

Leasehold

Residents' Handbook



Sussex Housing & Care

Sussex Housing & Care contact details

If you have any questions, please contact your scheme manager or the Sussex Housing & Care office:

Telephone: 0845 402 3702

Email: office@sussexhousing.org.uk

Website: www.sussexhousing.org.uk

Address: Ronald Simson House
24 Sutton Avenue
Seaford
BN25 4LG

Your scheme manager's contact details are included on the scheme information sheet enclosed with this residents' handbook.

For questions about the payment of your service charge, contact our finance team using the contact details above.

Contacting the emergency call centre

In an emergency you can contact the emergency call centre using the pull cord in your property, where provided, or calling 01323 644422.

If you would like this information in any of the following formats: large print, Braille, audio, face-to-face; or in any other language, please call the communications team on 0845 402 3702.

Welcome

Welcome to your new home.

To help you settle in, we have produced this residents' handbook giving information about Sussex Housing & Care, the services we provide, the facilities available at your scheme and details of how to contact us.

Whilst this handbook provides general information, your individual lease is the legal contract giving specific information about your home. Please read this handbook alongside your lease as your lease describes both your rights and responsibilities as a leaseholder and Sussex Housing & Care's rights and responsibilities as the property manager.

We hope you find this handbook helpful.

If you have any questions or need further information, please speak to your scheme manager.

We hope that you enjoy many happy years living here.

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1 About Sussex Housing & Care

Sussex Housing & Care (SHC) is a not-for-profit housing association dedicated to providing high quality, affordable accommodation and services for older people at a variety of locations across Sussex.

Established in 1946, today we offer a choice of properties to suit a wide variety of needs. Our accommodation ranges from retirement housing to residential care homes.

SHC is governed by a Board of skilled and experienced local people who give their time without payment.

As a not-for-profit housing association, we manage our money well so that we can use any surpluses to enhance our accommodation and the services we provide to our residents.

Equality and diversity

We are committed to ensuring equality, diversity and inclusion in all our relationships, whether in our services, our governance or as an employer.

It is our policy to treat all people equally, irrespective of ethnic origin, skin colour, nationality, religion or belief, culture, gender, sexuality, disability or health status, age, marital status or social background. We strongly believe that any discrimination on these grounds is wrong and we are committed to ensuring that our policies and practices combat discrimination at all levels.

We value the diversity of our residents and employees and expect our employees and contractors to do the same.



2 Moving in

This section of your residents' handbook gives a few tips about important things that you need to do or be aware of when you first move in to your new home.

Insurance

Sussex Housing & Care insures the structure of the building and some of the fixtures. (See section 6 'your service charge' for more information about the buildings insurance).

We don't insure the contents of your home or your personal possessions.

You are strongly advised to arrange comprehensive contents insurance to cover you for fire, flood, theft, and other risks, as soon as you move in.

Setting up utility accounts

On moving into your new home you will need to contact all service providers to set up your accounts and to pay any connection fees.

Personal information

When you move in, your scheme manager will ask you for some personal information, such as contact details for your next-of-kin and your doctor. This information is used in an emergency, so it is very important that we receive this information and also that you let us know of any changes.



3 Our services to you

This section tells you about the service you can expect from Sussex Housing & Care employees and the contractors that you are most likely to have contact with.

Customer care

Our customer care strategy is to put residents first by:

- finding out what you want and need
- delivering services to meet those requirements
- seeking your feedback on the services provided
- consulting you and taking your views into account in decision-making
- enabling you to participate in the management of your home
- setting codes of conduct for employees and contractors
- respecting your rights to privacy and confidentiality
- taking complaints seriously and responding promptly and appropriately.

Information from Sussex Housing & Care

We want to keep you informed about matters that affect you. We will do this by:

- responding promptly to requests for information or advice
- keeping this handbook up-to-date
- sending you regular newsletters
- publishing information about our performance
- providing information about our policies and procedures for matters that affect you, such as complaints and repairs and maintenance.

Your scheme manager

Our schemes are designed for people who want to retain their independence whilst benefiting from greater security and peace of mind.

