



First Choice Housing Association

# Tenant Handbook



**Welcome  
to your  
new home**



[fcha.org.uk](http://fcha.org.uk)

# First Choice's Mission

Improving quality of life through provision of quality, bespoke accommodation that enables tenants to achieve independence, fulfil their potential and optimise enjoyment of life, and allows staff and family to be part of that journey.



From 1st December 2022 tenants in Wales were given Occupation Contracts. Tenants in England still have Tenancy Agreements. Occupation Contracts in this document will also refer to Tenancy Agreements.

**First Choice is committed to the principles of equality and diversity as an employer and landlord. If you feel that you have been treated unfairly, please contact Customer Services on 029 2070 3758.**

# Introduction to your tenancy handbook



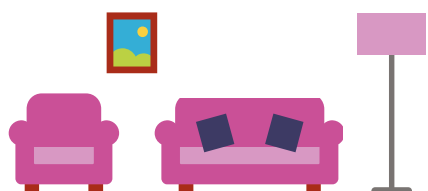
**This book tells you the things you need to know about living in your home and First Choice Housing Association Ltd.**

## **You can also get more information from:**

- Your occupation contract
- The video 'Your First Choice Home' available on our website: [www.fcha.org.uk](http://www.fcha.org.uk)
- The Repairs File - 'Getting Things Fixed'
- First Choice website: [www.fcha.org.uk](http://www.fcha.org.uk)

First Choice will treat the Welsh and English languages on the basis of equality. A full copy of our Welsh Language Scheme and a Welsh version of this document is available on request.

**// Please contact the Association if you require this information in another language or format.**



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# Section 1: First Choice Housing Association Ltd

## 1.1 First Choice Housing Association

- We buy and build houses for people to live in and have properties all over Wales and also in Shropshire, Shrewsbury and Telford.
- As well as general needs housing we provide housing for people with a disability, veterans and others who require specialised accommodation.

## 1.2 Respect for tenants

### First Choice will:

- treat tenants as individuals
- respect tenants' beliefs
- listen to tenants' views
- treat tenants well





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## 1.3 How to find out what we know about you

First Choice will make sure that any information we have about you is kept safe on our computers. We will not tell anyone else anything about you, unless we have to by law.

**// If you want to know what information First Choice has about you, you can telephone us or you can write to us and ask us to show you.**

If you think First Choice has talked about you, and you are unhappy about it, you can make a complaint.

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## 1.4 Making a complaint

If you are unhappy about the service you get from First Choice you can make a complaint. If you are approaching First Choice for a service for the first time, e.g. reporting a repair request, then this policy does not apply.

If you need help to make a complaint you can ask other people to help you. For example you could ask your support staff, an advocate, a friend, a family member or the Citizens Advice Bureau.



# Here is our two step guide to making a complaint to us:

1

Telephone, email or write to us. We will try to sort your complaint out as quickly as possible.

**Our phone number:**

(029) 2070 3758

Option 1

**Our address:**

First Choice Housing  
Association Ltd.  
10 Village Way,  
Greenmeadow Springs,  
Tongwynlais, Cardiff,  
CF15 7NE

**Our email address:**

[customerservices  
@fcha.org.uk](mailto:customerservices@fcha.org.uk)

2

If you are not happy with the way that we have dealt with your complaint you can ask us to look at it again.





# Ombudsman

**If we do not succeed in resolving your complaint, you may complain to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.**

The Ombudsman is independent and can look into your complaint if you believe that you have been treated unfairly or received a bad service.

**// The Ombudsman expects you to bring your concerns to our attention first and to give us a chance to put things right.**

**You can contact the Ombudsman by:**

**Phone:** 0300 790 0203

**Email:** [ask@ombudsman-wales.org.uk](mailto:ask@ombudsman-wales.org.uk)

**Web:** [www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk](http://www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk)

**Write to:** Public Services Ombudsman for Wales,  
1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae, Pencoed, CF35 5LJ





# Section 2: Your Occupation Contract

## 2.1 Your occupation contract

When you moved in to your home you were given an occupation contract. A contract is a legal document which tells you what your rights and responsibilities are.

