

HELPING YOU MAKE A HOME

The main title is written in large, bold, purple letters with a black outline. The text is arranged in three lines: 'HELPING', 'YOU MAKE', and 'A HOME'. Four red stick figures are integrated into the design: one is climbing the letter 'P', another is climbing the letter 'G', a third is climbing the letter 'U', and a fourth is standing on the letter 'O' with its arms raised in a celebratory gesture.

A HANDBOOK FOR OUR TENANTS



WELCOME TO YOUR NEW HOME



We're here to support you to take control of your life, make decisions about what you want to achieve and to develop the confidence and skills to be able to move on to more independent living.

Our approach is to concentrate on your individual needs, choices and aspirations rather than on diagnostic categories or labels.

We're here to help you actively take part in decisions about your support and have as much control over this support as possible.

This booklet gives you the information you need to know as a tenant of one of our schemes.

If you've any questions about anything you read here, you should speak to your recovery worker.

ABOUT YOUR TENANCY

Before moving into your home, you'll sign a tenancy agreement. This sets out rights and responsibilities for you as the tenant and for the landlord.

Your rights:

- You have a right to privacy and respect for your lifestyle as long as it doesn't interfere with the rights of others
- You have the right to safe and well maintained housing and for repairs to be carried out in a timely fashion
- You have the right to be safe and free from harassment
- You have the right to be given information about your tenancy and rental charges
- You have the right to information about our policies.

If you're not happy with any aspect of your support or accommodation then speak to your recovery worker about how to make a complaint or pick up our feedback leaflet.

Your responsibilities:

- To pay your rent
- To be considerate to other residents living in the same property as you
- To keep noise and disturbance to a minimum
- To take responsibility for any visitors
- To report repairs and broken equipment
- To avoid fire risks
- To keep your home secure by locking windows and doors.

Your tenancy agreement is a legal document and you should keep it in a safe place.

MOVING IN

Moving into a new home can be an exciting time but it can also be stressful. We want your move to go as smoothly as possible and will support you to settle in.

If you're unsure about a certain topic speak to your recovery worker about the specific arrangements at your scheme.

SETTING UP YOUR BILLS

Where your rent includes water rates and other charges we'll pay such charges to the relevant authority. Otherwise, you're responsible for setting up your utilities and council tax payments. Your recovery worker can help you with this if you're not sure how to do this.

CONTENTS INSURANCE

We don't provide contents insurance for tenants so you should consider taking out your own policy to cover your personal possessions. Your recovery worker can help you with this if you're not sure how to do this.

DECORATING YOUR HOME

We keep all our properties to a high decorative standard. However, if you want to decorate your own home you can as long as you get permission from the landlord first.

KEEPING PETS

We recognise that pets can have a therapeutic benefit and help you with your recovery. However, we have to balance this against what's appropriate given the type of accommodation you're staying in. If you'd like to keep a pet discuss this with your recovery worker first.

SMOKING

If you're in shared accommodation you're only allowed to smoke in your own room or in a designated smoking shelter outside. Smoking is not permitted in common or shared areas as this is against the law. If you do smoke in common or shared areas we may have to take action to end your tenancy.

HAVING PEOPLE TO STAY

Your accommodation is for single occupancy only and under your tenancy you mustn't have anyone else staying with you permanently.

There will be different rules for having visitors and overnight guests depending on the type of accommodation you're in. What applies to you will be explained when you move in.

ABSENCE AND ABANDONMENT

You must inform your recovery worker in writing and in advance if you intend to be away from your home for more than 14 days.

You must not abandon your home and tenancy. If you fail to occupy your home as your only or principal home for a period of more than 14 days and we have reasonable cause to believe that your home has been abandoned, then we'll take steps to end the tenancy and take possession of the property.



GREEN LIVING

There's lots of ways to live in a more environmentally friendly way – and it can save you money on your bills too.

Here are just a few tips:

- Switch the lights off when you leave a room and use energy-saving bulbs
- Turn down the temperature on your heating by just one degree – this can reduce your heating bills by 10%
- Try to only use washing machines and dishwashers when they're full
- Switch your TV and DVD player off at night – keeping appliances on standby uses a lot of electricity
- Only boil as much water as you need – boiling a kettle uses a lot of power
- If there's a recycling scheme then use it.

YOUR RENT

WHAT YOUR RENT COVERS

We try to keep our rents and service charges as low as possible while still allowing us to maintain our properties and services to the highest standards possible.

HOW TO PAY

When you move in your recovery worker will discuss with you the best way for you to pay your rent. This can be weekly or monthly and should normally be done by standing order. You'll be given an up to date rent statement once a month. Your recovery worker can take you through this.

You may be entitled to housing benefit to help cover the costs of your rent. You can talk to your recovery worker about what you may be entitled to and how to apply. They can also help you to deal with the Housing Benefits Office and the Benefits Agency and help you get independent financial advice if you want it.

Rents for our housing can be made up of the following charges:

Core rent – covers the costs of maintenance, building insurance, some staff costs and any mortgage or lease we may have on the property.

