

RENT

REPAIRS

SHELTERED HOUSING

HOME OWNERSHIP

# TENANTS HANDBOOK



## WELCOME

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### **Welcome to your tenants' handbook**

The handbook contains important information about your tenancy and should be read alongside your tenancy agreement.

The handbook explains your rights and responsibilities as a tenant, as well as the rights and responsibilities of Basildon Borough Council as your landlord.

Your tenancy agreement is a legal document and it tells you what you and the council must and must not do. You get your tenancy agreement when you start your tenancy with Basildon Council.

If the council needs to change the terms of your tenancy agreement it must give you notice of




the change. If the change affects all tenants, the council must consult its tenants and provide an explanation of the reasons for the change. The council must also consider any comments they receive during the consultation.



We have tried to cover most things in this handbook that you need to know but if you would like more information please contact us (see section 13 for details).

We aim to provide a high-quality housing service. We will listen to your views and involve you in the decisions that affect you and your home.



Should you need this handbook in a different format please contact us.

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## SECTION 1 - ABOUT YOUR TENANCY

Your tenancy agreement will tell you what type of tenancy you have and the terms/conditions of that tenancy

**Important: Breaking a tenancy condition is serious. It could result in you losing your home. Please ensure you have read your tenancy agreement and understand your rights and responsibilities.**

### DIFFERENT TYPES OF COUNCIL TENANCIES

#### Flexible tenancies (due to be implemented in the future)

A flexible tenancy is a form of secure tenancy, which is for a fixed period granted in accordance with the Housing Act 1985, following amendments made by the Localism Act 2011. It contains many features of a secure tenancy.

The main difference is that a secure tenancy can be brought to an end by the landlord if the council satisfies a court that one of the statutory grounds for possession are satisfied, and (in most cases) that it is reasonable to order possession.

In addition, the tenancy can be brought to an end if the occupier fails to satisfy the requirements that they use the property as their main and only home and a valid Notice to Quit (NTQ) is served and they lose security of tenure. It can also be brought to an end if a joint tenant serves a valid NTQ.

By contrast, with a flexible tenancy, the court must make an order for possession where the fixed term has expired, the correct notices have been served and any review has been considered. There are no requirements to prove grounds for possession or reasonableness.

Where a flexible tenancy has not expired, the council may also seek possession on the same grounds as apply to any secure tenancy.

From the date flexible tenancies are introduced, the majority of new tenancies offered by the council will be flexible tenancies. In some limited circumstances secure tenancies will be offered instead of flexible tenancies. Flexible tenancies allow the council to regularly review tenants' housing needs and aspirations, and to work with them to realise those aspirations and to meet those needs.



The majority of flexible tenancies will be renewed several times in the years to come, allowing tenants to be settled in their local communities, much as with a secure tenancy. However, some tenants' needs may change, and we will work with them to help them move to accommodation which meets those needs. Where tenants no longer need a particular type of accommodation – such as a larger family home or an adapted home – the flexible tenancy will allow us to move them to more suitable accommodation and make that home available to people who need it.

#### Flexible tenancy period

Most flexible tenancies will be for a period of five years. Such tenancies will provide a reasonable degree of security (for example, for vulnerable people and for people with children), while enabling the council to make best use of the housing stock for those in need.

There may be exceptional circumstances which may justify offering a flexible fixed term tenancy of less than five years. The use of shorter tenancies in these circumstances is intended to help reinforce the tenant's responsibilities under the tenancy agreement and to enable any necessary support to be put in place.

#### Examples of these circumstances are:

- where an existing flexible tenant has persistently breached or not kept to an agreement to correct any breaches of tenancy for example:
- the tenant has not kept to a rent arrears agreement for eight weeks, or has been making irregular payments

- the tenant has received warnings about a breach of tenancy and there is evidence that the breach is continuing
- the tenancy has been demoted, although subsequently reinstated

These matters will be addressed at the review meeting and a new flexible tenancy of two years may be offered, where the council considers this is warranted in all the circumstances

- where a tenancy review identifies that a tenant needs to move, but the council cannot find a suitable alternative home immediately. This will include cases where the council has assessed that the tenant does not have a housing need for the current property, even though the tenant may want to remain there.

#### Secure tenancies

A secure tenancy is a periodic (usually weekly) tenancy granted in accordance with the Housing Act 1985.

Secure tenancies will be granted to:

- tenants of sheltered accommodation
- any existing secure or assured non-shorthold tenant where they choose to move to another social rented home, whether with the same or another provider of social housing, or because they need to move due to redevelopment works (this does not apply where tenants choose to move to accommodation let on 'Affordable Rent' terms).

#### Non-secure tenancies (Temporary Accommodation)

Most tenancies are secure, but some are not. These are known as 'non-secure' tenancies. Non-secure tenants include temporary tenants.

As a non-secure tenant you have fewer rights. If you do not keep to the conditions of your tenancy agreement or the council cease their housing duty to you under the homelessness legislation, we will give you a notice ending your tenancy. This gives you four weeks' notice to leave the property, and advises that you may wish to obtain legal advice. However, the council cannot evict you without a court order. If you do not leave the property, we

would start court proceedings to get a possession order.

If court proceedings are started it is important to understand that the court has to give a possession order. This means that you will have to leave the property on the date set out in the order, and you would have to pay the council's court costs.

Further detailed information on the different types of tenure, including the flexible tenancy review process can be found in the Council's Tenancy Policy.

#### JOINT TENANTS

Joint tenants are both responsible, together and separately, for keeping to the conditions of the tenancy, such as paying the rent. This means that if one tenant breaks a tenancy condition, the other can also be held responsible.

If a joint tenant leaves the property to move elsewhere, you must let the council know. However, the absent joint tenant is still jointly and severally liable for all tenancy conditions including the payment of rent.

If the council receives a valid NTQ from one or both of the tenants in accordance with the terms and conditions of the Tenancy Agreement this will end the tenancy for both parties when the four week notice period expires.

Where a joint tenancy has been terminated, but the remaining tenant wishes to remain in the property, although we will give consideration to granting a new sole tenancy to the remaining occupier, this is not guaranteed and subject to conditions. Further information can be found in the Council's Allocation Scheme under Relationship Breakdown – End of joint tenancy.

If you would like to add someone to your tenancy please contact the Customer Service Centre.

#### WHAT RIGHTS DO I HAVE AS A SECURE TENANT

As a secure tenant you can only be evicted if a court gives the council a possession order. It also means that by law you have certain rights that cannot change or be taken away. These rights are as follows.

- You can live in your home for the rest of your life as long as you keep to your tenancy agreement
- You can buy your home at a discount under the Right to Buy scheme if the criteria is met
- When you die, your tenancy may, pass on to someone in your family so long as all of the relevant legal requirements are met
- You can take in lodgers as long as it doesn't make your home overcrowded
- You can sublet part of your home if the council gives you written permission
- You can carry out improvements to your home with our written permission
- You can be paid for certain improvements you have made if you move home
- You can help to manage your estate
- You can exchange your home with another tenant, if certain conditions are met

### WHEN CAN WE END YOUR TENANCY

If you are a secure tenant, the council can only end your tenancy if we obtain a court order. The court will only give us a court order for certain reasons (known as grounds for possession), including that you have breached a condition of your tenancy, such as not paying the rent or causing a nuisance.

Examples of things that would breach your tenancy agreement are as follows.

- You not paying your rent
- You or anyone living with or visiting you causing anti-social behaviour
- You not letting us or our service provider into your home to meet our responsibilities as your landlord including but not limited to inspecting the condition of your home, servicing your gas boiler and carrying out repairs
- The property not being your only or main home/loss of security of tenure
- Breaches of other terms and conditions of your tenancy
- One of the mandatory grounds set out in the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014.

### Important: Breaching a tenancy condition is serious. It could result in losing your home.

If there is a problem, we will talk to you first. If you fall behind with your rent, we will ask you to make an arrangement to pay the overdue rent in instalments.

If you do not keep to the instalment arrangement we may give you a 'notice of seeking possession'. This is a legal notice that is valid for 12 months. It sets out the reasons why the council is considering evicting you.

The notice does not come into force for 28 days save cases where a notice has been served for anti-social behaviour, giving you time to take action to put the matter right (for example, by bringing your rent up to date or stopping the unreasonable behaviour). In cases of serious anti-social behaviour the council can apply for a court order immediately.

The council does not want to take people to court; however, we will start court proceedings if there is a serious breach of tenancy or you persistently break your tenancy conditions. If the council gets a court order, the court may suspend it to allow you to stay in your home as long as you keep to the terms of the order.

Only in serious cases will the council seek an 'outright possession order' that means you will have to leave the property on the date set out in the order.

In some cases the council may apply to the court for your secure tenancy to become a non-secure tenancy (demotion), which means you will lose a number of rights secure tenants have, such as the right to buy your home.

However, it is important for you to know what circumstances might lead to you being evicted.

### REASONS FOR LOSING YOUR HOME

#### Secure Tenants

The court will decide if it is reasonable for us to evict you for the following reasons:

- If you have not paid your rent or have broken some other condition of the tenancy agreement
- If you have (or someone living in or visiting your home has) behaved in a way which

causes a nuisance to, or annoys or disturbs your neighbours, visitors or people in the area

- If you have (or someone living in or visiting your home has) been violent, or threatened or intimidated any of our employees or service providers
- If you have:
  - been convicted of using the property for illegal purposes or convicted of an arrestable offence in your area
  - caused a family member to leave your home because you or your partner have been violent or abusive towards them or threatened them with violence or abuse

If you have damaged the property or parts shared with other tenants and failed to carry out the necessary repair

If you or persons living with or visiting you have damaged furniture provided by us

If you got the tenancy by giving, or persuading someone else to give, false information

If you paid a tenant to exchange homes with you

The council has provided you temporary accommodation while we carry out building work to your home, on the understanding that you return home when the work is finished, and you have failed to do so

If you have not let us or our service provider into your home to meet our responsibilities as your landlord, including but not limited to, inspecting the condition of your home, servicing your gas boiler and carrying out repairs

The Court may allow us to evict you in the following circumstances if it is satisfied that you can get suitable alternative accommodation.

- If we want to demolish the building, or carry out work on the building or land connected to it, and we cannot do this while you are living in the home.

The Court may allow us to evict you for the following reasons if it thinks that this is reasonable and it is satisfied that you can get suitable alternative accommodation.

- If you or persons living with or visiting you have damaged furniture provided by us
- If you are living in a supported housing scheme (for example, sheltered flats), no body living in your home needs that support, and we need the home for a person who does need supported housing
- If you took over the tenancy when the previous tenant died and the property is too large for you

### Mandatory Grounds for Possession

The Anti-social Behaviour, Crime & Policing Act 2014 introduced new absolute grounds for possession of secure and assured tenancies where the relevant criteria has been met.

