

SHELTERED HOUSING TENANT HANDBOOK



TAIGHEADAS FASGACH
IÙL MÀLADAIR

YOUR SHELTERED HOUSING TENANTS' HANDBOOK

IÙL MÀLADAIR TAIGHEADAS FASGACH

This handbook is about The Highland Council's sheltered housing and the housing support you will receive if you are a sheltered housing tenant.

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INTRODUCTION

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Sheltered Housing Schemes are owned by The Highland Council. Vacant sheltered houses are allocated by the Council's Housing and Property Services using waiting lists.

You can apply to be considered for sheltered housing by filling in a Highland Housing Register Housing Application Form.

All of the Council's sheltered housing schemes are fitted with community alarm systems, which are answered by the Warden and/or the Regional Communications Centre in Aberdeen who will deal with calls when the Warden isn't working. Sheltered houses are also fitted with smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors as standard.

Most of the sheltered housing schemes have Wardens, who are employed by Housing and Property Services. Where there is no warden sheltered housing alarms are linked directly to the Regional Communications Centre in Aberdeen, with staff available to answer calls 24 hours per day.

In basic terms, the Warden's role is to act as a contact who will check regularly to ensure that tenants are well, and who can summon help when needed. Wardens cannot actually provide any degree of personal or domestic care themselves, but they can advise tenants on how, and where, help can be found.

More detailed information on the service you can expect from your Sheltered Housing Warden is given on page 3.

INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR WARDEN

FIOSRACHADH MUN NEACH-GLEIDHIDH

HOW YOUR WARDEN IS RECRUITED

The Highland Council has policies and procedures in place to ensure that Sheltered Housing Wardens are able to effectively perform their role in providing your housing support service.

Your Warden is recruited according to The Highland Council's recruitment and selection process which includes:

- Taking up references
- Criminal records checks

YOUR WARDEN'S TRAINING

Your Warden will be aware of, and be able to put into practice, The Highland Council's policies and procedures relevant to the job including:

- Whistle blowing
- Managing risk
- Health and Safety
- Proper record keeping

Training of Wardens is carried out on an ongoing basis according to individual requirements and new Wardens will be made fully aware of all relevant policies and procedures in order to be able to meet your housing support needs.

Your Warden will also have a Personal Development Plan which will mean that any training and development needs are identified jointly with their manager, and met as soon as possible.

The support and care you personally can expect to receive from your Warden is clarified on page 3 and will be explained by your Warden at the beginning of your sheltered housing tenancy. Your Warden can also explain any outstanding matters that may arise during their agreed visits to you.

HOW YOUR WARDEN WILL SUPPORT YOU

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During your first week as a sheltered housing tenant your warden will explain all about your accommodation and the sheltered housing scheme facilities, and ensure you are comfortable operating the community alarm, working everything in your new home, and finding your way around any shared facilities. They will also explain how they will support you, a summary of which is as follows:

MAIN DUTIES

The **main duties** of the Sheltered Housing Warden are to:

- Visit or contact tenants regularly. Your Warden will usually make contact with you (either face to face or via your intercom) at least once a day.
- Respond to emergency situations, and call for appropriate assistance.
- Respond to tenants' needs, as part of a caring team, and liaise with various Services on your behalf when necessary.
- Test alarm systems regularly.

If you live in a sheltered housing scheme with guest rooms and/or communal areas, the Warden will also be responsible for:

- Encouraging the use of communal facilities.
- Liaising with other Services to ensure the cleanliness of communal areas.
- Taking bookings of guest rooms and maintaining records of use, where applicable.

ADDITIONAL WARDENS DUTIES YOU CAN REQUEST

Wardens will carry out the following **additional duties** on request:

- Assisting you in reporting repairs and housing maintenance problems on your behalf, **if you are unable to do so yourself**.
- In an **emergency**, Wardens can collect prescriptions, shopping etc for tenants. If the need for this service is to be long term, however, other arrangements will have to be made. If you are unable to make such arrangements yourself, the Warden will advise on how appropriate help can be accessed.

