



Tenant Handbook

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About this Handbook

Dear tenant,

As a new tenant there will be lots of things you will want to know about and you are bound to have questions about the terms of your tenancy for example, what to expect from your home, how to pay your rent or report a repair, your rights and responsibilities as a tenant and the council's responsibilities to you. You may also need to be guided to the right sources of help and advice.

That is why I am pleased we can provide you with a tenant handbook. It is part of the council's commitment to keeping our tenants well informed about how our services work and how to get the best from them.

A printed version of this handbook will be given to you as part of your welcome pack and it is also available on the council's website. The handbook is divided into sections to make it easy to find what you are looking for. There is a separate section at the end with contact details and phone numbers you may need.

If you have any suggestions as to how it could be improved please contact the council or email tenancymanagement@northampton.gov.uk

We would be pleased to hear from you.

With very best wishes



Councillor Mary Markham
Portfolio holder for Housing



About the Council



Northampton Borough Council is a local authority responsible for delivering a range of services to over 212,000 people.

The council as a social housing landlord

The council is a social housing landlord. This means it provides low cost housing and housing services directly to its tenants.

The council is responsible for helping to maintain the supply of low cost social housing in the town. Affordable housing is in particularly high demand at the current time but the council cannot meet the demand on its own. Although we have recently begun to build a small number of new homes the majority of new social rented housing is built by housing associations, or 'Registered Providers'. The council works in partnership with them and approved private sector landlords to try to ensure that sufficient properties are available to keep pace with demand and a choice of housing for people with a range of needs.

The council recently decided to make changes to its management arrangements for housing and will set up an 'arms-length' organisation or ALMO to run the service from January 2015 onwards. All tenants will be kept informed of any changes that will affect them as that date approaches.

Other services provided by the council

In addition to managing its housing stock the council has responsibility for many other services including:

- land use planning and control
- keeping the streets clean
- collection and disposal of rubbish
- the development of arts, culture, recreational and leisure facilities (now an independent trust)
- licensing
-

concessionary travel

Staffing

The head of the council's paid service is the Chief Executive, David Kennedy. He is supported by a senior management team who are responsible for ensuring that the services the council delivers are of good quality, in line with government priorities and meet national and local targets

The council is a large organisation employing a range of staff to deliver its services on a day-to-day basis. The handbook should guide you to the right group or individual member of staff to help with any queries or concerns you may have.

Democratic arrangements

Locally elected councillors make the political decisions about the future direction of the council's business. Elections are held every 4 years. The next borough council election will be in May 2015.

There are 45 councillors in total representing the various electoral wards across the Borough. If there is an issue you wish to raise with your local councillor you can find contact details on the [council's web pages](#)

Northampton Borough Council's Cabinet, comprising 7 councillors, is the main decision making body of the council. There are also overview and scrutiny committees that can question and review their decisions.

[Mary Markham](#) is currently the portfolio holder for housing. This means she, along with senior managers within the service, is the council's main spokesperson for housing issues.

About the Housing Service

Applying for housing

The council manages just under 12,200 homes. People wanting to be housed must apply to the council and put their names on the waiting list, or **Housing Register**.



In July 2008 the council introduced its CBL (Choice Based Lettings) service. CBL is a system that allows applicants to bid or express an interest in council, housing association or private properties from accredited landlords as they become available, and for which they are eligible.

The council currently faces a serious shortage of properties to offer because very little new social housing has been built over recent years and there have been significant increases in the number of people approaching the council to be housed. In December 2012 the council approved a new [Allocations Policy](#) which means that it no longer has an open waiting list. The changes were introduced to help manage expectations and ensure people do not join the Register when there is no realistic prospect of being able to obtain social housing. The changes will also help us to continue to provide social housing to those in most need.

To be eligible to join the Housing Register you must demonstrate that you are either in significant housing need or are in one of our reasonable preference categories. You must also meet a number of criteria including : qualifying nationality and immigration status, have a local connection with Northampton, be within the earnings and savings limits and have no record of unacceptable behaviour (this includes anti-social behaviour and serious tenancy breach) or have housing-related debt.

To see if you are eligible go to our [online pre- screen pages](#) on the council's website.

If you have any queries about applying for housing, bidding or the status of your application email yourhome@northampton.gov.uk

Council properties

The council currently owns and manages just under 12,000 properties across Northampton. We currently have the following properties:

Type of accommodation	No. of properties	% of total
2 bed house	1838	15.4
3 bed house	3123	26.1
4 bed house	217	1.8
5 bed house	116	1.0
maisonettes	179	1.5
Non sheltered bungalows	459	3.8
sheltered bungalows	1136	9.5
sheltered/very sheltered flats or bedsits	888	7.4
general needs flats or bedsits	4017	33.5
Total	11973	100

At any one time a proportion of these properties will always be empty whilst they are waiting to be repaired or re-let. The council aims to keep properties empty (or void) for as short a time as possible.

General housing enquiries

Please ring the council on **0300 330 7000** for all your housing queries e.g. about:

- a repair
- your rent or benefits
- your tenancy
- a problem with a neighbour or your area
- moving house
- renting a garage



All calls are charged at local rate and the phone lines are open from 8am – 5pm Monday to Friday.

This helpline is operated by housing customer services staff who are based in the council's Contact Centre. They will do their best to answer your query as accurately and promptly as they can.

Minicom: **01604 838970** or email enquiries@northampton.gov.uk

Visiting us

The council's main housing office is the One Stop Shop at the Guildhall. This is open for visitors from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday.



If you come to the One Stop Shop you can speak to a customer services officer about any housing, Council Tax or Housing/ Council Tax Benefit query. We operate an appointment system following feedback from our customers who wanted to see reduced waiting times. There is a self serve area where customers can view properties online and make bids (using Your Home kiosks). A number of agencies also offer drop in sessions or appointments, including Northamptonshire Police, the Fire and Rescue Service, the Citizens Advice Bureau and the Community Law Service (formerly Welfare Rights).

The One Stop Shop is open from 9am–5pm daily for supported self-service and use of telephones but face to face "sit-down" enquiries will now only be dealt with by prior appointment between the hours of 10am and 4pm, with reserved 'slots' every hour specifically for emergencies. There will be additional support in place from floorwalkers and in the contact centre to support customers with 'self-serving' enquiries.

What our staff do

Housing officers tenancymanagement@northampton.gov.uk

Housing officers are the main link between you and the council and their role is to support you and to foster good tenant/landlord relations. Your housing officer will be your main contact point for all queries related to your tenancy. Housing officers can advise you of your rights and responsibilities, help with any queries or difficulties you may have related to your tenancy, make sure tenancy conditions are being upheld and to try to resolve any disputes.

Their duties include:

- showing prospective tenants around properties
- signing up new tenants and explaining what they need to know about their tenancy
- visiting all new tenants within the first 4 weeks
- identifying when tenants need additional support and making referrals to appropriate agencies
- dealing with all breaches of tenancy (excluding rent arrears)
- managing complaints of anti-social behaviour and nuisance by supporting victims and taking appropriate action against perpetrators
- referring environmental crime such as abandoned vehicles, fly tipping, graffiti, vandalism and overgrown gardens

- inspecting the communal areas of council flats on a monthly basis and acting on issues of disrepair or damage
- attending evictions
- working in partnership with the Police, health and social services professionals, Community Safety, the Fire and Rescue Service and other agencies
- working with local community groups and resident associations

For contact details of your local housing officer go to [our website pages](#)

Rent income officers rentincome@northampton.gov.uk

Their duties include:

- monitoring rent and service charge accounts
- contacting tenants who have rent and service charge arrears
- helping tenants to optimise their income and benefits and arranging money advice where necessary
- agreeing repayment plans in line with the tenants ability to pay and monitoring compliance
- taking appropriate action to recover overdue rent and service charge income, including legal action through the courts where all other avenues have failed to secure suitable repayments.

Property maintenance teams

Property maintenance staff are responsible for the maintenance of council properties. This includes responsive and cyclical repairs, plus the cleaning and refurbishment of empty (or void) properties to bring them up to the required standard so they can be re-let.

The council employs trade workers to undertake certain types of repairs but also uses approved contractors.

Asset management staff

Staff working in this part of the housing service deal with 'major works' (i.e. large projects) to bring council properties up to the Decent Homes standard (including disabled adaptations). They arrange regular gas servicing, monitor and deal with asbestos in council properties, and work on projects to regenerate neighbourhoods. They also provide services to leaseholders and process Right to Buy applications.

The Housing Options Team

This team advises people about their housing rights and the choices open to them and help them find suitable accommodation. Housing options officers assess the circumstances of people who make a homelessness application and help them find somewhere permanent to live. They arrange temporary accommodation to give people a roof over their head whilst a more permanent

solution is sought. Our financial /money advisors give impartial advice on managing budgets and practical help to people at risk of losing their home as a result of welfare reform or other changes.

The Housing Choice and Resettlement Team

yourhome@northampton.gov.uk

This team is responsible for assessing housing applications and operating the Choice Based Lettings service. Every week staff within this team advertise the council, housing association and private sector properties that are available to let, draw up shortlists of applicants with the highest priority for each property, make offers and work with vulnerable clients who may be unable to make bids without some help.

The 'Gateway' service also operates within this team. People, who for a number of reasons may be vulnerable, have their needs assessed and gateway officers work in partnership with support agencies to help them maintain a tenancy either in social housing or the private rented sector.

Private Sector Housing Solutions Team pshs@northampton.gov.uk

Staff in this team provide a range of services to landlords, private sector tenants and owner occupiers. They inspect houses in multiple occupation and operate a licensing scheme to ensure these properties meet safety and other standards. They also assess the needs of council tenants who request disabled adaptations

The Independent Living Team

This team is responsible for supporting residents to live independently in their own homes. The Call Care and Lifeline services are also part of this team.

The Customer Engagement Team participation@northampton.gov.uk

This team is responsible for encouraging and supporting people who want to get involved in developing housing service improvements.

Other council staff you may need to contact:

Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction Scheme staff
benefitservices@northampton.gov.uk

Staff within the Revenues and Benefits service are responsible for Council Tax bills, assessing Council Tax reduction/Housing Benefit claims and awarding benefits.

Neighbourhood wardens neighbourhoodwardens@northampton.gov.uk

These wardens are based in the community and are the councils 'eyes and ears' and act as a link between the community and other organisations, such as the Police and parish councils.

All neighbourhood wardens are 'accredited' officers, which gives them powers of enforcement. They work together on specific projects or problem areas such as issuing fixed-penalty notices for littering or putting household waste out too early.

Members of the public can contact their neighbourhood warden if they have any concerns relating to their area. The wardens provide highly visible patrols on the streets of the areas they are responsible for.

For details go to our [web pages](#).

Customer Care

Our Customer code

Our staff follow a customer code when dealing with members of the public. This means that you should expect the following whenever you contact us.



Our staff will:

- always be welcoming, courteous and polite
- help with forms and explain procedures in plain language
- apologise where mistakes have occurred
- offer translating and interpreting services where necessary
- use customers comments, compliments and complaints to improve our service.

When answering the telephone our staff will

- make every effort to answer promptly (within 5 rings or 20 seconds) with a professional, polite and friendly greeting
- take 'ownership' of your call and deal with it personally wherever possible. If necessary they will transfer your call to another department or take your name and number and pass the message on.

When responding to any correspondence our staff will

- Acknowledge letters within 1 working day of receipt (by the correct section or member of staff), giving a contact name and an estimated response time. We aim to reply within 10 working days, but if further time is necessary we will let you know.
- Send all letters on council headed paper with a contact name/section, date and reference.
- Check that grammar and spelling are correct and that the wording is clear, simple and free of jargon.
- Ensure the contents are clear and logical, the tone is helpful and courteous, and the letter must answer all the points/queries raised.

If you come into the One Stop Shop there is access for people in wheelchairs, soft seating for people who are waiting, private interview facilities and

information boards.

If one of our staff visits you at home they will show their identity card as soon as the door is opened, give their name, and tell you why they have called.

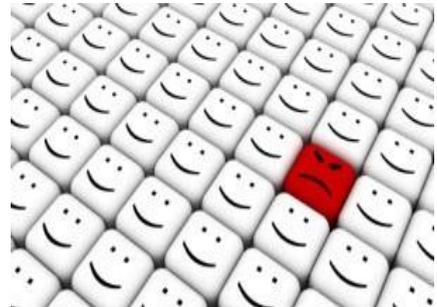
If we cannot offer you a service our staff will clearly explain the reasons why not and if there is some published material that would be helpful they will provide copies of it for you.

If a service has not been provided satisfactorily or on time our staff will

- investigate the issue and try to give a full explanation
- inform you of what service will be delivered and when
- apologise on behalf of the council, if necessary
- refer you to the council's customer feedback policy if you are still not happy and explain what you need to do.

Making a Complaint

The council values customer feedback and uses the information it receives to drive forward improvements to services. Although we want to provide a high good quality housing service there may be occasions when things go wrong.



You have the right to complain if you are not happy with the service you have received. A complaint is a way of letting the council know that you are dissatisfied with a particular service. We will always try to put things right if it is possible to do so.

The council has a procedure to be followed when a complaint is received to ensure you are kept informed about what will happen, who is dealing with it and the expected timescale for a reply. This is explained on the council's [customer feedback form](#).

When to complain

Generally speaking you might wish to complain

- when: we have failed to do something we
- agreed to do we have done something wrong
- you found it difficult to access our
- services we have treated you unfairly or
- rudely
- you are concerned about the quality of service you have received we have given you inadequate or wrong information.

We would not classify it as a complaint when it is:

- a disagreement about a government regulation that we have to
- apply a routine request for a service – for example - reporting the need for a repair to your home, a request for information or an explanation of council policy
- a comment of a political nature.

The council will consider and investigate your complaint and if we find that we are in the wrong we will apologise and do everything we can to put things right. We will also take actions to ensure the problem is not repeated.

If your complaint is about a council policy, the councillors responsible for the policy will be informed and they may decide to review it to see whether any changes are needed.

How to make a complaint

If you are dissatisfied with one of our services, in the first instance you need to contact the person who dealt with you or ask to speak to their manager. Tell them

- what has happened
- why you are unhappy
- the names of any members of staff you have been dealing with
- what you would like us to do to make things right.

You can make your complaint in person, over the phone, by letter or email but we recommend you complete [a customer feedback form](#).

Our address is:

Northampton Borough Council
Customer Services
FREEPOST MID 17327
Northampton
NN1 1WJ

Once we have received your complaint we will contact you within 3 working days, usually by phone, to see if your concern can be resolved easily and quickly. If the matter is comparatively straightforward we aim to settle it immediately to your satisfaction.

If you are not happy with the reply you receive or the action that has been taken you need to contact us again so that we can review the matter for you. Please tell us about what has happened so far and say why you are still dissatisfied.

We will set up a stage 1 formal complaint which will be acknowledged within 5 working days and we will provide you with a full response within 10 working days. If for any reason we are unable to do this we will tell you how the investigation is proceeding and when you can expect a full response.

A full reply should tell you

- our conclusion about your complaint
- the reasons for our conclusions
- whether or not we believe we are at fault
- if we are at fault how we will put things right.

If you are still dissatisfied you may escalate your concern and ask for the matter to be reviewed at stage 2. To do this please let us know that you want to do this and why. It will be helpful to enclose copies of any earlier correspondence with your complaint. Your complaint will be acknowledged within 5 days and you can expect a reply within 20 working days. An independent manager will review the previous decisions and decide if they were fair and reasonable.

The ‘designated person’

After the conclusion of the council’s complaints process, if you are still unhappy you have the right to take your complaint to a ‘designated person’ to independently review the council’s findings and if necessary refer your complaint to the Housing or Local Government Ombudsman. A designated person could be any councillor, MP or a tenant panel. It is up to you, to whom you take your case. Please note at present there is no tenant panel set up to consider complaints in Northampton.

The Ombudsman

If you do not wish to speak to a ‘designated person’ you still have the right to take your complaint to the Ombudsman service, but you must wait 8 weeks before approaching them. The Ombudsman service is made up of independent bodies that investigate allegations of maladministration.

Please note: before you make a complaint to either a designated person or the Ombudsman, you must have given the council a proper chance to deal with it.

The Ombudsman will investigate the way in which procedures and policies were followed but does not usually criticise council decisions that have been properly taken simply because someone may disagree with them.

If your complaint is about a matter related to your tenancy [the Housing Ombudsman](#) will consider it.

Complaints concerning applications for housing, homelessness and housing options advice are likely to fall under the remit of [the Local Government Ombudsman](#).

Other complaints

If you wish to make a complaint about the Chief Executive contact the council’s Monitoring Officer.

If you wish to complain about your local councillor contact:

Standards for England
4th floor Griffin House
40 Lower Street
Manchester
M1 1BB

Tel: **0845 078 8181**

Email: enquiries@standardsforengland.gov.uk

Getting Involved

The council understands that tenants are at the heart of the housing service and are the best people to tell us what we are doing right and what needs improving. By working with the council you can achieve what you want for your home and local area.



Your views on the housing service we provide matter to us. We want to hear the good and bad points about the service as well as your suggestions for improvements.

How you can get involved

There are a number of ways in which you can have your say and work in partnership with the council to implement changes in the housing service. All the activities vary in the level of commitment required - just choose the one that is appropriate for you.

