

Your tenancy, our housing service

A guide



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1. TENANCY

A. Your co-operative

Welcome to Ross Walk Co-operative Housing Association. Formed in 1978, we own around 120 homes in the Belgrave area of Leicester. We're more than a housing association, we're a housing co-operative which means that you are more than a tenant, you're a tenant member. This gives you the power to elect your management committee which decides the policy of the Co-op. It is made up of elected tenant members and people with special skills who are invited to help us who are not paid for their work. Being a Co-op means surplus money must be put back into the organisation for the benefit of all the members. **It also means you do NOT have the right-to-buy your home.** The day-to-day work involved in managing your home and tenancy is carried out by the Leicester-based PA Housing. The Co-op has a contract with PA, called a Service Agreement, which sets out what services they will provide, and how much the Co-op will pay for them.

B. Responsibilities

The Tenancy Agreement is the legal document you sign before you move in. Depending on when you moved into your home, and whether you have a single or joint tenancy, there are different types of agreement. The agreement sets out in

detail the terms of your tenancy and it's important you understand it. If you need a copy or help understanding it please contact us (section 5). In summary your main responsibilities are to:

- pay the rent and other charges on time
- take care of the property, keep the inside properly decorated and do any repairs you are responsible for
- ensure that everyone in your household and your visitors behave responsibly. They must not overcrowd their property, cause nuisance to neighbours, or harass or threaten other people
- let us know if you are going away and leaving your home unoccupied for more than 4 weeks
- let us know in writing if you plan to leave. You must do this at least 4 weeks beforehand, and leave the place in good condition.

Our main responsibilities are to:

- consult you on any proposed changes to the tenancy
- keep your home in good repair
- keep in working order all pipes, drains, gutters and installations inside your property for heating your water, gas or electricity supply.

We have the right to:

- change your rent or other charges provided we give you appropriate notice
- be let into your home to carry out inspections or repairs, to service appliances or carry out safety inspections.

You have the right to live in your home without being unnecessarily interrupted by us and you can ask us to review any decisions we make that you don't agree with.

As we are a Co-op Housing Association you do NOT have the right to buy your Co-op home.

C. Household changes

Relationship breakdown - If you are in a relationship that is breaking down, it may have an impact on your tenancy and it's important you contact us so we can discuss your options. You should know that only a court has the power to force you

to move out of your home and that joint tenants have equal rights to remain in the home but either one may end the tenancy. If you are not joint tenants, the person named on the Tenancy Agreement has the right to ask their partner to leave the home. However, a married partner can stay until a court decides who must leave. If you are not joint tenants and the person named on the Tenancy Agreement leaves the home, the remaining partner does not automatically have the right to stay. We are happy to discuss how your situation may affect your tenancy with us and do what we can to help. The details of any conversation you have with us will be confidential. You can also go to a specialist who can advise you about your particular situation. For example:

- advice agencies such as Leicester's Zinithya Trust or the Citizen Advice Bureau
- Relate (relationship counselling) for family problems
- the Council's Housing Department about your housing options
- a solicitor for your legal rights.

Death - When a tenant dies it is important that we know straightaway so relatives or friends need to tell us so we can discuss next steps. Some of these steps are set out in law, such as a joint tenant will automatically keep the tenancy. Others are down to our discretion such as situations where there is no joint tenant where a partner (married or unmarried including same sex couples) may be allowed to take over the tenancy. This is called a succession. In certain circumstances, such as where a home is left under-occupied, we have the right to re-house a successor in a different home. Our policy only allows for a tenancy to be passed on once on the basis of succession. This means that if you become the tenant because a member of your family passed it on to you, you cannot pass it on to someone else.

Marriage/Partnership - If you get married or form a partnership during your tenancy we may allow your partner or spouse to become a joint tenant. We will investigate their rights and previous circumstances before agreeing. A partner must have lived with you for at least 12 months for us to consider this.

