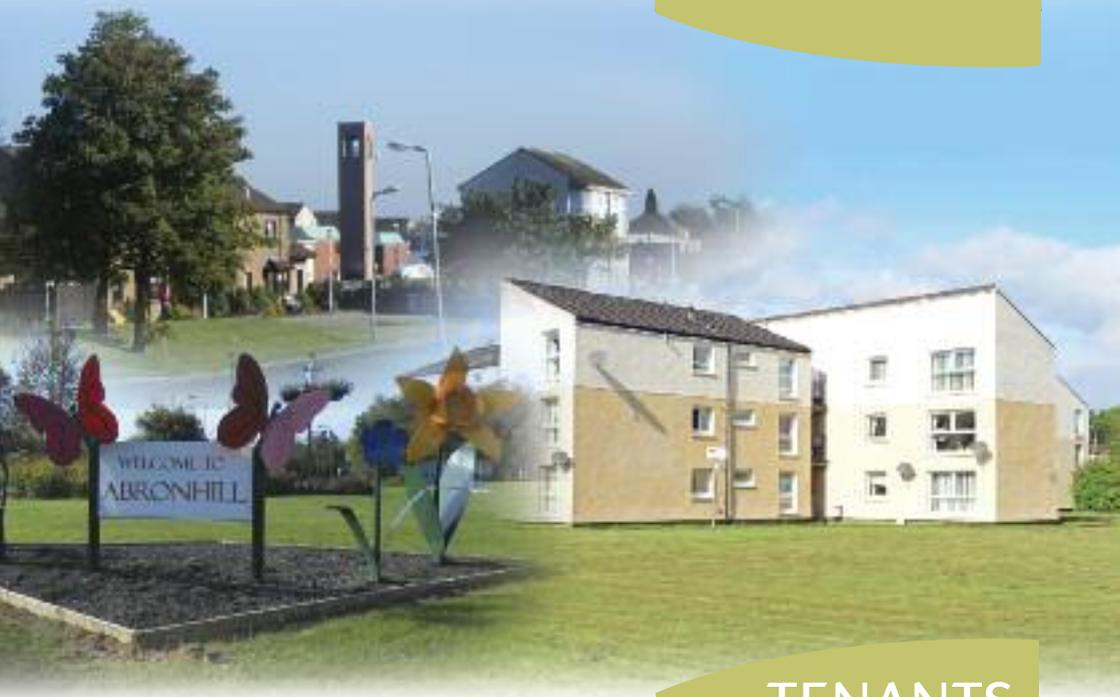




Abronhill Housing Association



TENANTS HANDBOOK

Tenants Handbook

This is your tenant handbook. We don't expect you to sit down and read it all in one go but it's a handy source of bite-size information about all of the services available to you as an Abronhill Housing Association tenant.

You will find out practical advice about your home, guidance on your responsibilities as a tenant and how to access information about other support services provided for you by Abronhill Housing Association and our partners.

We can produce information on request in large print, braille, tape and on disk. It is also available in other languages. If you need information in any of these formats please contact us on 01236 457948.

About your Association

Where to find us

Our office is at Unit 10,
Abronhill Shopping Centre, Abronhill,
Cumbernauld, G67 3AZ

Tel: 01236 457948

Email: admin@abronhillha.org.uk

www.abronhillha.org.uk

Facebook: Abronhill Housing Association

Twitter: @Abronhill_ha

The office is open:

Monday – Thursday	9.00am to 1.00pm 2.00pm to 5.00pm
Friday	9.00am to 1.00pm 2.00pm to 4.00pm

Our Mission Statement

“We aim to provide good quality affordable housing for people who want to live in Abronhill by giving a high quality housing service controlled by local people”

Our Structure

Abronhill Housing Association Ltd is a charitable Housing Association registered with the Scottish Housing Regulator and operating on a non-profit basis.

Anyone over the age of 16 can apply for membership providing you meet one or more of the following criteria;

1. You are a tenant of Abronhill Housing Association.
2. You can contribute particular community, business or professional experience or skills.

