



**Welcome
to your home.**

It's easy to contact us. We'd love to hear from you.

In writing:

Gosforth office:

Number Five,
Gosforth Park Avenue,
Gosforth Business Park,
Newcastle upon Tyne,
NE12 8EG

Prudhoe office:

Spetchells Centre,
58 Front Street,
Prudhoe,
Northumberland,
NE42 5AA

Morpeth office:

First Floor Owen House,
Sanderson Arcade,
Morpeth,
Northumberland,
NE61 1NS

Stanley office:

Greengates House,
Amos Drive,
Greencroft Industrial Estate,
Stanley,
Co Durham,
DH9 7YE

Hexham office:

Tanners Burn House,
Hexham Business Park,
Burn Lane,
Hexham,
Northumberland,
NE46 3RU

Chester-le-Street office:

Bowes Offices,
Lambton Park,
Chester-le-Street,
Co Durham,
DH3 4AN

Our opening times are:

Monday to Thursday: **9.00am - 5.00pm**
Friday: **9.00am - 4.30pm**

You can also contact us for free on:

Telephone: **0808 164 0111**

Whether you are calling us from a landline or mobile, you will not be charged for making the call and one of our experienced Customer Relationship Team colleagues will be happy to help you.

Our team is available Monday to Friday between 8.30am and 5pm. But if you need to call us outside of these hours then don't worry – your call will be diverted to our out-of-hours contact provider where you can report emergency repairs, pay your rent or report any instance of anti-social behaviour.

Website: www.karbonhomes.co.uk
Email: info@karbonhomes.co.uk
Twitter: [@KarbonHomes](https://twitter.com/KarbonHomes)
Facebook: [KarbonHomes](https://www.facebook.com/KarbonHomes)

Hello and welcome to your home!

Why not put the kettle on, make yourself a cuppa and spend 10 mins reading through this handbook it gives you lots of useful information about your tenancy with us and to make settling into your new home as easy as possible.

Within the following pages, you'll find out what to do and who to turn to when you need help or advice on a whole range of matters. You'll find out how to get involved with our work to improve your community and you'll learn some useful tips to make your home a very safe and happy one.

There's information about your tenancy and the wide range of services you can access, as well as general information about Karbon Homes.

To ensure your tenancy runs as smoothly as possible, you will be allocated a named member of staff who will support you throughout your time with us and provide advice on specific matters relating to your tenancy or any questions in relation to this handbook.

Our Customer Relationship Team will be your first point of contact should you have any questions about your tenancy.







About Karbon Homes

Karbon Homes is your new landlord and is responsible for the day to day management of your home.

We are setting out to provide as many good quality homes as possible so that we can be the first choice for more customers. Customers come to us with a range of requirements. Some want affordable rented housing, while others are looking to get on the home ownership ladder. We also support older people who want to live independently and provide Extra Care schemes with round-the-clock support for those who are more vulnerable.

We own or manage almost 30,000 properties across the North East of England and Yorkshire.

We provide homes and services by supporting people and communities to fulfil their potential. We have a growing reputation for delivering regeneration schemes in partnership with private sector house builders, and our subsidiary company Prince Bishop Homes.

Our supported housing teams are renowned for the quality of their services, in helping some of the most vulnerable people in society to live independent lives.

We also have specialist knowledge in providing homes for older people.

The needs of our customers are always at the heart of our work. By listening and responding to what you want to see in your local area, we can build strong communities together.

What you can expect from us:

Improving services and building stronger foundations for more people

We will listen to you and make sure our services are tailored to meet your individual requirements, and work with you to develop our services further.

We aim to provide the services you want at a time and place that suits you. We want to offer a menu of services that you can choose from and a range of convenient ways to contact us.

To demonstrate our commitment to excellent customer service at all times, we have developed a number of Customer Service Standards that outline what you can expect from us.

Through these standards we are committed to:

- Making sure you are actively involved in what we do and the decisions that affect you
- Supporting you during your tenancy
- Responding quickly if things go wrong
- Valuing the diversity of our tenants, treating everyone fairly and with respect
- Providing clear and accurate information
- Being flexible in the way that we provide our services
- Building and maintaining our homes to a high standard

Our aim is to deliver all of this in a friendly, polite and respectful way.

Looking after your privacy

Why we collect information

We collect information from you to help us to:

- Collect rent and service charge payments
- Provide a repairs and maintenance service
- Manage complaints and support you in making a complaint if you need to
- Provide a welfare rights service
- Provide an anti-social behaviour service



How information about you will be used

We may use your information to:

- Carry out our lawful functions as your landlord
- Improve services based on your feedback
- Check with you that the information we have is accurate
- Compare it against other information to help combat fraud and crime
- Assess your entitlement to a benefit or an opportunity
- Check your identity when you contact us

We will use your information to contact you for operational purposes.

Examples are to confirm or ask about a:

- Visit or a repair
- Gas Inspection arrangement
- Request for you to contact Karbon Homes

We may share your information with:

- Other housing associations to help with property transfers
- The police and law enforcement agencies to prevent crime
- Other companies to prevent fraud and to pursue debtors

We will keep your information safe and secure.

If you need further information please write to us.



Moving in

To help you settle into your new home quickly and easily, here's a handy checklist of the things you need to do when you move in.



Your Karbon Homes officer will contact you a few weeks after you have moved in to arrange a new tenant visit. It is important that you are available so they can answer any queries you may have and ensure your tenancy gets off to the best possible start.

