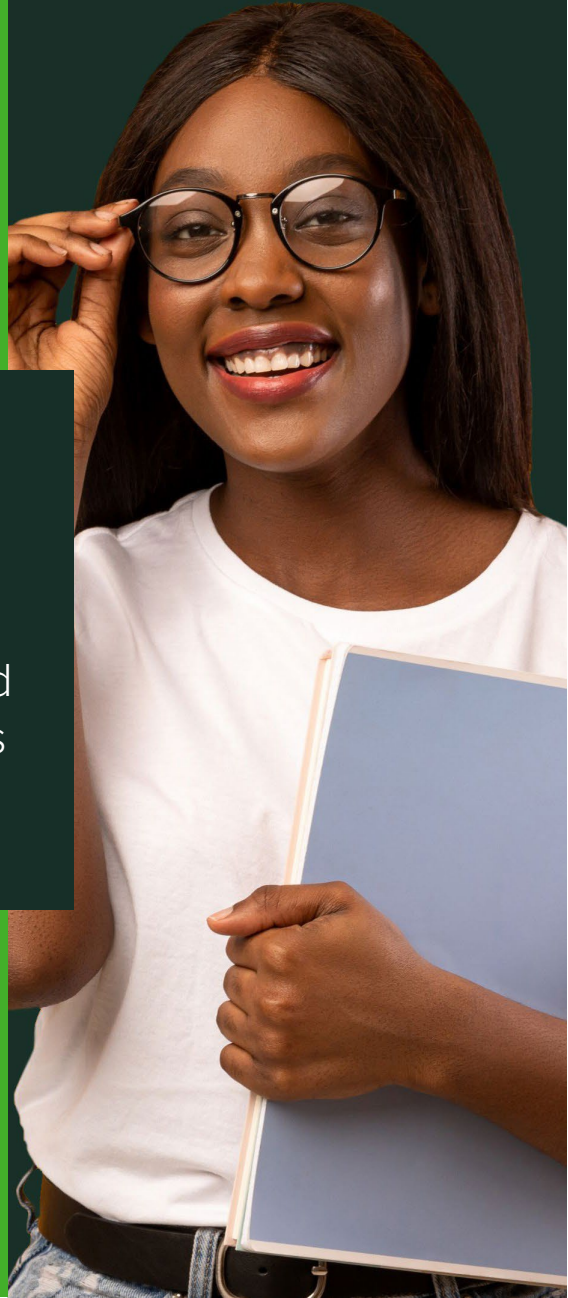


Orwell Customer Handbook



Welcome to our 2024
version of the Orwell
Customer Handbook.

You will be able to find
information needed as
an Orwell customer.



To view the digital
handbook or contact
us, scan the QR code,
call us or visit the link
below.

0345 60 100 30
www.orwell-housing.co.uk

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Welcome to your handbook

This handbook highlights the services we provide to you as an Orwell customer. We offer many services and cover a lot of information which we hold in the handbook. If there is anything you would like to suggest or think is missing from the current handbook, please let us know by using one of our forms of contact listed on our contact page shown on page 5.

Orwell Housing Association was formed in 1963 in Ipswich, employing no staff and managing only a handful of properties. Today, Orwell Housing Association own or manage over 4,300 homes providing safe and secure accommodation for over 8,200 people and operate in 12 local authority areas. We employ in the region of 800 people and provide housing, care and support services with customers at our heart.

Orwell occupies a refurbished Victorian building at 325 London Road, Ipswich, as our Registered Head Office.

How to contact us

How to contact us

Did you know you can contact us via phone, email, our website, or social media accounts? Whichever mode you choose, we look forward to hearing from you.

If you need to contact us for any reason just use whichever option you are more comfortable with, listed below.

To find out more information or contact us, visit our website here by scanning the QR code.

www.orwell-housing.co.uk/contact-us/



Phone us between the hours of 8:30 to 5pm
0345 60 100 30

*Mobile phone rates may vary, please check with your service provider on what rates you will be charged. The hotline operates during office opening hours.

Out of office hours the number automatically connects to a contact centre who are trained to handle any issues that may arise.

Email us

For general enquiries please email: info@orwell-housing.co.uk

Reporting Repairs

For information on how to report a repair, visit the repair section on [page 29](#). You can also report a repair via our online form here. www.orwell-housing.co.uk/repair-form



Damp and Mould

To find out more information on damp and mould, go to [page 10](#) or use our form to report it to us.

www.orwell-housing.co.uk/dampmould/



Orwell App

Our free Orwell Housing app provides you with instant access to your account so you can manage your tenancy and services from your phone, anytime.

To find out more information on the Orwell App, visit our website here by scanning the QR code.

www.orwell-housing.co.uk/orwellapp/



Write or visit us

Registered Office:

Orwell Housing Association Limited Crane
Hill Lodge
325 London Road Ipswich,
Suffolk, IP2 OBE

Registered in England and Wales as a Charitable Industrial &
Provident Society under Number 16460R
Housing & Regeneration Act 208 - Homes & Communities Agency
Registered No L0028

Ipswich office opening times

The Ipswich office on London Road is open from 8:30am to 5pm
Monday to Friday. **An appointment must be made in advance.**

Making a complaint

Complaints are a positive and valuable source of learning as some help us identify where we can make improvements to our services. If you have a complaint, please let us know by using the below link or by using the contact details on the previous page.

To find out more information or make a complaint, visit our website here by scanning the QR code.

www.orwell-housing.co.uk/make-a-complaint



View our complaints policy

If you want to view our complaints policy, please see the below link or by using the contact details on the previous page.

Condensation, damp and mould

Condensation, Damp and Mould

This section explains how dampness caused by too much condensation can lead to mould growth and how we can work together to keep it under control.

Condensation is a common problem caused when moist, warm air meets a cold surface like a window or external wall. Dampness caused by too much condensation can lead to mould growth on walls, ceilings and furniture. This section explains how condensation forms and how we can work together to keep it under control.

Condensation mainly occurs during cold weather and appears on cold surfaces and in places where there is little movement of air. It is most likely to be found in corners, on or near windows, in or behind wardrobes and cupboards and often forms on north facing walls.

We can help - How we support our customers to tackle damp and mould

We understand that damp and mould can negatively affect your quality of life. Once the issue has been reported, we will contact you and arrange a property inspection. We will work with you to identify the cause(s) of the damp and mould and carry out any necessary works.

Resolving the issue can be complex. We will monitor the work we have done over a period of time to ensure that the issue has been resolved and is unlikely to recur.

How to report damp and mould

You can fill out the form below or call us between 8.30am - 5pm from Monday to Friday on 0345 60 100 30. Alternatively, you can email reportdamp@orwell-housing.co.uk, use the My Orwell portal or, download our new app.

To find out more information on damp and mould, visit our website or use our form to report it to us.

www.orwell-housing.co.uk/dampmould/



If you find damp and mould in your home, it is important that you report it to us as soon as it occurs so we can do something about it.

Examples of problems that could cause damp and mould to occur if they are not addressed:

-  Drying clothes in your home without appropriate ventilation - We recognise that not everyone has outside space to dry clothing, or the wonderful British weather may prevent you from doing this and tumble dryers are expensive to run. An alternative would be to hang your laundry over your bath or shower (so the water drains away) and leave the bathroom window slightly ajar.
-  A leak in your home, from a neighbouring home, or in a communal area - Please report any repairs to us as soon as possible.
-  A damaged roof gutter or from a neighbouring property, or in a communal area - Please report any repairs to us as soon as possible.

- ▲ A roof gutter in need of maintenance at your home (e.g., filled with leaves / moss growth) or from a neighbouring home, or in the communal area - Please report any repairs to us as soon as possible.
- ▲ A damaged rainwater pipe from your home, or a neighbouring home, or communal area - Please report any repairs to us as soon as possible.
- ▲ A broken extractor fan or ventilation unit in your home - Please report any repairs to us as soon as possible.
- ▲ A broken or blocked trickle vent in your home - Please report any repairs to us as soon as possible.
- ▲ Damaged seals on baths and showers - Please report any repairs to us as soon as possible.

Other things that help reduce the risk of condensation, damp and mould

- ▲ In cold weather, if possible, leave some background heating on all day - portable gas or paraffin heater can create more moisture and are best avoided.
- ▲ Open windows or use a humidistat-controlled electric fan in the kitchen and bathroom when cooking, washing up, bathing and drying clothes.
- ▲ Tumble dryers are best vented to the outside, as they are a major cause of moisture in kitchens and bathrooms.
- ▲ Close doors to prevent moisture reaching other rooms, especially bedrooms which are often colder and more likely to get condensation.

- ▲ Keep a small window ajar or a trickle vent open.
- ▲ Position wardrobes and furniture against internal walls (walls which have a room on both sides) rather than against outside walls.
- ▲ Wipe down windows and sills every morning, wringing out the cloth rather than drying it on a radiator.
- ▲ Condensation sponge stripes on windows will collect the condensation and avoid damp forming under window sills. These items are available from most good Do-it-Yourself shops.
- ▲ Mould can be removed by wiping down walls and window frames with a fungicidal wash which features a Health & Safety Executive (HSE) 'approval number'. Guidance will be available on the back of the packaging.
- ▲ Dry-clean mildewed clothes and shampoo carpets.

Support and Advice

Support and Advice

Prices have jumped up considerably with the largest increases in UK history. Many people are worried that they will not be able to afford their bills. We have put together this Support and Advice Toolkit to share knowledge and signpost to available support. Support can be provided for anyone who needs it. Whether you are in employment, on a low income or claiming benefits, you may be able to receive help from some of the services below.

Below you can find different categories dedicated to supporting people during this crisis. If you need any additional help or support, please contact one of our team either by calling us on 0345 60 100 30 or by emailing tenancysustainment@orwell-housing.co.uk

To visit our website and view the Support and Advice Toolkit, scan the QR code or visit www.orwell-housing.co.uk/support-toolkit



- ▲ Money
- ▲ Food and Essentials
- ▲ Fuel and Energy
- ▲ Housing
- ▲ Activities and Offers
- ▲ Wellbeing
- ▲ Work
- ▲ Podcasts

Help with Housing Costs

Many residents could receive assistance with paying their rent by claiming financial support from either their local council or the Department of Work and Pensions. Find out more below.

Many residents can receive financial support towards paying their rental charge by claiming either Housing Entitlement via Universal Credit or Housing Benefit from their local council. Their Eligibility to this financial support is accessible via a means tested benefit application, which is intended to support people in receipt of a low income and have low savings.

This financial support can also cover part or all of a service charge, but water, heating and lighting charges to individual accommodation are excluded and would be the responsibility of the resident to cover.

Most working-aged residents or mixed-aged couples, who are considering a new claim for financial support for their housing costs, may need to apply for Housing Entitlement via Universal Credit.

The benefits system has changed the way this financial support is provided, with most working-aged residents, who are in receipt of Housing Benefit will be invited to apply for Universal Credit. This invitation will be provided by a migration notice from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). For further information about this process, please see our webpage on this topic and further guidance.

If you would like to find out more, view the Universal Credit Support page here.

[www.orwell-housing.co.uk/i-am-a-customer/
universal-credit-support/](http://www.orwell-housing.co.uk/i-am-a-customer/universal-credit-support/)



At Orwell Housing, we have team members available to support anyone with the necessary forms and provide guidance on completing this process.

Depending upon eligibility for this financial support and where you live, it can take several weeks to be processed and may take some time before the first payment is made to you. We encourage all residents to ensure they are making the right choice for their circumstances and to apply, when possible, with accurate information and supply any evidence requested.

Paying the rental charge for your home is the responsibility of the resident. If a resident receives financial support to help cover this charge, they must ensure any changes in their circumstances are updated on their claim. This will help avoid any delays to their financial support being issued. In addition, it is helpful to notify your Housing Officer or Scheme Manager of this, to make them aware of any potential changes in your support or payment plan.

Below we have included further information, guidance and support avenues to assist with the right financial support available for your circumstances.