Your scheme manager's role is to:

- provide you with information, advice and support
- make sure that the scheme is well-maintained, safe, clean and tidy, including:
 - carrying out regular health & safety checks of the building
 - (where applicable) testing that the emergency alarm call system is working – they will need access to your home to do this
 - dealing with any repair requests and building emergencies within their hours of work and at other times if alerted by the emergency call centre
 - being the main link to surveyors and contractors when any major repairs or planned works are carried out at the building.
- deal with any emergencies, for example calling relatives, your doctor or other professional help
- encourage and promote community and social activities.

Your scheme manager is not expected to provide nursing, personal care or domestic assistance; his/her role is to make sure that you and your relatives know what services are available and how to access them.

Scheme managers usually work during the day Monday to Friday. The exact hours of work depend on the size of the scheme and local arrangements. Details of your scheme manager's working hours are available from your scheme manager and are displayed on the scheme notice-board.

When the scheme manager is not on duty

Your scheme manager will let you know their hours of work and any planned absences, such as holidays or training. When your scheme manager is on holiday or off work due to illness, some of their duties may be covered by another scheme manager. In turn, your scheme manager may occasionally be called on to provide cover at another scheme. This arrangement enables us to provide continued support to our residents without the cost of employing additional staff to cover holidays and periods of illness.

When the scheme manager is not on duty, emergencies are dealt with by the emergency call centre, which is accessed via the emergency call system in your home. Calls are automatically diverted to the emergency call centre when the scheme manager is not available.

Ensuring you receive the support you need

When you move in, your scheme manager will talk with you about any health, social or physical support you need to help you stay fit and independent. Your scheme manager will signpost you to the appropriate services to help you. We keep a note of this 'support plan' and your scheme manager will review it with you once a year. If you prefer, you can complete the 'support plan' yourself.

Emergency call system (where provided)

If your home has an emergency call system installed, this consists of a speech unit on the wall of your living room/hallway with a pull cord attached. (There may also be additional pull cords throughout your home connected to the emergency call centre).

You can contact your scheme manager or the emergency call centre (when the scheme manager is not available) by pulling the cord or activating the speech unit. It is important not to remove, shorten or tie up the pull cord as you may not be able to summon help in an emergency.

When you moved into your home, you will have been asked to provide personal information, such as contact details for your next-of-kin and your doctor. If you use the emergency pull-cord, information about you is automatically displayed to the team at the emergency call centre.

Please only use the emergency alarm call system for emergencies or when you need urgent assistance; for example when there is an intruder, medical situations, injuries and emergency repairs.

Emergencies

If you are ill or in difficulty, your scheme manager or the emergency call centre will contact relatives, friends, your doctor, ambulance or social services on your behalf.

Gifts

We know that residents sometimes like to show their appreciation to their scheme manager or other SHC employees by giving them a gift to say thank you. While we really appreciate this kind thought, our employees are there to provide a service for you and they don't expect to be given anything.

However, we understand that some residents do like to give a “thank you” to their manager. We have agreed that residents shouldn’t give gifts worth more than £10. It can be embarrassing to managers to have to refuse, so please do bear these limits in mind and remember people are often more grateful simply for a kind word. Thank you!

Similarly, occasionally residents like to leave a gift for SHC in their Will. We appreciate this generous gesture and if you are thinking of doing this, please talk to our chief executive first.

4 Your home

This section of the handbook provides information about your home and the facilities at your scheme.

Shared facilities with other properties

At some Sussex Housing & Care sites, leasehold properties may share facilities with other Sussex Housing & Care properties located in the same grounds. If you would like further details of how facilities and the related costs are shared between properties, ask your scheme manager.

Cleaning

Sussex Housing & Care are responsible for keeping the internal communal areas clean and tidy.

Gardens

Sussex Housing & Care look after the communal gardens and grounds. The specification and cost of gardening work are discussed and agreed with residents each year.

We realise that many residents enjoy gardening and where this is possible, we are happy for you to help look after a small area of garden (usually close to your property). However, we do ask that if you are unable to continue looking after this, you arrange for it to be reinstated to its original state or left in good condition. If you would like to look after a patch of the communal gardens, please speak to your scheme manager first, so that we can consult with other residents before agreeing.

