


**HILLDALE**   
housing association

# Tenant Handbook





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# Welcome to your new home!

We're really pleased to have you as a tenant, and we want you to feel safe, comfortable and supported from the very start.

This handbook was created by tenants, for tenants and is here to help you understand how your home works, what your tenancy means, and where to go if you ever need help or advice.

Please keep this handbook somewhere safe so you can come back to it whenever you need to. If anything in here doesn't make sense, or you would like it explained in a different way, just let us know. We are always happy to help.

We can also provide this information in other formats, such as easy read, large print or audio, if that would be better for you.

**There's a lot of information, ways you can talk to us and report things on our website, so you can also look here:**





## Contact us

If you'd like more information about anything in this handbook, or you'd like to get involved with Hilldale, just get in touch.



Telephone:  
**01257 367374**



General email:  
**hello@hilldale.org.uk**



Repairs email:  
**repairs@hilldale.org.uk**



More information:  
**hilldale.org.uk**

**Please keep this handbook somewhere safe so you can come back to it whenever you need to**



# Need help quickly?

Sometimes you just need a quick answer.

You can contact us if you need to report a repair, pay your rent, speak to your housing officer, or ask for support. If something doesn't feel right in your home or your neighbourhood, we would always rather you get in touch than worry on your own.

If you're not sure who to speak to, just contact us and we will make sure the right person helps you.

Our full contact details are on the opposite page, but here are a few frequently asked questions and answers too:



## How do I report a repair?

- For emergency repairs, call 01257 367374, 24 hours a day
- For all other repairs, call 01257 367374 and press 1
- Email us at [repairs@hilldale.org.uk](mailto:repairs@hilldale.org.uk)
- Fill in the repairs form on our website

## Need help quickly? *Continued*



### How do I contact my housing officer?

- Visit our website to find your housing officer's details
- Call 01257 367374 and press 1



### How do I make a complaint?

- Email us at [hello@hilldale.org.uk](mailto:hello@hilldale.org.uk)
- Call: 01257 367374
- Fill in the complaints form on our website
- Speak to your housing officer, who can help you report it



### I need help adapting my home. What should I do?

- See the home adaptations section in this handbook
- Visit our website for more information
- Speak to your housing officer for support



### I'm having problems with my neighbour. What can I do?

- Report it to your housing officer
- Email us at [hello@hilldale.org.uk](mailto:hello@hilldale.org.uk)

**If you're not sure who to speak to, just contact us**

# Moving into your home



Moving into a new home can feel like a big step, so we want to make it as smooth as possible.

Before you move in, we check your home carefully to make sure it's safe and ready to live in and there are some things you need to do, to make sure you're all set!

## We:

- ✓ Check your gas and electrical appliances to make sure they're safe
- ✓ Give you copies of gas and electrical safety certificates, as well as an energy performance certificate, or tell you where you can find them
- ✓ Check your home to make sure it's safe, clean and ready to live in
- ✓ Give you or your care provider a set of keys

## When you move in, you need to:

- Check your heating, hot water, lights and sockets are working
- Find out where the fuse box, stop tap and boiler/heating controls are
- Tell us about issues or damage you find
- Take gas, electricity and water meter readings, and note them down here:

Gas

Electricity

Water



**Once you have moved in, you'll need to:** 

- Contact gas, electricity and water suppliers to set up your accounts from your tenancy start date OR set up your direct debit to Hilldale for your utility payments. We will let you know which one of these applies to you
- Arrange TV, broadband and phone services if you want them
- Make sure you have a TV licence, or tell the TV Licencing Agency you've moved
- Tell your local council so you can pay the correct council tax, unless you live in a house with several people sharing facilities such as a bathroom and kitchen
- Register to vote or tell the electoral register you've moved
- Arrange contents insurance to protect your belongings
- Change your address or register with a local GP service, dentist and pharmacy, if you need to
- Update your address with the Department for Work and Pensions, if you receive Universal Credit
- Tell your bank about your change of address



**If you have any questions or concerns,  
please contact us; we're here to help.**



# Your tenancy

Your tenancy is the agreement between you and us as your landlord. It explains your rights, your responsibilities, and the rules for living in your home.