If you have any further questions or you would like to speak to someone regarding any of the information, please contact us on 0345 60 100 30.

Housing Costs Help Links

Further help and advice with housing costs is available from the following agencies. Follow the links or scan the QR codes to be taken to the relevant websites:

Citizens Advice link

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/>



Gov.uk

<https://www.gov.uk/>



Shelter

https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice



Money Helper

<https://www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en>



Universal Credit

Universal Credit is a benefit available to most of those of working-age or in a mixed-age couple. Universal Credit is replacing:

- ▲ Housing benefit.
- ▲ Jobseekers allowance (income-based).
- ▲ Employment and support allowance (income-related).
- ▲ Income support.
- ▲ Child and working tax credits.

Who can claim universal credit

You can claim Universal Credit if you need help with living and housing costs.

You must be of working age or in a mixed age couple, but it doesn't matter if you're in work or not working.

If you are already claiming one of the benefits which Universal Credit is replacing, unless you have a change of circumstances, you are likely to be invited to apply for Universal Credit by the end of 2025.

Who can't claim

You can't claim Universal Credit if you:

- ▲ Have £16,000 or more in savings.
- ▲ Are excluded from benefits because of your immigration status.
- ▲ Are under 18 (with below exceptions).

How to claim universal credit

You have to make an online claim for universal credit.

<https://www.gov.uk/apply-universal-credit>

It should take 20 to 40 minutes.

You will need to ensure you have certain items to hand.

- ▲ your email address
- ▲ bank details
- ▲ national insurance number
- ▲ proof of identity
- ▲ household income and savings
- ▲ rent
- ▲ childcare costs

Please be advised you will need to create a Login, a Password and 3 Security Answers, which you will need to use at a later stage.

If you need help, call the universal credit helpline on 0800 328 5644 or you could contact the Citizens Advice - Help to Claim service who will be able to assist you with making your claim.

Their contact details are:

National Helpline: 0800 144 8 444

What happens next?

You usually have to make an appointment at your local Jobcentre Plus within 7 days of making an online claim. You must attend the appointment to complete your claim.

To book this appointment you will need to contact Universal Credit Full Service on 0800 382 5644.

If you are struggling during this waiting period, you can ask for an advance payment for up to 1 month's expected entitlement amount, which you will need to pay back over the next 24 months.

When will I receive my payments?

You will receive your first payment after 5 weeks if you are assessed as eligible and then monthly just like a salary. It is paid in arrears on the same date every month, unless your payment date falls on a weekend or bank holiday, when you may receive it early.

Housing costs and Universal Credit

When you apply for Universal Credit your housing costs will be included. You do not have to make a separate claim.

The costs will be included in the monthly payment made directly to you and it is your responsibility to ensure that this is paid to your landlord. Depending on how much you earn, you may not get the full costs, so it is important that you ensure that the remainder of your rent is paid in full from your earnings.


If you feel that this is going to be problematic for you, discuss it with the job centre or Orwell Housing. In some circumstances, it can be arranged to have the housing costs paid directly to the landlord.

All Universal Credit claimants in Orwell areas, are eligible for local budgeting advice from the Citizen's Advice Bureau, who are trained particularly for universal credit. If you are finding it hard, please contact us.

Discretionary Housing Payments

If you are still having difficulty paying your rent due to a genuine difficulty, you can apply to your local authority for a Discretionary Housing Payment. And there is local budgeting support.

 [Help with Housing Costs - East Suffolk](#) - This downloads a PDF document - 0.5Mb





 [Universal Credit Support - East Suffolk](#) - This downloads a PDF document - 0.2Mb

 [Universal Credit Support - West Suffolk](#) - This downloads a PDF document - 0.1Mb

These services are available from all local authorities. Please go to your own for advice.




Support and Wellbeing

Sometimes we need extra help to deal with everyday living. This could be in finding work or learning a new skill, keeping on top of bills, deal with debts, or coping with loneliness or anxiety. The Tenancy Sustainment service is set up to provide tailored service to:

-  Look after your home including moving home
-  Budget and save money
-  Access training and gain employment opportunities
-  Maintain your mental and physical health

Your Home

Your home is your haven and a place of comfort where you can be yourself and feel safe. Sometimes things happen to upset this balance. We can help support you to deal with these issues and get your home back to a place of safety and comfort. This includes:

-  Dealing with clutter
-  Anti-social behaviour
-  Moving in or out of home

Lofty Heights

Lofty Heights works closely with you to declutter and clean your home and garden and create the living space where you feel safe and enjoy once again. www.lofty-heights.org/

Safer Neighbourhood Team

Find your Safer Neighbourhood Team where you can address issues that concern you in your local community. www.suffolk.police.uk/

Keeping the children entertained

Great tips and ideas to keep your children entertained and creative at home. This site also gives you advice on speaking to your children about the coronavirus pandemic. www.savethechildren.org.uk/

Money

Dealing with money can sometimes be quite difficult and leads to more debts and increased anxiety. We will help you develop budgeting skills and give you the information you need to make the right choices and get your finances back on track.

Emergency funding

Offers you a wide range of practical debt solutions including a Covid Payment Plan (CVPP), Debt Management Plan (DMP), Debt Relief Order (DRO), Individual Voluntary Arrangement (IVA) and many more including free expert financial advice. www.stepchange.org

Citizens advice

Supports you to take the best step forward to resolve your financial situation www.citizensadviceipswich.org.uk/

Citizens advice Mid Suffolk

Offers you free, confidential advice to help you find the right solution to whatever problems you are facing. www.midsuffolkcab.org.uk/

Benefit entitlements

This is an online benefits calculation that provides a reliable estimate of the benefits you are entitled to. www.entitledto.co.uk/

Employment

There are times when we are affected by changes in life. You may have been made redundant, just finished education, or have never worked before, and looking at taking a new step, either to retrain, find your first job, learn new skills or volunteer. We can show you how to access free training, create, or update your CV, or find a rewarding volunteering role.

What can I do?

A brilliant tool that uses your personality, skills and interests to determine a range of job roles to suit you, then shows you the relevant training needed to achieve your goals. www.icanbea.org.uk

Skills toolkit

Offers you a skills assessment and explores careers from over 800 profiles to discover what each job involves.

<https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk>

Free online courses

This site has a wide range of free online courses including volunteering opportunities to build new skills.

www.myworldofwork.co.uk/

Qualification free courses

No previous knowledge or qualification is needed to join most of the courses here. All you need is a willingness to share your ideas and experience with others. www.wea.org.uk/

Realisefutures

Provides you with learning, coaching, advice, employment training and the opportunity to work within their social enterprise businesses.

www.realisefutures.org

Health and Wellbeing

Health and wellbeing is vitally important to keep us going in our daily lives. At some stage we all suffer from some level of poor health and wellbeing. Coronavirus has greatly impacted all our lives, including feelings of isolation and loneliness. We are here to get you through these difficult times and work closely with support agencies to ensure that you get the support in any area that is affecting your health both physically and mentally.

Need medical help

A step-by-step tool to get medical help near you.

<https://111.nhs.uk/>

Wellbeing service

The Wellbeing service gives support to help you with anxiety, depression and other mental health issues. They empower you and give you tools to manage mental health and look to the future.

www.wellbeingnands.co.uk

Mental health

Suffolk mind helps you understand mental health and how to improve and maintain your own mental health in a safe and secure environment. www.suffolkmind.org.uk

Norfolk support

whether you are dealing with a mental health problem or supporting someone who is, you will be given all round support, from talking therapies and gardening projects to employment services.

www.norfolkandwaveneymind.org.uk

Domestic abuse

Pandora Project is a confidential, non-judgmental service that provides advice and support if you are affected by domestic abuse. This support is also extended to children.

www.pandoraproject.org.uk

Wellbeing turning point

This service has access to a team of experts including doctors, nurses, peer mentor volunteers and recovery workers, available to help you make that change when you feel ready to take the steps towards recovery. <http://wellbeing.turning-point.co.uk>

Support for the elderly

The silver line is a confidential, free helpline service where volunteers are matched with you based on your interests. They also set up group calls so you can connect with other likeminded people in your area, as well as support dealing with domestic abuse and neglect.

www.thesilverline.org.uk

The Samaritans

If you are having a difficult time or worried about someone else the Samaritans are a phone call away (116 123) to listen without pressure and help you work through what is on your mind.

www.samaritans.org

Child line

A free and private service where you can talk (0800 111) about anything safely and in confidence. www.childline.org.uk

Get Involved

Get Involved

Get involved in what's happening around the organisation. Have your say and make a difference!

We are committed to improving our services, and we encourage our customers to get involved and help us achieve this.

We provide a range of ways for you to get involved, at a level that suits you and the time you have spare. You will never be left out of pocket for your involvement as we will reimburse transport costs where necessary.

Below you can find information on all the ways you can get involved. Please follow the links below for more information.

Orwell Residents Group

Orwell Residents Group are a performance review group, scrutinising service areas, and acting as a critical friend to influence the future of housing services.

If you would like to find out more about the Orwell Residents Group, visit our website below or scan the QR code.

www.orwell-housing.co.uk/org



Complaints Handling Assessment Team (CHAT)

The Complaint Handling Assessment team is made up of a group of customers who work with us to help monitor our complaints processes and outcomes.

If you would like to find out more about the Complaints Handling Assessment Team, visit our website below or scan the QR code.

www.orwell-housing.co.uk/chat



My Orwell Voice

This is our digital engagement platform where we encourage customers to give feedback on consultations, Orwell policies and current services.

If you would like to find out more about My Orwell Voice, visit our website below or scan the QR code.

www.myorwellvoice.co.uk



Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs)

Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) have been designed by the Regulator for Social Housing to drive up standards and improve the quality of social housing by ensuring providers are accountable for the services they deliver.

There are 22 measures, 12 of these measures come directly from customer feedback surveys, 10 come from information we hold on our systems about our operational activity.

If you would like to find out more about our Tenant Satisfaction Measures, visit our website below or scan the QR code.

www.orwell-housing.co.uk/ourtsmperformance/



Surveys following a service

We give our customers the opportunity to let us know about their experience when we have undertaken a particular service.

If you would like to find out more about our Survey Feedback results, visit our website below or scan the QR code.

www.orwell-housing.co.uk/feedback/



We look forward to hearing from you. If you have any questions or would like to contact us visit our website or email us using the address below.

customerinsightandengagement@orwell-housing.co.uk

Repairs and Maintenance

Repairs and Maintenance



At Orwell Housing Association, we are dedicated to providing efficient, high quality repair services to ensure the safety, comfort, and wellbeing of our residents. This service standard outlines the procedures and expectations for reporting and handling repairs, classified by urgency to ensure timely responses.

Appointment slots are currently between 8am-4pm, with school run times available between 9:30am-2:30pm for those for children of school age. Some evening appointments may be available on Thursdays. This will be reviewed annually; we hope to be able to deliver timed slots in the future.

What Orwell, as Landlord, is responsible for

Keeping the structure of the properties we manage, including its interior and exterior, in reasonable repair.

This includes:

-  The roof, outside walls, outside doors, windowsills, window catches, sash cords, glazing putties and window frames including the necessary external painting and decoration.
-  Internal walls, skirting boards, doors and door frames, hinges, locks, door jambs, thresholds, letter boxes, door handles, floors (but not actual floor coverings unless we have supplied a water resistant covering, and this has worn out or been damaged by the refitting of your kitchen) ceilings, plasterwork (but not internal painting and decorating, except in some extra care and supported housing schemes).

- ▲ Drains, gutters and external pipes, chimneys, chimney stacks and flues but does not include sweeping.
- ▲ Pathways, steps or other means of access. Please note that we are not responsible for removing ice or snow during periods of bad weather. Where there is an on-site Caretaker, any blocked paths which are our responsibility will be cleared as much as is practically possible to do.
- ▲ Garages and stores in our ownership.
- ▲ Communal lighting, door entry systems, alarm systems & decoration.
- ▲ External decoration- we normally carry this out every 6 years depending on the rate of deterioration.
- ▲ Boundary walls and boundary fences alongside public footpaths.