Individual gardens, which are the responsibility of an individual leaseholder, include responsibility for any trees and may include fencing: this should have been checked when you purchased your property.

At Downash Court, a number of allotments are available for residents: please ask your scheme manager for more information about availability and conditions of use.

Please don't leave food in the garden as this can attract rats and other vermin.

Guest room

Some schemes have a guest room, usually with en-suite facilities, available for use by your family and friends.

The guest room can be booked through your scheme manager. Priority will be given to relatives or friends of residents who are unwell.

Residents are responsible for ensuring that the room is left in a tidy condition and bed linen laundered after their guests leave.

Laundry

Some schemes have a laundry with washing and drying machines. Your scheme manager will show you how to use these and, if necessary, draw up a timetable identifying when machines are available for each resident to use.

The laundry is strictly for residents' use only. Please only use it between 8am and 8pm (or at times to be advised by your scheme manager) so that you don't disturb residents in nearby properties.

A small drying area may be provided outside: your scheme manager can advise you about this.

Lounge

The communal lounge provides a meeting place for social and leisure activities or simply a place to sit and chat. Residents may also use the lounge to stage their own events, subject to observing the terms and conditions for the use of the lounge.

The lounge may also be used by other community groups (with the scheme manager's prior consent) or by SHC for meetings – residents will be advised of this in advance.

Please don't forget to tell your scheme manager about any plans for using the lounge.

When using the lounge, please be considerate towards residents in neighbouring properties.

Parking

Some schemes have designated parking bays and your lease will show if you have your own parking bay. At other schemes, parking is on a first come, first served basis for residents.

All other cars should be parked outside the estate.

Pets

You are welcome to keep a pet (subject to your lease).

Before you do get a pet, you need to obtain written permission. Ask your scheme manager for more information.

Permission is usually granted, but can be withdrawn if the pet becomes a nuisance.

To avoid your pet being a nuisance to other residents, please:

- don't let your pet roam free
- do keep your pet on a lead in the communal areas
- don't let your pet foul the communal areas or gardens.

If you do ask us if you can keep a pet, we will give you a copy of our detailed pet policy.

Refuse and recycling

Communal refuse bins are provided. Please help keep these clean and tidy by: wrapping all kitchen waste and sharp or broken objects, before placing them in the refuse bins.

Recycling arrangements depend on your local authority's policy. Your scheme manager will be able to advise you about this.

Satellite and cable TV

Many schemes have a communal TV aerial. In some circumstances, this allows you to subscribe to satellite TV without a separate satellite dish. Where this is not possible, you will need to ask our permission before putting up your own satellite dish. Whether we are able to grant permission for this, depends on the layout of your scheme, planning restrictions and the terms of your lease.

Scooters and electric wheelchairs

If you have a scooter, or are thinking of getting one, please ask your scheme manager where you can store it safely and securely. Scooters must be insured and regularly serviced.

For fire safety, scooters must not be stored or charged in corridors or communal areas.

Large scooters (known as Class 3 scooters) are not allowed inside the building.

Sheds, greenhouses and conservatories

If you would like to erect a shed, greenhouse or conservatory, please ask us first. We will need to make sure that the land you intend to put the structure on is legally yours and not part of the communal grounds. We may also specify requirements, such as maximum size.

Sometimes it is also necessary to consult neighbours before permission can be granted.

Television licence

TV licences are free for people aged 75 and over.

In some schemes, customers aged 60 and over may be eligible for a concessionary TV licence. Your scheme manager will advise you if this applies to your scheme. If it does apply, payment for the licence, which is less than the cost of a full licence, will be collected separately from your service charge.

Window cleaning

We employ a window cleaning contractor to clean the outside of all windows and the inside of windows in the communal areas. This is paid for through your service charge.

Leaving your home unoccupied

If you are planning to be away from your home for seven days or more, please inform your scheme manager or the emergency call centre.

On your return, it is advisable to run your taps for a short while before using the water to clear any bacteria that may have accumulated.

5 Repairs & maintenance

Your lease sets out the exact responsibilities for repairs and maintenance. Generally, Sussex Housing & Care is responsible for arranging repairs to the structure and exterior of your home, together with all communal areas.