D. Moving In

The start date of your tenancy is shown on the tenancy agreement we ask you to sign. From that date on you are responsible for the property and for paying rent. You must make sure that any housing-related benefits, if you qualify, is paid for your new home. If you do not move in immediately you must still pay the rent. When you take up your tenancy, you will sign a Tenancy Agreement and we will tell you about:

- the start date and your tenancy conditions
- the services we provide
- how to pay your rent
- how to report a repair

We will also tell you about how to download and use the MyPA app (see section 5) and organise for our contractor to ensure services such as gas and electricity can be used and paid for by you. We will give you:

- a copy of the Tenancy Agreement
- various useful advice leaflets covering a range of topics including gas servicing, repairs, being a good neighbour, joining the management committee and useful numbers. These are also available on your Co-op's website.
- information about benefits. We can sometimes help you with any application forms you need to complete
- all sets of keys we have. We do not hold spares. You are responsible for getting further sets, and getting into your home if you get locked out or lose your key.
- an up-to-date inspection record for any gas installations provided by us in your home
- details about the Co-op and a list of Management Committee meeting dates.



2. RENTS

Your rent is what pays for your home and all the services we provide. Its level is set in line with the Co-op's policies and government guidance, we aim to:

- cover our costs including repair and maintenance, the management of tenancies and any loan repayments for the original cost of the buildings
- set rents at levels that are reasonable for households in low-paid employment
- provide enough homes to meet local needs.

If you want to appeal against your rent increase, you should follow the advice sent out with your rent review letter.

A. Ways to pay

You can pay your rent in a variety of ways:

- Through your bank or building society where you can set up a Direct Debit or Standing Order arrangement. We can give you the necessary forms and explain how to do it. Your payment must leave your bank account in time to be with us by an agreed day of every week.

- At any post office, or at any shop which displays the PayPoint or PAYzone signs
You can pay with cash or by cheque. Take your plastic rent payment card with you. Normally, your payment will get through to us in 2-3 days, but it can take longer if you pay at a shop.
- By direct payment through your benefits. When claiming benefits, you can ask for the part that covers your rent to be paid direct to us. Remember though, if your benefit does not cover the full amount of rent you still have to pay us the difference.
- Your My PA app (see Section 5).

The full amount due is shown on your rent statement - which can be accessed through the My PA app - and any letter sent to you about changes to your rent. The amount is made up of your weekly rent and, for certain properties, service charges. Your rent is due on the Monday of every week. You can pay monthly but when doing so you will pay all your month's rent in advance at the beginning of each month. We calculate your monthly rent by multiplying your weekly rent by 52 (for each week of the year) and dividing by 12 (for each month).

B. Struggling to pay

Paying your rent is your number one financial priority. It's more important than anything else because you will lose your home if you do not pay. We don't want that to happen and have a specialist team who can help you if you are struggling to pay. We understand that anyone can have money troubles so we will do our best to help. If you know you have a rent payment problem, or you have received a letter from us about your rent, you should contact us immediately.

We will discuss your arrears with you and, if appropriate, give you advice including how to apply for benefits. We may also put you in touch with another organisation that can give you specialist, independent advice. If you cannot pay the full amount you owe us, we may agree that you can pay an extra amount each week until the debt is paid off. However, we will take legal action against you if you do not keep to any repayment agreement you have made with us, and you continue to be in arrears with your rent payments. We will deliver a legal 'Notice to Quit' to you. If this happens, you must contact us immediately to discuss how to stop this going any further.

If you still do not try to clear or reduce your arrears, we will go to court and as a result:

- you will have to pay the court costs
- you will have a County Court Judgement against you
- you will still have to pay us what you owe
- you could lose your home. If this happens you may be considered to be intentionally homeless and, as a result, you and your family may not be rehoused by another housing association or a council. We do not have to accept you onto our waiting list if you approach us again at a later date.

C. Other charges

We strongly advise you to take out home **contents insurance**. This would provide cover against damage to your personal belongings, carpets, furniture and other household contents and decorations, if, for example, you had a fire or flood. It would also cover for things stolen in a break-in, or damage from a neighbouring property.

D. Benefits

If you're on a low income you may be entitled to help with your rent. Anyone who is in rented housing and is named on the Tenancy Agreement can apply for housing benefits, provided they satisfy certain conditions. Applications and enquiries about benefits, housing related or otherwise, are not dealt with by us, but by your local council's benefits office. We can, though, help you apply or put you in touch with other organisations who may be able to give you help and advice.

Remember, it is your responsibility to ensure that your rent is paid even if you receive benefits. You must also renew your claim when you receive a reminder to do this. If you do not renew on time you may go into arrears with your rent and your benefits will not be backdated. If there are changes in your circumstances such as the number of people in your home, or a change in income you should inform both us and your local council's benefits office.



