

Tenant Handbook

About EHSL

EHSL is a not-for-profit organisation committed to providing the highest quality supported housing services on a national basis, offering housing related advice and support to its tenants to enable them to live as independently as possible.

Our vision and values are core to the delivery of these services - these are:

- To provide quality services, promoting independence and the rights of all people with disabilities to have a safe and welcoming home, with support as and when they need it.
- To work productively within a multi-agency team to meet the accommodation needs of people who have a learning disability or other requirement for support.
- To treat every tenant with respect and equality - we believe in equal opportunities for all regardless of race, cultural heritage, sexual orientation or disability.
- To support and promote tenant involvement at all times.
- To provide choice - we believe that people with disabilities should have genuine choice about where and how they live.
- To operate all parts of our business in an environmentally friendly way.
- To manage our finances, debts and resources prudently.
- To grow and adapt our service to meet the needs of a larger number of people that require accommodation, care and support.

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Moving In

Welcome to your new home

We are delighted that you have chosen to live at one of EHSL's supported housing services, and would like to welcome you into your new home.

This tenants' handbook has been designed to provide you with some advice about your home and tenancy agreement, along with information on how to contact us and what we can do to help. We can provide an easy-read version if one is required. We hope that you find it useful.

Everybody at EHSL is aiming to provide you with a quality service to ensure that you are comfortable and happy in your new home. We welcome your contributions and feedback to help influence how we provide our services, so if there is anything we can do to help you, please get in touch.

The EHSL Team

About This Handbook

This handbook will help you to understand:

- How to report maintenance requests to EHSL.
- Timeframes in which EHSL will respond to maintenance requests.
- What to do when making improvements and adaptations to your home.
- How to look after your home and deal with problems that may arise.
- How to pay your rent and service charges.

Reporting Repairs

All maintenance requests should be reported EHSL. Please call us on 0161 919 3126 during office hours to report a repair. If you are unable to call, repairs can be reported via email to: repairs@ehsl-uk.com. For emergencies please call 0345 319 4542

When reporting repairs, it is important to provide as much detail as possible to help describe the problem. Photographs are a useful aid in providing information, so please email images whenever possible.

Repair Priorities

Once repair requests have been received, EHSL will categorise repairs into three groups depending upon the urgency of the situation. If you feel your request has been allocated an incorrect response time, please explain to our staff why you believe this to be the case.

Category 3 - ROUTINE - Attendance arranged within 28 Days

For less urgent repairs where there is little or no inconvenience to residents or care staff. Usually where single items are defective but there is no loss of use of the home or its services.

Category 2 - URGENT - Attendance arranged within 5 Days

For situations where there is no danger posed, but the ability to use the facilities or the home has been affected as a result.

Category 1 - EMERGENCY - Attendance arranged within 24 Hours

This is considered as any occurrence where there is actual danger to the occupants of the building, staff or visitors, or there is potential for further damage to the property.

Wherever possible, care and support staff will be expected to assist tenants in troubleshooting any matters that may otherwise result in a maintenance call-out.

Getting Comfortable

There are many things to consider now you have moved into your new home. Here are a few important points to help you adjust and settle in.

Smoking



Smoking cigarettes and e-cigarettes will not be permitted inside any of our buildings. Smoking can pose a serious risk of fire, can cause damage to property and will invariably leave a building requiring redecoration.

Any expenses incurred as a result of repairing damage caused by your smoking, i.e. staining, odour, burn marks etc. will be recharged to you as a result.

Pets



We will always try to allow pets where possible. Some buildings may be more suitable for the keeping of animals than others and we must consider whether pets will have a negative effect on other residents and neighbours.

Please seek written consent * before getting any pets to ensure your home is suitable for animals.

Adaptations



If you wish to carry out any alterations or improvements to your property, you must make a formal, written request to EHSL*.

Major adaptations will be subject to the recommendation of an occupational therapist.

Once EHSL have received your request we will make a decision and write back to you to inform you of whether or not you will be able to carry out the work.

Decorating



EHSL will decorate communal areas in your home but it is your responsibility to decorate the interior of your bedroom or flat.

Decoration must be done to a high standard and vibrant colour schemes may not be permitted.

Please contact EHSL in writing* to make a request for permission before you make any changes.

*** EHSL's postal address can be found on the rear of this booklet.**

Keys



You are responsible for replacing any keys or fobs that you lose. If your keys or fobs are stolen, we recommend that you contact your contents insurance provider to make a claim on your policy for the costs incurred. You must first report the theft to the police and then provide your insurers with the crime reference number that the police will give to you.

If you use the EHSL emergency maintenance service to have your locks changed as a result of loss/theft of keys, you will be responsible for covering these costs.

Utilities



We can support you to notify gas, water and electricity companies when you are moving in and can arrange for supplies to be connected.

If you wish to have a landline in your property it will be your responsibility to arrange its connection and pay bills.

Some properties will include utilities in the rent and we can support you to set up payments to cover these bills.

Furniture



EHSL will usually provide your accommodation unfurnished although your support provider may have provided you with furniture. It is your responsibility to look after any furniture that has been provided.