Whilst we are responsible for arranging for the repairs to be carried out, the cost of the works is charged to either the service charge (for day-to-day repairs) or the sinking fund.

Your repairing responsibilities

You are generally responsible for internal repairs and decoration to your home. Some items may be covered by insurance in certain circumstances (please refer to section 6 for more information about insurance.)

See Appendices 1 and 2 which specify the respective repairing responsibilities for the leaseholder and Sussex Housing & Care at our different properties.

How to report repairs

(for items that are the responsibility of Sussex Housing & Care)

Routine repairs should be reported to the scheme manager when they are on duty. If the scheme manager is not on duty, you can contact Sussex Housing & Care head office on 0845 402 3702). We will confirm whether it is SHC's responsibility and if so, arrange for it to be dealt with.

Emergency repairs should be reported to the scheme manager when they are on duty and to the emergency call centre at other times. Please report only genuine emergency repairs through the emergency call centre as the cost of works treated as an emergency is generally higher than non-emergency works and these costs are passed onto residents through the service charge.

How long will repairs take?

We prioritise repairs in order to deal with them efficiently and to make sure that the most urgent repairs are dealt with first:

- Priority 0: **emergency response**

Where works are required to avoid serious health & safety hazards or prevent serious structural damage to your home – these will be attended to and made safe.

Where works are an emergency such as complete loss of power or water, uncontrollable burst pipes, or broken windows to be secured – full repairs will be prioritised and carried out as necessary.

- Priority 1: **24 hour response**

Emergency repairs such as partial loss of power, lighting or heating, leaking roof, no hot water, or plumbing leaks will be attended to within 24 hours.

- Priority 2: **response within 3 to 7 days**

Urgent repairs such as non-emergency electrical repairs, minor leaks, or re-glazing.

- Priority 3: **non-urgent response**

Works such as fixing leaking gutters will be carried out within 20 days.

- Priority 4: **planned maintenance**

We have planned maintenance programmes for equipment such as lifts, fire alarms, emergency lighting, communal water systems, and the emergency call system.

Major repairs and works

For major works, such as planned maintenance for lifts and other equipment, we will consult you in accordance with our legal obligations (see section 7 'your lease')

These works are funded either through your service charge or a % contribution at the time your property is sold. Your lease will define which is applicable to your property.

Decoration

We aim to decorate the outside of all buildings every five years and the internal communal areas every six years. We may extend or reduce these periods if appropriate, but only after consulting you.

We will give you notice of any work and invite you to comment on proposed colour schemes.

Alterations or improvements

We recognise that you may wish to improve your home. The terms of your lease usually require you to obtain our permission before carrying out any improvement or alteration to your property.

Common requests to make improvements or alterations are: installing additional electric sockets, new or additional kitchen units, new bathroom suites, new window frames or doors.

Your scheme manager can give you the form you will need to complete to request permission.

We will require you to use appropriately qualified contractors. Where work may affect the structure of the building, such as adding a conservatory or replacing windows, you will need to obtain the appropriate permission from the local authority.

We will not withhold permission unreasonably. In some cases, permission may not be granted where it is considered that the alterations or improvement are out of keeping with the rest of the estate or property, will make the property difficult to sell in future, or may be unsuitable for possible future occupants.

Once permission has been granted, please let your scheme manager know when your contractors are due to start work.

Adaptations for people with a disability

If you have a disability, we may be able to adapt your home to make life easier for you. We may be able to apply for grants to pay for adaptations and aids including grab rails and ramps.

Please talk to your scheme manager if you feel that an adaptation or aid might help you. They can refer you to an occupational therapist who will visit you and make recommendations for the appropriate adaptation and/or aids. SHC can also help guide you towards any funding support that may be available.

