



TENANTS' HANDBOOK



Updated March 2023

☎ 0300 131 2 131
✉ PO Box 787
Harrogate
HG1 9RW

Definitions

General Needs Housing

General Needs Housing is for people of all ages and not housing for just the elderly or people with disabilities.

Gross Charge

The Gross Charge is the total amount of rent and charges relating to the property that you are liable to pay.

Locality

'Locality' is the estate or village your property is in. It refers to all streets and properties in the area.

Neighbours

Your 'neighbours' include anyone living in the locality who could be affected by your activities, no matter who their landlord is.

Notify/Notified

To be informed of something officially.

Property, premises and home

The words 'property', 'premises' and 'home' refer to the property you live in, including any garden and outbuildings but not including any shared areas.

Rent Arrears

If a tenant is in rent arrears, their rent has not been paid on time and the tenant is behind with their rent payments.

Shared areas

A 'shared' or 'communal' area is a part of a building or estate which all tenants can use - for example halls, stairways, entrances, landings, shared gardens, lawns and landscaped gardens.

Sub-let

To sub-let is to give another person the right to live in part or all of your property.

'We', 'us', 'our', 'the council'

Relates to North Yorkshire Council

Written permission

A letter from the council which says you are allowed to do something, following a particular request.

You/the tenant

The word 'you' or 'the tenant' relates to the person named on the tenancy agreement.

Welcome to your new home

We want you to enjoy living in your home and we strive to provide you with the best service possible. We aim to treat all our customers fairly, impartially and equally. We will treat you as we would expect to be treated ourselves.

North Yorkshire Council has one of the top performing council housing services in the country and we are constantly looking at ways to improve; we welcome any comments or feedback you have on this handbook or the services you receive.

This handbook will give you information on your tenancy, what you can expect from the council and what we expect from you, the tenant. You will also find useful information that you will need to know when moving into your property, if you want to exchange properties, or if you want to move out.

For more detailed information please consult your Tenancy Agreement.

This is the contract between you and the council when you occupy a council home.

Your local customer services team is based at:

North Yorkshire Council
Civic Centre
St Lukes Avenue
Harrogate
HG1 2AE

If you need to post something to us please use our mailing address:

North Yorkshire Council
PO Box 787
Harrogate
HG1 9RW

This chapter of the handbook explains the responsibilities of both the council and you, the tenant.

We appreciate that moving home can be a stressful and very busy time for you and your family.

Moving into your new home

On the back page there is a list of contacts you may have to tell when you move house.

If you are finding it difficult to pay for new furniture for your home, you may be eligible to buy furniture from Essential Needs in Harrogate. They provide a range of second hand furniture and white goods at a reduced rate for people on benefits. To use this service speak to your Housing Officer who will be able to refer you.

If you need support and help with organising your budgets or understanding the terms of your tenancy, please contact your Housing Officer who will be able to put you in touch with departments, agencies or charities who can help.

Who is my housing officer?

Every tenant has a Housing Officer (Estates) who deals with the day to day issues affecting your home. You also have a Housing Officer (Income Management) who has responsibility for managing your rent account. The latter officer will answer any questions you may have about your rent charge, agreeing payments and advising you of benefit matters. If you're not sure who your Housing Officers are search for 'Harrogate housing team' on the council's website at www.northyorks.gov.uk and enter the name of your road or village. Or ring our Customer Services team on 0300 131 2 131 and they'll be able to help.

General Information

To find out information on bin collection days, recycling, street cleansing or the council's parks team who look after cutting the grass in shared areas, visit the council's website at www.northyorks.gov.uk or call our Customer Services team on 0300 131 2 131.

Your responsibilities

Your Tenancy Agreement gives you rights but it also gives you responsibilities. The following is just a summary and is not intended to replace your Tenancy Agreement.

You must:

- notify us in writing if you are going to be away from the property for more than three calendar months
- pay your rent – this is due weekly in advance
- report any repairs that are needed to your home that are the council's responsibility
- take care of your property and keep it clean and well decorated
- make sure any shared areas are kept clean and tidy
- allow reasonable access to the property for repairs and servicing to be carried out
- not do anything, or store any objects on the premises, that will cause a danger to others in the area
- not physically or verbally abuse or intimidate any employees of North Yorkshire Council or contractors working on their behalf
- not use the premises for any illegal or immoral purpose
- not inflict domestic violence, threaten or use mental, emotional or sexual abuse against your partner, ex-partner or other members of your household.

You are responsible for:

- maintaining your garden
- the behaviour of all occupants and visitors to your home; you should ensure that neither you, nor they, are the cause of any nuisance or any anti-social behaviour.

The council's responsibilities

We will:

- keep the structure and exterior of the premises in repair
- take reasonable care to maintain shared areas
- give you help and advice if you report anti-social behaviour
- consult with you if you are likely to be substantially affected by a change to our housing policy or practice.

Insurance

We will insure your home (the building) and any fixtures and fittings in it, which belong to us.

We do not insure your own contents and personal belongings - it's important you arrange your own insurance for these items. Similarly, we do not insure for lost keys to your property - it is your responsibility to replace the keys or call a locksmith.

You may wish to choose your own insurance provider and it's important you use the one which suits you best. The council works with reputable insurance companies, to offer you Tenant's Home Contents Insurance. You can pay for the insurance on a weekly, monthly or annual basis.