The first thing to do is to join the **Tenant Sounding Board**. This is a list of tenants who want to be informed about opportunities to participate. To join the sounding board you need to fill in a registration form. You will find one in your sign up pack.

You will need to tell us how you would like to be involved (e.g. doing surveys, attending meetings or joining small discussion groups), when you would be available and what sorts of areas or subjects you are interested in (e.g. repairs and maintenance, rent collection, sheltered housing). We will then contact you if an opportunity for involvement comes up and you can decide if you want to take part.

Other ways to be involved:

- Get involved in [a walkabout in your area](#)
- Become a tenant auditor
- Join a scrutiny panel or other tenant group
- Take part in a focus group
- Attend drop in sessions or roadshows about housing services
- Join your local Residents Association

- Respond to letters or surveys we might send you
- Become a member of a Plain Language / Communications Group
- Read the tenant magazine 'My Home' and send us your comments
- Send your complaints or comments to us about the housing service.

The council will reimburse you for expenses incurred as a result of your involvement, in line with our tenant expenses policy and provide you training and any other support needed for your involvement to be effective.

For further information about how to get involved please contact: the Customer Engagement Team.

Tel: **01604 837836** email: participation@northampton.gov.uk

Your Tenancy



We introduced major changes related to tenancies on March 1st 2013. Any new tenancy offered to single people and families is now likely to be of a fixed term, probably 5 years.

Until the Localism Act 2011, councils were only able to grant lifetime secure tenancies, introductory tenancies and insecure tenancies. However the legislation now allows councils to offer flexible tenancies to new tenants, while protecting the rights of existing tenants.

The council has agreed a [Tenancy Strategy](#) and new [Tenancy Policy](#) and these describe the changes and the reasons for them.

The main types of tenancies that the council can now grant are secure tenancies, flexible (secure) tenancies and introductory tenancies.

Since 1st March 2013 all new tenants who do not meet the criteria for a lifetime secure tenancy will be given a flexible tenancy, which will follow on from the initial introductory tenancy.

What type of tenancy will we offer you?

This will depend on your circumstances. If you are elderly (i.e. at state retirement age or older) you will be offered a secure lifetime tenancy.

Households with a disabled person (i.e. who qualifies for Mobility Level 1 or 2 on the Housing Register) will also be offered a secure lifetime tenancy.

Families (including single parent households) will be normally be offered a flexible tenancy of 5 years.

Please note: Existing tenants who move to another social rented home will be granted a tenancy with no less security of tenure when they move. However if an existing tenant chooses to move to an affordable rent property, they may have to pay a higher rent.

About flexible tenancies

A flexible tenancy will usually be offered for a 5 year period and follow on from an initial 12 month introductory tenancy. In exceptional circumstances we will offer a 2 year flexible tenancy and the reasons for this are set out within the Tenancy Policy. A flexible tenancy is still a secure tenancy but unlike a

lifetime secure tenancy it will usually last for a fixed period of time. If you hold a flexible tenancy you will have the same rights as those tenants that hold a secure tenancy apart from the right to make improvements and the right to compensation for improvements.

If you are offered a flexible tenancy you can seek a review about the length of the term of the tenancy that you have been offered. If you choose to do this you must do so within 21 days of receiving the offer notice. You may attend a review in person or submit a written request.

We will visit you at home 12 months before your flexible tenancy is due to end. The purpose of this visit is to check on your circumstances and consider all other relevant factors such as the conduct of your tenancy and the condition of the property. We will decide whether you are to be granted either a further flexible tenancy or not, or whether you are to be granted a lifetime secure tenancy. If you are granted a further tenancy it may not necessarily be at the same property.

If you are not going to be granted a further tenancy you have the right to seek a review of our decision. You must request a review within 21 days of being given notice of our decision.

If it is decided you are not going to be granted a further tenancy then we will serve you with a notice at least 2 months before your tenancy is due to end.

Introductory tenancies

The council currently operates a system of introductory tenancies. This means that new tenants do not have full security of tenure for 12 months. Your introductory tenancy is effectively a trial period and during this time you must show us you are responsible to ensure you keep your council home.

If you have an introductory tenancy you must:

- pay your rent on time
- look after your home
- abide by your conditions of your tenancy agreement
- not behave anti-socially, cause a nuisance or harass other people or our staff - this includes your family and any visitors.

Whilst you have an introductory tenancy you cannot:

- buy your home
- take in lodgers
- sub-let part of your home
- make improvements
- exchange your home with another tenant (a mutual exchange)

The council will monitor your tenancy and if there are no problems the introductory tenancy automatically becomes secure after 12 months. If the tenancy is not conducted in a satisfactory manner, because of breaches of tenancy conditions, the council can extend your introductory tenancy for a further 6 months or begin proceedings for repossession of your property. This

means you could be evicted.

Housing law makes it relatively easy for the council to bring possession proceedings against a person with an introductory tenancy. If you are served with any legal notice in relation to your introductory tenancy then you have the right to seek either a written or oral review by an independent review panel. You must make the request for a review within 14 days of receipt of the notice and a decision will be made by no later than 28 days after you have been served with a notice. The council must still obtain a court order to gain possession of your home but under the legislation for introductory tenancies a possession order is mandatory.

Secure tenancies

After 12 months an introductory tenancy becomes secure unless you have breached your tenancy conditions and legal proceedings have been lodged with the court.

If you had a secure or assured tenancy with another council or a housing association immediately before you moved into your current home it is likely you will be given a secure tenancy from the start. People placed in temporary accommodation by the council have non-secure tenancies.

Demoted tenancies

A secure tenancy can be demoted for a fixed term if the council applies to the court for Demotion Order. If you have breached your tenancy conditions, for example due to persistent anti-social behaviour by you or a member of your household, we can apply to the court to demote your tenancy. This means that you can stay in your home but you will lose some of your legal rights. Your tenancy in effect will become like an introductory tenancy.

A tenancy normally remains demoted for 12 months. If there are no further problems within the 12 months it will once again become secure.

The tenancy agreement

Your tenancy agreement is the document you sign at the beginning of your tenancy and it a **legally binding contract** between you and Northampton Borough Council. It is important you take the time to read the agreement so that you are fully aware of your rights and obligations to the council and the council's rights and obligations to you.

If you are a joint tenant you are individually and jointly responsible for your own actions and those of the other tenant. You are, therefore, jointly and individually responsible for ensuring that all the tenancy conditions are met. You are also responsible for the behaviour of any person that lives or visits your home, including children.

The council now requires a photograph of the tenant or joint tenants to be attached to the tenancy agreement. This is to ensure we can verify the identity of the tenant at any time and reduce the opportunity for illegal sub-letting and

other fraudulent activities.

Please note : We offer all new tenants the opportunity to sign a Good Neighbour Agreement as part of the sign up process. Whilst it is voluntary it is expected that most tenants will be happy to sign it. The agreement describes what anti-social behaviour is and sets out the positive behaviour that we expect the tenant to show.

Changes to the tenancy agreement

Occasionally we may need to change the conditions of your tenancy. If this is to happen we will send you notice of any proposed changes and ask for your comments. Once everyone has had the opportunity to comment we will send you formal notice of the changes to be made and how they will affect you. We must give you four weeks notice before we change any terms or conditions within your tenancy agreement.

Changing your tenancy if your circumstances alter

If your circumstances change and you think this may affect your tenancy or your right to stay in your own home please ring your housing officer and seek their advice to ensure your rights are protected.

Joint tenancies

A joint tenancy is when more than one person is named on the tenancy agreement. Partners (married or unmarried) or single people sharing a home will normally be offered a joint tenancy when they become tenants.

However if your circumstances change and you want to move to a joint tenancy your housing officer will verify the details on your application and make a few checks, such as whether your rent payments are up to date. The person you wish to be a joint tenant with must have been living with you for at least 12 months and proof will be needed for this.

We can refuse to grant a joint tenancy if we think the person you are proposing will not make a good tenant.

If you are a joint tenant you will both have equal rights but also equal responsibilities. This means each tenant can apply for Housing Benefit and if one tenant dies the tenancy remains with the other. However each tenant is responsible for ensuring the rent and other charges are paid in full. If one of the joint tenants leaves the home they still remain responsible for paying the rent.

The tenancy can be ended by either of the tenants but this must be in writing. When this happens the tenancy ends for both of you. We may grant a new tenancy for the remaining tenant in the same property (see family/relationship break up).

Succession of tenancy

Provided you have not succeeded to your tenancy, your tenancy can be passed to your husband, wife, civil partner or partner, so long as they were living at your home at the time of your death and this was their main home. If your tenancy commenced before April 2012 another member of your family can also succeed as long as they lived with you continuously for a period of 12 months prior to your death, and this was their main home. If your tenancy commenced after the 1st April 2012 other family members do not have a legal right to succeed to your tenancy.

Assigning

If your circumstances change it is possible to arrange to pass on your tenancy to your partner or a family member, as long as they have lived in the property as their main home for 12 months. This is called assigning the tenancy and it is the process of passing all the legal rights and responsibilities over to the other person. If we give you permission you will need to complete a Deed of Assignment. Your housing officer can advise you about this.

If a relationship breaks up - can I be forced to leave my home?

- If your name is on the tenancy agreement only the court can force you to leave your home. The name of the tenant can only be removed if we agree to it or if a court order is obtained.
- If you are a joint tenant either partner can end the tenancy. Normally we would expect the partner who wishes to leave the property to sign a Deed of Release to allow the tenancy to transfer from joint to sole, in the name of the remaining partner. However if your partner wants to end the tenancy against your wishes let us know immediately. It may be possible to get a court injunction to stop it.
- If you are not the named tenant but are married you both have the right to stay in the property. If you cannot decide between you who has to leave a court will have to make the decision for you. Do not give up your right to stay until you have sought legal advice. We recommend you see a solicitor.
- If you are unmarried and not the tenant you do not have the automatic right to stay in your home but if this is your wish you may be able to get an 'Occupation Order' from the court. Speak to your housing officer and contact a solicitor.
- A court will normally put the rights of any children first to ensure they do not become homeless. The court will normally award the tenancy to the parent who has the main care and responsibility of the children.

Rights & Responsibilities

The council's responsibilities are to:

- consult with you on any proposed changes to your tenancy
- keep in good repair the building you live in (and any attached garage).

We have the right to:

- change your rent or other charges provided we give you 28 days notice
- be allowed into your property to carry out inspections (with notice) or repairs, or to service heating appliances
- force entry into your home or even move you out in an emergency.

As a tenant your responsibilities are to:

- live in the property as your main home
- pay the rent and any other charges in full when they are due
- take care of the property, keep the inside properly decorated, and do any repairs you are responsible for
- ensure that members of your household, visitors or pets do not cause nuisance or annoy neighbours and behave in a reasonable way
- not harass or threaten anyone, including our staff
- inform us when you are going to be away from your home for more than 4 weeks, for example if you are going into hospital
- give us 4 weeks written notice of wanting to move out of the property (except for transfers) and leave it in good condition when you leave.

Please see your **Tenancy Agreement** for a fuller description of tenant responsibilities.

Tenants' rights



By law council tenants with a secure tenancy have a number of rights.

You have the right to stay in your home without being disturbed by us or any other person(s) acting on our behalf as long as you do not breach your tenancy conditions. However, we may have to enter your or home to carry out essential repair or maintenance work.

You cannot be made to leave their home unless ordered by a court. Generally before ending a secure tenancy a court has to be satisfied that there are specific grounds for making you leave, such as breaching your tenancy agreement, including significant rent arrears, anti-social behaviour, allowing the condition of your home to significantly deteriorate or making false statements when you applied to be housed.

Right to exchange

You have the right to exchange (swap) homes with another secure tenant of Northampton Borough Council, a housing association or another council. You must inform both landlords and get our permission in writing. Permission is usually given unless there are specific reasons such as causing overcrowding, under occupation or outstanding rent arrears. We will make a decision in writing on all mutual exchange applications within 42 days of receiving them.

Right to succession

Provided you have not succeeded to your tenancy, you have the right to pass your tenancy to your husband, wife, civil partner or partner on your death, as long as they were living at your home at that time and this was their main home.

Right to assign

You have the right to assign (or transfer) your tenancy to another person. This means you give up your tenancy and all rights and responsibilities pass to this person. The person to who the tenancy is assigned must have lived in the property as their main home for at least 12 months.

There are three ways to assign your tenancy.

- by mutual exchange
- through a court order
- to a would-be successor

Permission for the assignment will be considered by the council but in certain circumstances, e.g. divorce proceedings, the courts have the power to order the assignment of a tenancy.

Right to take in lodgers and sub-let

You can take in lodgers (unless you hold an introductory tenancy) as long as you do not overcrowd your home. A lodger is someone who shares your home as a member of your household.

You must seek our permission first if you want to sub-let part of your home.

You may not sub-let the whole of your property. You must let us know the name, age and sex of any intended lodger or sub-tenant, the part of the house they will occupy and the date they move in. You must also tell us when they move out. If you receive Housing Benefit you must let that section know as it may affect your entitlement.

Lodgers cannot succeed to your tenancy.

You are responsible for the behaviour of any lodger or sub-tenant or their guests or visitors

Right to repair

You have the right to have your home kept in reasonable state of repair and you are entitled to have qualifying repairs carried out by the council at their expense under the Right to Repair Scheme. By law all councils have to carry out these repairs within an agreed time period.

When you report a repair to us we may ask to inspect your home to satisfy ourselves whether it is a qualifying repair. If it is we will tell you how long it will take to get the repair done.

Right to make improvements

You can carry out improvements to your home provided you get written permission before you start the work. Each application is considered separately, and all alterations have to be carried out safely, use the appropriate materials and comply with any relevant planning control or planning regulations. We strongly recommend you do this to protect your interests.

Right to compensation for improvements

Tenants are entitled to compensation for certain types of improvement work. This is paid when your tenancy is ended and the repayment is calculated on a set formula deducting an annual depreciation from the original costs.

Right to a home loss payment.

If you are forced to leave your home permanently through no fault of your own you can in some circumstances claim compensation. You may be eligible for a home loss payment for the personal upset caused by the loss of your home and a disturbance payment to cover the expenses you incur. You must have held your tenancy for more than one year and claim within six years of moving out. The amount to be paid is set by regulations.

Right to be consulted about changes that affect you or your home

We must consult with you about any major changes to your tenancy agreement, to our policies and responsibilities and any improvement work within your communities.

We must give you 4 weeks warning of any changes coming into effect, including increases to your rent, support or service charges. We must also consult with you about any modernisation or improvement to your home.

Right to buy

If you are a secure tenant you may have the right to buy your home if you meet certain conditions.

To qualify you need to have held secure tenancy for a minimum of 5 years. If you live in a house or bungalow you will receive a discount of 35% increasing by 1% for each subsequent year up to a maximum of 60%. If you live in a flat or maisonette you will receive a discount of 50% increasing by 2% for each subsequent year up to a maximum of 70%. To receive the maximum discount of £75,000 will depend on the market value of your property and the length of secure tenancy served.

If you have an introductory or demoted tenancy you do not have the right to buy. If you have lost your security of tenure due to a tenancy breach you also will not qualify. If you have any rent arrears or other debts to the council, these must be cleared prior to completion.

Certain types of home are also excluded from the scheme – for example those specifically designed for older or disabled people cannot be sold under Right to Buy. Tenants in sheltered accommodation also cannot buy their homes.

Right to access and control of personal information

We treat all personal information about our tenants and leaseholders as confidential. However by law we must share certain information with other parts of the council (Benefits staff for example) and other organisations such as Social Services and the Police.

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 you have the right to see the information relating to you that we hold on file or computer, as long as you give us reasonable notice. If anything is factually incorrect or there is an opinion expressed you are not happy about you can ask for it to be corrected, amended or taken out.

If we disagree with your request you can insist that a note of your views is added to the record. You cannot view any information held on your file relating to other tenants or third parties.

Right to manage

Council tenants and leaseholders have a right to manage. This means they can investigate the feasibility of establishing a tenant management organisation (or TMO) to run their housing service on the council's behalf. TMO's are not for profit organisations that can be formed from an established resident, tenant or community association. If tenants vote for the transfer to a TMO, the council remains your landlord but the TMO manages the housing service on the council's behalf.

Right to vote on transfer to another landlord

Before your management arrangements can change there must be a thorough and rigorous consultation process. If transfer to another landlord is proposed you have the right to vote on this, if you hold an introductory, flexible or secure tenancy.

Moving In



What to expect of your new home

Before the council can let a property to a new tenant it must reach a certain standard. This is called the **lettable standard**. When you move in you should expect that your property should be in good order and be clean, tidy and secure. This means:

- It will be free from damp, mould or infestation.
- Broken/cracked stair treads or risers will be repaired.
- Broken and/or missing handrails and/or balustrade will be repaired or replaced.
- Damaged/uneven floorboards/floor panels will be repaired or renewed
- Nails will be removed from floors/stairs.
- Broken/uneven floor screed or asphalt will be remedied.
- Kitchen units will be clean and in good condition. Where the kitchen is unhygienic or beyond repair, a new kitchen will be fitted.
- Bathroom fittings will be clean and in good condition, Tiles and grout will be clean and sound. Plugs and chains will be in place. New toilet seats will have been fitted.
- New locks will be fitted to front and back doors.
- Existing windows will be secure and in good working order. Any broken glass will be replaced on the day the new tenant moves in.
- The property will have a good standard of decoration and good decoration will be left in place.
- Gas and electricity safety checks will be carried out.
- Floors will be clean and carpets removed unless they are in an excellent condition. Damaged floor tiles will be replaced. Every effort will be made to match them with the existing flooring.