3. REPAIRS

A. Responsibilities

You are responsible for keeping your home clean and properly decorated, and for some repairs such as the following which is not a complete list.

- replacing lost keys
- changing locks if you are locked out
- fitting doorbells
- replacing bulbs, fluorescent tubes and starters
- adjusting internal doors, eg for new carpets
- resetting trip switches
- replacing broken or cracked glass unless you report it to the Police and can give us a Crime Number (not an Incident Number)
- trying to clear blockages in wastepipes or toilets
- filling cracks or holes in plaster (unless very large)
- replacing plugs and chains to baths and basins

- replacing clothes lines or restringing rotary driers (unless communal)
- putting up TV aerials (unless communal)
- dealing with vermin such as ants, bees, wasps, cockroaches, fleas, mice and rats. (Contact Leicester City Council for advice, they can provide a free service for rat infestations. Contact us for help dealing with mice)

In some circumstances these repairs will need to be done by a skilled worker and paid for by you.

We are responsible for repairing and maintaining the structure of the property you live in. This includes all the external parts and any internal fixtures and fittings originally provided by us, unless they are identified as your responsibility. Our responsibilities also cover all pipes, wiring, fixtures and fittings for heating, drainage, power and lighting, and smoke detectors, and for servicing any appliances provided by us. Outside your home we are responsible for any brick outhouses and sheds originally provided by us, the steps and paths leading from the property boundary to your main entrance doors, and any boundary walls and fences bordering public areas.

If you have specific health conditions you may be able to have **adaptations** made to your home. Contact Leicestershire County Council Social Services for information.

Gas Safety. We must, by law, carry out an annual gas safety check in every property with a gas supply. You must, by law, allow us in to do this. You must not block off air vents.

If you, or someone in your home, causes damage, we expect you to repair it or, to arrange and pay for it to be done. We will always do emergency work to make your home and family safe, but we will charge for this if you have caused the problem. Our charges include administration costs.

B. Reporting a repair

You can report a repair either by calling us, which you should do if it is an emergency, or through the MyPA app (See Section 5). When you have reported a repair we will discuss your repair problem and let you know whether an order will be placed immediately, or whether a member of our team needs to visit to assess what needs to be done. If an order can be placed, we will tell you the timescale (see Section 3C) it falls into. We will discuss when you can be at home to let

someone in to carry out the work. We will also take your phone number and pass it on to the contractor.

For all repairs we will send an electronic acknowledgement. This will give details of the work we have ordered, the date by which it should be completed, and the name of the contractor. If it is an emergency, we will also give you this information over the phone. For emergency repairs, the contractor will phone you to say when someone will come. For routine repairs, they will agree a specific day – and can usually give you an AM or PM appointment.

To carry out the repair we will need your co-operation. You may need to make certain arrangements and prepare for our contractor's visits. Repair operatives should not be left alone in your home or with only children present (under 16). If you leave the home the repair operative may have to leave the property too. You should not leave your key hidden somewhere, or with someone else, for a repair operative to pick up and let themselves into your home. You are expected to allow repair operatives to get on with their work by keeping children and pets out of their way, and by clearing furniture from where they are working. If furniture or carpets need to be moved, you should get this done before repair operatives arrive. They may be willing to help but cannot be held responsible for any damage caused in the process.

Do let us know if a repair is not completed within the time allowed or if you are not satisfied with the work done or the service provided. We will investigate all complaints (see Section 5a) to ensure that work is carried out to a good standard without delay.

C. Timescales

When you report a repair to us we assess the nature of the problem and the circumstances, and then allocate it to one of the following categories:

- **Emergency** - within 24 hours. This is for when there is real danger to life or limb, major damage to the property, flooding or the home is insecure. Work may only be done to make the situation safe, with other work to follow.
- **Routine** - repair completed within 14 days. When the repair does not cause immediate inconvenience or pose any danger to occupants or members of the public.

Some non-urgent repairs are held back to be included in our on-going planned maintenance programme.

Some repairs will need to be inspected before repair work can be ordered. An officer will call at your home, or you can ask for an appointment for a specific date.

