

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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The Council's Sheltered Housing Schemes are owned and managed by The Highland Council. Properties are allocated by the Housing Service in line with the Highland Housing Register (HHR) Allocation Policy. You apply by filling in a HHR Housing Application Form.

Telecare is available. This is so that you can easily call for help in an emergency at any time (24 hours per day).

Most of the Schemes have a Warden Service during working hours. Essentially, the Warden's role is to act as a point of contact. Whilst they cannot provide any personal or domestic care themselves, they can advise tenants on how, and where, help can be found. They can also call for help if it's needed.

There are opportunities for tenants to get involved in decision-making activities; tenant & resident groups etc.. Wardens can give you information about activities in your scheme. They can also help you get in touch with the Tenant Participation Officers who promote and support tenant involvement if tenants wish to start up a group.

INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR WARDEN

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During your first week as a tenant, your Warden will explain all about your accommodation (and the facilities if these are provided). They will make sure that you are comfortable with things like reporting repairs etc. They will explain the services you can get. And they will agree your 'Tenant Service Plan' with you – this establishes what level of service you need and will get.

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

- Visit or contact tenants regularly. They will agree with you the frequency of these contacts - and your preferred method of contact. This will be based on your assessed needs and your requirements.
- Liaise with various Services on your behalf, if you need this.
- Test hardwired alarm systems

You can ask your Warden questions at any time and they will try to help.

If there is anything else that you need to help you live independently, or if you need emergency help for a short time, speak to your Warden. They can give you advice. They will try to help you to access the help you need.

If there are guest rooms and/or communal areas, Wardens are also responsible for:

- Encouraging the use of communal facilities.
- Liaising with others to make sure communal areas are maintained.
- Dealing with bookings of guest rooms.

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 whilst a tenant is away. *Wardens will only enter unoccupied houses in an emergency, e.g. burst pipes; fire alarm etc., if a tenant is on holiday, or in hospital, for example). This will be an accompanied visit.*
- Carry out domestic work of any kind, including laundry.
- Do shopping, pay bills, etc.
- 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 responder for your telecare.
- Become involved in disputes between neighbours, or between tenants and their families. Your Housing Management Officer can help with this.

In some cases, Wardens are also employed as home carers. Home carers are employed via NHS Highland. Their service is provided following an NHS assessment. If your Warden is also your home carer, they provide you with the care which has been agreed with you in your NHS 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 contact and they feel that you are at risk (e.g. because you had not made them aware that you would be away). In all such cases they will have asked, and been given, permission by a senior manager.*

- 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** 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; for laundry, or for a concessionary TV licence, they will follow the Council's set procedures. 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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Wardens' working hours vary across Highland and from scheme to scheme. Your Warden will tell you what their working hours are. They will also give you their phone contact details. You may wish to use these if you need to speak them during their working hours. Contact details are at the back of this handbook.

You can also get help or advice from your local Housing Office. Just call or visit your local Service Centre and ask to speak to a Housing Management Officer (or Housing Management Assistant). Contact details are at the back of this handbook.

If you need to report an emergency repair 'out of hours' call **01349 886691**. The repair will be dealt with straight away if there is a serious risk to health and safety, or where there is potential for serious damage to the property.

If you need emergency help, these calls are answered by the NHS Highland Hub in Inverness. They will be able to give you advice about your emergency or organise the emergency help you need straight away.

Your Warden is entitled to holidays and days off. Alternative arrangements are put in place. You will be told about these. Highland Council Offices are also closed for these Public Holidays which means that there is no housing or warden service:

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

WHAT IF THERE ARE CHANGES TO YOUR WARDEN SERVICE

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In the unlikely event of unexpected changes to the 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 service.

If you have any concerns, contact your Warden or your local Service Centre.

CHARGES FOR SERVICES

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Details about charges for the warden service will be explained to you before you sign your sheltered housing tenancy.

If you receive help for benefits to cover your rent, this will also cover the charge for the warden service. You may also be able get help to pay for your telecare.

As any other tenant or occupier, you will also be responsible for all other housing related costs – this includes rent; heating; electricity; phone-line and Council Tax.

RECRUITMENT & TRAINING

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

They are recruited according to The Highland Council's recruitment and selection process. This includes taking up references and criminal records checks. New Wardens are made fully aware of all relevant policies and procedures.

Your Warden will be aware of, and will be able to put into practice, policies and procedures relevant to the job including: Whistle Blowing; Managing Risk; Health & Safety; Proper Record Keeping.

