



# **Sheltered Housing**

# **Tenant Handbook**

## Sheltered Housing Services

The Council's sheltered housing is managed by the Housing & Property Service.

Sheltered properties are allocated (let) through the Highland Housing Register (HHR). You apply by filling in a HHR Housing Application Form. You can do this on-line at [www.highland.gov.uk/housing](http://www.highland.gov.uk/housing) Or ask us for a paper copy.

Most Sheltered Housing Schemes have a Warden Service during working hours. Essentially, they provide an enhanced housing service and contact for you. Wardens are part of the local Housing team.

You will also have a Housing Management Officer. They provide housing services to all the tenants in their area.

At the start of your tenancy, your Warden will explain all about your accommodation. They will make sure that you are comfortable with things like reporting repairs etc. They will agree your 'Tenant Contact Plan' with you. They will explain how to get involved in 'tenant participation' activities and groups – and help you contact Tenant Participation Officers who promote tenant involvement.

You can ask your Warden questions at any time and they will try to help. If there is anything else that you need to help you live independently, speak to your Warden. They can give you advice. They will try to help you to access the help you need.

The **main duties** of the Sheltered Housing Warden are to:

- Visit or contact tenants regularly.
- Liaise with various Services on your behalf, if you need this.

### **Wardens should not be asked to:**

- Enter houses to look after pets, plants, etc whilst a tenant is away. *Wardens will only enter unoccupied houses in an emergency, e.g. burst pipes; fire alarm etc., if a tenant is on holiday, or in hospital. This will be an accompanied visit.*
- Carry out domestic work of any kind, including laundry.
- Do shopping, pay bills, etc.
- Administer medication. If you have difficulty with this, the Warden will try to help you find a solution.
- Hold bank books, pension books or cash.
- Be a volunteer telecare responder.
- Become involved in disputes between neighbours, or between tenants and their families. Your Housing Management Officer can help with this.

In some cases, Wardens are also employed as home carers. Home carers are employed via NHS Highland. Their service is provided following an NHS assessment. If

your Warden is also your home carer, they provide you with the care which has been agreed with you in your NHS Care Plan.

**Please be aware that the Warden:**

- Does not have a right of access to your house without your permission. *The exception to this would be if there is no response from you to the Warden's contact and they feel that you are at risk (e.g. because you had not made them aware that you would be away). In all such cases they will have asked, and been given, permission by a senior manager.*
- Is not allowed to smoke in your home whilst on duty.
- Is not allowed to take children or pets into your home, without specific permission from yourself and the Warden's Manager.
- Is not permitted to receive gifts of money or goods from tenants.
- Will **not** be responsible for handling your finances.

**What will happen if my warden's away or off duty?**

Your Warden will tell you what their working hours are. They will also give you contact details for calls or contacts during their working hours.

You can get help or advice from your local Housing Office. Just call or visit your local Housing Office or Service Point and ask to speak to a Housing Management Officer (or Housing Management Assistant). Contact details are at the back of this handbook.

Your Warden is entitled to time off. Alternative arrangements are put in place. You will be told about these. Highland Council Offices are closed for Public Holidays which means that there is no housing or warden service:

- Christmas Day, Boxing Day, 1st & 2nd of January
- Good Friday and Easter Monday
- May Day

If you need to report an emergency repair 'out of hours' call 01349 886691. The repair will be dealt with straight away if there is a serious risk to health and safety, or where there is potential for serious damage to the property.

**What happens if there are changes to my Warden Service?**

In the unlikely event of unexpected changes to your service, we will inform you as quickly as possible. You will be kept fully informed as far as possible in advance of any planned changes to your service.

**Sheltered Housing Charges**

Details about charges for the warden service will be explained to you before you sign your sheltered housing tenancy.

If you receive help for benefits to cover your rent, this will also cover some (or all) the charges for the warden service.

You are responsible for all other housing related costs – this includes heating; electricity; phone-line and Council Tax.

### **Your information and contacts**

During your first week as a tenant, your Warden will go through your Tenant Contact Plan with you. This will then be placed on your Personal File.

You will be fully consulted and will agree details such as:

- How often you will be contacted or visited by the Warden – and your preferred method of contact. They will take into account your need for regular contact.
- Who you would like contacted in an emergency.
- Any other person you would like involved in planning the service you get.
- Who, if anyone, you would like to help you with financial or administrative arrangements (as your Warden is unable to do this).
- Other contact details such as GP, other professionals involved in your care.
- Any special communication needs or preferences you have. Or any other arrangements you prefer for communication with your Warden.

Remember, your Warden needs to keep your records up-to-date. Let them know any changes, for example to your contact details. This is important. It makes sure you get help you need and, if necessary, any additional care from other services. Your Warden will tell you why they need information about you. You should never have to provide any information which is not essential for your service.

### **Security & Confidentiality**

This section is about how we treat the information we have about you, and how we make sure that your privacy and rights are respected.