D. Standards

All repairs will be carried out by contractors approved by the Co-op. Each repair operative must carry identification and a works order. Always check their identification and ask to see the works order, it will give the name of the contractor. If you are in any doubt about someone who has come to your home to do a repair, contact the office. Our contractor's operatives will deal with you in a professional way. You can expect them to:

- introduce themselves and show you identification before entering your home
- explain what they are going to do and discuss how this will affect you
- take reasonable care of your home
- make sure materials and tools do not cause danger to you or your visitors
- clear up rubbish and leave the area tidy at the end of each working day
- re-connect essential services at the end of each day and when the repair is completed

Repair operatives are not allowed to:

- smoke in your home
- use your power supply without your consent.

If a repair is not completed within the time allowed or, if you are not satisfied with the work that has been done or the service provided, please let us know. From time to time, we carry out regular quality control visits to make sure that our contractors are working to high standards.

E. Improvements

We are committed to an on-going programme of improvements to our homes and we have plans in place to carry out major repairs and improvements. We will discuss with you, well ahead of time, any work we plan to do in your home.

You may carry out improvements to your home provided you have our permission in writing. If we don't give permission we will tell you our reasons. You should discuss your plans with us first and you must not start work before getting permission. We have the right to insist that the work is done to a certain standard, and to inspect it at certain stages.

If you have removed any fixtures or fittings without permission these must be put back the way they were and in the same condition. If you have made alterations which were not carried out properly or were done without permission, we may make you change them back or bring them up to the correct standard. You will have to pay for the cost of doing this.

You can put up your own fittings as long as you do not damage or alter the property. This includes putting up shelves or hooks. If you want to make other alterations, you must first ask our permission. We will expect you to put back any fittings you have removed, or restore the property to its original condition when you leave. You are responsible for decorating inside.

F. Gardens

If you have a garden, you are responsible for:

- keeping it tidy and free of rubbish
- trimming or lopping any shrubs, hedges or trees to make sure they do not become a nuisance to neighbours
- maintaining any paths other than the main paths to your front and back doors

You may carry out any reasonable landscaping and planting as you wish. However, you must contact us before cutting down a tree. You also need our permission before carrying out certain major tasks, including building a garage or shed.

You must not do major car repairs in parking areas, on your driveway, or on the roadside. You must not park a large commercial vehicle, caravan, boat, trailer or mobile home in any communal parking areas.



4. HOME

A. Neighbourliness

Your Tenancy Agreement states that you, anyone else in your household or your visitors, must not cause nuisance to their neighbours. If this happens you are in breach of the Agreement. If you do not respond to complaints we will get involved. We will try to resolve the matter with you but if the nuisance does not stop, we will take action which may result in you and your family being made to leave your home.

Nuisance includes persistent and excessive noise, disturbance or abusive behaviour, which causes distress to others including these examples:

- Sound. Control the volume of sound from radios, music systems and televisions. Do not put these systems against shared walls. Where possible, use headphones.
- Housework. Make sure you mow lawns, use washing machines and do housework at reasonable times of the day.
- Dogs. If you have a dog, do not leave it barking constantly in the home or out in the garden, and clear up any mess it makes.

- DIY. Warn neighbours when you are going to do something noisy such as drilling or hammering.
- Children. Make sure your children do not annoy your neighbours.
- Cars. Try to be quiet when returning home late or setting off early; do not rev engines, hoot horns or slam doors.

Noise can penetrate easily between floors and walls in adjoining properties. Many tenants do not realise how much noise is heard elsewhere in the building. Try to approach the neighbour and explain politely to them how much they are disturbing you. If noise becomes excessive and persistent you should contact us. We have well developed ways of dealing with complaints about noise and nuisance. Your local council may also be able to help. To support your complaint you need to keep a diary of events and we have a form you can use for this. Under the terms of the Tenancy Agreement, neighbours are expected to be tolerant of different lifestyles but should not have to put up with excessive and persistent noise, disturbance, or abusive or threatening behaviour.

B. Anti-Social Behaviour

Anti-social behaviour is any behaviour which harms the quality of life of residents causing distress or alarm. Harassment is the deliberate interference with the peace, comfort or safety of any person. This includes graffiti, damage to property, abuse, threats, drug dealing, theft and vandalism. You are breaking your Tenancy Agreement if you harass anyone on grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.

