

WEST OF SCOTLAND

H O U S I N G A S S O C I A T I O N

Tenant's Handbook



www.westscot.co.uk



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Springburn Art Project

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A. Introduction

1 | Welcome

Welcome to your Tenant's Handbook.

We hope that you will find it easy to read, interesting and useful. The Handbook gives information about the Association, our responsibilities as a landlord and the services we provide. It offers advice on a range of issues about your tenancy. This should help you to get the most out of being a tenant of the Association and to enjoy your home as much as possible. West of Scotland Housing Association tries to provide the best possible services for our tenants. If you have any suggestions about how we can improve our services please let us know.

There is a flap inside the back cover of this handbook. You may want to keep your copy of your Tenancy Agreement here. The Tenancy Agreement gives a lot more information on rights and responsibilities.

2 | About the Association

History

West of Scotland Housing Association is one of the oldest housing associations in Scotland. It was founded in 1965 as Christian Action Glasgow Housing Association. Reverend Richard Holloway, and a group of others, formed the Association to help people living in the Gorbals and Pollokshields areas of Glasgow.

Progress in the early days was slow, with individual flats being bought and improved. However, a Housing Act in

1974 introduced a new funding framework for improving sub-standard houses. The Association then grew steadily until 1981 when it was renamed West of Scotland Housing Association. This was because the Association was starting to work outside Glasgow.

Since the early 1980s the Association has built and improved many homes. It now operates over a large part of West Central Scotland.



Our Cowllairs office

What We Do

As well as managing houses and providing services to tenants, the Association continues to grow to meet housing needs. It does this by building new houses or buying older properties and bringing them up to modern standards. Most of the money for this comes from grants given by The Scottish Government. The Association also has to borrow money from banks and building societies to help fund its new developments. The Association provides houses for single people,

couples, families, older people and people with special needs. In recent years it has also provided shared equity housing for people wanting to get a start on the home ownership ladder.

Becoming a Member

The Association is a voluntary organisation which has charitable status. A Management Committee is responsible for overseeing the work of the Association. The Committee agrees all the policies of the Association and is elected annually by members of the Association. The Association wishes to encourage tenants to become members. The Association's Committee is made up of tenants and other people who share the aim of providing good homes and services. Committee places are set aside for tenants from Glasgow, Ayrshire, Camlachie and Lanarkshire. This is to make sure that tenants from every area can influence the Association's policies and priorities.

The day to day work is carried out by staff employed by the Association. Staff work in different departments, doing a wide range of duties. You will have most contact with your Housing Officer.

To ensure that it acts in a proper manner, the Association is registered with The Scottish Government's Housing Regulator. They monitor the way we operate and check that our policies are fair.

Our Aims

Since the early days in the Gorbals, the Association has been committed to helping people in housing need. This is still very important, and has been built in to the Association's vision.

Our vision is:

"To create, sustainable, affordable housing and communities where people want to live."

Willowacre Trust

The Association is fortunate to have the support of a sister charitable trust, Willowacre Trust. The Trust provides funding which cannot be obtained from any other source to assist the development of new projects. It also has a welfare fund which provides direct support to tenants of the Association in need and assists with the cost of community and social events.



Celebrations at Willowacre Trust

B. Your Tenancy

1| Type of Tenancy

From the 30th September 2002, all of West of Scotland Housing Association's tenants become Scottish Secure Tenants. This gives tenants certain rights and responsibilities laid out in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. These apply whether or not you have signed a Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement.

If you have signed a Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement, you will have additional contractual rights and responsibilities as stated in the agreement.

2| Preserved Rights

If you were a secure tenant before you became a Scottish Secure Tenant, then you carried over the right to have rent set by a Rent Officer.

3| Your Right to Buy Your House

Because West of Scotland Housing Association has charitable status, the vast majority of our tenants do not have a right to buy their home. However, some tenants who transferred with their house to the Association from another landlord may have a right to buy their home.

We have written to tenants who have a right to buy their home. You will not have a right to buy if you have not received a letter from us.

C. Being A Tenant

1| Introduction

Being a tenant of the Association gives you a number of rights. It also places a number of responsibilities on you and your family. These rights and responsibilities are there to help make sure that you and all our tenants are able to enjoy their homes to the full. We will always try to keep to our side of the bargain by giving you your rights and we hope that you will live up to your responsibilities.

2| Being a Good Neighbour

Living beside other tenants can sometimes cause problems or difficulties for everyone. Showing some tolerance and applying common sense can help neighbours live together in harmony and help everyone enjoy their homes to the full.

Abandoned Cars:

If you think a vehicle has been abandoned in your street or car parking area, you can contact your local council's environmental health department, who will take steps to have the vehicle removed. If you are unsure about who you should contact, telephone the Customer Service Team on 0844 892 0321.

Living in Flats

If you live in a flat, following a few simple dos and don'ts can make life more enjoyable for you and your neighbours.

Do:

- ✓ take your turn at cleaning the stairs and common areas
- ✓ Keep any pets under control at all times
- ✓ close gates and doors behind you, particularly doors in blocks with controlled entry systems
- ✓ keep an eye on your children and make sure they're not a nuisance to neighbours
- ✓ expect to hear some noise from other flats at times and be tolerant of this
- ✓ make sure that friends visiting or leaving your flat late at night come and go quietly
- ✓ Put your rubbish into the bins provided in the back court
- ✓ take your bin out for emptying and return it as soon as possible on the appropriate day
- ✓ arrange to have bulky items uplifted by your local council

Don't:

- X play music, TV, etc., at loud volume, especially late at night
- X leave bikes, etc., cluttering up or blocking stairs
- X leave rubbish on the stairs, as this is a fire hazard
- X let anybody into the block if you don't know who they are
- X use household appliances like vacuum cleaners late at night

Bulk uplifts

Your local council provide this service to all residents in their area. If you are unsure who to contact, telephone the Customer Service Team on 0844 892 0321 for advice.