- Your rights are things that you can expect First Choice to do.
- Your responsibilities are the things that you must do.

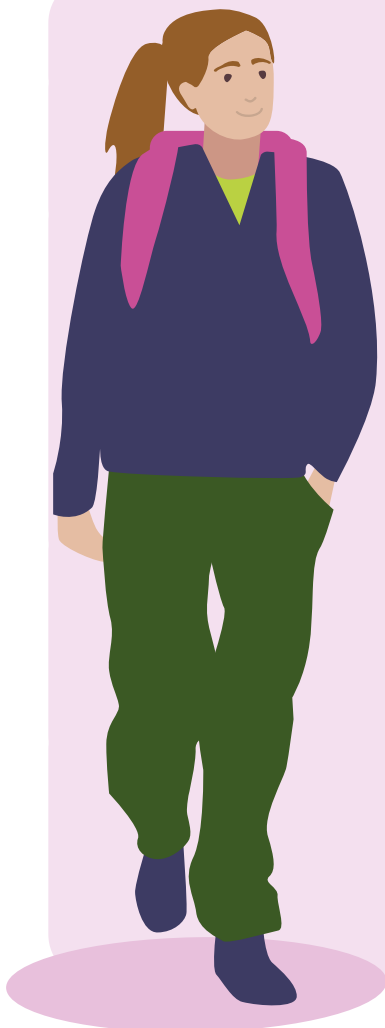
If you have a secure contract you can stay in your home as long as you wish, provided you do not break the rules. You can only be evicted from your home by a court order. This could be due to anti-social behaviour or rent arrears.

If you have a supported contract First Choice can give you two months' notice to end the tenancy. It is, however, unlikely that this will happen.



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## 2.2 Your rights



### These are your main rights:

- You have the right to live in peace and quiet in your home.
- You have the right to have a home that is in a good condition, fit for human habitation and to get things fixed by First Choice when repairs are required.
- You have the right to have good, clear information about First Choice and your home.
- You have the right to complain to First Choice if you are not happy with our services.

If you want to know more about your rights please look at your occupation contract and the tenant information video **'Your First Choice Home'** available on our website [www.fcha.org.uk](http://www.fcha.org.uk).

**// Please contact us if you need advice.  
We are here to help you maintain your  
home and tenancy.**



## 2.3 Your responsibilities

These are your main responsibilities:

- You **must** pay your rent.
- You **must** tell First Choice when things need to be fixed.
- You **must** allow First Choice's contractors into your home to fix things that are broken and carry out major repairs. Major repairs are things like putting in a new kitchen.
- You **must not** damage your home.
- You or your visitors **must not** behave badly towards the people you live with, your neighbours or people visiting the area where you live.
- You **must not** make changes to your home unless First Choice agrees in advance.



If you want to know more about your responsibilities please look at your occupation contract and the tenant information video '**Your First Choice Home**' available on our website [www.fcha.org.uk](http://www.fcha.org.uk).



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## 2.4 Breaking your occupation contract

If you break the rules in your occupation contract you could be evicted – made to leave your home. Only a court of law can evict you from your home.

**// First Choice will always try very hard to make sure that you get the help and support you need to stay in your home.**

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## 2.5 Moving out of your home

**If you are going to move out of your home you must do these things:**

- Write and tell us four weeks before you move. This is called 'a period of notice' and is part of your responsibilities in your occupation contract.
- Pay your rent for the four week period of notice.
- Leave your home in a clean and tidy condition and take all your belongings with you.
- Repair any damage you have done to your home.
- Make sure that the decoration in your bedroom is in a good condition.



# Section 3: Maintenance & Repairs – Getting Things Fixed

The Association will provide and maintain dry, warm and healthy homes for all of our tenants by ensuring that homes are protected from deterioration and damage to a standard that is fit for human habitation (FFHH) which is set out in the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016.