You must not decorate the outside of your home without permission. Some paints can shorten the lifespan of woodwork, recharges would apply if this has been done incorrectly and without permission.

Keeping in good repair and proper working order the installations we own for the supply of water, gas and electricity, for sanitation and for space and water heating.

These include (but are not limited to):

- ▲ Basins, sinks, baths, toilets, flushing systems and waste pipes.
- ▲ Electrical wiring, including sockets and switches, gas and water pipes, and taps.

- ▲ Starter mechanisms for fluorescent light fittings (but not the tubes).
- ▲ Water and space heaters, fireplaces, fitted fires and central heating installations.









What you as the Tenant are responsible for

You are responsible for the upkeep of your home.

This includes:









- ▲ Fitting of TV aerials and satellite dishes (where not provided by Orwell). If you are thinking of installing satellite TV, you must first seek written permission from Orwell, and in the cases of flats you may also require planning permission. We will reserve the right to specify the location of satellite dishes on any of our properties. If you erect a dish without permission, we reserve the right to have it removed and re-charge the cost to you.
- ▲ Minor cracks to plaster (except in some extra care and supported housing schemes).
- ▲ Adapting doors to accommodate carpets.
- ▲ Internal decoration (except in some extra care and supported housing schemes).
- ▲ Replacing locks or keys which have been lost. If you have a mortice lock we will re-charge you for the cost of replacing it.
- ▲ There is no charge for replacing a core on a lock, but you will be recharged for keys. If you require any additional keys, please

contact us and we will order them for you upon receipt of payment. However, if your home has been burgled and the lock broken, Orwell will replace the lock without charge. (These costs are correct at the time of going to press. We reserve the right to alter the amounts charged if costs change).

-  Minor gaps between skirting and floors which are capable of being filled by you whilst decorating (except in extra care and supported housing schemes).
-  External and internal window cleaning (except extra care and supported housing schemes, where external window cleaning is covered by service charge.)
-  Plumbing-in and maintaining washing machines or dishwashers. Plugs and chains on sinks, baths and basins, (except in extra care housing schemes).
-  Toilet seats (except in extra care and supported housing schemes).
-  Bathroom cabinets, towel rails, toilet roll holders.
-  Light bulbs and fluorescent tubes (fluorescent tubes are provided by Orwell in extra care housing schemes).
-  Changing of domestic fuses (except extra care and supported housing schemes). See box on the back page of this leaflet for further advice).
-  Maintenance of any fittings and appliances not provided by Orwell.

- ▲ The bleeding of radiators (except in extra care and supported housing schemes) – when you switch the central heating system on for the first time in winter, please check that the radiator valve is fully turned on and that some radiators may contain air that needs discharging using a radiator key to bleed them.
- ▲ Fencing between you and your neighbours.
- ▲ Individual shed maintenance and repairs.
- ▲ Curtain rails.
- ▲ Tidy dryers, washing lines and rotary dryers (unless communal or in extra care and supported housing schemes).
- ▲ Shelving, coat and hat rails.
- ▲ Provision/replacement of dustbins/wheelie bins, unless otherwise specified by Orwell. Some local Councils supply these to each household and most Councils are changing over to a dual or triple bin system for recycling. If you are not sure, contact your Housing Officer or local Council for advice.
- ▲ Pest Infestation within the premises- For cases of infestation of rats, mice, fleas, red bugs, pigeons etc please contact us for advice.
- ▲ Doorbell batteries and light bulbs.
- ▲ Smoke & Carbon monoxide detector batteries and testing.
- ▲ Hedge / lawn cutting and maintenance of private gardens, including private fences, sheds and garages. Please note that the

terms of your tenancy agreement require you to maintain your garden in reasonable order.

-  Rubbish clearance and cleaning of private areas.
-  Cleaning of common parts except where specified as part of service charge.
-  Floor coverings (except in kitchens and bathrooms where Orwell has supplied a water-resistant covering – this will be replaced if your kitchen has been refitted or the floor covering is worn out). Please note damage caused by you is your responsibility, e.g. in moving appliances.
-  Filters to extractor fans.
-  Telephone and TV connections.
-  Blocked WC/waste pipes. We can unblock WCs and pipes for you but we will recover the cost of doing so from you – normally before the work is carried out. Please see the scale of charges for rechargeable items set out on the opposite page.
-  Water butts are gifted to the property during the development.
-  All future repairs and replacements are tenant responsibility.

In addition to the above, you are responsible for the cost of any repair required as a result of your neglect or misuse. If we undertake this repair, we will recharge you for the work undertaken.

If your home is damaged by a third party, you must report it to the Police and request a crime number before reporting it to the Repairs

Hotline on 0845 60100 30 otherwise we may charge you for the repair.

WARNING:

Some systems that are powered by combination boilers require a certain amount of air pressure to remain efficient – therefore in no circumstances should you bleed radiators in these systems. If you're unsure, please call us.

You will be forewarned if such a system exists or is installed in your home. If you fail to take heed of this warning and the system is damaged as a result, you may be charged the cost of repair or replacement.

Tenant Recharges – Scale of Charges

(as at 1st January 2024 – reviewed regularly)

Broken windows

Out of hours board up - £120.00

Office hours board up - £80.00

Reglazing

Double glazed unit - £120.00

Single glazed unit - £80.00

Lock changes

Out of hours - £120.00

Office hours - £80.00

Plumbing works

Blocked toilet - £80.00

Blocked sink - £80.00

Blocked shower/bath - £80.00

Washing machine blocked - £80.00
Electric test: tenant damage - £95.00

Bathroom repairs

Replace broken basin - £150.00
Replace broken WC pan - £120.00

Door repairs

Replace internal door - £150.00
Replace front door/rear door - £520.00
Replace Fire Door - £241.00
Replace Composite Timber - £140.00

Miscellaneous

Damage to cables - £80.00
Aborted call-out charge - £75.00

Please note that we reserve the right to alter the scale of charges. For any re-chargeable repair we will request an upfront payment either in cash or paid by credit/debit card, prior to the repair being ordered. In certain circumstances, an arrangement to pay the charge in instalments may be possible, but the tenant must pay something on account.

Loss of Power

If you experience power failure you will need to do the following, depending on the type of consumer box that you have:

- 1. Check the consumer unit, the location of which will have been advised by your Housing Officer.**
- 2. Reset trip switches as necessary.**
- 3. Check it isn't a fault with your appliance by turning off all**

appliances, and one by one turn them back on, to establish which one trips the switch.

If you are unsure of what to do, please contact us.

Insurance

We encourage you to take out appropriate insurance to cover the cost of making good any damage as outlined above. Please note that it is your responsibility to ensure that your home contents are adequately insured against damage or loss. Our insurance will not cover your personal possessions unless the damage or loss was caused by us. If you wish to know more, please contact your Housing Officer.

We expect the contractor, who will carry out the repair work, to commence as soon as possible and in any event no later than 6 hours for an emergency, within 7 calendar days for urgent job, within 14 calendar days for non-urgent work and within 31 calendar days for a routine job, from the time the repair was reported.

Planned works is scheduled between 6 - 12 months.

Reporting Repairs

 You can report repairs online using via our online portal:
www.orwell-housing.co.uk/i-am-a-customer/the-orwell-app/

 You can also visit our website and fill in our online form.

For information on how to report a repair, visit our website. You can also report a repair via our online form here. www.orwell-housing.co.uk/repair-form



Alternatively, you can call us on: **0345 60 100 30**

We will require the following:

- ▲ Detailed description of the problem including photographs where possible.
- ▲ Your availability for when we can come and carry out the repair.
- ▲ Your telephone contact details.
- ▲ Details of any vulnerabilities within the household.

All orders for repairs are processed by our team, who will in the case of emergency or urgent work contact the contractor direct to report the problem. In most cases you will then be put through to the contractor to arrange an appointment time that is convenient to you. For Orwell Repairs once your repair has booked you will receive a text message with your appointment date and time, we will then text you on the day when our operative is on his way.

It should be noted that a contractor, when attending an emergency, may only be able to do a temporary repair to make your property safe and secure until a more thorough repair can be made. This may be redefined as 'urgent' and the completion deadline extended. Should the repairs not be carried out within the specified time, please

contact us and we will endeavour to find out why it has not been done. If this happens again you may be entitled to compensation – see below.











Failure to give access may result in the repairs order being cancelled.

Out of Office Hours

When requesting an emergency repair out of office hours your telephone call to this office will be redirected to a call centre, – who cover such problems when Orwell's offices are closed. The staff will talk to you about your repair request and determine whether it is an emergency or not before contacting our Contractors. Assuming your repair request is an emergency then you can expect a contractor to attend and make safe and secure within 6 hours.

List of Repairs Classifications

Emergencies

-  These will be dealt with within 6 hours.
-  Total loss of electrical power – if you have a card meter, please check you have credit on the card.
-  Electrical checks following flooding or water penetration.
-  Unsafe power, lighting socket or electrical fitting likely to cause injury.
-  Total loss of water supply.
-  Total or partial loss of gas supply or leak.
-  Blocked flue to open fire or boiler.
-  Total or partial loss of space or water heating where there is a vulnerable person.
-  Blocked or leaking foul drain, soil stack, or toilet pan (where there is no other working toilet in the property).
-  Uncontrollable leaking from water or heating pipe, tank or cistern.

- ▲ Insecure external window, door or lock.
- ▲ Structural damage to property e.g. fire, storm or flood.
- ▲ Failure of lift.
- ▲ Failure of warden call alarm system.
- ▲ Faulty fire alarm system.
- ▲ Faulty smoke or Carbon monoxide alarms.
- ▲ Total or partial loss of room heating. (During October to March).
- ▲ Fire or Flood.
- ▲ Gas Leak.
- ▲ Overflowing sewage in the tenant's home.
- ▲ Socket or switch that is dangerously faulty.
- ▲ Exposed or loose electrical wires.
- ▲ Forced entry and replacement of lock where a person is locked out or inside the property (this repair will be recharged unless you provide a crime reference number).
- ▲ Re-securing doors where the property is not secure.
- ▲ Make safe rotten timber floorboards or stair tread.
- ▲ Internal leaks that can be controlled using a bucket or bowl.
- ▲ Additional security measures if you are a victim of domestic abuse.

Urgent Repairs

These are less serious than emergencies and will be dealt with within 7 calendar days. Some examples are: (This is not an exhaustive list).

- ▲ Partial loss of electric power.
- ▲ Partial loss of water supply.
- ▲ Total or partial loss of room or water heating. (1st April to 30th September)
- ▲ Blocked sink, bath or basin (this may be a re-chargeable repair).
- ▲ Defective cistern or overflow.
- ▲ Minor plumbing leaks/defects.
- ▲ Leaking roof (of property – not sheds/outbuildings).

- ▲ Faulty timber flooring or stair tread.
- ▲ Loose or detached banister or handrail.
- ▲ Immersion heater repairs.
- ▲ Flooring/floor covering is damaged/uneven and is dangerous.
- ▲ Heating system failure: temporary heaters delivered on first visit; additional works required.
- ▲ Drainage cover is loose or damaged.
- ▲ Anything else deemed as a potential risk or hazard to health and safety that isn't an emergency.

Routine Repairs

These will be done within 31 calendar days.

- ▲ Renew door furniture.
- ▲ Renew lock.
- ▲ Overhaul window.
- ▲ Replace taps.
- ▲ Renew wash hand basin/bath.
- ▲ Replace light switch/socket outlet.
- ▲ Roofing repairs.
- ▲ Kitchen unit repairs- please note kitchen repairs will only be done for matters of Health and Safety or general wear and tear. Kitchen replacements will be carried out as per our programmes, to find out when your kitchen is due for replacement please contact us.
- ▲ Plastering repairs.
- ▲ Wall tiling repairs.
- ▲ Guttering repairs.
- ▲ Glazing repairs.
- ▲ Graffiti- this will be treated on a case by case basis, if it is offensive we may be able to move this to an urgent repair.
- ▲ Door entry phone not working.