Looking after Older Neighbours

If you have older people living next to you, keep an eye out for them to make sure they're all right. This is particularly important during winter. Watch out for signs like milk not taken in or papers left in letter boxes. If you're worried about a neighbour who you've not seen for a day or two contact the Police or your Housing Officer.

3 Problems with Neighbours

Problems with neighbours can range from noisy parties to criminal activity. Anti-social behaviour can make life very difficult for people living in the area and we want to stop it whenever we can.

We believe every person has a right to live in their home and community free from harassment, fear and undue disturbance from others. We will look at specific area approaches where we have a lot of houses and particular difficulties with anti-social behaviour. We will use a broader range of actions to deal with anti-social behaviour. All complaints will be recorded and monitored.

If you are having problems with a neighbour, try to discuss things with them first. They may not realise that they're causing a problem. It's important that you approach neighbours in a calm and open way and be willing to compromise if possible.

It may be that a friendly word will solve the problem. If the situation doesn't get any better or you're worried about approaching a neighbour, speak to the Customer Service Team. They will discuss the problem with you. We will record your complaint and deal with complaints in confidence.

Your Housing Officer will visit everybody involved and try to settle the situation. If mediation does not work and problems continue we may have to consider court action against the tenants concerned. We can also look at using an independent mediation service where appropriate.

It can be very difficult to sort out some problems or to take court action. It is a big help if tenants who are affected by anti-social behaviour keep notes and a diary of dates and times when they have problems. If cases have to go to court then we might have to ask tenants who have complained to help us by acting as witnesses.

If you want more information you can get a copy of our leaflet "Problems with Neighbours," from the Customer Service Team.

Remember that you should call the Police if you are being threatened by a neighbour or if neighbours are causing a breach of the peace. Some things are better dealt with by the Police rather than by us.

If your problems are being caused by someone who owns their house or who is the tenant of another landlord we may not be able to take action against them. We will, however, give you all the advice and support we can.

D. Your Right To Complain

We always try to provide the best possible service to our tenants. There can be times, however, when things don't go as well as we would like and we need to know about these occasions. We can't improve our services if we don't know where we're going wrong.

We have introduced a Comments, Complaints and Compliments Procedure to:

- make it easy to let us know when you are not happy with the services
- Stop problems happening again
- deal quickly with any shortcomings in our service
- be fair, open and easy to use
- promote a way of resolving disputes.

If you're not happy about the way something has been dealt with, you should try to sort it out with the staff that have been dealing with it or their managers. Where this doesn't work you should ask for your difficulties to be treated as a formal complaint.

The Area Housing Manager or the Director of the Department involved will be first to consider a formal complaint. They will try to reply to you within two weeks. They may want to meet you or visit you at home to discuss the problem. If your complaint is still not sorted out to your satisfaction, you can ask for the Association's Chief Executive to investigate. He will try to reply to you within two weeks and may also want to meet you or visit you at home.

If the Chief Executive and the tenant cannot resolve the problem, then the matter will be considered by a panel made up of members of our Management Committee. Their decision will be final. You will be given the chance to present your case to the panel.

Any tenant who is not happy with our final decision will be given details of how to contact the independent Housing Association Ombudsman Service. We will co-operate fully with any enquiry by the Ombudsman.

If at any stage in the process a complaint is found to be justified we will apologise straight away and sort things out as soon as possible. We may offer a small ex-gratia payment to repay tenants for any expenses they have had or for any inconvenience or distress caused to them.

SUMMARY OF THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

- Step 1** try to sort things out with staff
- Step 2** involve the Area Housing Manager or Director
- Step 3** involve the Chief Executive
- Step 4** involve members of the Management Committee
- Step 5** complain to the Housing Association Ombudsman

E. Paying Your Rent

1 | How your Rent is worked out

Former Secure Tenants

If you have been a tenant with the Association since before 1989 you have

the right to a Registered Rent. This is set by the Rent Officer, an independent Government official. We can only apply to have your rent increased once every three years unless we have made major improvements to your home. At each review we apply for a new rent. Generally we will apply for the rent you would have paid if you had an assured tenancy. The Rent Officer then decides what is a fair rent for the house.

Depending on the size of the increase between two registration dates, it may have to be phased in over two years. You have the right to appeal to a Rent Assessment Committee if you think that the new rent set by the Rent Officer is too high.

We will give you at least one month's notice in writing of any increase in your rent.

Scottish Secure and Assured Tenants

We are responsible for setting rents for Scottish Secure and Assured Tenants. In doing this we try to set rents which meet all of the costs of managing and maintaining our houses, which allows money to be set aside for improvements to our houses and which are affordable for our tenants.

Rents for Assured and Scottish Secure Tenancies vary depending on the size, type, condition and location of houses. Points are awarded to each house based on a range of factors that reflect the quality of accommodation. The rent is then based on the number of points. The Association's Management Committee reviews the rent level each year.

If you have transferred to the Association from another landlord as part of a stock transfer then your rent increase may be linked to the annual rate of inflation.

If we do increase your rent it will take place on the 1st of April each year. We will consult you on the proposed rent increase and we will write to you at least one month beforehand to confirm the proposed rent increase.

2|Service Charges

If we provide you with services then we normally charge you separately for these. This Service Charge is usually on top of your rent. The type of things which are covered by Service Charges are grass cutting or garden maintenance and stair cleaning, etc. If you live in sheltered housing then there will be a Service Charge to pay for the maintenance of common facilities. You may also have to pay the council for the cost of the warden service.

You should pay Service Charges along with your rent every month. You may be eligible for Housing Benefit to help with the costs of Service Charges unless the charge is for heating or power used in your own home.