The purpose of this is to speed up the possession process in cases.

Grounds for possession can be considered when the tenant, a member of the tenant's household, or a person visiting the property has met one of the following conditions:-

- Convicted of a serious offence (specified in section 2a to the Housing Act 1985);
- Breach of Civil Injunction;
- Convicted for breaching a Criminal Behaviour Order (CBO);
- Convicted for breaching a noise abatement notice; or
- The tenant's property has been closed for more than 48 hours under a Closure Order for anti-social behaviour.

Secure tenants of Local Authorities will have the statutory right to request a review of the landlord's decision to seek possession.

If the above is met, the court must grant a possession order (subject to any available Human Rights defence raised by the tenant, including proportionality).

## SUCCESSIONS OF A TENANCY (WHAT HAPPENS IF A TENANT DIES)

In certain circumstances, when a tenant dies, their tenancy can pass on to someone else living in the home. This process is called succession and is explained in the Council's Tenancy Policy.

If you think you have the right to take over a tenancy when the tenant has died it is important that you contact us as soon as possible. You should not assume that everything will be alright. If you delay, and you are going to depend on Housing Benefit to help you pay your rent, you also run the risk of falling behind with your rent. This is because your benefit may not automatically be backdated to the time the tenant died if the succession is approved.

Unless you are the spouse or civil partner of the tenant who has died, you may not have the right to stay in your current home if it is larger than you need. The council will always try to be as understanding and helpful as they can in finding you another home if you meet the criteria.

Further information regarding successions, including the council's policy on granting discretionary succession rights for tenancies that commenced after 1 April 2012, under-occupation of a property by a successor and in situations where there are no further succession rights are detailed in the Council's Allocation Scheme and Tenancy Policy.

### If there is no right of succession

If you are not entitled to take over the tenancy by succession, or there are no further succession rights, you do not have the right to stay in the home. However, the council will always discuss your situation and the alternatives with you.

## TRANSFERRING (ASSIGNING) YOUR TENANCY

You can transfer your tenancy to someone else:

- if a court orders this as part of divorce proceedings
- by mutual exchange
- to pass your tenancy on to someone who could take it over if you died (succession) by assignment

The council can refuse an assignment of the tenancy if the criteria has not been met. For further information, please contact our Customer Service Centre.

## HOUSING FRAUD

The council places great emphasis on preventing and detecting housing fraud. When you sign your tenancy agreement you are declaring that the facts on your application are true. If you obtain a tenancy through deception you may be prosecuted and lose your tenancy.

The Prevention of Social Housing Fraud Act 2013 made unlawful sub-letting a criminal offence carrying a two-year prison sentence and up to £50,000 fine.

In order to help identify housing fraud the council regularly carries out tenancy reviews. This is to ensure that:

- the legal tenant is living in the property and it is their main and only home.
- subletting or other breaches of the Tenancy Agreement is not taking place

When we visit you at home, we will ask a range of questions and carry out an inspection of the inside and outside of your property. We will also ask you to provide at least two forms of identification to prove you are the legal tenant. One must be a document with your photo such as your driving licence or passport.

This is also an opportunity to identify any problems you are experiencing and offer any additional support you may require.

**If you know of anyone who you think may be committing Housing Fraud please report it at [www.basildon.gov.uk/fraud](http://www.basildon.gov.uk/fraud) or call 01268 206743.**

## RENTING A GARAGE

If you would like to rent a garage you can apply in one of the following ways:

- Apply online to rent a council garage (recommended)
- Call 01268 533333 (You can complete an application over the phone or ask for a form to be sent to you)

Please note: If you owe money to the council your application will not be processed and you will have to reapply when the debt has been cleared.

In some areas there is a waiting list for garages. When a garage becomes available we offer it to the person in that area who has waited the

longest. Some areas already have vacant garages and you will not have to wait.

When we offer you a garage we will ask you to sign a tenancy agreement before we give you the keys. You must pay the rent for the garage every week for the week ahead. If you have financial problems doing this, contact the Income Collection team. If you let your rent arrears build up, we will start legal action by serving a 'notice to quit' on behalf of the council. This could result in you losing your garage and the debt may be registered with a credit reference agency.

If you want to give up your garage, you need to give us a week's notice in writing. This must end at noon on a Monday, when you should return the keys to the council offices in Basildon.

### Using a garage

We will ask you to sign a tenancy agreement that states that you will:

- pay the rent on time
- use the garage only to store a vehicle and nothing else
- use the garage only for a vehicle you are responsible for
- keep the inside of the garage in a clean and tidy condition and report any necessary repairs as soon as possible
- allow relevant staff and service providers to enter and inspect the garage

You must not use the garage for:

- running a business or storing goods you have for business purposes
  - storing flammable or other dangerous substances in the garage
  - keeping pets
  - sublet or give up possession of the garage
  - make any structural alterations to the garage
  - cause any nuisance, annoyance or obstruction to neighbours of nearby properties and garages
- If you do any of these things we could immediately repossess your garage, and you would have to pay our expenses.

### General information

If you rent a garage you should keep the area around the garage clear so other people can get access to their garages at all times and ensure that you do not interfere with the council's housing management functions.

If you cannot get into your garage, we aim to help you get access to your vehicle on the same day if reasonable to do so.

Garages are designed to safely store vehicles. We cannot guarantee that a garage will be weather-proof.

You are responsible for arranging insurance against theft or damage to the things in your garage.

**For more information see the council's Rent a Garage webpage**

## SECTION 2 - PAYING RENT AND SERVICE CHARGES

Your rent is due every Monday for the week ahead. Your rent includes any service charges, Housing Related Support charges and amounts charged for heating and insurance.

**Note: a service charge is a charge for services we provide such as cleaning and lighting in shared areas.**

**Note: the Housing Related Support charge is only applicable to tenants living in our Sheltered Housing Service.**



### Ways to pay:

#### 1. By Direct Debit (recommended)

Contact the Customer Service Centre on **01268 533333**, so they can send you a direct debit form. You can set this up for the 1st or 16th of each month for rent

#### 2. Online

You can pay your rent online on the council's website.

#### 3. By Credit Card or Debit Card

You can pay your rent by credit or debit card at the Basildon Centre using one of our payment kiosks. You can also make a payment via the council's 24 hour payment service on **01268 533333** you will need your 10 digit tenancy number or invoice number.

#### 4. By Setting the council up as a Payee on Internet Banking

You can set the council up as a regular payee via internet banking – you will need the following information:-

Council's Account Number: 54244900

Council's Sort Code: 60-02-39

Reference Number: Your ten digit tenancy sxnumber

#### 5. In person

You can pay your rent in person at the Basildon Centre, Post Office branches, and places that display the Paypoint logo.

#### 6. By post

Please make cheques and postal orders out to 'Basildon Council' and write your rent account number on the back. Send your cheque or postal order to:

**Basildon Borough Council, PO Box 4  
St Martins Square  
Basildon  
Essex  
SS14 1DL**

For more information please see the Council Rent and Service Charges webpage.

**It is important that you pay your rent and service charges on time.**

#### Problems paying your rent

If you have problems paying your rent, please see the Tenant Rent & Services Charges webpage.

#### Rent direct scheme

If you are on Income Support or Jobseeker's Allowance and you are behind with your rent, you can ask the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to pay a small amount of your benefit direct to us each week, to pay off the rent you owe. For more information, contact the Customer Service Centre.

#### Claiming benefit to help with your rent

If you are unemployed or on a low income (including a pension), you may be able to get Housing Benefit to help you pay your rent. Please do not delay making a claim as there is limited

opportunity for the benefit to be backdated.

For more information visit the Housing Benefits webpage.

#### Change in circumstances

You must tell the council about any change in your circumstances that could affect your benefit. If you receive too much benefit, you will have to pay it back. To report a change in circumstances, fill in the change in circumstance form online.

#### Home contents insurance

We strongly recommend that all our council tenants take out home contents insurance, either by making their own arrangements or by joining the home contents insurance scheme provided by Basildon Council.

To avoid the uninsured loss of your household goods and contents council tenants must have an up to date Home Contents Insurance Policy

It is a common misunderstanding that Basildon Council will automatically replace lost, damaged or destroyed household goods and contents of a tenant whose council home has been affected by an incident such as a house fire, a flood or a burglary.

This is not the case; council tenants who do not have their own up to date home contents insurance policy will be in real danger of being left with no household goods and contents if their council home is affected by such an incident.

A Home Contents Insurance Policy will cover tenants for damage or loss of household goods and contents such as furniture, electrical equipment, clothes and jewellery caused by an insured peril such as flood, fire or theft.

For more details or an application form, you can visit our Home Contents Insurance webpage.



## SECTION 3 - MAINTAINING YOUR HOME



You must keep your home in good condition.

The law says the council has to maintain:

- the structure and outside of the building
- fittings for gas, electricity and water;
- basins, sinks, baths and toilets; and
- heating and hot-water facilities.

The council will maintain your home to a good standard. We will repair all elements of the property through fair wear and tear. However, if damage is caused by your negligence or abuse you will be charged for the work.

Any modification or alterations you wish to make must be agreed in writing in advance of any works being carried out. Further information on carrying out improvements yourself can be found in Section 4 - Home Improvements (link).

### WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE REPAIRS?

In the chart below, we explain what repairs we are responsible for and the repairs you will need to do yourself.