For more details visit our website at www.northyorks.gov.uk or speak to your Housing Officer.

Your new home

Reporting a repair

If you need a repair please report this online at www.northyorks.gov.uk, email propertyservices.har@northyorks.gov.uk or telephone 0300 131 2 131 – see page 10 for more information on emergency, priority repairs and timescales.

This handbook contains information about your tenancy and the services you will receive whilst you are a tenant.

There is also more information at www.northyorks.gov.uk

Keeping you up to date

You will receive four newsletters a year. The newsletter keeps you up to date with information on repairs, new housing laws, and what is happening across the district. Look out for the surveys and quizzes; there may be an opportunity to win prizes for a few minutes of your time.

There are lots of ways to have your say on how your housing service is performing and could be improved. Search for 'tenant involvement' on www.northyorks.gov.uk or call our Tenant Involvement Officer on 0300 131 2 131 for more details.

What standard of service can I expect?

For each area of housing, there is a service standard. The service standards outline what the council expects from its tenants.

To see all the service standards visit www.northyorks.gov.uk and search for 'Harrogate housing local standards'

Right to view information

Under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) - which came in to effect in May, 2018 - you have the right to see information that the council holds about you. You can request information on data held about you by submitting a subject access request form. For a copy of the form, and an explanation on the nature of information you may receive/restrictions on what information can be passed to you, go to www.northyorks.gov.uk and search for Data Protection and Freedom of Information.

How do I make a complaint?

We aim to provide a quality service for all of our customers; however there will be times when things go wrong.

You have the right to complain when you are not happy with the service that you have received. You can make a complaint:

- by completing an on-line complaint form. Go to www.northyorks.gov.uk and search for complaints
- by calling our Customer Services team on 0300 131 2 131
- in writing to Customer Services, North Yorkshire Council, PO Box 787, Harrogate, HG1 9RW

Rent and benefits

To keep your rent account up to date, your payment must reach your account by Friday of each week (unless you pay by direct debit).

If you don't keep your rent payments up to date you could end up losing your home.

How is my rent calculated?

The annual percentage increase in rent is decided by the Government; the council then administer the changes. Tenants pay rent over 52 or 53 weeks of the year.

If you pay by direct debit, the weekly amount is multiplied by 52 or 53 weeks and then divided by 12 (months of the year).

How do I pay my rent?

Online - You can manage your rent account online, check your balance, see transactions and make a payment. Have your rent account number handy and follow the easy instructions on page 7.

By direct debit - If you have a bank account, you can pay your rent by monthly direct debit. You have the option of a pay date of the 1st or 15th of each month. Your Housing Officer can advise you how much your payments will be.

By phone - The council's automated 24 hour phone payment line is 0300 131 2 131. You will need your ten digit reference number.

Pay at the Post Office - You can pay your rent by cash or cheque at any local Post Office. Please note that if you are paying at a Post Office, you must pay by Thursday for the payment to reach your rent account that week. Please take your payment card with you.

PayPoint - You can pay at any retailer or Post Office in the UK displaying the PayPoint logo. Remember to take your All-Pay payment card with you. If using your payment card, please make sure you use your account number at the bottom left of the card, not the long number across the middle.

Not sure what your rent reference number is? It's the ten digit number on your rent statement or at the bottom of your rent card - or just phone your Housing Officer if you get stuck.

If you are paying for a garage please make this clear and remember to give the reference number for the garage and not your home.



Rent arrears

If for any reason you are unable to pay your rent you must contact your Housing Officer immediately. It is an obligation of your Tenancy Agreement that you pay the rent promptly and when it is due.

If you are struggling to pay your rent because your income has changed, or there is a change of circumstances at home, your Housing Officer will be able to give you advice about applying for benefits. If you plan to catch up in the following week - for example you are going to be away on holiday - you should let your Housing Officer know. Most problems can be resolved quickly without the need for legal action; we can usually come to an agreement with you about how to pay off your rent arrears.

Continued on page 8

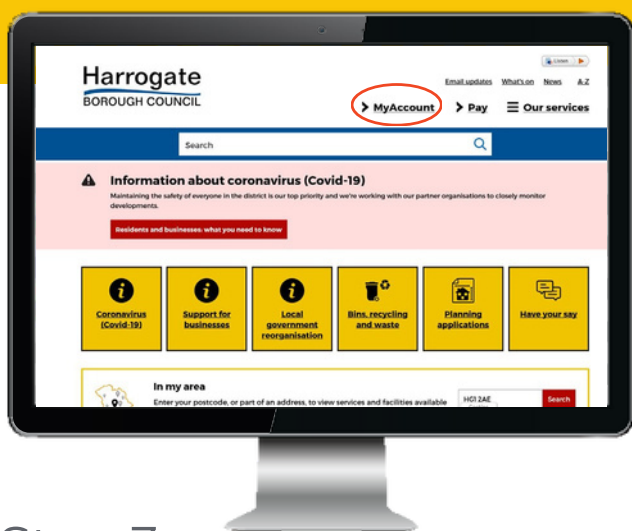
How to pay your rent online

You can manage your rent account on-line, check your balance, see transactions and make a payment. Have your rent account number handy, then just follow these easy instructions:

