. You may want to refer to our 'Selection and Allocation' policy and 'Letting our homes' leaflet.

We will not normally offer someone a transfer if they have broken the terms of the tenancy

agreement for example non payment of rent or caused anti-social behaviour.

We will carry out an inspection of your home prior to an offer of a transfer. If your home has not been kept in a satisfactory condition the offer will be withdrawn.

Mutual exchanges

You can exchange your home with another Estuary resident, or a Council or other Housing Association resident subject to certain conditions. You should refer to our information leaflet, 'Mutual Exchanges', as this gives you more information.

You cannot exchange if:

- You hold a starter tenancy or are within the introductory period of a fixed term tenancy
- You have broken the terms of your tenancy, for example owe us rent or another charge and we have started legal action to recover this
- Your home has been specially adapted and the adaptations are not suitable for the proposed new household
- The proposed new household would statutorily overcrowd or under occupy your home



If we refuse permission we will tell you why and you have a right to appeal this decision.

When you exchange you will have to accept this property in its current condition.

Sometimes we will attach conditions to the exchange. This may include clearance of arrears which have not resulted in legal action or where we ask you to carry out repairs that are your responsibility. You must satisfy the conditions before exchanging.



Please remember when you are swapping homes, you must get written permission from all the landlords before moving. If you fail to do this your move will be illegal and possession proceedings will be commenced.

Homeswapper

Estuary residents can register for free with the UK wide scheme, HOMESWAPPER. Please look at their website www.homeswapper.co.uk.

This is a mutual exchange service where you can obtain details of possible swaps and contact them directly. Once you have found an exchange you should contact your Housing Officer who will send you the appropriate form to start the process formally.

There are many mutual exchange sites available on the internet however as Estuary subscribes to HOMESWAPPER this service is free to our residents. Other similar sites

may charge a fee if you wish to register and you will be responsible for this payment. As with any internet site please take care when giving personal information.

Moving out

tell us and you could be entitled to £100



Ending your tenancy

When you decide that you want to move out of your home, for whatever reason, you must give us at least four weeks written notice. The date you give us to leave must be a Sunday for weekly tenancies or the end of the month for a monthly tenancy.

When you leave your home, you are responsible for the following:

- Clearing your home including the loft, any sheds, garages or out-buildings
- Removing and disposing of any floor coverings (unless we have agreed with you that they can stay)
- Make good any damage to decoration or holes in the wall where you have removed pictures or shelving

- Cleaning your home, all surfaces, fixtures and fittings, particularly bathroom and kitchen
- Ensuring your rent account is clear
- All keys are returned to Estuary on time, if you do not do this further rent will be charged

Please see our leaflet 'Ending Your Tenancy' for more information or speak to your Housing Officer.

If you don't meet these responsibilities and we have to clear, clean or repair something that you should have done we will recharge the cost to you.

Where you move out leaving your home completely clear of all belongings, flooring, rubbish, clean throughout and not damaged in any way you could be entitled to a £100 clean and clear allowance. It is also subject to you having no outstanding debts with the Association and giving us a forwarding address.

For more information please refer to our 'Clean and clear' leaflet.

Before you leave make sure that you have told the utility providers (gas, electricity and water) your final meter readings and your forwarding address.

You will need to redirect your mail as we are unable to post letters on to you.

Death

We understand that this is a sad time and that bereavement can be difficult. We would ask you to make sure you contact us so that we can talk through what needs to happen to end the tenancy.

If we ask you to move

Sometimes we may need to ask you to move to carry out major work which cannot be done with you living in your home. If this happens we will:

- Help to find somewhere suitable for a temporary move
- Help you with costs that might be incurred as a result of the move, for example telephone connection and mail redirection
- Pay statutory home loss payments where required, when we ask you to move permanently

Please refer to the information leaflet 'Major Works'.

Resident involvement at the heart of our business

What we mean by resident involvement

Involvement means Estuary working to:

- Know what its residents and communities want
- Give residents and the community the opportunity and support to be involved if and how they want to
- Give residents and the community the opportunity to have more influence over the decisions that we make
- Consult residents and communities about major changes we propose to our services
- Provide residents with information about our services in appropriate formats

How it works

We involve residents in governing the Association and influencing and reviewing our services and the information that we publish about our services.