3|When You Should Pay

Your rent is due to be paid on the 28th of each month in advance. For example, your rent for July should be paid on 28th June. If you would find it easier to pay weekly or fortnightly then you can do this provided that you pay in advance.

4|How You Can Pay

You can pay your rent in any of the following ways:

- by Direct Debit
- by Telephone or over the Internet
- by using your Swipe Card at any Post Office
- at a shop or garage which has a Pay Point terminal
- by agreeing that your Housing Benefit is paid straight to the Association by the Council.

When paying by Swipe Card, you simply hand over the payment and your card. The till operator will give you a receipt, which you should keep as proof of payment. You can get a mandate to pay by Direct Debit from the Customer Service Team. If you wish to pay by telephone, and you have a debit card, you can call Allpay on 0870 770 0472 or log on to www.allpay.net

For security reasons we do not accept cash at any of our offices.

5|Housing Benefit

Housing Benefit helps people meet the cost of rent if they would find it difficult to pay themselves. You can apply even if you do not get any other benefits. Housing Benefit is administered by Councils.

You can claim Housing Benefit by contacting your local Council and asking for a form. Forms are also available from the Customer Service Team. You should make a claim even if

you are not sure you will qualify.

You should make a claim as soon as you can because it is difficult to get a claim backdated.

The amount of Housing Benefit you get depends on the amount of money coming into your house, your savings, and the number and ages of people in your house. If you are on Income Support you will normally get all of your rent paid through Housing Benefit unless you have other adults living in the house. You need to make a claim to the Council for Housing Benefit even if you are getting Income Support.

The Council will pay your Housing Benefit by cheque to you unless you ask for the money to be paid straight to the Association. Most people prefer to have their Housing Benefit paid straight to the Association as this helps them with budgeting.

If your income or the number of people living in your house changes, you must let the Council know. The Council will also send you a new form every year. You must fill this form in and send it back to the Council or your Housing Benefit will be stopped.

If you need advice about Housing Benefit or help to fill a form, please get in touch with the Customer Service Team. If they cannot help, they can ask our Welfare Rights Service to get in touch with you to sort things out.

6 | Difficulties Paying Rent

If you are having difficulties finding the money to pay your rent, you should get in touch with your Housing Officer

straight away. As well as checking to see if you are eligible for any benefits, your Housing Officer will make a sensible arrangement with you to pay what you owe over time. Once you make an arrangement it is very important that you keep to it and make regular payments.

We will always try to deal sympathetically with you if you are having financial problems. However, if you do not make or keep to an agreement to pay rent which you owe then the Association will, as a last resort, take legal action. This could result in eviction.

7 | Welfare Rights

To help tenants to get as much help with their finances as possible, the Association has a Welfare Rights Service. Staff will provide advice on any benefits you might qualify for and help you to apply for them. The Welfare Rights Service can also help you to put in appeals and will attend tribunals with you if necessary.

This is a very useful service. If you think that the Welfare Rights Service may be able to help you, please contact the Customer Service Team.

If you want advice or assistance about money problems or debts from someone who does not work for the Association, then you should contact an organisation like the Citizens or Money Advice Bureau. The Social Work Department or Department of Works and Pensions may also be able to help.

F. Getting Repairs Done

1 | Who Does What?

It is important for both you and the Association that houses are maintained to a high standard. The Association will repair most items in your home, however, you will be responsible for doing some repairs. This division of responsibility for repairs is shown in the tables below:

E = Emergency	Complete within 24 hours
U = Urgent	Complete within 3 working days
R = Routine	Complete within 10 working days
P = Planned	Carry out as part of larger contract (Tenant to be advised of likely timescale when reporting the repair)

If a repair is a qualifying repair (Q) under the “Right to Repair”, the Association has to carry out the repair within a certain timescale. You will be advised of the timescale and an appointment will be made at the time you report a qualifying repair. The Association reserves the right to pre-inspect the repair to determine whether it is a qualifying repair, you will be advised of this when reporting the repair.

PLUMBING

Item:	WSHA	Tenant	Priority	Q	Comments
Pipes, taps, stopcocks, etc	√		R		Leaks are emergencies, others are routine
Tap washers	√		R		
Plugs and chains		√			
Hot Water Cylinder	√		E	√	No hot water RTR leaks are emergencies, others routine
Choked sinks or toilets	√		E	√	Recharged if due to neglect
WC Cisterns	√		E/R	√	Leaks are emergencies, others are routine
WC Bowl	√		E/R		Leaks are emergencies, other are routine
Toilet seats	√		R		
Wash hand basins	√		R		
Baths	√		R		
Kitchen Sinks	√		U		
Showers		√			Unless fitted by WSHA
Waste pipes	√		U		
Drains	√		E/U		
Gutters and downpipes	√		R		
Washing machine connections		√			Unless fitted by WSHA

ELECTRICAL

Item:	WSHA	Tenant	Priority	Q	Comments
Switches and sockets	√		R		Emergency if dangerous
Light fittings	√		R		
Stair Lighting	√		U		Emergency in common stairs
Wiring and consumer unit	√		E	√	Check trip switch first
Plugs and fuses		√			
Immersion heater	√		U	√	Routine if other means to heat water
Electric fires		√			Unless fitted by WSHA
Storage heaters	√		R	√	Emergency if no heat in the house
Communal TV aerials	√		E		
Warden call systems	√		E		
Controlled entry systems	√		U		
Extractor fans	√		U	√	
Door bells		√	R		Unless fitted by WSHA
Smoke detectors	√		E		
Smoke detector batteries		√			
Electrical appliances		√			
Outside lighting	√				If fitted by WSHA (Tenants are responsible for bulbs to lights in their garden)

HEATING

Item:	WSHA	Tenant	Priority	Q	Comments
Boiler	√		E	√	
Fireplaces	√		R		If supplied by WSHA
Radiators, pumps, thermostats	√		E/R	√	Emergency only if no heating
Chimneys or flues	√		R	√	
Chimney sweeping		√			
Gas fires	√		R		Emergency if only form of heating