- Any polystyrene ceiling tiles will be removed the ceiling skimmed ready for painting by the tenant.
- All heating appliances will be serviced and in good working order. In the case of a property, which is heated by only a coal fire, full central heating will be fitted, normally a gas wet system.
- Rubbish will be removed from gardens and sheds/bin stores.
- Improvements made by the previous tenant that are safe, meet regulations and are in good condition will be kept and maintained. Any that do not meet these standards will be removed

Decorating

Where decorating is required, tenants are offered a choice of a decoration pack, which is delivered to the property, or vouchers/electronic pre-paid cards for use in a retail outlet.

The decorating pack consists of materials e.g. paint, wallpaper and equipment such as paintbrushes, rollers and paste. Vouchers vary in value depending on the size of the property. If the property has one bedroom the voucher will be worth £100. If the property is larger the vouchers are worth £100 plus £30 per additional living or bedroom. The value of the materials in the decorating pack and vouchers is always the same.

If the new tenant has a disability that makes them unable to decorate, the property may be decorated for them. This may be part decoration only, depending upon the condition of the property.

Adapted properties

If we have adapted the property for a disabled person, e.g. by removing the bath and fitting a walk in shower, this will remain. We will try to offer the property to someone who needs these adaptations, but if there is no one on the housing register, who needs them, they will remain. The shower will not be removed or the bath refitted. Stair lifts will, however, be removed and stored for future use.

What to do when you move in

Notify gas and electricity suppliers

You must notify both your gas and electricity supplier that you are moving from one address to another, in order that the meters at both your old and new addresses can be read.

National Grid will advise you who was the previous gas supplier. Contact them on **0845 608 1524** or go online at www.nationalgrid.com



MPAS will advise you who the previous electricity supplier was. Contact them on **0845 6030618**.

If you are moving into a property with a gas supply, it will be necessary for the council's gas contractor **P H Jones Ltd** to remove a disc from the meter before the gas can be used. You will need to give P H Jones at least 24 hours notice.

The servicing and repair of council owned gas appliances is also carried out by P H Jones Ltd. Contact them on:

- **01604 588811** for repairs during normal working hours or an emergency occurring during the day
- **01604 580900** for an emergency between 5.pm and 8.am.

Gas leaks are always the responsibility of National Grid and must be reported to them. If you smell gas, or suspect a leak, contact the Gas Emergency Service immediately on **0800 111999**.

Contact the water company

You should contact Anglian Water on **0800 919155**, to arrange payment of your water rates at your new address and claim a refund, if any, for your old address. For general enquiries and emergencies, you should phone **08457 145145**.

Redirect your mail

The Post Office will arrange to redirect mail to your new address. Prices range from about £8 for one month to £40 for a complete year.

For more information on redirection enquire at the main Post Office or look on the Royal Mail website at www.royalmail.com/portal/rm.

We cannot normally allow you to borrow keys to collect mail that may have been delivered to your old address, nor can we accept responsibility for such mail.

Make arrangements for your TV viewing

Your TV licence covers your house, not your television set. You must therefore notify TV Licensing of your new address, so that the licence can be transferred. The most convenient way to do this is online at www.tvlicensing.co.uk

If you are the tenant of a house or bungalow you will need to provide your own aerial for receiving TV signals by:

- Mast aerial - if the aerial is to be attached to the property you must get our permission. This will be granted unless the installation is detrimental to the building.
- Cable system (if available in your area) – Virgin Media have the franchise to fit a cable system in all council properties.

If you live in a block of flats or maisonettes there will be a communal aerial system – this provides radio and TV reception via a wall-mounted faceplate normally located in the lounge. The faceplate has three connection points - two push fit connections for FM (radio) and TV the third connection is a screw type fitting for SAT (satellite).

- Satellite dish – If you live in a house or bungalow and you wish to use the satellite facility then you will need to make your own arrangements through a commercial company.

If you live in a flat and your property has not been connected to the communal satellite and aerial system please ring us on **0300 330 7000** and arrangements will be made for the connection. This number is also used for reporting any faults on the communal aerial system. Due to restricted planning permission no individual aerials or satellite dishes can be erected on the building.

Arrange home contents insurance

The council **does not insure** your furniture, belongings or decorations against theft, fire, vandalism and burst pipes. You need to take out your own insurance. However under a special scheme arranged through Crystal Insurance, it is easy for you to protect your belongings.

This scheme is open to all council tenants and leaseholders.

If you are interested in taking out this policy call the council on **0300 330 7000**, or click on the link to the website <http://www.crystal-insurance.co.uk>.

Notify the Council Tax and Benefits sections of the council

Inform the Council Tax section of your move. If you received Council Tax or Housing Benefit at your last address also inform the benefits section.

Please note-since April 2013 government welfare changes have meant that if you are of working age you are unlikely to have your Council Tax completely covered by your benefit payment.

If you claim Income Support, Working Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit or Jobseekers Allowance tell the Benefits Agency that you have moved. We can help you with any of these forms.

Inform your GP and dentist

Tell your doctor and dentist that your address has changed.

When does your tenancy start?

The date on your tenancy agreement is the date you become the legal tenant. From that date you are responsible for your home and for paying the rent, even if you do not move in immediately. If you do not move in straight away this is likely to affect your Housing Benefit entitlement.

Can I put in my own fittings?

Yes, you can install your own fittings such as shelves and cupboards as long as you do not damage or remove anything, or alter the property. If you want to make other alterations you must ask for our written permission and you must make good any damage if you leave the property.

Will the council have spare keys to the property?

No, the council does not keep spare keys. New locks will have been fitted at the beginning of your tenancy. We provide you with the appropriate keys and it is your responsibility to obtain any further sets.

Is there any financial help available from the council?

Not directly from the council but if you face exceptional financial pressure we may be able to help you with the costs of setting up a new home through access to second hand furniture and white goods.

Ring the council on **0300 330 7000** and ask to speak to a gateway officer.

What about water meters?

If you choose to have a water meter installed you should let us know. The water company may offer to install one for you. If you decide to go onto a water meter they may give you a limited period of time to change your mind and go back to un-metered billing. However if the property already has a water meter this cannot be taken out.

Living in flats, bedsits or maisonettes

If you move into a flat, bedsit or maisonette it is important to be particularly considerate about noise, dispose of your rubbish in a responsible way, look after communal areas and maintain security if your building has a door entry system.

The communal hallways and stairs of flats are cleaned by the council for which you will pay a service charge. There are different schedules for the cleaning of communal areas depending on the type of flat block. There are also different arrangements for collection and disposal of rubbish depending on where you live. Your housing officer will advise you when you move in.

The council is responsible for maintenance of shared areas, drying areas, fencing, lighting, entry phones and lifts. This will also include the removal of graffiti.

Tenants and residents are responsible for keeping the shared areas secure. In most blocks there are door entry systems to help control who comes in the building. You should not allow anyone entry to the building unless you know them.

Rent & Service

How rents are set

The council is responsible for collecting the rent for the properties it owns and relies on its rent income to fund many of its services e.g. repairs and maintenance or improving the standard of council homes.



The majority of our rents are calculated, based on a government formula. This takes into account four things:

- the value of the
 - property the
 - number of
 - bedrooms
- local average earnings in comparison to the national average local authority average rent.

However as a general rule the bigger the property the higher

the rent. Rents are increased in line with a Government annual

formula.

Information on fair rents can be found on the Department for Communities and Local Government website at www.communities.gov.uk.

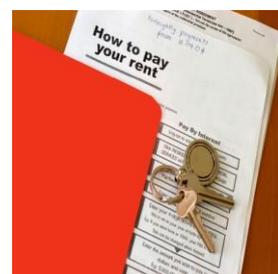
We have a small number of tenancies which are let at an affordable rent. The rent for these properties is calculated at 80% of the market rent for a similar property.

All council tenants are informed about their rent and any other service charges that apply when they accept an offer on their property.

The council writes to all tenants at the beginning of March each year to advise of the new rent and any other charges for the forthcoming year.

Ways of paying your rent

Your rent and any other service charges must be paid **weekly in advance on the Monday of each**



week.

We offer a range of different ways for you to pay your rent:

By direct debit

The council recommends this as the easiest and most convenient way to pay your rent.

It is easy to set up a Direct Debit and you can do this by ringing us on **01604 837104**, or contacting your rent income officer. Alternatively complete a [Direct Debit mandate form](#). Please complete and drop it into the One Stop shop at the Guildhall or post to:

Rent Accounting, Northampton Borough Council, Westbridge Depot, 9-13 St James Mill Road, Northampton NN5 5JW

Please remember to specify if you want your payment to be made on the 1st, 11th, 20th or 28th of the month.

You can cancel your direct debit at any time by notifying your bank or building society.

- **Telephone payments**

Payments can be made by debit or credit card quoting your rent reference number by phoning **01604 838383** which is a 24 hour automated telephone payment line.

Payments can be made using Visa, Mastercard, Delta, Switch, Maestro or Solo. Please note a 1.5% commission charge is added where a payment is made by credit card.

You can also ring your rent income officer and make a payment over the phone. You will receive a receipt in the post.

- **Payzone**

Use a housing rent swipe card and pay cash at any shop, post office or retail outlet displaying the payzone sign and receive a receipt. To find your nearest look on their website at <http://search.payzone.co.uk/>

- **Cheques through the post**

Cheques can be made payable to Northampton Borough Council and referenced with your rent reference number on the back. They need to be posted to The Guildhall, St Giles Square, Northampton, NN1 1DE. No receipt will be issued unless requested.

- **[Online](#)**

You can use your debit or credit cards to make a payment but please note a

small charge will be applied for credit card transactions.

Your rent account

When you begin your tenancy we set up your rent account. This will have an individual 6 figure reference number. If you have a query about your rent account at any time it is useful to quote it when you contact us.

We will send you a rent statement every 3 months showing all transactions over the last 3 months

You can also now view your rent account online on the council's website. To do this you must firstly set up a secure password through [the Citizens Account on the website](#).

Refunds

You can ask for a refund application form at the One Stop Shop [or download one](#). It will take about 2 weeks to process the refund. You will be sent a cheque for the overpayment.

If you receive Housing Benefit it may take longer for your claim to be processed, because checks have to be made to ensure that no benefit overpayments have occurred.

How we recover rent arrears

The council follows a statutory procedure to recover arrears and is required by law to do so.

We employ rent income officers who are responsible for recovering rent arrears and monitoring individual payments. If at any time you then experience difficulties maintaining your rent payments or you have any concerns about your rent account please call your rent income officer or email us on rentincome@northampton.gov.uk.

If you have rent arrears your rent income officer will wish to discuss the reasons for them and will, wherever possible, agree a repayment plan that is realistic for your circumstances. You may be entitled to benefits that you are not receiving and you will be advised about how to claim them.

If you have an introductory tenancy and build up arrears on your rent account it is unlikely that your tenancy will be made secure unless you can show you have made every attempt to clear those arrears. Rent arrears could result in you losing your home. We may serve a Notice of Possession Proceedings (NPP) that may lead to court proceedings if you do not clear the arrears. If the case is heard in court it is very likely that an order requiring you to leave the property will be granted - so it is vital your rent account remains up to date.

If you have a secure tenancy you will still be expected to maintain your rent payments. The council's computer system automatically generates letters

notifying tenants of any arrears on their rent account. If you receive one it is always advisable to ring your rent income officer to discuss the reason for the arrears even if the amount is quite small.

However if you persistently fail to make payments you will be served with a Notice of seeking Possession (NOSP) of your property. If after that satisfactory steps are not taken to clear the rent arrears you may be taken to court and ultimately evicted. Clearly, eviction is a last resort as the council does not wish to take away your home. However it will do so if rent arrears build up and no attempt is made to clear them.

Problems paying your rent?

If you contact your rent income officer they can advise you on your options for rent payment. However they may decide to put you in touch with one of our specialist money advisors in the Housing Options Team who will be able to give you impartial free and confidential advice. They can help you with budgeting and setting priorities for paying creditors.

Alternatively you could contact an external agency such as:

Community Law Service (formerly Welfare Rights)

3-7 Hazelwood Road
Northampton
NN1 1LG

The opening hours for their welfare rights and benefit advice services are Monday to Friday 9.30 am -12.30 pm, 1.30pm - 4pm Monday to Thursday.

Tel: **01604 636112** email enquiries@communitylawservice.org.uk

[The Northampton Citizens Advice Bureau](#)

7/8 Mercers Row
Northampton
NN1 2QL

Tel: **0844 855 2122**

Or visit the website of www.adviceguide.org.uk, where free advice is available.

National Debt line

Tel: (freephone) **0800 8084000**

Service charges

The rent you are charged covers the cost of repairing and maintaining your home and managing your tenancy. If you live in a flat you will also pay service charges. Service charges cover the cost of shared services to the communal areas in and around the flat block where you live, for example the cleaning of communal hallways, maintaining landscaped areas within the curtilage of the flats and electricity for communal lighting and door entry systems. When you sign up for your tenancy, if it is a flat, you will be advised of all the service charges that apply to your home in addition to the rent.

If you are entitled to housing benefit, then dependent on your income, all or part of your service charges will be covered by Housing Benefit. The exception to this is any charge for heating where communal heating systems are provided. Heating charges cannot be met through Housing Benefit.

If you live in a sheltered property there may also be an additional charge for any support you receive from the Independent Living Team and Call Care Service. If you are entitled to Housing Benefit these charges may be met through Supporting People Grant.

Housing Benefit



If you are on low income and need financial help to pay all or part of your rent you may qualify for Housing Benefit.

Housing Benefit is a means tested benefit, administered by local councils on behalf of the Department of Work and Pensions. It is paid by the council who reclaim the money from the Government.

What it covers

Housing Benefit covers the cost of your 'bricks and mortar' - this means the building you are living in and includes the use of your living rooms, kitchen, bathroom and a communal area (if you have one). It does not cover the costs of:

- meals
- water
- charges
- heating and
- lighting
- laundry
- cleaning your
- room
- gardening
- a separate garage or car parking
- space personal care and support.

These are known as ineligible service charges.

Who can Claim

Anyone who is liable to pay rent can claim. You can claim Housing Benefit if you are already receiving other benefits such as income related Job Seekers Allowance, Income Support, guaranteed pension credit, Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance. Your entitlement to these benefits will be unaffected by claiming Housing Benefit. However some benefits will affect it, notably Incapacity Benefit.

Who does not qualify for Housing Benefit?

- Anyone, or any couple, with savings of over £16,000 (except if you are over 60 and receive the guaranteed credit part of the pension credit you may still qualify with up to £132,000 worth of savings).
- Anyone living with a close relative who pays them "board".
- Asylum seekers and people from outside the UK who do not qualify for benefits.
- Most students and people living in residential /nursing homes.

Making a claim

The council is now using a system called E-Benefits to process benefit claims more quickly and efficiently.

To make a claim ring **0300 330 7000**. You will need to answer some basic questions and our staff will arrange a convenient time to ring you back, when our call agents will complete the claim form over the telephone. They will also book you an appointment to bring in any supporting documents that you need to provide for your claim. However, if you are ill or disabled, we can arrange for an officer to visit you at home to collect these.

Documents you will need to support your claim

You also need to provide documents (these must be originals) that confirm things about you, your partner and children (if appropriate). These will include documents related to your:

- Identity e.g. birth or marriage certificate, passport, National Insurance number card, medical card, driving license, UK residence permit, EU identity card or a recent gas or electricity bill.
- National Insurance number e.g. NI number card, payslips or letters from Social Security or the Tax Office.
- Earnings - your last 5 payslips if you are paid weekly or last 2 if you are paid monthly, accounts for the last financial year if you are self-employed or trading records so far if your business is new.
- If you have just started working we will calculate your claim based on a letter from your employer confirming your new salary.
- Capital, savings and investments e.g. your bank, post office or building society books, full bank statements, certificates for National Savings Certificates, ISA's, stocks, shares and unit trusts.
- Benefits, allowances, tax credits or pensions e.g. current award notices or letters from social security confirming how much you get. We may be able to check for some Social Security benefits.
- Other income received e.g. pension slips from a former employer, letter from the court showing maintenance payments, evidence of any board and lodgings paid to you.
- Other money paid out e.g. letters about student grants or maintenance, agreements or receipts from registered child carers.

How long does the claim take?

You have up to one calendar month to provide your supporting evidence but we encourage you to do this immediately. If there are special circumstances that mean that there will be a delay in obtaining evidence, please tell us straight away.

Once we have received your application form and all your supporting documents we can complete an assessment of claim.

Benefit is usually awarded from the Monday after the claim is received at the council offices. If you can show us that there were circumstances that delayed your application you have a case for the payment to be backdated (for example if you were ill or in hospital). In most cases you will need to write to us to explain why you were late returning your form.