WHAT YOUR WARDEN CAN'T DO FOR YOU

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WARDENS SHOULD NOT BE ASKED TO:

- Enter houses to look after pets, plants, etc while a tenant is away. *Wardens will only enter unoccupied houses (if a tenant is on holiday, or in hospital, for example) in an emergency, e.g. burst pipes, fire alarm. At all times, this will be an accompanied visit.*
- Carry out domestic work of any kind, including laundry.
- Do shopping (unless in an emergency - see page 3), pay bills, etc.
- Make arrangements for water/gas/electricity to be turned on/off. Tenants are responsible for attending to these matters.
- Become involved in disputes between neighbours, or between tenants and their families.
- Administer medication. If you have difficulty with this, the Warden will try to help you find a solution.
- Hold bank books, pension books or cash.
- Be a volunteer for the community alarm.

In some cases, Wardens are also employed as home carers. Home carers are employed by Social Work Services, and their service is provided following a community care assessment. If your Warden is also your home carer, they will carry out additional duties for you as agreed in your Care Plan.

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE WARDEN:

- Does not have a right of access to your house without your permission. *The exception to this would be if there is no response from you to the Warden's morning call, and you had not made the Warden aware that you would be away. In this situation, they can carry out an accompanied visit, to make sure everything is alright.*
- Is not allowed to smoke in your home whilst on duty.
- Is not allowed to take children or pets into your home, without specific permission from yourself and the Warden's Manager.
- Is not permitted to receive gifts of money or goods from tenants.

Your Warden will **not** usually be responsible for handling your finances. Where there is any payment of money which is handled by your Warden e.g. payment for the use of the guest room facility or collection of monies for a concessionary TV licence, your Warden will follow the procedures laid down by the Council. Any financial transaction will be carefully recorded, and a receipt will always be issued.

WHAT HAPPENS IF YOUR WARDEN'S AWAY OR OFF DUTY

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WARDEN'S WORKING HOURS

Your Warden is employed to work between the hours of 8am and 8pm, for as long as it takes to carry out two daily contacts with the tenants within your sheltered housing scheme (as per each tenant's request). This means that Wardens will be on duty for a period of time in the morning, and again in the afternoon/early evening. Please check with your Warden for exact working times, as these can vary depending on the size of the sheltered housing scheme.

Outside those hours, the call system will be switched over to the Regional Communications Centre in Aberdeen, where staff will answer any calls.

WARDEN'S HOLIDAYS

Your Warden is entitled to holidays and days off. Wardens will have between 20 and 25 days of annual leave, depending on how long they have worked for the Council. They are also entitled to a number of Public Holidays, including:

- Christmas Day and Boxing Day
- 1st, 2nd, and 3rd of January
- Good Friday and Easter Monday
- May Day

Some sheltered housing schemes have a Relief Warden, whilst others do not. This might depend on the size of the sheltered housing scheme you live in. If no Relief Warden is in place when the Warden is off duty, the call system will be switched over to the Regional Communications Centre in Aberdeen, where staff will answer any calls.

WHAT IF THERE ARE CHANGES TO YOUR WARDEN SERVICE

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In the unlikely event of unexpected changes to the Warden service you receive you will be informed as quickly as possible.

You will be kept fully informed as far as possible in advance of any planned changes to your support.

If you have any concerns about changes to the service you receive you should contact your Warden or your local Housing and Property Office.

CHARGES FOR SERVICES

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Details on any charges for your Warden housing support service are dealt with in the leaflet on charging and fully explained to you before you sign your sheltered housing tenancy.

Before you sign your tenancy agreement for your sheltered housing accommodation you will agree to the cost of your housing support and understand if you have to pay and how much you will be expected to pay.

As any other tenant or occupier, you will also be responsible for other costs at your sheltered housing accommodation, e.g. rent, heating, electricity and Council Tax, unless you are informed otherwise.

