

LANDLORD SERVICES



...a guide for tenants

This guide aims to help you know what the landlord service provides, what to do if you need a service and some of the things you will need to do. There is also information on other agencies and how they may be able to help in particular circumstances.

Each service has been listed separately and colour coded for ease of access and contact details provided.

It includes:

- repairs and maintenance
- contents insurance
- heating
- paying your rent
- renting a council garage
- anti-social behaviour
- Choice Based Lettings
- how to get involved
- ending your tenancy
- adaptations
- help with gardens
- complaints

Repairs and Maintenance

Reporting Repairs - If a repair is needed for which the council is responsible, contact the Repairs Service on 01748 829100, giving as much information as possible.

The council is responsible for:

- the structure and outside of your home - including roofs, walls, ceilings, floors, window frames, doors, gutters, drains, external pipe work
- the services to your home - including fittings for water, gas and electricity supplies, repairs of baths, sinks, basin, toilets, heating and hot water installations provided by the Council
- communal lifts, refuse disposal systems, communal aerial systems controlled amenities where they are provided
- decoration to the outside of your home and the communal areas within flat blocks.

Repairs outside the Office Hours

Emergency repairs outside office hours can be accessed by calling 01653 697737. This number should only be used in an emergency and only between 5.15pm and 8.45am Monday to Thursday, or after 4.45pm on Fridays, weekends and bank holidays.

Emergencies: gas leaks, water leaks - burst pipes or tanks; light failures in bathrooms or kitchens; bare live wires; loss of electric power; blocked or unusable WC (if there is only one in the property); blocked or broken soil waste pipe causing serious leak of sewage into dwelling (flats only); structural damage caused by storm, flood, accident or dangerous structures; failure of central heating - if OAP, disabled, very young child (winter only); supply temporary heating if repair cannot take place (winter only); blocked wastes (public toilets, public buildings); and insecure ground floor windows and doors.

Damage to Council Property

If you damage Councils property you will have to pay the Council for repairs as a result of activities, neglect or action by yourself, any members of your household, visitors, or third parties - including damage to installations and decorations.

It is also very important that you carry out preventative measures in relation to burst water pipes, blocked drains and sewers or damage by frost - such as draining down central heating systems if you are going away during the winter, turning the mains stop tap off. If you are unsure on what you should be doing contact one of the Maintenance Officers on 01748 901169 or 901163. In the event of a failure to carry out such measures you will be recharged for any necessary repairs.



Tenants Responsibilities

Full details of tenants responsibilities are provided in the Tenancy Agreement. Some of the repairs you are responsible for are:

- renewal of electric fuses, bulbs and batteries
- renewal of WC pulls/handles, chains/plugs for baths, sinks and wash hand basins
- replacement of broken glass
- clearance of blocked waste pipes
- renewal of internal locks, latches, hinges, handles and fasteners
- letterbox repairs/replacements
- replacement of interior and exterior door keys
- replacement of hat and coat rails
- draught proofing (unless specified in a modernisation programme)
- minor repairs to garden sheds
- renewal of coal bunker boards
- removal of rubbish from gardens
- minor plaster repairs
- replacement of pelmet rails
- repairs or replacement of washing lines (excluding rotary dryers)

If in doubt contact the Repairs and Maintenance team for advice on 01748 829100.

Prioritising Repairs

Each repair request is given a priority depending upon its urgency:

- **priority 1 and 2** - 1 working day: where there is danger to life or limb, or serious danger to the property such as major leaks or bursts, major electrical faults or structural damage due to storms
- **priority 3** - 2 - working day: urgent but not emergency work where the defect seriously affects the lifestyle of the occupants such as minor leaks on water systems, defective central heating systems (except from May to September)
- **priority 4** - 7 - working days: non urgent work such as faulty taps, extractor fans, faulty cisterns
- **priority 6** - 28 - working days: desirable but not priority work such as roof defects, slating, chimney
 - **priority 7** - 56 - working days: non urgent replacements

Doing Improvements Yourself

If you want to have an improvement undertaken in your home such as replacing internal doors, installing a new kitchen or bathroom you must first write to the Repairs and Maintenance Team Leader providing details of the work you are planning and who will be undertaking it. The Team Leader will advise you in writing of any council requirements and if approval is given for the work to be undertaken. The cost of all work will be borne by you - and depending on the type of work you may also be advised that all future maintenance will be your responsibility. You should not start any work before you get written council permission.