Membership costs £1 and allows members to attend public meetings and the AGM and

vote on any issues where necessary. As a member, you can also stand for election onto the Association's management committee.

The Association is controlled by the management committee, all of whom are volunteers. The committee has overall responsibility to ensure the Association is efficient, responsible and accountable to tenants. It is their job to approve the Association's policies and procedures.

Five staff members, 2 full time and 3 part-time are employed by the Association to deal with the day to day running of the organisation.



Your tenancy agreement

Your tenancy agreement is a Scottish Secure Tenancy and is signed by both you and the Association. The agreement outlines the rights and responsibilities of both the tenant and the landlord.

Security of Tenure

You are entitled to live in your home for as long as you want. However, if you do not pay your rent on time or breach any other part of your tenancy agreement, your tenancy may be at risk.

Eviction

The Association do not have the automatic right to end your tenancy and legal action will only be taken as a last resort. If we want to end your tenancy, we need to convince the Sheriff that it is reasonable to do so.

Matrimonial Home

If you are married, your spouse has equal rights to the home should the relationship break down, even if you don't have a joint tenancy. If the relationship breaks down between unmarried partners where only one partner is a tenant, the decision on any occupancy rights for the non-tenant is made by a sheriff. Until this decision is made, the non-tenant does not have the same rights as the tenant.

Abandonment

If a tenant does not permanently live in their home, the Association has the right to repossess the property without going to court. If we have reasonable grounds for believing that you have abandoned your home, an Abandonment Notice will be served. This notice will allow you 28 days to notify the Association in writing that you are actually occupying your home. If we do not receive a reply and still believe you have abandoned the property, we will repossess your home by serving another Notice. If you are likely to be away from your home for more than 28 days, you should let us know so as to avoid any confusion.

Succession

When a tenant dies, the tenancy may be inherited by one of the following people;

- Your husband or wife or
- The other joint tenant or
- Your co-habitee or
- Another member of your family who was living with you who is over 16 years of age or
- A live in carer

In all cases, the person inheriting the tenancy must have been living in the home for at least 12 months prior to the death of the tenant. The house can only be inherited twice.

Assignations

Should you decide to end your tenancy, it may be possible to transfer (or assign) your tenancy to another person remaining in your home providing certain conditions are met. It is very important that you make us aware of anyone living in your home. This ensures proof of their residency.

Assignations are subject to the approval of the Association.

If you wish to sub-let your home or take in a lodger, you must firstly obtain our written permission. This will not be unreasonably withheld.

Your right to make improvements and claim compensation

If you carry out improvements to your home, you may be able to receive compensation from the Association. For you to qualify for this compensation;

- The Association must have approved the improvement; and
- Your tenancy must have ended.

Examples of improvements where you may qualify for compensation include installing, replacing or fitting a bath or shower, insulation, double glazing, draught proofing, kitchen sink, rewiring, toilet, storage cupboards etc. Decoration does not qualify for compensation.

Please ensure all receipts are kept for any improvements.

If you would like further information on your right to compensation please contact the office.





Your Right to Information and Consultation

Information

When you signed your tenancy agreement, you will have received a copy of the agreement and information on our complaints procedure. The Association must also give you information on other issues, should you request it e.g. rent setting, applying for a house, exchanging homes, internal transfers, repairs and maintenance, tenant participation etc.

Consultation

The Association is obliged to ask you what you think before making any new housing management policies or making changes to existing policies that are likely to affect you a lot. We will take into account what you think before making a final decision.

Consultation may be carried out in a number of different ways, for example public meetings, surveys, individual letters etc. Our Tenant Participation Strategy describes how we will consult with our tenants and how your views will be taken into account.



Moving in

Gas and electricity

Meter readings should be taken as soon as you get your keys. It is your responsibility to notify the gas and electricity supplier that you have moved in and provide them with meter readings. You will be responsible for your gas and electrical supply as soon as you receive your keys.