## 3.1 First Choice's responsibilities

First Choice is responsible for keeping the structure of your home in a good condition, unless damage has been caused by you or someone else in the property.

### This includes:

- Roofs, chimneys, kitchens, windows and doors.
- Drains.
- Repairing and cleaning gutters, rain water pipes, gas and plumbing systems.
- Baths and toilets.
- Heating and hot water supplies.





**// If you have a support provider they may do these things for you and charge you through a service charge.**

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## 3.2 Your responsibilities

You are responsible for maintaining your home to a reasonable standard.

### This includes:

- Making sure that you use the heating and ventilation properly to keep your home free from condensation.
- Keeping sinks and waste pipes clear from debris and blockages, e.g. food waste in kitchens or soap residue in bathrooms.
- Replacing door locks if you lose your keys.
- Replacing domestic fuses and resetting trip switches.
- Keeping smoke detectors clean and free from dust.
- Keeping wall vents and extractor fans clean and free from dust.
- Keeping your garden tidy and cutting back trees.



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### 3.3 The Repairs File

First Choice provides all properties with a 'Getting Things Fixed' file. If you have an email address this will be sent to you to be saved on your computer.

First Choice will also send you copies of important certificates e.g. Landlords Gas Safety Certificate.

**// Out of hours emergency repairs are dealt with by a company called Delta. Contact our office on 029 2070 3758 and we will connect you to them.**

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### 3.4 Paying for repairs

First Choice will pay for repairs to your home.



**But if you break something by accident or on purpose you must pay for that yourself.**



### 3.5 Who does the repairs and maintenance?

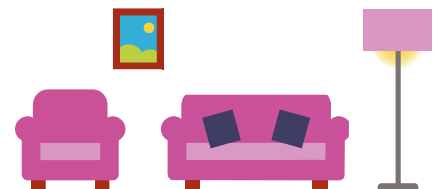
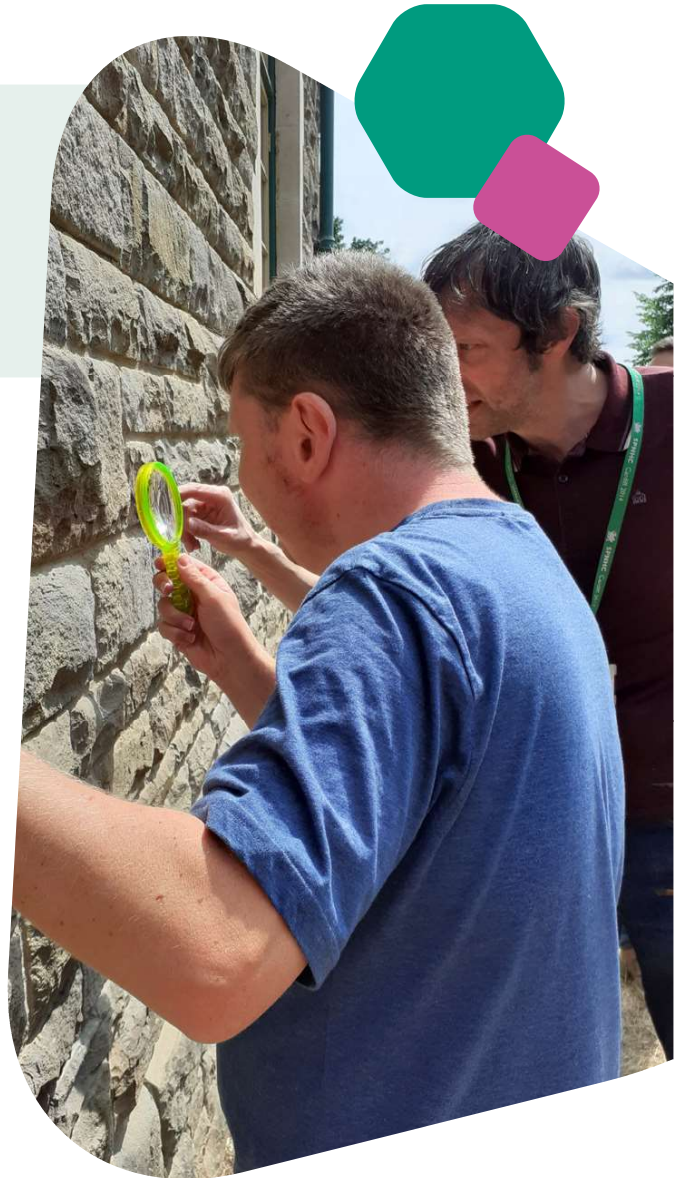
First Choice contractors carry out repairs to your home. When you phone to report a repair, we will agree a suitable appointment with you (either a morning 8.30am – 12.30pm or afternoon 12pm – 5pm) unless it is an emergency repair.