6 Your service charge

Sussex Housing & Care manages your scheme and provides a range of services. The cost of providing these services is met by the service charge, which usually includes the following items:

- cost of the scheme manager service, including salary, national insurance, pension, heating, electric and water charges to residential and office accommodation (where applicable), office telephone, sickness benefits, and charges for monitoring and maintaining the emergency call system
- cost of maintaining the communal areas, including cleaning and materials, window cleaning, gardening, heating and electric costs, and any statutory charges
- insurance of the buildings and communal equipment and public liability
- contribution to a sinking fund for renewal of communal furnishings and/or the emergency call system
- contribution to a sinking fund for cyclical decorations
- contribution to a sinking fund for responsive repairs to the communal areas
- miscellaneous expenditure
- administration and audit charges
- water/sewerage charges where there is a communal water meter
- a contribution towards a sinking fund for major repairs (where applicable)
- contribution to gas boiler maintenance contract (where applicable, for example Sackville Court)
- Sussex Housing & Care's fee for managing and administering the scheme.

If you own a garage at the scheme, a service charge will be levied to cover the cost of repair and maintenance of the garage.

Your service charge is payable monthly in advance by a bank standing order and is payable in full until the property is sold.

Setting the service charge

The service charge is reviewed before the start of each financial year and a budget is proposed for the following year.

At the end of the year, you will receive a copy of the audited service charge accounts for your scheme.

Reasonableness of service charges

We endeavour to ensure that our service charges are reasonable. Leaseholders are required to pay 'reasonable' service charges for works of a 'reasonable' standard. If there is a dispute about this, the Leasehold Valuation Tribunal will determine what is 'reasonable'.

You have a right to obtain a summary of relevant costs incurred. If you require more detail, you have the right to inspect all accounts, receipts and documents relating to the summary of costs, and to take copies. We can make a charge for providing copies. We do this to cover our administrative expenses. If you would like this information, please contact the finance department at head office. We will provide the information within one month.

You can refuse to pay the cost of any service incurred 18 months before the demand for payment is made unless we have notified you in writing that the cost has been incurred.

Protection of money paid for services

We separately identify the money in the service charge accounts and reserve (sinking) funds for each scheme collectively in a separate bank account managed by Sussex Housing & Care. We actively manage the money to achieve good rates of interest, whilst ensuring the security of funds. We add the interest to the sinking funds at the end of the year.

Council and other local taxes

You are responsible for paying any local authority taxes, such as council tax, for your property.

Utility charges

You are responsible for paying the water, sewage, gas and electric charges for your property (unless your lease requires payment to be made through the service charge).

Sinking funds

Throughout the life of a building, it will be necessary to spend money on repairs, replacements and (where the lease allows) improvements. These works are paid for by leaseholders contributing to a sinking fund, which has been set up to meet the likely cost of works to the building.

We try to make sure that the full cost of works is paid for from the sinking fund. On occasions, we may also need to charge leaseholders a 'lump sum' where there is insufficient money in the sinking fund to pay for the necessary works.

When you sell your property, you can't take out the money that you have paid into the sinking fund. However, a healthy sinking fund is attractive to prospective purchasers.

Insurance

Sussex Housing & Care has a responsibility under the terms of your lease to insure the buildings at your scheme at a "reasonable cost". We insure buildings against physical loss, destruction or damage. We also hold public and employer's liability insurance and contents insurance for the communal areas.

Any lessee or a recognised Leaseholders' Association can request details of the insurance policy. If requested, we are obliged to provide a copy of the policy, or a summary, and must state the amount insured and the name of the insured.

Lessees who have asked for details of the policy have a further right to inspect the policy and a receipt of proof of payment of the premium. Residents have the right to take copies, for which we may make a reasonable charge.

Finally, lessees have the right to notify our insurers of a possible claim up to six months after the event, which has led to the claim, even if there is a shorter time limit for making claims in the policy. This does not mean that a resident may make a claim on the policy, but it does mean that the claim does not fail because we have failed to satisfy the insurers in time.

We recommend that you take out a contents insurance policy which covers your carpet, furniture, furnishings, and all other property belonging to you. Our insurance does not cover residents' personal property even if it is damaged by another resident or third party.



7 Your lease

This section of the residents' handbook explains briefly your rights and responsibilities as a leaseholder.

Living in peace with your neighbours

You have the right to live peacefully in your own home, as do your neighbours.

The most common form of complaint about neighbours is unreasonable noise. Please be considerate towards others when using televisions, radios and musical instruments.

If you feel that someone is causing a nuisance, it might help to talk to them about it. People are often unaware that their behaviour is disturbing others. If the nuisance continues, speak to your scheme manager who will advise you whether or not we can help.