THE INFORMATION WE NEED TO HAVE ABOUT YOU

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PERSONAL FILES

During your first week as a sheltered housing tenant your Warden will go through your Housing Support Plan with you, which will then be placed on your Personal File.

You will be fully consulted on your Housing Support Plan and agree details such as:

- How often you will be contacted or visited by your Warden.
- Who you would like contacted in an emergency.
- Any other person you would like involved in planning your housing support.
- Who, if anyone, you would like involved to help you with financial or administrative arrangements (as your Warden is unable to do this).
- Other contact details such as GP, other professionals involved in your care.
- Any special communication needs or preferences you have or any other arrangements you prefer for communication with your Warden.

It is important that you provide the Warden with the names of at least two relatives or friends who are willing to be key holders, and would be able to respond in an emergency. These volunteers are the people who would be contacted by the Regional Communications Centre in Aberdeen if you need to use your community alarm when the Warden is off duty.

Your Warden will also fill out a form which can be used to access other services and agencies (e.g. Social Work Services) should you need additional support at any time. Involving anyone else in your care will always be with your consent unless you are at risk or unable to give your consent.

You should always be aware that your Warden is keeping your records up-to-date on their planned visits to you. This is important to ensure that you receive the best support and any additional care from other services that may be necessary.

Your Warden will tell you why they need information about you. You should never have to provide any information which is not essential for your housing support.

SECURITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

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This section is about how we treat the information we have about you, and how we ensure that your privacy and rights are respected.

You can be assured that information about you is kept securely and confidentially. You will receive a Data Protection leaflet at the start of your tenancy which explains how information about you will be handled and how your confidentiality will be protected.

You are entitled to ask to see your Personal File. If you wish to see your file you should put your request in writing to your Warden, but please be aware that while your Warden will aim to deal with your request as quickly as possible, she/he will have up to 40 days from receipt of your letter to comply with your request (this is according to the Data Protection Act 1998).

You should always be aware that your privacy will be respected. This includes conversations with your Warden in your home - your Warden will not discuss private information should a third party be present, unless this is with your permission. You should also be confident that your Warden will never gossip about you or pass confidential information to other tenants without your permission.

The information we have about you will not be passed on to anyone outside of The Highland Council unless you have given your permission, e.g. where you have indicated in your Housing Support Plan that you are happy a family member is informed about you in an emergency.

The only exception to this is when we may have to talk to other agencies if:

- Your Warden is worried that you might hurt yourself or someone else.
- A crime or illegal activity is alleged to have taken place.

You will normally be informed if this is going to happen and the reasons why.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

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The Highland Council believes that everyone has the right to be treated with dignity and respect.

Your Warden will be sensitive to your social, cultural, sexual and religious beliefs. Any legitimate preferences in these matters are viewed as being important to you and will be taken account of accordingly.

You can inform your Warden of any of these matters that you feel relate to your housing support and be assured that your Warden will treat this information in a sensitive, impartial and confidential manner.

You should never feel obliged to discuss personal matters outside of your housing support that you wish to remain private.

PLANNING FOR YOUR ABSENCE

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IF YOU'RE GOING AWAY OR ARE ADMITTED TO HOSPITAL

Please inform your Warden if you are going to be away overnight, including any hospital stays that involve an overnight/several overnights.

This is important to ensure records are updated for fire procedures (particularly relevant for sheltered housing schemes with communal areas), and also to plan for any arrangements that should be made for your home in your absence.

Your Warden can help advise you on the kinds of things you may need to think about if you're going away. This might include issues such as:

- Avoiding frozen pipes in the winter - is the heating left on, the water turned off etc.
- How the rent is paid in your absence.

YOUR RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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When your sheltered housing tenancy begins you will receive, and agree to, a legal written agreement (a Tenancy Agreement) which tells you what your rights and responsibilities are as a tenant, and in turn what you can expect the Council to be responsible for.

You will also be informed of and agree to any cost associated with the housing support service you can expect to receive, i.e. your Warden service.