Things I need to do	Tick below
Both your electric and gas (if applicable) supplies are provided by British Gas. When you move in your gas supply may be disconnected for health and safety reasons. You should contact us and we will reconnect the gas supply and issue you with a certificate to confirm that the supply is safe to use You can change your electricity and/or gas supplier at any time	<input type="checkbox"/>
We will tell you if your water charge is included in your rent or whether you have to pay it directly to the water company. If the water rates are not included in your rent you should contact the water company to register with them	<input type="checkbox"/>
Make a note of where your stopcock is located	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pay your rent as soon as you receive your rent account number to avoid falling into arrears	<input type="checkbox"/>
Make a new claim for Council Tax Support or, if you are already claiming Council Tax Support, inform the Council of your change in address	<input type="checkbox"/>
Make a new claim for Housing Benefit or Universal Credit (including the Housing Element of Universal Credit) or, if you are already claiming, inform the Council or DWP of your change in address	<input type="checkbox"/>
We always recommend that you take out your own contents insurance to protect your own belongings against damage including fire and flood. We have arranged an easy and reasonably priced insurance scheme that you may want to consider, please contact Customer Services for further details	<input type="checkbox"/>
You should contact your preferred telephone provider who will advise you how to get connected. If you had a telephone at your previous address you may be able to take the same number	<input type="checkbox"/>
You should consider having your post redirected from your old address	<input type="checkbox"/>
Remember to tell others that you have moved, in particular your doctor, dentist, children's school, your employer, TV licensing, the DVLA and bank	<input type="checkbox"/>



Your tenancy and your rights

Your rights and responsibilities form part of your Tenancy Agreement and it's important that you read this separate document and talk to your Karbon Homes officer about anything you don't understand.

This section of the handbook is intended to help you understand your rights and explain some of them in more detail. Many are subject to certain conditions and formal procedures which are too detailed to set out in this welcome guide. If you are unsure of your rights, please contact us and we can explain them further.

What is a Starter Tenancy?

A Starter Tenancy is an Assured Shorthold Tenancy which will last for 12 months from the date your tenancy begins. During this period, Karbon Homes will keep your tenancy under review.

If you do not break any tenancy conditions during this time, you will automatically become an Assured Tenant. There will be no need to sign a new agreement.

All tenants have in their tenancy agreement the following rights:

Your Right to Occupy

You have the right to occupy your home without interruption or interference from us for the duration of this tenancy (except for the obligation contained in this tenancy agreement to give access to our employees or contractors).

Your Right of Security of Tenure

You have the right to occupy your home and your tenancy can only be ended by us if one or more of the conditions shown in your tenancy agreement is broken or if you no longer occupy the property as your only or principal home. We can only end your starter tenancy by serving of a Section 21 notice, or if you are an assured tenant, we must obtain a court order.

Your Right to Repair

If we do not carry out repairs within an agreed timescale, and fail to do so after a second request is made, then in certain circumstances you have the right to organise your own repairs and receive compensation from us. There are specific conditions attached to this right that our Customer Relationship Team can explain.

Your Right to Consultation

You are entitled to be consulted about changes that affect you and your home. Our section 'getting involved' explains how we consult with customers but we encourage feedback about the services we deliver to help us to understand what we are doing right but more importantly, how we can do things better. We may ask for your feedback by completing a short survey about a particular service.

Your Right to Information

You have the right to information about the terms of your tenancy agreement, our policies and procedures including housing allocation, transfers, tenant consultation, our repairs obligations and our performance as a landlord.

Your Right to Make a Complaint

If you are not satisfied with the service you receive from us then you have the right to make a complaint. If you are not satisfied after you have exhausted our complaints process then you have the right to refer your complaint to the Independent Housing Ombudsman Service. Further details are given in the 'compliments, complaints and comments' section.

As an Assured Tenant, you have additional rights as follows:

Your Right to Exchange

You have the right to exchange properties with a secure tenant from a local authority or another assured housing association tenant. You must have our permission before proceeding with the exchange.

Your Right to Acquire

You may have the right to acquire your home. Not all properties can be purchased under this scheme.

Your Right to Carry out Improvements and obtain compensation for improvements

If you have carried out certain improvements in your home, such as installing a shower, you may have the right to claim compensation when you end your tenancy. To qualify you must have obtained our written permission to carry out the improvement and followed any conditions we set out.



Your Rent

The money you pay for your rent covers the cost of your home and the wide range of services we provide.

How your rent is set

There is more information in our rent policy to explain how we decide what rent to charge. Generally, the rent charged by all registered housing associations are governed by the law and by a framework set by Central Government and the social housing regulator. Any future changes to your rent will happen in line with this framework, reflecting government limits and policies.

If you are a shared owner, your rent will continue to be set in accordance with your lease.

In addition to your rent, you may have to pay a service charge for services such as grounds maintenance, communal cleaning, and communal lighting or laundry facilities. The cost of providing these services are shared equally between tenants who receive these services.

How to pay your rent

You are responsible for paying your rent on time and we offer a range of convenient payment options to make paying your rent as quick and easy as possible.

- Direct Debit
- At Post Offices and outlets with the PayPoint logo using your Allpay card
- Bank Standing Order
- Debit card over the telephone or online
- By having your Housing Benefit paid directly to us
- By sending us a cheque (please do not send cash in the post)
- By Third Party Payments if you are in receipt of certain benefits.

We will let you know if we add any other methods of payment.

We will send you a rent statement every three months which will show in detail the rent you have been charged, any payments you have made, any made by Housing Benefit and the balance on your account.

Please keep any receipts of payment which you can use to check they have been received.