Repairs Plus

Planned up to 12 months. We will always aim to book these in as soon as we can within this time.

- ▲ Brickwork loose/damaged.
- ▲ Garage door repair.
- ▲ Loft insulation.
- ▲ Door frame repair.
- ▲ Wall/base unit repair/replacement.
- ▲ Meter cupboard door/box repair/replacement.
- ▲ Internal door repair.
- ▲ Bath panel damage.
- ▲ Boxing repair/replacement.
- ▲ Skirting/architrave repair.
- ▲ Bollard or parking post repair.
- ▲ Gate/fencing needs repair/replacement – Where OHA is responsible.
- ▲ Misted glass.
- ▲ Boiler Upgrade.
- ▲ Storage Heater Upgrades.
- ▲ Fencing repairs- please note fencing repairs are currently on hold due to high numbers of demands. New requests will only be raised if they pose a Health and Safety risk.

As of 1st November, Orwell will no longer continue to carry out fencing repairs. Customers will be written to advise that from this date fences will be gifted and customers responsibility. This is except for boundaries alongside public footpaths. From this date Orwell will only provide and maintain 2 privacy panels between gardens adjacent a patio which will be close boarded wooden panels, with the remainder being marked by chain link fencing. Customers may install their own wooden fences with permission.

Orwell will no longer continue to carry out repairs and replace all patios and paths within a tenant's garden. Orwell will provide and maintain one patio directly adjacent your back door and a path leading to your back gate. Any additional patio areas or multiple paths will be the responsibility of the tenant. Customers may install their own additional patio areas with permission.

New Homes Defects Procedure

Defect Liability Period:

- ▲ First Inspection: 12 months post construction (building defects).
- ▲ Second Inspection: 12 months post construction (heating/plumbing/electrical defects).
- ▲ Reporting Urgent Defects: Use the Repairs Hotline: 0345 60 100 30.

Emergency Contacts:

- ▲ Gas Leak: Turn off gas at the meter.
- ▲ Contact National Grid: 0800 111 999.
- ▲ Electricity Failure: Check the trip switch on the consumer unit.
- ▲ Contact UK Power Network: 0800 7838 838

Water Supply Issues:

- ▲ Contact Anglian Water: 0845 7145 145

Aids and Adaptations

Aids and Adaptations

Aids and Adaptations can be arranged for you if you need your home altered to help you or members of your family to live more independently. Mobility problems can often be overcome by carrying out alterations and other changes can be made to improve accessibility, remove hazards or increase safety in your home.

Typical examples may be a simple grab rail by your front door to help you up the step, or one by the bath to steady you as you get in and out. It could be a ramp for a wheelchair user or even a more substantial adaptation such as a level-access shower.

You are entitled to the service if you are a resident or someone in your household has a mobility or disability issue. All requests are subject to budgetary provisions. Orwell always try to make 'reasonable' adjustments for our tenants and have an Aids & Adaptations Policy that we work to. Our Policy is in line with that of many other housing associations and for a major adaptation, the suitability of the property for adaptation will be considered to protect the best use of our stock. (i.e. - *fitting level access showers in properties on the first floor or above does not represent the best use of our housing stock and they rarely meet the long-term needs of our tenants.*)

Orwell always discuss with the tenant whether alternative, purpose-built accommodation would better meet their needs and work with them to achieve this move if appropriate.

What are Aids and Adaptations

Aids and Adaptations fall into three categories:

1. Lifeline Services

If you feel vulnerable in your own home, you can have an alarm response service installed to make you more secure. All you need is a working BT or similar telephone line socket within 2 metres of mains electricity plug socket. You will also be required to provide a minimum of two named keyholders who can be contacted when an alarm is raised.

If you need help, alarm calls can be easily raised from anywhere in the home or garden (up to 50 metres coverage) by simply pressing the radio trigger or the large illuminated red button on the home unit.

Additionally, a **Bogus Caller Button** can be fitted near the front door.

There will be a charge for this service, however in some circumstances this could be funded through Social Services. Please contact us for further information.

2. Minor Adaptations

Examples of these include grab rails, lever taps and for residents with sight or hearing impediment. Orwell will endeavor to get these works carried out as quickly as possible.

3. Major Adaptations

These include, over bath showers, level access showers, and other major adaptations and require an Occupational Therapists Recommendation.

How does it work?

In the first instance residents should contact an Occupational Therapist. An Occupational Therapist is a trained health specialist who can:

- ▲ Assess your needs and suggest what type of adaptation would be the most suitable for you.
- ▲ Give you good advice about easier and safer ways of carrying out various tasks.
- ▲ Recommend minor or major adaptations for your home and help you to apply for them.

If you do not have an Occupational Therapist, your Doctor, Local Hospital or Social Services should be able to refer you to one. A recommendation from an Occupational Therapist is required in all instances except for minor works costing less than £1,000.00. Further information can be obtained from the below services.

▲ **Adult Social Care (Customer First) – Suffolk County Council**

▲ **Norfolk County Council Adult Social Services**

▲ **Essex County Council Adult Social Care**

All the Councils have information and guidance to help you and equally they have children's services. Referrals for children are generally sent to Orwell directly by the Occupational Therapist.

When the association's budget has been fully allocated, Orwell will assist you in making an application to see if you are eligible for a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) from your Local Authority.

What is a Disabled Facilities Grant?

Sometimes certain local authorities may financially assist by offering to pay towards an adaptation. A grant may be paid when the council considers that changes are necessary to meet your needs, and that the work is reasonable and practical.

Do I have to pay?

To ensure the association's budget is allocated to those in most need all applications are means tested and this is based on the Housing Benefit means test. All those in receipt of either housing benefit, council tax benefit, income support or who have a disabled child under the age of 19 are passed through for 100% funding. This assessment could result in you being asked to make a contribution towards the work. If you or a member of your family is, or was an ex-serviceman or woman, funding may also be sought from the Royal British Legion, The Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association (SSAFA) or the Royal Naval Benevolent Trust.

What if my home cannot be adapted?

In some cases, due to the layout, age or structure of your home it may not be possible to adapt your property. In this case, we can discuss other options with you such as re-housing you into a property that is more suitable for your needs or that can be more readily adapted. The association does own some self-contained properties that have been specifically built or adapted for people who are wheelchair users. Please ask your housing officer for details.







Improvements and Alterations

Improvements and Alterations

As an Orwell resident you have the right to carry out improvements to your home providing you have obtained written consent from us and all other necessary approvals. We reserve the right to request that the property is returned to its original condition where alterations are carried out without our prior consent.

Conditions for tenants' own improvements and alterations:

Work must not start until you have received written approval from us. We will not unreasonably withhold consent.

-  You should provide details of the work to be carried out with drawings and sketches if necessary.
-  You must provide three quotations from bona fide contractors and give reasons for choosing a particular quote.
-  The work must be carried out in a competent manner using new materials and to our satisfaction.
-  All work must comply with planning, building and other statutory regulations as appropriate. We will require proof that these consents have been obtained prior to the work starting.
-  Any work to a gas central heating system must by law be carried out by a Gas Safe™ registered installer and test certificates provided.
-  Any alterations to an electrical installation must be checked and certified by a qualified electrician. If you fail to provide evidence of testing with a certificate, we will need to carry out the test and recharge you the full costs of doing this work.

- ▲ You will be responsible for the future maintenance of the improvement, alteration, including any additional costs of maintenance due to the alteration/improvement.
- ▲ Any damage to the property during the course of the work will be your responsibility.
- ▲ When the work is complete you should inform us so that a member of our staff can make an inspection.
- ▲ If the work is not completed to our satisfaction, it will be your responsibility to have any faults put right and if this is not done, we reserve the right to make good the faults and charge you the cost.
- ▲ If at the end of the tenancy you wish to remove the improvement or alteration, the property must be re-instated to its former condition.
- ▲ We reserve the right, at the end of the tenancy, to insist that you restore the property to its previous state. Should you fail to carry out this request, then we may complete the work and charge you the cost.
- ▲ If you move and leave the improvement or alteration in the property and we decide this is acceptable, then the improvement or alteration will become our property as will the future maintenance liability.

We will not make a financial contribution to your own improvements and alterations, unless an agreement is made before work starts and compensation for improvements will only be paid when you finally move on.

It is therefore important that you keep any receipts for work done in a safe place as it may be several years before you can claim.

The Right to Compensation for Improvements

If you wish to be compensated for improvements that you make to your property you will need to follow the guidelines as set out before we will give permission in writing for the work to start.

We will inspect the improvements when completed, and sometimes whilst they are in progress. When permission is given by us to start work, we will inform you that compensation will only be paid when you move out and this may be deducted from any money that you may owe to us.

You will also be made aware that the final sum of compensation payable will not be the full amount you paid to the Contractor, as depreciation will be deducted.

Fire Safety

Fire Safety

Here are a few fire prevention reminders which will only take a few minutes to read but could save the lives of you and your family.




Fire Safety and the importance of smoke detectors

Every year over 60,000 fires in the home kill 700 people and injure another 10,000.

The most common causes of these fires are chip pans, or smokers' materials setting fire to upholstery, such as chairs and sofas. Even if you don't smoke or use a chip pan, you could still be at risk. Here are a few fire prevention reminders which will only take a few minutes to read but could save the lives of you and your family. Fires in the home are fast spreading, lethal and devastating, yet very often preventable. Taking extra care, fitting a smoke alarm and knowing what to do if a fire occurs can help save your home and your life.

How to prevent a fire

Smoke alarms save lives!

-  It is recommended that a smoke alarm is fitted on each floor of your home. Orwell provides detectors in line with regulations. If you choose to fit additional detectors please follow this advice, you will be responsible for the fitting and maintenance of additional detectors.
-  You should check each alarm once a month.
-  Ensure the alarm's battery is changed at least once a year, unless your alarm is hard-wired or powered by a lithium battery which

has a longer life. In these instances, please check with the manufacturer for life span of batteries.

Chip pans/deep fat fryers

- ▲ Never fill a pan more than one third full of fat or oil.
- ▲ Never leave the pan unattended when the heat is switched
- ▲ Never put food in the pan if the oil begins to give off smoke.
- ▲ Turn off the heat and allow the oil to cool.
- ▲ If a pan catches fire, do not move it – turn off the heat (if safe to do so), leave the room, close the door and call the Fire Brigade. ONLY if you feel safe to do so, cover the pan with a fire blanket, or a damp tea towel and leave for 30 minutes.
- ▲ Do not throw water onto a chip pan fire

Open fires and portable heaters

- ▲ Place a fire guard in front of open fires.
- ▲ Never sit closer than 3ft or place clothes or furnishings near an open fire.

Smoke and use of matches

- ▲ Never leave a lit cigarette or pipe unattended.
- ▲ Never smoke in bed.
- ▲ Ensure cigarettes, pipes and matches are extinguished properly.
- ▲ Always keep matches out of reach of children.

Electrical appliances and wiring

- ▲ Follow manufacturers' instructions to make sure correct fuses are used and circuits are not overloaded.
- ▲ Switch off and unplug all electrical appliances not designed to stay on.
- ▲ Service electric blankets and never leave them unattended or on whilst in bed, unless they are designed for this.
- ▲ Never use adaptors for high power appliances i.e. kettles, heaters, vacuum cleaners.
- ▲ Never use more than one adaptor per socket.
- ▲ Never pull a plug out by the flex, twist, bend or join flexes or place them under carpets.
- ▲ Look out for the signs of dangerous wiring: hot plugs and sockets; fuses that blow for no obvious reason; lights flickering; brown scorch marks on plugs and sockets.

Orwell Housing Association has installed smoke detectors in all its properties.

Smoke Detector Checks

Weekly – Press the test button on the detector.

If the detector beeper makes a continuous loud sound the detector is working properly. If the detector fails to respond to the test, try replacing the battery first before contacting us. If the detector is faulty, Orwell will replace it. However, you are responsible for the supply of replacement batteries.

At least once a year – clean the detector.

A vacuum cleaner or soft duster should be used to clean the detector. It is advisable to remove the battery prior to cleaning.