We will take action against anti-social behaviour in or around the areas where we own properties. We consider this a high priority. We will work with other agencies such as the Police or Council to deal with such behaviour. If it is one of our tenants, we can take action to make them leave their home. Alternatively, we can apply to court for an injunction which is an order requiring someone to stop doing a particular action. We will need details of any problem, so you should keep a diary of events. You can take private action against the person but you will need to contact a solicitor to do this. If a problem is between neighbouring tenants and it is clear that one of them has broken their Tenancy Agreement, we can take legal action against that tenant.

C. Condensation, mould and damp

If, despite following the advice below, you have a persistent problem with mould or damp we want to know. When you report a problem to us we'll arrange for one of our surveyors to attend your home and carry out an investigation. We aim to carry out this first inspection promptly. We have produced a separate leaflet, a copy of which is on our website and is available on request, which sets out typical timescales taken to resolve problems depending on their source and severity.

Condensation starts as moisture that is produced by cooking, washing, or drying clothes indoors on radiators. This moist air condenses on cool surfaces such as walls, mirrors, wall tiles and windows, and even some clothes. When the moist air is warm it rises and often ends up on ceilings and in upstairs rooms and then forms mould. If mould forms wipe it off immediately with water. Do not use washing up liquid, apply a bleach solution to the wall or use a recommended product available from a DIY store. The bleach solution should be diluted with 10 times more water than bleach. Wear protective gloves and wash your hands thoroughly when you have finished.

Condensation can occur in any home. You can take steps to prevent it by closing kitchen and bathroom doors to prevent steam going into other colder rooms and keeping window trickle vents open. You can open kitchen and bathroom windows when cooking or washing so that steam can escape, or use an extractor fan which uses very little electricity. Also open some windows in other rooms for a while each day to allow a change of air. Do not use bottled gas heaters which produce a lot of moisture. Wipe down surfaces where moisture settles to prevent mould forming and do not block air vents. To produce less moisture dry clothes outdoors whenever possible, otherwise use well-ventilated rooms, cover pans when cooking and vent any tumble driers to the outside. Try to keep your house warm, take steps to prevent heat loss and maintain low background heat.

Mould is formed of very small plants which thrive in the conditions produced by condensation. The spores are very small and exist in the air. They will colonise a suitable habitat very quickly and produce more spores, so if left untreated, it is common for entire rooms to be covered. Prevention is always best but if you do get a patch of mould, please wipe away and mop up any moisture appearing on walls, windows, windowsills and other surfaces. Wring out the cloth into a sink rather than leaving it to drip dry. You can remove mould by washing the surfaces affected with an anti-fungicidal mould remover, which you can purchase from most supermarkets and DIY stores. Always remember to follow the manufacturer's instructions.

There are a number of different potential sources of **damp**. These include:

- Condensation damp – This type of damp is caused by having a significant amount of moisture in the air from a variety of sources such as cooking and bathing.
- Penetrating damp – this can be from roofs, chimneys, parapet walls, and indeed any wall or building feature above ground. This can be caused by a rainwater defects and weather penetrating the fabric of the building.
- Plumbing leak damp – Dampness caused by pipework leaking internally such as broken pipes or a failed stopcock.
- Rising damp – This occurs when moisture travels upwards against the forces of gravity, typically up a wall or through a floor, from its source below the ground.

D. Pets

You can keep most normal domestic pets in your house or flat though you do have to get our permission to keep a dog. You must ensure that your pets do not escape or cause nuisance, danger or a health hazard to other residents or our employees. If you are not a responsible owner, we can forbid you to keep a pet.



5. CONTACT AND INVOLVEMENT

A. Contacting Us

The best way to contact us, including to report repairs, is by telephone on **0116 257 6800** or email: coops@pahousing.co.uk. If you want to meet us face-to-face you can book an appointment via the link at the top of our website: www.rosswalkcoop.org.uk. These 'surgeries' take place at 34 Cecil Road on Tuesdays 2-4.30pm.

You can also get in touch via our app, My PA, which enables you to easily access to your account from any internet-enabled device 24/7. Through the app you can view and make rent payment, set up Direct Debits, diagnose and report repairs, book appointments and report issues with grounds maintenance or communal cleaning as well as many more features.

Through the app you can also tell us about a repair, and if you use our picture-based reporting tool, you can identify the exact problem. Upload a photo of your own, and the system supplies all the information we need to make a quick repair. We're more likely to fix it on our first visit if we know the details. We promise that your personal information is always kept safe and secure.