Out of hours calls	Landlord	Tenant
Attending to genuine emergencies after hours	✓	

Outside the home	Landlord	Tenant
Communal areas, such as lobbies, staircases, lifts and landings	✓	
Garages, bin sheds and out-buildings owned or let by the council (excluding unauthorised alterations)	✓	
Tenants own sheds and outbuildings		✓
Garden walls (only where owned by council) replaced with fence	✓	
Fencing (we will repair or replace boundary fencing, however, major fencing works may be planned for the future)		
Front, side and rear gates, including ironmongery	✓	
Line posts, washing lines or rotary clothes driers if fitted by the council	✓	
Washing lines individual		✓
Washing lines communal	✓	
Car hardstanding area and gates (if installed by the council)	✓	
Car hardstanding and gates (installed by the tenant and where permission has been granted)		✓

Roof	Landlord	Tenant
Shared TV aerials and sockets (communal)	✓	
TV aerials and sockets owned by the resident		✓
Chimney and chimney stacks (except where damaged by a residents' aerial)	✓	

Roof	Landlord	Tenant
Roof structure and coverings	✓	
Guttering, rainwater pipes and clips	✓	
Gutter clearance	✓	
Fascia, soffit and barge boards	✓	

Doors	Landlord	Tenant
Door numbers (where provided by the council)	✓	
Gaining entry to the property (lock-in, lock-out, lost keys)		✓
External doors and frames	✓	
Entrance door locks (an additional lock for added security is the responsibility of the resident)	✓	
Door locks on toilet and bathroom doors	✓	
Door entry systems	✓	
Internal doors, ironmongery and frames	✓	
Doors adjusted if new carpets fitted		✓
Hard wired door bells provided by the council	✓	
Door knocker provided by the council	✓	
Security chain provided by the council	✓	
Spy hole (view finder) provided by the council	✓	
Letter plate and brushes provided by the council	✓	
Door and window double glazing seal	✓	

Windows	Landlord	Tenant
Window frames, external sills	✓	
Window locks and restrictors installed by the council (at least 1 first floor window to remain without a lock to provide an emergency exit).	✓	
Glazing (except where an incident or a crime reference number is available or where the damage relates to hate crime or domestic abuse)		✓
Window ironmongery (only where the original was fitted by Basildon Council).	✓	
Window vents	✓	
Blinds (removal, adjustment after replacement windows, refitting)		✓
Internal timber, UPVC or tile window sills	✓	
Curtain rails and poles		✓

Walls, ceilings and canopies	Landlord	Tenant
Vents and fans (residents are responsible for keeping permanent ventilation clear)	✓	
External walls and rendering	✓	
Foundations	✓	

<b>Walls, ceilings and canopies</b>	<b>Landlord</b>	<b>Tenant</b>
Porches (only those owned and provided by the council)	✓	
Concrete canopies over doors or windows	✓	
Internal walls	✓	
Major plaster work	✓	
Minor repairs to plasterwork, such as hairline cracks and small holes (under 50mm square)		✓
Wall tiles grouting (to match existing tiles as closely as possible) One row of tiles to sinks, hand basin and two rows of tiles for baths	✓	
Cleaning and re-grouting of wall tiles		✓
Textured coatings to walls and ceilings. (Residents are responsible for the cost of removal of finishes applied to wall surfaces during their tenancy) <b>Textured coatings often contain asbestos and tenants must contact the council before any coating is removed</b>		✓
Skirting boards	✓	

<b>Adaptations for disabled people</b>	<b>Landlord</b>	<b>Tenant</b>
Adaptations for disabled people as a result of recommendations by Social Services	✓	

<b>Kitchen</b>	<b>Landlord</b>	<b>Tenant</b>
Kitchen cupboards and drawers (items beyond repair will be replaced and matched where possible)	✓	
Cupboard door catches, handles and hinges	✓	
Worktops (worktops beyond repair will be replaced and matched where possible) except where damaged by tenant	✓	

<b>Bathroom</b>	<b>Landlord</b>	<b>Tenant</b>
Bath panels provided by the council	✓	
Wooden airing cupboard panels and shelving. (Residents are responsible for installing any additional panels or shelving require)	✓	
Internal pipe-work boxing (not provided on request and only where the original was fitted by Basildon Council)	✓	

<b>Waste Pipes and drains</b>	<b>Landlord</b>	<b>Tenant</b>
Soil and vent pipes and clips	✓	
Drains and gully surrounds (within the boundary of homes provided by the council)	✓	
Gully grids (within the boundary of homes provided by the council)	✓	
Keeping gully grids clean		✓
Drain and waste pipe blockages where caused by faulty pipework or tree root ingress	✓	

<b>Waste Pipes and drains</b>	<b>Landlord</b>	<b>Tenant</b>
Drain and waste pipe blockages where caused by the tenant		✓
Manhole and inspection chambers on council owned land	✓	
Following a legislation change in 2011, the waste water service provider became responsible for more shared drains		
The council will tell customers when a drain repair is not the council's responsibility		

<b>Plumbing</b>	<b>Landlord</b>	<b>Tenant</b>
Water service pipes from inside the property boundary (stop cock and internal pipe work) overflow pipes and water tanks	✓	
Blocked sink, bath and hand basin waste pipe	✓	
Blocked toilet – unless the drain is faulty	✓	
Taps, stop cocks and wheel valves	✓	
Kitchen sink	✓	
Wash hand basin	✓	
Toilet flushing systems	✓	
Toilet seat and lid	✓	
Bath or shower tray	✓	
Plugs and chains		✓
Shower (where fitted by the council)	✓	
Disconnection and reconnection of washing machines (unless supplied by the council)		✓
Seal to bath, basin and sink unit	✓	
Removal and replacement of radiators for decoration (recharge)	✓	
Repairs to plumbing caused by decoration, carpet fitting etc.(recharge)	✓	
<b>Please note:</b> Where sinks, baths, hand basins or WC's blockages are caused by the tenant eg. cooking fat, grease, hair, cotton buds, baby wipes, etc. repairs may be chargeable		

<b>Electrical items</b>	<b>Landlord</b>	<b>Tenant</b>
Light bulbs and lamps (except communal areas and external lighting)		✓
Electrical wiring, sockets and light fittings	✓	
Additional sockets and light fittings ( <b>written</b> permission must be sought from the council)		✓
Hard wired smoke alarms	✓	
Hard wired carbon monoxide detectors fitted by the council	✓	
Independent battery operated smoke alarms		
Battery operated carbon monoxide detectors		✓
Electrical Consumer Unit (fuse box)	✓	
Electric storage heaters (only where owned by the council)	✓	
Electric fires (only where owned by the council)	✓	
Electric meter and supply of electricity		✓

Electrical items	Landlord	Tenant
Electric meter box	✓	
Immersion heaters	✓	
Cookers (unless supplied by the council)		✓
Cooker installation and restraint		✓
Disconnection and reconnection of cookers (unless supplied by the council)		✓
Extractor fans	✓	

Gas	Landlord	Tenant
Gas pipework	✓	
Supply of gas		✓
Gas meter box	✓	
Gas fires (annual service)	✓	
Radiants for gas fires supplied by the council	✓	
Radiants for gas fires damaged by the resident (recharge)	✓	
Gas water heaters (annual service)	✓	
Radiators, valves, time clocks and thermostats	✓	
Gas boilers	✓	
Cookers (unless supplied by the council)		✓
Disconnection and reconnection of cookers (unless supplied by the council)		✓

Floors	Landlord	Tenant
Laminate floors (the resident must get permission from the council to lay laminate flooring). We will not normally give permission if you live in a flat.		✓
Provide access to the council for repair or maintenance where needed underneath laminate flooring. Please note laminate flooring will not be re-laid.		✓
Concrete floors	✓	
Floor tiles where fitted by the council in kitchens, bathrooms and hallway only. (where tiles are replaced, every effort will be made to match the existing tiles – <b>(a complete match cannot be guaranteed)</b> )	✓	
Loose floor coverings and fitted carpets		✓
Threshold strips and carpet grippers		✓
Floor boards and joists	✓	

Home energy efficiency	Landlord	Tenant
Loft insulation	✓	
Cavity wall insulation (where property structure allows)	✓	
Draught-proofing to windows (unless already provided as part of the frame design)	✓	
Draught-proofing to external doors (unless already provided as part of the frame design)	✓	
Separate hot water cylinder jackets (after the first one has been supplied by the council)	✓	
Low energy light bulbs		✓

Fireplaces	Landlord	Tenant
Use of correct fuel		✓
General cleaning of appliances (removal of ash)		✓
Fireplaces	✓	
Sweeping chimneys, solid fuel service, flat flues or smoke problems	✓	
Fire glasses	✓	

Home security	Landlord	Tenant
Extra door or window locks		✓
Security door chains and spy holes where fitted by the council	✓	
Extra security measures for victims of domestic violence are provided through Basildon Council's Homelessness service	✓	
Child safety devices, for example, window restrictions		✓

Internal decoration	Landlord	Tenant
Internal decoration		✓

Staircases	Landlord	Tenant
Staircase, banisters and hand rails	✓	



All the repairs are subject to the terms of the Council's Rechargeable Repairs Policy.

If there are items that are potentially causing a risk to health and safety, and they are not part of the original structure of the property, (for example, conservatories, sheds, greenhouses and coal bunkers) we may remove the items for safety reasons.

#### **We are not responsible for repairs when the damage is:**

- caused by you or someone living in or visiting your home;
- caused by your own fixtures or fittings.

You will need to make arrangements for your own contents insurance for your personal items/ possessions.

#### **What repairs will the council do if you have applied to buy your home**

If you have applied to buy your home under the Right to Buy Scheme, we will only carry out essential repairs and no improvement works such as kitchen, bathroom modernisation, window renewals, etc. will be done.

#### **CHARGING YOU FOR REPAIRS YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR**

If we carry out a repair that you are responsible for, we will charge you for the cost of the work. You may have to pay before the work is carried out.

If repairs are needed because of your negligence or your intentional damage, we will do whatever repairs are necessary to make the property safe and charge you for the cost of the work.

An admin fee of £20 will be chargeable on repairs that are not paid for prior to work commencing. VAT will also be charged for gaining entry to your home.

Out of hours requests for repairs made between 17.30pm and 8.00am will incur an additional extra charge.

#### **HOW TO REQUEST REPAIR WORKS**

Morgan Sindall Property Services carry out repairs and maintenance services to Council owned properties. They also undertake gas safety

checks, servicing, repairs and renewals to all domestic gas heating and hot water systems.

You may request repair works, in person, by phone, by email or in writing (see section 13 for contact details). **Please be aware that emergency repairs should only be reported in person or by telephone.**

#### **Request repair works**

To request a repair you can use the step by step, online non-emergency council housing repair system. This uses easy-to-understand pictures and diagrams that will help you identify most commonplace maintenance problems and quickly enable repair staff and our housing repairs service provider, Morgan Sindall Property Services, to pinpoint the trouble.

All you have to do is follow the diagrams and enter your address along with your preferred appointment time and we'll do the rest.

Alternatively, you could use the non-emergency repair works – text only option

#### **To request emergency repair works**

You may request an emergency repair during office hours and out of hours. Please phone Morgan Sindall Property Services on **01268 533333**.

The Customer Advisor will ask for:

- your full name and address
- the full details of the repair needed
- when someone will be at home to let our service provider in.

Find out more about Council Housing Repairs

#### **HOW QUICKLY ARE REPAIRS DONE?**

All repairs are given a priority, which sets out when the work should be carried out.

#### **Priority 1 (emergency – attend within 2 hours)**

This priority only covers emergencies, such as where there is a danger to people or property. Emergencies include:

- burst pipes
- total loss of an electricity supply
- overflowing sewage
- gain entry.

We will make every effort to get to you quickly to make your property safe. However there may be follow up work.

#### **Priority 1 (emergency gas repairs attend within 24 hours)**

This priority cover gas heating or gas hot water breakdowns.

#### **Priority 2 (at the tenant's convenience)**

This priority covers all responsive repairs except Priority 1 repairs listed above. Appointments will be booked at the convenience of the tenant but work should be completed within 28 days.

#### **APPOINTMENTS**

Morgan Sindall Property Services will offer you an appointment for them to carry out Priority 2 repairs.