JOINERY

Item:	WSHA	Tenant	Priority	Q	Comments
External Doors and Frames	√		R	√	Emergency if door not secure (including handles and locks)
Internal Doors and Frames	√		R		Will recharge if due to neglect, etc

Internal handles and locks	√		R	Will recharge if due to neglect, etc
Replacing lost or broken keys		√		
Skirting		√		
Stairs, banisters and handrails	√		R	√ Emergency if unsafe
Floors	√		P	√ Inspection needed first
Kitchen units	√		R	√ Will recharge if due to neglect
Broken glass		√		√ Unless vandalism is proven
Window frames, latches, cords	√		R	√
Double glazing	√		P	

STRUCTURE

Item:	WSHA	Tenant	Priority	Q	Comments
Internal walls and ceilings	√		R		We will recharge if due to neglect, etc (including plasterwork)
External walls, roughcast	√		R		Will be inspected first
Roof tiles, ridges, etc	√		R		Emergency if unsafe
Chimney heads and cans	√		R		Emergency if unsafe
Carports		√			Unless built by WSHA
External woodwork (including painting)	√		R/P		

OUTSIDE THE HOUSE

Item:	WSHA	Tenant	Priority	Q	Comments
Paths and steps	√		R	√	Only if provided by WSHA
Handrails	√		E/R	√	Emergency if unsafe
Fences and gates	√		P		Only if provided by WSHA
Clothes poles	√		R		
Rotary driers	√		R		Only if provided by WSHA
Retaining / Boundary walls	√		R/P		

If a repair needs to be done because you have been careless or negligent, e.g. flooding from your washing machine or shower, then you may have to do it yourself or pay for it to be done. We may carry out repairs that are your responsibility and then send you a bill for the cost of the work.

Please note that we may alter the priority to reflect particular situations e.g. where there is a strong medical need.

2 | How to Report Repairs

You should let us know as soon as possible if a repair needs done. This lets us get repairs done before things get any worse. The best way to report a repair is to phone the Customer Service Team on 0844 892 0321. Be ready to tell them your address, the nature of the problem, which room is affected, when you can give access for the repair.

You can also report a repair on our website using our repair page. This can be found at www.westscot.co.uk click on the repairs and maintenance tab then on repairs online on the left of the screen.

Most repairs can be identified without an inspection. In some cases however, a Housing Officer or Technical Officer will call at your home to see exactly what is needed before a repair can be ordered.

3 | Reporting a repair when office is closed

If you need an emergency repair done when our offices are closed, you should phone BCAS on 0800 7837937. They will arrange for a contractor to visit.

The type of repairs we will do outside office hours are –

- Burst pipes/badly leaking pipes causing flooding
- Choked toilet (if only toilet in house)
- No hot or cold water
- Blocked drain causing a leak or sewage into home

- No heating
- Door or ground floor window not secure
- Broken handrail to stairs
- Serious roof leak
- No electricity or no lights
- Smoke coming from an electrical fitting
- Faulty smoke detector sounding

4 | How Long Will They Take?

The time it will take for repairs to be carried out depends on how serious they are. All repairs are given a category and the timescales for completion are as follows:

Emergency Repairs

These are serious faults which could cause risk to your health or damage to the house, e.g. burst pipes, no power. Repairs in this category should be made safe within 6 hours and will normally be completed within 48 hours.

Urgent Repairs

These are repairs which are not so serious but need to be done quickly, e.g. light not working. Urgent repairs should be done within 3 working days.

Routine Repairs

Most repairs fall into this category. This includes work like internal joiner work, external repairs and installing new baths, etc. We aim to complete all routine repairs within 10 working days.

We will tell you which category your repair is in when you report it and when it should be completed. We will also try to make an arrangement with you for a convenient time for the tradesman to call.

If you are unable to give access after it has been arranged but you do not cancel the appointment, you will be recharged the cost of the contractors time for the aborted call.



Working on repairs

5|Quality of Service

Making sure repairs are done properly is important to you and the Association. We want to ensure that our repairs service is as good as possible. We monitor our own performance and the performance of our contractors to ensure you get a good quality service.

You have a critical role in this. After you report a repair we will send you a 'Repair Satisfaction Form'. You should fill this in to tell us whether or not you are happy with the standard of repair. If you are not happy, e.g. if the contractor

was untidy, impolite or did a bad job then please let us know. We will investigate all complaints about poor quality work. We may also telephone or visit you to check that repairs have been done properly.

6|Cyclical Maintenance and Major Repairs

(Planned work)

As well as doing repairs that are reported to us by tenants, we do regular maintenance work to our houses to keep them in good condition. Our cyclical maintenance programme includes work like cleaning and repairing gutters and painting external woodwork, etc. At present we aim to paint external woodwork every 4 years.

We will often hold back non-essential repairs, like fencing, and do them as a contract because it gives better value for money and means we can do more repairs from the money available.

We also carry out major repairs and renewal of fittings. This includes work like rewiring, installing or renewing central heating, renewing windows and re-roofing, etc. on a planned basis to keep all our houses up to modern standards. If any major repairs or improvements are planned for your home we will contact and consult with you well in advance of the work being done. We will outline the major repairs programme each year in our newsletter.



Building more new homes!

7| Defects liability

After your house has been built, improved or had major work, the work that was done is covered by a guarantee called 'defects liability' and usually for either six months or a year. This means that the original contractor has to make good any defects which occur during that period. You should report these repairs to your area team. We will arrange for the work to be done, however, at times it can be difficult for us to get the contractor to respond quickly.

8| Right to repair

From 30th September 2002, under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, Scottish secure tenants have the right to have small urgent repairs carried out by their landlord within a given timescale. This is called the Right to Repair scheme.

