

# STARTING YOUR TENANCY

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## Chapter 1

# Starting your tenancy

Taking on a tenancy, especially for the first time, is a big responsibility.

As well as paying your rent, you will have other bills like council tax, electricity, gas, furniture and decoration to pay for.

Take time to list all the bills you have to pay and prioritise your needs.

Paying your rent should always be your first priority.

You can seek advice on budgeting from our office or Citizens Advice Bureau.

### Registering for gas and electricity

You must arrange an electricity account and gas account (if applicable) to allow you to move into the property.

**1. As soon as you take possession of the property, record the meter readings and the meter number on both of the supply meters.**

- On the electric meter the meter number is known as an S number
- On the gas meter the meter number is known as the M number

## **2. Find out who supplied electric and gas to the previous tenant by telephoning:**

- Electric – Scottish Power 0800 400 200. They will ask for the S number
- Gas – Scottish Gas 01217050990. They will ask for the M number.

## **3. Contact the power company you wish to use and set up an account with them. It is worth shopping around to see which company is offering the best deal.**

SCARF (Save Cash and Reduce Fuel) can provide independent advice.

The power company will ask for:

- The S or M number
- The name of the existing supplier
- The meter reading.
- Your telephone number

### **Council tax**

Contact your local council to register for Council Tax. If you are entitled to state benefits you may qualify for a rebate.

### **Bin collection**

Find out which day your bin is emptied, so that it is not left in the street longer than necessary.

### **Decoration**

You are responsible for the decoration of your home e.g. laying carpets, papering walls. If you move into a newly built house it is recommended that you do not paper the walls immediately, as the house will be inspected after a year and any settlement cracks will be fixed.

If you want to carry out alterations to your home e.g. remove fitted wardrobes, you must gain permission from our maintenance section.

### **Heating systems**

Most gas heating boilers have instructions for their use printed on them. Read these carefully before starting the boiler. Make sure the gas supply to the boiler is turned on. If you have difficulty with the heating system contact Tenants First staff.

### **Home contents insurance**

It is extremely important that you have home contents insurance.

For information on low cost insurance, see page 66.

### **Post-letting visit**

Within the first week of your new tenancy, a maintenance

officer will arrange to visit you to advise you on the following: :

- Use of heating boiler, timeclock etc.
- Use of gas fire.
- Advice on use of room and/or radiator thermostats.
- Switching off gas and electricity at mains.
- Use of MCBs/fuses in the consumer unit.
- Use of fans.
- Use and upkeep of smoke detectors.
- Use of shower.
- Location of water stopcocks.
- Use of windows, trickle vents, fire escape windows
- Use of external door locks.
- Use of emergency call out system

### **Settling-in visits**

Approximately four weeks from the start of your new tenancy a housing officer will arrange to visit you in your new home to see how well you are settling in and if you require assistance on anything to do with your tenancy. There will be another two visits during the first year of your tenancy.

### **Support**

Taking on a house can be a difficult time. Some people need a bit of extra help and there are a number of ways we

can help. There are also other organisations that offer help for tenants.

If you would like help, ask your Housing Officer.

### **Getting to know your neighbours and the community**

Introduce yourself to your neighbours. This helps reduce any misunderstanding that might arise through use of common areas, noise etc.

### **Find out about the local community**

Find out where the housing office, benefits agency, job centre, careers and perhaps, social work department are;

Check if your doctor and dentist cover the area you've moved to. If not, or if it is too difficult to get there from your new address, register with local practitioners.

If you're changing your dentist, check that he/she will treat you on the NHS.

Find out where your nearest post office is.

Find out the times of buses and bus fares. The nearest bus stop may list the buses that stop there.

You can find out from the local library or resource centre about local groups and activities;

Find the nearest safe public telephone

### **Important things you should do when starting a new tenancy**

- Read your lease;

- Know your rights and responsibilities;
- Know what the co-op is responsible for;
- Make sure you have been given copies of gas and electrical safety certificates;

Ask your housing officer or any other member of staff to explain anything you do not understand.