

Lambeth Housing Tenant Handbook

Dear tenant,

Welcome to Lambeth Housing – we hope you enjoy your new home. This folder is designed to help you settle into your new home by letting you know what services we offer and how you can access them.

It explains your rights and responsibilities as a tenant of Lambeth Council. We have kept the information short and to the point and we have included a lot of other useful information. It is divided up into the following sections as separate documents.

Your Housing Service:

This provides a checklist of who to contact and what to do when starting out in your new home. It also includes information about how to get involved with the way your home and estate are managed.

Health and Safety:

This section will give you useful advice about keeping yourself, your home, the people you live with and your community safe.

Your Rent:

Explains what your rent covers, the different ways you can pay it and the help and advice which is available.

Your Environment:

Letting you know about environmental issues that affect you such as disposing of household waste and bulky items, saving energy, recycling, gardens, pests and parking.

Your Tenancy Agreement:

This section includes information on the different types of tenancy agreements. It also includes information on your rights and responsibilities as a tenant and our rights and responsibilities as your landlord.

Key Contacts

North Area Housing Office:

91 Kennington Lane, SE11 4HQ

Email: HMnortharea@lambeth.gov.uk

Opening: 9am to 5pm, Monday, Tuesday, Thursday & Fridays (excluding bank holidays)
10am to 5pm, Wednesday

South Area Housing Office:

139 Albert Carr Gardens,
London, SW16 3HB

Email: HMsoutharea@lambeth.gov.uk

Opening: 9am to 5pm, Mondays to Fridays (excluding bank holidays)

If you are interested in joining or starting a community group, contact your local resident participation officer (RPO).

Tel: 020 7926 6000

Email: gettinginvolved@lambeth.gov.uk

If you need more information, you can visit

<https://www.lambeth.gov.uk/council-tenants-and-homeowners>

We are committed to making sure that your home and your neighbourhood are safe and pleasant places to live, and we all have a part to play in making sure that happens. We look forward to working with you over the coming months and years to make our estates some of the best in London.

Yours faithfully,



Tim Fairhurst
Assistant Director, Neighbourhood Housing

Useful Contacts

Senior Neighbourhood Housing Officer:

Name:

Telephone:.....

Email:.....

Income Officer:

Name:.....

Telephone:.....

Email:.....

Neighbourhood Housing Officer (Estates):

Name:.....

Telephone:.....

Email:.....

Neighbourhood Housing Officer (People):

Name:.....

Telephone:.....

Email:.....

Resident Participation Officer:

Name:.....

Telephone:.....

Email:.....

Tenants and Residents Association:

Name:.....

Contact :.....

Your Housing Service

Welcome to your new home. This service guide includes helpful checklists and advice about moving into a new home and what to do if things go wrong. It also gives you information on how to become involved in the wider Housing community.

Your new home:

You must sign your tenancy agreement before you move into your new home. When you sign your tenancy agreement you will meet the staff in our local area offices. They are there to help you with any worries or problems you may have throughout your tenancy.

Before you move in, we will ensure your home is in a suitable condition. We may need to do repairs after you have moved in, but we will let you know exactly what these are and when they will be done.

When preparing your home, we will check that:

- All walls and ceilings are in a reasonable condition. We only decorate properties in exceptional circumstances. But we will occasionally supply you with voucher to obtain paint and related material to decorate your new home in colour of your choice;
- The heating appliances have been recently serviced or serviced as soon as you have connected your gas and electricity supplies and are ready to move in;
- The electrical and gas systems are safe, or made safe and certificates issued. You will get a copy of any gas-safety certificates at your sign-up meeting. We will ensure that the gas or electricity (or both) are all ready for you to arrange for your meter(s) to be connected;
- The property is clean;
- None of the window or door glass is broken;
- All kitchen and bathroom units are clean and working properly;
- The garden has been cleared of rubbish and is in a reasonable condition

If any of these checks have not been completed or you did not receive a copy of your gas or electrical certificate at your sign-up meeting, contact us straight away on 020 7926 6000.

About our services

We manage about 29,000 tenants' and leaseholders' homes.

Area housing offices:

We have two area teams dedicated to supporting residents, each with its own estate management service, repairs service and customer service team.

North: Kennington & Vauxhall, Stockwell & Vassall and Clapham

South: Brixton, Norwood and Streatham

You can call us, Monday to Friday, 8am to 8pm on 020 7926 6000.