When you report a repair we will tell you whether it is a qualifying repair under the scheme.

If the repair qualifies under the scheme we will:

- Tell you the maximum amount of time allowed to carry out the repair;
- Explain your rights under the Right to Repair Scheme;
- Make access arrangements with you to allow the repair to be carried out.

If our usual contractor has not started the qualifying repair in the time limit set, you can ask a contractor from the Association's approved list to carry out the repair. You cannot instruct another contractor if the repair is also a defect (*see defects liabilities above*). You may also be entitled to compensation from the Association for the inconvenience.

If you have to instruct another contractor because the repair has not been started, the contractor will automatically bill the Association.

If you require any further information please contact the Customer Service Team on 0844 892 0321.

G.Home Safety & Security

1| Safety in the Home

Homes can be very dangerous places. A large number of accidents happen in the home every year. Many of these could be avoided if people followed a few simple precautions such as:

- Don't leave electric cables or flexes trailing
- Never leave saucepan or pot handles sticking out over the edge of the cooker

- Always use steps if you are getting anything out of a high cupboard or doing a job like changing a light bulb. Do not stand on chairs, stools, etc.
- Always keep medicines, solvents, or other hazardous substances out of the reach of children
- Take care when doing DIY and using tools. If you are using power tools always use a circuit breaker.

Gas

The Association is required by law to inspect all its gas appliances and pipe work and issue its tenants with a Landlord's Gas Safety Record. This will be done in a 9 month cycle. In addition the Association will service any gas fires or central heating boilers in your house every year. It is essential that you allow the engineers access to do this work.

If you have any gas appliances of your own, e.g. a gas cooker then you should have it repaired and serviced by an approved tradesman. You must check that any tradesmen work for a company registered with Gas Safe Register, a body which approves only properly qualified and trained gas installers.

If you want to install any gas appliance, you must first contact West of Scotland Housing Association for permission. It is dangerous (and can be illegal) if you let an unqualified person fit, repair or service a gas appliance.

If you smell gas in your home, you should:

- Put out all cigarettes and other naked lights

- Switch off all gas appliances
- Turn the gas off at the mains (the main tap is usually beside your gas meter)
- Make sure you do not turn on any lights or other electrical switches (this could cause a spark)
- Phone TRANSCO on the emergency number: **0800 111 999**

2|Security

Many burglaries are done on the spur of the moment. They can be avoided by following a few steps:

- Always lock your doors and windows if you are going out
- If you are going away, ask a neighbour to keep an eye on your house. Make sure you cancel your milk and paper deliveries
- Do not leave valuables lying about where they can be seen
- Do not keep large sums of money in your home
- If you live in a block of flats with a controlled entry system, make sure that the entry doors are always locked. Do not let anyone you don't know into the building
- Relatively cheap items like door chains and peep holes can increase your security
- All of our staff and our contractors carry identification as do staff that work for Councils, Water Boards, etc. If anyone calls at your home ask to see identification before you let them

in. If they don't have proper identification, or you are not sure about them, do not let them in. If you are at all suspicious, telephone the police

- A Neighbourhood Watch scheme can help to reduce the chance of break-ins as people keep an eye on each other's houses and watch out for anything suspicious in the area. The crime prevention or community involvement branch at your local police station can give you advice on setting up a Neighbourhood Watch scheme.

3|Fire

Fire Precautions

Fire can kill. Many fires are caused by carelessness. Some of the more common causes of fires are:

- Dropped matches or cigarettes
- Chip pans being left unattended and overheating
- Smoking in bed
- Overloaded electrical sockets or faulty electrical appliances
- Faulty electric blankets
- Drying or airing clothes near fires or on storage heaters.

Carrying out these few simple checks before going to bed every night could help you to avoid having a fire:

- Empty ashtrays into a metal bin
- Disconnect all electrical appliances which do not need to be on overnight.

Smoke Detectors

The Association has installed smoke detectors in all of its houses. Most are wired smoke detectors with a battery back-up in case there are any power cuts.

Your smoke alarm will only help to protect you and your family if it is working properly. To make sure it is working properly you should test it every month by pressing the test button. You can use a brush handle to reach it. If the battery is flat, put a new one in your detector. Never take the battery out of the smoke detector unless it is to replace it with a new one.

Never try to disconnect your alarm, move it or paint it.

If you have a Fire

If there is a fire in your house, you should do the following:

- Close the door to the room where the fire is to stop flames from spreading
- Warn everyone else in the house and get everyone out immediately
- Phone 999 for the fire brigade
- Warn other people in the building and your neighbours
- Do not go back in the house for any reason until the fire brigade has said it is safe to do so
- Contact the Association to let us know that there has been a fire, no matter how small.

4| Watch Out for Winter

Although most of our houses have central heating, there is still the risk of frozen or burst pipes during periods of heavy frost. Following the few simple steps below should help you to avoid any damage to your home:

- Find out where your main stopcock or tap is
- Report any dripping taps or running overflows to the Association so that they can be fixed
- Always try to keep your home heated to at least 10°C and allow heat to circulate into all rooms
- If you are going away from home for any length of time during winter ask the Association to drain down your water supply

If your Pipes Freeze

- Telephone the Association for advice
- Turn off the water at the stop cock or tap
- Switch off your immersion heater or boiler
- Turn on taps at sink, bath, etc.
- Turn on as much heating as you can

If you have a Burst Pipe

- Telephone the Association and report the problem
- Turn off the water at the stop cock or tap
- Switch off your immersion heater or boiler
- Turn on all taps to empty your tanks

- If water comes into contact with electrical fittings, switch off the electricity at the mains

Remember burst pipes can cause a lot of damage. The Association will repair your house but we are not responsible for damage to decoration or to your furniture, carpets or other belongings.