After cleaning, the battery should be replaced and the detector tested.

At least once a year – replace battery

The detector usually requires the following types of 9v batteries: Ever-Ready Long Life or Duracell Type PP9.

No other kind of battery should be used. The smoke detector may not operate properly with other batteries.

The detector should be tested immediately after replacing the battery.

What if...

Q: The detector is found to be faulty following the check?

A: Please report the fault to the Association and it will be replaced within seven days.

Q: The battery is found to be dead following the check?

A: The person conducting the check will notify the tenant of the need to replace the battery. A record of the advice given will then be made.

Q: I took the battery out of my detector and forgot to replace it. Will my contents insurance still be valid?

A: If you have removed your battery and your property was damaged by fire, your insurers may invalidate your claim or reduce the settlement offered to you in the event of your detector being inoperable.

Mains Operated Smoke Detectors

Some of the Association's homes have mains operated detectors and where these are in extra care or supported housing schemes they are checked on an annual basis and if repairs are needed these will be completed within seven days. Regular testing is recommended on a weekly basis using the test button. If the detector does not activate, call the Repairs Hotline on 0345 60 100 30.

If your smoke detector is activated but there is no fire, do not remove the detector or batteries, but try and clear the property of smoke. If your detector is triggered but there is no smoke and it appears faulty, do not cut the wires to silence the alarm. To silence the alarm, try and flip the trip switch and then flip it back on. Report any fault to Orwell on the Repairs Hotline 0345 60 100 30.

If your system is a stand-alone system, i.e. not linked to a central control panel, you should try to clear the smoke from around the detector by wafting a suitable item in front of it, e.g. a tea towel or newspaper. However, if the detector persists, contact the Repairs Team.

Fire Safety in Flats

It is important to know the fire safety measures put in place for people living in flats. We have made a booklet which covers some important information needed about fire safety in flats.

To view the flip book or download the fire safety in flats document, follow the link or scan the QR code.

<https://online.fliphtml5.com/nogg/zsfp>



How can we help prevent fires in housing?

Below you can watch a video from Zurich UK. The video was made to share information on how to prevent fires in your home. You can also find some information on fire safety and the full article from Zurich here... www.zurich.co.uk/news-and-insight/how-can-we-help-prevent-fires-in-housing

Gas Safety

Gas Safety

When requesting repairs during office hours, you will need to contact the Repairs Hotline. You can find out what to expect below.

This section explains what you need to do with your gas supply when you move into your new home and how we help keep you safe with our annual gas safety checks. There are also gas safety tips.

Annual gas and safety checks

Your safety is our main concern, and we do everything we can to ensure your safety, but we do need your help and co-operation. On average 30 people die every year from carbon monoxide poisoning. This is usually caused by gas appliances and flues that have not been properly installed or maintained.

As your landlord, we must by law ensure there is an annual service and safety check on all gas-fired appliances we own, such as gas fires, boilers, warm-air units and water heaters. This work should be done once within every 12 months. However, the Association operates gas servicing programme using the 'MOT system'. This allows us to service your gas heating system up to 2 months in advance of the expiry date and retain the original expiry date. Therefore, you may have your gas heating serviced more than once in a 12-month period.

You must allow us access to your home to do these safety checks on all the appliances and flues we provide. For your own safety, your full co-operation with this is vital. To ensure this is as convenient for you as it can be, the service engineer will contact you directly with an appointment. If this isn't convenient, you can

contact them to arrange another date and time.






If you do not allow us access to do this check, it is a breach of the conditions of your agreement. We will take action to gain access to, or retake possession of your home – this could mean you lose your home. You will have to pay our legal costs.


If you want to install a gas fire, you must get our permission first. The installation must be done by a Gas Safe registered engineer, and you will need to send us a copy of the CP12 safety certificate once it is fitted and annually thereafter. Please note that you are responsible for annual safety checks on your new fire, we are not responsible for the cost of any repairs or maintenance. You must call us to discuss the gas fire before you start any work.


You don't need our permission to fit a gas cooker, but you should get a Gas Safe registered person to do the work.

Gas Safety

If you smell gas **TAKE IMMEDIATE ACTION** by following these simple steps:

-  Put out all naked flames and cigarettes immediately.
-  Do not switch on any appliances, lights, doorbells or mobile phones.
-  Open all doors and windows and keep them open until the escape is stopped.
-  Check to see if your gas tap, fire or cooker has been turned on accidentally.
-  Check to see if any pilot lights have gone out.

 Turn off the gas supply – in most homes or properties the gas lever is next to the gas meter.

 Leave the property and calmly tell your neighbours about the problem.


Phone National Grid to report the escape on **0800 111 999**


Make sure you leave the area before using your mobile phone.

For more advice about gas leaks, what to do if you smell gas and how the gas emergency service works, go to the National Grid website: www.nationalgrid.co.uk.

Other precautions

Never use a gas appliance if you think it is not working properly. Signs to look out for include yellow or orange flames (except for fuel effect fires which do display those colour flames), soot or stains around the appliance, and pilot lights that often blow out.

 Never cover an appliance or block the convection air vents.

 Never block or obstruct any fixed ventilation grilles or air bricks.

 Never block or cover outside flues.

Carbon monoxide alarms are a useful precaution but do NOT regard them as a substitute for proper installation and maintenance of gas equipment by a Gas Safe registered installer. If you decide to buy a carbon monoxide alarm, ensure it meets current safety standards (BS7860 or BS EN 50291) and carries the kite mark.

If in doubt, ask a member of staff for advice. Always follow the manufacturer's fitting instructions.

Asbestos Awareness

Asbestos Awareness

When requesting repair during office hours, you will need to contact the Repairs Hotline. Discover more below.

Asbestos is the collective name for a group of fibrous minerals which are mechanically strong and resistant to heat, moisture and chemicals.

As a responsible landlord we appreciate that people who think they may have asbestos in their homes may be worried about the possible dangers.

Could my home contain asbestos?

It is not unusual to find asbestos in houses and flats as it was used extensively in the building industry until the mid-1980s, usually for fireproofing or heat and moisture resistance.

Properties built after 1990 are extremely unlikely to contain asbestos as the material was completely banned from 1993.

Asbestos cement has been widely used as a cladding material and can still be found in garages and sheds as well as panels and roof sheets.

Decorative coatings – some Artex and decorative coatings have been found to contain very small levels of asbestos fibre.

It is not always easy to tell whether a product contains asbestos as modern materials often look similar – remember it is usually older products that contain asbestos.

The only sure way to identify asbestos containing materials is by laboratory analysis.

What are the possible health risks?

Historically, it is people who have worked extensively with asbestos products, their families or people who lived near the factories which produced these products who have a significant risk of developing health problems.

Asbestos does not pose a risk to health where it is in good condition, undamaged and is managed properly.

You may like to think of it in the same way as electricity; it is a constant presence which is completely safe unless tampered with.

Could DIY or decorating disturb asbestos?

If asbestos-containing materials become damaged, there is a potential for asbestos fibres to be released.

We therefore have a responsibility to emphasise that as part of your agreement you must obtain permission before carrying out any building work such as modernisation or DIY.

We are able to advise you on any specific risks involved, and the suitable precautions to be taken.

If your home was constructed using traditional methods, i.e. brick/plaster, the risk of exposure while decorating will be negligible. In some properties, materials containing asbestos may have been used as pipe boxing, particularly in bathrooms or as inspection panels. Also some decorative coatings such as Artex sometimes used to contain small amounts of asbestos. If you discover a previously painted surface which is not wood, metal or brick, it should not be rubbed down but wetted and cleaned, prior to painting.

DIY projects require greater caution than decorating because they are more likely involve activities such as drilling or sanding down. These activities have the potential to release asbestos fibres.

You are advised not to undertake any work on material that you suspect to contain asbestos or attempt to remove asbestos materials yourself.

Remember

Asbestos does not pose a risk to health where it is in good condition, undamaged and is managed properly.

What to do if you find asbestos

If you come across asbestos containing products in your home, or that you believe may contain asbestos, it is important that you contact us immediately.

On receiving your report, we have a procedure in place for managing asbestos containing materials. This includes (if necessary) appointing our independent asbestos consultants, to carry out surveys and advise on the course of action to take in each individual case.

To comply with Health and Safety guidelines, we are identifying properties that may have a potential problem and have an effective asbestos management programme in place. This may include ensuring the material is sealed and monitored.

You should not be alarmed that properties contain asbestos, as these materials pose no risk to health if they are in good condition and are left undisturbed.

Anti-Social Behaviour

Anti-Social Behaviour

Anti-social Behaviour (ASB) can take many forms. ASB can be any unlawful behaviour or any action which causes disturbance, alarm or distress. Read more below to find out more about ASB and what can be done.

If you would like to report ASB, please follow the link below, scan the QR code or contact us on 0345 60 100 30

<https://forms.office.com/e/CQ8XSCHFLH>



Antisocial Behaviour can take many forms. These may include nuisance caused by animals; dumping of rubbish; business use that causes disturbance; inappropriate use of communal areas. It can also include noise, domestic abuse, aggression, harassment and hate crime, threatening or unlawful behaviour or any action that causes disturbance, alarm or distress. We have used both terms 'anti-social behaviour' (ASB) and 'nuisance' here – these terms are commonly used for any of these actions.

We want our estates to be safe and secure places to live and will neither tolerate nor condone antisocial behaviour. You can help by being considerate to those around you. All residents are responsible for the behaviour of household members and their visitors.

This section covers the range of behaviour and actions that may be defined as anti-social behaviour or nuisance. It suggests ways that you can prevent or resolve them as well as actions that we might take.






If you would like to view the ASB policy, please follow the link below, scan the QR code or contact us on 0345 60 100 30 for a copy.

<https://forms.office.com/e/CQ8XSCHFLH>







Being a ‘Good Neighbour’

Being a good neighbour means treating others as you would like to be treated yourself. You can avoid neighbour disputes or causing nuisance in the following ways:

-  Introduce yourself to the neighbours before you move in and warn them there might be some disturbance during the moving and settling in period.
-  Don't cause noise that can be heard outside the home at unreasonable hours. This includes noisy household and media equipment, slamming doors, swearing and fighting.
-  Tell your neighbours (or invite them) if you plan a party. Don't play music too loud and ask visitors to be quiet when they leave. If you follow these rules, occasional parties are fine, but frequent parties or loud groups of visitors in your home are unacceptable.
-  Keep your music player or TV at a reasonable volume at all times. Call on your neighbours to test what volume can be heard and mark the volume control with a piece of sticky tape to indicate the acceptable level.
-  Control your pets at home and on the estate – remember you must have our permission for anything except a small pet in a container. Don't leave dogs alone at home barking, nor let them run loose on foul the estate. Use the animal waste

disposal bins provided. In some extra care and supported housing stricter rules about pets apply. Please ask if in doubt.

-  Don't leave rubbish out on the wrong day or in the wrong place, nor allow it to build up in your garden or in communal areas. It can cause both an obstruction to passersby and encourage vermin.
-  Recycle as much as you can. On some estates communal bins are available for recycling. Please make sure that the correct waste is placed in the correct bin.
-  Don't drop litter on the estate. Take it home or put it in a bin.
-  Don't do major car repairs at your home or on the estate. Minor routine servicing is fine, so long as you don't play music too loud while you are doing it. And don't leave the car with music playing loudly, children shouting or the engine running. Clear up all oil and fuel spillages.
-  Be clear about where, and what type of vehicle, you may and may not park on the estate, and do not leave any vehicle untaxed or not roadworthy. Drive carefully, there may be cyclists, pedestrians or children playing.
-  Don't let children or young people play unsupervised on the estate or in communal areas in ways that could cause damage, danger, distress or nuisance.

Orwell's approach to preventing antisocial behaviour

We are committed to the elimination of all forms of antisocial behaviour and will neither condone nor tolerate it. We:

-  Train and update staff regularly to ensure they can act effectively to address all forms of antisocial behaviour.