How much benefit will I get?

When calculating the amount of Housing Benefit you may be entitled to we take into account:

- your income
- any savings you may have
- the size of your family
- non-dependents (i.e. other people aged 18 or over who live with you).

[The Direct.Gov website Benefits Advisor](#) includes an online benefit calculator. This may help you to find out how much you may be entitled to. A customer services officer or your rent income officer can also do a trial calculation for you.

Welfare reform

There have been a number of significant changes to benefit entitlement introduced by the Government since 2011 and these may affect you. For example, if you are of working age and are deemed to 'over occupy' your property you are now likely to receive less Housing Benefit than prior to 1st April 2013.

Housing Benefit and a number of other means tested benefits are due to be replaced by Universal Credit. Universal Credit is likely to be rolled out in the Northampton area from 2016-17.

Under occupation

Since 1st April 2013, the government will no longer pay full Housing Benefit to anyone of working age if they are under-occupying a property. Tenants who have one bedroom more than they need will see a reduction in their weekly Housing Benefit of 14% of their rent charge. Tenants who have two or more bedrooms than they need will see a reduction in their weekly Housing Benefit of 25% of the rent charged.

How many bedrooms are you entitled to?

One bedroom is allowed for each of the following:

- A couple
- A person aged 16 or older
- Two children of the same sex until they are 16
- Two children of the opposite sex until one reaches 10

- Where the claimant or partner requires overnight care

The reduction will apply to parents who share the responsibility of the children in separate homes. The main home of the child will be classed as the home where the parent receives the child benefit.

Approved foster carers will be allowed an additional room, so long as they have fostered a child, or become an approved foster carer in the last 12 months.

In addition, local councils have been advised to allow an extra bedroom for children who are unable to share because of their severe disabilities. However, this will depend on the individual circumstances of each case, the extent of the disability and the sleep disruption caused to the other child required to share the room

What to do if you are affected by these changes

If you are experiencing difficulty making rent payments you should contact us immediately on **0300 330 7000**. We can arrange for a specialist officer to speak to you and discuss your options in detail.

There are a number of options you can consider if you are affected by the new under occupation rules:

- **Continue living where you are and pay the shortfall** – you could look at where you may be able to reduce your weekly outgoings so you can afford to make up your rent payments.
- **Get some money advice** – Our money advisors in the Housing Options Team can offer debt/budgeting advice help with money management and check that you are receiving all of the benefits to which you are entitled. Organisations such as the Citizens Advice Bureau and the Community Law Service may also be able to help.
- **Take in a lodger** – This is an option but think carefully about sharing your home. You will need to notify your landlord and Housing Benefits. The amount of benefits you receive may reduce depending on the income you are receiving from your lodger.
- **Make an application for Discretionary Housing Payments -** You may be able to top up your Housing Benefit payment by applying for a **Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP)**. See details below.
- **Transfer to a smaller property** – Ask us about moving to a smaller property. If you are willing to downsize we will give your application a high priority and you may be eligible for a downsizing payment of up to £500.
- **Mutually exchange to a smaller home** – We recommend any tenants wishing to move home register their name and property details with the Home swapper scheme at www.homeswapper.co.uk. Tenants downsizing through mutual exchange could also be eligible for a

payment of up to £500.

- **Find work or increasing the number of hours you are working** – by increasing your income from work you should become less dependent on housing benefit payments.

Please email us at welfarereform@northampton.gov.uk if you would like to discuss any of these options further.

Getting further help - discretionary housing payments

Each year the council receives a small amount of funding from the government for 'discretionary' payments. If you pay more rent than you receive in benefit there are certain circumstances where the council might make a one off discretionary payment to you to cover the shortfall.

To apply for this you need to contact us and explain your circumstances. You may be asked to come into the Guildhall to complete a form or if this is not possible one of our officers may visit you at home.

Understanding our decision

When we have assessed your claim for benefit we will send you a decision letter. The letter shows the information we have used to work out your benefit and you should check it carefully. If you do not understand our decision or you want to know more, please get in touch with us and ask us to explain it. You should do this within one calendar month of the date on our decision letter.

If you ask us for more information after this time, we will still explain the decision to you but may not be able to look at the decision again if you later decide that it is wrong.

We can explain our decision verbally, or if you want us to confirm it in writing we will send you a 'statement of reasons' explaining how we have worked out your benefit.

You can contact us by phone, by email or in writing, or you can call into the Guildhall.

What if I disagree with the decision?

You should write to us within one calendar month of the date of the decision letter.

If you have only asked for a verbal explanation, we still count the one calendar month from the date of the decision letter. But, if you ask for a written statement of reasons, you will have the one calendar month from the date of the decision letter plus the time we took to send you the statement of reasons. If you do not understand something in your notification letter please call us on **0300 330 7000** or write to us for a more detailed explanation.

If you think your benefit has been wrongly calculated, or that you have been told that you are not entitled but you think you should be, please contact us again (in writing) within one month. Your claim can be checked again.

Once we have received your letter we will make sure a different officer from the one who originally assessed your case will look at your claim again. We will then write to let you know whether the original decision stands or whether we will amend your entitlement.

Housing Benefit appeals

If you still disagree with the decision you have the right to an appeal. The appeal will be heard by an independent Appeal Tribunal. You can do this by writing to us stating that you wish to appeal against our decision on your Housing Benefit entitlement.

When making an appeal always ensure the letter is signed by the person affected and say why you wish us to reconsider the decision. Please send all correspondence to:

The Benefits Service
Northampton Borough Council
The Guildhall
St Giles Square
Northampton
NN1 1DE

Email: benefitservices@northampton.gov.uk

You have one month to appeal against the decision from the date on your entitlement letters. This is important because the tribunal does not have to look at anything you do not mention. Make sure that you sign the form.

You can get help with putting together your appeal from an independent advice centre such as the Citizens Advice Bureau or Community Law Service.

For further information on the appeals process please contact us on **0300 330 7000**.

Reporting changes in your circumstances

It is important that you are aware of all the changes that may affect your entitlement to Housing and Council Tax Benefit.

You can report changes by contacting us on **0300 330 7000**. Our staff will take note of your change and again arrange for you to come in and bring any documentation that you need to provide with you.

Tell us straight away if:

- any of your children leave school or home
- anyone moves in or out of your home (including lodgers and sub-tenants)
- your income or the income of anyone living with you changes (this includes benefits)
- your capital, savings or investments change (e.g. you inherit money or property or have a large win from bingo or the Lottery)
- you or anyone living with you becomes a student, goes on a youth training scheme, goes into hospital or a nursing home or goes into prison
- you or anyone living with you gets, changes or leaves a job
- you move house or move rooms within a house
- you or your partner are going to be away from your home for more than a month
- you receive any decision from the Home Office
- anything else you have previously told us changes.

Please note if you knowingly make a false claim, or tell us about a change in order to increase or maintain entitlement to benefit, you could face a criminal prosecution which may result in eviction and a prison sentence. We publicise the details of those who commit fraud against the council.

Overpayments

Overpayments can occur if your circumstances change and your entitlement reduces or stops altogether. If this happens we will write to you to tell you the amount, the reason for it, the dates it covers and how we propose to recover it. You will also be told about your rights of appeal.

If you are currently receiving Housing Benefit the overpayment will be recovered from your benefit payments through a weekly deduction known as 'claw back'. This is a reduction in your weekly benefit that you need to add towards the weekly level of rent you pay.

If you are no longer receiving Housing Benefit the overpayment may be recovered from other benefits or an invoice may be issued.

Verification of claims

The council has an Interventions Team that verifies Housing Benefit and Council Tax reduction claims. This verification is either done by us sending you a review form or by a personal visit to your home by a member of our staff. It is their job to confirm that those getting benefit remain entitled to it. If you receive a Housing Benefit and Council Tax reduction review form it is essential you complete it and return it to us straight away together with all supporting documents. Any delay could result in your benefit payments being stopped.

Reporting suspected fraud

Anyone can refer details of suspected benefit fraud to the council on **01604 837320**. This line is open 24 hours a day but during office hours you can speak to a trained fraud officer so that as much detail as possible can be collected. All calls are treated in the strictest confidence and no callers' identity is ever revealed. You can also email us at reportfraud@northampton.gov.uk

Alternatively you can call the national benefit fraud hotline on freephone **0800 328 6340**. You do not have to give your name.

Housing Benefit enquiries

For any enquiries about Housing Benefit please contact us by writing to:

The Benefits Service
Northampton Borough Council
The Guildhall
St Giles Square
Northampton NN1 1DE

Tel: **0300 330 7000** Fax: **01604 838742**

email: benefitservices@northampton.gov.uk

Repairs



For more detail about repairs please consult your [Repairs Handbook](#).

The council's responsibilities

The council is responsible for the outside of your property, the main structure of the building and any fittings and appliances we originally supplied. We are also responsible for pipes, wiring, heating systems, drainage, power and light fittings and any fittings or facilities in communal areas.

In the garden we are responsible for any fences, walls, outbuildings, sheds or coal bunkers that were originally put up by the council plus the main paths from the boundary of your property to your front and back door.

All repairs are carried out by our own workforce or by specialist contractors selected by us from an approved list.

By law we must also carry out an annual safety check and service of your gas supply. This check is done for us by a specialist contractor.

We also carry out ongoing maintenance work to the outside of properties. The programme is agreed in consultation with tenants and we ensure we do the most important work first.

Our response times

We treat repairs differently depending on how important they are.



Emergency repairs

These include repairs that remove immediate danger to people, avoid flooding or major damage to the property, make the property secure or restore total loss of heating in winter (31st October to 1st May)

We respond to emergency repairs within 24 hours.

We will complete the repair at the time if we can. If we cannot we will make the situation safe and carry out any follow up work as urgent or routine repairs. Emergency repairs cover:

- gas leaks
- major leaks to roofs
- burst water mains

- total failure of electrical power and/or lights
- blocked drains
- blocked sink waste pipes in high rise flats
- no heat in a property occupied by an elderly person
- blocked toilet where there is only one in the property
- repairs to doors or windows where building security is affected
- faulty cooker points
- dangerous electrical fittings
- gale or storm damage causing danger to life or property
- overflow running continuously
- breaches of security to outside windows and doors
- covering up exposed manholes or gully grids

Urgent repairs

These include work to restore full or partial failure of sanitation, water or electrical supply, prevent immediate damage to the property, overcome serious inconvenience to the household or where there is a possible health, safety or security risk.

We respond to urgent repairs within 7 days. Urgent repairs cover:

- minor leaks in water system or dripping overflows
- no heating or hot water (except where appliance needs replacing)
- electrical repairs, except where the appliance needs replacing
- blocked sinks, basins and baths
- missing roof tiles
- unsafe or dangerous floorboards
- unsafe or dangerous hand or grab rails
- second toilet not working
- faulty TV aerials and sockets (if fitted by the council)

Non-urgent repairs

Non-urgent (routine) repairs are day-to-day things that are unlikely to cause danger or damage to your home e.g. replacing an internal door. We complete these within a maximum of 30 days. If we have to extend the timescale, if, for example, materials have to be ordered, we will let you know, however our target is complete them within 15 days.

Qualifying repairs

Under the Government's Right to Repair regulations you have the right to have small repairs, known as 'qualifying repairs' (up to the value of £250) done within set time limits. If we do not complete a qualifying repair within the correct time you have the right to ask us to get another approved contractor to do the work.

If this contractor fails to do the work on time or in a satisfactory way you may be entitled to compensation and you have the right to request that we send another approved contractor to do the work.

A useful Right to Repair leaflet is available at the One Stop Shop or online at www.direct.gov.uk

Reporting a repair

There are a number of ways to report a repair to the council.

- ring the council on **0300 330 7000**

The line is open 8am-5pm Mondays to Fridays. Calls are normally charged at a local rate.

- minicom (for deaf or hard of hearing) **01604 838970**

This line is open 9am-5pm Monday to Friday.

- report the [repair online](#)

This service is only suitable for non-urgent repairs. Set up a citizens account on the website and then enter details of the problem. Your problem will be logged and you will be given an appointment time for the repair work to go ahead.

- email: housingrepairs@northampton.gov.uk

What you need to tell us when you report your repair

- your name, address and daytime phone number
- what needs to be repaired
- when you will be at home
- any circumstances we will need to take into account, such as whether you are hard of hearing and will take time getting to your door.

We will check that the repair is our responsibility and if it is how quickly we will be able to deal with it. If necessary we will arrange for a maintenance surveyor to visit your home to look at what needs to be done.

We then enter details of your repair onto our computer system.

For urgent and non-urgent repairs we may make a morning or afternoon appointment for a specific day. Morning appointments will be between 8.30am until midday and afternoon appointments will be between midday until 4.30pm, or 3pm on Fridays. Please let us know immediately if a repair worker

does not come within the response time or keep to an appointment time arranged with you.

If you find you cannot keep an appointment please let us know and we will make a new arrangement. Please also let us know if the repair is no longer needed.

For all repairs we will send you an acknowledgement by post which will confirm the job number, the name of your contractor, the date of your appointment and the target date by which the repair should be completed.

What happens next?

If it is an emergency repair we will ask you to stay at home until a repair worker arrives or arrange for a neighbour, relative or friend to wait in on your behalf.

If you are not in when the repair worker comes to do an emergency repair a card will be left telling you to contact us to arrange when they will return. You will be recharged for the repair workers time. Your repair will now be treated as an urgent repair and carried out sometime in the following 7days.

If you do not make contact within 14 days we will cancel the job. Also you will be charged for wasting the repair workers time.

If you are not at home when a repair worker comes to do an urgent or routine repair they will leave a card saying when they will call again. If this is not convenient you must phone to agree a different day. If you are not in on their second visit the repair will be cancelled.

Preparing for a repair

We will tell you if you need to protect or move your furniture or if you need to lift any flooring or carpets. This should be done before the repair worker arrives. Let us know if you have any difficulty arranging this.

A responsible adult must be at home all the time while repair workers are working.

Please ensure that repair workers can get on with their work safely. Keep your children and any pets away from the area where they are working. Repair workers can refuse to work at your home if they feel that their health and safety, or yours, is at risk.

Please provide a smoke free environment for our repair workers and contractors. They can refuse to carry out the repair if you smoke whilst they are working.

What to do when the repair worker arrives

Check their identity card before you allow them into your home.

Repair workers should not smoke, play radios, or make or receive private phone calls during their work time. They are not allowed to receive money, services or gifts from tenants.

Repair workers must ask your permission to use your phone, toilet or electricity supply or go into other rooms in your home.

Emergency repairs out of hours

We operate an out of hours service for council tenants, but this should only be used for **real emergencies**.

Ring 01604 837999.

Please note: if you call the emergency service out of hours for non-emergencies you will be recharged for the cost of the call-out and any work carried out.

Repairs that are your responsibility

Some minor repairs are your responsibility rather than the councils. You are expected to do these yourself or arrange and pay to get them done. These include:

- replacing keys or locks when keys are lost or stolen or when you get you get locked out (including garages and outbuildings)
- trying to clear blockages in basins, sinks baths or toilets
- decorating
- resetting trip switches
- replacing light bulbs or fluorescent tubes
- putting up TV aerials and satellite dishes (only with our permission)
- maintaining garden paths (except any that lead from the boundary gate to the front and back doors)
- replacing clothes lines and rotary driers (unless for communal use)
- replacing plugs and chains in baths, sinks and basins
- replacing handles and latches to doors and kitchen units
- adjusting doors when new carpets and laminate floorings have been fitted
- testing and cleaning smoke detectors
- fitting waste supply pipework and vents for washing machines
- keeping your gully grids clear of leaves etc.
- replacing door knockers, bells or security chains
- replacing toilet seats and flush chains

- renewing shower curtains, hat and coat hooks, shelves, curtain rails and battens
- repairing any fencing, steps, patios, sheds or any other garden features not originally provided by the council
- getting chimneys swept if used for wood or coal fires
- descaling showerheads
- keeping air and window vents clear
- fitting TV aerials and sockets (unless communal aerials).

Damage and recharges

If you or anyone in your home cause damage to your home we expect you to arrange for it to be repaired. If we have to do the repair to make sure you and your family are safe you will have to pay us for the cost of the repair.

If you are reporting criminal damage caused by others, you should firstly contact Northamptonshire Police, by ringing **101**. Then call the council on **0300 330 7000** and advise the customer services officer of what has happened. We only carry out work to make your home safe. You must arrange all other repair work. All repair work must be carried out by a qualified tradesperson. If you want us to do the work we will give you an estimated cost which will include an administration charge. You will have to pay us in full before the work starts.

Further information on re-charges can be found on our [web pages](#).

Keeping Safe



Fire prevention

A fire can start very easily and can spread with speed.

Home fire safety checks are available to all Northamptonshire tenants free of charge by the Fire and rescue Service. During their visit they will advise on:

- how to make your home safer
- what to do in the event of a fire
- what to do if you are trapped by a fire

They also fit a free smoke alarm if your home is without one and explain how to maintain it correctly.