The first appointment may be for an inspection only and not to carry out the work. Morgan Sindall Property Services will arrange any further appointments direct with you.

Appointments are available Monday to Friday and Saturday morning excluding bank holidays. You will either be offered a morning or afternoon appointment. Working times are 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday and 8am to 2pm Saturday.

If the service provider fails to keep the appointment without giving you 24 hours' notice or giving us a good reason, you may be entitled to compensation of £20. Should your rent account be in arrears then this will be credited to your account.

However, please note that with regards to electrical and gas servicing appointments if you do not allow our service provider into your home to carry out the necessary work at the appointed time we will charge you the cost of the service providers visit.

#### **WHAT TO EXPECT FROM OUR SERVICE PROVIDERS**

Our Service Providers have to follow an agreed code of conduct, which means they must:

- carry an identity card with a photograph, which they will show you

- be polite
- behave in a proper and professional way at all times
- cause as little disruption and mess as possible
- take care of your belongings and protect them from damage
- clear any rubbish from inside your home at the end of each working day
- remove any rubbish they have left in the garden or outside the property.

#### **THE RIGHT TO REPAIR (FOR SECURE TENANTS ONLY)**

You can use the Right to Repair scheme to carry out work when our repair service is not of an acceptable standard.

#### **Qualifying repairs**

Under the Right to Repair scheme, you are entitled to compensation from us if we do not complete particular repairs within a specified time limit. Repairs that qualify under the scheme are mostly minor repairs costing up to £250 which affect the health, safety or security of you or your household and are classed as urgent. Examples include:

- unsafe power or lighting sockets or electrical fittings
- blocked flue to an open fire, gas fire or gas boiler
- leaking roof
- toilets that do not flush (where there is no other working toilet in the property)
- blocked sink, bath or basin
- leak from a water or heating pipe, tank or cistern
- loose or broken handrails.

#### **Steps to take**

If you think a repair qualifies under the Right to Repair scheme we may need to inspect your home before we can decide whether it is a qualifying repair. Repairs that do not qualify will be processed in the normal way.

For qualifying repairs, the following procedure applies:

- We will ask Morgan Sindall Property Services, to carry out the work within a set time
- If the job is not finished within the relevant timescale, ask us to place the work with a second service provider. When we have done this, we will send you a repair notice telling you when the job should be finished
- If the second service provider fails to do the work on time, you will be entitled to compensation. The amount of compensation that can be paid is £10, plus an extra £2 a day from the end of the second service provider's priority time limit. The maximum compensation is £50
- If you owe money to the council, we will take the amount you owe the council from your compensation.

### SERVICING GAS APPLIANCES

If your home has a gas supply, by law we must carry out a safety check every 12 months.

For your own safety and the safety of others it is essential that you let us into your home to carry out a service and safety check on your gas central heating.

Regular servicing is essential because:

- your boiler will run efficiently
- it makes sure your heating system is safe
- it reduces the likelihood of breakdowns
- we have a legal obligation to carry out a safety check of the system every 12 months.

Morgan Sindall Property Services will send you a reminder letter approximately two weeks prior to the date of the gas servicing appointment. If the date of the annual gas servicing appointment is not convenient, you can rearrange (see section 13 for contact details). You will also receive a copy of the Landlord Gas Safety Record (LGSR).

**If you do not let Morgan Sindall Property Services in to service and/or carry out a safety check on the gas equipment in your home, you are breaking the conditions of**

**your tenancy agreement. We can choose to take court action against you to get into your home or start proceedings to evict you. We will also charge you for the cost of the no access visit.**

For more information please see the Annual Gas Service webpage.

### CENTRAL HEATING WITH RADIATORS

If your heating breaks down, do the following simple checks:

- If you have a prepayment meter, check that there is credit on the card
- If one or two radiators are not warming up, make sure the valves at the end of the radiator are open
- Check the timer that switches your heating and hot water on and off is set to your preferred times and is switched on
- If the boiler comes on, but it won't heat up or provide hot water you will need to request a repair.

**IMPORTANT:** New heating systems radiators cannot be bled, as this will turn OFF the boiler. Any problems with the heating system or hot water please contact Morgan Sindall Property Services.

### HOME SAFETY Gas

**The gas mains infrastructure is maintained by National Grid**

If you think you smell gas, do the following:

- Do not use matches or naked flames
- Do not turn light switches on or off
- Immediately put out any cigarettes
- Turn off the gas supply. This is usually near the gas meter unless the meter is in a basement or cellar. If you smell gas in the basement or underground car park, get everybody out of the building
- Open doors and windows to get rid of the gas
- Immediately phone the National Gas Emergency Service on 0800 111 999.

### If National Grid comes out in an emergency

National Grid will make the gas supply safe and turn off any appliances if necessary. They will tell you to contact a Gas Safe registered engineer to do the repair. You should phone Morgan Sindall Property Services who will make sure the repair is carried out as soon as possible.

### Gas Appliances Belonging to You

- Keep your gas appliances in good working order by having them regularly serviced by a Gas Safe registered engineer
- If you are going to move and plan to take a gas appliance which belongs to you, the gas supply must be capped off correctly by a Gas Safe registered engineer.

### Electricity

**To stay safe with electricity you should do the following:**

- Buy British (BS) or European (EN) Standard light bulbs and plugs
- Make sure all plugs are wired correctly
- Switch off the TV and stereo when you are not using them (not just put them on standby) when you go to bed
- Use a fireguard in front of electric fires
- Get expert help for all repairs and wiring
- Make sure all equipment and appliances have a suitable European or British Standard quality mark
- Before any electrical works are carried out, get written permission from us. Work must be carried out by an electrician registered with the NICEIC.

**You should never do the following:**

- make any changes or carry out repairs to the sockets or wiring

- use an appliance with a damaged flex
- use cracked or chipped plugs or sockets
- run an appliance from a light fitting
- overload sockets with adaptors
- handle plugs, switches or any appliance if you have wet hands
- allow flexes on kettles, toasters and other appliances to hang over a work surface or touch the hot parts of a cooker
- use a portable appliance in the bathroom (a shaver can be used if a special socket is already fitted)
- drape clothes over a convector or storage heater
- cover or block air grilles on fan heaters
- fit time switches or delay controls to electric fires
- run extension leads across open walkways
- use any sockets in communal areas.

### Solid fuel heating

If you have solid fuel heating:

- Always make sure the fuel you use is suitable for the fire (your coal merchant will be able to tell you)
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions when using your fire (ask us for advice if you need help)
- Be careful of sparks or burning coals
- Use an adequate fireguard in front of the fire
- Allow our Service Provider into your home to clean your chimney at least every 12 months.

If you think your chimney is blocked please contact Morgan Sindall Property Services.

## Water supply

It is our job to deal with any leaks to the water supply in your home. Leaks outside your home may have to be repaired either by us or by Essex & Suffolk Water.

## Water hygiene

Legionella bacteria (which causes Legionnaires' disease) are commonly found in soil, streams, ponds and so on in the natural environment and can also be found in manmade water systems (for example, in hot-water and cold-water storage tanks and pipework).

Legionella is usually associated with larger water systems such as those found in office blocks, hotels and hospitals, but it can live in smaller systems used in homes. Legionella bacteria can survive at low temperatures, but develop quickly at temperatures between 20C and 45C. High temperatures over 60C will kill them.

The heating and hot-water controls in all council properties are set by our service provider. The settings are designed to reduce the risk from legionella bacteria and you should not alter them. If you think that your hot water is too hot or too cold, contact Morgan Sindall Property Services. However, if you are a resident on the Langdon Hills estate which has district heating please contact Thames Energy on **01268 411122**.

You can help to keep levels of bacteria in water systems low by following a few simple steps:

- When you have been away from home for one week or more, run the hot and cold taps in the kitchen and bathroom for 10 minutes when you return to the property
- Regularly use all of the taps inside and outside your home (both hot and cold)
- Keep taps and shower heads clean and free from limescale and any other deposits
- Ensure water tanks are covered with a lid.

## Condensation

To keep your home free from damp and mould, you need to avoid creating condensation.

There is always moisture in the air, caused by normal household activities such as cooking, washing, hot baths and drying clothes.

When this air reaches a cold surface (such as a wall or window) some of the water in the air is left behind. This dampness encourages mould to grow. This can affect clothes, bedding and decoration.

Condensation occurs in every home, but you can reduce its effects by doing the following:

- dry clothes outdoors if possible. If you have a tumble dryer, you must fit an outside vent or condenser
- open windows a small amount, particularly when cooking
- when running a bath, putting the cold water in before the hot to reduce the steam and keep the bathroom door closed
- ventilate cupboards and wardrobes and do not put too many items in them as this stops air circulating
- try to keep a constant heat in your home so there are no cold surfaces for water vapour to settle on.

## Asbestos

Asbestos may have been used in building your home as it was commonly used in the construction industry up until the 1970's. If asbestos is handled correctly it does not cause a risk to health.

If you suspect that any asbestos in your home is damaged or will be disturbed when you decorate or carry out work, phone **01268 533333**. They will arrange for a surveyor to inspect the material. The surveyor will then arrange to carry out any necessary work to make the home safe.

For more information please see the Dealing with Asbestos webpage

## SECTION 4 - HOME IMPROVEMENTS



**As well as routine repairs, your home will need regular maintenance. From time to time, worn-out items will need to be replaced. These improvements to your home can take place in three ways.**

- As part of our regular programme of works (for example, painting the outside of your home).
- As part of a planned maintenance programme, which will usually involve a number of properties on an estate (for example, when windows are replaced).
- When you use your right to improve your home.

### THE BASILDON STANDARD

After the successful delivery of the Decent Homes Standard we are currently working towards creating a new standard for housing, which will be called the Basildon Standard. This new standard will be published in 2017.

### IMPROVEMENTS CARRIED OUT BY US

We plan to continue carrying out a range of improvements to council homes within the Borough. These plans depend on the condition of the properties, their age and the facilities they need to meet modern living standards.

Each year we develop a programme to make the best use of the money we have available. The money is very limited, so we will prioritise the improvements to make sure the work most important to safety is carried out first.

Improvement programmes typically include:

- replacing roofs on properties
- electrical upgrades and rewiring

- installing new heating
- structural repairs
- fitting new kitchens
- fitting new bathrooms
- installing new windows and doors.

You will have a choice of wall tile and floor covering colours when we renew bathrooms. When we fit new kitchens you will also have a choice of kitchen unit and worktop colours.

### THE EXTERNAL PAINTING PROGRAMME

We paint the outside of your home as part of a regular programme.

### IMPROVEMENTS CARRIED OUT BY YOU

Tenants often wish to make improvements to their home for their own comfort and convenience. However, if you wish to carry out your own improvements there are some conditions that need to be met. These are:

You must not make any improvements or alterations to your home, or to the electrical, gas or water systems, without our permission in writing. You must also have any necessary planning permission or building regulations approval.