TV License



If you wish to watch TV it will be your responsibility to apply for a TV license for your new home. We can assist you to apply for a TV license during your signup meeting, or you can register online at www.tvlicensing.co.uk.

Communal areas



Please make an effort to keep communal or shared areas clean and tidy so other residents can enjoy their home too. Clean up after yourself and leave the area presentable and ready for other tenants to use. Please do not use communal areas for the storage of personal belongings.

Looking after your Home

Electricity

The fuse box (also called the consumer unit) contains the main on/off switch for the electricity in your home. The fuse box can usually be found next to the electricity meter, under your stairs or by your front door. It has a circuit breaker that will automatically switch off the electricity by tripping a switch, breaking the circuit in the event of an electrical fault.



You will also find a row of smaller switches called mini circuit breakers. These control the electricity to the lighting and socket circuits in particular rooms or parts of your home. They will trip out if there is an overload on a particular circuit (e.g. if a light bulb blows).

If you lose electricity

Loss of electricity could be because of a power cut or, if you have a top up electric key meter, a lack of credit. Check to see if neighbours' homes have also been affected by a potential power cut. If neighbours still have power, you may have to check whether a fuse has tripped in your fuse box.

- Open the cover on the fuse box
- Check which fuses have tripped to the 'off' position and turn them on.
- Be aware that a faulty device may still be connected and may continue to trip the circuit until the device has been turned off or unplugged.

If after following the above steps you still have a problem, please call our maintenance helpdesk on 0161 919 3126.

Safety Around Electricity

There are a number of ways to increase your safety while using electricity in your home.

- Unplug electrical appliances when they are not in use.
- Keep appliances clean and in good working order.
- Keep water away from appliances, plugs and sockets – Don't touch sockets with wet hands
- Never put anything into plug sockets except plugs.
- Do not overload multi socket adaptors
- Do not cover electrical outlets
- Report any damaged sockets, light fittings and other electrical outlets immediately

Energy Efficiency

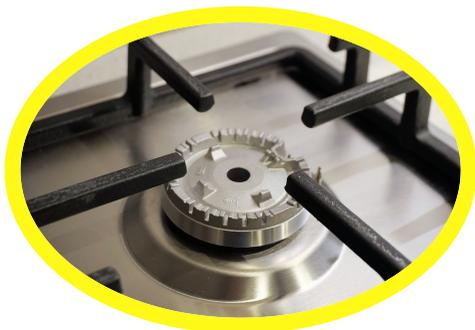
Being energy efficient means that you are not only helping to save the planet, but also helping to save your own money. To use less electricity in your home, please consider the following:

- Unplug electrical appliances when they are not in use.
- Wash clothes at a lower temperature.
- Empty your vacuum cleaner regularly.
- Turn lights off when leaving a room.
- Use energy efficient light bulbs.
- Dust the rear of your fridge regularly and keep its door closed.
- Turn the heating off if you have your windows open.

Gas

Gas appliances can present danger in the home either when highly flammable gas is escaping, or through the emission of carbon monoxide.

If you smell gas in or around your home:



- Turn off your gas supply at the meter if you are able to.
- Open any windows and doors to allow the gas to disperse.
- Do not light matches, lighters or cigarettes.
- No not turn on lights or sockets.
- **Call the Gas Emergency Helpline on 0800 111 999**

Gas Safety



In line with our legal obligations EHSL need to have a gas safety inspection performed at your home every twelve months. EHSL will instruct a gas safe registered engineer to visit your home to inspect the following:

- Gas appliances owned by EHSL.
- Gas appliances owned by the tenant.
- Gas pipes that run from the meter into your home.

You must allow the gas safe engineer to access your property when required. Failure to comply will constitute a breach of tenancy.

Carbon Monoxide

Carbon Monoxide is a poisonous gas that you cannot see, smell or taste. It can be caused by faulty central heating systems, gas appliances and fires, as well as blocked flues and chimneys. If it goes undetected it can kill without warning in a matter of hours.

Your home should have a carbon monoxide detector installed in any room with a gas appliance, including cookers, gas fires and boilers. If you do not have one, please contact us to arrange for one to be supplied.

Dealing with Carbon Monoxide

If your carbon monoxide alarm sounds and you suspect a leak:

- Stop using all appliances. Turn them off and open doors and windows to ventilate the property. Do not turn on lights or sockets.
- Evacuate the property immediately. Stay calm and avoid raising your heart rate.
- Call the gas emergency number on 0800 111 999 to report the incident.
- Do not re-enter the building. Wait for advice from the emergency services.
- Seek immediate medical help – you may not realise that you have been affected by carbon monoxide and going outside will not treat any exposure by itself.
- Finally, please notify EHSL of the incident on 0161 919 3126.

Water

A stopcock is a valve that stops the water supply coming into your home. It is important that you familiarize yourself with where your stopcock is located, before an emergency arises.

The stopcock is usually located under the kitchen sink. It may also be located at a point close to where the water main enters your home, such as underneath a metal cover on your garden path or in a cupboard close to the front door of your home.