Their training is carried out on an ongoing basis according to individual requirements. Wardens take part in an 'Employee Review & Development' each year. This means that training needs are identified with their manager, and met as soon as possible.

THE INFORMATION WE NEED TO HAVE ABOUT YOU

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During your first week as a tenant, your Warden will go through your Tenant Service Plan with you. This will then be placed on your Personal File.

You will be fully consulted on your Tenant Service Plan. You will agree details such as:

- How often you will be contacted or visited by your Warden.
- Who you would like contacted in an emergency.
- Contact details for your telecare responders.
- Any other person you would like involved in planning the service you get. *Involving anyone else in your care will always be with your consent (unless you are at risk or unable to give your consent).*
- Who, if anyone, you would like 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.

You need to provide the Warden with the names of at least two people (in separate households) who are willing, and able, to be your telecare responders and respond in an emergency. These volunteers are the people who would be contacted by the Highland Hub in Inverness if you have an emergency and need to use your telecare alarm. They need to be within 30 minutes travel time to you. And need to be key holders.

Remember, your Warden will be keeping your records up-to-date. If there are changes, for example to your contact details, let them know. This is important to make sure you get help you need and, if necessary, any additional care from other services. 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 service.

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 get information on Data Protection at the start of your tenancy. This 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 Tenant Service 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.

This is because we have a 'duty of care'. Unless it is not appropriate to tell you, you will 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. If you have any legitimate preferences in these matters, Wardens will view these as being important to you and will be taken account of accordingly. You can let your Warden know about these - if you feel they are relevant to the service you get from us. 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 that you wish to remain private.

PLANNING FOR YOUR ABSENCE

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IF YOU'RE GOING AWAY OR ARE ADMITTED TO HOSPITAL

You must tell your Warden if you are going to be away overnight. This includes any hospital stays that involve an overnight/several overnights. If you do not, your Warden may need to report you as missing to the Police. They also enter your property to see if you are there.

This is very important. It helps Wardens plan for any arrangements that should be made for your home in your absence. And is critical for checks in case of fire (particularly where there are communal areas).

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 tenancy begins you will be given, and agree to, a legal written agreement (a Tenancy Agreement). This tells you what your rights and responsibilities are as a tenant, and what you can expect the Council to be responsible for. You will be told about, and agree to, any cost associated with the services you receive (e.g. warden; telecare services).

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 tenancy, you will also end all other services delivered by us to that property.

More information is included in the booklet '**Your Guide to a Successful Tenancy**'. You will get this booklet at the start of your tenancy.

HEALTH & SAFETY

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Your Warden is responsible for the safe running of the sheltered housing scheme. This includes communal areas such as a lounge and kitchen. They make sure 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.

Make your Warden aware of any accident or incident that has occurred. They will record this on the Council's form. It is important that all accidents and incidents are recorded. This is so that we can act to prevent future accidents and improve safety.

YOUR VIEWS ON THE SERVICE YOU RECEIVE

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We are always interested in the views of our tenants on the service we provide. This helps us monitor our service quality – and, if necessary, improve it. You should **always** feel free to tell your Warden if you are unhappy with the service you get. We also welcome positive feedback on the service.

As part of your Warden service, you will be visited at least every six months to review your Tenant Service Plan and ask for your feedback on the service. The feedback from this review will be one of the ways we monitor the quality of our services. 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 would rather not give your comments to the Warden, contact the Council's Service Centre. Ask to speak to the Manager of your sheltered housing. You can also 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 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 by The Highland Council's Community Services (Housing). Complaints about Wardens should be made using the Council's Complaints Procedure. Copies are available at any Council Service Point, or by telephoning: 01349 886606. You can 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.

If you are a tenant in the South Area of Highland, you can also complain to the Care Inspectorate. Contact details:

- Phone: 0345 600 9527 Email: enquiries@careinspectorate.com
- Website: www.careinspectorate.com
- Address: Care In, Compass House, 11 Riverside Drive, Dundee DD1 4NY

Inspection reports are available from the Care Inspectorate and on their website.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU WANT MORE INFORMATION

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You will be given useful information at the beginning of your tenancy. Information and guidance is also available on the Council's website at www.highland.gov.uk If you would like help with finding this information, or if you are unsure about anything, Your Warden can advise and direct you to find any information you need.

If you have any questions, please discuss these with your Warden or contact your local Housing Office / Service Centre