You can also request a rent statement at any time by calling our Customer Relationship Team.

Help in paying your rent

You may be entitled to Housing Benefit or Universal Credit to cover all or part of your rent. It is your responsibility to make a claim to your local Housing Benefit office or Job Centre plus office. If benefit is not paid or it does not cover all of your rent, it is up to you to pay the difference. If you receive benefits towards your housing costs direct you must use that money to pay your rent.

You should make a claim as soon as possible as delaying may result in you losing benefit. Benefit will not usually be paid before you move into your home and make a claim, and delaying could put you into arrears.

When you make a claim for Housing Benefit you will need to provide:

1. Proof of identity
2. Details of your household
3. Details of your income and savings
4. Copy of your Tenancy Agreement
5. Copy of your Furniture Agreement (if applicable)

You can get help with filling in the Housing Benefit form from your local Housing Benefit Office or from our staff.

You should always advise the Housing Benefit department of any change in your circumstances.

Universal Credit

Universal Credit is a new benefit for working age people that is paid monthly and replaces benefits including:

- Income Based Job Seekers Allowance
- Tax Credits
- Income Support
- Income related Employment and Support Allowance; and
- Housing Benefit.

Universal Credit is paid directly to you, including the money towards your rent. If you are making a claim for Universal Credit and think you will have difficulty

in paying your rent to us every month, please contact us straight away to discuss your options.

You should always advise the Department of Work and Pensions of any change in your circumstances

Council Tax Support is not included in Universal Credit so you will still need to apply to your Local Authority for this separately.

If you get into arrears

If you are experiencing difficulties in paying your rent and are unable to make a payment, you should contact us immediately. You will be able to speak to a trained member of staff who will help you and offer advice.

You will be asked to provide information about your income and expenditure in order that an affordable repayment plan can be agreed. We will adopt a firm but fair approach to recovering rent arrears. We will make early contact with you if your account falls into arrears.

If you do not keep up with your payments, or do not contact us to address your arrears or break your agreements, we will serve you with a Notice of Seeking Possession which may lead to us asking the court for possession of your home.

It is never too late to ask for help. Our advice is don't ignore the problem and risk losing your home. We will do everything we can to help you stay in your home.

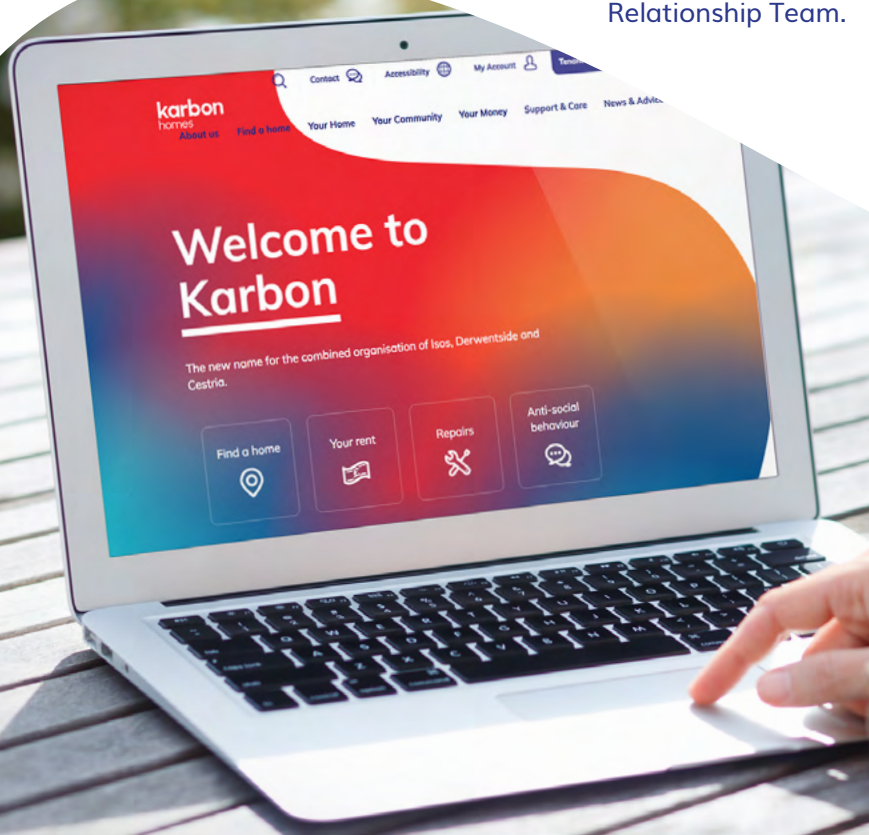
Benefits and money advice

Karbon Homes has a dedicated team of specialist officers who can offer free and confidential advice to all tenants about benefits and tax credits. They can also give you advice on cheaper ways to borrow money and effectively manage your debts.

The team can:

- Increase your income by making sure you are claiming all the benefits you are entitled to
- Help you to fill in complex benefit application forms and advise you on how to manage your benefit claim online
- Help you challenge and appeal incorrect benefit decisions
- Give specialist debt advice
- Help you to manage changes in your circumstances such as ending or starting work, sickness, births or bereavements
- Give advice on alternatives to pay day loans and doorstep lenders and advice on opening a bank account or saving and borrowing with your local credit union.
- Give help and advice on the best ways of managing and paying your rent or other bills
- Keep you up to date with all the changes to the benefits system
- Look at ways to help you with energy efficiency service and getting the best deal.

If you are struggling to pay your rent or any other bills, or you would like some benefits advice, our team will be happy to talk to you in confidence. You can contact them by telephoning our Customer Relationship Team.