Housing and Council Tax Benefit

You are responsible for paying rent from the date shown on your tenancy agreement, even if you move in at a later date. The Association does expect tenants to move in at the earliest opportunity.

You are responsible for claiming Housing and Council Tax Benefit and providing the necessary documentation. The Association will be happy to help you complete the paperwork for this when you sign up for your tenancy.

If you are claiming Universal Credit it is your responsibility to notify them of your rent charges and date of entry in order that you qualify for the housing element.

Contents insurance

The Association is responsible for the buildings insurance of your property; however, it is the tenant's responsibility to insure the contents. We strongly advise all tenants to take out contents insurance in the event of fire, flood or theft. Information of the scheme run by Thistle Insurance is available in your welcome pack.

New tenancy visit

A member of the Association staff will visit you at your home to check you are happy with your tenancy. This will be carried out 4 weeks after your move in date.

Moving Checklist

When you move home, remember to:

- End your existing tenancy within the relevant timescale set out in your existing tenancy agreement
- Notify the Department of Works and Pensions of your change of address (if you fail to do this your benefits may be stopped)
- Notify the TV licence of your new address
- Ensure that meter readings are taken the day that you leave and both gas and electrical suppliers are notified of your move out date and given the meter readings
- Arrange to have your telephone/satellite systems disconnected and reconnected
- Arrange redirection of your mail at the post office (there is a charge for this)
- Make a note of emergency repair telephone numbers.

Water Supply

When you move into your home, the water supply should be turned on. If it is not, you should find the stopcock and turn it on. You should still find out where the stopcock is, you may need to know this in an emergency.



Your Responsibilities

Being a good neighbour

You are responsible for making sure that you, your visitors and your family do not act or harass in an anti-social manner to any person in your neighbourhood. This includes, visitors, association employees, residents, contractors and agents and those in your home.

If your neighbours or their visitors are causing a nuisance, please contact us immediately. We have a comprehensive policy detailing how we will deal with anti-social behaviour, neighbour disputes and harassment. Please contact the Association if you would like a copy.

Condition of your home

Internal decoration of your home is your own responsibility and you should ensure that you keep your home in a good decorative order. You will be charged for any repairs resulting from neglect or your carelessness. If you move out, you should leave your home in a good lettable condition.

Pets

You must obtain written permission from the Association if you wish to keep a domestic or exotic pet. You are not allowed to keep fowl, pigeons or other livestock. You are responsible, as the tenant, for the behaviour of any pets owned by you or anyone living with you and you must ensure

your pets are kept under control and supervised at all times.

You will be held responsible for any damage caused by your pet and the Association can insist on removal of your pet should it cause nuisance or damage and you may be charged for any damage caused by your pet.

Gardens

You are responsible for the upkeep of your garden and it is your responsibility to ensure that your garden is maintained to a good standard and grass is cut regularly. North Lanarkshire Council do provide a grass cutting service for vulnerable tenants unable to cut their grass (there is a charge for this).

Stair Cleaning

Those residents living in flats are legally required to keep all common areas clean and tidy. This includes stairs, close doors, hand rails, windows and walls. You and your neighbours are jointly responsible for keeping these areas clean and tidy.

Your neighbourhood

We need your co-operation to ensure our area remains a pleasant place to live. Please do not allow children to vandalise property. If you witness vandalism or any criminal act, please contact the police immediately.

Paying your rent

How do I pay my rent?

Rent is due in advance on the 28th of each month and can be paid:

- At any post office or pay zone outlet using the payment card provided, you will not be charged a fee for this service.
- By direct debit. Forms are available from the office and you can pay weekly, fortnightly, monthly or 4 weekly.
- Debit card online at www.allpayments.net please ensure that you have your payment card and debit card to hand when using this service.
- By telephone payment at 0844 557 8321 please ensure that you have your payment card and debit card to hand when using this service.
- By Housing Benefit which is usually paid direct to the Association. If you receive partial housing benefit, you are responsible for the remainder of your rent using the above options.
- For security reasons cash cannot be accepted at the Association's office.