Tenants Contents Insurance

Richmondshire District Council negotiated a Home Contents Insurance Scheme designed specifically for our tenants. Whilst the Council insures the building it is the responsibility as tenant to have appropriate Contents Insurance. Contents Insurance is something which will make a big difference should you suffer from a fire, flood or burglary or accident as without this you can be left with nothing and find it very difficult to afford the cost of replacing any items lost or damaged. You can get more information at any of our Community Offices or on the web site richmondshire.gov.uk or telephone 03456 718172

Heating

Keeping warm

The cost of keeping warm depends on a number of things:

- the fuel you use
- the type of heating
- the level of insulation
- the size and number of rooms
- the number of people in the household
- how often and for how long you use the heating

Some of these factors will be out of your control, but you may be able to do something about others and keep warmer for less money



Saving Money and Energy

With gas, electric and oil prices rising, now is the time to take action to reduce their bills and save energy. Richmondshire District Council is working with partner organisations to help you save energy and money.

Advice is available at www.energywatch.org.uk on:

- price comparison information
- how to change supplier
- managing bills
- energy saving

The Energy Saving Trust - www.energysavingtrust.org.uk - gives free impartial and independent advice on energy use and how to make savings on fuel bills.

The council is also working with the Department of Work and Pensions to provide advice and assistance for people of pensionable age.

Visit www.thepensionservice.gov.uk

Helpful Hints

- try to use a lower setting on your heating system for a longer period of time - its cheaper and more comfortable
- if you have a thermostat try turning it down 1°C - this can help reduce your heating bill
- turn down your heating when no one is at home
- don't put furniture in front of radiators or heaters
- draw curtains when its dark - don't hang them in front of radiators, tuck the bottoms on the window sill
- make the most of the warmth from the sun - spend your time in sunny rooms
- use energy saving light bulbs - they are a little more expensive but use around a quarter of the electricity and last up to 10 times longer.

Efficiency Tips

Lighting

- turn off lights in empty rooms and corridors - especially at the end of the day, which can save up to 15% off your lighting bill
 - use only the light you need
 - use daylight - its free so keep windows and skylights clean and clear
 - clean light fittings annually - dirt reduces lighting efficiency, encouraging people to switch more lights on.

Heating

- set the thermostat at 19°C - costs rise by 8% for every 1°C increase
- don't heat unused space
- reduce heating during holidays and weekends
- keep radiators clear - don't block radiators with furniture - it reduces efficiency and output
- check thermostats are sited out of draughts and away from either cold or hot spots.

Paying your Rent

As a council tenant you are responsible for ensuring that your rent is paid on time. Rent is due weekly.

There are several ways in which you can pay your rent:

set up a Direct Debit which will pay your rent direct from your bank account. It can be set up to pay your rent monthly on either the 1st (so that you are paying in advance and do not fall into arrears). The council will not take any action for late payment, if you choose to pay on the 15th of the month as long as you ensure the payment is made.

Pay in person at Mercury House, Richmond at any of the council's community offices:

- Richmond Community Office - Mercury House, Station Road, Richmond
- Colburn Community Office - Colburn Library and Information Centre
- Leyburn Community Office - Thornborough Hall, Leyburn
- Reeth Community Office - Hudson House Enterprise Centre, Reeth
- Upper Wensleydale Community Office - Community Resource Centre, The Neukin, Hawes
- pay by telephone by calling 01748 901158/ 901159/ 901184 or 901185. You will need to have your payment card details and rent account number ready
- pay by cheque - made payable to Richmondshire District Council with your name, address and account number written clearly on the back of the cheque.

Please do not send payment by cash in the post.

What if I can't afford to pay my Rent?

If you are in receipt of certain state benefits you may get help in paying your rent. Contact the landlord service and ask to speak to your Housing Management Officer on 01748 901158 or 901159 who will be able to advise you further. If you are on a low wage or work part time you may also qualify for some help with your rent.

If you have any changes in your personal circumstances which affect your income or the number of people in your family please contact your Housing Management Officer as soon as possible to avoid falling into rent arrears.

What happens if I don't pay my Rent?

The council does understand that sometimes tenants will fall into rent arrears due to events happening beyond their control, such as a loss of job due to redundancy or a death in a family. We are sympathetic when things like this happen. However you need to let us know so that we can make sure you are getting the right advice and help you avoid arrears increasing and make arrangements to pay off any outstanding arrears.

If a tenant allows their rent account to fall into arrears and does not make arrangements to pay them off and claim the appropriate benefits which may be available, the council will take action against your tenancy. This action can result in a Notice of Seeking Possession being served on you which, if the arrears continue to increase or arrangements are not made and adhered to, can result in an application to court for possession of your home.

Other Help

Help is also available from specialist independent advice agencies such as the Citizens Advice Bureau.

Citizens Advice Bureau offer a range of services including advice on benefits, budgeting and dealing with debt related problems.