Repairs

This section is designed to guide you through any repairs needed for your home. Your tenancy agreement outlines our repair responsibilities.

It explains who is responsible for which type of repair.

If you need a repair to your property, the first thing you should do is check whether the repair is something we can do for you, or whether you need to do it yourself.

Our responsibility for repairs to your home

We are responsible for the following:

- To keep in repair the structure and exterior of your home including:
 - Drains, gutters and external pipes
 - The roof
 - Outside walls, outside doors, windowsills, window catches, sash cords and window frames including necessary external painting and decorating
 - Internal walls, floors and ceilings, doors and door frames, door hinges and skirting boards but not including internal painting and decoration
 - Chimneys, chimney stacks and flues but not including sweeping
 - Pathways, steps or other means of access
 - Plasterwork
 - Integral garages and stores
 - Boundary walls and fences.

Repair of installations

To keep in repair and proper working order any installation provided by us for space heating, water heating, sanitation and for the supply of water, gas and electricity, including:

- Basins, sinks, baths, toilets, flushing systems and water pipes
- Electric wiring, including sockets and switches, gas pipes and water pipes
- Water heaters, fireplaces, fitted fires and central heating installations.

Any item damaged by you that would normally fall to us to repair in accordance with this clause may be repaired by us subject to a recharge agreement with you of the reasonable repair cost.

Please note that we are only responsible for the water, electric and gas supply inside the property (after the meter or stopcock).



Your responsibility for repairs

You must keep your home clean and maintain a tidy garden.

You are responsible for keeping your property in a reasonable condition by letting us know as soon as you notice a repair is needed, and taking action to prevent it from getting worse.

Generally, you are also responsible for:

- Repairing and maintaining any fixture, fitting or appliance you or a previous tenant have put in, unless we have an agreement to maintain it for you
- Allowing us into your home to carry out repairs, safety checks and any inspections that we need to do
- Decorating inside your home, including filling minor cracks or holes in walls and ceilings
- Taking action to prevent pipes from freezing or bursting
- Taking action to prevent and control condensation
- Draught proofing (although you may be eligible to get help with this)
- Curtain rails, washing lines, tidy driers, door bells, coat hooks, towel rails and toilet roll holders
- Minor adjustments to kitchen units, cupboards and drawers
- Cleaning extractor fans
- Wall and floor tiles (unless supplied by us)
- Securing or replacing toilet seats unless damage is fair wear and tear
- Bleeding radiators
- Replacing glass in windows and doors, unless you have reported the damage to the police as vandalism
- Resetting trip switches
- Replacing plugs and chains on baths, basins and sinks
- Keeping gully grids clear of leaves and other rubbish
- Replacing keys or locks when keys are lost or when you get locked out
- Adjusting doors when you have fitted new carpets



- Replacing light bulbs, fluorescent tubes or starters (including external security lights)
- Replacing electrical plugs (not sockets) and plug fuses to your own appliances
- Clearing blockages in basins, sinks, baths and toilets caused by inappropriate use
- Dealing with any pests such as ants and wasps nests.

We can give you more information and advice about these matters and if you are suffering from ill health, are vulnerable or disabled and have nobody to help you, we may be able to do some of this work for you for a charge. For more information contact our Customer Relationship Team.

How to report a repair

Repairs to your home can be reported by telephone, text, email, calling into or writing to our offices.

When you contact us please make sure that you have the following information:

- As much detail about the problem as possible
- Times when there will be someone at home (am or pm)

If we need to work inside your home, you will need to ensure that a responsible adult is there to let us in and to stay while the work is completed.

You will know that your repair has been recorded because you will either receive a letter, email or text telling you when the work will be completed. Alternatively you will be contacted to arrange for an inspection to be done.



Emergency repairs when our offices are closed

You can report an emergency repair by telephone at any time of the day or night.

Our Customer Relationship Team will direct you to the emergency repairs service.

Please only use the emergency service if your request really is an emergency.

The emergency repairs team will ask questions to check if your call is an emergency or not. All calls to this service are recorded. If a tradesperson attends for what turns out to be a non-emergency, you may be asked to pay the cost of their visit. Repairs carried out as an emergency cost a lot more than daytime repairs.

If you use the emergency service because you are locked out of your home, you will be charged a fee. The cost of the locksmiths visit will be passed to you and this is likely to be in excess of £100. You must look after keys and should let someone you trust have a spare key, in case you lose yours.

How long will it take for your repair to be done?

When you report a repair, you will be given a date by which it will be completed and informed who will carry out the work. If possible, we will arrange a convenient appointment for the work to be carried out.

The time allowed will depend on the nature and seriousness of the problem.

If you are suffering from ill health, are vulnerable or disabled and the repair is relevant to your particular circumstances, we will endeavour to help you by undertaking the repair more quickly than our published timescales.

The Right to Repair

Certain essential repairs are covered by the Right to Repair provisions. If these repairs are not completed within the prescribed timescale you have the right to instruct us to arrange a second contractor to complete the repair and if that second contractor fails to complete the repair, you will be entitled to compensation. For more information about the repairs that qualify and the relevant timescales, please contact us.

Cyclical maintenance

We will carry out servicing and cyclical maintenance on a regular basis to keep your home in a good state of repair.

Every year, we will service and safety check gas, oil and solid fuel systems and appliances, lifts and fire alarms.