Some examples of things that you will need approval for are shown below:

- making any changes or adding to fixtures, fittings or services
- additional electric sockets
- putting an aerial or a satellite dish on the outside of your home
- decorating the outside of your home
- having laminate flooring fitted (we will not normally give permission if you live in a flat, unless you are on the ground floor)
- sheds, conservatories, decking, patio, loft conversions, extensions, driveways and fencing.

If the item that you would like to improve is not listed above and you are not sure whether or not you need permission, please ring Housing Property Services for advice.

Before any works commence, you must refer to the Asbestos Management Survey on your property, and ensure that any works involving removal of asbestos containing materials are done so in accordance with Health and Safety Executive Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012 (CAR 2012).

Once you have our **written** permission and work has started, you must make your alteration within a reasonable time and to the standard we set in our written permission. You must also keep to any other conditions we set.

In respect of health and safety standards, if the work has not been completed to a satisfactory standard, we reserve the right to request that the installation is removed and the property reinstated to the original design at a cost to you.

### Can I claim any payment towards the cost of the improvement work?

Under the Secure Tenants of Local Authorities (Compensation for Improvements) Regulations 1994, where tenants carry out certain improvement works themselves, they may be able to claim some of the costs back from us.

### What types of improvements will qualify?

Certain improvements that are valued at between £100 and £3,000 can be considered. Tenants may be compensated for installing, replacing or fitting:

- a bath or shower
- wash-hand basin
- toilet
- kitchen sink
- storage cupboards in bathroom or kitchen
- work surfaces for food preparation
- space or water heating
- thermostatic radiator valves
- insulation of pipes, water tank or cylinder
- loft insulation
- cavity wall insulation



- draught proofing of external doors or windows
- double glazing or other external window replacement
- secondary glazing
- rewiring or the provision of power and lighting or other electrical fittings (including smoke detectors)
- any object that improves the security of the dwelling house but excluding burglar alarms.

Tenants won't be compensated for redecorating their homes, or for fittings such as new flooring, blinds, fitted wardrobes, etc., as these aren't included in the scheme. The landlord will only pay compensation on qualifying improvements where the tenant has written permission to do the work.

If you are considering carrying out a home improvement, please discuss this with Housing Property Services who will tell you whether you may be able to claim any payment for the work you intend to carry out. After this, if you would still like to go ahead with the improvement, please ensure you have the council's written permission before the works start.

### Will my rent be increased?

Your improvement may add value to the property you live in but the rent will not increase as a result of these improvements.

### What happens when I move?

You may be entitled to some compensation for any improvements/alterations that remain in the property. The amount we pay will depend on the cost of the work you carried out and how long ago it was done.

We also reserve the right to request that any essential maintenance or repairs are carried out before vacating the property. Failure to do so will result in the council recharging you for the cost of putting things right.

## SECTION 5 - LIVING IN YOUR HOME

**This section covers issues about living in your home. It explains our policies, procedures and offers practical advice.**

### Anti-social behaviour and nuisance

The council is committed to preventing and tackling anti-social behaviour. We have a specialist Anti-Social Behaviour team to deal with the more serious and complex cases of anti-social behaviour. We rely on you to help us by making sure that you do not create any form of nuisance to others, but also by reporting anti-social behaviour to us and other relevant agencies.

Anti-Social behaviour can include but is not limited to:

- problems with neighbours
- harassment or hate crime
- drug dealing
- noise nuisance
- domestic abuse

For more information please visit the Anti-Social Behaviour webpage.

### Report an incident to Basildon Council

Basildon Council expects most people to solve their own problems with their neighbours, but if that fails we will take whatever action (if any) we consider to be appropriate in the circumstances.

Please use the online form to report an incident of anti-social behaviour, nuisance or harassment contact our Anti-Social Behaviour team on **01268 533333**.

In an emergency please call 999 or 101 for a non-emergency,

All reports will be dealt with in the strictest confidence. Please include details of the incident (for example, the date, time and an incident number the police gave, if they were called).

Our first step is usually to speak to the person the behaviour is affecting to hear their version of the event. If someone has broken their tenancy agreement we will remind them of their responsibilities and what will happen if the disturbance continues. We may also involve council departments such



as Environmental Health or Planning and other agencies such as social services and the police.

### Noise complaints

The Council's Environmental Health Service may be able to help you if noise from neighbours is causing a nuisance. Typically this would be loud music, dog barking or excessive noise from DIY in unsociable hours. They will give you a noise monitoring form to write down details of dates and times of the noise nuisance. They will also send the neighbour a letter about the problem (your details will not be given in this letter). If they find that there is a nuisance, the person will be served with a notice to stop making the noise. If the problems continue, and Environmental Health staff witness this, formal action will be taken. This could mean prosecution and seizing the equipment causing the noise.

Noise from everyday living and shouting would not be covered but might form part of a general problem of anti-social behaviour to be investigated by the Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Team.

Please use the online form to report noise pollution.

### Domestic abuse

Basildon Borough Council can assist you if you are a victim of domestic abuse, there are various options available to you:

- call **01268 533333** and speak to the Anti-social Behaviour Team who will advise you of all the options available to you
- attend the Basildon Centre and say J9 to a member of staff, which is a code word that means you want to obtain some support and advice regarding an abusive relationship.



## Mediation

Mediation is a process where an independent person helps people to settle a dispute they have. The service is free of charge for all tenants who want to use it. It is an alternative to going to court, where the process is lengthy and expenses can be very high.

### What if the problem continues?

If the anti-social behaviour is serious and carries on despite our efforts to stop it, we can take legal action. We may apply for an injunction, an possession order or an eviction order. We will only apply for an eviction order if everything else we have tried to do to sort out the problem has failed.

If you are evicted for anti-social behaviour, the council may refuse to offer you a home in the future.

A copy of the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy is available on the website.

## PROTECTING STAFF

We are committed to customer care, but also to protecting the safety and wellbeing of our staff. A condition of your tenancy is that you or your visitors do not threaten or abuse council staff or anyone working on the council's behalf. This includes using bad language or visiting the Basildon Centre while under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

## CONDITION OF THE PROPERTY

It is your responsibility to look after your home both inside and out and keep it reasonably clean and tidy.

You are responsible for:

- keeping your home clean and free from rubbish and disposing of your rubbish properly
- not causing or allowing any damages to your home
- reporting any repairs that are needed
- not hoarding items in your home that may be a fire or health risk or prevent access to your property
- not leaving syringes and other sharp items in public areas where people could come into contact with them
- taking reasonable action to control any vermin or pests that enter your home or garden

If you do not keep to conditions above, we may charge you for any work we do to put the situation right, such as removing rubbish or clearing your property.

We may also take legal action against you which could result in you losing your home.

## GARDENS AND BALCONIES

You are required to keep your own garden or balcony in a clean and tidy condition so they do not cause a nuisance to your neighbours.

You are responsible for:

- keeping the garden tidy and free of rubbish, household items and vehicle parts
- trimming shrubs, hedges or trees to make sure they do not become a nuisance to neighbours
- grass cutting
- maintaining any fencing that is your responsibility

If you wish to cut down or remove any bushes, hedges or trees which you did not originally plant, please speak to your Estate Officer as you will need to get permission before doing so.

You will also need our written permission to:

- erect a garage, shed, lean to, summerhouse, pergola or greenhouse
- erect or change a wall or fence
- install paving, decking or patio.

Further information about getting permission is in Section 4 - Home Improvement.

## GAS, ELECTRICITY AND WATER SUPPLY

You must make sure your home has water and gas or electricity (or both). Remember that meters are owned by the relevant supplier and they could prosecute you if you tamper with them.

Any meter in your home regardless if you use it may incur a standing charge from the supplier.

We are responsible for the gas supply pipe from the gas meter, and for the water pipes within the boundary of your home. The company that you have a contract with to supply gas is responsible for the meter and the supply pipe to it. You are responsible for paying companies you have a contract with to supply gas, electricity or water and for contacting them if there is a problem with the meter.

We will undertake a gas central heating safety check once a year to ensure you are protected from gas leaks and carbon monoxide poisoning. It is essential you allow our Service Provider access, in order to service and check the gas central heating every 12 months.

You will be sent a gas servicing notification letter approximately 8 weeks in advance of the date of the gas servicing appointment. To keep costs to a minimum it is important to ensure this appointment is kept or if necessary a more convenient appointment time is made by contacting Morgan Sindall Property Services.

If you fail to allow our gas servicing provider to service and/or carry out a safety check on the gas appliances in your home, you will be in breach of the conditions of your tenancy agreement. This may result in legal action to gain entry to your home and you would be liable for all costs.

## RUNNING A BUSINESS FROM HOME

Generally, you would not be able to run a business from your home. However, in certain circumstances this may be allowed if the business does not affect your neighbours. If you are considering starting a business from home, you need to contact your Estate Management Officer to discuss this.

## PETS AND ANIMALS

If you want to keep pets or animals, you should get our permission first. We will not refuse without good reason. However, some homes (such as flats in blocks) may not be suitable for some pets or animals.

New tenants who when applying for housing included their pets or animals on their homeseeeker application form, can consider that permission has been given, but only for those pets or animals stated on the form. You must get permission for any subsequent pets.

You must make sure that any pet or animal is kept under control at all times and does not become a health or noise nuisance, or behave in a way that could annoy, frighten or cause a nuisance to other people including Council staff or service providers when they visit your home.

You must not allow any animal to foul any of our property, including areas you share with other

tenants. You must clear up after any animal you are responsible for. If you do not, we will charge you for the cost of cleaning and any other expenses that are needed to remove the nuisance.

If you are already living in sheltered housing, please speak to your Scheme Coordinator as there are guidelines on keeping pets in sheltered accommodation and you will be asked to complete a form.

## VANDALISM

Vandalism and graffiti not only spoil the environment but are expensive to deal with and/or get rid of. Please report any damage or graffiti to the Council's Street Scene Service. If you see anyone damaging the council's property, you should call the police. If someone is convicted of damaging council property, the court can make him or her pay for the damage. You can also report vandalism, fly tipping etc. through Street Scene

## RUBBISH AND RECYCLING SERVICES

The council encourages residents to recycle as widely as possible. Information regarding all rubbish and recycling services is available on the council's website.

You can enter your postcode online to receive a list of services for your local area.

You should not burn rubbish in your garden as this may cause a nuisance to your neighbour. It also causes pollution.

If your block has a rubbish chute:

- do not use it before 7.00am and after 9.00pm, as the noise may be a nuisance to other tenants
- do not block it with bulky items
- use small bags not large black sacks
- never drop lit cigarettes or matches in it
- leave surrounding areas clean and tidy
- do not allow anything to be dropped or thrown from balconies or windows

If the chute becomes blocked please report it to Morgan Sindall Property Services.