5| Electricity

If all the power goes off in your home, check your fuse box or circuit breaker. Where necessary, replace the blown fuse with the correct size of fuse:

- Lighting – 5 amp
- Immersion heater – 15/20 amp
- Sockets – 30 amp
- Cooker – 30/45 amp

Circuit Breakers

Most of our houses now have circuit breakers and a residual current detector (RCD) rather than a fuse box. These are more sensitive than fuses and will turn off the supply to the circuit when they detect a problem. An RCD will turn off the supply to all the circuits it protects, usually the sockets, water heating, shower and cooker, the overhead lights are not usually protected by an RCD.

Before reporting a loss of power, carry out the following checks:

1. Is there a power cut in the area? If so, contact your supplier to find out how long it will be before the power will be back on.
2. If you have a power card meter, check there is credit on the meter.

3. If there is not a power cut, then check your circuit breakers. Is one of the little switches at the off position? If yes can you push it to on? If yes then problem resolved. If no then you will need to turn off all the appliances connected to the circuit, reset the circuit breaker, then switch them on or plug them in one by one until you find the problem appliance. Double check that it isn't a problem socket by plugging the appliance into another socket. If the appliance turns off the circuit breaker again then it is a faulty appliance.
4. If all the circuit breakers are "on" check the RCD, if it has turned off then the problem lies in one of the circuits it protects. Turn off or unplug everything on the protected circuits and reset the RCD. Then switch on each appliance one by one until you find the problem. When turning on the cooker, check each ring, grill and oven separately, allowing them to fully heat up.

If you can't find the problem, report it to the Association.

6|Insurance

We insure the structure of your home against damage. This is called Buildings Insurance. Buildings insurance does not cover your contents (furniture, clothes, bedding, carpets, appliances, etc.), personal belongings or the decoration of your home. If you have a fire or flood and you do not have your own house contents insurance you could face a financial disaster.

We strongly recommend that you take out comprehensive house contents insurance to cover your belongings for damage or loss as a result of fire, flood or theft. You should check any insurance policy carefully to make sure that it covers you properly and that you are insured for the correct amount. Remember how much it would cost you to replace your belongings if you lost them.

The SFHA operate a very competitive home contents insurance scheme. You can get an application form by contacting the Customer Service Team on 0844 892 0321.

7|Window catches

Please make sure you always use the window safety catches properly. This can help prevent break-ins and make your home a safer place for children. If you discover that any of the catches are not working properly then let us know and we will get them repaired.



H. Getting a House or Moving

1 | Our Allocations Policy

Who can apply for a house?

The Association operates an open access housing list. This means that anyone aged 16 or over can apply for housing, and be assessed at any time. People living in all tenures and types of housing can apply. Application forms are available from all our offices.

If you want to apply for one of our houses in Lanarkshire, you should complete a “Common Housing Register” Application Form issued by the Council. You will then be added to the Council’s Register. The Association selects its new tenants from this Register.

How do you assess applications for housing?

The Association’s Allocation Policy is based on points. Every application is assessed and points are awarded based on the following factors:

- Property Condition
- Under Occupancy
- Security of Tenure
- Health Needs
- Sharing Amenities
- Social Needs
- Overcrowding
- Harassment

The number of points we award depends on how suitable your current accommodation is for your needs.

Because the Association only allocates a small number of houses each year, we are only able to help those applicants in the greatest housing need.

Your name will be added to the lists for the areas you have requested. The more points you have, the higher your position on the lists will be. If two or more applicants have the same number of points we will give priority to the person who applied first.

Will I need to provide any more details?

If you are applying to move on social or health grounds, you will need to provide support for your application. This could be a letter or form from your doctor, from your employer, or from an agency like the Social Work Department or Police, etc.

If you are, or have been, a tenant before, we will ask your landlord to let us know how you conducted your tenancy. If we get an unsatisfactory report then we may suspend your application for a period of time.

Where can I move to?

Our houses are divided up into areas, and you can pick up to five areas where you would like to live. There is no limit to the number of house types you can choose, but remember that if you want to move for medical reasons only certain types of houses may be suitable for you.

The size of house you can apply for depends on the size of your family. Normally we allow one bedroom for the following:

- Each couple or adult (i.e. aged over 16)
- Two children of the same sex under 16
- Two children of opposite sex both under 8
- Each child between 8 and 16 who would otherwise have to share with someone of the opposite sex (this is for guidance only)

Offers of housing

It is very difficult to say how quickly you may get an offer of housing. This depends on how many points you have, the number of people on each list and the number of houses that become available.

Before we offer you a house, a Housing Officer will normally visit you. This is to check your circumstances and to answer any questions you may have about becoming a tenant of the Association. We make offers of housing in writing, and you will be invited to view the house you are being offered with a Housing Officer.

If you refuse two offers of housing

which are suitable for your needs, you will not be offered housing for a period of two years.

Nomination Agreements

Where we have houses we enter into a Nomination Agreement with the local Council. Under these agreements the Council can nominate people from its waiting list for housing with us. About half of our empty houses are let to people nominated by Councils. If you want to be nominated in this way you should apply to the local Council and make sure they know that you are interested in being nominated to the Association.

More information

More information about our Allocations Policy and how it works can be found in a separate leaflet called 'Applying for a House'. You can get a copy of this by contacting the Customer Service Team on 0844 892 0321.

2 | Transferring to another West of Scotland House

Who can apply for a transfer?

If you are a tenant of the Association and you want to move to another house (a 'transfer') then you can apply at any time.

How are applications for transfer assessed?

Your Application for Transfer will be awarded points based on the circumstances in your home. Points are awarded for the following reasons:

- Overcrowding
- Under Occupation
- Health Needs
- Social Needs (e.g. employment needs, care needs)
- Harassment/Domestic Abuse

The number of points you will get depends on how suitable your current accommodation is for your needs.