Communal service charge – covers the costs of cleaning and maintaining any communal areas at the property.

Personal service charge – covers the costs of heating, lighting and a proportion of the water rates to your room as well as food and cleaning (if this is part of your tenancy agreement).

Care charges – cover the cost of providing physical and therapeutic care.

Your tenancy agreement will set out exactly which charges apply to you. Speak to your recovery worker if you need this explaining.

If we have to change the rent and service charges, we'll only do this once a year and you'll always get at least one month's notice before any changes are made.

WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU GET INTO DIFFICULTIES

It's really important to keep up with your payments and pay on time. If you don't pay your rent you'll be in breach of your tenancy agreement and could eventually lose your housing.

However, if you're experiencing financial difficulties or are struggling to make payments then you should let us know as soon as possible before the situation gets too serious.

Contact your recovery worker or other member of the team and explain the situation to them. They'll then work with you to agree a way for you to repay any debts and to manage your payments going forward.

If you don't let anybody know then we'll have to formally write to you and ask you to repay any outstanding rent. If you ignore this then we'll begin legal proceedings to recover what you owe us or to seek possession of the property.

Taking legal action is always a last resort and we'd much rather work with you to help you manage your finances better so it's always best to talk to your recovery worker rather than ignore any problems.

Our arrears policy gives more details about this process. Ask your recovery worker to see this.



MAINTAINING YOUR PROPERTY

We aim to keep all our properties to the highest standards possible but, as with any home, this can only be done with regular maintenance and timely repairs. As the tenant you're responsible for keeping your home to a reasonable standard. As the landlord, we're responsible for carrying out bigger maintenance and repair jobs.

REPORTING REPAIRS

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STEP 1: IDENTIFY THE PROBLEM

We'll need a good description of your problem to make sure we order the right repair for you. You'll also need to give us:

- Your full name and property address (and include any room numbers if applicable)
- A contact phone number
- The name and contact number for your recovery worker
- Suggestions for when would be a convenient time to carry out the repair.

STEP TWO: REPORT

Report your repair to our property services department (office hours: 9am - 5pm, Mon to Fri):
calling: **Freephone 0808 8000 140**
emailing: property@richmondfellowship.org.uk

OUT OF HOURS - To report a repair outside of office hours please contact your service as they'll have details for your local out of hours contractor.

When you report your repair we'll record the details on our systems, provide you with a job number and tell your recovery worker that we've logged your job. We'll then contact one of our contractors who'll get in touch with you to organise a time to complete the work.

STEP THREE: REPAIR

How quickly we carry out your repair depends on how serious the problem is:

- **Emergency** – this is something that could cause damage to someone's health or safety, or cause serious damage and destruction to property. We aim to respond within four hours.
- **Urgent** – this is something that needs urgent attention like a water leak or blocked toilet. We aim to respond within 24 hours.
- **Routine** – for all other repairs we aim to respond within five working days.

Once the contractor has made an appointment, you'll need to make sure they can access your home to carry out the repair work. If the date or time you've agreed is no longer convenient please call us or the contractor as soon as possible so we can re-arrange. All our contractors will carry ID with them so please check this before letting them in.

Once the repair has been done, we'll ask you to complete a customer satisfaction survey to check you're happy with how we dealt with it.

PLANNED MAINTENANCE

As well as responding to repair issues we also carry out a programme of planned improvements to ensure our properties are always of the highest standard such as redecorating and replacing out of date furniture and appliances.

We regularly inspect our properties to identify if any improvements are needed and will consult with you if any changes are required and when the work will be carried out. You must allow reasonable access for our staff and contractors to carry out inspections and maintenance work. We'll normally give at least 24 hours' notice when we need to access your home but we may need to have immediate access in an emergency.



ADAPTATIONS

We want people to live as comfortably as possible in our properties so if you need help using the bathroom or getting up steps then we may be able to install adaptations like grab rails or ramps to make your life easier. Speak to your recovery worker who'll be able to advise you how to make a request.

REPORT YOUR REPAIR DIRECTLY TO OUR PROPERTY SERVICES DEPARTMENT:

**FREEPHONE
0808 8000 140**

SAFETY CHECKS

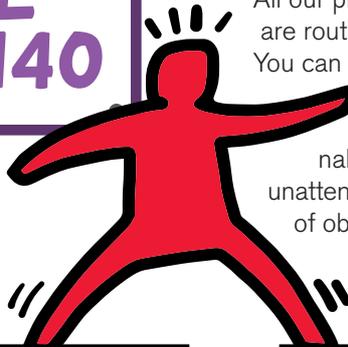
We all want to make sure you're safe in your home. There are checks we have to do as a landlord but there are also simple steps you can take to keep yourself safe too.

GAS

We've a legal duty to get all our gas appliances inspected and serviced every year. A copy of the most up-to-date gas safety certificate is kept at the property should you wish to check it.

FIRE

All our properties are fitted with smoke alarms and are routinely checked to make sure they're working. You can help reduce the risk of fire by unplugging electrical appliances before you go to bed or when you go out and not leaving naked flames such as candles or cigarettes unattended. You should also keep exits clear of obstruction.