### Special collections

You can arrange with us to have large items or electrical household goods collected for disposal. This must be booked in advance with us and there is a small charge of £10.00 for a maximum of five items. For further information see our Special Collections webpage.

### VEHICLES AND PARKING

Both the council and your neighbours expect you to park in a reasonable way, to be considerate and do not block other resident's access or obstruct emergency routes.

Please do not do the following:

- cause an obstruction (this can affect emergency vehicles, stopping them from carrying out their duties)
- block anyone's gate or drive, as this is seen as an obstruction
- park on the footpath, unless it is a marked-out parking area
- park in your garden, unless you have a proper hardstanding (hard area for parking, such as a drive) and dropped kerb for which written permission is required
- park in spaces for permit holders or disabled drivers unless you have the correct permit or blue badge
- park an HGV vehicle within the 7.5 tonne restriction zone (this zone mainly covers the eastern part of the district on the Felmores estate)
- park in front of garages in garage blocks.

Most shared parking areas do not have reserved places. The areas are for parking taxed and road-worthy vehicles. You should not park caravans, trailers and lorries in shared parking areas. If a vehicle is abandoned on the council's land, we will put a notice on the vehicle and arrange for it to be removed. The owner may be charged for the costs of removing, storing or disposing of the vehicle.

You are allowed to do minor repairs on your own vehicles, as long as the work does not cause a nuisance to neighbours. However, you must not carry out major repairs to vehicles on estate roads, within garages owned by the council or in parking areas.

The Clean Neighbourhood and Environment Act 2005 sets out two criminal offences of selling vehicles on the road and repairing vehicles on the road and you could be fined.

You will need permission from Basildon Council to build a hardstanding and from Essex County Council to get a dropped kerb to park a vehicle, caravan or trailer within the boundary of your home. For more information on dropped kerbs, phone Essex County Council on **0345 603 7631** or visit the Essex Highways website.

If anyone in your household is disabled, you can apply for a reserved parking area. Please contact the council for more information.

### LIVING IN HOMES WITH SHARED/COMMUNAL AREAS

If you live in a flat or maisonette you have special responsibilities, especially to other neighbours living close by. Please remember that everyone who lives in a block can use shared hallways, corridors, gardens and drying areas. Therefore, you must:

- keep staircases, walkways and other areas clean, tidy and clear of any of your personal belongings
- not block the entrance hall or landings, or use them for storage
- not dump rubbish
- not store any flammable or dangerous materials

Officers from the council and their service providers visit flat blocks and sheltered schemes regularly, if you do not keep to this advice, you may be putting yourself and your neighbours at risk. This is a breach of your tenancy agreement and may result in legal action being taken against you and any cost incurred will be recharged.

### SMOKING

It is against the law for any person living in or visiting a block of flats or Sheltered Housing Scheme to smoke within the shared areas.

If you smoke, please be considerate towards our staff or service providers when they visit your home.

### DOOR ENTRY SYSTEMS

Door-entry systems are installed to control entry to

the building. For security reasons:

- do not prop open the front door of the block
- do not let anyone you don't know into the block
- make sure the door is always closed behind you
- remember that tradesmen have their own button to use to get into the building.

If you have lost your front door key or door-entry key or card, you can get a replacement from Basildon Council. Please contact Morgan Sindall Property Services. You will have to pay a fee for this. You may also have to pay a charge if you (or anyone who lives with or visits you) cause any damage to the door-entry system.

### LIFTS

If there is a problem with a lift in your block you should phone Morgan Sindall Property Services.

### FIRE SAFETY

Basildon Council has a duty to ensure the wellbeing of all residents and visitors and must comply with the fire safety recommendations. For more information regarding fire safety see the fire safety leaflet issued at sign up or visit our advice for residents - fire webpage.

We have adopted a 'zero tolerance' approach in general needs flat blocks which means that no articles can be stored in any communal areas, lobbies or corridors.

Within the communal areas of our Sheltered Housing Schemes we have adopted a 'managed' use approach. With agreement from the Scheme Co-ordinator, residents will be able to store certain items in designated communal areas such as mobility scooters or wheelchairs and other walking aids.

Residents will be given the opportunity to remove the item/s within 7 days (unless there is an immediate risk) but if they fail to do so, Basildon Council will remove and dispose of it and may re-charge the individual responsible for the cost of the removal. Failure to comply with this will mean a breach of tenancy and could result in a tenant losing their home.

Items considered an extreme fire risk are, but not limited to:

- motorcycles
- scooters
- petrol lawnmowers
- anything with an engine that uses petrol or diesel
- mobility scooters
- cans of fuel etc.

### At All Times

- make sure that the smoke detectors in your home are working
- do not store anything in your hall or corridor, especially anything that will burn easily
- use the fixed heating system fitted in your home. Do not use any form of radiant heater there, especially one with either a flame (gas or paraffin) or a radiant element (electric bar fire)
- do not store chemicals or flammable things in the cupboard(s) where your gas and electricity meters are fitted
- do not block access roads to the building

### If a Fire Breaks Out in Your Home

- If you are in the room where the fire is, leave straight away, together with anybody else, then close the door
- Do not stay behind to try and put the fire out
- Tell everybody else in your home about the fire and get everybody to leave. Close the front door and leave the building
- Do not use any lift

### CALL THE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

### If You See or Hear of a Fire in Another Part of the Building

- it will usually be safe for you to stay in your own home
- you must leave your home if smoke or heat affects it. Close all doors and windows

### Calling the Fire and Rescue Service

The Fire and Rescue Service should always be called to a fire, even if it only seems a small fire. This should be done straight away. The way to call the Fire and Rescue Service is by telephone as follows:

- 1) Dial 999 or 112 from a mobile phone
- 2) When the operator answers give the telephone number you are ringing from and ask for **FIRE**
- 3) When the Fire Service Operator replies, tell them clearly the flat number and that you are calling from and give the postcode
- 4) Do not end the call until the Fire Service Operator has repeated the address to you and you are sure they have got it right. The Fire and Rescue Service cannot help if they do not have the full address.

### Smoke, Fire and Carbon Monoxide (CO) detectors

You should make sure any smoke and CO detectors in your home are working properly by testing them regularly (follow the manufacturer's instructions).

Basildon Council will maintain any detector that is powered by mains electricity. Do not interfere with the electricity supply. However, it is your responsibility to maintain any battery operated detectors.

Essex County Fire and Rescue Service can visit your home to give you general advice about things such as smoking and cooking. To arrange a visit, phone Essex County Fire and Rescue Service direct on 0300 303 0088 or complete their on-line form.

### ASBESTOS

Asbestos may have been used in building your home as it was commonly used in the construction industry up until the 1970's. If asbestos is handled correctly it does not cause a risk to health.

If you suspect that any asbestos in your home is damaged or will be disturbed when you decorate or carry out work, contact Housing Property Services. They will arrange for a surveyor to inspect the material. The surveyor will then arrange to carry out any necessary work to make the home safe.

For more information please see the Dealing with Asbestos webpage.

### SUBTENANTS AND LODGERS

You must ask our permission to sublet any part of your home to anyone else (a subtenant). We will give you permission if it is reasonable to do so. If we refuse permission, we must give a reason and you have the right to appeal.

If you have a temporary tenancy, you cannot take in lodgers.

In other cases, you can take in lodgers as long as the total number of people living in your home will not be considered overcrowded in accordance with the Council's Allocation Scheme. You must seek permission first before a lodger moves in and if the request is approved the lodger will not be considered as part of your household if you later wish to transfer or mutually exchange to another property.

You should inform the council's Housing Benefit and Council Tax services before allowing someone to move in, as it may affect your benefit.

Whatever happens, you must not rent out your entire home and move somewhere else. If you do, we will repossess the property. Contact the Customer Service Centre for permission to take in a lodger or subtenant.

## SECTION 6 - SUPPORTING YOU IN YOUR HOME

**This section gives information about services that can help you with your tenancy or to stay in your home if you need support.**

### SUPPORT FOR PEOPLE HAVING DIFFICULTY MANAGING THEIR TENANCIES

We may be able to help you if you have difficulty managing your tenancy. For instance if you:

- need help with paying your rent or claiming benefits
- are having difficulty maintaining your tenancy
- have trouble keeping your home secure (for example, you let people into your home that you don't want there).
- need help to deal with disputes you have with neighbours
- need to access other professional help from other agencies such as social services
- would like help to access local support groups/activities

We work with our own Housing Advice Team as well as outside organisations who offer help and support. If you think you need help managing your tenancy, or you know someone who does, contact Basildon Council and you will be directed to the most appropriate person to help you.

If you live in Sheltered Housing, this help will be provided by your Sheltered Scheme Co-ordinator and/or other agency.

### ADAPTATIONS

The council and Essex Social Care Direct provide a service to help residents with disabilities to continue living in their own home.

#### How to apply for minor adaptations

Minor adaptations include providing handrails and lever taps. Your needs are assessed by Social Care or an approved assessor (except for minor work in wet areas, such as access to the bath, where the work needs to be recommended by an Occupational Therapist).

For more information you can contact our Aids and Adaptations Team.



#### How to apply for major adaptations

By major adaptations we mean jobs such as installing wet rooms and stairlifts. Essex Social Care Direct will carry out an assessment of your needs.

You can phone Social Care on **0845 603 7630**. Ask for Social Care Direct. They will assess your needs over the phone and decide whether you are eligible for an assessment by an occupational therapist.

If it is not reasonable or practical to adapt your existing home the council may be able to offer you a more suitable property that has either been adapted or can be adapted to suit your needs.

Sometimes adaptations are not the best solution for you. In this case we have a scheme called 'Transfer Plus' which may help you to move into more suitable accommodation if you meet the eligibility criteria.

### TRANSFER PLUS

The Transfer Plus scheme is an alternative to installing major disabled adaptations in family sized accommodation.

The scheme will identify suitable alternative accommodation:

- that removes the need for the adaptation (for example, moving from a house to a bungalow removes the need for a stair-lift)
- where it is more appropriate to fit the adaptation (for example, a level-access shower is more appropriate in a ground-floor flat than a house)

For more information about Transfer Plus and other aids and adaptations visit the Adapting Homes webpage.

## SECTION 7 - SHELTERED HOUSING

**The council have 47 Sheltered Housing Schemes across the borough that provide safe and secure accommodation for residents over the age of 55 to live independently.**

There is a Sheltered Scheme Co-ordinator (SSC) on duty between 9.00am and 5.15pm, Monday to Friday. The SSC will make sure that you have access to services and facilities that maintain your independence. They will give you advice and information and help you get the support you need. This support could be putting you in contact with appropriate people or organisations such as the Benefits Agency, Social Services or Age Concern.

Some of the schemes are designated for residents over the age of 60 whilst others are for those over the age of 55. The over 60's schemes have a hard wired emergency alarm system installed so that if you need help in an emergency situation, including in the evenings or weekend you can pull the cord to alert the community alarm provider who will get you the appropriate help. You can also opt to have a daily welfare check if you require this.