**If it is an emergency a contractor will come within 24 hours.**

**// It is very important that you are at home to let the contractor in at the time of the appointment.**

All contractors sign a Code of Conduct. This means that they must be polite and helpful when they are working in your home. They must carry out the work in your home safely and tidy up after themselves.



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### 3.6 How to report a repair and what happens next

You can email your repair request to:

**[customerservices@fcha.org.uk](mailto:customerservices@fcha.org.uk)**

You can also report a repair on our website:

**[www.fcha.org.uk](http://www.fcha.org.uk)**

You can also telephone First Choice on

**029 2070 3758** to report a repair request. Press 'Option 1' for Customer Services.

**// First Choice will discuss with you whether the repair is an emergency or general repair (see 3.7 types of repairs).**

We will ask you to give us 3 convenient dates for a contractor to call, with a morning (8.30am to 12.30pm) or afternoon (12.00 noon to 5pm) time slot. We will then contact the contractor to agree a suitable date.

We will then phone you back to let you know when the contractor will be calling. It is important that this appointment is noted in your communications book to ensure everyone knows about it.

We will then email a work order to the contractor.



A copy of the work order will be sent to you by email.

First Choice will try to phone you the next working day after the appointment to make sure the contractor attended and completed the works, we will also complete a telephone survey to make sure you are happy with the service provided.

Alternatively, you can complete a questionnaire on our website. You will need the work order number to do this.



## 3.7 Types of repair

Emergency repairs are repairs which may cause harm to you or may seriously damage your home. They will be fixed in 24 hours (one day).

### These include:

- Loss of hot water.
- Loss of heating during the winter.
- Loss of power/ tripped electrics.
- Burst pipes & serious plumbing leaks.
- Blocked or leaking drains.
- Loss of toilet and bathing facilities, where there are no others in the property.



Scan the QR code to report any repairs





If you have an emergency repair telephone First Choice. If our offices are not open, please follow the options available to get the right service.

**// Out of hours emergency repairs are dealt with by a company called Delta. Contact our office on 029 2070 3758 and we will connect you to them.**

**// For all gas and LPG heating, plumbing and drainage repairs please call Robert Heath on 0333 0141 000.**

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## 3.8 Keeping your home in a good condition

First Choice will visit your home every two years to check that it is in a good condition. If any work needs to be done First Choice will arrange it.





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## 3.9 Decorating your home



First Choice will decorate or wash down the outside of your home every eight years.



First Choice will stain any fences which belong to us every eight years, unless it has already been pre-treated.



If you have a support provider they will usually make sure that the shared areas of your home are decorated. The shared areas of your home are the bathroom, kitchen, hall, lounge and dining room. This is paid for by the service charge you pay in your rent.

**Please see section 5 for more information.**



You should decorate your own bedroom. If you live on your own you should decorate inside all of your home.