Gas servicing

Under the Gas Safety Regulations 1998, all landlords must make sure that gas appliances are serviced each year and gas carrying pipework is safety checked. We are responsible for the following:

- Making sure gas appliances and flues are maintained in a safe condition
- Making sure yearly maintenance and safety checks are carried out on or before the 12 month anniversary of the last gas service
- Making sure we keep records and issue these to our tenants
- Making sure all safety checks are carried out by a Gas Safe registered installer.

Faulty gas appliances, which are not regularly maintained can become dangerous and can give off carbon monoxide. You cannot see, taste or smell this gas, but it can kill. There are about 30 deaths a year as a result of carbon monoxide poisoning from gas appliances. For your own safety, you should not sleep in a room containing an open flue gas or solid fuel appliance. If in doubt, please contact Karbon Homes and a member of our Gas Team will be able to give you further advice. If you fail to keep appointments for servicing, we will take legal action to access your home.

You must allow us into your home to carry out the annual gas safety check to protect you and your family.

For more information about gas servicing, please contact our Customer Relationship Team.





Repairs we can charge you for

If you or anyone in your home causes damage, deliberately or through neglect, you must report this to us as soon as possible. We expect you to arrange for the damage to be repaired, at your own cost, to our satisfaction and within a reasonable time.

Alternatively, we will repair the damage and you will have to pay for the cost of the work.

Examples of work which we may charge you for, which we call rechargeable repairs, are:

- Damaged sinks or toilets
- Damaged windows or doors and broken glass
- Floods from washing machines
- Changing locks due to lost keys

If you do the repairs yourself, or pay anyone else to do the work, but it does not meet our standards, we will have to carry out work to put this right and charge you for the cost of this work. Normally, we will invoice you for anything that you have to pay for shortly after you ask us to do the work, or, as quickly as possible after we have done the work.

If damage is caused by a break-in or vandalism, we will carry out work to make your home safe. We will not charge you anything for this work if you have told us about this kind of damage as quickly as possible and provide us with a crime or incident number to show that it has been reported to the police.

Improvements to your home

Before you undertake any improvements or alterations to your home you must write to us asking for permission.

You must seek permission also before putting up a satellite receiver. You must not start any alterations until you have received a letter from us saying you can go ahead.

We will normally allow most alterations and we may be able to help by providing you with some guidance on how to do it.

If you have carried out certain improvements, you will have the right to claim compensation when you leave your home provided that you obtained written permission to carry out those improvements in the first place. Contact us for further details.

We will carry out planned programmes of work to replace or renew major items in your home such as kitchens and windows as they come to the end of their expected, useful life. We will take account of your wishes and wherever practical offer you a choice of replacement item from our approved list.

How to prevent condensation in your home

Condensation occurs when warm air meets a cold surface. Water is formed at the point of contact with the cold surface, just as a bathroom mirror steams up when you have a hot bath. You can reduce the problems caused by condensation and dampness by following the advice below:

- Never block air bricks or vents in your walls, door or windows. If you have a gas boiler in your home then vents may provide oxygen for the efficient operation of your heating system, therefore it is dangerous to block these vents off
- When taking a bath or shower, provide ventilation by opening a window or using an extractor fan if fitted
- When cooking in the kitchen, keep the door closed but open a window to allow steam to escape. If you have no windows the extractor fan should be left to run for a while
- Reduce the amount of moisture in the air by not drying clothes directly on radiators or storage heaters
- Do not allow kettles and pans to boil for longer than necessary
- If you have an extractor fan then please use it
- Avoid using portable gas heaters as they produce high levels of water vapour
- Ensure that tumble driers are vented to the outside.



Your Neighbourhood

We expect all tenants to treat each other with respect and consideration at all times.

Your tenancy agreement outlines your responsibilities to be a good neighbour. We also need you to take responsibility for the behaviour of those people living with you and visiting you so we can make sure your neighbourhood is always a peaceful and welcoming place.

We take anti-social behaviour very seriously and have a duty to tackle it and protect you.

What is anti-social behaviour?

This is any unreasonable behaviour which causes offence upset or fear to others and can include but not limited to:

- Loud noise or music (i.e. parties, loud radio or television)
- Criminal behaviour or using your home for illegal or immoral purposes
- Violence
- Harassment
- Domestic abuse.

Karbon Homes does not classify the following as anti-social behaviour:

- People mowing their lawn at a reasonable time of the day
- People using their vacuum or washing machine at a reasonable time of day
- People carrying out DIY at a reasonable time of the day
- Noise from a child or children playing in, or near their home.
- Impact noises caused by tenants in neighbouring properties i.e. footsteps, chairs scraping or dropped items on the floor.

These examples could become a concern if occurring regularly late at night or early in the morning.

Hate crime & harassment

Hate crime and harassment are severe forms of anti-social behaviour and ones we will not tolerate. Examples of this type of behaviour include:

- Hate behaviour against certain people or groups of people because of their age, race, disability, gender, religious beliefs or sexuality
- Using threatening & abusive language
- Stalking
- Damaging or threatening to damage another person's property.



What to do if you are experiencing anti-social behaviour

Contact us as soon as possible after the incident and tell us what happened. We have dedicated officers whose job it is to tackle any anti-social behaviour and they will treat all reports or concerns in the strictest confidence. We also work with a number of different agencies depending on the nature of the problem, including the police and other specialist support services. We operate an out of hours anti-social behaviour reporting service which means you can report an incident when our office is closed by calling our freephone Customer Relationship number on **0808 164 0111**.