Tenant Management Organisations:

Tenant Management Organisations (TMOs) manage about 4,300 homes in Lambeth. In 1994, the law changed to give Council residents the 'Right to Manage' their own homes by setting up a TMO. The term 'tenant' means secure council tenants and tenants on introductory, demoted or joint tenancies.

A TMO manages homes on behalf of the Council by running day-to-day services on their estate. Each one is an independent organisation which is run by a committee of residents.

If your home is managed by a TMO, you will be told this when you sign your tenancy agreement.

For more information on setting up a TMO contact us on 020 7926 6000.

Repairs service:

We are working hard to improve our repairs service by focusing on getting the basics right and improving your satisfaction with the service. We have contractors that work in three contract areas covered by our area housing offices.

To report a repair, call 020 7926 6000 (Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm). To report an emergency repair outside working hours (Monday to Friday, 8pm to 8am; Saturdays, Sundays or bank holidays) call 020 7926 6666.

For more information about repairs see the Repairs Booklet or visit www.lambeth.gov.uk.

Tenancy enforcement

We have a dedicated service that deals with the minority of tenants who break their tenancy agreement and other tenancy condition breaches. We aim to tackle any activity that may be a nuisance, or may threaten, upset or annoy residents living in our properties. We also take action to prevent and deal with other issues such as subletting and squatting.

Estate cleaning and grounds maintenance

We are working across the borough to:

- Check and replace light bulbs in communal shared areas
- Check the day-to-day running of communal boilers and report any faults
- Check your estate is clean, refuse is collected, the grass is cut and your environment is maintained to a good standard
- Report graffiti and remove it where possible, particularly if it is obscene or racist
- Deal with emergencies that affect our tenants' homes, like burst pipes and floods
- Repair lifts

Resident participation

We work with residents to ensure that you can fully participate in activities and decision-making concerning your estate or home. We also support tenants' and residents' associations, help residents organise community events and run consultation activities to find out your views.

Moving-in checklist

When you move home there are many things to remember. Below is a handy checklist of people to contact and things to do.

HAVE YOU REMEMBERED?	WHAT TO DO	TICK
Welfare benefits	Phone the number shown on your most recent benefits letter.	
Gas and electricity	Take meter readings and tell suppliers you have moved. Do not put money on any keys or cards that have been left in the meters in your property as you will be charged for any previous tenant's debt.	
Water supply Tell the supplier when you moved in (if you don't use our communal water supply).	Contact Thames Water and provide a meter reading if the property has a meter. Telephone: 0800 980 8800 Visit: www.thameswater.co.uk	
Mail redirection Do you need to get your mail redirected from a previous address?	Contact your local post office or Royal Mail. For more information visit www.royalmail.com	
Heating and hot water Do you know how to heat the water and use the central heating?	Contact us on 020 7926 6000 for advice.	
TV licence Tell them your new address	Contact TV Licensing UK. For more information visit www.tvlicensing.co.uk	
Rubbish collection Do you know when and where the rubbish is collected?	Ask your neighbours or contact Lambeth Service Centre on 020 7926 9000 or visit www.lambeth.gov.uk/rubbish-and-recycling	
Parking permit Is parking restricted outside your home?	For a residents permit (for on street parking), contact Lambeth Council Parking Services on 020 7926 9000 , Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm, visit one of our customer centres (refer to section 5) or visit www.lambeth.gov.uk/ParkingPermits Contact us on 020 7926 6000 if you are interested in Estate parking services or in renting a garage.	

From the start of your tenancy you will be responsible for organising and paying all your charges for gas, water and electricity.

Gas test

Once you have been signed up for your new home, our gas servicing contractor will contact you to arrange to turn your gas on and test the supply. The test will identify any faulty appliances in your property. The contractor will also check your boiler and show you how to use it.

For the contractor to do a turn on and test, you must have your gas supply connected.

If our gas servicing contractor discovers a fault with the boiler during the turn on and test, they will arrange an appointment with you to fix the problem. You are responsible for getting any gas appliances you have had installed, such as a gas cooker, checked regularly by a Gas Safe registered engineer. For more details regarding Gas Safe either, telephone on 0800 408 5500, or visit the webpage: www.gassaferegister.co.uk

To report a fault or request a repair to your individual heating system contact us on 020 7926 6000

Communal heating

If you do not have a boiler in your property, this means you will be connected to the communal heating. In many of our homes connected to communal heating there are units called Heating Interface Units (HIU). These look similar to a boiler but have no gas supply to them or visible flame.