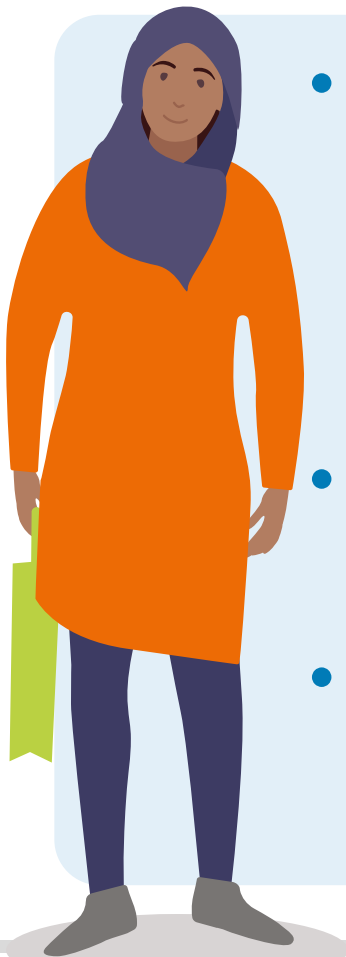
Please make sure that the intumescent strips on the side of internal fire doors and/or door frames are not painted over. These strips expand if there is a fire to prevent smoke spreading through the property. If they are painted over they will not work properly. Please let us know as soon as possible if this happens.

# Section 4: Making Changes to Your Home

## 4.1 Adaptations

Sometimes changes have to be made to people's homes to make it easier for them to live there. This could be something like putting hand rails next to the bath, or having a new level access shower or specialist bath that is easier to use.

**If you need to make changes to your home to make it easier to live there you must:**



- **Contact First Choice.** Tell us what changes you want to make and ask us if you can. In most cases an Occupational Therapist's report will be required. Please send us a signed copy of this.
- **We will try to say 'yes'.** If we say 'no' we will tell you why.
- **We will give you advice** on where you may be able to get money to pay for the changes.

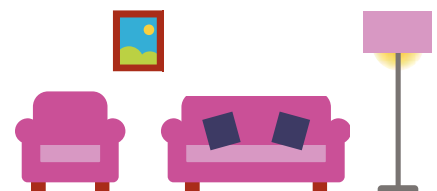
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## 4.2 Improvements

If you want to change your home by doing things like putting up a satellite dish or putting in a new fireplace you must write to us to ask.

**// We will try to say 'yes'. If we say 'no' we will tell you why. You will have to pay for the changes you make.**

Any improvement works which you want to undertake in your home **must** be requested in writing to First Choice in advance. Any works undertaken without prior consent from First Choice will be reinstated to the original condition and the cost of the works will be re-charged.



# Section 5: Rent and Service Charges

## 5.1 Rent

**Your rent can be made up of three different things:**

- Core rent.
- First Choice's service charge.
- The charge for extra services (for supported housing tenants).

**Rent is the money you pay to live in your home.**

## 5.2 The core rent

**The core rent includes these things:**

- Major repairs. Major repairs are things like new kitchens. Getting things fixed – day to day repairs and maintenance.
- Decorating the outside of your home every five years.
- Building insurance.
- Checking that your heating system is safe and working properly.

- Paying the mortgage. The mortgage is the money First Choice had to borrow to buy or build your home.
- Managing your home. This is the money that pays for First Choice staff to make sure that everything is going okay with your tenancy.
- Council tax (for homes in some areas).

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## 5.3 First Choice's service charge

If you have any of the following equipment in your home, it is First Choice's responsibility to make sure this equipment works.

### **The service charge you pay to First Choice covers any of these items:**

- The fire alarm system.
- The fire fighting equipment.
- Anti-scald valves.
- Fixed hoists.
- Specialist baths and toilets.
- Gas cooker connections.
- The electrical system in your home.
- Carbon monoxide detectors.