Step 1

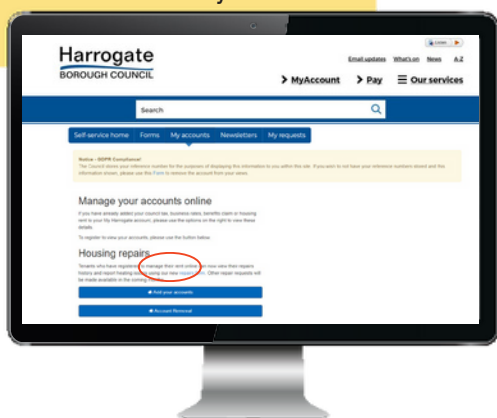
Go to **www.northyorks.gov.uk** and search for **Harrogate MyAccount**. If this is your first time using our online service you will need to register for an account – click on **Create a new account**.

If you already have a My Harrogate customer account, you will need to sign in – click on **Sign in to your account**.



Step 3

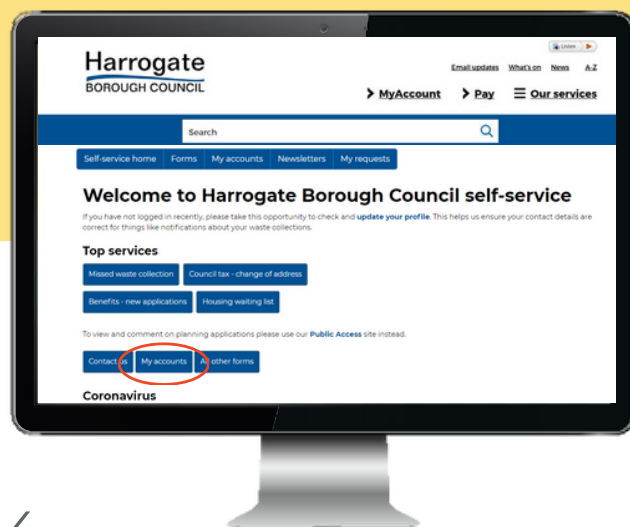
The first time you'll need to add your rent account – click on Add your accounts.



If you need any help setting up your rent account online please ring our Customer Services team on 0300 131 2 131.

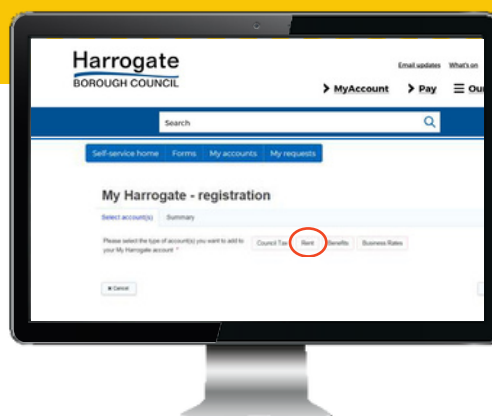
Step 2

Click on the **My accounts** tab – you can register and view your rent account from here.



Step 4

Register your rent account by clicking on the tab **Rent** – you'll need to enter your rent reference number. And remember that you can now set up your benefits and council tax online accounts – just click on the relevant tab.



and
you're
done!

We can't accept any
payments in person
at any of our offices

Continued from page 6

The council does not take court action against tenants lightly and we will always contact everyone falling into arrears in time to resolve the matter without the need for legal action. Some tenants, however, persistently fail to make regular payments.

If you don't contact the council or you fail to keep to any arrangements, the council will take legal action against you as described below.

Notice of seeking possession

If you don't make or maintain satisfactory arrangements to pay off your arrears, the first step in legal action against your tenancy is a Notice Seeking Possession. This Notice gives you 28 days to ensure that any rent arrears are reduced and rent payments are paid regularly to avoid the council taking further action.

During the Notice period, you can still make an appointment to meet your Housing Officer and come to an agreement about how you will pay off your rent arrears. If you make and keep to a satisfactory arrangement during the Notice period, the council may agree not to take further action against you. However, once a Notice Seeking Possession has been served it remains in force for 12 months and the council can take the case to court at any time during this period.

Orders for possession

If your case is taken to court, the council will normally be granted a Suspended Possession Order, requiring

you to make a payment of a weekly amount to reduce your rent arrears. This will be in addition to your normal rent. This means that, providing you keep to this Court Order, you can't be evicted even though the court has agreed that the council has a legal right to the possession of your home.

However, if you fail to keep to the Court Order, the council can ask the court for a possession date and then a Warrant of Possession to evict you from your home, unless you have paid your debt in full. A county court bailiff will then come and evict you on the day set by the court.

In exceptional circumstances, the council may ask for an outright possession order straight away and the judge may give the council possession of your home immediately, with no conditions attached.

Introductory Tenants

Notice of Possession Proceedings

For the first year your tenancy will usually be an Introductory Tenancy and the council can get possession of your home more easily if you break any of the terms of your tenancy, including paying your rent. If you fail to pay your rent or break another condition of your tenancy, your introductory tenancy can be extended for a further six months.

Your Housing Officer will visit you within 6 weeks of you first moving in and then visit you again after 6 months and 9 months.

If you don't maintain payments a Notice of Possession Proceedings will be served. The Notice will state that the Council intends to take you to Court for an Order to possess your home. You will be given 14 days in which to appeal against the Notice and a further 14 days before a Court date is applied for.

