



# Looking After and Improving Your Home



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North Kesteven District Council

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## Looking after and improving your home

Looking after your home and garden is an important part of your tenancy agreement. This means you must keep the inside and outside of your home clean and tidy. If you receive permission from the Council, you can make alterations and improvements to your home. This leaflet explains the following:

- Your responsibilities for the upkeep of your house;
- The Council's responsibility for keeping your house in good condition; and
- The Tenant Improvement Scheme.

## Damage to your property

Below are details of what you should do in the case of any damage to your property:

- Report any faults or damage to your property as soon as possible. Please see leaflet No. seven 'Reporting Your Repairs', for more details on how to do this;
- Tell the Council straight away if a company wants to carry out works around the property. This includes water, electricity and gas companies. You must not agree to work being carried out without getting written permission from the Council first, except in the case of an emergency;
- Pay for the repair or replacement of any item that the Council owns, which is damaged by you, your family or visitors. If the damage was caused deliberately or by neglect, you may be charged for the repairs on top of your rent. Examples of this include smashed windows, broken doors and damage caused from an un-reported leaking pipe;
- Allow Council workers and contractors into your home to inspect and carry out repairs and improvements. We will send

you a letter informing you of when they will call. However, in the case of an emergency we will tell you over the phone or in person; and

- Allow us to break into your property in the case of an emergency. In these situations we will need immediate access, and if you do not let us in, you could be putting yourself and your neighbours at risk. We can take legal action to enter your home if you do not agree. In these circumstances, you may have to pay the costs, and could be prosecuted for obstruction.

Please note that any person who calls at your home must show you their official identification before entering.

## Inside your home

### **Our responsibility:**

Please see leaflet No. seven 'Reporting Your Repairs', for more details on which parts inside your property we are responsible for repairing.

### **Your responsibility:**

You are responsible for the following inside your home:

- Decorating
- Keeping it clean, this includes regular cleaning of bathroom and kitchen fittings. eg: toilets, baths and sinks.
- Repairing and maintaining your own equipment such as cookers or washing machines.

Any improvements you have made yourself are also your responsibility, unless you have an agreement for us to repair and maintain it.

You must obtain written permission from the Council before making any alterations to your property and its fixtures or fittings. This includes removing walls, changing bathroom fittings and making specialist adaptations.

## Outside your home

### **Our responsibility:**

The Council must keep your home in good condition. Please see leaflet No. 7 'Reporting Your Repairs', for more details on which exterior parts of your property we are responsible for repairing.

If you make an improvement or alteration to the outside of your home without our agreement in writing, we may ask you to return the property to how it was before. If you do not do this, we will charge you for doing the work ourselves.

### **Your responsibility:**

#### **Do not:**

- Park anywhere on your property except on a “hard-standing” (a driveway or paved area intended for parking);
- Park anywhere that would obstruct emergency services, or cause a nuisance;
- Park on grass verges or footpaths; and
- Drive over any open plan or grassed area to gain access to your property.

You must not use your property or the land around it for any of the following purposes:

- Carry out repairs to any vehicle that does not belong to you or other residents in your property. These include:
  - dismantling, • breaking, and • scrapping.
- Park, or allow an illegal, untaxed or unroadworthy vehicle on the land around your home, without our agreement in writing. Permission will not be unreasonably withheld;
- Park any vehicle on the land around your home unless you have written permission from the Council. These vehicles include:
  - trailers, • boats, • caravans, or • any similar vehicle.

- Put up structures anywhere on your property without our agreement in writing. Permission will not be unreasonably withheld. Structures include:
  - sheds, • fish-ponds, • pigeon lofts,
  - garages, • aerials, or • satellite dishes.
- Keep or use dangerous material unless it is stored and used safely. This is to avoid the risk of leaks, fires or explosions. These materials include:
  - bottled gas, • paraffin, and • petrol.

If you need to use and store oxygen cylinders due to a medical condition, you must inform the Council and agree suitable storage arrangements. If you do not keep such material safely we can enter the property and remove it. You must pay for the costs of removal and disposal.

## Gardens

You are responsible for the following in your garden:

- Cutting the lawn;
- Trimming the hedges and shrubs;
- Keeping it clear of rubbish; and
- Carrying out any trimming works to trees that we may ask you to do.

If your garden is overgrown and you do not tidy it without good reason, the Council can clear it and charge you for the work.

Reduced rates are available for a grass cutting service if we accept you as vulnerable due to age, health or disability.

You must receive written permission before planting any trees or hedges, including Leylandii. Permission will not be unreasonably withheld, but some conditions may be set.

## Grounds maintenance

An annual grounds maintenance programme is prepared by the Environmental Services team. This covers grass cutting, and hedge, shrub and tree pruning. This work is carried out by contractors.

During the growing season we cut grass verges and communal areas on a regular basis. Shrubs and hedges are only pruned between September and March, and trees are only pruned when necessary.

Tenants who pay a service charge for grass cutting also get the grass in their garden cut regularly.

## Communal parts of blocks of flats or houses

### **Our responsibility:**

The Council will carry out the following in communal areas:

- Paint the outside of your home at regular intervals;
- Clean out gutters, at our discretion;
- Carry out repairs in a reasonable time;
- Send you written confirmation of your request for a repair;
- Clear up after a repair; and
- Leave the decoration as close as possible to how it was before the work was done.

Please see leaflet No. 7 'Reporting Your Repairs', for more details on which parts of communal areas we are responsible for repairing.

### **Your responsibility:**

You must co-operate with us and your neighbours to keep any communal areas, such as corridors, stairways and entrances clean, tidy and clear of obstruction.

## Improvements to your home

### The Tenant Improvement Scheme

This Scheme allows you to make improvements or alterations to your home, but you must get the Council's permission first. Permission will not be unreasonably withheld.

Conditions usually apply to any works you want to carry out. Improvements should be made to a decent standard and by a qualified person. You must also obtain any necessary building regulations or planning permissions.

### You must do the following if you want to make an improvement to your home:

1. Make your request using the Council's Request Form, which is available from your Housing Officer.
2. Receive confirmation of your request and wait for your application to be considered.
3. You will then receive a letter, which outlines the decision of the request. You will either:
  - a. Receive permission to carry out the works with any conditions attached; or
  - b. Be given the reason if the request is refused.
4. Once you have signed and returned a copy of the permission you can begin works.
5. When the works are completed, they will be inspected by a Council Officer.

If you wish to carry out improvement works to your house, please ask your Housing Officer for more details. Rules and regulations apply. Forms are available by either visiting the Council offices, Sleaford. Telephoning Customer Services on 01529 414155, or visiting, [www.n-kesteven.gov.uk](http://www.n-kesteven.gov.uk)

There is a set of advice and information leaflets about Housing Services. For more information contact the Council's Sleaford Offices as detailed over leaf.