To report a fault or request a repair to the communal heating contact us on 020 7926 6000.

For more information about repairs see the Your Safety section.

Moving into sheltered housing

If you are moving into sheltered housing, you are likely to have already met the scheme manager. The scheme manager will visit you soon after you move in to explain how all the services in your home works. You will also need to fill in a personal information form when you move into your home, giving contact details of key people, such as relatives or care workers, and medical information.

Photographs

When you sign your tenancy agreement you will need to give us a recent photograph of yourself. We use photos of our tenants to check that the correct people are living in our properties. The photographs will be recorded electronically and stored according to our rules of confidentiality.

Insurance

Your tenancy conditions state that you are responsible for the contents of your home. We are only responsible for the cost of repairs to the building. We strongly recommend you take out home contents insurance as protection against loss or damage to your furnishings and personal belongings.

Decoration inside your home

When you move into your property you may want to decorate it. We may provide to you a decorating allowance but we usually provide voucher to obtain paint and sundry material that is sufficient for each room that needs decorating.

In some exceptional cases we may do the decorating ourselves while the property is empty. If so, you will not receive an allowance or voucher to obtain paint and sundry material.

Compliments, comments and complaints

Compliments are just as important to us as complaints. We love to hear from you when things go well. Your compliments help us to identify when we give exceptional customer care and we want to promote this amongst our staff.

If you have a comment or a practical suggestion that you would like us to know, please let us know.

We aim to provide good quality service at all times, but we understand that sometimes things can go wrong. If this happens, we want you to tell us about it so we can improve and provide you with a better service. Often, you can get a problem sorted by talking to a member of our staff.

Whether you have had a good experience or bad one, tell us. Your feedback will help us to improve our performance and make things right for you.

Making a complaint

There are several ways to make a complaint about our services. We can usually put things right quickly if you direct it to a colleague from the service that you are not happy with.

You can speak with them in person or by phone, write to them or report it online. They will try to resolve your issue straight away and they will call you back, by the next working day, to agree a way forward.

Where this is not possible, there are two stages to our formal complaints process:

1. Local Resolution:

This is a formal complaint which requires a written response. We will acknowledge your complaint within two working days and will make sure that you receive a full written response within 20 working days.

Sometimes it may take longer to provide a response. If this is the case, we will tell you the reason why there is a delay and when you can expect a full response.

If your complaint is still unresolved, you can escalate it to the Corporate Complaints team, who will carry out a full review of your case.

2. Final Review:

If you remain unhappy following our investigation of your complaint at Local Resolution stage you can escalate your complaint to Final Review. Requests to proceed to Final Review should be made in writing where possible, however, if you require reasonable adjustments, we will be happy to take your request over the phone.

Your request for a final review should be made to our Contact Centre using complaints@lambeth.gov.uk. All requests will be acknowledged in writing. The request should set out that you would like your complaint to be escalated, explain why you believe the Local Resolution decision was inadequate, and what action you would like us to take to resolve the issue.

Email: complaints@lambeth.gov.uk

Address: Complaints Team, London Borough of Lambeth, PO Box 734, Winchester, SO23 5DG

Tel: 020 7926 9694

If you have been through all the stages of our complaint's procedure, and you are still not satisfied with the way we handled your complaint, the Independent Housing Ombudsman may be able to consider your case. You can ask for your complaint to be referred to the Independent Housing Ombudsman by:

1. Contacting an MP; you can approach any MP in England.

Contact details for all MPs can be found on the House of Commons website. You can also contact the House of Commons by telephoning their Information Office on 020 7219 4272 or writing to:

House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA.

2. Contacting a Lambeth Councillor: you can approach any councillor in Lambeth.

Contact details for Lambeth councillors can be found on Lambeth Council's website.

You can also find contact details for Lambeth councillors by calling 020 7926 1000 or email: democracy@lambeth.gov.uk

If you would rather approach the Independent Housing Ombudsman directly, you can, but you must wait eight weeks from the date of receiving the response from our Review of your complaint. Contact details for the Independent Housing Ombudsman are:

Exchange Tower, 1 Harbour Exchange Square, London E14 9GE

Telephone: 0300 111 3000

Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Visit: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Getting involved

We want to deliver services to standards that you expect and work to policies that you support. Your comments enable us to identify any parts of our service that need to be improved and to make positive changes.

There are several ways that you can get involved with us, your neighbours and your community, and the way your home and environment are managed.

Ways to get involved

All Lambeth Council residents can comment on our services, including the people you live with and anyone who lives on an estate or in a block we manage.