When you signed your tenancy agreement, you agreed to these terms. It's important that you understand them, but if anything is unclear, you can always ask us to explain.

Your tenancy is there to help you live safely and comfortably in your home, and to make sure everyone in the community is treated fairly.





# Your responsibilities

As a tenant, there are some important things we ask you to do to help keep your home and community safe and pleasant.

- ✓ Look after your home by keeping it clean, tidy and well ventilated
- ✓ If something goes wrong, it's important that you report repairs as soon as possible so that small problems don't become bigger ones
- ✓ Allow us access to your home when repairs, inspections or safety checks need to be carried out. These checks are important and help us make sure your home stays safe
- ✓ Being a good neighbour is really important. This means being respectful of others, keeping noise to a reasonable level, and making sure your behaviour does not cause distress to people living nearby
- ✓ Pay your rent and any charges on time. If you are finding this difficult, please speak to us as soon as possible so we can support you



**Please let us know if your circumstances change, such as who is living in your home or if your support needs change.**

# What we do as your landlord



We are your landlord. That means we are responsible for your home and for providing housing services to you.

Your tenancy agreement is with us, but if you receive care or support, this will usually be provided by a different organisation.

Once you've moved in, we are committed to providing a safe, secure and well-maintained home.

## **We:**

- ✓ Carry out repairs
- ✓ Make sure all legal safety checks are completed, including gas, electrical and fire safety
- ✓ Give you clear information about your home, your tenancy and any services you receive
- ✓ Aim to communicate in a way that works for you and ensure information you need is clear
- ✓ Understand everyone is an individual and provide support where needed
- ✓ Always treat you with respect, fairness and dignity
- ✓ Take reports of problems, including anti-social behaviour, seriously and work with you to resolve them

# Rent and money

Your rent is an important part of your tenancy and must be paid regularly.

We offer different ways for you to pay your rent, and we will explain these to you. If your rent changes, we will always let you know in advance.

If you are worried about money or finding it difficult to pay your rent, it is really important that you contact us as soon as possible. We can offer support, advice and help you find a solution, such as setting up a payment plan.



**Our aim is to support you to keep your home, not to make things harder.**

# Repairs

If something in your home needs fixing, please let us know as soon as possible.



## Emergency repairs

These are things that need urgent attention to keep you safe and are dealt with within four and 24 hours, depending on the severity. Emergency repairs include things like:

- Burst pipes or leaks that can't be contained or isolated
- Blocked and overflowing external drains
- Blocked toilet/non-flushing toilet, where no others are available
- External doors or windows that can't be locked
- Broken glazing to windows and doors
- Total loss of power
- Unsafe electrics (live or exposed wiring, or electrics in contact with water)
- Serious roof issues, including falling gutters, slates or tiles
- A bath or shower out of use where this is the only washing facility
- No water from any taps
- A property alarm continually sounding
- Complete loss of heating and hot water, with no alternative available

### **If you have an emergency:**

Call 01257 367374 for emergency repairs (available 24 hours a day)

### **If you smell gas:**

Call the National Gas Emergency Line: 0800 111 999, then call us on 01257 367374

### **If there is a fire:**

Call 999

### **If there is a total loss of electricity:**

Check for a local outage at: [powercuts.nationalgrid.co.uk](http://powercuts.nationalgrid.co.uk)

Perform a trip switch test if possible

If you cannot resolve the issue, call 01257 367374

The Priority Services Register (PSR) is a free UK-wide service which provides extra advice and support, including when there's an interruption to your electricity, gas or water supply. You can sign up at [www.thepsr.co.uk](http://www.thepsr.co.uk)

# Repairs

## Non-emergency repairs

These are less urgent issues, such as minor leaks or general wear and tear. These are usually completed within a set timeframe, often between 7 and 28 days, depending on the type of repair.