03444 111444 or www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Renting a Council Garage

If you want to rent a garage, you will need to complete a Garage Application Form available from our website or your local Community Office. Once you have completed and returned this you will join the waiting list. All garages are let in date order. Non-council tenants may also apply to rent a garage, however priority is given to Council tenants. A garage tenancy will be granted to council tenants only if there are no arrears on their rent account. The council reserves the right to advance a garage application in certain circumstances, such as for a vehicle owned by a disabled person. For more information contact 01748 901154/ 901155/ 901160/ 901187

Anti-Social Behaviour

The Landlord Services team can offer help to council tenants to help resolve problems of anti-social behaviour such as:

- domestic abuse in council homes
- racial harassment
- nuisance youths
- noise nuisance
- neighbour nuisance

If you are experiencing anti-social behaviour from a council tenant you should contact one of the Tenancy Relations team members 01748 901157/ 901183

The Tenancy Relations team will then decide how best to help you. That may be by referring you to an internal service or external agency. Other partners that we work with include North Yorkshire Police, Independent Domestic Abuse Services and the Council's Environmental team.

When you contact the council to report details of anti-social behaviour we will ask for details of:

- your name and address
- the name and address of the person causing the nuisance
- the type of nuisance being caused
- how long this nuisance has been happening
- if you have spoken to the person causing the nuisance
- if you have reported the nuisance to any other agency
- if you have completed any diary sheets

Choice Based Lettings

The Council is one of seven partners in the North Yorkshire Home Choice council lettings scheme. If you wish to move in the future to alternative council or housing association accommodation you should register at: www.northyorkshirehomechoice.org.uk.

Once registered your application will be assessed and you will be put into a band - bronze, silver, gold or emergency. More information is available about the bands and how the scheme works on the website or telephone 01748 901160/ 901187/ 901154/ 901155..



Applying for Accommodation

Property is advertised every week on the North Yorkshire Home Choice website and once your application is accepted by the council you can bid on accommodation which you are interested in and which suits your needs.

How to get Involved

The council has developed a Tenant Involvement Agreement with the Tenant Panel which shows how the council will work with tenants to develop, monitor and improve our services.

There are a number of ways you can get involved. We understand that you will have other commitments and in order to help you decide which way is best for you we have developed with our Tenant Panel a 'Menu of Involvement'.



Menu of Involvement

Type of Involvement	What is this	Amount of Involvement	tick the ones you would like to be involved in
Editorial Group	<p>Complete and return housing surveys.</p> <p>Complete and return questionnaires relating to housing guides and service standards</p> <p>Meet and discuss content of Tenants Newsletter</p>	😊😊	
Tenant Suggestion Scheme	<p>Make suggestions to improve the housing service using the standard form available at all community offices or to download from www.richmondshire.gov.uk</p>	😊	
Tenant Panel	<p>Meets every 4 – 6 weeks to review and develop service plans and regulatory requirements. Attends Scrutiny Committee 1 meetings and feeds in tenant reports</p> <p>Monitors the ways tenants have been consulted/involved in housing services</p> <p>Monitors the Performance of the Housing service</p>	😊😊😊😊	
Estate Walkabouts	<p>Meets several times a year with the Estate Managers to walk the estate</p>	😊😊😊	

For more information contact the Housing Management Team Leader:
01748 901152

Ending your Tenancy

Should you need to end your tenancy in the future you will need to give the council four weeks written notice of your intention to end your tenancy and provide the council with a forwarding address.

In the first instance contact your Housing Management Officer on 01748 901158 or 901159 who will be able to give you advice on the things you will need to do. You will be sent a 'Tenancy Termination Notice' which you need to complete and return to the council as soon as possible.

You will also be sent an 'exit questionnaire' to complete so we can monitor the reasons why people leave our accommodation.

How to leave your Property

We will send you information on the condition we expect our accommodation to be left in when you leave. In general terms we would ask that you remove all your possessions from the property and garden leaving no rubbish inside or outside the property - leaving your home clean and tidy.

We will try and arrange a date when a visit can be made by a Maintenance Officer who will inspect the property and advise you on any work that you would be held responsible for if damage has been done to the property during your tenancy. However, if an inspection is not possible you will still be held responsible for any damage noted by the Maintenance Officer when the property is inspected following your departure. The Council will recharge you for damage to the property.

Handing in your Keys

You should make sure you hand your keys into one of the Council's Community offices by 12 noon on the Monday your notice expires to avoid being responsible for any future rent. If you are late handing in your keys you will be held responsible for all rent and any service charges until the keys are received.