We won't tolerate any form of harassment and we will investigate all reports, dealing with them promptly and sensitively. If you experience any harassment or discrimination or know that someone else is, please tell us as soon as possible. We will advise you what we can do to help resolve or ease the problem.

Right to consultation

We welcome your feedback and are committed to taking your views into account. For more information about our approach to consultation and resident involvement, see section 9 of this handbook.

Residents' associations

Leaseholders have the right to form a residents' association. If a residents' association wishes to be consulted on matters such as expenditure on major repairs and certain long term agreements, it must be recognised by Sussex Housing & Care. For more information, see section 9 ('listening to you').

Your right to be consulted about major works and services

We have a legal duty to consult you before any major works are carried out or certain contracts are agreed. The current threshold for undertaking consultation is that if any one leaseholder has to contribute more than £250 for the works, we must consult all leaseholders.

Service contracts, such as gardening contracts, are covered by legislation if they involve a contract longer than one year and the cost to any one leaseholder is more than £100 in any year of the contract. (Please note that these financial thresholds for consultation will change periodically as they are set by law).

There is a set procedure that we must follow for consultation:

- Serve notices on leaseholders and recognised residents' associations inviting observations on the work to be carried out
- Invite leaseholders to approve a list of contractors or nominate contractors to be invited to tender for the work
- Where appropriate, advise leaseholders of reasons when work is not awarded to the lowest tenderer or a contractor that residents nominated.

The right to manage

This right gives qualifying leaseholders the right to take over management of their homes. To exercise this right, a majority of qualifying leaseholders must vote in favour of the proposal and a 'right to manage' company must be formed. The company must comply with certain legal requirements, such as the appointment of officers and it must have a memorandum and articles of association.

The right to manage company would not inherit the rights of Sussex Housing & Care as landlord. For example, it would not own the freehold.

The right to information about Sussex Housing & Care as your landlord

The name and address and details of directors and secretary of your landlord, Sussex Housing & Care, must be supplied within 21 days of a request. Please contact the finance director at head office.

Privacy and data protection

You have the right to expect us to respect your privacy in your home and to maintain confidentiality about personal details that you give us. We will treat your personal information in line with our responsibilities under the Data Protection Act 1998.

We collect information about you and your relatives to help us deliver the best service to you. We use and store information in order to:

- assess, administer and process applications for housing
- administer our service to residents and to manage the housing and services we provide
- conduct surveys and collect data to help improve our housing and services
- enable us to comply with legal and regulatory requirements
- provide you and your relatives with information about SHC, some of which might be of a fundraising nature

The information we hold about you is confidential between you and SHC and we will not disclose it to anyone else, except to our regulator, the Tenant Services Authority, who has a statutory duty to monitor our work. Occasionally we have to give relevant information to the Government and other government agencies, local authorities and companies who undertake work for us (for example, making repairs and servicing equipment).

Access to information we hold about you

You have the right to check factual information that we hold about you.

If you would like to see this information, please make an appointment with our head office, giving 48 hours notice. We will ask for proof of your identity.

8 Keeping safe and secure

Making sure your home is safe, secure and comfortable is a priority for us. This section tells you about safety and security at your scheme.

Accidents

If you have an accident or see one on your scheme, please tell your scheme manager so that they can record it. This record will help us to investigate and learn lessons that could stop it from happening again.

Scheme managers carry out regular checks in communal areas such as kitchens, corridors and lounges. If you see anything that you think is unsafe, please let your scheme manager know.

Electricity and gas

Our wiring is installed by qualified electricians in accordance with industry best practice. Sussex Housing & Care-owned electrical appliances used in communal areas are purchased from reputable suppliers and tested by qualified electricians.

If the pilot light on a fire or central heating boiler keeps going out, please contact your scheme manager or the emergency call centre* immediately as the fault may be dangerous.

If you smell gas, do not switch on any electric lights or use emergency pull cords near the suspected leak – this could cause a spark resulting in an explosion. If safe to do so, switch off the gas supply and open a window to ventilate the area. Contact your scheme manager or the emergency call centre using the pull cord in another flat.