At a local level

● **Come along to an estate or area meeting**

We arrange meetings for an estate or area. All residents of an area are invited to attend and Estuary staff will be available to discuss any issues. These meetings help

us to find out about any problems you might be facing, for example, rubbish or anti-social behaviour

● **Become an estate/block/street representative (EBS Rep)**

EBS Reps volunteer to represent all residents on an estate, in a block or in a street. They are invited to join the Estate Services Team on their site inspections to monitor gardening and cleaning contractors. They also help to keep us informed of any management or maintenance issues that affect their community

● **Join a residents' association or community group**

These are groups of interested residents from an

estate or area who represent all residents in their community. Residents' associations work with us on such issues as the management and maintenance of their area, community development work and social activities for the residents. Community groups may be made up of Estuary residents, other housing association residents, owner/occupiers and other organisations

● **Community activities**

We arrange various activities, including fun and activity days. These give you the opportunity to meet your neighbours, Estuary staff, and other community workers

Resident involvement at the heart of our business



At an Estuary wide level

- **The Federation of Estuary Residents (FER)**

This is an independent group of residents from all areas. All residents are automatically members of the Federation. The FER represent residents' views on policy and practice within Estuary and are consulted regularly on all the services we offer to residents

- **Become a mystery shopper**

We have mystery shoppers to test our services twice a year. To do this, we may arrange a meeting to discuss and agree various scenarios to be tested, or we may send out a postal survey. Whichever means we use, full training and information is

provided and any expenses incurred will be reimbursed. There is also a reward scheme in place for those who take part

- **Become a service advisor**

We have a panel of service advisors who we consult when we need your views on any changes we are proposing in our policies, procedures, or delivery of services. We usually make contact by post, telephone or email. This gives you the opportunity to give your opinion without having to leave your home

- **Join a focus group**

We offer you the opportunity to join focus groups. These are set up as and when necessary to allow you the opportunity to give your views on a particular service

- **Join a partnering panel**

Estuary has various partnership panels, where residents are invited to join staff in ongoing work. For instance, Contractor Partnering, focuses on residents attending meetings with Estuary in the recruitment and tendering process for the selection of our various contractors

- **Join our void inspections panel**

We have a panel of residents who volunteer to join our surveyors when visiting a local property. This gives the resident the opportunity to view a property prior to letting, to make sure it is at a satisfactory standard

At a management level

- **Become a Board Member**

Residents can apply to become members of our Board of Management. The Board sets strategies, policies and direction and monitors our work. All residents can apply to join the board of management. Board members are selected on the basis of their life experience and skills

Estuary Residents Scrutiny Committee (ERCS)

This is an independent group of residents who scrutinise how Estuary work. They report to the Community and Neighbourhood Committee of the Board making recommendations for service improvements.

Our commitment being fair to you



Equality and diversity

At Estuary Housing Association we value inclusiveness and we are committed to embedding equality and diversity at the heart of our work. We aim to be an inclusive organisation, where individual differences are respected. Where staff, people who use our services, as well as their families and carers, are treated with dignity and on the basis of their merits, abilities and needs. Everyone has a fair opportunity to fulfill their potential without suffering discrimination or disadvantage.

Interpretation and translation

We will consider providing transcriptions into Braille, large print and audio tape/CD/DVD for customers with disabilities. Where necessary we may translate certain written information into appropriate languages and use interpreters.

Customer feedback

Estuary wants to ensure that our services meet our published standards and the needs of our customers and partners. Your feedback is always important to us.

Anyone who receives or requests a service from us and the people acting on their behalf can provide feedback. This may take the form of compliments, comments, suggestions and complaints. Please refer to our leaflet 'Your feedback' for more information.

If you go through our complaints process and remain unhappy you have the right to appeal our decision. Please contact us for further details.

Complaints when received are monitored and adjudicated through Estuary Housing Association procedures.

Who should I contact?



Below are the details of the staff you will probably need to contact most frequently. You will find contact details including telephone numbers, email addresses, and a brief guide to their role. We hope this will help you to know who best to ask for when you have an enquiry. For any one else not listed below please contact our Registered Office or refer to our website www.estuary.co.uk (see back page for details).

Housing Officers have responsibility for their own 'patch' of properties. You will be kept informed who your Housing Officer is along with their contact details. They will assist you with any query regarding your tenancy, letting empty homes, home visits to discuss rent arrears, concerns or support with Anti-Social Behaviour issues and resident involvement.

Leasehold Housing Officer has responsibility for enquiries specifically from shared owners, leasehold and market rent residents.