Your rent account

Details of your rent account are held on the Association's computer system. Accounts are updated regularly and up to date balances available at all times, during office hours. You can obtain a rent account statement at any time by contacting the office.

Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit

We advise tenants to apply for housing benefit and council tax benefit when they first sign their tenancy agreement. Forms are available from the office and staff are happy to help with completing the forms. Entitlement to housing benefit and council tax benefit is calculated by staff at the Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit Office at North Lanarkshire Council, Benefits and Revenues, PO Box 9060, Motherwell.

You must inform the above office immediately if any of your circumstances change. You must also ensure that you complete a new form every time you are requested to do so.

Rent increases

Rents are increased every year on the 28th of March. All tenants will be notified of this in writing.

Problems paying your rent

If you have problems paying your rent, please contact the Association immediately. Staff are committed to giving help and advice and understand that individual circumstances can change. Please do not ignore this problem as increased rent arrears can result in you losing your home.



AFTAR Project

The AFTAR project is available to provide help and assistance to tenants and residents of Abrohill. An advisor from Citizens Advice can visit you in your home or in the private interview room within the Abrohill Housing Associations Office to discuss any issues such as:

- Benefit entitlements, appeals, form completion assistance
- Energy advice, getting the most appropriate tariff and assistance in changing suppliers
- Job opportunities, job searching skills, employment related issues, computer learning and job clubs
- Sign posting to other appropriate services for individuals.

This service is private and confidential, if you would like any assistance please call the office on 01236 457948 to arrange an appointment.

Repairs and maintenance

Our responsibilities:

The Association ensures that at the beginning of your tenancy, and during the tenancy, the property is wind and watertight and fit for human habitation.

We will ensure repairs needed to make sure the property remains in this condition are carried out within a reasonable time.

The Association has the right to gain access to the property to inspect or carry out repairs, and will give 24 hours notice in writing.

The Association is responsible for the structure and external fabric of the buildings. This includes:

- Drains, gutters and external pipes
- The roof
- External walls, doors, window sills, frames and catches.
- External painting



- Internal walls, floors, ceilings, doors and frames, but not decoration or fittings damaged by vandalism, neglect or carelessness.
- Flues and vents
- Pathways, steps, wall, fences within the area attached to the building, unless specifically excluded.
- Plasterwork, tiling and floors.
- Integral garages and stores



Hornbeam Cladding

We will also keep the following in good working order:

- Central heating and hot water
- Sanitation
- Basins, sinks, baths, WC sets and waste pipes and showers fitted by the Association
- Electrical wiring
- Central heating installations and extractor fans

Full details of repairs responsibilities can be found in Section 5 of your Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement.

Floor coverings

Carpets, vinyl, laminate flooring and tiling (permission is required for floor tiling)

It is the tenant's responsibility to lift and relay the above floor coverings should access be required to skirting boards, services and floor structure beneath.

Where planned renewals of sanitary ware, kitchens and heating systems impact on the above floor coverings it is the tenants responsibility to make good any deficiencies (although every effort will be made to minimise such shortcomings) and provide access as required above if necessary.

Reporting repairs

All repairs should be reported to staff as soon as possible. If you have an emergency repair outwith office hours please contact Rodgers and Johnston on 0800 999 2520 or for a gas emergency repair please call Saltire Facilities Management Ltd on 0330 202 0444.

For the avoidance of doubt, emergencies are as follows:

- A burst or serious leak
- Loss of essential services
- Security hazard (insecure front door, broken window etc)
- Health and safety hazard.

Please note that only emergency repairs should be called out of hours any abuse of this service may result in you being recharged. If your repair is not an emergency please contact the office during office hours.



Response times

The Association has set different targets for responding to different types of repairs. We aim to carry out repairs within the following timescales:

- Emergency:** Complete within 6 hours
- Urgent:** Complete within 3 working days
- Routine:** Complete within 15 working days
- Planned:** These repairs may be programmed for completion as part of a scheme and held over until it is practical to carry these out e.g. boilers, roofs etc.