* Residents of Sackville Court can also contact British Gas as your service charge includes a contract with British Gas for emergencies. The phone number and contract number to quote will have been given to you when you moved in or ask your scheme manager if you need this.

Fire

Our properties are built to high safety standards with doors and walls designed to slow the spread of fire. Every scheme has a fire procedure that tells you what to do if the fire alarm sounds. Your scheme manager will tell you about this procedure when you move into your home.

In most cases, your home is fitted with a fire alarm system linked to the emergency call centre who can call the fire service in an emergency. Where this does not apply your scheme manager should advise you of this when you first move in.

Health & Safety

Your scheme manager inspects the building and communal areas regularly. If you see anything that concerns you, please tell your scheme manager straightaway.

Master key

The scheme manager holds a master key that can provide access to your home. This will only be used with your prior permission or where there is evidence that you may need help in an emergency.

It is important that you do not change your locks, fit additional locks or keep a chain on the door when it is closed as this would obstruct access in an emergency.

Snow and ice

During autumn and winter, fallen leaves, snow and ice can make paths and roads slippery. Scheme managers will arrange for leaves and snow to be cleared in line with the snow and ice plan and they will let you know which areas will be gritted. It is often not possible to clear or grit all areas, so please take care.

If more snow is due, we will not grit an area as this will often be wasted effort. If we, or our contractors, can't get to the estate, we will not be able to clear the snow or put grit down.

Smoking

Smoking is not allowed in the internal communal areas.

Water

If you have been away for a while, on your return, make sure that you run your taps for a short while before using the water to clear any bacteria that may have accumulated. It's also a good idea to run water through any unused outlets, such as showers, once a week. Shower heads should be cleaned every three months even when used regularly.

9 Listening to you

This section of the handbook gives information about how you can give us feedback on our services.

Comments, compliments and complaints

We welcome your feedback, whether good or bad. We like to be told if we have done something well. Likewise if you are unhappy about our service, please tell us so that we have the opportunity to put it right.

Making a complaint

Our aim is to provide the best standard of service for all our residents and we welcome your suggestions, comments and views on how to improve the services we offer. We recognise that from time to time things go wrong and you may feel you have not received the quality of service you deserve. In this case you have the right to complain.

We believe that most problems can be easily resolved on the spot and our aim is to get it right first time so every effort will be made to resolve matters before they become complaints. Please speak to the person who provided (or failed to provide) the service and they will endeavour to solve the problem for you straight away.

However if you are not happy with the way we have dealt with something, our complaints policy explains how to make a complaint.

Consultation

We are committed to consulting residents on important matters that affect you, including:

- the service charge accounts and budget. We hold three meetings per year with residents to discuss the service charge and accounts
- major repairs and renewals. We will consult on contracts in accordance with legal requirements
- changes in management arrangements and services.

We will use a variety of methods to consult, including:

- letters
- serving formal notices
- displaying notices at your scheme
- holding meetings
- asking residents to vote to indicate their preferences
- discussion with resident representatives.

We will give you a reasonable period of time to make your views known and we undertake to consider carefully all comments before making a decision.

Residents' groups and associations

We will support residents wishing to form a residents' association as we recognise that they can be an effective means of expressing residents' views and for consulting residents.

We will recognise and support residents' associations where at least 60% of residents are members of the association.

If you are interested in setting up a residents' association, please talk to your scheme manager or visit our website.

Becoming a member of Sussex Housing & Care

If you are interested in becoming a shareholding member of SHC, please write to head office, enclosing £1. Shareholders are entitled to attend and to vote at our Annual General Meeting held each September to elect the Board.

10 Moving on

This section provides brief information about what you need to do when selling your home.

If you are intending to sell your property, please ask for a copy of our "Selling your home" leaflet, which explains in more detail what you need to do and be aware of, such as monies that may be payable to Sussex Housing & Care.

Who can buy your home?

You can only sell your home to people who meet the age requirement as specified in your lease. They will also need to be able to lead independent lives, managing their home themselves, possibly with the help of carers, relatives or friends.

Approval of purchasers

Before a sale can take place, we must assess the potential buyer and any other intended occupant, to make sure they meet the requirements of the lease.

