



Sheltered Housing

Tenant Handbook

Sheltered Housing Services - Handbook

The Council's sheltered housing is managed by the Housing & Property Service.

Warden Services

Our sheltered housing is covered by a warden service during working hours. They provide an enhanced housing service and regular point of contact for you. Wardens are part of the local Housing team. You also have a Housing Management Officer.

Your Warden explains the different services when you start your tenancy. They:

- make sure that you are comfortable with things like reporting repairs, getting in touch with your housing officer, finding tenancy information and advice on the Council's website etc.;
- agree how often that they will contact you
- explain how to get involved in 'tenant participation' activities – and help you contact Tenant Participation Officers who promote tenant involvement
- will answer questions you have about the service and your home
- liaise with various Services on your behalf, if you need this.

If there is anything else that you need to help you live independently; speak to them. They can advise you on how to get the help you need.

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. This will be an accompanied visit.*
- Carry out domestic work of any kind, including laundry, shopping, pay bills, etc.
- Administer medication. If difficult, your warden can try to help you find a solution.
- Hold bank books, pension books or cash.
- Be a volunteer telecare responder.
- Be involved in disputes between neighbours, or with families. Your Housing Management Officer can help with this.

Please be aware that the Warden:

- Does not have a right of access to your house without your permission. *The exception to this would be if you haven't responded to your regular 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). If so, they first get emergency 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.
- Will **not** be responsible for handling your finances.

What will happen if my Warden's away or off duty?

Your Warden will tell you what their working hours are. They will also give you contact details for calls or contacts during their working hours.

You can get help or advice from your local Housing Office. Just call or visit your local Housing Office or Service Point 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.

When your warden is not available, we put other arrangements in place – and let you know. Highland Council is closed for Public Holidays. This means no service on:

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

What happens if there are changes to my Warden Service?

We will let you know you as quickly as possible. We will keep you informed as far as possible in advance of any planned changes to your service.

Your information and contacts

During your first week as a tenant, your Warden will go through your Tenant Contact Plan with you. This will then be placed on your Personal File. You will be fully consulted and will agree details such as:

- How often you will be contacted or visited – and your preferred method of contact. They take into account the different needs you have.
- Who you would like contacted in an emergency.
- Any other person you would like involved in planning the service you get.
- 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.

Remember, your Warden needs to keep your records up-to-date. Let them know any changes, for example to your contact details. This is important. It makes sure you get help you need and, if necessary, any additional care from other services.

Your Warden tells you why they need information about you. **You should never have to provide any information which is not essential for your service.**

Security & Confidentiality

This section is about how we make sure that your privacy and rights are respected.

We keep information about you securely and confidentially. At the start of your tenancy, we will tell you about how your information may be used, how your confidentiality will be protected and your rights. This is set out in our Privacy Notice available on www.highland.gov.uk/privacynotices on the Council's website.

You have a right to see information which is held about you. You can find out more about this on the Council's website or by asking your Warden or Housing Officer.

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 if another person is 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.

Equal Opportunities

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.

Sheltered Housing Charges

Charges are explained to you before you sign your tenancy.

If you get benefits to help you to pay your rent, these will also cover some (or all) the charges for the warden service.

You are responsible for all other housing related costs – this includes heating; electricity; phone-line and Council Tax.

Your rights and responsibilities

When your tenancy begins you are 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 also get this booklet: **Your Guide to a Successful Tenancy'**, at the start of your tenancy. And you can find tenancy information on the Highland Council's website at www/highland.gov.uk

If your circumstances are likely to change, make sure to tell your Warden. They can help you plan and avoid problems. For example, if you wish to move and end your tenancy.

What if I am going to be away for a time or admitted to hospital?

You must tell your Warden if you are going to be away overnight. This includes hospital stays. If you do not, your Warden may need to report you as missing to the Police. Or enter your property to see if you are there.

This is important. It helps us to plan for any housing issues. It is critical for checks in case of fire (particularly if there are communal areas in your building).

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

Health & Safety

Your Warden is responsible for the safe running of the sheltered housing. 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. They will record this on the Council's form. It is important these are recorded. This is so that we can act to prevent future accidents and improve safety.

Your view on services

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 or have concerns. We also welcome positive feedback on the service.

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 Service. You can also follow the guidance under 'Making a Complaint' below.

Making a complaint

If you feel unable to tell your Warden of difficulties, you can complain directly to the Council. We will take your complaint seriously and deal with it as quickly as possible using the Council's Complaints Procedure. Use the form on the Council's website at www.highland.gov.uk You can also call us. All complaints will be dealt with

You do not have to give your name. But you need to if you want us to get back to you.

What to do if you want more information

Guidance is available on the Council's website at www.highland.gov.uk If you want help to find this, or if you are unsure about anything, your Warden can advise you.

If you have questions, please ask your Warden or contact your local Housing Office / Service Centre. Find contacts on www.highland.gov.uk/housingoffices

Useful Contacts

Highland Council (Housing Services) phone number **01349 886602**

Warden's Name.....

Warden's Phone

Housing Management Officer's Name

Housing Management Officer's Phone

Local Housing Office address

Emergency repair 'out of hours': 01349 886691

If you need this information in an alternative format (e.g. large print) or language, speak to your Warden or contact: The Highland Council, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness IV3 5NX
Telephone: 01349 886602 Email: housing@highland.gov.uk

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