

METRO

REAL ESTATE GROUP



The Residential Tenant Handbook

METRO REALTY RESIDENTIAL LIMITED



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About Metro Realty Residential Limited as a landlord

This handbook has been prepared to provide information to you to help you understand your rights and responsibilities and to help you get the best from your time living in a Metro property.

Our aim is to be a good landlord, working with good tenants for the benefit of the properties in our care.

We want to improve our service to tenants and hope this handbook will help us to achieve that.

This Handbook is a guide and is not intended to provide you with legal advice on the terms of your tenancy.

You should always seek help from the Citizens Advice Bureau or a legal adviser if you are unsure about your rights and responsibilities.





Your tenancy agreement

Your tenancy agreement is an important legal document.

It sets out the terms and conditions of your tenancy and the rights and responsibilities of both Landlord and Tenant.

If you do not keep to the terms of the agreement, you will be in breach of your tenancy and, in serious cases, could lose your home.

ASSURED SHORTHOLD TENANCY

Nowadays this is the most common type of tenancy agreement. It gives you a legal right to live in your property for a specified period of time. It also offers the landlord a right to take back the

property at the end of the tenancy should he/she so wish. Normally, however, after the initial fixed period, they run on from month to month as long as the terms of the agreement are met.





In broad terms your and our responsibilities are:

We expect you:

- To look after the property in accordance with the terms of your tenancy agreement
- To pay your rent on time on the dates required by your agreement or any other dates agreed between us
- Not to cause nuisance or annoyance to your neighbours or other people

In return we undertake to:

- Respect the fact that the property is your home and allow you to enjoy it without unnecessary interruption or disturbance
- Carry out repairs for which we are responsible in an effective and timely manner
- Insure the building (but not the contents) against normal risks.

Tenancy agreements will also set out procedures for things like rent reviews, handling of deposits and arrangements for ending a tenancy.

The following sections give more detail.



Looking after the property

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The following sections give more detail.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

- Keeping the property clean and in good condition, in particular maintaining the interior decoration and cleaning the inside of the windows
- Unblocking sinks, baths or showers, replacing bath or basin plugs and toilet seats
- Replacing fuses and light bulbs
- Not altering or changing the appearance or structure of the property in anyway without our consent
- Not altering or changing the gas, electrical or plumbing installations nor installing external aerials or satellite dishes
- Letting us know of any repairs that need to be carried out
- Allowing us to have access to the property, with reasonable notice, to inspect condition or carry out work that is our responsibility
- Looking after your own belongings and keys to the property.



OUR RESPONSIBILITIES

We will aim to meet our statutory responsibilities and provide decent homes for people to live in. We will normally be responsible for the following things:

- The structure and exterior of the building and outbuildings provided by us, including roofs, chimneys and walls
- External decoration, doors and windows (except glass)
- Internal plaster (except minor cracks)
- Drains, gutters and external pipes
- Repair and maintenance of heating and plumbing installations and appliances provided by us
- Paths and steps giving access to the property
- Cleaning the windows externally regularly
- Keep the garden neat, tidy and well maintained



Getting repairs done

ROUTINE REPAIRS

Most of our repairs are carried out as part of a planned maintenance cycle. For example, we aim to do external decorations every five years and will often carry out a survey of properties prior to this so we can plan to carry out other maintenance works, such as woodwork repair or re-pointing, at the same time.

Hopefully this will minimise disruption to you and reduce costs overall. You will be notified in advance of when such repairs are planned so you can agree access arrangements and highlight any maintenance work that you believe is required.

We aim to carry out repairs to a good standard and will try, as far as possible, to minimise disruption to you and your home.

SERVICING OF GAS AND ELECTRICITY INSTALLATIONS

If you have gas in your home, we will arrange for a gas safety test to be carried out every year by a Gas Safe Registered Engineer. Depending on the terms of your tenancy, we aim to carry out fixed wiring electrical tests every five years.

When we receive a report of a repair we will allocate it to an appropriate member of our team. We will agree the degree of urgency with you as well as the timescale for the work to be completed.

All repair notifications should be sent to repairs@metrogroup.property or via our website.

We have three broad categories of repair as follows on page 9.

EMERGENCY

This would include defects that affect the health, safety or security of the tenant or another person at risk, or which have a serious adverse impact on the building.



URGENT

This would include problems that cause serious discomfort, inconvenience or nuisance to the tenant or another person.