In the over 55 schemes there is no hard wired alarm system installed, but you can choose to buy an alarm from any provider of your choice.

### SHELTERED HOUSING AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1. Provide a safe and secure environment for people to live independently
2. Offer choice and flexibility to tenants in the service they receive
3. Establish social networks through the provision of communal facilities
4. Promote fair access and diversity in all aspects of the service provided by the council and its staff
5. Provide the appropriate housing support to enable tenants to remain living independently in their own homes for as long as possible
6. Empower tenants to have a direct say in the way that their homes and services are managed and to play an active role in the improvement and development of the services.



### MOVING IN

Within 14 days of you moving into one of our properties a Sheltered Scheme Co-ordinator will make contact with you to make an appointment to complete all the necessary paperwork, introduce themselves and give you details of the scheme.

They will also talk to you about the level of support you need to maintain your independence. They will check on your personal details such as any illnesses they need to be aware of and will collect details such as your next of kin or doctors details in case they are required in an emergency.

### OTHER FACILITIES

Most schemes have a communal laundry with washing machines and tumble dryers. These are for residents' use only and family members must not use this facility. All schemes have a communal lounge which you are encouraged to use to meet other residents. Many schemes organise their own social events which help build the community spirit within the scheme.

### SHELTERED SCHEME COORDINATORS

The SSC teams work from 9.00am to 5.15pm Monday to Friday to provide housing related support to sheltered tenants. The only exceptions are Bank Holidays or occasional training days but you will be informed of these dates. Staff may not be in the building all day, every day, but are contactable by telephone if you need assistance. You will be given the list of telephone numbers within your welcome pack. Staff work in teams to cover designated areas, each team has a Supported Housing Officer, who manages the team. All staff wear name badges so they can be identified easily.

### SCHEME MEETINGS

Every scheme has regular meetings/coffee mornings and residents are encouraged to attend to discuss any issues of concern.

### KEYS

Your home will have an independent lock on your front door. We would suggest you have a key-safe fitted to the outside of your home to keep a spare key for emergencies. The key-safe has a personal number which is chosen by you. If you lock yourself out and there is no key-safe, then you would be liable for the cost of a locksmith.

### SECURITY

All tenants are responsible for the security of their own property and the communal areas of the scheme in which you live. If there is an entry phone door, you should only let in visitors you know and you are sure of their identity.

### REPAIRS

You are responsible for reporting your own repairs using the details provided in your welcome pack. This enables you to make an appointment which is convenient to you.

### SERVICE CHARGES

In addition to your weekly rent, you will need to pay a service charge for any shared services in your scheme such as, lighting, heating and hot water in communal areas, laundry facilities and lifts. These charges will be fully explained to you when you sign up your tenancy and you may be eligible for some help in making these payments.

### SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

There is a range of social activities available in sheltered schemes ranging from coffee mornings to exercise classes, darts, bowls etc. If you have an interest that you think other residents would share we would encourage you to make use of the communal lounge and organise something yourself.

### SHELTERED HOUSING FORUM

Basildon Council has an active Sheltered Housing Forum which is made up of tenants from schemes across the borough. The forum can raise issues and reports back to residents. The aim of this group is to ensure that tenants have

a say in the future of sheltered housing and the council. If you would like more information on this, or how to become a representative, please contact the Community Involvement Team.

### PRIVACY

You have a right to privacy, and staff should enter your home only if they have been invited, or in case of an emergency.

### CONFIDENTIALITY

The council has strict rules about confidentiality. Information given by you will only be shared in strictly controlled circumstances with professionals from other agencies, if they need the information to assist in your support. Steps are taken to keep the information secure and confidential when it is stored, and any breach of confidentiality is treated as a serious matter.

### PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES

The council has a clear policy for staff covering general, financial, verbal and physical boundaries, and these issues are covered in staff training. For example there are strict rules regarding confidentiality, handling money, not having any involvement with tenants' wills, not assisting with personal care e.g. shopping, changing light bulbs assisting with dressing and not accepting any gifts from residents.

### RESPONSIBILITIES

You must ensure you keep to the conditions of your tenancy by caring for your home and not causing nuisance to neighbours. In particular the council will not tolerate abusive or aggressive behaviour towards staff.

You must let the SSC know if you have any change of circumstances or if you are going to be away for a period of time.

### GUESTS

Family or friends can come and stay with you in your home but only for a period of up to two weeks and there is an age restriction on guests. Guests staying with you cannot use the communal areas without you "the tenant" being present. After the two week period special permission would be required from the sheltered housing service as it could affect your benefits and/or TV license concessions.

## TV LICENCES

Your scheme may be entitled to a TV licence concession. Your Scheme Coordinator will be able to give you more information on this when you move in.

## PETS

**You can keep small caged animals or fish but you must have our prior written permission for a cat or a dog.**

Owners are responsible for cleaning up after their pet if it goes to the toilet in communal areas and this includes washing away any urine. Any animal hair needs to be removed before items are put into the communal washing machines or tumble driers and filters cleaned. Council Officers cannot take responsibility for looking after any pet, even in an emergency, and no pets are allowed in the internal communal areas except guide or therapy dogs

## SECTION 8 - PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS

**While you are a secure tenant or flexible tenant you should not become homeless as long as you keep to the conditions of your tenancy. If you need information or further advice about preventing homelessness please visit our Homeless Prevention webpage. You will also be able to access a copy of the Homeless Prevention Strategy on this webpage.**

### WHEN DEBT THREATENS YOUR TENANCY

If you are behind with your rent, it could threaten your tenancy. Please see the councils Rent Payment Difficulties webpage.

You should also contact the Council's Housing Assessment and Advice Service who can give you advice on sorting out your priority debts, as well as providing general advice on housing and claiming benefits. To contact them you can either:

- complete the online form
- visit the drop in service at the Basildon Centre between 8.30am and 4.45pm. When you arrive you will need to take a ticket. However, please note this is on a first come, first serve basis so it is not possible to guarantee everyone will be seen.

You may also be able to get assistance with debt management from the Citizen Advice Bureau.

In the event of failure to take reasonable action to prevent the loss of your tenancy, you may be found intentionally homeless. This means that, if you re-present to the council for further housing assistance in such circumstances, you will be able to access advice, but it is unlikely a further



rehousing duty will be owed.

### HARASSMENT AND VIOLENCE

Sometimes tenants are at risk of becoming homeless because of harassment or violence. If you experience harassment or violence from other tenants, your neighbours, their visitors or someone living with you, you should get help immediately.

If, however, you engage in harassment, it must be emphasised that Basildon Council shares information across services, linking together the homeless services, environmental health and anti-social behaviour teams. Details are retained on file should a subsequent eviction be necessary.

If the problem makes it difficult for you to stay in your home, you should contact the council for advice and assistance.

If you are suffering from domestic abuse, sexual violence or any other form of abuse please visit the councils Safeguarding People from Abuse webpage where you can find a list of agencies and helplines.

You can also contact Basildon Council for assistance. To do this you can either:

- call 01268 533333 to speak to the Anti-social Behaviour Team who will advise you of all the options available to you
- attend the Basildon Centre and say J9 to a member of staff, which is a code word that means you want to obtain some support and advice regarding an abusive relationship.

## SECTION 9 - MOVING

**If your household grows or changes you may want to move to another property.**

### TRANSFERS

If you are a secure or flexible tenant you can apply for a transfer (where we transfer your tenancy to that of a more suitable home). You will only qualify for a transfer if your home is unsuitable for your housing needs for example, if you:

- need more or fewer bedrooms
- have a disability or medical condition that makes your home unsuitable.

More information on transfers and how to apply can be found on the Basildon Council's website at [www.basildonchoice.org.uk](http://www.basildonchoice.org.uk)

### MUTUAL EXCHANGE

If you are a secure or flexible tenant you have the right to exchange your home with a tenant of a council or housing association in Basildon or another district or borough.

Before you can exchange with another tenant you must get the council's written permission. The person you are planning to exchange with must also get permission from their landlord. If you move without permission, the council will make you return to your original home and you will both be putting yourselves at risk of eviction from your homes.

There are some restrictions on a tenant's entitlement to a housing mutual exchange. To see these and for more information regarding

## IN AN EMERGENCY

If you become homeless outside normal office hours, you can contact one of the following:

- Council Emergency Services – **01268 533333**
- Essex County Council: Adult Social Care (out of hours **0345 606 1212**)
- Basildon Police – **0300 333 4444**
- Changing Pathways (formerly Basildon Women's Refuge) – **01268 581591**
- Safer Places – **0845 017 7668**



mutual exchange, please see the councils Housing Mutual Exchange webpage.

You can also visit the Homeswapper and Swap & Move websites for more information. As a council tenant you can register your property for free on both these websites.

Once you have found a swap you can download an application form from our website or contact our Customer Service Centre to request one is sent to you.

### Downsizing Incentive Scheme

The council wants to ensure that housing stock is used effectively. Family sized properties are scarce across the borough. If you are in a home that is too big for your needs you may be eligible for the downsizing scheme if your housing need is a one bedroom or studio sized property. The council may be able to help you find a smaller more suitable home and help to pay for removals and decoration as well as an incentive payment of £1,500.

Further information, including an application form is available on the Downsizing Incentive Scheme webpage.

## HOUSING FOR OLDER PEOPLE

Sheltered housing schemes provide older residents with a comfortable, manageable and secure home of their own; preserving their privacy, dignity and maximising their independence.

All our schemes have communal areas for residents to use and enjoy, these are paid for in a weekly service charge. If you are in receipt of Housing Benefit, some of these charges may be paid for you.

If you are interested, full details are available on our Sheltered and Supported Housing webpage.

## ENDING YOUR TENANCY

You can end your tenancy at any time by giving at least four weeks' notice in accordance with the terms and conditions of your tenancy agreement. If you cannot give the full four weeks' notice, discuss this with your Tenancy & Estate Officer on **01268 533333**.

## SECTION 10 - BUYING YOUR HOME

**You may be able to buy your home from the Council under the right-to-buy scheme.**

### WHO HAS THE RIGHT TO BUY?

If you have a secure or flexible tenancy with Basildon council you may have the right to buy your home through the right-to-buy scheme (exceptions include sheltered housing, purpose-built for tenants with special needs or for elderly people, or if your home is under notice to be demolished).

You do not have the Right to Buy until you have been a public-sector tenant (not a private tenant) for at least three years.

### THE DISCOUNT RULES

You will be able to buy your home at less than its market value. The discount you get is set by the Government and depends on how long you have been a public-sector tenant.



You must hand your keys in by **midday**, at the latest, on the Monday immediately after the date your tenancy is due to end. If you fail to do this, you will have to pay an extra week's rent as you are responsible for the weekly rent until the keys have been received.