Please ensure you always keep your appointment for repairs. If you are unable to do so, you should contact the office beforehand to make an alternative arrangement.

Cyclical Maintenance

Some maintenance items are carried out on a cyclical or continuous basis. This includes gas servicing and gutter cleaning.

Alterations and improvements

If you wish to carry out any alterations or improvements to your home, you must ask the permission of the Association. Forms are available from the office along with details of the procedure for requesting permission. We will not unreasonably withhold permission.

There are some improvements which may qualify for compensation in the event that

you leave your home in the future. You should have received a leaflet on this issue when you signed your Scottish Secure Tenancy agreement. If you did not receive a leaflet or would like more information on your 'Right to Compensation for Improvements' please contact the office.

Please note that you must request permission before installing laminate flooring.

Rechargeable repairs

Any repairs caused by neglect, carelessness or abuse by you, a member of your household or visitor to your home, will be charged to you. We will normally request payment in advance however, alternative arrangements can be made on request.

Medical Adaptations

We have a small budget to pay for medical aids and adaptations e.g. handrails, ramps, showers etc. If you are experiencing difficulty in your home, please contact the Occupational Therapist based at the Social Work Department on 01236 638700. They can assess your specific needs and send us details. We are more than happy to carry out the necessary works, subject to funding being available.

Looking after your home

Refuse Collection/Bin Areas

All household rubbish should be secured in bags and placed in your bin store/wheelie bin. If you have bulk items that need to be uplifted will be please contact North Lanarkshire Council on 01698 403110 to arrange this. (There is a charge for this)

Annual gas service

If you have gas central heating within your property, it is imperative that access is provided on an annual basis for service of the system. The Association is required by law to ensure a safety check is carried out annually and failure to provide access to the contractor may lead to access being forced to a property.

Right to repair scheme

All Scottish Secure tenants have the right to small, urgent repairs carried out by their landlord within a given timescale. These repairs are known as qualifying repairs and, if they are not carried out within the given timescale, you may be entitled to compensation. Further information can be obtained from the office.

Keeping your home safe and secure

Beware of fires

Fires start easily and spread very quickly. Please test your smoke alarm every week to ensure it is still working. Never remove the battery from your smoke alarm and always replace 'dead' batteries immediately.

If a fire does break out in your home, please follow these simple steps:

- Get yourself and your family out
- Phone 999
- Warn your neighbours
- Do not go back inside until fire officers confirm it is safe to do so.

If you smell gas in your home:

- Switch off all gas appliances
- Put out cigarettes and do not light matches or lighters
- Do not use electrical switches
- Open doors and windows
- Switch off the gas using the handle in the meter box
- Contact Transco on 0800 111 999

Protect from frost

In order to avoid burst pipes, please leave your heating on constantly during very cold weather – even at a low heat.

If you are unfortunate enough to experience a burst pipe, please follow these steps:

- Turn off water supply at the stopcock.
- Turn on all taps to drain water from your pipes.
- Switch off your electricity supply if water comes into contact with electrical wiring.
- Contact the Association or out of hours emergency repairs service
- Warn your neighbours if their house is likely to be affected.





Letting us know

Complaints procedure

You will receive a copy of the Association's complaints procedure when you sign for your tenancy. Further copies can be obtained from the Association office.

If you have a complaint please report this in the first instance to a member of the Association staff who will seek to resolve the matter as soon as possible. Our complaints procedure has two stages. Stage one front line resolution where we will aim to deal with your complaint within 5 working days. If you are dissatisfied with our response at stage one we will look at your complaint again at stage two. Some complex complaints or those that require investigation will be looked at this stage immediately. We will acknowledge your complaint within 3 working days and give you a decision as soon as possible but within 20 working days unless there is good reason for further time being required to deal with your complaint. If you after this you still remain dissatisfied you can ask the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) to look at it.