Orders for Possession

As an Introductory Tenant, the Court would have no discretion but to award possession back to the Council and you would be evicted.

Help available

It is important to stress that, if you are in difficulty with your rent payments you must contact your Housing Officer immediately. Problems are best dealt with as soon as they occur rather than waiting for the arrears to build up. The council will only resort to applying to evict you if all attempts to help you have failed.

Benefit information

If you are on a low income you may be eligible for help towards the cost of your rent and council tax.

Additional information that would need to be considered is:

- If you are of working age and eligible for help with your rent you will need to claim Universal Credit online at www.gov.uk/universalcredit
 - If you are of pension age and eligible for help with your rent you will need to claim housing benefit from the council, further information available on the council's website at www.northyorks.gov.uk
 - For all age groups if you are eligible for help with your council tax you will need to claim council tax reduction from the council, further information is available on the council's website at www.northyorks.gov.uk
- When claiming housing benefit, council tax reduction or Universal Credit, any changes to your circumstances must be reported as they may affect the amount of benefit you receive. If you are claiming housing benefit or council tax reduction any changes should be reported to the council. If you are claiming Universal Credit changes should be reported on your Journal.

Discretionary housing payments can give you extra financial help if you are already receiving housing benefit or the housing element of Universal Credit but still struggling to pay your rent. You can find an application form on the council's website at www.northyorks.gov.uk

If you need support filling in the forms or understanding the letters you receive, please contact your Housing Officer.

Frequently Asked Questions

What should I do if I have lost my rent payment card or it doesn't work? -

If you lose your 'allpay' rent payment card or you need a new one, you should contact your Housing Officer. You should receive a new card within a week.

How often is my rent due?

Your rent is due weekly and your payment must reach your rent account by Friday of each week to keep your account up to date.

How do I know whether my rent account is up to date? -

We will send you a rent statement each quarter. You can also view your rent statement, your current balance and transactions on our website; register at www.northyorks.gov.uk for an online account. Alternatively, contact your Housing Officer for further help.

I can't pay my rent. What should I do?

If you are struggling to pay your rent, contact your Housing Officer. They can come to an agreement with you about how you can pay off your rent arrears. They can also put you in touch with the council's Benefits section and agencies who can help.

Repairs and maintenance

Reporting a repair

If you need a repair please report this online at www.northyorks.gov.uk, email propertyservices.har@northyorks.gov.uk or telephone 0300 131 2 131.

If you would like to write to us about your repair, please send it to the Housing team, PO Box 787, Harrogate, HG1 9RW.

Try to give us as much detail as possible; we may ask you several questions to find out as much information as we can.

Please remember to give us your name and address when reporting repairs. We will send you a receipt of the work which will give you information about which contractor we will be using and when the work will be completed.

All tenants receive a satisfaction survey letter; please complete the survey when the job has

been done. If you are not happy with the work that's been carried out, please tell us. Your views can help us to improve the service you receive.

Emergency repairs

If you have a genuine emergency outside office hours, you can contact the council's Emergency Repairs team. They can only help if it is an emergency. The telephone number is 01423 556300.

How long will I have to wait for a repair?

When the repair work is ordered, you will be given details of when the work should be completed. The table below explains how the council prioritise repairs.

PRIORITY GRADE		Examples
E	Emergency repairs carried out and property made safe within four hours, with any follow up work done in the next four days. Used strictly for emergency work, where repairs will prevent danger to life or limb and/or serious damage to a property.	Burst water pipes, gas leaks, no power in the property, a blocked toilet drain or a property that isn't secure.
A	Urgent repairs to be done within three working days. Work that needs to be carried out urgently to overcome a nuisance to the tenant, to prevent on-going damage to the property and /or where there is a potential health and safety risk.	A leaking waste pipe to the sink, a faulty light or socket, heating not working, a faulty ballcock in the toilet.
B	Repairs to be done within 10 working days. Work that needs to be done promptly because the tenant is unreasonably inconvenienced and/or the problem may get worse.	A loose hand washing basin, an external door that's sticking, a loose kitchen cupboard, loose or broken roof tiles.
C	General repairs to be done within 30 working days. Standard work where the problem doesn't cause a high level of disturbance or inconvenience to the tenant and/or is unlikely to deteriorate further.	Wall tiles that need to be renewed, fencing needing repair, plaster requiring filling, a loose kitchen worktop, loose floorboards, repairs needed on external render and pointing, windows that are sticking.
P	Planned improvement or repair work to be done within 60 working days.	Planned improvements or major repairs to kitchens, bathrooms, heating, roofing, fencing and/or landscaping.

Who does the repair work?

North Yorkshire Council has its own in-house maintenance team made up of joiners, electricians, plumbers and builders. The in-house team takes on day to day repairs. Heating work and planned work such as kitchen and bathroom replacements, roofing and building work, is generally carried out by contractors.

All repair contractors carry an ID card and you should ask to see it before letting anyone into your home. If you have any doubts, please ring the Property Repairs team - even if this means leaving the contractor waiting on your doorstep.

What repairs are tenants responsible for?

You must take care of your home and avoid causing damage to the property. For example, you shouldn't do anything that will block your sink or drains.