You can be assured that information about you is kept securely and confidentially. At the start of your tenancy, we will tell you about how your information may be used, how your confidentiality will be protected and your rights. This is set out in our Privacy Notice available on [www.highland.gov.uk/privacynotices](http://www.highland.gov.uk/privacynotices) on the Council's website.

You have a right to see information which is held about you. You can find out more about this on the Council's website or by asking your Warden or Housing Officer.

You should always be aware that your privacy will be respected. This includes conversations with your Warden in your home - your Warden will not discuss private information if another person is present, unless this is with your permission. You should also be confident that your Warden will never gossip about you or pass confidential information to other tenants without your permission.

## **Recruitment & Training**

The Highland Council has policies and procedures in place to ensure that Sheltered Housing Wardens can effectively perform their role.

Staff are recruited according to The Highland Council's recruitment and selection process. This includes taking up references and criminal records checks. New staff are made fully aware of all policies and procedures.

Staff training is carried out on an ongoing basis according to individual requirements. Training needs are identified with managers, and met as soon as possible.

## **Equal Opportunities**

The Highland Council believes that everyone has the right to be treated with dignity and respect.

Your Warden will be sensitive to your social, cultural, sexual and religious beliefs. If you have any legitimate preferences in these matters, Wardens will view these as being important to you and will be taken account of accordingly. You can let your Warden know about these - if you feel they are relevant to the service you get from us. Be assured that your Warden will treat this information in a sensitive, impartial and confidential manner. You should never feel obliged to discuss personal matters that you wish to remain private.

## **What if I am going to be away for a time or admitted to hospital?**

You must tell your Warden if you are going to be away overnight. This includes hospital stays that involve an overnight/several overnights. If you do not, your Warden may need to report you as missing to the Police. Or enter your property to see if you are there.

This is very important. It helps Housing to plan for any arrangements that should be made for your home in your absence. It is critical for checks in case of fire (particularly if communal areas).

Your Warden can help advise you on the kinds of things you may need to think about if you're going away. This might include issues such as:

- Avoiding frozen pipes in winter - is the heating left on, the water turned off etc.
- How the rent is paid in your absence.

## **Your rights and responsibilities**

When your tenancy begins you will be given, and agree to, a legal written agreement (a Tenancy Agreement). This tells you what your rights and responsibilities are as a tenant, and what you can expect the Council to be responsible for.

It also sets out details on how to end your tenancy should you wish to do so.

If your circumstances are likely to change in the future, make sure that your Warden knows. They can help you plan and avoid any problems.

You can find more tenancy information on the Highland Council's website. You will get this booklet: **Your Guide to a Successful Tenancy**, at the start of your tenancy.

## **Health & Safety**

Your Warden is responsible for the safe running of the sheltered housing scheme. This includes schemes with communal areas. They make sure that fire procedures are up-to-date, communal areas are free from hazards, and that any accidents and incidents are correctly recorded, reported, and dealt with.

Make your Warden aware of any accident or incident that has occurred. They will record this on the Council's form. It is important these are recorded. This is so that we can act to prevent future accidents and improve safety.

## **Your view on services**

We are always interested in the views of our tenants on the service we provide. This helps us monitor our service quality – and, if necessary, improve it. You should **always** feel free to tell your Warden if you are unhappy with the service you get or have concerns. We also welcome positive feedback on the service.

As part of your Warden service, you will be visited to review your Tenant Contact Plan arrangements. They may also ask you for feedback about our services.

If you would rather not give your comments to the Warden, contact the Council's Service Centre. Ask to speak to the Manager of your Sheltered Housing Service. You can also follow the guidance under 'Making a Complaint' below.

## **Making a complaint**

If you feel unable to tell your Warden of any difficulties you have with the service, you can make a complaint directly to the Council. Your complaint will be taken seriously and will be dealt with as quickly as possible.

You can make your complaint on the Council's website at [www.highland.gov.uk](http://www.highland.gov.uk) Look for the 'Your Council Tenancy' pages. You can also call the Council. All complaints will be dealt with using the Council's Complaints Procedure.

You do not have to give your name when making a complaint, but it will be necessary to give your name if you would like us to get back to you.

## What to do if you want more information

You will be given information at the start of your tenancy. Guidance is also available on the Council's website at [www.highland.gov.uk](http://www.highland.gov.uk) . If you would like help with finding this, or if you are unsure about anything, your Warden can advise and signpost you.

If you have any questions, please discuss these with your Warden or contact your local Housing Office / Service Centre. Find contacts on [www.highland.gov.uk/housingoffices](http://www.highland.gov.uk/housingoffices)

## Useful Contacts

Warden's Name.....

Warden's Phone .....

Housing Management Officer's Name.....

Housing Management Officer's Phone.....

Highland Council (Housing Services) phone number. 01349 886602

Emergency repair 'out of hours': 01349 886691

Local Housing Office address .....

Use this space for your own contacts

If you need this information in an alternative format (e.g. large print, braille) or language, speak to your Warden or contact: The Highland Council, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness IV3 5NX Telephone: 01349 886602 Email: [housing@highland.gov.uk](mailto:housing@highland.gov.uk)