This book sets out what you can expect from your Warden service in more detail (see page 3), which will be further explained when your Warden visits at the start of your sheltered housing tenancy and goes through your personal Housing Support Plan.

Your Tenancy Agreement will also set out details on how to end your sheltered housing tenancy should you wish to do so.

If you end your sheltered housing Tenancy Agreement you will also end the housing support service you received from your Warden.

HEALTH & SAFETY

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Your Warden is responsible for providing a housing support service to you as an individual but will also be responsible for the safe running of the sheltered housing scheme.

This particularly applies in sheltered housing schemes where there are communal areas such as a lounge and kitchen and includes ensuring that fire procedures are up-to-date, communal areas are free from hazards, and that any accidents and incidents are correctly recorded, reported, and dealt with.

You should make your Warden aware of any accident or incident that has occurred and the information will then be recorded on the correct form. It is important that all accidents and incidents are recorded in order that we can act to prevent future accidents and improve your safety.

YOUR VIEWS ON THE SERVICE YOU RECEIVE

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We are always interested in the views of our tenant's on the service we provide. This enables us to monitor the quality of housing support and improve our service as necessary.

You should **always** feel free to tell your Warden if you are unhappy with the service you are receiving. We also welcome positive feedback on the service.

As part of your Warden housing support service, you will be visited a **minimum** of every 3 months to ensure you are happy with the service you are receiving. Your Warden will carry out this visit and the feedback from these visits will be one of the ways we can monitor the quality of service we provide. You will, of course, see your Warden more regularly than this and should feel free to talk to them about any problems during any of their planned visits.

If you have any comments to make about your Warden that you wish to discuss with someone else, you should follow the guidance under 'Making a Complaint' below.

MAKING A COMPLAINT

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If you feel unable to tell your Warden of any difficulties you have with the service you receive, you can make a complaint directly to the Council. Your complaint will be taken seriously and will be dealt with as quickly as possible.

Wardens are supervised through the line management of The Highland Council's Housing and Property Services. Any complaints regarding the Warden service should therefore be made to Housing and Property Services using the Council's Complaints Procedure, copies of which are available at any Council Service Point, or from a member of staff by telephoning: 01463 702000. You may also lodge your complaint on the Council's website at www.highland.gov.uk by following the link through Suggestions/Complaints.

You do not have to give your name when making a complaint, but it will be necessary to give your name if you would like us to get back to you. You can also make a complaint to the Care Commission as detailed on page 12.

THE CARE COMMISSION

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The Highland Council's sheltered housing service is registered with the Care Commission.

The Care Commission registers and inspects the services listed in The Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001, and takes account of the National Care Standards published by the Scottish Executive.

If you have a complaint about the service you receive as a sheltered housing tenant, or about the Care Commission itself, you can make a complaint to the Care Commission who will deal with it quickly and sympathetically.

You can contact the Care Commission at:

The Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care

Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee DD1 4NY

Telephone: 01382 207100

Fax: 01382 207289

Website: www.carecommission.com

The Highland Council's sheltered housing service will be inspected by the Care Commission. Once this inspection has taken place you are entitled to see their inspection report. Please contact your local Housing and Property Office if you wish to find out about the Care Commission inspections.

You can also play a part in the Care Commission's inspection of your sheltered housing service. Please contact the Care Commission for more information.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU WANT MORE INFORMATION

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You should receive a number of useful Housing Help and Advice Leaflets at the beginning of your tenancy. This will help and inform you of issues connected with your tenancy and also give you useful contact information such as local Housing and Property Office contact details, Service Point details, and emergency contact telephone numbers.

Your Warden's contact details will be at the back of this Handbook.

Your Warden will advise and direct you to any information you require that you may be unsure about.

We hope that you have found this Sheltered Housing Tenant Handbook useful. If you have any further questions about your sheltered house, the Warden housing support service, or The Highland Council's policies and procedures, please discuss these with your Warden or contact your local Housing and Property Office or Council Service Point.