ROUTINE

This would include problems that can be deferred without serious discomfort, inconvenience or nuisance to anyone or the long-term deterioration of the building. If planned maintenance is due to be carried out within a reasonable time, it may be appropriate for such repairs to be dealt with then.

EMERGENCY REPAIRS OUT OF HOURS

If an emergency arises and you are unable to contact Metro and have to instruct a local contractor, we would ask that you inform us within 24 hours. In the event of a genuine emergency, the cost of the call out and repair will be paid for by Metro unless you are responsible for the work under the terms of your tenancy.

IF REPAIR WORK IS NOT CARRIED OUT AS AGREED

We will always try to carry out the work within the timescale agreed with you. If we find that it will not be possible as planned, we will let you know in advance, explain why and agree a revised time with you.

If we have failed to carry out an agreed repair when promised, you should contact Metro who will investigate and rearrange as appropriate.





Rent and money matters

PAYING YOUR RENT

Your rent must be paid, monthly in advance, by Standing Order from a bank or building society account (in accordance with the terms of the lease) This form of payment saves you from having to remember to make payments on the right dates and can be easily amended to reflect changes in rent.

ARREARS

It is important that you pay your rent on time but we will deal with fairly if you fall behind and will take account of any specific difficulties you may be facing. However, we will not ignore arrears of rent, because this would not help you and it would increase the cost of managing and maintaining our housing for everyone else.

If you know you are going to have difficulty paying the rent or you have received a letter from us saying you owe us rent, you should contact us immediately on the number shown on your rent demand or arrears notice. If appropriate, we can put you in touch with professional, independent agencies that will be able to advise you on how to manage your debt and how to safeguard the 'roof over your head'.

COURT ACTION

If you do not pay off arrears on your account in an agreed way, particularly if they continue to grow, we will start legal proceedings to recover the money you owe in accordance with the terms of your agreement plus legal costs. In serious cases, where you make no attempt to clear or reduce the arrears at an agreed rate, we will seek a court order to repossess your home.

We tell you this so that you know what rent arrears can lead to and encourage you to talk to us at an early stage so we do not need to take legal action.



DEPOSITS

We usually take a deposit at the beginning of a tenancy which may be the equivalent to one or two months' rent. We hold this to cover the cost of any repairs or replacements which are your responsibility and are still outstanding when you leave. Any unspent amount of your deposit will be returned to you at your forwarding address.

In April 2007 the Government introduced a new Tenancy Deposit Scheme in England and Wales (not applicable in Northern Ireland). This requires landlords to register details of all new tenancies at their beginning and end with an approved body which has the responsibility to:

- Protect deposits during the tenancy
- Ensure deposits are returned promptly where there is no dispute at the end of the tenancy
- Where there is a dispute about the return of the deposit, arrange for it to be dealt with fairly by the Independent Complaints Examiner.





Being a good neighbour

USE OF THE PROPERTY

We expect you to live in the property as your principal home and not to use it to run any form of business or for any activity that is not consistent with a private domestic residence.

A degree of home working is acceptable but if you use the property as a registered business address or for a full-time business you will need our consent and it may require a different type of tenancy.

You must not allow the property to become overcrowded or to be used for any illegal or immoral purpose.

BEHAVIOUR

You are responsible for the behaviour of people who live with you or visit you. This responsibility covers behaviour in your home, and in the locality.

You, or they, must not:

- Behave in ways that cause nuisance, annoyance, harassment, alarm or distress to other people
- Create unreasonable noise
- Cause damage to the property of the locality
- Commit an arrestable offence in the property or locality.

PETS

We are not against pets being kept as a matter of principle, but we do need to be able to make sure they are appropriate in type and number and are not allowed to damage the property or disturb the neighbours.

If you want to keep pets, you will need our written consent. This will not normally be refused as long as the request is reasonable and compatible with the nature of the property.

If animals become a nuisance or damage the property, we reserve the right to withdraw consent for them to be kept at the property.

Usually, additional security will be required as a safeguard against potential damage and/or nuisance.



When you plan to move out of your home, for whatever reason, your tenancy agreement will usually set out the period of notice you need to give us.

If the initial fixed term of your tenancy has expired and you are occupying on a month-to-month basis, we will accept a month's written notice of your intention to move but it is helpful to us to have as much advance warning as possible.

You must pay the rent for the final month and we ask that you give us a forwarding address.