Ring **0800 38 999 50** during office hours to book your free home safety check, book one online on the county council's website at www.northamptonshire.gov.uk or write to:

Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service
Home Fire Safety Check Team
Fire Station
Headlands
Kettering
Northamptonshire
NN15 6BH



email: safetycheck@northantsfire.org.uk

If you do already have a smoke detector test it regularly and renew the battery once a year or when it gets low. Please remember:

- make sure all fires are out or have a fire guard in front and properly stub out all cigarettes before going to bed at night or when you go out
- never dry clothes over heaters
- watch chip pans while you are cooking and remove them from the heat when you have finished
- do not leave candles lit if no-one is in the room
- never keep explosive or flammable materials such as bottle gas paraffin or petrol in your home, garden or in a shared area.

If there is a fire in your home you must

- leave the property immediately
- shut the door behind you
- call the Fire and Rescue Service by dialling **999** once you are safe

If you live in a flat and there is a fire elsewhere in the building (e.g. in another flat or in a corridor or on a landing) **stay in your flat** and call the Fire and Rescue Service.

Wait for instructions from them - they will tell you if you need to evacuate your flat, and will tell you when and how to do this.

If smoke starts entering your flat from beneath the fire door, place a wet towel along the bottom edge of the door to prevent the smoke coming in. Then phone the Fire and Rescue Service. Stay in your flat and await instructions.

The main entrance door to your flat is a fire door and will prevent smoke and fire passing from the flat to the corridor, or from the corridor into your flat for approximately 30 minutes. This will allow the Fire and Rescue Service to assess what needs to be done.

Electrical safety

Never:

- touch bare wires before turning off the electricity at the mains box (consumer unit)
- touch anything electrical if it is wet - turn off the electricity at the consumer unit and do not use it again until it is completely dry
- overload sockets - when you use adaptors, make sure that the total load on the adaptor is no more than 13 amps
- carry out any electrical alterations or improvements without our permission.

And ensure

- you unplug any appliances that are not in use
- you use the correct fuses in plugs
- you disconnect the electricity supply to any faulty switch, socket or appliance
- you avoid places where electrical wires are behind the plaster when putting in nails or fixings around a socket, switch or light fitting
- you use a circuit breaker device (usually fitted on your extension lead). When using portable appliances or tools outside

Gas safety

If you can smell gas

- open doors and windows
- check to see if the gas has been left on unlit or if a pilot light has gone out
- turn off the gas at the meter
- do not use anything electrical e.g. door bells, switches or even your phone
- do not smoke or light a flame.

Call National Grid on **0800 111 999 from a phone outside your home.** National Grid will make the situation safe and will leave you a notice about what action they have taken. You then need to contact us.

Please also do not

- remove or block air vents
- carry out any repairs, removals or changes to gas appliances or fittings without getting or advice or permission.

Preventing carbon monoxide fumes

Please remember to:

- keep rooms well ventilated:
- make sure vents are not obstructed or closed
- sweep chimneys at least once a year
- buy officially approved appliances marked with the British Standard Kite Mark
- use Gas Safe registered gas installers
- check and service gas appliances regularly.

The council must, by law, carry out a gas safety check on all appliances it has supplied once a year. You must allow us into your home to do this check. We will service and repair all appliances we have installed.

A useful security checklist

- Never leave your keys or any money where a stranger might find them or see or reach them through the letter box.
- Mark valuable items with your postcode and house number, or keep a note of serial numbers.
- Arrange home contents insurance.
- When you go out in the evening, draw the curtains and leave a light on in a room (not just the hall).

- When you go away fit a timer device to a living room lamp to make **the** house look as if someone is in. If you are going away for a long time inform the Police, your housing officer or if you live in sheltered accommodation, your sheltered housing co-ordinator. It is a condition of your tenancy that you advise us if you are likely to be away from your home for more than 4 weeks.
- Arrange with a neighbour to keep an eye on each other's houses.
- **If** you fit extra door locks, make sure that they can be opened easily from inside in case you need to get out in an emergency.
- When you go out check that all windows and doors are closed.
- Keep your shed locked - a thief might use tools to break into your home.

Asbestos

Most people are aware of the potential risk posed by asbestos. It is a natural mineral made up of many small fibres which was widely used in the past as building materials and in all sorts of products



Asbestos fibres are strong and resistant to heat which made them popular for use in fireproofing. Properties built after the mid 1980's are unlikely to contain asbestos or asbestos products but some older council properties may.

What are the risks?

There are asbestos fibres in the air because asbestos has been used so widely, but exposure to this low level is unlikely to pose a danger to health. It is only if very high levels of fibres are breathed in and get trapped in the lungs that they may cause lung disease, including cancer.

People who have worked with asbestos for many years as part of their job or have washed the dusty clothes of those who have worked with asbestos are most likely to be affected. Workplace regulations now protect people against harmful exposure to dangerous substances.

There is only a very small risk to people who come into contact with asbestos in their homes or other buildings that they use, such as offices, shops, schools etc. However short term exposure to asbestos fibres can occur during DIY work if the materials containing asbestos are damaged in some way i.e. by drilling, sawing or sanding. This should be avoided as high levels of fibres can escape and be harmful.

Where is asbestos found?

Building materials using asbestos were widely used from 1930 to around 1980, particularly from the 1960's onwards. So houses and flats built or refurbished at this time may contain asbestos.

Asbestos has also been used in some heat resistant household products such as oven gloves and ironing boards, although this has been banned since 1993. The types of places asbestos might be found are:

- heater units, boilers and warm air units
- old storage heaters
- warm air and central heating boiler insulation
- heating appliance rope gaskets
- cold water cisterns
- flat roof decking tile, roof slates, roof sheeting (especially garage roofs and outhouse roofs), roofing felts, soffits, gutters, flue pipes and rainwater pipes
- thermoplastic and vinyl floor tiles
- internal partitions, wall boarding, airing cupboard linings, heater cupboards, shelving, pipe and duct covers
- bath panels
- some decorative finishes such as artex.

Please remember that most of these products above do not contain asbestos. Some asbestos material in boilers, heaters etc. are sealed in and will not be accessible to you but need to be listed in case of boiler replacement works. More detailed information about asbestos in the home can be found on the [council's website](#)

What the council is doing

We are currently creating an asbestos register covering all council accommodation to ensure we know where it occurs, its condition and whether it poses any risk and needs to be removed.

What you can do

Remember asbestos containing products can look very similar to those not containing any. So if you are planning any DIY work please contact the council on **0300 330 7000** or your housing officer.

Asbestos in good condition and left undisturbed presents no hazard to anyone. If you suspect material contains asbestos and you would like to get it tested, contact the council and ask to speak to a member of the Technical Services Team to arrange for a survey. To be on the safe side assume the material contains asbestos until you have the results.

Check callers carefully

As a general rule never let anyone into your home unless you are satisfied with who they are and why they are calling. Older people should be particularly vigilant as they can be targeted by bogus callers or sales people using high pressure tactics. However all council tenants should remember:

- if you have a door viewer, check to see who it is before opening the door
- if you have a door chain, keep it on when you open the door
- if you don't know the caller, ask to see their identity card, and check it carefully
- if you are unsure about the person, ask them to remain outside while you telephone the organisation they claim to represent to check who they are
- call the council if it is a contractor who has come to carry out some repair work

Do not give in to anyone - it is your home.

Door Entry Systems

Door entry systems are put in to control who comes into buildings with shared entrances. To keep your building safe you need to:

- make sure that the door always locks behind you
- never leave the entrance door open or propped open
- try not to allow non-residents to follow you into the block even if they appear genuine (they should press the button for the flat they are visiting)
- report any faults to us immediately.

When you move in you will receive two keys or fobs to your main entrance. You will have to pay for any extra keys or fobs, including any that are lost.

Outside Your Home



Rubbish collection

The council is responsible, through its partnership with Daventry District Council and [Enterprise](#), for the collection of household rubbish.

This is a vital service that makes the town a healthy, safe and clean place to live. We operate a kerbside collection service for all recyclable and non-recyclable waste. This is normally through wheelie bins and recycling boxes, but plastic sacks are provided where wheelie bins are not suitable e.g. for people who live in flats. Large communal containers are in use in some blocks of flats and other residential developments.

The council's waste collection service means that we will:

- collect your refuse and recycling on the same day each week (there may be exceptions at Christmas, New Year and Bank Holidays)
- endeavor to advertise well in advance any changes to the collection service
- collect large bulky items for a small charge
- provide facilities for recycling waste.

You can help us by:

- Putting your refuse and recycling out at your nearest kerbside by 7am on collection day only and taking back any containers after emptying. Special arrangements can be made if you are unable to do this. For more information or to apply for an assisted collection call the Customer Contact Centre on **0300 330 7000** or [look on our web pages](#)
- Making sure refuse sacks are tied.
- Making sure that when you request removal of large items, these items are easily accessible on the day we have arranged to collect them.
- Using your local recycling facilities and composting garden waste.

All houses in the town have 3 plastic boxes for recycling - a green one for paper and cardboard, a blue one for plastic bottles, cans and foil and a black one for glass bottles and jars. In addition, 65,000 homes are on the 'twin bin scheme', with one black wheelie bin for non-recyclable household waste and one brown bin for garden waste collection. These are normally emptied on alternate weeks.

The remaining properties in Northampton without wheelie bins still have black sacks delivered for non recyclable household waste. These sacks are

collected weekly.

If you live in a flat you can still take part in the scheme. All properties in the borough are entitled to a collection service. Call the Customer Contact Centre on **0300 330 7000** or e-mail recycling@northampton.gov.uk for more information.

Recycling calendars giving collection dates are available from the recycling team (contact details as above) or you can [download one](#) from the council's website.

NB In January 2012 the council started a new weekly food and textiles collection service. For more details go [the waste recycling area of the website](#).

Recycling tips

- Pack your newspapers sideways in the recycling box - it stops them blowing away and you can get just as many in.
- Put out extra recycling in tied up bags (but not black sacks please). We'll take as many cans, newspapers and plastic bottles as you put out.
- Place garden waste directly into your brown bin, if you have one. Do not put the waste in plastic bags as the contents of the bin to be composted and the plastic will not break down. If you have problems with garden waste sticking to the bottom of the bin, you may line it with cardboard or paper.
- Do not put out any more rubbish than will fit in your wheelie bin. The scheme is meant to cut down on the amount of rubbish going to landfill sites, so please recycle as much of your household rubbish as possible.
- To help keep your black bin clean and reduce smells, tie your kitchen waste bags before putting them in the bin. There is no need to buy extra black bags, simply use your kitchen bin liners. There are businesses that will come around and clean your bin for you but to do this just use water or disinfectant.

In addition the council operates a number of recycling 'banks' in the town. These can be used for glass bottles and jars, plastic bottles and cans. There are also banks for books, and Salvation Army shoe and textile banks.

Special collections for large items

If you have a large item such as a piece of furniture or white goods like a fridge, cooker etc. you wish to dispose of we have a bulky waste collection service, for which there is a £25 charge.

You can request this service by contacting us on **0300 330 7000**, emailing us

at waste@northampton.gov.uk or completing an [online request form](#). We will let you know the collection date. If you are expecting delivery of new items, it is sensible to make any arrangements for collection of your old items in advance.

We will collect up to 3 household items such as a 3-piece suite (which is classed as three items), carpets, chairs, bed, mattresses etc. The general rule is, if you would take it with you when you move house it is likely to be suitable for this service.

Please note we do not collect:

- domestic waste, either loose or bagged
- gas bottles
- sheds
- greenhouses
- bags of rubble
- fence panels
- concrete posts
- car or motorbike parts
- garage doors/window frames
- Christmas trees
- garden waste e.g. trees
- asbestos
- fluid containers e.g. drums
- large gates
- wire fencing and large fire surrounds
- general builders waste
- doors - internal and external
- fixtures and fittings of the house.

These items should be taken to your local household waste recycling centre or disposed of by a private contractor. (See yellow pages for local contacts.)

Garden waste

Garden waste can be used for composting. Home composters can be purchased at a discounted rate through the council. For more information contact us on **0300 330 7000**.

If you have to dispose of garden waste you can put this out for collection in your brown wheelie bin. If you do not have a brown bin yet then contact the waste call centre to arrange for a separate collection. Do not put garden waste in black sacks alongside domestic refuse. It will not be collected.

Household Waste Recycling Centres

There are two [Household Waste Recycling Centres](#) in the town run by Northamptonshire County Council:

Ecton Lane Recycling Centre

Lower Ecton
Lane Great
Billing
Northampton
NN3 5HQ

Tel: **01604 406583**

Sixfields Recycling Centre

Walter Tull
Way Weedon
Road
Northampton
NN5 5QL

Tel: **01604 582682**



Gardens

If you have a garden with your council property you are responsible for looking after it by:

- keeping it tidy and free from rubbish
- trimming shrubs, hedges and trees to make sure they do not become a nuisance for your neighbours
- maintaining garden features such as patios or terraces and any fencing you have put up
- ensuring that any barbecues or bonfires are kept under control and that the smoke does not cause a problem for neighbours
- making sure no indoor furniture or appliances, flammable materials or gas are stored in the garden.

If you do not look after your garden you will be in breach of your tenancy conditions and in extreme cases the council may commence legal proceedings and repossess your home. If you are having problems maintaining your garden, contact your housing officer to see if any help can be given.

The council is responsible for maintaining steps and the main paths that lead to your front and back doors and also some fences or boundary walls that border public paths or footpaths.

You will need our permission to

- put up a garage, shed or greenhouse in the garden
- do major landscaping including constructing a pond
- park a car or caravan in your garden, or put up a fence around an open plan area
- plant leylandi or any other fast growing tree or shrub
- cut down or remove a tree
- put up or change a wall or fence
- put up barbed wire on a wall or fence
- lay a patio adjacent to your home.
- erect an aviary or other external structure

Garages

The council lets garages to tenants. There are always a number available to rent at any time at competitive rates.



Council garages are for personal private use only and must not be used for business purposes. They are only intended to store a car, van or motor bike and are not sufficiently weather tight or secure for the storage of any other goods. You should not store petrol or any other inflammable materials in your garage. You should also not sublet your garage to anyone else.

Anyone can apply to rent a council garage, but we give priority to existing council tenants. You will not be offered a garage if you have any outstanding rent arrears or owe any other debt to the council. Also if your account falls into arrears at a later date we may serve 7 days notice to quit on you. The garage will be repossessed if the account is not cleared within this time period.

If you would like to apply for a garage, please contact us and we will send you an application form. Once you have returned it to us you will be entered on the garage waiting list. When a garage becomes available, we will let you know. How long you have to wait for a garage depends on the site you want and how many other people are waiting. The application form explains the different allocation priorities for the waiting list. Forms can be obtained from the One Stop Shop or you can [apply online](#).

Rent arrears on garages

You will not be able to keep your garage if your account falls into arrears. If you owe any rent the council will serve you with a notice to quit and repossess the garage.

When you rent a garage you enter into a license agreement with the council and become a licensee. This does not offer you security of tenure so if you fail

to pay your rent on time, the council does not have to apply to the court for a Possession Order.

If your garage is repossessed and found to contain goods, we will contact you to ask you to remove them. If you do not contact us we will remove them for you and charge you for the cost of the garage clearance, lock changes and storage of any items. These charges will be added to any other arrears you may already have.

Most garage arrears cases can be dealt with relatively simply, provided you get in touch early enough. Ignoring the situation can only make matters worse. Contact us on **0300 330 7000** or ring your rent income officer for advice.

Giving up your garage

We require at least one week advance notice. When you give us back the keys the garage should be empty and swept through. We will charge you if we have to clear it and dispose of any items left behind as we see fit.

Parking

There are a few simple rules to follow if you park your car near your property:

- always park considerately and follow any parking restrictions, signs or markings in the area
- do not park any kind of vehicle in your garden unless you have been given our permission in writing. If we give permission you must pay for our recommended contractor to make a drive or hardstanding and add a dropped kerb
- parking on pavements, footpaths and verges is against the law. Your car may be removed if you park where parking is not allowed, if your car causes an obstruction or is untaxed
- do not store a moped or motorbike inside your home or indoor shared areas
- do not use car parking areas on the land or roads around your house to carry out large-scale car repairs

The council has legal powers to stop people parking illegally on council land or in resident parking areas. We do take action to enforce these powers and in some instances have vehicles towed away and impounded. We are also piloting a vehicle clamping scheme in the Spring Boroughs area of the town.

Abandoned vehicles

Abandoned vehicles are a menace to communities. They are an eyesore and cause nuisance on busy streets with limited parking. More frequently they are a danger to users of the public highway and are targeted by vandals or set alight.

If a vehicle has been abandoned in your street or you see an untaxed car

parked in your road, you can now call ELVIS to get it removed. ELVIS is the Northamptonshire End of Life Vehicle Impound Scheme.

Set up by Northamptonshire Police, Northamptonshire County Council and all the district and borough councils in the county, the scheme aims to remove abandoned cars quickly and efficiently.

The ELVIS team will inspect abandoned and nuisance cars within 24 hours of notification and remove them within a further 24 hours if they are within their rights to do so.

10 ways to spot an abandoned car:

1. Does it look vandalised and/or fire damaged?
2. Does it look unused and in poor condition?
3. Has it been there for over a week?
4. Is there a valid tax disc?
5. Are the wheels or petrol cap missing?
6. Have parts been removed or damaged? (e.g. broken windows or flat tyres)
7. Has it been parked or abandoned in an isolated or unusual location?
8. Is it a known area for abandoned vehicles?
9. Have you seen anybody use it or act suspiciously around it?
10. It is full of rubbish/hazardous material/ combustibles?