We want residents and their representatives to take part effectively in the activities we arrange to find out their views, so we offer a range of ways for you to get involved.

Residents' Associations (TAs)

Resident Associations (sometimes known as Tenants and Residents Associations) play an important role in representing the interests of tenants and leaseholders in a particular local area (normally an estate) and are consulted on issues relating to the services provided for those properties.

RAs are the backbone of our engagement with residents. There are up to 70 RAs in the borough covering 60 per cent of our properties. Find out about whether your property is covered by a TRA or how to set one up if you do not already have one by contacting the Resident Participation Officer at gettinginvolved@lambeth.gov.uk.

We provide **accredited training** for residents including paediatric first aid, food hygiene and housing as well as training for RA committees in finance and organising activities. If you are interested in these courses, please contact the Resident Engagement Team at gettinginvolved@lambeth.gov.uk.

We provide **activity grants** for RAs wanting to strengthen their communities such as after school clubs, computer classes, art projects and children summer programmes. We also support residents wanting to improve their environment with greening projects such as developing community gardens and growing their own food.

Lambeth 500

Lambeth 500 is an informal consultative group open to all residents living on our estates or street properties (irrespective of their tenancy status) with access to the internet. It is designed to involve those residents who are interested in shaping the future of housing in the Borough and are willing to give feedback on suggested improvements. If you would like to join the Lambeth 500 please contact Lambeth500@lambeth.gov.uk.

Area Boards

Residents sit on Area Boards and meet at least four times a year to review performance and identify services needing improvements. This includes:

- repairs
- cleaning
- grounds maintenance
- area housing services

Area Boards make recommendations for formal service reviews led by residents on **task and finish groups**. Up to two service reviews can be done **in** each year and their recommendations will be taken on board by the Council to improve services.

Resident Assemblies

These are the main consultation forums for residents from across the borough to come together to hear and discuss housing services, current topics of interest and local information. Please check the website for the latest news on Assemblies or email gettinginvolved@lambeth.gov.uk

Resident Panels

The Council also uses resident panels to look at specific service areas residents are interested in. For the latest news on Panels please contact gettinginvolved@lambeth.gov.uk.

Tenant management organisations

In 1994, the law changed to give council residents the 'right to manage' their own homes by setting up a tenant management organisation, or TMO. The term 'tenant' in this context means leaseholders as well as secure council tenants. A TMO is paid to manage homes on behalf of the council by taking responsibility for the running of selected services on their estates.

Each TMO is an independent organisation run by a committee/Board of residents. For more information on setting up a TMO, please visit:

<https://www.lambeth.gov.uk/housing-and-regeneration/council-and-social-housing/tenant-management-organisations-guide>

The Lambeth Lettable Standard

Now that you have been offered a Lambeth property, we would like to make moving in as easy as possible.

This document provides a summary of the Lambeth Lettable Standard, which sets out the standard for the repair work that we will carry out in your property before you move in.

Any repair that you may request apart from those listed below are not covered by this Lettable Standard.

A copy of the full version of the Lambeth Lettable Standard is available on Lambeth Council website and on request.

Windows and doors

- Windows and doors will be sealed against wind and water penetration
- Glazing will be free from cracks and glazing putties, strips and beads will be in a sound condition
- All window and door elements, including the frames and boards, will be in a sound and useable condition with all necessary attachments in working order
- All front entrance doors will have had a lock change before you are given the keys
- All walls and ceilings will be in a suitable condition for redecoration
- Floor tiles or vinyl will be present in the bathroom, toilet and kitchen and we will fit a minimum of two courses of wall tiles to form a splash back above sinks, wash hand basins and baths
- Floor screed (concrete flooring), floor boards and existing floor finishes will be retained and will be in safe and sound condition

Fixtures and fittings

- All fixtures and fittings including cupboards, built-in wardrobes and kitchen units will be in good working order
- Central heating systems will be checked and in full working order
- Where no central heating is provided there will be at least one form of heating in the living room with appropriate ventilation
- All electrical re-wiring will conform to the current NICEIC safety requirements

Decoration

- In exceptional circumstances, we may consider decorating some or all of the rooms in your new home if any of the following apply:
 - ▶ You are elderly or disabled
 - ▶ Sheltered properties
 - ▶ Your property has been adapted for disabled use

As a general rule we'll provide to you a decorating allowance or voucher to obtain paint and sundry material to enable you to decorate your new home. The allowance depends on the number of rooms in your new home. Where the property has a separate bathroom and toilet, these will be treated as a single unit and payment will be for a single room only.