Agencies to Contact

You will need to let a number of agencies know when you are leaving and where you are moving to including:

- Gas
- Electricity
- Water
- Housing Benefit
- Council Tax

You should also make sure you take meter readings of all your utilities and keep these for your reference in case there are queries with final bills.

Adaptations

The Council provides a service to help disabled tenants with small adaptations which allow them to keep their independence in their own homes.

If you think you need an adaptation in your home call North Yorkshire County Council on 01609 780780 and ask for assistance from the Occupational Therapist team.

What happens?

You would normally get a visit from an occupational therapist who will assess your needs within your home. Following this assessment the Council will receive a referral from the occupational therapist detailing the work they recommend for your home.

You would then receive a visit from a Council Maintenance officer who will give you advice on the work to be undertaken and when it is likely to be done.

Minor adaptations include:

- Grab rails
- Hand rails leading to the entrance door
- Lever sink taps on, wash basins or baths
- Door entry systems
- Key safes
- Door bells and flashing door bells
- A half-step to doors leading outside
- Extra stair rails
- Vibrating smoke alarms

Major Adaptations include:

- shower over bath
- level access shower
- kitchen alterations
- ramps
- stair lift

Help with Gardens

If you live in council sheltered accommodation the council would normally cut the lawns which are linked to the scheme.

The council also operates a discretionary garden scheme which allows it to cut the lawns and trim the hedges of individual council tenant homes. This scheme is available to tenants who have a disability or long standing health problem that prevents them from maintaining their garden and who have no family members residing in the district able to help undertake this work.

If you think you need help and fit the above criteria contact the Housing Management Officers on 01748 901158 or 901159.

An application form is also available on www.richmondshire.gov.uk/housing/apply for garden assistance.

Other services

There are other agencies that may be able to offer assistance across Richmondshire for garden maintenance, although they may make a small charge:

- Richmond Community Volunteer Service (01748 833773)

Complaints

If you are not happy about a council service we have a corporate feedback service to raise complaints and concerns - as well as praise services.

You can give feedback in a variety of ways:

- face to face at Mercury House
- by phone, direct to the Service Feedback Officer or the Contact Centre on 01748 829100
- by letter
- by fax to 01748 828750
- by email to enquiries@richmondshire.gov.uk
- via a Councillor
- by using our Corporate Complaints form which is available at any of the Council's community Offices and on the council's web site www.richmondshire.gov.uk

There are three stages in the feedback procedure:

- **Reply by relevant Service Delivery Team**

An assessment of the feedback given is made and resolution suggested if necessary. We aim to do this within 15 working days of acknowledgement of the complaint.

- **Investigation by Service Managers**

This stage provides for where the customer remains dissatisfied with the response under stage 1. We aim to do this within 15 working days

- **Investigation by Corporate Director**

This final stage gives the right of referral to the Corporate Director who will explain the nature of the investigation and any anticipated time scales.

What can the council do to put things right

We will:

- apologise for an issue which has been substantiated
- provide an explanation and ensure that all points raised are answered fully and clearly
- take all necessary action to put things right where applicable
- consider payment of compensation where our customer has suffered injustice as a result of what we have done or not done
- ensure that the same problem will not reoccur by improving the service and monitoring the outcomes of change.

Housing Ombudsman

An issue can be referred to the Ombudsman at any time, although it is normal practice for the Ombudsman not to begin an investigation unless the Council had an opportunity to use its own procedures to resolve the matter. We can provide you with details on how to contact the Ombudsman.

More information

Landlord Services, Richmondshire District Council, Mercury House, Station Road, Richmond, North Yorkshire DL10 4JE

Tel - 01748 829100

Email: enquiries@richmondshire.gov.uk

Web: richmondshire.gov.uk

Useful Numbers

Reporting a Repair	01748 829100
Gas and Oil	01748 829100
Emergency Repairs (outside office hours)	01653 697737
Tenants Contents Insurance	03456 718172
To make a rent payment by phone during office hours	01748 901159 01748 901158/ 901184/ 901185
To Rent a Council Garage	01748 901160/ 901187/901154/ 901155
Problems with Anti-Social Behaviour	01748 901157/ 901183
Choice Based Lettings	01748 901154/ 901155/901187
Tenant Involvement	01748 901152
Ending your Tenancy	01748 901158/ 901159
Adaptations	01609 780780
Garden Assistance	01748 901158/ 901159
Complaints	01748 829100
Citizen Advice Bureau	03444 111444

This information is available in alternative formats and languages



Richmondshire District Council

Mercury House, Station Road, Richmond DL10 4JX

01748 829100 | enquiries@richmondshire.gov.uk

richmondshire.gov.uk