If you see an abandoned vehicle, please make a note of the registration number of the vehicle as well as its make and location and report it to ELVIS on **08456 121 999** or email elvis.recovery@northants.police.uk

Graffiti removal

Graffiti is criminal damage and many people find it offensive. We are working together with the county council, local community groups, the police and the probation service to get graffiti removed from wherever it occurs. This is called the Northampton Anti-Graffiti initiative.

If you notice graffiti on your property or any other council property call us on **0300 330 7000** or email us on streetcare@northampton.gov.uk.

We will investigate it and whenever possible remove it. This is a free service. Graffiti of a racial nature will be removed within 24 hours of it being reported. All other graffiti will be removed within 16 days where possible.

We can also give free advice on how to treat graffiti yourself using special paint removers. If you know who is creating the graffiti you can give information anonymously to Northamptonshire Crimestoppers on **0800 555 111**.

We aim in the future to develop powers under the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 to issue fines to offenders and gather evidence that may lead to a prosecution. Council staff, including environmental neighbourhood wardens will be trained with enforcement powers.

Keeping Pets



You may keep pets in your council home as long as they are suitable for the size and type of property you live in. Section 18 of your Tenancy Agreement tells you about the conditions that apply to the keeping of pets. In summary these are:

You must keep your animal under control. This means you must clean up after it. You can be fined or taken to court if you allow your pet to foul public areas or to roam.

You also must not allow your pet to make too much noise (for example barking continually inside or outside your home).

If you have a dog or dogs you must get written permission from the council to keep them. You will need to fill out a form. Your housing officer can provide you with one or you can [apply online](#)

If you want to keep a dog you need to consider how you are going to look after it, train it and how it might affect your neighbours.

Permission will not be given for any dog that is covered by the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 i.e. Pit Bull Terrier, Japanese Tosa, Dogo Argentino and Fila Brasileiro.

If you live in a house or bungalow you can have up to 2 dogs but before giving permission we will consider

- the size, breed and health of the dog(s)
- the size and condition of your property
- your tenancy history and who the owner will be
- whether you can adequately look after them
- whether you are banned by law from keeping animals
- how they will be looked after when you are at work or on holiday.

You cannot keep a dog if you live in a bedsit, flat or maisonette unless:

- you have a guide dog
- your GP or other professional has written to recommend you keep one for your health or wellbeing
- you are the repeat victim of crime
- you can demonstrate that special circumstances exist.

If you already own a dog and have had it since before 1st April 1999 and you meet the consent criteria above, permission will only be given for the duration of the dog's life. You will not be allowed to keep dogs in the future unless special reasons again apply.

If you transfer or arrange a mutual exchange from a house into a flat or maisonette then you will have to accept the no dogs rule as a condition of the move – unless the special reasons apply.

Other animals

You can keep a variety of pets without needing council permission, as long as they do not cause nuisance to other residents and are kept in appropriate cages/tanks etc.

This includes

- one or two domestic cats
- small caged animals (in reasonable numbers) such as hamsters, mice, gerbils, rabbits, chinchillas, chipmunks, ferrets
- caged birds including budgies, parrots, parakeets, canaries, finches, cockatiels, lovebirds
- reptiles such as iguanas, lizards, non-venomous snakes, turtles, skinks, chameleons, terrapins, tortoises, toads, newts, salamanders
- insects such as spiders, stick insects, grass hoppers, locusts
- ornamental fish including goldfish, koi carp, freshwater and saltwater tropical fish
- up to 12 pigeons (in a purpose built loft).

Improving Homes

The Decent Homes Programme

In 2000 the government announced plans for all council owned housing to be upgraded to "Decent Homes Standard", a standard to apply to all social housing (except leasehold and shared ownership properties). A decent home must:

- meet the current statutory minimum standard for housing i.e. contains no serious health and safety hazards
- be in a reasonable state of repair i.e. not have walls, roofs, windows, doors, chimneys, central heating boilers, gas fires, storage heaters, plumbing or electrics that need replacement or repair
- have reasonably modern facilities and services e.g. have kitchens of less than 20 years old or bathrooms of less than 30 years old
- provide a reasonable degree of 'thermal comfort' i.e. heating

The information we currently hold about our stock has helped us to identify the areas to be included in our Decent Homes Programme.

In total around 4000 properties need to be improved so they meet the standard. The improvements will be done through a planned work programme phased over several years.

The first phases in Kingsley and Kingsthorpe South were completed during 2010 and made around 450 properties "decent". Phase 1 also included work to improve another 300 properties in various other locations across the Borough. Phases 2 and 3 are to be spread over 4 years to upgrade a further 3000-4000 homes across the remainder of the town.

[View our Decent Homes pages](#) for more details about the council's Decent Homes programme and what tenants can expect if their home is affected.

Improvements made by tenants

As a tenant you have the right to carry out improvements to your home yourself - provided you get written permission before you start any work.



Each application is considered separately and all alterations will need to be carried out safely, use the appropriate materials and comply with planning and building control requirements.

If you have any queries and want to discuss a particular issue before submitting an application please contact us on **0300 330 7000** and ask for advice

Don't forget to always obtain written permission before

- making additions, alterations, replacements or improvements to your home or the fixtures or services in your home
- decorating the exterior of your home
- making any substantial alteration to fencing around your home
- fitting any type of aerial or satellite dish
- cutting down any substantial tree, hedge

or shrub. Please also remember:

- If you are about to carry out any DIY work or decorate around the home, you must notify contact us first to check there is no risk of disturbing asbestos.
- Any additions, alterations, replacements or improvements involving a gas appliance or gas supply pipes or fittings must be carried out by a competent and Gas Safe registered person, and must comply with current Gas (Installation and Use) Regulations.
- Any additions, alterations, replacements or improvements to the electrical systems must be carried out by a competent and qualified person, and in accordance with the Institution of Engineering and Technology guidance. A copy of your electrical completion certificate must also be provided.
- If you carry out any work which is found to be unsatisfactory you will be re-charged the full cost of any additional work required.
- You will be responsible for the maintenance and repair of any addition or alteration to your home, and making good any damage.
- Any permanent alteration or addition becomes the property of the council and must not be removed when you leave.
- Any alteration you carry out without permission may be removed by the council to restore the property to its original design, and you would have to pay for the cost of this extra work.

Compensation for improvements

You are entitled to compensation for certain types of improvement work that you have carried out, as long as it was started after April 1994.

A repayment is calculated according to a set formula that takes annual depreciation from the original costs into account. It is paid to you after you leave the property. The type of work we will compensate for covers:

- replacing the bath, shower, wash hand basin and toilet
- having double glazing, external window replacement or secondary glazing fitted
- fitting draught proofing of external doors or windows
- installing central heating, hot water boilers and other types of heating insulating pipes, water tank or cylinders
- replacing the kitchen sink and work surfaces for preparing food insulating the loft and cavity walls
- rewiring and the installation of power, lighting or other electrical fixtures
- adding security measures other than burglar alarms adding or replacing storage cupboards in bathrooms

You can get up to a maximum of £3000 for any one improvement. The minimum amount we will pay is £50. You will need to be able to show invoices or receipts for the work done.

Getting your home adapted

If you have a disability you may need to adapt your home in some way to make it more suitable for your needs and to help you live more independently. If you would like to find out what your options are call us and ask for a housing assessment to be carried out.



[You can also apply for a housing assessment online](#)

Acceptable types of work include:

- widening doors and installing ramps
- providing or improving access to rooms and facilities e.g. by installing a stair lift or a downstairs bathroom
- improving or providing a heating system which is suitable for your needs
-
-

adapting heating or lighting controls to make them easier to use improving access to and movement around the home to enable you to care for another person who lives in the property, such as a child.

Subject to money being available, some minor adaptations like grab handles, extra stair rails or ramps, can be also be carried out by the council at no cost to you.

Contact:

The Private Sector Solutions Team
Northampton Borough Council
The Guildhall
Northampton NN1 1DE

Tel: **0300 330 7000**

Email: pshs@northampton.gov.uk

Buying Your Home



The Right to Buy scheme was introduced in 1980 by the Conservative Government under Margaret Thatcher. The aim of the scheme was to allow council tenants and tenants whose council homes were transferred to a housing association the opportunity to buy their homes, usually at discounted prices.

The majority of properties are sold freehold. This means you own the land the house is built on. Flats and maisonettes are sold leasehold. For these the council continues to own the land and the building but you have the right to live there for the length of the lease.

Who has the right to buy?

If you are a secure tenant you may have the right to buy your home, under the **Right to Buy** scheme. However you must meet the conditions laid down within the scheme. If you have an introductory or demoted tenancy you do not have the right to buy.

You currently need to have held your tenancy for 5 years to qualify, although the Government have indicated they wish to reduce the qualifying period to 3 years.

Certain types of home are also excluded from the scheme – for example those specifically designed for older or disabled people cannot be sold under Right to Buy. Tenants in sheltered accommodation also cannot buy their homes. You cannot buy your home if your tenancy is held in connection with your job or if you have lost your security of tenure due to a possession order.

If you have engaged or threatened to engage in anti-social behaviour the council can apply to the court for an order suspending your right to buy. If you have any rent arrears or other debts to the council, these must be cleared prior to completion.

The sale price

The sale price will be set to compare with other properties of a similar type for sale in your area. If you disagree with the price you can request a valuation by the District Valuer. If you are unhappy with this valuation you then have the right to appeal against the District Valuer's determination by writing to the Right to Buy Officer.

The amount of discount you will receive depends on how long you have been a tenant but the maximum available to our council tenants is now £75,000.

If you live in a house or bungalow you will receive a discount of 35% increasing

by 1% for each subsequent year up to a maximum of 60%. If you live in a flat or maisonette you will receive a discount of 50% increasing by 2% for each subsequent year up to a maximum of 70%. To receive the maximum discount of £75,000 will depend on the market value of your property and the length of secure tenancy.

See [the Government Right to Buy leaflet](#) for more details.

Things to bear in mind

Buying your own home is one of the biggest financial decisions most people make so you need to get as much information and advice first. Take your time to consider whether it is the right choice for you.

Tenants are always advised to seek legal advice before committing themselves to buying their property.

Firstly consider how you will raise the money to buy your home. You are likely to need a loan or mortgage to exercise your right to buy. Please make sure you know what your mortgage repayments will be and you will need to be confident you can afford them. Unlike council rents that are increased in line with a government formula, mortgage interest rates fluctuate depending on general economic and market conditions. Over time your repayments may vary considerably unless you can find competitive fixed rate deals.

We recommend you seek independent financial advice about the types of mortgages available and what might best suit your circumstances. Alternatively do your own research and shop around for the best deals available. Useful guides are also available from the websites of the Council of Mortgage Lenders at www.cml.org.uk (020 7437 0075) or the Financial Services Authority at www.fsa.gov.uk (0845 606 1234).

Please be aware that a number of firms offer mortgages and other services to council tenants who wish to buy their own homes. Some of these companies offer tenants money up-front for a deal in which they end up owning the property – called a deferred resale agreement. Others charge for things that landlords do for free e.g. help with completing application forms. The council's advice is to think very carefully before committing yourself to this type of arrangement.

In addition to the sale price, you need to add on the cost of any bank or building society fees, survey and valuation fees, Land Registry charge, Stamp Duty and your solicitor's fees. You will also need to arrange for buildings and contents insurance.

Once you own your home you will be wholly responsible for the costs of maintaining it, including routine repairs, major structural repairs and improvements.

If you become a leaseholder by buying your flat, you will have to pay service charges each year and also contribute towards the cost of major repairs and refurbishment.

You will not be entitled to claim any Housing Benefit to help with the cost of your mortgage. You may be entitled to income support to assist with housing costs but this is usually not payable until 39 weeks after you first claim it.

If you are elderly and own your home the value will be taken into account in assessing whether you need financial help with the cost of residential care.

Buying your own home is one of the biggest financial decisions most people make so you need to get as much information and advice first. Take your time to consider whether it is the right choice for you. We always advise you seek legal advice and financial advice before committing yourself to buying the property.

How to apply

The rules of the Right to Buy scheme are quite complex and each application has to be looked at individually. The council offers free and independent advice to our tenants about the scheme, as well as help to fill in an application form if you wish to proceed.

You can collect an application form from the One Stop Shop or [download one](#)

Selling your property

After the property is yours you can sell it whenever you wish however if you applied for Right to Buy on or after January 18th 2005 and wish to sell within 5 years you will need to repay some of the discount and a percentage of any equity in the property. If you sell within 10 years you must offer the property back to the council before you put it on the open market.

For more information contact:

The Right to Buy Officer
Northampton Borough Council
The Guildhall
St Giles Square
Northampton
NN1 1DE

Tel: **0300 330 7000**

Email: righttobuy@northampton.gov.uk

Home Buy

HomeBuy is the 'umbrella' name for all the low cost home ownership products that are on offer to those households who would not ordinarily be able to afford to purchase a property on the open market. Most of these schemes are offered by housing associations all over the country. All of the properties that come under the HomeBuy umbrella are marketed by EM HomeBuy who operates as the HomeBuy Agent for Northamptonshire and other areas of the East Midlands.

EM HomeBuy also maintain the eligibility register for those people who wish to be considered for one of these properties.

For more information go to the [Homes and Communities Agency website](#)

The different schemes include:

Shared ownership

Shared ownership allows you to buy a share of a housing association property that you can afford, by way of a mortgage or cash payment, on a long-term lease basis. You pay rent to the housing association for the remaining share.

The share purchased will usually be 25%, 50% or 75% depending on the housing association and property type.

NewBuy

NewBuy lets you buy a newly built home with a deposit of only 5% of the purchase price. To qualify for NewBuy, your new home must be:

- a new build – being sold for the first time or for the first time in its current form (e.g. a new flat that used to be part of a house)
- priced £500,000 or less
- your main home (you can't use NewBuy to buy a second home or a buy-to-let property)
- owned fully by you (you can't use NewBuy for shared ownership or shared equity purchases)
- built by a builder taking part in the scheme

To qualify you must be either a UK citizen or have the right to remain indefinitely in the UK.

You don't have to be a first-time buyer and there's no limit on your level of income. But you can't use NewBuy with any other publicly funded mortgage scheme. You apply for a mortgage from an approved lender. The lender will check that you can afford to repay it, as they would for any other type of

mortgage. If the lender is satisfied, and you meet all the criteria above, you could be able to get a mortgage of up to 95% of the purchase price.

HomeBuy Direct

HomeBuy Direct is a new shared equity product designed to help people buy a home direct from a builder. Home Buy participants take out a mortgage to cover at least 70% of the purchase price and this is topped up with an equity loan. The maximum value of any home purchased is £300,000.

The equity loan is interest free for the first five years. At the start of year six there is a charge payable of 1.75% of the equity loan, which is levied monthly. This charge rises by + RPI + 1% a year thereafter.

Rent to Buy

With this scheme you pay a reduced rent on a new build home allowing you to save for a deposit and then buy your own home. It is aimed at first time buyers with an income of under £60, 000 who struggle to get a mortgage without a deposit.

You pay an 'intermediate rent' set at no more than 80% of the current market rent on a new build home for up to 5 years. You can use the time to save for a deposit. At the end of the time you can then opt to buy your home through shared ownership and continue to pay rent on the share you don't own. If you are unable to buy the property at the end of the intermediate period your landlord will review your position.

FirstBuy

FirstBuy is a new equity loan scheme to help first time buyers onto the property ladder.

How does it work?

- You buy 100% of your home but you only have to cover 80% with your mortgage and deposit.
- The remainder is covered by an equity loan funded jointly by the developer and the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and is held as a second charge. These loans must be repaid after 25 years, when the mortgage comes to an end or when you move, whichever, happens first.
- There is nothing to pay on the equity loan for five years.
- After five years you will pay a fee of 1.75% p.a. on the equity loan, this will increase by RPI plus 1% each year thereafter.
- You will repay the equity loan when you sell your home based on the same percentage split at the time of sale.
- You may purchase the remaining share(s) of your home immediately through Housing Options Plus, who are the aftersales HomeBuy Agent.
- You must complete an application form with **EMHomeBuy**.

Equity Loan Schemes

Some developers have their own schemes to assist you to purchase one of their properties. With these schemes you will own 100% of the property but only take a mortgage for a set percentage, in most instances this will be 80% to 90% of the market value. The developer will then take a second charge on the property, for the remaining share. The equity share held by the developer will have to be paid back within a set period of time, this differs from one developer to another, or when you decide to move, whichever happens the sooner.

The EMHomeBuy register

EMHomeBuy are part of East Midlands Housing Association and are the HomeBuy agents for Northamptonshire. If you wish to be considered for a HomeBuy property you need to join the EMHomebuy register. Contact them through their website at www.emhomebuyorg.uk or ring them on **0844 892 0112**



Supported and sheltered accommodation allows retired or disabled people to live independently in their own home and manage their affairs for as long as possible. Some customers may require support to help them to become independent, some to maintain their independence and others just need help from time to time. The service we offer is flexible to help our customers when they need it most.