Our registered office, which is open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm (update to 8am to 8pm and Saturdays 8am to 12.30pm when this comes into force), is:

PA Housing
3 Bede Island Road
Leicester
LE2 7EA

B. Customer Care

We aim, for you, to think the following about our service:

- You listen to us
- Our views shape your decisions
- You do what you say you will do
- If you get it wrong, you say sorry and fix it
- We love our homes and communities and are proud of where we live
- Our service charges are fair and accurate
- It's easy to talk to you
- We understand our responsibilities

More specifically, we aim to:

- respond promptly to all communication
- communicate in clear, jargon-free language
- provide you with clear and relevant advice and information in response to any queries
- be polite and helpful and will always show identification
- treat you with respect
- ensure staff are properly trained
- provide interview facilities that allow access to all disabled customers and customers with pushchairs
- acknowledge emails within 24 hours, if we need to follow this with a more detailed response, we will contact you again within 10 working days or by a date we have agreed with you

- deal with telephone calls as promptly as possible and only transfer calls where necessary but if we have to, we will tell the other member of staff your name and why you are calling

Staff are always happy to discuss any query, problem or worry you may have about your tenancy or related matters. We will always treat you with respect, take action promptly where necessary and keep you informed of progress. We will also give you as much other help and advice as we can.

We will treat anything you say to us with discretion. All the information you give us is confidential. However, you should be aware that, by law, we have to share certain essential details with some other public organisations (for example local Councils, Benefits Agency, Inland Revenue).

C. Consultation

Every tenant is automatically a member of the Co-op and shares ownership and responsibility for the management of our homes. Each year, at our Annual General Meeting our tenants elect the management committee which meets each month to plan and review strategy, development, finance and housing services. You are encouraged to join our management committee, attend meetings and take an active role in decision-making.

We believe in the right of our tenants and other residents to influence decisions about their

homes and the surrounding areas. We will inform you of any plans that affect you or your home, including any changes we want to make to the Tenancy Agreement, how we manage or provide our services to you and any modernisation or improvements we are planning for your home. You have a number of opportunities to find out about the activities and services we provide including:

- our newsletter which is issued several times a year
- our website and social media channels
- this Guide and leaflets on particular topics
- an Annual Report which tells you how well we are doing each year. This is sent out to every tenant once a year
- letters or fact sheets about particular plans we have or projects we are involved in.

We also carry out surveys from time to time to find out how well our customers think we are doing in various key areas of our service. These surveys may be online, telephone interviews or posted questionnaires. Sometimes they will be face-to-face interviews conducted by researchers. We welcome any constructive criticism or suggestion about our operations, services, organisation or way of working. If you would like to make a suggestion, please write to us or fill out one of our Complaints and Compliments forms which you can find on your Co-op's website.

If you have an interest in making your community a better place or knowledge of housing management, development, finance or legal matters, and would be interested in joining our committee, please contact us. You do not need to be an expert, as we offer training and support. If you are not a tenant member, but have some relevant skills or knowledge and would like to work with us, please get in touch – we would be delighted to hear from you. If you are interested, please call us on 0116 204 4135 for an informal chat and to arrange a meeting.

We have clear policies and procedures which promote **equal opportunity** and respect for the needs of everyone in our community. Our policies cover opportunities for resident involvement, the provision of housing and services, and the appointment of contractors. We will act swiftly and firmly against any form of discrimination, for example on such grounds as age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

D. Complaints

If you have a complaint, we want to know. We can then try to put it right. Your comments and complaints help us to correct our mistakes and improve our service to you. We would expect you to complain if we have:

- failed to fulfil our responsibilities
- carry out a policy
- provide a service
- failed to achieve good standards of service
- failed to take into account relevant information you have given us when coming to a decision
- acted towards you in an unfair way

There are multiple ways that you can make a complaint including by phone, letter, email, through the website or by speaking to someone who represents the Co-op, or by other means. We will maintain confidentiality in the handling of complaints. In the first instance every appropriate effort will be made to resolve complaint straightaway and without a formal process. If we are unable to do this and the complaint becomes formal we will consider it as follows:

- Acknowledgement and logging
- Confirmation of the complaint
- Investigation
- Decision-making