How we can help

We will work with you and support you throughout the process and we will agree any proposed action with you. In most cases we will:

- Agree an action plan with you and monitor the case closely
- Write to and visit those involved
- Issue incident report sheets and ask you to keep a record of events as they happen
- Keep in regular contact with you
- If a problem persists or becomes more serious we will consider taking more serious action.
- We will as part of any investigation, consider the type of action we will take against a perpetrator of anti-social behaviour.

Any action taken will be reasonable and proportionate; this can be both non legal and legal actions ranging from a tenancy waning to civil court action.

Domestic Abuse

We will deal with any reports of domestic abuse promptly and sensitively and will call on the support of the various agencies we work with who have expertise in this field. We can help with finding secure accommodation and can put you in touch with a number of agencies who are skilled in helping and supporting you.

We will look to offer where appropriate and safe to do so additional security measures in order for you to remain safely in your home.

How you can be a good neighbour

- Be considerate to your neighbours – try and keep the noise at a reasonable volume at all times
- Do any building work or other noisy work during reasonable hours in the day
- Please ensure you are responsible for all pets
- Keep an eye on elderly or vulnerable neighbours. If you suspect they are being harassed and they may be too afraid to tell us, please report it on their behalf. We will deal with this diplomatically and sensitively.

Getting Involved

We would like you to get involved with our work and your community.

Here at Karbon Homes, we are keen to involve as many customers as possible to help us to improve our services. We firmly believe that the delivery of excellent services to customers can best be achieved by the genuine and active involvement of you, our customers.

There are lots of opportunities for you to get involved and in ways that are convenient to you. This could be locally, so you can help us to monitor and review services that are being delivered locally or at a more strategic level within the organisation.

Communicating with our customers through our digital channels provides a wide and more accessible way to consult and inform customers. We already have lots of customers who engage with us through digital channels such as surveys and social media and we would like to expand on this to increase our customer engagement.

If you would like to get involved and help us to deliver services we can all be proud of, then we would love to hear from you. We know that involving people who receive services is a proven and sound way of bringing in a new challenge as to how we can refine, rethink or be more efficient in how we deliver our services.

Extra Support

We provide a range of supported housing options including supported living, and specialist supported housing for older people. Other examples of these include:

- Supported accommodation for people with mental health problems
- Supported accommodation for young people
- Supported accommodation for people with learning disabilities

Support is provided either directly by our support staff or by one of the many support providers we work in partnership with.

If you think you could benefit from further support, or you wish to know more about any of these services, please contact your Karbon Homes Officer.



Extra support for older people

At Karbon Homes, we have a specialist team to support our older customers.

- We provide bungalows across the North East specially designed for the over 60's with a range of services to help you stay independent.
- If you need adaptations to help you be more mobile and independent we can quickly provide help with small things such as grab rails and lever taps.

We can also arrange major adaptations such as level access showers, stair lifts and access ramps following an assessment from an Occupational Therapist.

Our Independent Living and Sheltered Housing schemes offer you self-contained apartments with communal areas for socialising and the security of door entry and 24/7 emergency alarm. Each has their own Scheme Officer to provide the support and advice you need to live an independent life at the heart of your community.



Compliments, complaints and comments

Our aim is to provide you with the highest standard of service at all times and if something goes wrong put the problem right as soon as we can. We value your feedback and use any compliments, complaints and comments you give us to see where we can improve our services.



What is a compliment?

A compliment is when you tell us you are happy with our service.

For example if:

- We deliver a service on time
- We give you the correct information
- You receive a good or excellent quality of service
- You want to praise or highlight the service given to you by a particular member of staff.

What is a complaint?

You have the right to make a complaint if you are not satisfied with the service we have provided.

For example if:

- We do not deliver a service on time
- We give you the wrong information
- You receive a poor quality of service
- You have a complaint about a particular member of staff.

What is not treated as a complaint?

- A standard request for a service
- A request for information or an explanation
- A first time request for some type of repair or maintenance work to be carried out
- An insurance claim
- Information or an explanation of Karbon Homes' policy or practice
- Dissatisfaction with a decision where a complainant has not used the relevant review procedure
- Complaints about services provided by individuals/ companies not within the control of Karbon Homes e.g. utility companies, Local Authorities.



How your complaint is handled:

We have a procedure for dealing with complaints raised by you on any matter arising from this tenancy. The procedure shall operate in accordance with the requirements of our regulator as laid down from time to time.

If you are still dissatisfied after the complaints procedure has been exhausted, you have the right to refer the matter to the Independent Housing Ombudsman.

If you are not happy with the response to a complaint, you can ask for it to be reviewed at the next stage. To move between stages in our complaints procedure you must provide clear answers to the following questions:

- a) What specific part of your original complaint have we failed to address?
- b) What would you like the outcome of your complaint to be?

What is a comment?

A comment is when you make a suggestion or have an idea regarding our service, which may help us to improve it.

There are a number of ways to pay us a compliment, make a complaint or comment on the services we have provided:

- You can request a compliments, complaints and comments form
- In person when you visit the housing office or in person to a member of staff
- If you prefer, you can ask a friend or relative to speak or write to us on your behalf
- By telephone, email or website.

Contact our Customer Relationship Team for further information.

In the event of a failure in service, in many cases a written apology may be more appropriate. In all cases, our emphasis is on putting right a service failure.

In legal terms, any payment made in respect of 'ad hoc' discretionary compensation is purely a gesture of goodwill and is not an admission of guilt or liability.

Being Green

We are all aware that we need to be kinder to the environment to minimise climate change and to protect this planet for future generations.

You can play a big part too by making the area you live a greener and more pleasant place to be.