Sheltered housing in Northampton

The council has a variety of properties which are sheltered and these are allocated to people who need them, in accordance with the council's allocation policy.

Who else provides sheltered housing?

There are some sheltered and very sheltered housing schemes in Northampton run by housing associations and they offer properties for both for rent and purchase.

The St Crispin retirement village is another option for older people wishing to live in supported social housing. This is a large complex in Duston with 270 properties for sale and rent (259 flats and 11 bungalows). It is a joint venture between ExtraCare Charitable Trust, Midland Heart, Northamptonshire County Council and Northampton Borough Council. The village offers a range of facilities including a restaurant, pub, hall, shop, library, health and fitness studio, hairdressing salon, steam room and jacuzzi spa. Social Services also provide care packages to frailer, more vulnerable people living in the village.

Who qualifies for the council's sheltered housing?

To qualify you must be aged over Pension Credit age, or younger but receiving Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and having been assessed by one of our officers as needing sheltered accommodation.

Our new [allocations policy](#) will apply to all applicants wishing to join the Housing Register.

What our service offers

From April 2013 the sheltered housing service became part of the Independent Living Service and a number of important changes were introduced. We will now employ a team of staff to provide flexible support during normal working hours plus a small response team for evenings and weekends to help in an

emergency.

The support given to any one person will be based on their individual needs and depend on the outcome of an assessment, carried out by one of our officers. The support offered will include visits and telephone calls but we will also encourage residents to attend drop in sessions at their local community room. Assessments will be repeated at regular intervals so we can be flexible if your circumstances change.

In addition to support provided by members of staff, all the council's sheltered housing properties have an alarm system linked to the Call Care central control. Residents will be able to summon help in an emergency at any time using the intercom, pendant or pull cord, depending on how the equipment is set up in their property.

We will also operate 'community hubs (i.e. places where a whole of range activities will take place and a number of staff will be based).

Support plans

An assessment of your needs will be carried out by our Independent Living Officers and a support plan drawn up when you move into sheltered accommodation. If you don't need to move but require support then they will arrange to visit you to complete an assessment. The questions we ask are designed to help us develop a plan specific to your needs.

What if my needs change suddenly?

Your support plan will be reviewed at least every 6 months to make sure it takes account of changes in your health or circumstances. However if you go into hospital, suffer a bereavement or a sudden change in circumstances we will visit you to review your support plan. The support you receive can be changed immediately to meet your needs, whether this is long term or for a few weeks.

The cost of sheltered housing

Sheltered housing rents vary according to the size, type and location of property. When you sign up for your tenancy you may be helped to complete a Housing Benefit application. If you qualify for Housing Benefit this may pay your rent in part or full.

The cost of the support you receive will be explained to you when your support plan is agreed. This cost will also include the cost of the Call Care alarm service. The cost varies depending on the support you receive, and if changes are made to how much support you receive this may be reflected in the cost to you. You may be entitled to help towards all or part of the support service cost – officers will be able to advise you of your entitlement.

If you would like more support than you are assessed as needing then you may be able to 'buy' this, however this will not be covered by any benefits you may receive to pay for the service.

Contact details

For further information about sheltered housing please contact us at

Independent Living Team
The Guildhall
Northampton
NN1 1DE

Tel: 01604 838462 email: shelteredhousing@northampton.gov.uk

Lifeline



The council offers the Lifeline service to people who wish to remain in their own home but want the reassurance of being able to call for emergency assistance if they ever need it. It is a 24-hour, 365-day monitoring service giving you the freedom to live your life independently knowing that you can obtain assistance when you need it.

Lifelines are specially designed telephones with an alarm unit within them. You can trigger the alarm by pressing a large red button on the phone or on a pendant that can be worn around the neck. A control operator will answer the call and summon whatever help is necessary.

Anyone can have a Lifeline. You do not have to be a council tenant, there are no age limits and you do not have to have a disability. We install Lifelines across Northamptonshire. If we do not cover the area you live in we will refer you to someone who may be able to arrange a Lifeline for you.

When you sign up for Lifeline you must supply two emergency contact details. If you trigger your alarm the Central Control Centre will ring your nominated contact to let them know there is a problem.

Is it easy to install?

Yes. A telephone point with a power point nearby is all that is needed for installation. There is no disruption to your home and you will still be able to use your own phone.

What does it cost?

Existing sheltered housing tenants may already have a lifeline which they pay for as part of their support charge.

For other people living in Northampton it currently costs £48.27 plus VAT for the initial installation, and the weekly rental is £4.25 plus VAT.

Many of our customers do not have to pay the VAT for the service. If you have a disability or chronic illness you may be exempt. We will check this with you when we contact you about your application.

How do I pay for the service?

The preferred method is by Direct Debit through your bank account. This is the simplest and easiest way to pay. Other payment methods include the council's 24 hour telephone payment line, making a credit card payment payment through the council's website, sending a cheque in the post, paying cash at a

payzone outlet at a post office or by BACS and bank transfer.

How soon can I have a Lifeline?

You can download [an application form here](#) or complete [one online](#).

Once we have received your application form and checked with you that all the arrangements are in place, we can normally fit within two weeks. If you need it to be fitted urgently for some reason, perhaps you are coming home from hospital, please tell us and we will try to fit it within a few days.

How do I cancel the Lifeline if I no longer need it?

Please contact us to ask for a cancellation pack. We will then send you:

- a letter explaining what you need to do
- a cancellation form
- a prepaid envelope for our accounts section
- a prepaid sticker so that you can return the Lifeline and pendant to us at no cost to yourself.

It is very important that you return the unit promptly because we can then use it to help someone else.

Will my details be kept confidential?

Yes. We ensure that all your details are kept securely, as required by the Data Protection Act 1998.

For further details or information call us on **01604 230227** or email lifeline@northampton.gov.uk

Anti-Social Behaviour

What is Anti-Social Behavior?

It comes in many forms from serious acts of violence, harassment or threats of violence directed to one person or others, to general nuisance. Here are some examples:

- aggressive and threatening language and behaviour
- actual violence against people and property
- hate behaviour against certain people or groups because they are perceived to be 'different' because of their, race, colour or lifestyle
- using a property for criminal activity such as prostitution or drug dealing
- loud noise, for example by playing music very loudly, regular arguing, slamming of doors, shouting in the early hours of the morning or late at night
- allowing pets to make excessive noise or be a danger to people
- vandalising property which is not owned by you, including graffiti
- dumping rubbish and litter in your garden or around the area in which you live
- parking vehicles inconsiderately, abandoning vehicles or keeping untaxed vehicles in the street
- domestic abuse
- being a general nuisance in the community.



Our commitment to tackle anti-social behaviour

Satisfaction surveys have shown that nuisance and anti-social behaviour is a significant worry for many of our tenants, who are either experiencing it day to day or are concerned about it happening in the area in which they live.

The council views anti-social behaviour extremely seriously and has signed up to Respect ASB Charter for Housing. This Charter, developed by housing professional bodies together with landlords and tenants, aims to set service standards, based on best practice, to prevent and tackle anti-social behaviour.

We believe that to provide a quality housing service we must be effective in identifying and tackling the problems caused by neighbour nuisance and anti-social behaviour as they are damaging to individuals and local communities.

Our policy is to

- prevent and minimize the causes
- encourage tenants to sign up to a good neighbour agreement when they start their tenancy
- encourage tenants to report incidents
- support both victims and witnesses
- tackle individual perpetrators by using a range of actions, including taking legal action to evict them
- work in partnership with other council staff such as the neighbourhood wardens, the Anti-Social Behaviour Unit and other agencies, particularly the Police, to ensure that the most extreme forms of behaviour are properly dealt with through the criminal justice system.

Download [our policy](#) and [procedures](#) on anti-social behaviour.

We assess how serious any anti-social behaviour is that is reported to us, and depending on the severity, respond as follows:

GRADE 1 (complainant interview will be completed within 1 working day of the complaint being received)

Hate related incidents (based on gender/race/religion/age/disability/ sexual orientation etc.)

Domestic violence/abuse

Physical violence

GRADE 2 (complainant interview will be completed within 3 working days of the complaint being received)

Verbal abuse/harassment/intimidation/threatening behaviour

Vandalism and damage to property

Drugs/substance misuse/drug dealing

Prostitution/sexual acts/kerb crawling

Other criminal behaviour/crime

GRADE 3 (complainant interview will be completed within 5 working days of the complaint being received)

Noise

Pets and animal nuisance

Vehicle nuisance

Alcohol related

Garden nuisance

Misuse of communal areas/public space or loitering.

Litter/fly-tipping/rubbish

Your responsibility as a tenant

When you start your tenancy you sign a tenancy agreement which is a legal contract. This states that neither you, your children, other members of your household or visitors must cause nuisance to neighbours or any other person in the local area, whether they live there or not.

We offer all new tenants the opportunity to sign a Good Neighbour Agreement as part of the sign up process. Whilst it is voluntary it is expected that most tenants will be happy to sign it. The agreement describes what anti-social behaviour is and sets out the positive behaviour that we expect the tenant to show.

Please remember if you have an introductory tenancy and you behave anti-socially it is relatively easy for the council to evict you for breaching your tenancy conditions. If we apply to the court for a Possession Order and we have followed procedures correctly, the court has to grant the order. You will lose your home with no guaranteed rehousing by the council.

What to do if you are experiencing anti-social behaviour

Talk to your neighbour if possible. When people live close together, they often don't realise they are disturbing others. If you are disturbed, the first step to take is to explain politely to the people involved that they are causing you a problem.

Talk to us. If the problem persists, contact us by phone or email us on asb@northampton.gov.uk

Whilst it is preferable that you tell us who you are, we will still investigate anonymous complaints. If you are able to talk to your housing officer we would encourage you to do so. If the matter involves serious tenancy breaches the matter may be passed to a tenancy enforcement officer to take the matter forward.

Try mediation. The council works with independent mediators. Tenants who cannot agree can talk through their problems to try to find solutions acceptable to all parties. Any issues discussed remain confidential wherever

possible and the service is free. If you think this may help speak to your housing officer.

If talking fails

If talking to your neighbour does not help solve the problem, we will need a record of the problem so that we can deal with it properly. You may be asked to:

- complete diary sheets with details, dates, times and events
- take photos for evidence if this is appropriate and does not put you in danger
- report incidents to us and the Police
- talk to other neighbours who may be suffering similar problems and ask them to keep diaries.

What happens next?

Having investigated the situation the housing officer will put together all relevant information and agree with you what action is going to be taken.

The council has an Anti-Social Behaviour Unit comprising council staff and a police officer. The Unit deals with serious and persistent incidents of serious nuisance and anti-social behaviour. We may refer your case to them if appropriate.

The information gathered from the Police, council and tenants provides a record of incidents that is very important should the matter go to court. It also helps us to identify possible areas of concern to look at more preventative work we can consider.

The action we can take

The council will consider a variety of options to tackle nuisance and anti-social behaviour. This would include:

- issuing advice and warnings to offenders
- independent mediation
- referring tenants to an appropriate support agency such as Stonham or CAN (Council on Addiction)
- extending the period of an introductory tenancy for a further 6 months or applying to the courts for a Demotion Order
- asking offenders to sign Acceptable Behaviour Contracts

- applying for a Court injunction that if broken could lead to a fine or imprisonment
- seeking a Possession Order from the court so that the perpetrator can be evicted from their council property
- seeking an Anti-Social Behaviour Order
- using Parenting Orders
- closing 'crack houses'.

In taking action against offenders we may ask you to go to court to act as a witness. We appreciate that some tenants may be apprehensive about this but there are a number of ways we can support you. If the anti-social behaviour is being caused by someone who has an introductory tenancy no evidence needs to be presented to court and no witnesses are required.

Who else can help?

Environmental Health staff can take action against neighbours who are causing a nuisance that is detrimental to health. They can be contacted through the main council number **0300 330 7000**.

Email: ehhealth@northampton.gov.uk

Environmental wardens are employed by the council to help reduce anti-social behaviour, minimise the fear of crime and provide a link with services for the community. Ring the main council number.

Email: neighbourhoodwardens@northampton.gov.uk

Northamptonshire Police should be advised if you are ever physically threatened or racially or sexually harassed by your neighbour.

Tel: **101**

Email: northantspolice@mailroom@northantspolice.uk

Victim Support provides confidential support and information to victims of crime and to witnesses attending local courts.

Tel: **01604 603477**

The Sunflower Centre provides advice, information and support for victims of domestic abuse.

Tel: **01604 233684**.

Moving On



Mutual exchanges

Exchanging is popular as it is now only possible to transfer if you have an urgent need to move- not if you just wish to move area for example. If you find someone whose home you would like and they have agreed to swap homes a mutual exchange might be the solution for you.

If you have a secure tenancy you can apply to exchange your home with another tenant of Northampton Borough Council, another council or a housing association. Council tenants with an introductory tenancy are not eligible.

There are some restrictions on mutual exchanges e.g. you cannot exchange into a property that is too big or too small for your needs and you cannot exchange into a sheltered property unless you meet the eligibility criteria.

Northampton Borough Council is currently a member of the Homeswapper scheme, which is major mutual exchange service for council and housing association tenants wanting to move home. All our tenants can register details of their homes on Homeswapper for free.

We recommend any tenants wishing to move home register their name and property details with the Homeswapper scheme at www.homeswapper.co.uk

When you have registered the system immediately checks for possible swaps for you. It then saves these and you can log in anytime to see them. To make sure you do not miss any, regular match alerts will be sent to you either by email, text or letter. If you are interested in a match you can then use the other tenants contact details and get in touch.

If you want the exchange to go ahead you will then need to complete an [exchange application form](#)

You can also [complete an application form online](#)



Getting the go ahead

We will need to give you permission before any exchange can go ahead. If you exchange without permission you may be forced to move back. Any Housing Benefit entitlement will also end on the day you moved without permission.

We normally approve exchanges, except where:

- either tenant has breached their tenancy agreement
- either landlord is in the process of taking legal action against either tenant for breach of their tenancy conditions
- either property is considered too big or too small or has had disabled adaptations that are no longer needed
- the other landlord does not allow exchanges.

Before we give approval for the exchange we do some checks.

Firstly we will need to inspect your current home to ensure that it is still in good condition and identify and repairs or redecoration that are your responsibility before you leave. A follow up visit will be done to check that these have been done.

Secondly we will check your rent account - if you owe any rent your move will be delayed until your arrears or any other housing related debts have been paid off.

By law we must make a decision within 6 weeks (42 days) from the date of your application.

Once we write to give permission for the exchange to go ahead you must attend to the things the council has asked you to do before you move e.g. any repairs that are required, resulting from damage or neglect. We will check to make sure these repairs have been done and that any outstanding rent arrears or other debts to the council have been paid.

When you exchange both tenants must accept the other property in the condition in which it is left (including the decoration). The council will carry out routine repairs in accordance with your tenancy agreement but it will be your responsibility to repair any damage caused by the previous tenant.

Transfers

Tenants have a right to apply to transfer to another home. However the council's Allocations Policy will only allow transfers if you have a very pressing need to move, for example for health or urgent medical reasons. We recommend you consider other housing options first if at all possible.

View our [housing options leaflet](#) for more information.

The Under Occupier Scheme

If your circumstances change and your council home becomes too big for your needs we could move you to a more suitable property and complete any adaptations required to your new home. A smaller home may be easier for you to manage. You could also reduce your rent, Council Tax and heating bills. Welfare reform means some tenants will also now be 'over occupying' and receive reduced benefit - another reason to consider downsizing.



The council runs a scheme to help people move to smaller properties. You could be entitled to £500 if you are willing to downsize.

As an under-occupier you will be placed in the emergency band (which is the highest priority band) on the Housing Register and if you accept an offer of a smaller council, housing association or private rented property you will qualify for the payment.

If you are downsizing to another council property in Northampton through a mutual exchange you will still be eligible for the payment.

Quitting your tenancy

To end your tenancy you must give us at least least 4 weeks written notice. The exceptions to this are when:

- you are transferring your tenancy to another council property or we have nominated you for housing association accommodation, in which case normally only a weeks notice is required
- you are moving into a residential or nursing home or
- you are notifying us of the death of a tenant.

Council tenancies run from Monday to Monday.

Notice of termination forms are available from the One Stop Shop or you can download them. [See our ending your tenancy pages.](#)

Please note once notice of termination of tenancy has been given, it can only be withdrawn or extended at the discretion of the council. On the termination of tenancy form you will be asked to specify two or three potential dates during your notice period for an end of tenancy visit by the property inspector.

What happens when a tenant passes away?

If a tenant passes away the council does not require 4 weeks notice if the keys to the property are handed back immediately.

If the tenant's relatives would like some time to clear the property they can have up to 2 weeks during which time no rent will be charged against the account. This only applies only where a tenant lived on their own.

Please note Housing Benefit entitlement ends on the date a tenant passes away and not on the date the tenancy is quit.

What to check before you move out:

- ensure your rent is paid up to the date of termination
- carry out any repairs that you are responsible for
- leave the property and garden in good order
- remove all of your personal items and furniture (except furniture provided by the council)
- leave the property clean and free of rubbish and debris
- make sure the property is secure
- return all keys to the council, including keys for door entry systems, car parks and UPVC windows
- redirect your mail and ensure you advise utility companies about your change of address
- give the council vacant possession.

