

Butlin Property Services Ltd

Tenant Handbook

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ENCLOSED

This booklet is designed to provide you with all necessary information relevant to your time as a tenant with BPS.

If you require any further information, or need to report any repairs or maintenance issues then please contact our Lettings Department on:

Leicester 0116 274 5778

Birstall 0116 274 5778

Office Opening Hours:

Mon - Fri 8.30am . 5.00pm

Keep this booklet to hand in case of any emergencies

Contents

Page

Utilities & Council Tax

Gas, Electricity & Water	3
Council Tax	3
Telephone & Communications	4
Final Bills	4

Rent & Deposit Payments

Rent Payment	4
Failure to Pay Rent	5
Deposit Payments	5

Repairs & Maintenance

Procedures	6
Emergency Repairs	6
Gas	7
Electricity	7
Water	8
Security	8
Statutory Repairs	8
Tenants' Requests	9
Legionella Prevention	9

General Information

Keys	10
Insurance	11

Utilities & Council Tax

Gas, Electricity & Water

You are responsible for paying **ALL** of your utility bills throughout the **entire** duration of your tenancy. The first thing you should do when you move into your new accommodation is to read the meters. These are usually located in areas such as cellars, kitchen cupboards or under the stairs.

Next, you should contact your utility companies to provide them with the readings and to ensure that you are listed on the database as the person(s) now responsible for paying the bills. You can find who supplies you by calling:

ELECTRIC	Central Networks 0845 6030618
GAS	MPAS 0870 6081524
SEVERN TRENT	0845 7500 500

EMERGENCY GAS LEAK call Transco 0870 608 1524

The person who requests the supply is liable to pay. If there is more than one tenant, it is recommended that you sign an agreement between yourselves setting out each person's liability for payment of bills in the event of a later dispute. When you receive a bill, it may be appropriate to check to see if the meters have been read. If the bill has been estimated, an [E] will appear by the reading, and you should therefore phone in the correct reading immediately.

Failure to pay bills on time will attract a red reminder letter. If you ignore this then the service or supply may be disconnected. If you are having difficulty in paying the bill, contact the relevant utility company without delay. It may be possible to negotiate to spread the payment over a period of time.

Council Tax

It is vitally important that you notify your local authority of who is occupying your property as failure to do so may result in a large Council Tax bill for which you will be liable.

The authority will ask for evidence of your status and they will be able to advise you accordingly. Contact your relevant council offices on the following number and ask to speak to the Council Tax department.

Leicester	Leicester City Council	Tel: 0116 454 1004
Loughborough	Charnwood Borough Council	Tel: 01509 263151

Please note that you may be asked to provide proof to your Management Agent that you have registered the property under your name and have obtained the necessary Council Tax exemption.

Telephone & Communications

If you wish to be connected to a telecommunications service, it is important that you notify your management agent of your new contact details. Certain subscriptions may require a wayleave agreement to be signed by the landlord or agent before they can be installed.

In any event, it is important that your management agent has an allocated number so that you can be contacted during the course of your tenancy.

The law is very clear that each household with a TV capable of receiving broadcasts (including SKY or cable) must have a TV Licence. One licence covers any number of sets in a single household, and students with a joint tenancy are likely to be classed in this fashion. More information and details of how to obtain a licence can be acquired from your local post office or online.

Final Bills

All of the above information is relevant to the end of your tenancy. You will be contractually obliged to provide your management agent with copies of all final paid utility bills, a copy of your Council Tax Exemption Certificate or evidence that the council tax is fully paid and proof that contracts with communications companies have been terminated.

Until all of the above have been received, your deposits will not be returned, and so it is in your best interests to ensure that all of these are set up and concluded properly.

Rent & Deposit Payments

Payment of Rent

It is a condition of your tenancy that all rent must be paid by **bank standing order 3 days in advance of your rent due date each month**. Although rent may be collected from you individually, if you are in a joint tenancy, you are jointly and severally liable for the payment of the total balance. You will be notified if arrears occur but it is important that *all* of the rent is paid on or before the due date. You must not wait to be chased.

Late payment of rent will attract a charge. ***Please remember that it is not the responsibility of the agent to collect or chase rent, but the contractual obligation of the tenant(s) to ensure that the money is paid.*** Administration costs are incurred every time a rent reminder has to be sent, and so it is in the best interests of the tenant to keep their agent fully informed. Rent arrears letters will be charged at £25.00 each if the rent is overdue by more than 17 days.

If there is a genuine reason why your rent cannot be paid, it is essential that your management agent is notified immediately. Situations are only made worse when your agent is not made aware of a problem, and payment schedules can be arranged with proof of serious hardships.

Failure to Pay Rent

Failure to pay rent is likely to result in a Notice Seeking Possession being served on your property. **Further administrative charges will be made to tenants if this course of action has to be followed.** Regardless of who has failed to make their payment, action can only be taken against all of the tenants, if you have a joint tenancy. If, after 14 days, the arrears are not cleared in full, it is likely that court action will commence to recover the outstanding amount, possession of the property and court costs.