When you leave your home, you are responsible for the following;

- Clearing your home including any loft spaces, sheds, garages and garden of all your personal belongings
- Ensuring everyone moves out with you
- Removing and disposing of floor coverings you have fitted unless they are in such good condition that we give you permission to leave them

- Putting right any damage that has occurred – for example, making good the walls where shelves, etc. have been taken down
- Ensuring decorations are left in good order
- Cleaning all surfaces, fixtures and fittings, including bath, toilet, basin, kitchen units, sink, etc. This may include additional professional cleaning where pets have been kept
- Leaving flues and chimneys in clean condition
- Leaving solid-fuel appliances in clean condition.

If you do not meet any of these responsibilities, we will re-charge you for any work that you should have done.

We will normally try to meet you to inspect your home before you move out.



Leaving your home

Often a record of condition will have been made of the property at the beginning of the tenancy and we can point out anything you are responsible for putting right during this visit.

Before you leave your home for the last time you need to ensure you have:

- Read any gas, electricity and water meters and sent the reading on to your suppliers so they can close your accounts with them
- Told the local council for the purposes of Council Tax
- Told other service providers such as telephone and television services
- Redirected your post to your new address. The post office can help with this.

You also need to ensure that your rent account is up to date.

You are responsible for rent up to the last day of your tenancy and we will still seek outstanding rent after you have left the property.

Finally, please make sure you return the keys.

Your deposit will be returned to you less the costs of making good any outstanding items that were your responsibility when you left the property.

For tenancies created since April 2007, deposit returns will be dealt with by an approved independent body under the Government's Tenancy Deposit Scheme.



ENERGY Did You Know?

- Turning the thermostat on your central heating system down by 1oC could cut your heating bills by up to 10%.
- Washing clothes at 30oC instead of 40oC uses around 40% less energy.
- Unplugging your PC overnight could save you as much as £35 per year.
- One energy saving light bulb can save you up to £9 per year – that adds up to more than £100 over the course of the bulb's lifetime!
- By boiling as much water as you need you could save enough energy in a week to run a TV for 26 hours.
- The average household could save up to £300 a year on energy bills and two tonnes of carbon dioxide by being more energy efficient.





Green tips

ENERGY Saving Tips

- Turn off the lights when you leave the room.
- Don't leave appliances on standby and remember not to leave appliances on charge unnecessarily.
- Dry washing on clothes line outside whenever possible.
- Put the lid on a pan to reduce the amount of time and energy it takes to boil.
- Walk, cycle or take public transport wherever possible.
- Share car journeys where possible; www.nationalcarshare.co.uk or www.fewwheelers.co.uk or join a car club www.carclubs.org.uk.





WATER

Did You Know?

- Simply turning off the tap whilst you clean your teeth could save as much as nine litres of water a minute.
- Don't overfill the kettle when making a cup of tea. Only fill and boil what you need.
- Taking a shower rather than a bath could save you up to 400 litres of water a week.

WATER

Saving Tips

- Don't let the cold water that comes through before a tap runs hot go down the drain – use it for watering plants or put it into a water butt in the garden.
- Keep a jug of water in the fridge to prevent wasting water every time you wait for the tap to run cold.
- Only use the washing machine and dishwasher when you have a full load.
- Consider buying a water butt to collect rain water for the garden – using rain water not only saves main water but also the energy used to treat it.
- Putting a water-saving device, or simply a plastic coke bottle full of water, in your toilet cistern could save three litres of water every time you flush.



Green tips

WASTE

Did You Know?

- On average, every person in the UK throws away their own body weight in rubbish every seven weeks.
- The energy saved from recycling one glass bottle will power a colour TV for 15 minutes or a computer for 20 minutes.
- 100,000 tonnes of plastic bags are thrown away in the UK every year – that is the weight of 70,000 cars. Carrier bags dumped in landfill take 100 years to decompose.
- If you recycle your paper, in just seven days it could come back as your newspaper.
- 50% of food purchased in the UK goes to waste.
- The UK produces enough waste every two hours to fill the Albert Hall.
- The UK produces more than 434 million tonnes of waste each year.
- Glass bottles can be recycled into house insulation. Plastic bottles can be recycled into fleece jackets.





WASTE Saving Tips

- Reduce, reuse, recycle.
- Register with the Mailing Preference Scheme to avoid receiving junk mail;
www.mpsonline.org.uk or Tel: 0845 703 4599.
- Donate unwanted items to charity shops or give them away through www.freecycle.org.
- Recycle as much household waste as possible – contact your local council to find out about recycling facilities and services in your area.
- Choose to reuse – take shopping bags with you and if you cannot avoid an occasional plastic bag then reuse it.
- Write a shopping list to help you buy only what you need to avoid throwing away excess food, paint etc.





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