### For non-emergency repairs please:

- Email us at [repairs@hilldale.org.uk](mailto:repairs@hilldale.org.uk)
- Fill in our form in the my home section on our website
- Call us on 01257 367374 and select option 1. The line is open Monday to Friday, from 8.30am-4.30pm.

## Repairs I've reported

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Repair \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Repair \_\_\_\_\_

## Rechargeable repairs



These are repairs you need to pay for. Most repairs are covered by us, but sometimes we will ask you to pay.

This may happen if:

- You damage something (on purpose or by accident), like breaking a window or making a hole in a wall
- You lose your key and need a replacement
- You block your toilet by flushing items like nappies, pads, wipes, or paper towels
- You block your sink pipes by putting things like food or hot fats down them
- We need to clean or repair your home after you move out, including removing rubbish

If damage is reported, we'll talk with you about it and work together to prevent it happening again. Repeated damage is taken seriously and could put your tenancy at risk.

### Costs

- In some instances, we may be able to give you a cost beforehand, but if we can't, we'll explain why
- You may be able to arrange your own contractor for non-urgent repairs, but this must be agreed with your housing officer

If you disagree with a charge, speak to your housing officer, who will review it with you and explain the costs.

If you can't pay straight away, talk to your housing officer. We can agree a payment plan to make things more manageable.

# Safety in your home



Your safety is really important to us.

We carry out regular safety checks in your home, and it's important that you allow us access into your home when these are arranged.

These checks help make sure things like your heating, electrics and fire safety systems are working properly.

Fire safety is also really important. You should test your smoke alarms regularly, avoid overloading plugs, and never leave cooking unattended.

**If a fire does happen, leave the building immediately and call 999.**

# Damp, mould and condensation

We want your home to be safe, comfortable, and healthy.



If you notice any signs of damp or mould, please let us know as soon as possible. We'll arrange an inspection and help fix the problem.

## What is condensation?

Condensation is the most common type of damp. It happens when warm air meets cold surfaces, such as windows or walls.

You might notice:

- Water droplets on windows (fogging)
- Mould around windows or in corners
- Musty smells
- Peeling paint or wallpaper

It's more common in winter, when homes are closed up and there is less fresh air.

## Other types of damp

Rising damp is caused by water rising up from the ground into your home, usually affecting ground floors. Signs include tide marks on walls and damaged skirting boards.

Penetrating damp is caused by leaks or damage to the outside of the building, such as roofs or walls. It often appears as damp patches and may get worse after rain.



### **What is mould?**

Mould is a type of fungus that can affect your health. Small areas can be cleaned with an anti-mould spray but please do not brush mould, as this can spread it.

If mould keeps coming back, or if anyone in your home has breathing problems, please contact us straight away.

### **How to reduce condensation**

A few simple steps can help:

- Open windows for 10-20 minutes each day
- Use extractor fans when cooking or bathing
- Keep lids on pans when cooking

- Dry clothes outside, or in a well-ventilated room (not bedrooms)
- Wipe water from windows each morning
- Leave a small gap between furniture and walls

### **Heating your home**

- Keep your home warm with a steady temperature
- Try to heat rooms regularly rather than in short bursts
- Open doors in unused rooms to allow airflow
- Aim for around 18-21°C in living areas

**If you notice any of these issues, please let us know. We're here to help.**

# Support available



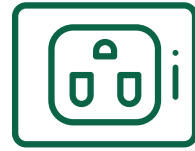
We understand that sometimes you may need extra support, and we are here to help.

We can support you with things like managing money, accessing benefits, setting up your home, or getting help with your health and wellbeing. We can also work with other organisations to make sure you get the right support.

If you are struggling in any way, please speak to your housing officer.

**You don't have to deal with everything on your own.**

# Adaptations



If you find it difficult to use parts of your home, adaptations may help.

These are changes made to your home to make it safer and easier to live in.