If a court judgement is made against you it will affect your ability to not only obtain credit but also to secure accommodation elsewhere, either in the private rented sector or to obtain a mortgage, until the debt, court costs and any accrued interest on these debts has been cleared in full.

For any rent or payment queries you should contact our Lettings Department on 0116 274 5778 (option 1).

Deposit Payments

It should be noted that deposit payments are completely separate from rent payments. They are held in a deposit protection scheme on behalf of tenants and returned at the end of the tenancy, subject to the terms and conditions of the tenancy agreement being adhered to.

Deposits will not be returned until all of the keys to the property have been returned, all of the rent has been paid, any charges have been agreed and all of the copies of Final Paid Bills have been received. A more detailed guideline for your deposit return will be sent to you once you have handed in your months notice.

Please note that deposits may not be used at any time to replace rent payments.

Repairs & Maintenance **Procedures**

In the event that your property may require repairs or maintenance during the course of your tenancy, the following procedure should be observed to enable us to process your request quickly and efficiently.

For all repairs and maintenance issues please call our Lettings Department on:-

0116 274 5778 (option 1)

Property maintenance will be categorised in order of priority and importance, as below:-

- 1) Emergency Repairs
- 2) Statutory Repairs
- 3) Tenants Requests

Emergency Repairs

Emergency Repairs relate to matters arising which may be considered dangerous to the tenants, which may result in significant damage, or which may compromise the security of the property. More often than not, these issues revolve around the utility supplies to the property. i.e. Gas, electricity and water.

In the event that such problems may arise outside of the normal office opening hours of your management agent, tenants would be expected to act in a reasonable manner to make the property and its installations safe. If you call an emergency contractor please be aware you will be liable for the cost. If we consider the repair was necessary we will ask the Landlord to refund you accordingly.

Recommended Emergency Contractors:

Electrics – 07976 916 875 (Electract)

Gas/Plumbing – 07927 552 590 (AT Services)

Each of your utility companies will have a freephone emergency number to call, but you should make sure that these are used appropriately depending on the nature of your problem.

Emergency Telephone Numbers

Gas
Electricity
Water

Transco
All Suppliers
Severn Trent

Tel: 0800 111 999
Tel: 0800 056 80 90
Tel: 0800 783 4444

Gas

All rented accommodation with gas appliances must be issued with a Gas Safety Certificate. It will be given to you on move-in if applicable.

If you smell gas and are concerned about a possible leak then you should call Transco on the above number. However, it must be pointed out that Transco will not *test* your appliances, they will simply switch off your supply until a CORGI registered engineer can re-test the system.

If you suspect a gas leak in your property, open as many doors and windows as you can. **DO NOT** USE ANY ELECTRICAL SWITCHES. **DO NOT** SMOKE. VACATE THE PROPERTY.

Tenants are often alerted to potential problems with gas appliances via carbon monoxide detectors. Although the use of these detectors is encouraged and recommended, tenants can often make the mistake of situating them within the extreme vicinity of gas appliances, thus causing them to give inaccurate readings. Ideally, such detectors should not be placed directly above, below, or to the immediate side of cookers or boilers.

Electricity

If the electricity in your property should become faulty, you should first try and identify the source or cause of your problem. Ask yourself the following question, ~~Have~~ all of the electrics in the house, including the lights, stopped working? If the answer is ~~no~~ then it is probable that your fuse box has tripped a fuse.

This can often be caused by overloading sockets with too many electrical appliances, particularly those which have a heating elements in them (e.g. kettles, electric fires, hairdryers etc.). If this is the case, then the problem can often be rectified by simply flipping the switch on the fuse box, often located in a cellar, entrance hall, kitchen or under the stairs.

If the answer to the first question is ~~yes~~ then it is probable that your property has suffered a power failure. If this has occurred then all other properties in your area will also be without electricity. If the situation persists you should call your electricity supplier to ascertain the nature and extent of the problem.

Remember, if you are in any doubt then you should contact your management agent at your earliest opportunity, who will advise you on the best course of action.

Water

If your property springs a leak from any of the plumbing installations, (i.e. taps, baths, sinks, toilets, pipes etc.), you must first turn off your water supply at the main stop cock. This is often situated under sinks, in ground floor bathrooms or generally where the water supply enters the house, and should be turned clockwise until the water shuts off. This will prevent the situation getting any worse, until a competent plumber can be present to attend to the problem.

It is also helpful to run both the hot and cold taps in the property, as this helps to drain the pipes and any water storage tanks, alleviating any water stored in the system.

The other major problem that can be created by water is through roof or gutter leaks, often emphasised by heavy rain. These should be reported immediately, but will only be treated as an emergency if water is penetrating the exterior of the building and causing damage to the interior. It must be remembered that roofing contractors can only attend to these types of problems when the weather conditions will allow.

Security

Sadly, we do not live in a crime-free society and it is not unheard of for some properties to be exposed to this criminal element. If your property should be unfortunate enough to be subjected to a burglary or attempted break-in, you should report this immediately to the police. They will issue you with a crime number which should be retained for future reference.