If any repairs have to be done due to damage you have caused or because you have failed to tell us about a problem, you may have to pay for them.

Your tenancy agreement details what repairs are your responsibility and which are the council's.

The repairs which you are responsible for include:

- internal redecoration
- damage by a member of or visitor to the household
- replacing lost keys
- fitting curtain track battens
- renewing plugs and chains to sink, baths and basins

- renewing light bulbs, tubes and starter motors for fluorescent lights
- making good minor cracks and holes in the plaster
- renewing individual TV or radio aerials (please note that permission is required from the council before installing aerials and satellite dishes)
- wooden sheds (permission will not be granted for a shed in any communal area).

Annual servicing

The council will service certain appliances annually. These include, but are not limited to:

- gas central heating
- wired-in appliances (e.g. a smoke alarm)
- solid fuel heating
- ground or air-source heat pumps.

When our contractor contacts you about a gas system service and test, you should make an appointment with them as soon as possible.

Gas servicing is very important and is there to keep you safe.

As your landlord, the council has a legal duty to carry out a gas safety inspection of any gas appliances we own.

These inspections and tests have to be carried out within 12 months of the last inspection. This means that we will arrange for tests to be carried out well before the anniversary of the last test, to allow time for a convenient appointment to be made with you and to make sure the council complies with the law.

What do I do if....?

Emergencies can arise within your home. We have put together a list of questions and answers to guide you through some of these problems.

I can smell gas....

- Turn off the gas at the meter. You do this by turning the isolation valve a quarter turn. If it is not by the meter under the stairs, beneath the kitchen sink, it may be under or next to a meter box that is outdoors.
- Open doors and windows to let the gas escape.
- Put out all naked flames.
- Ring National Grid Gas Emergency Hotline on 0800 111999.
- Leave the building and wait for National Grid operatives.
- Do NOT smoke.
- Do NOT switch electric switches on or off.
- Do NOT use the door entry system.

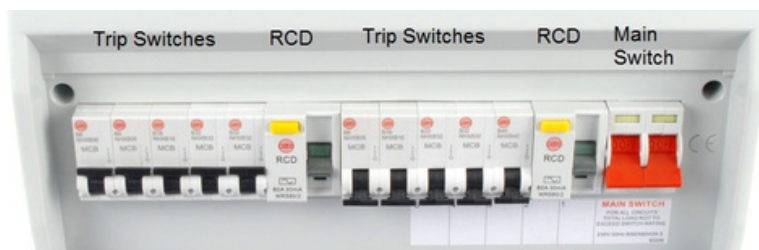
My electricity has gone off...

If all your electric goes off, first check with a neighbour to see if they have the same problem. If they have, this will usually mean that there is a power cut and power will be restored in due course.

If it is only your property that's affected, check the fuse box. Normally, all the switches should be in the 'up' position.

Look at the RCD Switch (there are two in our illustration, yours might only have one).

If it is in the 'half-way' position, push it all the way down, then all the way up.



Did it stay up? If so, everything is OK again.

If it clicked straight back to the 'half-way' position, do the following:

- Push down all the switches LEFT of the RCD at 'half-way'.
- Push the RCD switch all the way down and then right back up again; it should stay up this time.
- Slowly, one by one, push each of the switches up; if the RCD clicks down again, the last switch you pushed up is the circuit where there is a problem.
- Push the 'problem' switch back down again and leave it down.
- Re-set the RCD by pushing all the way down, then all the way up again.
- Push all the other switches to 'up' EXCEPT the 'problem' one.
- Report your electrical fault to Customer Services on the next working day (you should have enough of the electrical circuits working to manage for a while, so it is not an emergency repair).

If you manage to switch all the switches up and the RCD doesn't click back down, there is no longer a problem and everything is OK again – you might find that a bulb has blown somewhere in the house, causing the RCD to trip out.

It would be useful to keep a torch with good batteries handy for looking at the fuse box. All electrical work should be only carried out by a qualified electrician.

My water pipes are leaking...

- Turn off your stop tap, or 'Sure Stop' switch.
- Put a container or towel beneath the leak.
- Turn off the electricity if water is near plug sockets or lights.
- Telephone the Customer Services team; tell them if the pipe is still leaking. A tradesperson will be sent to your home as quickly as possible on the same working day.

My heating doesn't work...

- Check the time clock and thermostat controls are set correctly.
- If you have a programmable thermostat, check whether the battery needs replacing.
- If you have a pre-payment card or key meter, check that there is enough credit on it.
- If you have a modern wall mounted gas boiler with a pressure gauge, check that the needle is in the green area (the gauge may be behind the flap on the front of the boiler).
- If you still have problems contact the Customer Services team.

My heating is on but my radiators aren't warm...

Sometimes air becomes trapped in a central heating radiator, which results in the radiator becoming cold at the top and warm at the bottom. You will need to 'bleed' the radiator, which means removing the air from the radiator and allowing it to fill with hot water.

To do this, you will need a radiator key, a cloth and possibly a cup to catch any excess water. You can buy a radiator key from any hardware shop or most large supermarkets.