Cleaning

- Before you move in, we will remove all rubbish, furniture and carpets left behind
- We will sweep out all rooms and wash all windows on the inside
- We will wash kitchen and bathroom cupboards, floors, wall tiles and sanitary fittings
- We will wash all woodwork, doors, radiators, boiler coverings, grills vents and electrical fittings

Gardens

- If your property has a garden, we will ensure that it is sufficiently cleared as to be accessible
- Gardens will be cleared of any rubbish and debris
- We will ensure that paths, patios or hard standings are in a safe condition
- We may not provide fencing and gates but we will remove broken or collapsed fencing

General

- We will always carry out all standard electrical and gas testing before you move in
- We will fit a smoke alarm on each level of the property

If you have any questions that you would like answering please contact us on 020 7926 6000 or visit your local area Neighbourhood Housing office.

Signed: Address:

Print name:

Date:.....

Witnessed by:

Gas and Electricity Supply In Your Home

Information on Gas

When a property becomes empty the contractor carries out a soundness test only. This means that the property will be checked to ensure that there is no gas leaking from anywhere. No appliances are tested i.e. the boiler, this is because most of the time there is no gas in the property and Lambeth cannot create an account in their name.

We will never carry out work to a property's meter, but we will ensure that there is the necessary pipe work for a meter to be connected.

Gas Certificates are valid for 12 months.

Please note

- Some properties do not have gas running to them. Please check your gas certificate for this information this will also tell you if you have communal heating or an individual boiler
- Where there is no gas supply to the property we are not required to provide one
- It is your responsibility to contact the supplies and get your utilities connected
- If you do not provide access for a gas inspection legal proceedings could be taken against you

You should keep this certificate until it is replaced when an annual service is carried out. Our Gas Servicing Contractor will notify you of an appointment.

Please check that you were given gas and electrical certificates at your sign up.
(Not necessary for Sheltered Schemes)

Information on Electricity

When a property becomes empty the contractors will carry out a test to ensure that the property is safe. The electrician will then provide us with a report with any necessary works that need to be carried out. Once the works are completed, they will issue us with another certificate that says that the electrics are safe.

A copy will be given to you at your sign up. We will ensure that there is wiring available so that a meter can be connected but we do not under any circumstances carry out any work to the meter.

Electrical Certificates are valid for 6 months.

Please note:

- We do not carry out improvement works to the property. For example, we do not install or relocate plug sockets/lights.

- **Please do not** put any money on any existing keys or cards that are left in the meters inside the property. You will be charged for any debt owed by the previous tenant

Gas Test

Once you have been signed up for the property and the Voids Officer receives your paperwork, they will send an e-mail with your details to our Gas Servicing Contractor.

Our gas servicing contractor will contact you, either by telephone or letter, to arrange a “Turn on and Test” appointment. This test will pick up any faulty appliances in the property, for example, boiler or gas fire. A check will be carried out to the boiler and you will be shown how to use it.

If you do not have a boiler in your property then you have communal heating and any defects or faults should be reported via the Housing Management services centre on 020 7926 6000.

Please note:

- A ‘Turn On and Test’ cannot be completed if you do not have your gas or electricity supply connected
- If our Gas Servicing Contractor discovers a fault with the boiler when they carry out the turn on and test, then they will arrange an appointment with you to get this rectified as soon as possible

Please sign below to say that you have read and understood this information and will act on this information where necessary

Tenant’s (full name):

Signature: Date:

Witnessed by (full name):

Signature: Date:

How to register to vote in your new home

Once your tenancy sign-up is complete and you have moved into your property, you should register to vote as soon as possible. To register to vote in Lambeth applicants must be aged 16 or over* and be a British citizen, an Irish or EU citizen with a permanent address in the borough, or a Commonwealth citizen who has permission to enter or stay in the UK, or who does not need permission. To apply online visit [gov.uk/register-to-vote](https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote). Applications take around 5 minutes to complete and you will need to provide your date of birth and National Insurance number. For further information about voting and elections in Lambeth visit [lambeth.gov.uk/vote](https://www.lambeth.gov.uk/vote).

*Eligible citizens can register to vote in England from the age of 16 onwards and are able to vote once they become 18 years old. If you're not sure if you, or any adults living with you, are on the electoral register, contact electoral services

T: 020 7926 2254

electoralservices@lambeth.gov.uk