When you have a prospective buyer for your property, please contact the scheme manager who will arrange for your prospective buyer to be interviewed to assess whether they meet the criteria for living in the scheme.

Can I put up a 'For Sale' board?

Some leases prohibit the use of 'For Sale' boards. Please check with your scheme manager whether they are allowed and if so, that the proposed location is appropriate.

Appendix 1

Repairs and maintenance responsibilities at:

- Church Bailey
- Downash Court
- Nevill Close
- Sackville Court
- Waldron Court

Repairs and maintenance responsibilities are defined in your lease and are divided between Sussex Housing & Care (SHC) and you as the leaseholder.

Repairs and maintenance are funded through contributions from the service charge, including three sinking (or reserve) funds to cover future planned and unplanned maintenance.

SHC will work with residents to maintain an 'asset management plan' covering a 25 year period. This will help inform leaseholders about the likely future funding needs from the sinking funds and will determine the annual contributions required from the service charge to the sinking funds.

The lease defines Sussex Housing & Care's responsibilities as:

- Exterior walls
- Roof
- Foundations
- Timber and joists
- Beams
- Chimney stacks
- Rainwater and soil pipes, fascias and soffits
- Sewers and drains to point of entry into the flat
- Gas, water and electricity pipes to the point of entry to the flat
- External redecoration
- Internal common way decorations and floor coverings
- Windows and external doors, excluding replacement keys
- Communal gardens, paths, walls and fences

- Communal grounds and parking areas
- External open spaces surrounding blocks of flats
- Door entry systems to communal areas
- Emergency call system, where applicable.

The lease defines the leaseholder's responsibilities for repairs and maintenance as:

- Fittings, such as kitchen units and sinks
- Floorboards
- Internal walls
- Plaster and/or other surface material on interior walls and ceilings
- Internal doors and door frames
- Toilets, baths and showers
- Radiators, cisterns, tanks, boilers and pipes within the flat
- Gas, water, and electricity installations in the flat
- Fixtures and fittings and internal decorations
- Leaks or burst pipes, including damage caused to other property as a result.

Appendix 2

Repairs and maintenance responsibilities at:

- St Peter's Mews
- Bourne Court

Repairs and maintenance responsibilities are defined in your lease and are divided between Sussex Housing & Care (SHC) and you as the leaseholder.

Repairs and maintenance are funded through contributions from the service charge, including three sinking (or reserve) funds to cover future planned and unplanned maintenance.

SHC will work with residents to maintain an 'asset management plan' covering a 25 year period. This will help inform leaseholders about the likely future funding needs from the sinking funds and will determine the annual contributions required from the service charge to the sinking funds.

The lease defines Sussex Housing & Care's responsibilities as:

- Exterior walls
- Roof
- Foundations
- Timber and joists
- Beams
- Chimney stacks
- Rainwater and soil pipes, fascias and soffits
- Sewers and drains to point of entry into the flat
- Gas, water and electricity pipes to the point of entry to the flat
- External redecoration
- Internal common way decorations and floor coverings
- Communal windows and doors, excluding replacement keys
- Communal gardens, paths, walls and fences
- Communal grounds and parking areas
- External open spaces surrounding blocks of flats
- Door entry systems to communal areas
- Emergency call system, where applicable.

The lease defines the leaseholder's responsibilities for repairs and maintenance as:

- Fittings, such as kitchen units and sinks
- Floorboards
- Internal walls
- Plaster and/or other surface material on interior walls and ceilings
- Internal doors and door frames
- Toilets, baths and showers
- Radiators, cisterns, tanks, boilers and pipes within the flat
- Gas, water, and electricity installations in the flat
- Fixtures and fittings and internal decorations
- Leaks or burst pipes, including damage caused to other property as a result
- Windows to your flat, excluding external redecoration (where applicable).

Sussex Housing & Care

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A Housing Association registered under the Industrial and Provident Societies Act 1965 (No 12871R) and the Housing Act 1996 (No LH0079).

A charity exempt from registration under the 2nd schedule of the Charities Act 1960.

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Member of the National Housing Federation.

Member of English Community Care Association.

Member of the Independent Housing Ombudsman Scheme.