Your Application for Transfer will be placed on the list for the areas you have requested. The more points you have, the higher your position on the lists will be. If two or more tenants have the same number of points we will give priority to the person who applied first. We keep Applications for Transfer on a separate list from applications from people who are applying to go on our housing list. This means that your Application for Transfer will be assessed against other tenants in similar circumstances.

Please note that if you are in rent arrears or owe any other money to the Association or have a poor tenancy record you may not be offered another house until those things are sorted out or you are keeping to an arrangement to repay.



Will I need to provide any more details?

If you are applying to transfer on health or social grounds or to escape harassment, you will need to provide support for your application. This could be a letter or form from your doctor, from your employer or from another agency like the Social Work Department or Police, etc.

Where can I move to?

Our housing stock is divided up into areas and you can pick up to five areas where you would like to live. There is no limit to the number of house types you can choose, but remember that if you want to move for medical reasons only certain types of houses may be suitable for you.

The size of house you can apply for depends on the size of your family. Normally we allow one bedroom for the following:

- Each couple or adult (i.e. aged over 16)
- Two children of the same sex under 16
- Two children of opposite sex both under 8
- Each child between 8 and 16 who would otherwise have to share with someone of the opposite sex (this is for guidance only)

Offers of Transfer

It is very difficult to say how quickly you may get an offer of a transfer. This depends on how many points you have,

the number of other tenants on the transfer list and the number of houses that become available.

A Housing Officer will normally visit you before you receive an offer of a transfer. The reason for this visit is to check your circumstances and to check that your house is up to standard. We make offers of transfer in writing and you will be invited to view the house you are being offered with a Housing Officer.

If you refuse two offers of transfer which are suitable for your needs, you will not be offered another house for two years.

3| Mutual Exchanges

You can exchange (swap) houses with other tenants as long as certain conditions are met. You can exchange with other tenants of the Association or with tenants of any other landlord if that landlord agrees. We may also allow exchanges involving more than two tenants (3-way or multiple exchanges).

The main conditions for exchanges are:-

- That all tenants have clear rent accounts
- That all tenants have satisfactory tenancy records
- That the houses involved are the right size, right type, etc for the people who will be moving into them

Remember if you are interested in an exchange you should not move until you have permission.

If you want to apply for an exchange please ask the Customer Service Team for an Application Form.

4| Help With Buying a House

The Association may take part in schemes to help tenants buy alternative houses on the open market. Taking part in these schemes help us to free up houses which we can then allocate to people who need them. Ask the Customer Service Team for details of any schemes or keep an eye on *Westworld* for details.

5| Giving Up Your Tenancy

If you want to end your tenancy you have to give us at least 28 days 'notice'. You must do this in writing - either by sending us a letter or filling in a form which you can get from any Association office. Your husband or wife, or any joint tenant, must also sign to show that they agree that the tenancy should be given up.

You will have to pay rent up to the end of the 28 day notice period even if you actually move before then. When you move you should return all your keys in to your Area Office. You should leave your house clean and tidy and remove all furniture and other belongings. We may dispose of any items you leave and charge you for it. You can also be charged for the costs of any work needed to bring the house up to standard for letting to another tenant. We will try to visit you during your 28 day notice period to identify any work which you might have to do before you leave or might have to pay for.

6 | Transferring your Tenancy

If you are leaving your house or moving away, e.g. to a new job, and you would like someone to stay on in the house then you can apply to transfer your tenancy to them. You must always ask our permission to do this. The person who wants to have the tenancy must be at least 16 years old. For more information about our policy in transferring tenancies contact the Customer Service Team on 0844 892 0321.



New homes in Camlachie

I. Services for Older People

1 | Amenity, Sheltered and Very Sheltered Housing

We have a number of houses which have been built or converted to meet the needs of older people. These are known as amenity, sheltered housing and very sheltered housing.

Amenity Housing

Amenity houses have a number of features which make them particularly suitable for older people:

We normally only allocate amenity houses to people of at least 60 years old. Most of our amenity houses only have one bedroom and are suitable for single people or couples. Given the age of most of the residents we normally arrange for gardening to be done by our contractors. An extra charge is made for this. This Service Charge can be covered by Housing Benefit if you are eligible.

Sheltered Housing

Sheltered housing is designed for older people who are able to live independently but who like the added security of knowing that help is available when it is needed. Sheltered housing has all the special design features that you find in amenity housing but our sheltered housing developments offer extra facilities. These include:

- A lounge for meeting other residents and holding social activities
- Laundry facilities for use by the residents
- A guest bedroom for use by family or friends (not all developments have this facility)
- Emergency call system

The Council may also provide funding for a Warden service to provide housing support to tenants.

There is a Service Charge to cover the costs of the communal facilities provided in sheltered housing. The Service Charge can be covered by Housing Benefit if you are eligible.

The local council funds the cost of the warden service. They may charge tenants for all or part of the cost of this service. If you are eligible for housing benefit there will be no additional cost, however if you do not qualify for housing benefit the local council will invoice you separately for this service.

For further information please contact The Welfare Rights Team.

We normally only allocate sheltered housing to people who are at least 60 years old. Most of our sheltered flats and bungalows are suitable for couples but a few are only big enough for one person.



Welfare Rights Team

Very Sheltered Housing

Very Sheltered Housing is particularly suitable for frail, older people. They are similar to sheltered housing but with more intensive support and additional

facilities. There is a very high demand for these houses and we usually work closely with the Council's Social Work Department to make sure they are allocated to the people who most need them.

2 | Aids and Adaptations

Under an agreement with Social Work Departments, the Association is responsible for carrying out permanent adaptations to our houses to make them easier for frail or disabled people to live in. The types of alteration which we can do include:

- Installing grabrails, ramps, etc.
- Replacing baths with showers
- Redesigning kitchens

We can only do alterations like these if they have been recommended by the Social Work Department and if we can get funding from the Scottish Government or another source. If you are having difficulty in managing in your home and feel that an adaptation might help, you should contact the Occupational Therapist in your local Social Work Department. They will assess you and then give us their recommendations.