The first thing to do is to switch off the central heating system. The bleed valve is a small square nut at the end of the radiator. With the key, gently turn the nut anti-clockwise until you hear a hiss; this is the air in the radiator being released. When water starts to seep out of the valve turn the key back clockwise. This will shut the valve. Do NOT screw the valve off completely, as the plug will come out and you may have difficulty getting it back in. If you have a combi-boiler, you may have to top up the pressure after having bled the radiators as the pressure in the heating system may have been lost.

Planned improvements

The council is committed to ensuring all tenants have a warm and well maintained home. Each year we prioritise improvement works to ensure your homes meet the government's Decent Home Standard and create fewer carbon emissions.

When you are offered improvement work to your kitchen and bathroom, we will give you a choice of colours for your kitchen units, floor and wall tiles. Other planned maintenance works may include new heating systems, ventilation systems, improved insulation, new windows and doors and new roof tiles or slates.

After work has been completed, you will be able to give your feedback in a satisfaction questionnaire. We value your feedback and use the information you give us as a measure of our success and to develop our service further.

Asbestos

Up until the end of 1999, asbestos was used in house construction and was particularly useful as a heat resistant material for fire protection.

Materials that contain asbestos are perfectly safe as long as the material remains undamaged and intact.

You should always get the council's permission before carrying out any home improvements.

If you are concerned about asbestos in your home, please contact the Property Services team. They will be happy to provide you with further information and advice.

We will tell you if the council's contractors are going to do any work that may involve asbestos. The contractors will make sure that you and your family are kept safe during the work and will tell you when the work is finished.

Looking after your new home

Condensation

All air contains a certain amount of 'invisible' water vapour. Condensation often occurs when air carrying water vapour comes into contact with a cold surface. This can be seen, for example, on the bathroom mirror when you have had a bath or shower.

Condensation may show up as patches of black mould; this grows in the moisture soaked up by the wall. Black mould will usually grow on an outside wall or behind a piece of furniture.

What can I do to avoid condensation?

Normal activities such as washing, bathing and cooking create moisture. These activities can't be avoided but the moisture they produce can be kept to a minimum.

There are several easy ways to do this:

- Keep saucepan lids on when cooking.
- Dry clothes outside wherever possible.
- When you are doing things that create a lot of moisture, like showering, bathing or cooking, open a window in the room either during or immediately after the activity for a quarter of an hour or so.
- Use extractor fans where fitted.

The best solution is to make sure that there is always some ventilation in your home. If you have vents or air bricks don't block them up and if you have an anti-condensation fan fitted, you should use it. Try to keep the internal doors to the kitchen and bathroom closed to stop moisture spreading to other parts of your home.

Keeping your home warm will also help fight condensation problems. It is recommended to keep your home between 18C and 24C when you are at home.

Gardens

Individual gardens

It is your responsibility to cut the grass and hedges, prune any trees and keep the borders tidy. Trees must be treated with care and if you are unsure what to do we can give you advice. Every 3 to 5 years, the council's tree specialist will inspect the trees in your area to ensure that they are healthy. If you are responsible for a hedge next to a footpath or ginnel, you must maintain both sides and ensure that any walkway is not obstructed by the hedge.

If you are elderly or have a disability and have no one living at home or nearby who can do the garden for you, the council may be able to help you. Ask your Housing Officer for details.

Shared gardens

The council will maintain the grass and gardens in communal areas. The grass will be cut 14 times between April and October or approximately every 2-3 weeks, although this can vary during wet weather.

We don't use grass cutting machinery that picks up the grass clippings. We cut hedges twice a year, once between July and September and once between November and January. We aim to inspect all rose and shrub beds every two weeks between April and October. We inspect all trees on a 3 to 5 year cycle.

If you have any concerns about trees or grass cutting in your area please contact our Customer Services team on 0300 131 2 131.

Please note, we will not grant permission to put up a new shed on any shared land.

Shared stairways and halls

If you have shared halls and stairs to your home you, and all the other residents in the block, are responsible for cleaning these areas. It's best if you can agree with your neighbours who should clean which areas.

The walls/stairs/hallways should be kept free from any items, rubbish or obstructions so that in the event of a fire everyone can evacuate the building safely. Rubbish poses a fire risk and should therefore never be stored in any stairway and/or hallway.

Pets

You may keep pets unless you live in a sheltered housing scheme. You must look after your pets and keep them under control so that they don't annoy or upset your neighbours. You may exercise your dog in the shared areas around your home and if it fouls in this area or any public place you must pick up and remove it. Leaving such waste is a health hazard especially to young children, and is very unpleasant for your neighbours.

If you experience problems with dogs, such as dog fouling, stray dogs, or would like to find out more about responsible dog ownership contact the council's Dog Warden Service on 0300 131 2 131.

Pest control

As a householder you may occasionally get problems caused by animals or insects - for instance rats, wasps and bees. If you experience problems please contact the Customer Services team on 0300 131 2 131. There may be a charge for this service; however, people living in certain properties or on state benefits may not have to pay.

Parking

Unless you have your own driveway, parking spaces won't be allocated with your property. In some areas we do provide parking areas and lay-bys and we would ask that residents have priority over visitors in these areas.

Waste collection

You must ensure you put all your waste in the containers provided by the Council, waste not contained (side waste) will not be collected and will be treated as being fly tipped. In addition you should not place any unwanted items i.e. sofa, washing machine etc on the public highway as they will also be treated as being fly tipped. Fly tipping will result in a fixed penalty notice of £400.