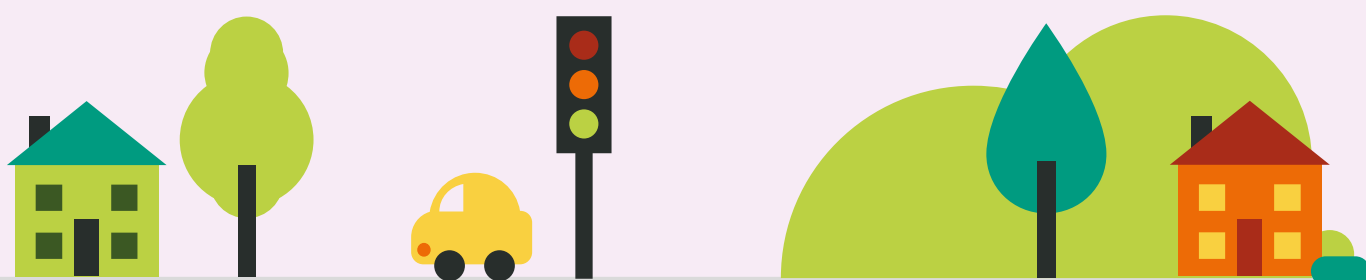
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## 5.4 The charge for extra services (Supported Housing)

If you have a support provider you may have some or all of the following services. The services you receive will be outlined in your occupation contract.

**These services are not provided by First Choice. They may be provided by your support provider or another organisation:**

- Cleaning of shared areas. Shared areas are the bathroom, kitchen, hall, lounge and dining room.
- Decoration inside the house.
- Contents insurance for items in shared areas.
- Testing of electrical appliances in shared areas.
- Cleaning the outside of windows.
- Minor maintenance and repairs – like changing light bulbs or fitting a new toilet seat.
- Gardening and cutting back trees.
- Heating and lighting of shared areas.
- Telephone line rental and phone – not phone calls.
- Laundry equipment.



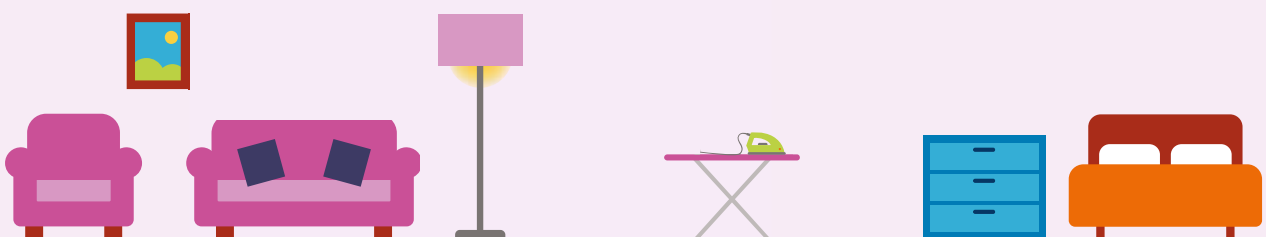
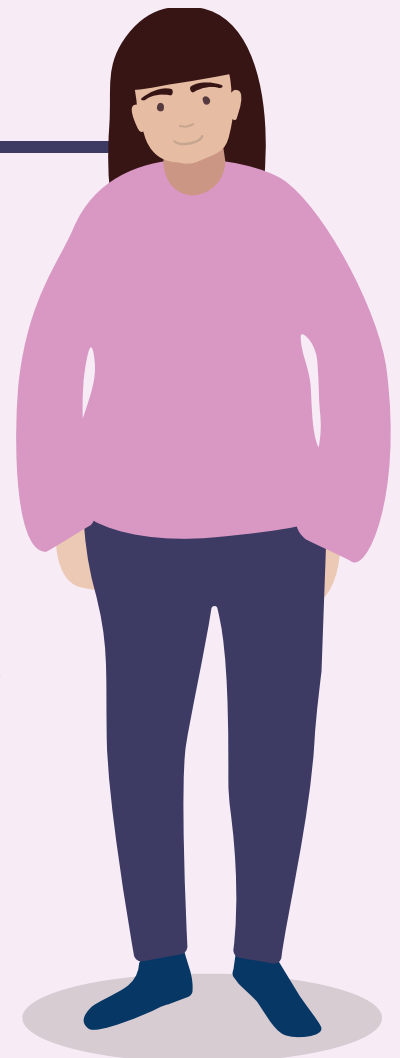


- Furniture, fridge, freezer, household equipment, carpets and bathroom and kitchen floor covering, in shared areas.
- Support staff time to sort out all these things. This is called Housing Management.
- Door entry systems.
- Employer's liability and third party insurances.
- Burglar alarms and security lighting.
- Refuse collection – medical or clinical waste.
- Pesticides and pest control.