When you move out, you must leave the property empty, clean and in good condition. Should you have one, it is important to remove any items stored in the loft, garden shed or external bin cupboard. Gardens should also be left in a tidy condition.

The council will recharge you for any damage to the property and the cost of cleaning or removing items or rubbish left behind.

You can see the checklist on our website detailing the things to remember when you are leaving your council home.



For more information on the Right-To-Buy Scheme you can:

- Visit our Right to Buy webpage
- Visit the Department for Communities and Local Government website to read your-right-to-buy-your-home

## SECTION 11 - MAKING YOUR VIEWS KNOWN

**We are committed to involving and empowering our residents in how we run our service. We have a range of opportunities for residents to get involved and are continually looking at innovative new ways of engagement.**

We want you to be able to tell us what you think about our services and suggest how we can improve them. There are many ways you can get involved including:

Core Groups for specific service areas such as repairs or estate management:

- 1 Tenant and Leaseholder Panel
- 2 Tenant Scrutiny Panel
- 3 Sheltered Housing Forum

### TENANT REPRESENTATIVES

Tenant representatives, along with councillors and the council, have signed an agreement called the Resident Compact. This document sets out how we consult tenants and involve them in issues that



relate to council services in the areas they live in.

To find out more about how you can become a Tenant Representative and get involved, phone the Community Involvement Team on **01268 208224**. You can also contact us by e-mail at [communityinvolvement@basildon.gov.uk](mailto:communityinvolvement@basildon.gov.uk)

Alternatively, if you do not wish to become a Tenant Representative yourself you can talk to the Tenant Representative in your area who will pass on your views as appropriate.



### How to submit a comment, compliment or complaint

Comments, compliments and complaints can be submitted in the following ways:

- Online: Submit your comments, compliments or complaints (recommended)
- Email: [comments@basildon.gov.uk](mailto:comments@basildon.gov.uk)  
[compliments@basildon.gov.uk](mailto:compliments@basildon.gov.uk)  
[complaints@basildon.gov.uk](mailto:complaints@basildon.gov.uk)
- In person at The Basildon Centre
- Phone: please see section 13 for contact details
- In writing - by sending a letter to the council at the following address:

### Customer Services, The Basildon Centre St. Martin's Square, Basildon, Essex SS14 1DL

If for any reason you are unable to submit your own feedback, somebody else (such as a friend, family member or local political representative) can act on your behalf to do this for you.

### Independent Housing Ombudsman

If you remain dissatisfied after you have completed the Council's Complaints Procedure, you can contact the Independent Housing Ombudsman which is an independent service to deal with disputes between landlords and tenants in England.

## HAVE YOUR SAY

Basildon Council is committed to listening to its tenants and welcomes comments, compliments and complaints which we use to monitor and improve the delivery of our services.

Feedback Type	Definition	What to Expect
<b>Comments</b>	Proposals to help the council improve service delivery and/or aspects of customer care	Not all comments or suggestions we receive will get a reply. Frequently the sender simply wants to make their thoughts known to us and it is clear that no reply is expected. In cases where a comment or suggestion raises an issue where a reply is thought to be appropriate you can expect a response within 10 working days
<b>Compliments</b>	An expression of praise concerning a high level of service delivery and/or customer care received	We really appreciate you taking the time to let us know that you were happy with the service we provided. Your compliment will be passed to the service area or person you have contacted us about
<b>Complaints</b>	An expression of dissatisfaction by one or more members of the public about the council's action or lack of action, or about the standard of whether the action was taken or the service provided by the council itself, or by a person or body acting on behalf of the council	You can expect a response to your complaint within 10 working days. Where this is not possible we will contact you within 10 working days to inform you of the reasons for the delay and when you can expect a full response

## SECTION 12 - INFORMATION

**You have the right to certain information about how we provide you with housing services.**

### SEEING INFORMATION WE HOLD ABOUT YOU

The Data Protection Act 1988 sets out how we can store and use personal information (including information from forms you have filled in and that you have given us over the phone, in letters or by emails, information about you that others have provided, and information from our records of your dealings with us).

If you want to see any personal information we hold about you, you will have to ask Basildon Council in writing, setting out exactly what information you want to see. You will have to pay a fee of £10 and provide proof of your identity before we can give you copies of the information. You can usually see all the information we hold about you, but there are some exceptions (for example, details which might put others at risk and information protected by other laws).

The council will provide the information within 40 working days. Once you receive the information you can tell the council if you think any of it is wrong or missing. The council will review it and take appropriate action if necessary.

For more information you can click here to go to the council's website. Alternatively please contact the Data Protection Officer as shown below.

**The Data Protection Officer**  
**Basildon Borough Council**  
**The Basildon Centre**  
**St Martin's Square**  
**Basildon**  
**Essex SS14 1DL**

Email: [dataprotectionofficer@basildon.gov.uk](mailto:dataprotectionofficer@basildon.gov.uk)

### THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000

Under this Act you can ask to see any recorded information (such as letters, documents, emails, minutes of meetings, policies, research and so on) Basildon Council holds. There is some information which does not have to be released, but the council will try to give you all the information you have asked for.



If the council does not provide some information, it will tell you why and explain how you can appeal against the decision. The only fee the council will charge will be for the cost of photocopying, postage and similar charges limited in accordance with the provisions of the Act.

You will need to put your request in writing to the council (this includes by email) and say exactly what information you want. The council will provide the information within 20 working days.

For more information you can click this link to the council's website. Alternatively please contact the Freedom of Information Co-ordinator as shown below.

**The Freedom of Information Co-ordinator**  
**Basildon Borough Council**  
**The Basildon Centre**  
**St Martin's Square**  
**Basildon**  
**Essex SS14 1DL**

Email: [freedomofinfo@basildon.gov.uk](mailto:freedomofinfo@basildon.gov.uk)

### HOUSING PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

Basildon Council is committed to providing high quality housing services to our customers. We monitor how well we are performing throughout the year against a set of key performance indicators and service standards.

Each quarter our performance is monitored and reported to the Tenant Scrutiny Panel.

We will tell you how we have performed in our annual report which will be published on our website. The annual report will also identify any improvements we need to make.

If you are not satisfied with our performance, we will do our best to put things right or explain why we cannot do anything about the problem.

For a list of our Service Standards please click here.

## SECTION 13 - TO CONTACT US

### EMAIL US (RECOMMENDED)

You can email us 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Our customer service centre will deal with your enquiry at the earliest opportunity during office opening hours.

The email addresses of various council service departments and/or officers are often included on each department's information pages throughout the website and there is a list of housing email addresses shown below.

If you are unable to find an email address for a particular service department or officer, or if you are unsure to whom your email should be addressed, then please send your email to our Customer Services at the following address:

- **Email: [customerservices@basildon.gov.uk](mailto:customerservices@basildon.gov.uk)**

During office opening hours customer services staff will re-direct all emails they receive to the relevant Basildon Council department or advise you who to contact if the matter you have raised is not the responsibility of Basildon Council.

#### **Aids and Adaptations:**

Email: [aidsandadaptations@basildon.gov.uk](mailto:aidsandadaptations@basildon.gov.uk)

#### **Anti-social Behaviour:**

Email: [ASB@basildon.gov.uk](mailto:ASB@basildon.gov.uk)

#### **Asbestos/Stock Condition:**

Email: [stockconditionteam@basildon.gov.uk](mailto:stockconditionteam@basildon.gov.uk)

#### **Community Involvement:**

Email: [communityinvolvement@basildon.gov.uk](mailto:communityinvolvement@basildon.gov.uk)

#### **Community Safety:**

Email: [communitysafety@basildon.gov.uk](mailto:communitysafety@basildon.gov.uk)

#### **Empty Homes and Garages:**

Email: [housingvoids@basildon.gov.uk](mailto:housingvoids@basildon.gov.uk)

#### **Housing Choice Rehousing:**

(Housing Applications)

Email: [cschomeseekers@basildon.gov.uk](mailto:cschomeseekers@basildon.gov.uk)

#### **Housing Rents**

Email: [incomeservices@basildon.gov.uk](mailto:incomeservices@basildon.gov.uk)

#### **Housing Fraud:**

Email: [fraudline@basildon.gov.uk](mailto:fraudline@basildon.gov.uk)

#### **Home Ownership:**

Email: [leaseenquiry@basildon.gov.uk](mailto:leaseenquiry@basildon.gov.uk)



#### **Morgan Sindall Property Services:**

Email: [basildonrepairs@morgansindall.com](mailto:basildonrepairs@morgansindall.com)

#### **Right to Buy:**

Email: [housesales@basildon.gov.uk](mailto:housesales@basildon.gov.uk)

#### **Sheltered Housing:**

Email: [shelterhousing@basildon.gov.uk](mailto:shelterhousing@basildon.gov.uk)

#### **Tenancy & Estate Management:**

Email: [3TTEM@basildon.gov.uk](mailto:3TTEM@basildon.gov.uk)

### PHONE US

During office hours Basildon Council operates an automated call answering system that offers easy push button options to connect callers directly to the service they require. Outside office hours callers will connect to our emergency phone line.

#### **Customer Services telephone numbers**

- Customer Services 01268 533333 (Automated call answering during office hours Mon-Fri 8.30am- 5.30pm)
- Emergency Number 01268 533333 (Out of Office hours)
- Morgan Sindall Property Services 01268 533333
- Text Relay (formerly Type Talk) 18001 - Textphone users please insert the prefix 18001 in front of our numbers.

### VISIT US/WRITE TO US

Basildon Council's town centre offices in The Basildon Centre are open 8.30am-5.00pm Monday to Friday. On Saturday mornings the reception area is open for enquiries and self service payments.

#### **Address details of Basildon Council's town centre offices in The Basildon Centre**

Basildon Borough Council  
The Basildon Centre  
St. Martin's Square  
Basildon  
Essex, SS14 1DL

### WALK IN SERVICE AT THE BASILDON CENTRE

- Self-service automated payment machines
- Self-service council web site access
- Benefits enquiries desk
- Council Tax enquiries desk
- Homeseekers advice and registration (available online, see Basildon Choice)
- Homelessness advice

### THE BASILDON CENTRE OPENING TIMES

The Basildon Centre is closed on bank holidays. In an out of office hours emergency please contact our emergency phone line, **01268 533333**.

#### **Basildon Centre Normal Opening Times**

<b>Monday</b>	8.30am to 5:00pm
<b>Tuesday</b>	8.30am to 5:00pm
<b>Wednesday</b>	8.30am to 5:00pm
<b>Thursday</b>	8.30am to 5:00pm
<b>Friday</b>	8.30am to 5:00pm
<b>Saturday*</b>	9.00am to 1.00pm.
<b>Sunday</b>	Closed

\* Limited service available on Saturday's

# TENANTS HANDBOOK