If you have excess waste that needs removing you must ensure whoever you employ has an upper tier waste carriers licence issued by the Environment Agency (EA). You can check this by contacting the EA on 03708 506 506 or visiting searching online. If they don't have a licence do not employ them.

If you do and your waste is found fly tipped you are at risk at receiving a fixed penalty notice of £250.

Frequently asked questions

Lost keys/locked out

If you lose your keys or have locked yourself out, it is your responsibility to pay for any work needed to break into your home, such as repairing broken doors or changing the existing lock.

If the council carries out the work you will have to pay for all the costs. You may ask your own joiner to break in for you, but you must always tell your Housing Officer if there is any damage.

How can I get rid of bulky items?

The council may be able to remove one or two larger items of furniture as well as safely disposing of old fridges and freezers. For more information contact Customer Services.

Can I run a business from home?

Your home is predominantly for you to live in rather than for purposes of running a business. However, some business activities that don't disturb your neighbours may be acceptable. Examples of this may be window cleaners, driving instructors, admin/IT services and painting and decorating.

You must get permission from the council for any business you wish to run from home. If permission is given but it results in a nuisance to your neighbour you will have to stop using your home for the business.

Can I carry out car repairs at home?

It is acceptable for you to carry out occasional repairs to your vehicle. However, we generally find that it's unacceptable for people to regularly carry out car repair work and we will generally refuse requests for people to run a car repair businesses from home.

Can I park an untaxed/uninsured car at home?

Yes, but you must get permission from your Housing Officer and the vehicle must be roadworthy and parked on a hard standing area on your property and not on the road. You also need to get a SORN (Statutory Off the Road Notice) from the DVLA.

It is illegal to park an untaxed vehicle on the public highway. The council will also take legal action to ensure that untaxed, uninsured and un-roadworthy vehicles are removed from hard standing areas, gardens, council roads and parking areas.

Can I park commercial vehicles at home?

You must have the council's agreement in writing before you park commercial vehicles, caravans, motor homes or boats in the garden, driveway or paved area around your home, or on any shared parking areas.

What help is available to provide a parking space?

Many council estates were designed before there was widespread car ownership and therefore they have limited parking available. The council gives grants to help tenants with the cost of installing a hard standing area in their garden.

If you wish to install a hard standing parking area next to your property, you must get permission from your Housing Officer. If you don't, you may be asked to remove the hard standing area and cover all of the costs involved in doing so.

In some areas we do provide parking areas and lay-bys. Please note that we do not allocate specific parking spaces to individual tenants and we would ask you to ensure that residents always have priority over visitors.

If you have a disability which means you can't walk far you may be able to ask for a disabled parking space to be provided at the roadside (although any registered disabled person may use this). For further details contact your Housing Officer.

How can I resolve parking problems with my neighbours?

If you are having a dispute with your neighbour about parking you should contact your Housing Officer for advice on what help the council can offer. Often parking disputes are best resolved by reaching an agreement with your neighbours as to who should have priority to park.

Anti-social behaviour

The council believes every tenant has the right to enjoy their home free from anti-social behaviour.

What is anti-social behaviour?

Anti-social behaviour is behaviour that is generally considered to be unacceptable to society or by a community. Anti-social behaviour is often illegal and includes:

- violence - threatening or actual
- domestic violence
- excessive noise
- vandalism
- theft
- drug dealing
- prostitution
- racial and sexual harassment
- storing stolen property

The council works closely with the police, North Yorkshire County Council and health and voluntary agencies through the Safer Communities Partnership to prevent and resolve problems of anti-social behaviour.

When problems can't be resolved the council may take legal action. This may involve seeking an injunction to stop someone from being at a property or even an area or an estate. Alternatively if a tenant (or their family, occupants of their home or visitors) is involved, the council may seek an order for possession in the County Court.

Threatening behaviour

If you are being threatened in any way you should first contact the police then let your Housing Officer know.

We take all complaints seriously. We will investigate your complaint and try to resolve the situation. We will however, need your help and this may involve making a statement about what has happened, keeping records of what happens to you and, in some serious cases we may ask you to go to court with us to tell the judge what happened.

Children and visitors

Tenants are responsible for the behaviour of their children and any visitors to their home. If your children are involved in anti-social behaviour in your area or even elsewhere, your tenancy will be put at risk.

Pets

If you have a pet in your home you are responsible for ensuring that it is kept under control and does not cause a nuisance to your neighbours. Dogs must not be allowed to foul either communal or public areas and must always be exercised with due regard to the safety and convenience of other people and animals.

Threatening behaviour against staff

We will not tolerate any threatening behaviour against our staff.

A condition of your Tenancy Agreement is that you or your visitors do not threaten neighbours, or intimidate or carry out any violent acts against any member, officer or agent of the council.

Domestic violence

Domestic violence is defined by the Government as ‘any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality’.

Domestic abuse is rarely a one off event and tends to escalate over time. The abuse can include:

- name calling or put-downs
- keeping someone isolated from family or friends
- withholding money
- actual or threatened physical harm
- sexual assault.

Your Housing Officer can give you advice about what help the council and other agencies can offer. Where there is evidence that domestic violence has occurred the council may take action for possession of a property against the person who has committed the violent act.

What is Hate Crime?