SAFETY TIPS

If you detect a gas leak:

- turn off all gas appliances immediately
- open windows and doors to let air in and the gas fumes out
- Ring the National Grid emergency line on: **0800 111 999**
- Do NOT use any naked flames
- Do NOT smoke.

If there is a fire you should:

- Leave the property immediately. If you live in flats you should use the stairs and not the lift
- Close doors behind you as you leave to contain the fire and smoke
- Dial **999** to alert the fire service
- Stay outside and don't go back inside the building.

Putting people in control of their own recovery is central to our philosophy. And putting the people who use our services at the heart of our organisation is fundamental to how we operate.

There's lots of ways you can get involved with Richmond Fellowship to help us improve the services we provide and to make the right strategic decisions about how we take our organisation forward:

- Be on interview panels to recruit members of staff
- Take part in one of our many quality reviews to improve our services
- Attend our national Working Together Forum and help shape the future direction of our organisation
- Join in with your local service meetings and have a say in how your scheme is run.

We'll provide you with training so that your valuable perspective is taken into account.

Speak to your recovery worker to find out more about how to get involved.



BE PART OF THE COMMUNITY

We want you to feel safe and comfortable in your home and to become a valued part of your community. We'll support you to achieve this.

At the same time, though, we expect all our tenants and their visitors to consider their neighbours and not cause a nuisance. Our homes must not be used for any criminal, immoral or illegal purposes, and we won't accept any antisocial behaviour, harassment or hate crime of any type against a person or group. We'll involve the police and take legal action if necessary.

NOISE

You and your visitors mustn't play any radio, television, hi-fi equipment or musical instrument so loudly that it causes or is likely to cause a nuisance or annoyance to any other resident or neighbour, especially between the hours of 11pm-7am.

PARKING AND ROADS

You or your visitors mustn't block local roadways and other vehicle access. You must keep them and car parking spaces clear of unroadworthy vehicles and other obstructions.

RUBBISH

You and your visitors must keep your home reasonably clean and tidy and assist in keeping the communal areas of the property, including any garden, clean and tidy. This includes making sure you store bicycles and other large, obstructive objects out the way.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Although we're all different we deserve to be treated fairly and with respect and we should have the same rights as other people. This means no member of staff, volunteer, contractor or other tenant can treat you any



less favourably than anybody else because of your race, religion, gender, age, disability or sexuality.

If you feel you're being discriminated against by an individual or by our organisation then you have a legal right to lodge a complaint. Our equal opportunities policy gives more details about this. Ask your recovery worker to see this.

PROTECTING YOU FROM ABUSE AND HARASSMENT

Abuse is anything that harms another person and may include physical, verbal, sexual or financial abuse, neglect or discrimination. Harassment is any kind of threatening behaviour, damage to your property or physical assault that is based on prejudices about your race, religion, gender, age, disability or sexuality.

We take all reports of abuse or harassment extremely seriously and will investigate all cases. We'll involve

the police if a crime has been committed. If, after investigation, we find that a member of our staff has been abusive then we'll take appropriate action against them which could include them losing their job. Our harassment and safeguarding policies give more details about this. Ask your recovery worker to see these.

PROTECTING YOUR INFORMATION AND CONFIDENTIALITY

We comply with the Data Protection Act which sets out how information is collected, stored and disclosed so that your privacy and confidentiality are protected. We've a policy to make sure any information you give us is treated carefully, sensitively and securely. We don't pass on any of your personal information to other agencies without your written permission unless we believe that you or others are at risk, have been involved in a serious crime, or there are concerns in relation to child protection.



MOVING ON

Our supported housing schemes are there to help you to develop your independent living skills. This means that hopefully after you've completed the term of your tenancy you're ready to move on.

If you need it, we can help you to:

- identify what ongoing support you may need
- find alternative suitable accommodation
- find suitable employment, education or training opportunities
- apply for any ongoing benefits you may be entitled to
- register with medical services and local authorities.

In some circumstances you may want to move on or transfer to other housing sooner than the end of your tenancy. For example, you want to be nearer to family or work or you don't like the area you're living in.

You should discuss your reasons for wanting to move with your recovery worker who may speak with other agencies involved in your care such as your GP or social worker to agree what should be done.



Where possible we'll do our best to accommodate your wishes by transferring you to another Richmond Fellowship scheme or nominating you to another housing association or council.

You must give us at least four weeks notice in writing when you wish to end your tenancy.

NOTES

Use this space to write down local contact details and information.

ABOUT US

Richmond Fellowship is a national mental health charity and one of the largest voluntary sector providers of support for people living with mental health problems in England.

Our services include residential care, supported living, crisis, employment and community-based support.

Find out more by visiting our website at:

www.richmondfellowship.org.uk

 /rfmentalhealth  @rfmentalhealth

If you need this leaflet in alternative formats such as a different language, large print or easy read then email our communications team on:

communications@richmondfellowship.org.uk

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