Minor adaptations are small changes like grab rails, lever taps, or moving sockets. These are usually arranged by us and don't normally need an assessment.

Major adaptations are larger changes, such as stair lifts, ramps, or wet rooms. These usually need an assessment by an occupational therapist and are often funded by the council through a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG).

We may also need permission from the property owner, and your housing officer will help with this.

Sometimes adaptations can't be carried out, for example, if the property isn't suitable or costs are too high. If this happens, we'll explain why and help you look at other options.

If you think you might need an adaptation, please contact us.

We will guide you through the process and work with you, and possibly the local council, to find the best solution.

**If you think you might need an adaptation, please contact us.**

# Anti-social behaviour (ASB)

Everyone has the right to feel safe and comfortable in their home.

## Examples of ASB

- Loud music or noise late at night
- Shouting, swearing, or threatening others
- Slamming doors or banging walls repeatedly
- Damaging the building or other people's belongings
- Smoking or drinking where it's not allowed
- Having visitors who regularly cause problems

## How to report ASB

If you experience this, please let us know. We will listen, take your concerns seriously and work with you to resolve the issue.

In emergencies, you should always contact the police.

You can:

- Speak to support staff, who can report it for you
- Contact your housing officer directly
- Email: [hello@hilldale.org.uk](mailto:hello@hilldale.org.uk)
- Call: 01257 367374
- Visit our website to report it online

## What happens next?

Your housing officer will look into the issue. This may include:

- Speaking to the person causing the problem
- Talking to others affected or witnesses
- Giving warnings
- Offering support to help change behaviour

# Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse is when someone hurts you, scares you, or tries to control you. It is usually done by someone you know and it is never your fault.

## **This could be:**

- A partner or ex-partner
- A husband, wife, boyfriend or girlfriend
- A family member
- Someone you live with or used to live with

Domestic abuse is not always physical. It can include:

- Hitting, punching, kicking, or slapping
- Throwing things at you
- Shouting or calling you names
- Making you feel scared, worthless or ashamed
- Threatening you
- Controlling where you go or who you speak to
- Telling you what you can or cannot do
- Taking your money or stopping you accessing it
- Touching you in a way you do not want

## **What you can do**

If you think you, or someone else, is experiencing domestic abuse, you can talk to:

- Support staff
- Your housing officer
- Social services
- Someone you trust
- The police or other support services

## **How we will support you**

If you report domestic abuse to us, we will:

- Listen and support you
- Help you contact the right services
- Provide a safe space for you to talk
- Remind you that it is not your fault
- Encourage you to get the help you need

# Making a complaint

We always try to get things right, but sometimes things go wrong. If you're unhappy, please tell us so we can put it right and improve our service.

## What is a complaint?

A complaint is when you tell us you're unhappy with:

- Our service
- Something we did
- Something we didn't do that we should have

## How to make a complaint

- Email:  
hello@hilldale.org.uk
- Fill in the form on our website
- Speak to your Housing Officer or care provider

## What we will do

- Take your concerns seriously
- Log your complaint within five working days
- Send confirmation by email or post

A staff member will:

- Look into the issue
- Speak to you and any staff involved if needed

You will receive a response within ten working days explaining:

- What we found
- What we will do next

If you're happy, we'll close the complaint and use your feedback to improve for the future, and if you're not happy, you can ask for a stage 2 review, where:

- A senior manager will review your complaint
- They were not involved the first time
- You'll receive a response within 20 working days

If you're still unhappy after Stage 2, you can contact the Housing Ombudsman Service for independent help.

# HILLDALE

housing association

Thank you for being part  
of our community.

We wish you every  
happiness in your home.

If you'd like more information about anything  
in this handbook, or you'd like to get involved  
with Hilldale, please get in touch.

**Telephone:**

**01257 367374**

**General email:**

**hello@hilldale.org.uk**

**Repairs email:**

**repairs@hilldale.org.uk**

**More information:**

**hilldale.org.uk**