J. Getting Involved

We try to encourage tenants to get involved in their communities, so that they can have a say in the services they receive and the communities they live in.

1 | Our Tenant Participation Policy

Our policy provides a range of ways for tenants to be involved:

Information

We provide tenants with as much information as possible about our services, our policies and our plans. We try to provide this information in ways that can be easily understood by everyone. One of the ways we provide information is by sending regular newsletters.

Consultation

If we are planning to do any improvements to your house we will consult you. We will also consult with tenants and tenants' groups if we are thinking about changing any of our policies or services.

Seeking your views

We believe our services should be designed to meet your priorities. We therefore try to make it easy for tenants to comment on the services they receive. We do this by surveying tenants and sending out repair satisfaction slips etc. We also have a "Customer Consultation Panel" which allows tenants to choose the level and issues they want to be consulted on.

Funding for Tenant Participation

We set aside a separate budget for tenant participation every year. This will be used to develop and support

tenants' groups, to provide training and to improve how we deal with tenant participation.

2 | Funding and Support for Tenant Groups

Getting Started

If you are thinking about starting up a tenants group talk to your Area Team. They will advise you how to set up a group. They can also put you in touch with existing tenants groups and with workers in other agencies who may be able to help get you started. We can also get leaflets sent out so that you can let other tenants know about your plans. Our staff can also help you to arrange meetings.

Start Up Grants

We can provide Start-Up Grants to groups of tenants who would like to set up a properly organised tenants' group. The group will need to make sure the money is used properly and to keep records of how it has been spent.

Annual Grants

Once a group is up and running it can apply every year for a grant. The amount of grant will depend on how many of our houses the group covers.

Special Grants

As well as Start-up and Annual Grants, we can give Special Grants to help groups with costs like going to conferences or buying equipment.

Recognition for Groups

We treat tenants groups as important bodies. We will consult them and involve them in any plans for improvements in their areas. Our staff will be happy to meet with groups on a regular basis to discuss what's going on in their areas.

3 | Other Ways of Getting Involved

While we are keen to promote and assist formal tenants groups, we believe that it is more important that we provide tenants with a range of ways they can participate so they can choose the option that is best for them. This can range from a one-off close meeting to regular Area Committees. Whatever option you choose, our aim is to give you as great a say as we can.

Joining the Association

Anyone can apply to become a member of West of Scotland Housing Association. We are particularly keen to encourage tenants to become members of the Association. This costs £1 and you will be given a share certificate to record your membership. Being a member entitles you to attend our Annual General Meeting and to receive our accounts and Annual Report. You are also eligible to stand for election to our Management Committee.

Area Committees

West of Scotland Housing Association covers a big area. We recognise there can be different issues in the different areas. This is why we have a number

of local area offices. We also realise that tenants may want to influence the decisions in their area rather than across the Association as a whole. We do therefore promote area committees. Please contact your area team if you are interested in being involved in an area committee.

The Association wants to make it as easy as possible for tenants to get involved in making decisions that affect them.

The Association gives tenants a range of ways they can get involved – as individuals, or in groups. The options include:

- **Tenant Voices:** for individual tenants living in smaller communities.
- **A Tenant Consultation Panel:** for individual tenants who would like to speak with us about individual issues.
- **Estate Walkabouts:** between tenants and staff.
- **Estate Forum.**



Tenant Advisory Group

K. Contacting the Association

Our Offices

We have set up a network of area offices so that our services are provided locally. This makes it easier for us to provide the type of service tenants in that area want.

Our staff who are likely to deal with your queries, like Housing Officers and Technical Officers, spend a lot of time out of the office. The best times to get in touch with them are between 9.00am and 10.00am in the morning and 4.00pm and 5.00pm in the afternoon (4.30pm on Fridays).

Please note that the Ayrshire and Lanarkshire Area Offices are no longer open to the Public. You can contact staff in these Offices via the Customer Services Team.

Ayrshire Area Office

17 Portland Road,
Kilmarnock, KA1 2BT
e.mail: info@westscot.co.uk

Camlachie Area Office

135 Stamford Street, Camlachie,
Glasgow, G31 4AW
e.mail: info@westscot.co.uk

Lanarkshire Area Office

Princes Gate, 60 Castle Street,
Hamilton, ML3 6BB
e.mail: info@westscot.co.uk

Cowlairs Office

252 Keppochhill Road,
Glasgow, G21 1HG
e.mail: info@westscot.co.uk



Customer Services Team

**FOR ALL YOUR CUSTOMER ENQUIRIES, PLEASE PHONE YOUR
CUSTOMER SERVICES TEAM ON 0844 892 0321**

Emergencies

If you need to get an emergency repair when our offices are closed you should telephone our 24 HOUR RESPONSE SERVICE on **0800 783 7937**. Tell them that you are a tenant of the Association, your address and details of the repair.

YOU MAY WISH TO NOTE DOWN THE DETAILS OF APPLIANCES, ETC., IN YOUR HOME ON THE CHECKLIST BELOW FOR INSURANCE PURPOSES.

Home Contents Insurance Checklist

ITEM	MAKE / MODEL / NUMBER	SERIAL NUMBER
Bicycle(s)		
Camera(s)		
Computer		
Electric Tool(s)		
Food Mixer		
Freezer		
Fridge		
Games Console		
Lawn Mower		
Microwave		
Music System		
Radio(s)		
TV(s)		
Vacuum Cleaner		
Video Recorder		
DVD		
Washing Machine		
Microwave		
Watches		
Jewellery		

Notes

FOR ALL YOUR CUSTOMER ENQUIRIES PLEASE CONTACT YOUR CUSTOMER SERVICE TEAM ON 0844 892 0321