The incident must also be reported at the earliest opportunity to your management agent. Your management agent will be able to arrange for any necessary repairs to be arranged, in order to secure the property.

Please note that if such an incident should occur outside of office hours, then it is recommended that tenants contact an appropriate out of hours contractor in order to deal with any glazing, locks or doors that need immediate attention. If contractors costs need to be settled on completion then your management agent will reimburse this amount to you, upon receiving a copy of the invoice.

Statutory Repairs

Landlords have a statutory requirement to keep in good order the fixtures, fittings and appliances of their properties. If any of these should become broken or malfunction through no fault of the tenants, the landlord has an obligation to repair or replace these items.

This type of repair most commonly relates to items of furniture, such as wardrobes, cupboards etc. and to appliances such as cookers and fridge freezers. In the event of these repairs being required, tenants should contact their management agent to request the appropriate contractors to assess and/or attend to any problems.

Priority will obviously be given to faulty appliances and these should naturally be reported as soon as possible. Neither your Landlord nor your management agent will have any responsibility for consequential losses.

Please remember that contractors are not employed by your landlord or their management agent. It is not usually possible to attend to a repair on the same day that it is reported – unless it is an emergency – and realistic ‘reasonable’ timescales must be appreciated.

Tenants’ Requests

This relates to requests that tenants may make to landlords for items or furnishings that are not present in the property (e.g. burglar alarms, showers etc.). In most cases properties are taken as seen, and the monthly rental figures will reflect the standard and level of furnishings that a property may include.

Tenants may often wish to decorate their own bedrooms or other rooms of the house. This may be done with the express written authorisation from the Landlord or Landlord’s Agent and must be undertaken to an acceptable standard. Any decoration that has to be made good at the end of the tenancy will be charged to the tenant’s deposit(s).

n.b. one of the most common charges levied against deposits is for the redecoration of walls where blu-tac, sellotape or drawing pins have been used to put up posters etc., causing damage to walls beyond wear and tear.

The most successful method of requesting any additional improvements is to send a letter addressed to the Landlord via your management agent, so that this can be considered. Your management agent does not have the authority to make these types of decisions or spend money on your landlord’s behalf, and so no guarantees can be made that these requests will be met.

Legionella Prevention

Legionnaires Disease is a potentially fatal form of pneumonia which can be caused by the inhalation of small droplets of water contaminated by the Legionella bacteria. In domestic properties, the Legionella bacteria can be given an environment to grow, under certain conditions, in hot and cold water systems.

Here we provide some tips on how Tenants can help to prevent the risk by good housekeeping.

- Hot water systems should be in working order and hot water should remain hot
- Cold water should remain cold
- Water in the household system(s) should be kept circulated

As a tenant:

- Do not interfere with the settings on your boiler or water heating system. The hot water should be set so that water is heated to 60°C.
- Make sure cold water coming out of cold outlets is cold
- Flush through any showers in the property at least two minutes every week (especially in guest rooms where they may not be used frequently). Keep clear of the water flow whilst doing this.
- Clean the shower heads periodically, descale and disinfect it. This should be done at least every six months

Please tell us as soon as possible if:

- The cold water is still running warm after you have initially run off any water which may have accumulated in the pipes. It should not be above 20°C.
- There are problems with water flow, debris or discolouration in the water.
- The boiler or hot water tank is not working properly, particularly if the water is not coming out of the taps at a sufficiently high temperature. It should come out at a temperature of 50°C after it has run for a minute at the latest

If you plan to leave the property vacant for any extended period (over two weeks), please tell us. When you return you should flush the water system(s) through by running all outlets for 2 minutes.

Your Landlord has a legal responsibility to take precautions to prevent the Legionella bacteria being present in hot or cold water systems and as required we undertake risk assessments to assist the Landlord in meeting this responsibility. However, as a Tenant you also have an important part to play by taking the simple steps above.

General Information

Keys

You will be issued with a set of keys to the property when you move in. You may have internal keys to the property as well, which may be in the property upon your arrival.

It is very important that you look after your keys, as it will not always be possible for your management agent to lend you a spare set. It should be noted that your Management Agents **DO NOT ALWAYS** hold copies of internal keys, and call-outs to attend incidents where keys have been lost or misplaced will attract a charge to the tenants. If this loss of keys compromises the security of the property, the landlord may also request that the locks are changed, also at the expense of the tenants.

Insurance

Landlords are required by law to insure their properties for the buildings and their own contents, fixtures and fittings. This does not however cover tenants for any of their belongings.

Personal contents insurance is recommended as a necessity and it is a false economy not to insure your possessions, particularly with the increase in valuable technology and entertainment systems that many tenants now own.

More companies are now providing policies that are specific to the rental market, and although the cost of premiums and the level of cover provided does vary, you should be able to find a policy that best suits your needs.

If you are living in a flat/apartment development please look for additional information/contact details that may be available on the notice boards in the communal areas.

If you require any further information then please feel free to contact our Lettings Department on Leicester 0116 274 5778 or e-mail us at lettings@butlins.co.uk