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## 5.5 Paying your rent

- You can pay your rent to First Choice by direct debit straight from your bank, or you can give the money for your rent to your support provider (if you have one) and they will pay it to First Choice.
- First Choice can receive Housing Benefit directly on your behalf.



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## 5.6 Rent increases

**First Choice may put your core rent up once a year. This usually happens in April.**

If we are going to put your core rent up we will tell you two months before we do it. We usually change the amount of your service charge at the same time to reflect the correct cost. If you receive housing benefit to pay your rent you will need to make a new claim each time your rent changes – or when the Housing Benefit department asks you to.



**// It is very important that you pay your rent. If you are having problems paying your rent you must tell us. We will try to help you to find a way to pay your rent.**



# Section 6: Taking Part in First Choice

## 6.1 Tenant Participation Strategy

We want to know what you think about First Choice. We also want you to be involved in the work that First Choice does. We will make sure you have the information you need to do this. This is called 'Taking Part in First Choice'.

**// All of the things that we do so you can Take Part in First Choice are set out in our Tenant Participation Strategy and Action Plan.**

### This tells you:

- How you can Take Part.
- The things you can Take Part in.
- What First Choice will do to help you Take Part.



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## 6.2 Different ways to Take Part



- Quarterly newsletter.
- Workshops, training and meetings.
- Discos and social events.
- Surveys and questionnaires.

**// If you would like a copy of the Tenant Participation Strategy – or want to know more about Taking Part in First Choice – please contact First Choice.**

### **First Choice will do these things to help you Take Part:**

- We will try to provide you with easy to understand information.
- We will make sure that there are a variety of ways that you can 'Take Part in First Choice'.
- We will provide money and staff time to make sure that you can 'Take Part in First Choice'.

# Section 7: Other Important Information

## 7.1 Television licences

If you live with other people, each tenant needs their own television licence to watch or record television in their own room. This licence will also cover the communal areas of the property.

If you live on your own, only one licence is required, regardless of the number of televisions in the property.

**/// If you are over 75 years old and receive Pension Credit you are eligible for a free television licence.**

You can get a 50% reduction on the television licence fee if you are blind or severely sight impaired.

**For more information contact:** TV Licensing,  
Darlington, DL98 1TL  
**Phone:** 0300 790 0368  
**Website:**  
[www.tvlicensing.co.uk](http://www.tvlicensing.co.uk)