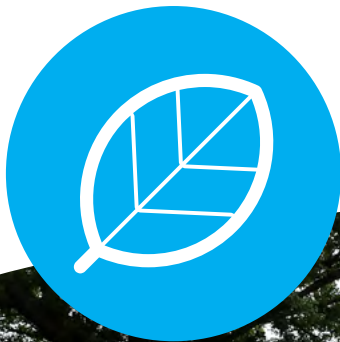
Save energy – save money

It only requires one small change to make one big difference.

Listed below are some handy tips to help you save energy and money.

Green tips:

- Turning down your thermostat if it is set too high could save between £85-£90 a year on heating bills. If you're going away during winter, leave it on a low setting to prevent freezing
- On average replacing an old fridge freezer with an A+ rated model will save you around £57 in energy bills over the lifetime of the fridge freezer
- Taking a five minute shower, instead of a bath uses less water, and can save around £15 a year on energy bills
- Turning off your lights when you don't need them could save you around £15 a year
- Turning off appliances such as TVs, DVD players, computers and games consoles, rather than leaving them on standby will save you around £30 a year
- Only filling the kettle up with as much water as you need could save you around £7 a year.
- Dry clothes outside or on a clothes horse, instead of using a tumble dryer as this is free
- Filling your washer or dryer up whenever possible or using the half load or the economical programme if your machine has one saves a significant amount of energy. Use 'low temperature' detergent and setting your machine to 30°C whenever you can.



Moving Out

Whilst we hope that you will stay in your new home for many years there may come a time when you would like to move on.

Here is a checklist that will help you with the things you need to do when you move out.

Things I need to do	Tick below
Give us four weeks' notice and provide us with your forwarding address	<input type="checkbox"/>
Allow us access to carry out an inspection of your property before you move out	<input type="checkbox"/>
Complete any repairs that we have advised are your responsibility before you leave – if you don't then you will be recharged	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pay your rent and any other outstanding debts before leaving and to cover your notice period	<input type="checkbox"/>
Inform gas, electricity, water and telephone companies of the date you are moving out, your forwarding address and give final readings where applicable	<input type="checkbox"/>
Inform Housing Benefit and Council Tax departments of the date you are moving out and your forwarding address and remember to make a new claim when you move	<input type="checkbox"/>
Inform others - such as your employer, doctor, dentist and children's school - of your new address.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Contact your local authority to have any unwanted furniture or belongings removed	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leave your property clean and clear of all your belongings – if you don't then you will be recharged and we will dispose of any items left	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure that you return all keys to us after agreeing how, when and to where with your Housing Officer. If you do not return all the keys, including meter cupboard and post box keys we will change the locks and you will be recharged	<input type="checkbox"/>
Arrange to have your post re-directed	<input type="checkbox"/>

Being Safe

If you're going away from your home for a while, don't be tempted to put your bins out early, put them out as close to collection time as practicable – don't signal you're out to burglars.

Don't leave keys under mats, or notes saying you're out.

Always lock windows and doors when you go out.

Always ask callers for ID; if in doubt call their company to verify they are legitimate.

Breathe safe!

Legionella and Legionnaires' Disease

Legionella is a form of bacteria found in water and can cause a form of pneumonia if water droplets containing the bacteria are breathed in.

Where water systems are used regularly the risk is very small. However, if you don't use your shower for a week or more, it is advisable to flush it through.

The best method is to take the shower head down and place it in either a bucket or plastic bag. Fill the bucket or bag with water this contains the spray and stops the droplets becoming airborne, then gently pour the water away.

Cleaning the shower head with a bleach solution every three months is also advised.

If your system maintains stored hot water (as opposed to a Combi that heats it as it needs it), the thermostat should be set at 60c. Please do not turn it down.

Whilst not related to legionella, if you are away from your home for an extended period, it is recommended you run all taps for five minutes to flush out the system.

Breathe safe! Carbon monoxide

Carbon monoxide is a colourless, odourless gas that can arise from the incomplete combustion of a fuel, generally due to an insufficient air supply. This can be gas, solid fuel, or oil.

The main way to stop this is to have your appliances regularly serviced and checked for safety, and that's why it's so important to allow us access to do this for you.

Also, never block vents or air bricks.

What are the signs or symptoms to watch out for that might indicate something is wrong?

- Yellow or orange rather than blue flames (other than with living flame effect fires which do display a yellow flame)
- Soot or yellow / brown staining around or on appliances
- Appliance that keep going out
- Increased condensation inside windows.

If you think your appliance has a problem, please contact Karbon Homes immediately.





Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning:

Early symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning can mimic many common illnesses and may easily be confused with food poisoning, viral infections, flu or tiredness.

Symptoms to look out for include:

- Headaches or dizziness
- Breathlessness
- Nausea
- Loss of consciousness
- Tiredness
- Pains in the chest or stomach
- Erratic behaviour
- Visual problems

If you or your family experience any of the above symptoms and believe you may have been exposed to carbon monoxide, you should seek urgent medical advice from either your GP or an A&E department.

If you think your appliance is spilling carbon monoxide, please contact us immediately.

Switch off or put out the appliance. If it's a gas or oil appliance shut off the supply at the meter or control valve.

Open all doors and windows to ventilate the room.

Visit your GP and tell him/ her that you believe you may have been exposed to carbon monoxide.

Immersion heater safety

Immersion heaters are generally safe and reliable, and have safety cut-outs to prevent them overheating, but how do you know if they develop a problem?