This represents a criminal offence against an individual or property that is motivated by the alleged perpetrator’s hate against the individual due to age, sex, race, religion, disability, sexual orientation or ethnicity, and we have supportive evidence that such behaviour is motivated by the alleged perpetrator’s hate.

Anybody found to be responsible for harassment or hate crime may be evicted from their property. This includes harassment or hate crime against our own staff.

Useful contacts

Independent Domestic Abuse Services (IDAS)

03000 110 110

North Yorkshire Victim Support

01609 643100

Citizens’ Advice

0808 278 7900

Dealing with problem neighbours

If you have a problem with your neighbour, you may simply need to speak to them. Perhaps they don’t know that what they are doing is upsetting you. Activities which often cause a nuisance include: noise, DIY work, rubbish, uncontrolled animals, unruly children and car repairs.

If you feel that you can’t speak to your neighbour, or you are not satisfied with their response, please contact your Housing Officer. Your Housing Officer will discuss the most appropriate way to deal with the behaviour that’s causing you problems.

To report anti-social behaviour please speak to your Housing Officer or complete a customer enquiry form on our website
www.northyorks.gov.uk

Support for older people

Sheltered Housing

The council has a six sheltered housing schemes across the district for people with slightly higher support needs who are still able to lead an independent life, but who would benefit from the security and the support of an Independent Living Officer.

The six schemes are:

- Carlton Lodge, Leeds Road, Harrogate
- Hewitson Court, Stockwell Road, Knaresborough
- Collins Court, High Street, Knaresborough
- Maple Creek, Red Lane, Masham
- Blossomgate Court, Blossomgate, Ripon
- Bondgate Court, Bondgate, Ripon

Each flat in the scheme has a call system and each tenant has a personal alarm trigger to enable them to get immediate help if needed. Sheltered housing schemes also have a range of shared facilities such as lounges for socialising and hairdressing salons, and most have mobility scooter storage and charging rooms.

At each scheme the Independent Living Officer acts as a guide to the tenants, providing support without interference. In case of an accident or other emergency, they will call the doctor or ambulance and contact relatives. They will also visit each tenant regularly, to ensure all is well.

When the Independent Living Officer is off duty or away for any reason, the scheme automatically switches over to

the Call Monitoring Centre and a Duty Independent Living Officer.

If you're interested in sheltered housing, please contact Customer Services on 0300 131 2 131 to request an application form.

Lifeline

For tenants who wish to remain in their existing homes and not move into sheltered accommodation, the council offers support through the Lifeline Service. This is provided via a Lifeline unit using the property's telephone land line.

Each Lifeline unit has a red emergency button and a personal alarm trigger which, if pressed, will immediately connect you to the call centre.

A call centre advisor can speak with you via the Lifeline loudspeaker and arrange appropriate help for you. This may involve contacting an Independent Living Officer, calling for a doctor or ambulance, or contacting a relative or neighbour. The Independent Living Officer will also make regular visits to ensure all is well.

Please contact the council's Independent Living Service if you are interested in finding out more about this kind of support.

Adaptations

If you're having difficulty managing in your home because of illness or disability, the council may be able to carry out adaptations to help you live life as fully and independently as possible. These adaptations may involve fitting small items such as grab rails or an additional stair rail, or larger items such as showers or ramps to door entrances.

If you think that you may need adaptations to your home, please contact the Property Services adaptations team to discuss the matter and request an application form.

The council works closely with the North Yorkshire County Council's Health and Adult Services team. Most requests for adaptations will require a member of this team to visit you, to make a professional assessment of your need and recommend the most appropriate adaptation.

If your home needs a lot of changes it may be possible for you to move to more suitable accommodation. Again, you should contact the Property Services adaptations team who will be happy to visit you and discuss your options.

Grass and hedge cutting

You can get help if you are elderly or disabled and have no-one living with you or nearby who can cut your grass or trim your hedges for you. For more details ask your Housing Officer.

Assisted bin collections

If you struggle when moving your bins to the kerbside, you can apply for assisted bin collections by contacting the council's Customer Services team. You will be sent an application form to fill in and a council officer may have to visit your property.

If your circumstances change and you no longer need this service, please let the Customer Services team know.

Useful telephone numbers

North Yorkshire Council

General enquiries: 0300 131 2 131

Benefits enquiries: 0300 131 2 131

Council Tax enquiries: 0300 131 2 131

Housing waiting list, transfers, homelessness: 0300 131 2 131

Housing Officers: 0300 131 2 131

Report a repair: 0300 131 2 131

Independent Living Services: 0300 131 2 131

Lifeline: 0300 131 2 131

Blue Badges, concessionary bus passes: 0300 131 2 131

Highways: 0300 131 2 131

Other agencies

Electricity - loss of supply: 0800 375675

Gas - emergency: 0800 111999

Police - non-emergency: 101

Emergency services: 999

NHS: 111

Moving home contact checklist

Schools

Doctor

Dentist and optician

Bank/building society

Credit card companies

Gas company

Electric company

Yorkshire Water: 0345 1242424

Contents insurance company

DVLA: 0843 455 0054

Car breakdown cover

Car insurance

Mobile phone company

Royal Mail redirection service

TV/broadband/phone companies

TV Licensing: 0300 790 6096

Council tax and benefits: 0300 131 2 131