You can contact the SPSO in person at:
4 Melville Street, Edinburgh, EH3 7NS

By Post: SPSO,
Freepost EH641,
Edinburgh, EH3 0BR

Tel: 0800 377 7330
Fax: 0800 377 7331
E-mail: ask@spso.org.uk
Website: www.spso.org.uk

Tenant Participation

Tenant participation involves the sharing of ideas and information with tenants to help make decisions about the services we provide. We want as many tenants as possible to get involved in the services provided by the Association.



The Association is also very keen to encourage tenants and residents to set up a Tenants Residents Group. If you or any of your neighbours are interested in setting up a Tenants Residents Group, please contact the Association for further information.

Equal Opportunities

The Association strives to ensure equal opportunities for all throughout the organisation. We aim to make sure no one is treated less favourably because of marital status, sex, age, race, physical or mental disability. This covers the employment of staff and ensuring contractors have an equal opportunities policy and that discrimination does not occur when allocating properties. You can request a copy of the Association's Equal Opportunities Policy from the Association office.

Moving on

Internal Transfers

We operate an internal transfer list for those tenants wishing to move to another Association property. Transfers are based on housing need. If you are interested in transferring, please contact the office to discuss your needs.

Mutual Exchange

This is where tenants can 'swap' homes with another tenant of a housing association, co-operative or local authority. The mutual exchange list is available to view in the Association office and application forms are available for completion if you wish your name to be added to the mutual exchange register.

To qualify for a mutual exchange, you must not have any outstanding arrears, legal expenses or rechargeable repairs.

Moving out

If you wish to end your tenancy you are required to provide the Association with 28 days' notice. You are responsible for the rent for the property until your termination date even if you leave the property before then. You should contact the Association to complete a termination of tenancy form. You must leave the property clean, in good condition and all items removed from the property. You can arrange a uplift for any items via Northline. (There is a charge for this)

You must ensure that any repairs you are

responsible for are carried out before your termination date. Failure to do so may result in an invoice being issued to you.

You must ensure that all monies due to the Association are paid in full prior to your termination.

Finally, your keys must be returned to the Association office by 12pm on the date of your termination. If you fail to do so you will be charge rent at a daily rate until the keys are returned.





Useful telephone numbers/contacts

Emergencies

Repairs:

Gas Central Heating	0330 202 0444
All other repairs	0800 999 2520
Gas Escapes	0800 111 999
Police Scotland	101
Crimestoppers	0800 555 111
Fire/Police/Ambulance	999
Scottish Water	0845 601 8855

North Lanarkshire Council:

Housing Benefit/Council Tax	01698 403210
Northline	01698 403110
First Stop Shop	01236 632726

Call Northline for all your bulk uplifts, pest control, abandoned vehicles, road and lighting, graffiti removal, animal welfare officer and environmental protection officer.

(Please note that you may incur a charge for these services)

Help and Advice:

Benefits Agency	0345 604 3719
Citizens Advice Bureau	01236 723201
Universal Credit Helpline	0800 328 5644

Other:

Abronhill Health Centre	01236 727654/723223
Community Education Centre	01236 733249
Abronhill Library	01236 731503



We aim to provide good quality affordable housing for people who want to live in Abronhill by giving a high quality housing service controlled by local people.

CONTACT US:

Unit 10, Abronhill Shopping Centre,
Abronhill, Cumbernauld G67 3AZ

Tel: 01236 457948

Email: admin@abronhillha.org.uk

www.abronhillha.org.uk



Abronhill Housing Association



Twitter @Abronhill_ha



INFORMATION IN OTHER FORMATS

If you require this Handbook in any other format please contact the Association at the above address.

Registered under the Co-operative and Community Benefits Societies Act 2014 (No 2443 R(S))
and with Scottish Housing Regulator (No HCB 275 AL)

Abronhill Housing Association is a registered Scottish Charity (Number SC033116) Tax Reference CR533055