Typical warning signs include:

- Excessively hot water coming out of the hot water taps
- Excessive noise or 'bubbling' from the hot water cylinder
- Hot water coming out of certain cold water taps (some storage cisterns also feed cold water taps in the bathroom)
- Steam or moisture in the roof space.

If you experience these signs please switch off the immersion heater system and contact Karbon Homes immediately.

Asbestos

Asbestos was widely used in the construction industry from the 1950s through to the mid-1980s. It can be found in many buildings and was used in a variety of building materials. Left undisturbed, asbestos poses little danger; therefore it should not be cause for concern. However, we would like to remind you not to make alterations to your home (including drilling into walls, ceilings and floors) without prior approval.





Mobility Scooters

We appreciate the benefit these can bring to people but the majority of Karbon Homes' properties were built before they existed, and therefore are generally not designed to accommodate them. We do however, provide parking bays for mobility scooters in our sheltered schemes.

Communal parts of any building

Mobility scooters cannot be stored or charged in any communal corridor or stairwell in any circumstances.

Sheltered communal premises

If you are thinking of getting a mobility scooter please speak to your scheme officer first. We will endeavour to help find a safe location where it may be stored and charged but this may not prove possible.

Ideally, scooters should be kept in a garage or a secure shed rather than in the home.

Fire Safety

If you live in a high rise building, a block of flats or a sheltered scheme there may be special fire procedures. You will be told about these when you move in and notices will be displayed throughout the building.

These simple, inexpensive tips can prevent fires in any home.

- Fit a smoke alarm and test it regularly
- Take care when cooking. Don't start cooking if tired, and don't leave a cooker unattended
- Plan an escape route and make a bedtime check
- Don't overload electrical sockets
- Don't smoke when you're tired or going to bed. The majority of cigarette related fires occur when falling asleep
- Use candles carefully. Again, if feeling tired, extinguish candles before falling asleep
- Keep all communal areas clear of objects
- Contact your Fire and Rescue Service for a home fire safety visit.





Flood Advice

We can expect to see more extreme weather events such as flooding in the future due to our changing climate. Hopefully, you'll never need this information, but it's important to be prepared.

What do I do if I receive a flood warning?

- Have torches, medication and waterproofs to hand
- Fill jugs and saucepans with clean water
- Move your family and pets upstairs or to a high place with a means of escape
- Turn off gas, electricity and water supplies when flood water is about to enter your home, if it is safe to do so
- Turn off any equipment that uses water (like washing machines and dishwashers)
- Do not on any account touch sources of electricity when standing in flood water
- Keep listening to local radio for updates or call the Environment Agency Floodline on **0345 988 1188**
- Flood water can rise quickly; stay calm and reassure those around you. Call **999** if you are in danger.

Flooding and Insurance

If you rent your home, Karbon Homes is responsible for most flood repairs.

However, we are not normally responsible for replacing or repairing any of your personal belongings that are damaged, including furniture.

IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT YOU HAVE YOUR OWN CONTENTS INSURANCE TO PROTECT YOUR BELONGINGS.

We make it easy for you to insure your belongings under a special low cost household contents insurance scheme. If you would like further information about this, please contact our Customer Relationship Team and we'll send you a leaflet about it.

What do I do if my home is flooded?

1) Contact Karbon Homes

Contact our Customer Relationship Team and tell us:

- What has happened?
- What damage has been caused?
- What, if anything, you have done to try to repair the situation?
- Whether the damage has affected neighbouring properties
- Whether the property is habitable.

2) Contact your contents insurance company

Most companies have a 24-hour helpline you can call. The staff will tell you what you need to do to make a claim following flooding.

3) Clean up

Karbon Homes will help clean up your home. We are responsible for most flood repairs to the building.

Before you start cleaning up, take photographs of the flood damage and mark the highest level of the floodwater on your wall.

Make a list of what has been damaged and keep it somewhere safe. This helps with your contents insurance claim.

Don't throw away flood-damaged furniture, carpets and other belongings until your insurance company tells you it's ok to do this.

Recover your valuables and keepsakes, and put them somewhere safe. Use rubber gloves when you are handling them and put them in bags or boxes in a safe place. Most articles can be professionally restored so do not make rash decisions.

Flooding can contain pollutants which can affect the health and wellbeing of a person coming into contact with them. Combat this by applying basic hygiene precautions, including:

- Washing hands after exposure
- Decontaminating footwear by washing and treating with a mild disinfectant
- Keeping children and pets out of the contaminated area





Useful Contacts

We try to help keep the communities we serve looking clean and tidy.

Local Authorities are responsible for street lighting, highways and offer services to get rubbish taken away that is too big for your regular bin collection. So, if you would like to arrange a bulky waste collection for an old sofa or kitchen appliance, these are the numbers or online contacts you will need:

Local Authority contact details:

Durham	03000 260 000	www.durham.gov.uk
Darlington	01325 405 000	www.darlington.gov.uk
Gateshead	0191 433 3000	www.gateshead.gov.uk
Hartlepool	01429 266 522	www.hartlepool.gov.uk
Middlesbrough	01642 245 432	www.middlesbrough.gov.uk
Newcastle upon Tyne	0191 278 7878	www.newcastle.gov.uk
North Tyneside	0345 200 0101	www.northtyneside.gov.uk
Northumberland	0345 600 6400	www.northumberland.gov.uk
Redcar & Cleveland	01642 774 774	www.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk
South Tyneside	0191 427 7000	www.southtyneside.gov.uk
Stockton on Tees	01642 393 939	www.stockton.gov.uk
Sunderland	0191 520 5555	www.sunderland.gov.uk





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