## 7.2 Pets

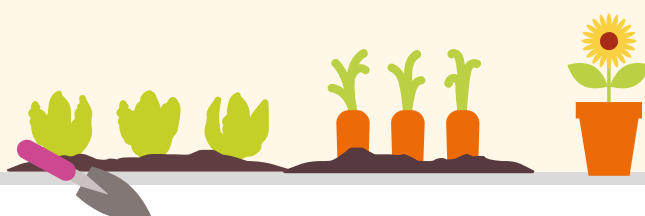
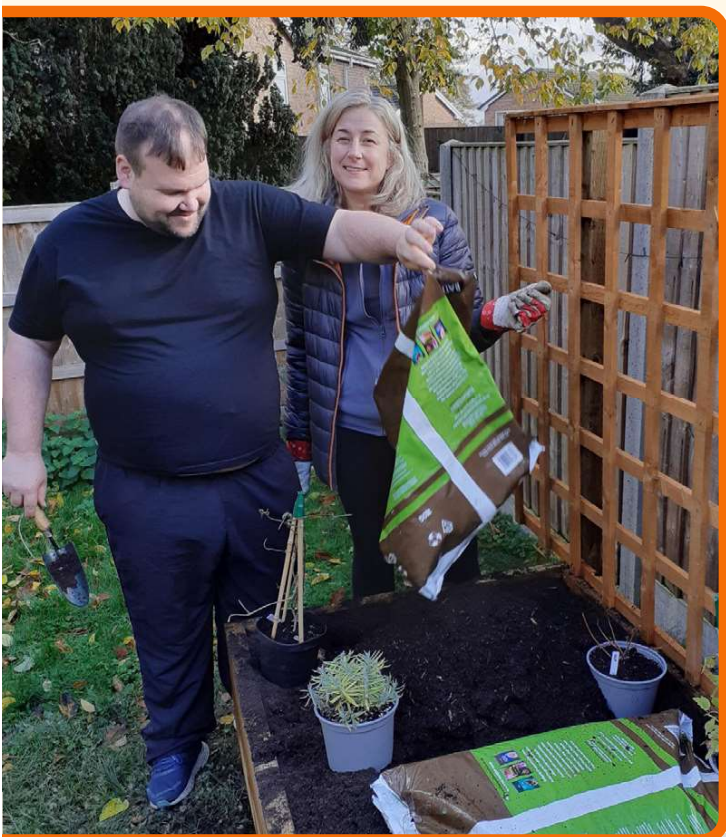
You may have a pet in your home as long as:

- The pet is kept under control and is not a nuisance to other tenants in your home or to neighbours.
- The pet is properly cared for.
- Please let First Choice know if you are thinking of keeping a pet in your home.

## 7.3 Your garden

If your home has a garden it is your responsibility to keep it tidy. It is also the responsibility of any other tenants you may share your home with. This includes cutting back any trees that are in your garden. First Choice is responsible for maintaining boundary walls and fences.

**// If you cannot keep the garden tidy, because you have a disability, you can pay to have your garden kept tidy. This can be done by your support provider or another organisation.**





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## 7.4 Council tax

If you live on your own, you are responsible for paying your council tax.

If you live with other people in a supported living property, First Choice is responsible for paying your council tax, which is charged for through your rent. You may be asked to complete a form to apply for Council Tax discounts.

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## 7.5 Insurance

- First Choice insures the structure of your home.
- You are responsible for insuring your personal belongings.
- If you live with other people, contents insurance for items in shared areas should be arranged. If you have a support provider they will often provide this service for you.



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## 7.6 Anti-social behaviour and breaches of contract

You have the right to live in peace and quiet in your home. First Choice takes very seriously any behaviour by First Choice tenants or their visitors which has a negative effect on:

- Any tenant in any of the First Choice's properties.
- Any person living in any other property in the neighbourhood.
- Any person working or using local facilities in the neighbourhood.

**// This behaviour is classed as anti-social behaviour and is a breach of tenancy.**



If you would like a copy of **First Choice's Anti-Social Behaviour Policy and Procedure** please contact us.

# Contacting First Choice Housing Association Ltd



## You can write to us at

First Choice Housing Association Ltd,  
10 Village Way, Greenmeadow Springs,  
Tongwynlais, Cardiff, CF15 7NE

**You can telephone us** between 9am and 4pm.  
Monday to Friday on: (029) 2070 3758 and  
Press Option 1 for Customer Services.

**You can email us** any questions or repair  
requests to: [customerservices@fcha.org.uk](mailto:customerservices@fcha.org.uk)

**Or visit our website at**  
[www.fcha.org.uk](http://www.fcha.org.uk)





**Building Independence**



## **First Choice Housing Association Limited**

Unit 10, Village Way, Tongwynlais, Cardiff. CF15 7NE

**Tel: 029 2070 3758**

**Email: [customerservices@fcha.org.uk](mailto:customerservices@fcha.org.uk)**

**[www.fcha.org.uk](http://www.fcha.org.uk)**

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