- ▲ Have signed up to the government's voluntary Respect ASB Charter for Housing' which commitments around improving quality of life by tackling unacceptable behaviour either through prevention or taking action.
- ▲ Make physical improvements to estates to reduce the opportunity for nuisance and involve other agencies to support people or to help individuals remedy their behaviour.
- ▲ Include conditions in all our tenancy agreements requiring residents not to cause, or allow their household members or visitors to cause, any form of antisocial behaviour in or near our estates or offices.

Neighbour disputes





Although we will not hesitate to take action against residents who cause serious or persistent antisocial behaviour, we will not generally get involved in personal disputes between residents, where there is no clear 'right' or 'wrong', as this can often make matters worse. We consider a 'neighbour dispute' to be a disagreement about what is regarded as 'normal' or appropriate behaviour or actions, i.e. lifestyle issues, the effects of which are confined to the two parties. If we do get involved, we will try to:

- ▲ Listen to and understand both sides.
- ▲ Encourage an amicable approach.
- ▲ Help the tenants find a compromise solution acceptable to both.
- ▲ Arrange external mediation services, if appropriate.

What you could do if you suffer from nuisance

You should report to the police immediately any matter that involves assault, threatening behaviour or criminal activity. Tell your Housing Officer as soon as the Orwell office is open.








In other cases:

-  Endeavour to discuss the matter with the person concerned, if you feel safe and secure doing so. Then allow time for whatever you agreed to be put into practice.
-  Contact your Housing Officer for advice on how to deal with the matter yourself.
-  If the problem is persistent noise, you can report it to the Environmental Health Department at the local Council. If it is a one-off problem of excessive noise at night e.g. a party, this department has powers to attend immediately, but not all councils operate a night service.
-  If you cannot, or are fearful of, trying to resolve a nuisance problem yourself, or you consider it to be unlawful, significant, persistent, affecting many households or involves harassment, ask your Housing Officer to get involved.

What Orwell will do...

When you report nuisance or anti-social behaviour, we will ask some questions to identify how serious or persistent the matter is, how many households it affects and whether we feel you could try to resolve it yourself. We would offer advice about how to do this, and we will check later to see whether you have been successful.

Otherwise, we:

-  Will consider whether there is any risk to you, and if necessary, take immediate action to prevent this.
-  Will aim to contact you or visit you within 5 working days. If the problem appears to require urgent investigation e.g. harassment, serious and immediate risk, realistic threats of violence or physical abuse, unlawful activity. We will normally also visit the person, or parents of a child, you believe is causing the problem, and any witnesses that can be identified.
-  Will discuss and agree with you what needs to be done to resolve the problem.
-  Will discuss with you the various options for resolving the ASB, including what action could be taken and how long the various actions might take and the chances of success.
-  Will keep you regularly updated, providing emotional or other support if required. However, we cannot disclose any confidential details.
-  May involve other agencies such as the local Council, the Police, Schools, Community or Voluntary services.
-  May provide physical equipment to keep you safe and secure if there is a potential threat, but we will not normally move a person to escape anti-social behaviour, as this may be seen by the person causing the problem as a 'victory'. However, if after full consideration of the case a temporary move is considered necessary, we could do so urgently.

- ▲ Will ensure a staff member contacts you to check whether you are satisfied with the way the problem has been, or continues to be, dealt with.
- ▲ Keep full records of all nuisance and anti-social behaviour incidents reported and share it, as appropriate, with Police and other social landlords so that such behaviour can be tracked and dealt with.

Remedies that Orwell could use (alone or with others)

- ▲ We will use the following remedies to prevent or resolve antisocial behaviour and nuisance:
 - ▲ Try to reach an amicable solution to a neighbour dispute using external mediation services if appropriate.
 - ▲ Environmental Protection Act – working alone or with other agencies to prevent or resolve a statutory nuisance.
 - ▲ Temporary move or transfer – only used where there is threat of physical violence or a persistent and significant neighbour dispute cannot be resolved. Transfers must be dealt with in accordance with the transfer procedure.
 - ▲ Work in partnership with other agencies – to provide support to help a person recognise the problem and amend their own, or their child's, behaviour.
 - ▲ Acceptable Behaviour Contract (ABC) – a regularly reviewed agreement between Orwell and a person committing nuisance, usually but not always a child or young person, involving police and social services. A first step that, if breached, may lead to legal action.

- ▲ An injunction is a court order requiring a person to do, or to stop doing, something. It can be obtained, usually very rapidly, against any person aged 18 or over, not just Orwell residents. In exceptional cases involving violence or threats of violence an injunction may be granted without notice and may include a power of arrest. It can be used to protect a witness.
- ▲ Antisocial Behaviour Order and injunctions may be used against children aged 10 or over as well as against adults, for behaviour causing, or likely to cause, alarm or distress. We will work with the police and social services and, because it can only be used as a last resort where other measures, such as an ABC, have failed, as it can take time to prepare. Breach of this injunction is a criminal offence.
- ▲ Possession procedures – Orwell considers possession action a last resort for ASB, only appropriate where the residents themselves are committing, or willfully failing to prevent their household members or visitors committing, significant and persistent ASB or harassment.
- ▲ Absolute grounds for possession where ASB or criminality has been proven by a court.

We will also work with the Police and Local Authorities to assist them to take the following action:

- ▲ Criminal Behaviour Order
- ▲ Crime Prevention Injunctions
- ▲ Community Protection Orders
- ▲ Community Protection Notices
- ▲ Closure powers

- ▲ Direction powers
- ▲ Community triggers
- ▲ Community remedies

Taking Legal Action

If we need to take legal action, the following steps will be necessary:

- ▲ Try to resolve the problem appropriately before considering legal action.
- ▲ Record the process, including letters and notes of interviews/ phone calls, to demonstrate that effort was made but was unsuccessful.
- ▲ Identify, support and train witnesses both to keep evidence of the offensive behaviour, as well as to appear in court if necessary.
- ▲ Note that where there may be risk to a witness, a civil court may be willing to accept hearsay or anonymous evidence, and not require a witness to be identified or to appear in court.
- ▲ If we need help in court from you or from other witnesses, we will explain the court procedure and give you time to make the decision. If you agree, we will show you how to keep records and, if necessary, how to give evidence.
- ▲ When sufficient evidence is gathered, we will complete the paperwork and submit it to the Court.
- ▲ In most cases the Court serves notice of proceedings on the person and summons them to a hearing. See above regarding certain injunctions that may be heard without Notice. The case

subject has a right to respond and the response would be copied to us and all witnesses.

- ▲ In most legal action for ASB and nuisance we would use a solicitor.
- ▲ We will not apply to court if more appropriate action can be taken, such as criminal charges.

For legal action to be considered, sufficient evidence needs to be gathered. This process can take a long time and may not resolve the situation immediately.

Keeping Evidence

Keep a record or diary of problems as they occur. Be as specific as you can in recording names, times, locations, what actually happened and how it affected you.

- ▲ Include details of who else witnessed the problem.
- ▲ Information will be treated confidentially and your personal details will not be disclosed unless we have your permission.
- ▲ Evidence doesn't have to be in writing, it could be, for example, audio taped.

My Home Contents Insurance

My Home Contents Insurance

Why do I need it?

If you are a tenant who rents, it is unlikely your landlord will cover your contents as part of the tenancy agreement. It's a good idea to consider what a home contents insurance policy would cover you for in order to help you make an informed decision on whether you need one.

Contents insurance is designed to help protect your possessions. No matter how careful you are, there's always a risk that your belongings could be broken, damaged or stolen. To help you decide whether home contents insurance is right for you, Orwell Housing Association have teamed up with Thistle Tenant Risks, and Great Lakes Insurance UK Limited who provide the My Home Contents Insurance Scheme, a Tenants Contents Insurance policy designed for tenants living in social housing.

The My Home Contents Insurance Scheme can offer you insurance for the contents of your home including cover for items such as furniture, carpets, curtains, clothes, bedding, electrical items, jewellery, pictures and ornaments.

How do you get further information?

- ▲ Call Thistle Tenant Risks on 0345 450 7288
- ▲ Alternatively, please visit the www.thistlemyhome.co.uk for more information or to request a call back.

Limits and exclusions apply. A copy of the policy wording is available on request.

The National Housing Federation working in partnership with Thistle Insurance Services Ltd. Thistle Insurance Services Limited is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority

Firm Reference Number 310419. Registered in England under No. 00338645. Registered office: Rossington's Business Park, West Carr Road, Retford, Nottinghamshire, DN22 7SW. Thistle Insurance Services Ltd is part of the PIB Group.

It is important to protect your belongings, and your landlord suggests that you look for providers who are regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA). Thistle Insurance Services are a company that specialises in social housing contents insurance, however there are also other providers that can be found on comparison websites like Money Supermarket or Compare the Market.

Paying Rent and Charges

Paying Rent and Charges

This section explains how and when you should pay your rent.

- ▲ You must pay your rent and other accommodation charges in advance on the first day of each month.
- ▲ If you find it easier you can pay weekly or fortnightly but must always be a month ahead when you pay.
- ▲ At a few supported housing schemes the charge is due weekly, and we will tell you if this applies to you.
- ▲ When you first move in, we shall ask you to pay for the month ahead, for any amount not likely to be covered by benefit.

Should you get into difficulties paying your rent, please contact us as soon as possible so that we can provide you with advice and support.

You may pay your charges in the following ways:

- ▲ Direct Debit – Please contact us to setup a Direct Debit.
- ▲ Use the Orwell App and/or the [MyOrwell portal](#) on our website. Download the app from your preferred store front.
- ▲ Credit and debit cards over the telephone (0345 60 100 30).
- ▲ Through your bank, building society or post office account.
- ▲ Standing Order – you control this and must remember to change it when the rent changes.
- ▲ Paying-in slip over the counter – ask Orwell for a book of slips with your rent account reference. If you use your bank's own slip you must write your name and address clearly on the back or we will not know it is your payment.
- ▲ Direct payment to Orwell by the Housing Benefit department – remember this does not always cover all your charges and you must make up any difference yourself.
- ▲ Universal Credit payments.
- ▲ If you are eligible for any other funding this will usually be paid directly to Orwell by the Council. This arrangement may change in

future for some claimants – always check with staff.

What happens if you get behind with your rent or other charges?

- ▲ Rent statements are included within a number of our arrears letters to tenants. Tenants are also able to view their rent statements via Orwell's Portal, My Orwell.
- ▲ You should pay any amount owing straight away, and ensure you are paying for the month ahead rather than at the end. If you disagree with the figures, contact your Housing Officer immediately.
- ▲ If your housing related benefit has changed, or not yet been paid since you claimed, it is your responsibility to check it out and to pay on time any amounts not included or not likely to be included.
- ▲ We monitor accounts regularly and will contact you as soon as you miss or reduce your regular payment or if your housing related benefit stops or reduces.

Preventing and Paying off Arrears

If you have, or believe you will have, difficulties paying your rent (or your wellbeing charge in extra care or supported housing), or you are already in arrears, speak to staff straight away. You can contact us by telephone, or email or if you prefer, we can make an arrangement to visit you.

Rent and Service Charges

The payment you make to Orwell each month or week includes rent and sometimes also a service charge. The way your charges are set takes account of Orwell's costs and of the requirements of our regulators.

The way they are changed each year will depend on the type of tenancy you have.

The majority of charges are due on the 1st of each month. However, some agreements have weekly charges. Your agreement shows you the charges you have to pay at the start of your tenancy, and how these may be changed.

What are the different charges and how are they set?

Rents:

The way in which the rent is determined for your home will depend on a number of factors:

- ▲ The type of occupancy agreement you have.
- ▲ When the property was acquired or built.
- ▲ The housing regulator's guidance on how rents are set.
- ▲ Statutory requirements.

Rent covers:

- ▲ The cost of building properties, loans, mortgages and grant repayment.
- ▲ The costs of maintenance, repair, external decoration, refurbishment and improvements.
- ▲ Our management costs, for example letting properties or dealing with accounts.