If you do not know the direct contact details for your Housing Officer or Leasehold Housing Officer please email housingofficers@estuary.co.uk

Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator contributes to Estuary's compliance with good practice and legislation. They also monitor and co-ordinate the Housing Officers case work, giving advice and support to staff and residents. Email asb.enquiry@estuary.co.uk

Revenue Team have responsibility for dealing with concerns or queries regarding your rent or service charge for a current or former tenancy or lease. They will give advice and support to residents who have financial difficulties, make repayment arrangements and liaise with Housing Benefit departments if authorised to do so. However they will also commence legal action where residents fail to make the required payments. Please email revenue.team@estuary.co.uk

Estate Services Team have responsibility for dealing with concerns or queries relating to gardening, cleaning or caretaking services for communal areas you need to speak with this team. They also carry out a programme of planned inspections of all the communal areas in order to monitor and improve our estate services. Residents are invited to attend estate inspections and put forward ideas on the future provision of these services. Please email estate.services@estuary.co.uk

Customer Advice Team provides customer focussed services at the Centre Place Offices, Southend. This includes providing a reception service at the Family Centre, answering initial telephone enquiries, and processing applications for our housing waiting list for rented accommodation. Please email customeradviceteam@estuary.co.uk

Community Development Team co-ordinate resident involvement, support and develop the Federation of Estuary Residents, residents associations, training and all involvement and community opportunities. The team work with residents to identify and develop projects to improve neighbourhoods and empower residents. They are also responsible for the services delivered within the Centre Place Family Centre, and the Student Social Work Unit. See section 8 for more details. Please email us at involvement@estuary.co.uk

...other contact details

Customer Advisors (Repairs) are responsible for dealing with repair enquiries, between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday. If you believe you may need a surveyor to visit your home please contact this team.

Planned Maintenance are responsible for carrying major refurbishment work to a number of properties for example replacement windows, external painting, redecoration to communal areas. Contact this team if you have enquiries for this type of work.

Our Housing and Community Development Teams can be contacted by:

- Telephone using the residents telephone line **0845 634 0635**
- By post at our Housing Office at Centre Place, 15 Prospect Close, Southend-on-Sea SS12JD
- Email using the addresses given under each section on pages 19 and 20

Our Repairs Team can be contacted by:

- Telephoning **0800 783 0496** (between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday)
- Post at our Registered Office, Maitland House
- Email **repairs@estuary.co.uk**
- For emergencies only out of working hours please call **0800 783 0496**

Sales and Marketing Manager is responsible for co-ordinating the sales, staircasing and reverse staircasing for our shared owner, private sales and resales. Please email sales@estuary.co.uk or telephone Maitland House on 01702 462246.

Useful contacts

Citizens Advice Bureau

www.citizenadvice.org.uk

Housing Ombudsman Service

0300 111 3000

www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Credit Action

www.creditaction.org.uk

0800 138 1111

National Debt Line

0808 808 4000

www.nationaldebtline.co.uk

Essex Police

0300 333 4444

www.essex.police.uk

Metropolitan Police

0300 123 1212

www.met.police.uk

HOMESWAPPER

www.homeswapper.co.uk

Visit our website

www.estuary.co.uk

This will enable you to:

- Apply for jobs at Estuary
- Apply for housing
- See our latest news
- View available shared ownership properties
- Pay your rent online
- Request repairs online
- Find information about us
- Find details of local services
- Link to other useful sites
- Download or order forms and publications

Get in touch

If you would like this document in another language, large print, Braille or audio or if you require the service of an interpreter, please contact us on 01702 462246.

Chinese

如果你想在你的這份文件的語言接觸 01702 462246

Italian

Se volete questo documento nella vostra lingua contatato 01702 462246

Vietnamese

Nếu bạn muốn tài liệu này liên hệ với ngôn ngữ của bạn 01702 462246

Lithuanian

Jei norite šio dokumento jūsu kalba susisiekti 01702 462246

Polish

Jeśli chcesz, aby ten dokument w języku kontakt 01702 462246

Portuguese

Se você gostar deste documento em seu idioma de contato 01702 462246

Swahili

Kama ungependa waraka huu katika lugha yako wasiliana 01702 462246

Turkish

Eğer dil başvurun 01702 462246 Bu belge istiyorsunuz

Registered Office:

Estuary Housing Association Ltd

8th and 9th Floor,
Maitland House,
Warrior Square,
Southend on Sea,
Essex SS1 2JY

Phone 01702 462246

www.estuary.co.uk



The Government Standard



business for neighbourhoods