Review – if the complainant is unhappy with the outcome of the investigation, they may request a review and which will be heard by the governing body of the co-op, someone independent of the complaint so far – offering the complainant and other parties to the complaint the opportunity to put forward their views. We have set timescales for each stage in the process:

Complaints procedure	Timescales
Logging and acknowledgement of the complaint	One week or 5 working days
Results of the investigation of a complaint	Two weeks or 10 working days from receipt of the complaint
Results of a subsequent review of a complaint	Four weeks or 20 working days from the request for a review

At the end of the complaint investigation and at the end of the review (if there is one) the co-op will write to the complainant to say:

- what the outcome of their complaint is
- the reasons why decisions have been made
- what offers the co-op is making to put things right
- what actions remain outstanding
- how the complainant can take the matter further if they are dissatisfied with the outcome or what the co-op is offering
- that the complainant may refer the complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service

Who else can I approach? You can get independent advice on your problem from your local Citizens Advice Bureau, Law Centre, local Voluntary Rights Centre, or a Solicitor. If you have a serious complaint against the Co-op and have been through our formal complaints process, you can approach the Housing Ombudsman who may investigate the matter further: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk



6. MOVING ON

A. Ending your tenancy

You must let us know, in writing, at least 4 weeks before the date you want to end your tenancy. We will respond to confirm receipt of the notice and let you know the next steps. The tenancy will usually end on a Sunday. You must remove all your furniture, flooring, personal possessions and any rubbish before you leave. Do not forget your loft!

We will normally charge you for the removal of any items left in the property. Leicester City Council offer a bulky item collection service that may be useful at this time: <https://www.leicester.gov.uk/your-environment/recycling-and-waste/bulky-item-collections/>

If you have removed any of our fixtures and fittings you must put them back, unless we agreed that this was not necessary when you got permission to do the work. If you do not put things back the way they were we will charge you for the cost of doing it ourselves, and also for any fixtures and fittings you have damaged.

You are still responsible for any debt that is owed to us. If you do not make an arrangement with us to repay it we will go to court to force you to pay us. We may also use debt collection agents. To set up an arrangement to repay any debt you

need to let us know, in writing, at least 4 weeks before you leave. You must also let us into the home to assess what repairs need doing, and to let new tenants look around. We will give you a reasonable amount of notice.

You must return keys to our Registered Office by 12 noon on the Monday after your tenancy ends. If you do not you may have to pay rent for the next week and for any lock change.

B. Exchanging

If you want to move to another Ross Walk Co-op property you will need to apply to go on our housing register. Ask at the office for an application form. We will assess your need for new housing. If your application is accepted, you will be put on the register. Not everyone on the register will be able to get a new home because the number of properties available for re-letting is often very low. Also, there are restrictions on who can move into certain properties. When a suitable property is available, we will check that the information in your application is still correct and we will carry out a rent check to ensure that you have no payments outstanding. We will visit your home to assess its condition and identify any repairs that you need to do before you move.

You might also consider swapping homes with another tenant. For urgent employment, medical or family reasons you can contact us or the relevant Council's Housing Department for further information. Otherwise you should put your name on the waiting list of local councils or housing associations in the area you want to move to. We can help you find out who to contact.

You can also try to find a tenant to exchange with through a national scheme called HomeSwapper, www.homeswapper.co.uk This is when two or more tenants exchange homes. To do this we have to give permission which will involve us inspecting your home and telling you what repairs you must carry out first. When you exchange, both tenants must accept the other property in the condition it is left. The new tenant takes responsibility for any damage or alterations made by the previous tenant. If you exchange without permission you can be forced to move back. It is illegal to pay anyone in order to persuade them to exchange tenancies with you. If an exchange happens on this basis, all the people involved could be made to leave their homes.

C. Moving out

Before handing in the keys, please make sure that:

- you have paid any rent or charges you owe us
- the property is clean and tidy
- you have wiped down all worktops, sills, kitchen units and floor tiles
- all your furniture, carpets and belongings have been removed, including from sheds and lofts, and no rubbish is left in the house or garden
- you have done any repairs or redecoration that are your responsibility
- you have contacted the gas, electricity, water and phone companies to finalise your accounts
- you have told the Council Tax section you are moving, and if you claim Housing Benefit, you have told the Department for Work and Pensions
- you have arranged for a Gas Safe registered gas installer to disconnect any gas appliances you are moving
- you have arranged for your post to be redirected.