Service Charges:

These are for additional items not included in rent. They directly reflect our costs providing them to your home, and we try to keep them as reasonable as possible. We will consult you about proposed major changes to the services provided, or when a new service is proposed. Service charges may cover for example:

- ▲ Estate staff.
- ▲ Communal gardening, cleaning and window cleaning.
- ▲ Heating and lighting of communal areas.
- ▲ Servicing and replacement of communal equipment - e.g. lifts, door entry systems, fire alarms etc.
- ▲ Administration regarding all the above.

In some extra care, and supported housing:

- ▲ Recuperation on the provision of furniture and white goods.
- ▲ Heating, hot water, electricity, water, sewerage to your home. This is not eligible for Housing Benefit – see below.
- ▲ Council Tax.

Not all services are eligible for Housing Benefits.

Support / Well-being Charges

These cover additional “Housing Related Support” to help a tenant maintain their tenancy and benefit from their home, usually in extra care or supported housing. They can cover for example:

- ▲ Help with sorting out your new home if you need to move home.
- ▲ Help and advice about claiming benefits.
- ▲ Understanding official letters and forms.
- ▲ Support in dealing with paying the bills and other arrears.
- ▲ Helping you communicate with other services.
- ▲ Support to sort things out so they don't get worse and you do not lose your home.

Subsidy may be provided to cover the cost of support/wellbeing depending on income.

Support/well-being is not covered by Housing Benefit.

How your charges are changed

Assured Tenancies:

Full Assured and Assured periodic rent increase:

- ▲ Normally take effect on 1st January each year.
- ▲ Must not occur more than once each year.
- ▲ There is a clause in the tenancy agreement permitting a rent review within the first year.
- ▲ Depending on the agreement and when it commenced, give one month's notice in writing or on a 'Statutory Form'
- ▲ Allow a 'Right to Appeal' against an increase (except during the first year) to a First Tier Tribunal Property Chamber Residential Property.
- ▲ Assured Shorthold tenants also have a right to appeal against the initial rent during the first six months of the tenancy but not annual reviews.

Secure Tenancies:

You are a secure tenant if:

- ▲ You were first granted a tenancy by Orwell for self contained property before 15 January 1989.
- ▲ You have kept that tenancy or moved directly to another Orwell property since that date.
- ▲ You inherited, exchanged or assigned into your home where the previous tenant had been a secure tenant.
- ▲ Rents and service charges for Secure tenants:
 - ▲ Are set every two years by the Independent Rent Service.
 - ▲ Are referred to as 'registered' or 'Fair' rents.
 - ▲ May occur at any time of the year.
 - ▲ Take account of Orwell's application to the Rent service for

the same rent set by Orwell for assured rents.

- ▲ Take no account of your personal or financial circumstances and the value of any improvements to your home that you have made yourself.
- ▲ You can ask for a consultation with the Rent Officer before a decision is made on the rent.
- ▲ You can appeal if you don't agree with the rent.
- ▲ If the Rent Officer decision differs from Orwell's application, we will charge whichever is lower.
- ▲ Orwell will give you one month's notice of the increase, the amount and the start date.

Appealing against your rent to an independent body

Both Secure and Assured tenants have a right to appeal against Orwell's rent and service charge increases.

- ▲ This does not apply to assured rent increases during the first year, but shorthold tenants can apply during the first 6 months against the initial rent set.
- ▲ Orwell will send you guidance and an appeal form if you are able to appeal.
- ▲ Further information can be found at www.justice.gov.uk/tribunals/residential-property or contact:

Eastern Region
First Tier Property Tribunal
Unit 4c Quern House
Mill Court
Great Shelford
Cambridge
CB22 5LD
Telephone: 0845 1002616 or 01223 841524
Email rpeastern@hmcts.gsi.goc.uk

Check for further information at www.rpts.gov.uk

Passing on your
tenancy to
someone else

Passing on your tenancy to someone else

Certain Orwell tenants have rights in particular circumstances to pass their home and the tenancy that goes with it to another person.

Passing on a tenancy to a husband, wife, partner or to a certain family member on your death is called 'succession'.

Transferring your current tenancy to such a person, for example, when you move to another home and pass your current home and your agreement to an adult son or daughter, is called 'assignment'.

You may also be able to pass your home and your tenancy by way of a 'mutual exchange'. This means two or more households swap with each other.

Automatic passing on of your tenancy

If you are a joint tenant your tenancy will continue to the other joint tenant when you die.

If you pass your tenancy to someone in your will we would apply to the court to end the tenancy unless the person is qualified to succeed in the ways described below.

Persons who may be qualified to succeed to or be assigned a tenancy

- ▲ Partner/civil partner – e.g. husband or wife, co-habitees and partners and same sex partners.
- ▲ Family Member – e.g. parents, grandparents, children, grandchildren, brothers and sisters, uncles and aunts, nephews and nieces. Step and half relatives are treated in the same way as full blood relatives.
- ▲ In some circumstances Orwell may consider permitting

succession to others e.g. a carer or a lifelong friend who has lived with the tenant for at least 12 months and has no other home. Each case will be looked at on its own merits.

- ▲ You should refer to your own tenancy agreement to see your succession rights.

Different Assignment and Succession rights for different tenancies

Even if it is not a joint tenancy, so long as the tenancy (or a former tenancy from which you took your current tenancy as a mutual exchange) had not already passed on in this way previously, the following rights of succession and assignments apply:

To a partner who lives with the tenant as their main home at the time of the death or of the application to take over the tenancy.

- ▲ Secure and full assured tenancies have these rights but note that for assured extra care tenancies granted after 1st January 2008, if the partner does not need or want the support, and or care we would seek to move them to a more suitable home.
- ▲ Most shorthold and ‘starter’ tenancies do not have the right to assign, and the Association would end the tenancy following an ‘inappropriate’ succession to a partner. We would provide full details of our reasons. ‘Market rented’ shorthold tenants should check with their Housing Officer.
- ▲ Demoted tenancy – succession only applies if the partner has lived with the tenant for at least 12 months. No other succession and no assignment is permitted.

To a family member who has lived with the tenant as their main home for at least 12 months before the death or the application to take over the tenancy. The family member must be able to prove their residence. Orwell would seek to move the family member to more suitable accommodation if the home was ‘unsuitable’.

- ▲ Secure and full assured tenancies have these rights but note that assured extra care housing tenancies granted after 1st January 2008 do not have the right of succession or assignment to family members.
- ▲ Most of the Association's shorthold and 'starter' tenancies do not have the rights of succession or assignment to family members.
- ▲ A Tenancy may also be assigned by Court action e.g in divorce or separation proceedings. The Association's consent is not required but please pass a copy of the Property Transfer Order to your Housing Officer immediately.

Consent

- ▲ A household member must advise us as soon as possible after the tenant's death and provide further information to enable us to confirm whether anyone is entitled to succeed.
- ▲ You must seek written approval from the Association to assign, but consent will not be unreasonably refused.
- ▲ If there is more than one claim to succeed, a partner will have priority over a family member.
- ▲ If there is more than one family member entitled and claiming succession, and agreement cannot be reached between themselves, then the Association will decide or may ask a court to do so.
- ▲ Where we have a right to do so, we may ask the successor or assignee to move to more suitable alternative accommodation.
- ▲ We may end the tenancy where there is no right to succeed or to assign.
- ▲ In certain cases we will grant a new tenancy instead.
- ▲ In extra care housing we will ask a successor to sign a support contract.
- ▲ Arrears and responsibility for breaches on the former tenancy will continue where a tenancy passes to a successor or assignee.

Procedures

- ▲ In the case of a qualifying succession, we will endorse the tenancy agreement to confirm the succession.
- ▲ Before any formal assignment of the tenancy can take place, you must receive Orwell's written consent.
- ▲ To validate the assignment, the Association and the assignee must sign a 'Licence to Assign Tenancy' to confirm the passing of the tenancy, and the tenant and the assignee must sign a Deed of Assignment of Tenancy, that protects the former tenant from responsibility for breaches by the assignee.
- ▲ An assignment will not be lawful until these documents are signed before the change takes place.

Joint Tenancies – Sharing your Tenancy

Joint Tenancies – Sharing your Tenancy

Depending on the tenancy type some Orwell tenants have a right to have someone else living with them as part of their household, or with Orwell's consent, to sub-let part of their home (but not all of it) or to take a lodger.

This section explains how joint tenancies may start and end, and what you need to do if you want to increase your household, take a lodger or sub tenant.

Joint Tenancies

If you have signed your tenancy with another person, then you are 'joint tenants' and share both the rights and the responsibilities equally. You are responsible for your own, and for your joint tenant's actions. Orwell could pursue either or both joint tenants for arrears or about other breaches of the tenancy agreement.

Orwell would normally offer a joint tenancy if a joint housing application has been received.

We will not grant joint tenancies:

- ▲ If a sole application is received from the Council.
- ▲ In extra care or supported housing, unless both persons need the support.

If you have a partner, but your application for housing with the Council is not a joint application, they can still share your home but will not be included in the legal tenancy.

Orwell will apply similar principles where an existing tenant asks for another person to share their tenancy. However, the law regarding

combining or separating tenancies is complex and a change to the formal tenants will require legal documentation to remove a person, and a new tenancy to be granted to enable an additional person to be joined in.

We may refuse to grant a new joint tenancy for any reason, but would normally do so if:

- ▲ There are rent arrears, other breaches, or a court order.
- ▲ Your partner has not lived in your home as their principle home for at least 12 months.

Relationship breakdown

When people who are joint tenants split up, Orwell has no power to change the tenancy to the sole name of one or other of the tenants, unless they agree between themselves or get a Court Order to define this. Until one tenant can be formally removed from the tenancy agreement, it continues in joint names and both the rights, e.g. security of tenure, and the responsibilities. For rent arrears, continue to apply to either and to both tenants.

An injunction and some other types of order can be granted by a court to protect a person from domestic abuse. This may include temporarily preventing a tenant from entering their own home, but does not itself separate the tenancy. An additional order is required to separate the tenancy.

A joint tenancy can be separated in the following ways:

A tenancy may be separated by the Court through the Family Law Act, which applies both to married and to cohabiting couples, or through separation, divorce or child custody proceedings. The decision of the Court is binding on Orwell. When you provide us with a copy of the Property Adjustment Order we will amend the agreement to reflect it.

- ▲ If one joint tenant leaves and agrees that his or her interest in the tenancy be transferred to the remaining tenant's sole name. Legal documents must be signed by the Association and by both joint tenants.
- ▲ If one joint tenant leaves but disappears without making any arrangement the joint tenancy continues. It may be possible for the remaining tenant to end the whole tenancy and for Orwell to grant a new sole tenancy of the same type. But we can only do so if the remaining tenant:
 - ▲ Gives sufficient notice to avoid the need for both to sign.
 - ▲ Is eligible for a new tenancy.
 - ▲ Makes a legal declaration that the departed joint tenant intended this.

Contact your Housing Officer for full information about the options before either joint tenant leaves.

Sharing your home with other people

Short hold and starter tenancies do not permit sharing of the home with any person other than those who Orwell agreed could move in with you at the start.

New household members

If you are a secure, full assured or fixed term tenant and anyone joins you to live as part of your household after you move in, you should advise your Housing Officer. This includes a new family member. This is because Orwell needs to be sure your household is not overcrowded, and also because a new partner or family member may eventually gain a right to take over the tenancy if you die or move out, so we need to keep a record.

We do not normally permit extra household members to join tenants

after they move in to extra care or supported housing.

Lodgers

A lodger is someone who:

- ▲ shares your home with you.
- ▲ eats or shares household tasks with you (perhaps).
- ▲ pays you an economic charge.

If you are an Orwell secure, full assured or fixed term tenant (except in extra care housing) you have a right to take a lodger to share your home with you, so long as you let us know beforehand the name, age and sex of the intended lodger, where they will sleep and how much they will pay.

Sub Tenants

A sub-tenant is a person who:

- ▲ rents their own independent space in your home.
- ▲ looks after themselves.
- ▲ has a formal economic relationship with you.
- ▲ has legal rights regarding his or her stay at your home.