If you fail to return your keys on time rent will continue to be charged on the property until you do so or until such time as the locks are changed and you are recharged the full costs of this. A council maintenance officer will visit and dispose of any items left in the property or garden. You will be re-charged for this and the cost of making good any damage not considered fair wear and tear.

Please remember also to read your meters.

Evictions

The council can and does evict tenants in the most serious cases of a tenancy breach.



However this is never done without efforts to keep you in your home and we always take all reasonable steps to try to resolve tenancy or rent arrears problems. However, if all support fails, we will apply to the court for a Possession Order.

The most common reason for eviction is non-payment of rent, although it is possible to be evicted for breaching any other aspect of the tenancy agreement, such as causing neighbour nuisance or anti-social behaviour.

With rent arrears cases if the court grants a Possession Order outright the tenant must either pay off the rent arrears in full or face immediate eviction. However you may receive a Suspended Possession Order which means that if you abide by its terms and pay off the arrears over a fixed period of time, you may not face eviction. You can subsequently apply to the courts to vary their order if your financial circumstances change and you cannot maintain the payments.

There is no guarantee that the courts will not evict households with dependent children so you should talk to your rent income officer as soon as you are unable to pay your rent. Please remember if you have an introductory tenancy the court has no choice but to grant a Possession Order to the council. Your circumstances will not be taken into account and you will be evicted.

The council or other registered social landlords (housing associations) generally have no obligation to re-house people who are evicted for non - payment of rent or serious anti-social behaviour as they are deemed to have made themselves intentionally homeless.

What happens at an eviction?

If you are evicted you will have to find alternative accommodation for yourself and anyone else who is living with you.

The County Court bailiff will tell you the date and time that the eviction will be carried out. A representative from the council will also be present at the eviction. The locks of the house will be changed and any of your personal belongings and furniture remaining will be cleared. We do not always store items for you.

Can I stop the eviction?

The earlier you take control of the situation the better it is for you and your family. It is more difficult to make agreements at a late stage. You have the right to apply for the Warrant of Possession to be suspended. The court will reconsider your case but may not necessarily overturn the decision.

If you are facing eviction for rent arrears it is essential that you receive good advice. Your rent income officer will be able to explain the court and legal processes involved.

Northampton Contact

Your MP's

Northampton North: Michael Ellis

Michael Ellis MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Tel: **0207 219 7220**

Email: michael.ellis.mp@parliament.uk

Constituency office

78 St George's Avenue
Northampton
NN2 6JF

Tel: **01604 717188** fax: **01604 716508**

Email: ellis2win@googlemail.com

Northampton South: Brian Binley

Brian Binley MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Tel: **020 7219 8298**

Email: binleyb@parliament.uk

Constituency Office:

White Lodge
42 Billing Road
Northampton
NN1 5DA

Tel: **01604 633414**

Fax: **01604 250252**

GP practices

For further information on whether the following practices are receiving new patients go to the [NHS Choices web pages](#)

Abington Park Surgery 0844 8151111

Christchurch Medical Centre, Ardington Road, Northampton, NN1 5LT.

County Surgery 01604 632918

202/4 Abington Avenue, Northampton, NN1 4QA.

Crescent Medical Centre 01604 713434

2 The Crescent, Northampton, NN14SB.

King Edward Road Surgery 0844 8151400.

Christchurch Medical Centre, King Edward Road, Northampton, NN1 5LY.

Maple Access Partnership 01604 250969

17-19 Hazelwood Road, Northampton, NN1 1LG.

The Mounts Medical Centre 01604 621286

Campbell Street, Northampton, NN1 3DS.

NN2:

Clarence Avenue Surgery 0 1 6 0 4 718464

14 Clarence Avenue, Northampton, NN2 6NZ.

Greenview Surgery 01604 791002

129 Hazeldene Road, Northampton NN2 7PB.

Kingsthorpe Medical Centre 01604 713823

Eastern Avenue South, Northampton, NN2 7JN.

Langham Place Surgery 01604 638162

11 Langham Place, Northampton, NN2 6AA.

Leicester Terrace Health Care Centre 01604 633682

7-8 Leicester Terrace, Northampton, NN2 6AL.

Moulton Surgery 010604 892582

Boughton Green Road, Northampton, NN2 7AN.

Queensview Medical Centre 01604 713315

Thornton Road, Northampton, NN2 6LS

The Pines Surgery 01604 845144

Harborough Road North, Northampton, NN2 8LL.

NN3:

Abington Medical Centre 0844 477 3858

Abington Health Complex, 51A Beech Avenue, Northampton NN3 2JG.

Brook Medical Centre 01604 401185

Ecton Brook Road, Northampton NN3 5EN.

Lings Brook Practice 01604 409002

Billing Brook Road, Weston Favell, Northampton, NN3 8DW.

Moulton Surgery 01604 790108

120 Northampton Lane North, Moulton, Northampton NN3 7QP.

Park Avenue Medical Centre 01604 716500

168 Park Avenue North, Northampton NN3 2HZ.

Rillwood Medical Centre 01064 405006

Tonmead Road, Northampton, NN3 8HZ.

Weston Favell Health Centre (Drs Dogra and Hassan) 01604 415157

Billing Brook Road, Weston Favell, Northampton NN3 8RZ.

Weston Favell Health Centre (Dr Lakha & partners) 08445 769030

Billing Brook Road, Weston Favell, Northampton NN3 8RZ.

Weston Favell Health Centre (Dr Molla) 01604 409631

Billing Brook Road, Weston Favell, Northampton NN3 8RZ.

Woodview Medical Centre 01604 670780

Holmecross Road, Northampton, NN3 8AW

NN4:

Danes Camp Surgery 01604 709426

Rowtree Road, East Hunsbury, Northampton, NN4 0NY.

Delapre Medical Centre 0844 477 3730

Gloucester Avenue, Northampton NN4 8QF.

Penvale Park Medical Centre 01604 700660

Hardwick Road, East Hunsbury, Northampton NN4 0GP.

Grange Park Primary Care Centre 01604 742410

Wilks Walk, Grange Park, Northampton NN4 5DW.

Whitefields Surgery 01604 760171

Hunsbury Hill Road, Camp Hill, Northampton, NN4 9UW

Wootton Medical Centre 01604 709933

36-38 High Street, Wootton, Northampton NN4 6LW,

NN5:

Duston Medical Centre 01604 584160

Southfield Road, Duston, Northampton NN5 6HN.

Kings Heath Practice 0 1 6 0 4 589897

Community Centre, North Oval, Kingsheath, Northampton, NN5 7LN.

The Surgery 01604 751832

117 Harlestone Road, Northampton, NN5 7AQ.

Out of hours service

Provides medical assistance when GP surgeries are closed.

Tel: 111

They will then provide you with an appointment for an out of hours doctor

Occupational therapy service

The Occupational Therapy Service
Unit 1 Gambrel Road, Westgate Industrial Estate Northampton
NN5 5BB

Tel: **01604 658411**

Dental practices

From 1 April 2006, NHS dentistry changed with a new charging system, although you will still receive free NHS dental treatment if you meet the exemption criteria.

New contracts have been issued to dentists. Some have now opted out of the NHS system and no longer treat NHS patients.

What can I do if I can't find an NHS dentist?

If your dentist is not able to accept you back onto his/her NHS list, then you may still be offered treatment as a private patient.

If this is not suitable NHS Direct, on **0845 4647 or 0800 5870 879**, can provide you with details of other dentists accepting NHS patients. Alternatively, you can use the internet to find a dental practice that is accepting patients for NHS treatment. Go to the [NHS choices web pages](#)

This website lists the following as dental practices currently operating in Northampton. Not all these practices now accept NHS patients:

NN1:

Abington Dental Practice

01604 638815

1A Billing Road, Northampton, NN1 5AL

Castilian Street Dental Surgery

01604 637080 or 631404

10 Castilian Street, Northampton NN1 1JX

Cheyne Walk Orthodontic

01604 639877

7 Cheyne Walk, Northampton, NN1 5PT

Community Dental Service

01604 231829

67 St Giles Street, Northampton, NN1 1JF

Dental Department St Andrews Hospital

01604 616000

Billing Road, Northampton, NN1 5DG

East Park Dental Practice Ltd

01604 638102

24 East Park Parade, Northampton, NN1 4LB

Floss Dental Care

01604 232474

14 Wantage Road, Northampton, NN1 4TH

Oasis Dental Care Ltd

01604 639296

40-42 Derngate, Northampton, NN1 1UH

Orthoworld

01604 604828

308 Wellingborough Road, Northampton, NN1 4EP

The Dental Suite

01604 232604

Ardington Road, Northampton, NN1 5LT

The Dental Surgery

01604 636836

5 Billing Road, Northampton, NN1 5AN

The Elms Dental Practice

01604 630984 or 630295

Cliftonville, Northampton, NN1 5BE

Victoria Promenade Dental Practice

01604 628862 or 638933

16 Victoria Promenade, Northampton, NN1 1HH

Wellingborough Road Dental Surgery

01604 636361

320 Wellingborough Road, Northampton, NN1 4EP

NN2:

Chichele House Dental Practice

01604 713223/ 722314

42 Kingsley Road, Northampton, NN2 7BL

Dental Surgery

01604 714149

40 Kingsley Road, Northampton, NN2 7BL

Harborough Dental Care

01604 715248

29 Harborough Road, Northampton, NN2 7BB

Kingsthorpe Grove Dental Practice

01604 719955

3 Kingsthorpe Grove, Northampton, NN2 6NS

Orthodontic Practice

01604 722314

42 Kingsley Grove, Northampton, NN2 7BL

Queens Park Dental Practice

01604 715147

91 Queens Park Parade, Northampton, NN2 6LR

Purely Orthodontics

01604 710090

Welford Road, Northampton, NN2 8AG

Shams Moopen Dental Practice

01604 722733

54-56 Kingsley Road, Northampton, NN2 7BL

NN3:

Cedar Road Dental Practice

01604 721525

Abington Health Complex, 51A Beech Avenue, Northampton, NN3 2JG

Weston Favell Dental Surgery

01604 405611

Billing Brook Road, Northampton, NN3 8DW

Woodview Dental Clinic

01604 670977

Holmecross Road, Northampton, NN3 8AW

NN4:

Far Cotton Dental Practice Ltd

01604 761344

12 St Leonards Road, Northampton, NN4 9DP

Grange Park Dental Surgery

01604 677576

Wilks Way, Northampton, NN4 5DW

Northampton Dental Access Care

01604 762217

22-26 St Leonards Road, Northampton, NN4 9DP

Rowtree Dental Surgery

01604 706887

Rowtree Road, East Hunsbury, Northampton, NN4 0NY

The Dental Surgery

01604 760156

Hunsbury Hill Road, Northampton, NN4 9UW

Mr N L Slack The Dental Surgery

01604 763627

117 St Leonards Road, Northampton, NN4 8DN

NN5:

Duston Dental Surgery

01604 753312

74 Main Road, Northampton, NN5 6JN

Harlestone Road Dental Practice

01604 751857

99 Harlestone Road, Northampton, NN5 7AB

St James Dental Clinic

01604 597680

116 St James Road, Northampton, NN5 5LQ

Mr M A Proud Dental Surgery

01604 581728

73 Weedon Road, Northampton, NN5 5BG

Services for children and families

Child protection

The welfare and protection of children and young people is everyone's responsibility. If you are worried about a child in any way please report your concerns.

If you do not wish to give your name you do not have to. If you do give your name, you can ask that your identity is not revealed to the parents/carer of the child concerned.

If a child is in immediate danger or left alone, you should contact the police directly on **03000 111222** and/or an Ambulance (**999**). If there is no immediate danger or you need advice or information, you should call the Children and Young People's Service - Referral Teams (9:00am - 5:00 pm Monday - Friday):

Ecton Brook Clinic
Chedworth Close
Ecton Brook
Northampton
NN3 5HW

Tel: **01604 411911**

Alternatively call the Police Child Protection Unit (9:00am - 5:00pm Monday - Friday) on **03000 111222**

If you want to discuss your concerns or need advice e.g. if you're not sure whether your concerns are justified, would like more information about confidentiality or would like to know what happens next (after you have reported your concerns), contact one of the following:

Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Centre on **0870 000 3344**

NSPCC National Helpline Tel: **0808 800 5000**

Childline Tel: **0800 1111**

Adoption and fostering

For information about what is involved please contact

Northamptonshire County Council
Norborough House
Coverack Close
Northampton
NN4 8PQ

Tel: **01604 704704**

Email: a&f@northamptonshire.gov.uk

Fostering Services

Northamptonshire County Council
John Dryden House,
8-10 The Lakes,
Northampton, NN4 7DF

Tel: **01604 236623**

Email: a&f@northamptonshire.gov.uk

Family Link

Family Link Team
Grafton Court
Kettering Venture Park
Kettering NN15 6XR

Tel: **01536 313100**

Email: familylink@northamptonshire.gov.uk

The Children's Information Service

The Children's Information Service run by the county council is a confidential service for parents and carers. They can provide information on early education funding and registered childcare providers (childminders, pre schools, day nurseries, out of school groups and holiday schemes).

Tel: **01064 237935**

Social care services for adults

The Adult Care Squad On 1st December 2005 the county council opened a call center to answer all enquiries about community care services for adults. You can contact them by phone or in writing at:

Adult Care Squad, Oxford House, Wellingborough, NN8 4JR

Tel: **0845 124 4500**

Email: acss@northamptonshire.gov.uk

Out of Hours Team

If you need a social services contact during the evening, at night or at weekend you can ring the Out of Hours Team and speak to the duty social worker.

Tel: **01604 626938**

Housing Associations

Housing associations are social landlords or Registered Providers with [the Homes and Community Agency \(HCA\)](#), the government agency that funds new affordable housing in England. The HCA's role is to invest public money in its registered providers so that a supply of decent social housing is maintained. Housing associations are the main providers of new social housing in the UK.

There are over 1,800 in England, currently managing around 1.7 million homes and housing at least twice that many people. Most are housing associations, but there are also trusts, co-operatives and companies. Many new housing associations have been formed to manage and develop homes transferred to them by local authorities.

Some housing associations are small and own fewer than 250 homes. However, many have merged with others to form partnerships or groups and are now very large organisations with properties spread across the country.

How housing associations work

Housing associations are run as businesses but they do not trade for profit. Any surplus is ploughed back into the organisation to maintain existing homes and to help finance new ones.

Housing associations provide housing for many different sectors of the community and always seek to help the most disadvantaged. These may be people who cannot get council housing because there is not enough available or because they do not qualify. Some specialise in providing housing for those who need special support, such as people with mental illness or drug problems.

All housing associations must have written policies on the type of housing services they provide, who can apply for housing and how applications will be considered. This will be specified in their tenancy policies which they will publish on their websites. Housing associations take the majority of their new tenants from council waiting lists but their allocation policies do differ.

Together with providing homes for rent, some housing associations also offer housing for sale, including low cost and shared ownership options.

Finding a housing association home

A number of housing associations operate in the Northampton area offering new homes for sale, shared ownership (NewBuild HomeBuy) or for rent. You can contact them to discuss various sites that may be coming available.

East Midlands Housing Association

Seymour House Queenswood
Office Park Newport Pagnell
Road West Northampton
NN4 7JJ

Tel: **0844 892 9000**

www.emha.org

Bedfordshire Pilgrims Housing Association

Pilgrims House
Home Lane
Bedford
MK40 1NY
Tel: **01234 791000**
www.bpha.org.uk

Home Group

Lancaster House
Judes Court
Kettering
NN15 7JH
Tel: **01536 414234**
www.homegroup.org.uk

Minster Housing Association

Jubilee House
92 Lincoln Road
Peterborough
PE1 2SN
Tel: **01733 349800**
www.hyde-housing.co.uk

Accent Nene

Manor House
57 Lincoln Road
Peterborough
PE1 2RR
Tel: **01733 295400**
www.accentnene.org

Nottingham Community Housing Association

169 St Leonards Road
Northampton
NN4 8DB
Tel: **0800 013 8555**
www.ncha.org.uk

Leicester Housing Association

26-27 Pen Court
Cattlemarket Road
Northampton
NN1 1EP
Tel: **01604 636414**
www.lha-asra.org.uk

Servite Houses

St Peters House
St Peters Way
Northampton
NN1 7TP
Tel: **01604 745100**

www.servitehouses.org.uk

Orbit Heart of England

3 Brookfield
Duncan Close
Moulton Park
Northampton
NN3 6WL
Tel: **08458 500500**

www.orbitheartofengland.org.uk

Genesis Housing Group

Capital House
25 Chapel Street
London
NW1 5DT
Tel: **020 8150 4100**

www.ghg.org.uk

Spirita (part of Metropolitan Partnership)

Raleigh House
68-84 Alfreton Road
Nottingham
NG7 3NN
Tel: **0115 988 7100**

www.mhp-online.co.uk/spirita

Guinness South

Henshaw House
851 Silbury Boulevard
Central Milton Keynes
MK9 3JZ
Tel: **03000 111
321**

www.guinnesspartnership.com

Muir Group

Stable Court
Ferrars Road
Huntingdon
Cambridgeshire
PE29 3DH
Tel: **01480 453234**

www.muir.org.uk