You may not sublet the whole of your home and few of Orwell's properties have space, facilities or layout to enable a part to be sublet. You may never sublet the whole of your home and may only sublet part of it if you have a secure or full assured tenancy that started before 1st January 2008, and you must have Orwell's consent to do so.

Implications of taking additional household members, lodgers or sub tenants

You are responsible for the behaviour of everyone at your home. Bad behaviour of anyone can put your own tenancy at risk.

- ▲ Rent, charges or other contributions that they give you may reduce your Housing Benefit. If you receive Housing Benefit you must tell the Local Council's housing benefit office immediately.
- ▲ If your tenancy ends, everyone must leave.
- ▲ You must not allow your home to become overcrowded. Your tenancy agreement shows the number of people Orwell allows to live there.
- ▲ Orwell will not take account of the presence of any lodger or sub tenant if we consider you for a transfer.

Mutual Exchange

Mutual exchange

Most Orwell residents have the right to swap their home, and the tenancy that goes with it, with that of another Council or Housing Association household. i.e. two or more households swap with each other. This is called 'mutual exchange'.

This is often the quickest and easiest way to achieve a move to somewhere more suitable for you.

Orwell tenancies are not all the same. Strict rules apply to mutual exchange and may apply differently to certain tenancies or types of housing. For example, residents of supported, extra care housing.

If you would like to register for our home exchange, then please use our registration form below and leave your details. You can also view the available properties below and if you find something you like, fill in the attached form.

If you would like to register for a Mutual Exchange, scan the QR code, visit the website below or call 0345 60 100 30

www.orwell-housing.co.uk/mutual-exchange



Who has a right to exchange

Orwell's secure, full assured and fixed term residents can undertake a mutual exchange (a swap) with another social housing residents. This includes residents of ours or another Housing Association's, a Council and some other social housing providers or charities.

For secure residents this is their right and for other residency types this is a contractual agreement.

Residents of extra care housing can only exchange with a person who also needs the support service and special facilities.




Most of our shorthold residents do not have this right, although in exceptional cases we may permit it in supported housing, so long as each resident needs the support provided by each landlord and agrees to sign a support contract.

Consent from the Landlord is needed before arranging an exchange

The written consent of both landlords is required and there are various reasons why consent may not be given. For secure tenancies, the reasons for refusal are set down in law. Generally, we will use the same reasons for full assured tenancies, but do have certain rights to extend these or to interpret them more flexibly.

Conditional consent may be given, that you can exchange, providing you remedy any problems identified in the property before the exchange takes place.

Reasons for refusing an exchange

-  A notice of seeking possession has been issued or possession proceedings are being taken.
-  Legal action for anti-social behaviour is pending or has been taken, or, in the case of some Orwell assured tenancies, there is evidence of recent and serious anti-social behaviour by either household.
-  The exchange would result in under-occupation or overcrowding of the property. Your tenancy agreement

shows the maximum number of persons for your home and the exchange partner will have the same information about their home.

- ▲ The accommodation is reserved for specific people (e.g. people with a disability or those needing extra care or supported housing) and the exchange is with someone who does not meet the criteria.
- ▲ The property is covered by a planning obligation and is reserved for people from the local area and the exchange partner does not meet the criteria.

Reasons for permitting an exchange on conditions

- ▲ If you have rent arrears or have broken any other obligation of the agreement, such as damage or neglect to your home, or unauthorised alterations, we will require any breach of agreement to be remedied, prior to granting consent.
- ▲ In certain cases, we may require that you sort out any legal issues e.g. an original joint tenant no longer lives with you but has not arranged to assign his or her interest in the tenancy to you.

Finding an exchange partner

- ▲ Apply through an online exchange service or through a local Choice Based Letting Scheme.
- ▲ Apply to go on our exchange register, a form for which is available from the offices. We will advise you of any suitable exchange partners on this list and will tell them about you.
- ▲ Contact the Council and other Housing Associations in the area you wish to move to.

Checking the other property and tenancy

- ▲ If you find details of a property that suits your needs, or a possible exchange partner approaches you, make

arrangements to visit each other's property to see if they suit both your needs.

- ▲ Remember that you swap the type and terms of contract agreements as well as the property. For example, if you swap with a Council tenant or some Housing Association secure tenants, you might gain and they would lose the Right to Buy. Your assured tenancy might offer you greater rights than another Association's assured tenancy and if you are a secure tenant you might lose the right to have an independently registered rent review.
- ▲ Ensure you check and advise whether pets are allowed, discuss the rents charged and what other services are provided and must be paid for.
- ▲ If you get a copy of your exchange partners' tenancy agreement your Housing Officer can help you consider such matters.

Applying for permission from the Landlord

- ▲ Once you have found somebody to exchange with, you will need to complete an application to 'exchange homes form', a copy of which can be obtained from our office.
- ▲ When we receive your application, we will check that there are no reasons for refusal. We will visit you at home to ensure there is nothing to prevent you exchanging, or to require conditional approval.
- ▲ We send a housing application form to the other residents, and when we get it back, we check to ensure they and your home would be suitable. If the exchange partner is local, we will also visit them.
- ▲ If your exchange partner is not an Orwell tenant, we will contact their landlord to ensure there are no reasons for refusal, or for making consent conditional, and we will advise the landlord of any of these reasons that may affect your tenancy. See 'Reasons for refusing an exchange' above.

- ▲ Before the exchange is approved, your Housing Officer will complete a checklist of the condition of your home, together with a list of fixtures and fittings. This is used to clarify the condition of the property prior to the exchange. This information is shared with the incoming resident and mutual agreement is reached with each resident regarding the condition of the respective homes being 'as seen'.
- ▲ If both landlords agree an exchange, or if conditional, as soon as the problems have been remedied by the residential, a date for the exchange to take place can be agreed by all parties.

Internet based mutual exchange schemes

HomeSwapper and House Exchange are two of the country's largest internet based mutual exchange schemes.

Simply register online at www.HomeSwapper.co.uk or Houseexchange.org.uk. From here, they search for all possible matches every day and send you alerts by email or text message.

These schemes may be accessible through your local Choice Based Letting Scheme.

Am I eligible to join?

Most social residents can use [these schemes](#). The service is **free** to residents of landlords partnering with HomeSwapper and House Exchange, otherwise there is a small membership fee which may be refunded to you by Orwell if requested.

Guidance for pet owners







Guidance for Pet Owners

We hope you find this guidance useful. It has been written following work undertaken by the Orwell Residents Group.

Research shows for pet ownership, there are several proven health benefits for people, including physical, mental and emotional improvements.

It is also recognised that pet ownership can be a means to improving your socialisation skills, especially when meeting and interacting with other pet owners.

However, choosing to become a pet owner should be carefully considered. You will need to:

-  Be aware of the commitment needed to care for a pet.
-  Avoid impulsive decisions about obtaining a pet and think of a pet that is suited to your home and lifestyle.
-  Recognise that having a pet requires a lot of time and money.
Ensure pets are properly identified where appropriate (i.e., tags, microchips).
-  Prevent a pet from upsetting other people, animals and the environment, including proper waste disposal, noise control, and not allowing pet(s) to stray or become feral.
-  Make alternative arrangements if caring for the pet is no longer possible or you are going to be away from home.
-  Irresponsible pet ownership can cause suffering to animals and be a nuisance to your neighbours.
-  Click on the link below if you would like to apply for a pet.

If you would like to apply for a pet, please scan the QR code or follow the link below to complete our online form. You can also call 0345 60 100 30.



www.orwell-housing.co.uk/pet-application

Orwell's commitment

- ▲ To act fairly and non-discriminatory.
- ▲ To consider the physical, emotional, and mental wellbeing of our customers when making a decision about whether a pet can be kept.
- ▲ To ensure reasons are provided in writing should consent to keep a pet not be approved giving clear reasons why permission was refused.
- ▲ To provide advice on rehoming if approval is refused in relation to an existing pet.
- ▲ To consider each customer on a case-by-case basis.
- ▲ To ensure different property types are considered with decision making and all customers within the area are taken into account.
- ▲ To maintain guidelines detailing what is meant by responsible pet ownership.
- ▲ We will not grant permission for any dogs which are listed on the Dangerous Dogs Act.
- ▲ To take prompt action should any complaints be made about pets in line with our Anti-Social Behaviour Policy & Procedure.

Other Acts and Orders that could affect Orwell's permission being granted are:

- ▲ Animal Welfare Act 2006.

- ▲ Control of Dogs Order 1992.
- ▲ Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Keeping a pet

Whilst Orwell is supportive of tenants keeping pets, your Tenancy Agreement contains clauses which you must follow.

Tenancy Agreements can vary, so please seek advice from your housing officer.

Orwell's consent is not required to keep small fish, a small bird or small animal in a suitable container. Consent is not required for a registered assistance dog, however, please make us aware if you require one.

Tenants must not keep other pets that Orwell has not granted permission for.

Orwell will not grant consent for any pet that it considers in its discretion:

- ▲ May harm the premises, the common areas or any building of which the premise form part.
- ▲ May cause nuisance, injury or a trip hazard.
- ▲ May present a health risk.
- ▲ Is not suitable for the premises.

Where Orwell grants consent or where consent is not required, any animal kept must be adequately cared for and kept under control.

Failure to seek consent, controlling your pet or not abiding by any reasonable conditions of consent may cause Orwell to withdraw its consent. This result may require the removal of some or all of the pets immediately and permanently.

Orwell can choose to withdraw consent or require the removal of pets if:

- ▲ You fail to seek consent prior to getting a pet.
- ▲ You fail to abide by the conditions of consent.
- ▲ You are not able to control your pet.
- ▲ The pet becomes a regular nuisance to neighbours.

Orwell may charge you for cleaning or repair services for any damage caused by a pet you are responsible for.

Pets generally considered to be suitable include:

- ▲ Cats and dogs.
- ▲ Smaller caged animals including rabbits, hamsters, guinea pigs etc.
- ▲ Small birds such as canaries and budgerigars.
- ▲ Fish.
- ▲ Snakes and reptiles, insects and spiders but these must not be poisonous.

Permission to keep a dog or a cat in certain types of property may be refused, for example if there is no direct access to a garden.

Do you need permission to keep a pet?

You will need to complete an application form to keep any pets other than those outlined in this document as generally not needing an application. However, should you wish to keep more than a few small pets normally not requiring an application form, we would advise you to complete one. This is so that the suitability of additional pets can be assessed.

You will not be allowed to keep the pet you are applying for until





an application has been completed and approved by your housing officer.

The application form contains a declaration to confirm that you understand your responsibilities as a pet owner. Please remember that if you do break any condition of your tenancy, your home will be at risk.


Permission will not be granted for animals considered as 'livestock' including cattle, sheep, goats, swine, horses, or poultry.

Usually, every attempt would be made to resolve complaints informally.

However, if this fails, then more formal action will be considered. For example:


-  Use mediation to resolve complaints between neighbours.
-  Withdrawing permission to keep a pet.
-  Involve statutory organisations such as Environmental Health or voluntary organisations such as the RSPCA.
-  Seek a court injunction or possession of your home.

What should I do if I suspect cruelty or neglect of a pet?

-  **RSPCA** - If you suspect cruelty or neglect of a pet, you can report it to your housing officer or contact the RSPCA directly on 0300 1234 999 or visit their website www.rspca.org.uk

Who to contact if I need to rehome my pets?

-  **BLUE CROSS & RSPCA** - The RSPCA can help give advice and support or you could also contact Blue Cross on 0300 777 1897 or visit their website www.bluecross.org.uk.

 **THE CINNAMON TRUST** - The Cinnamon Trust is a National Charity for the elderly, the terminally ill and their pets. If you need to rehome your pet you can contact the Cinnamon Trust by calling 01736 757 900 or visiting their website www.cinnamon.org.uk/contact-us/



If you would like this leaflet in another
language or format please email
comms@orwell-housing.co.uk
or call 0345 60 100 30

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