Preventing Blockages

Blockages will usually occur when foreign objects have entered the pipework. To avoid potential blockages, please avoid putting anything down your toilet except for toilet paper. Other waste such as sanitary towels, nappies, wet wipes and kitchen roll must be disposed of appropriately in a bin.

To prevent blockages in sinks and toilets, please take the following precautions:

- Scrape plates thoroughly before washing up to minimize food debris.
- Keep a strainer over the plughole in your kitchen sink to prevent food debris entering the drain.
- Do not allow food, oil or fat to be washed down the sink.
- Do not use too much toilet paper whilst using the toilet.
- Do not put wet wipes in the toilet.

Unblocking sinks and Toilets

If you have found a sink or toilet to be blocked, please take the following steps to attempt to remove the blockage.

- Pour some hot, soapy water into the bowl. Allow some time for the water to sink into the pipework. Try this several times if possible and the blockage may break up. Also try to use commercially available products to disperse the blockage.
- Use a plunger which can be purchased from most supermarkets and DIY stores. Make sure there is enough water in the bowl to cover the rubber part of the plunger and pump it up and down. You may need to cover the overflow in a sink to create a seal.
- If following these steps has not proved to be successful, please call our maintenance line on 0161 919 3126.

If any foreign objects are found to have caused a blockage, the tenant may be charged the full cost of clearing the blockage.

Sinks, baths and showers

When bathing please make sure shower or bath mats are in use to catch escaping water. After bathing, be sure to check the floor for excess water and mop up any spills if necessary to avoid the spread of damp.

Water Leaks

If you notice a water leak please turn off the water at the stopcock and place a container underneath the source to avoid further damage. Any water leaks should be reported to EHSL immediately. Uncontainable leaks should be reported as an emergency.

If you notice a serious water leak in office hours call EHSL on 0161 919 3126. For out of hours' emergencies please call 0845 319 4542

Condensation

Everyday activities such as cooking, washing and bathing can cause condensation. This is where moisture in the air makes contact with a cold surface, such as a window and condenses, leaving water droplets on the cold surface.



Avoiding Condensation

Condensation will usually form as a result of a resident's habits and lifestyle. Wherever there is persistent condensation, there is usually black mould to be found. The amount of condensation produced in a home will depend on three factors:

- Amount of water vapour produced by occupants.
- Temperature of the building.
- The amount of air circulation in the building.

There are a few precautions you can take to prevent condensation and mould from forming in your home:

- Dry clothes outside or in the bathroom with the door closed and a window open or an extractor fan running.
- Cover pans and use extractor fans when cooking.
- Do not turn extractor fans off.
- Open windows regularly and keep trickle vents open (these are a small vent in some window frames which will allow air to flow).
- When running a bath, run cold water first to avoid excess steam.

Black Mould

Regular buildups of condensation can allow a fungus known as 'black mould' to grow on walls, ceilings, clothes and furniture. As well as affecting plasterwork and rotting window frames, black mould can have a negative effect on your health if the mould is not treated promptly. Mould can be a particular problem in the colder months when residents will often keep windows closed and clothes will be dried inside the home. To prevent condensation and mould you should maintain a constant balance of warmth and ventilation in your home.

Treating Condensation and Mould

Mould can be treated very easily by wiping off as much as is possible using a fungicidal wash, ensuring the instructions are being closely followed. Fungicidal wash can be bought from most supermarkets and hardware stores. Repaint the affected surface using a fungicidal paint and dry any wet surfaces, such as windows and windowsills daily to help prevent the mould returning. Windows should be left partially open to allow for adequate ventilation.

To avoid the buildup of condensation and the growth of mould in your home, try following these six simple steps:

1. Produce less moisture
2. Remove excess moisture
3. Open the Windows
4. Heat your home more
5. Insulate and draught-proof
6. Kill and remove the mould

Tenants have a responsibility to ensure their home is adequately ventilated to avoid mould growth. Instances of mould should be reported as soon as they are identified in order for advice to be given. **Please take extra precautions against condensation and mould during the winter months.**

Pests

The tenant is liable to pay for; the treatment of fleas, bed bugs, ants, mice, wasp nests and other pests unless it can be proved that these are a result of the Landlord being in breach of his repairing obligations or pre-date the start of the tenancy.



Preventing Pests

Preventing pest infestations before they become established is vitally important. Infestations will often develop if a property is left unclean with food and/or waste left out. In order to prevent infestations please follow the below advice:

- Keep surfaces free from food, crumbs or waste.
- Wash your bedsheets and clothing regularly at a high temperature.
- Do not allow waste to build up inside or outside the property.

Dealing with Pests

If it is determined that an infestation has occurred due to the lifestyle of a tenant, they may be charged for the resulting treatment.

Domestic products such as ant powder or insect repellent should be used prior to reporting the problem to EHSL. Your local council may be able to provide services free of charge.

Please contact EHSL for further information on our pest policy.

Gardens

EHSL may provide gardening services at properties with communal gardens. If so, EHSL will maintain the garden, keeping it in a reasonable state by having grass cut, hedges trimmed and basic weeding performed. All residents are expected to keep their gardens clear of litter and especially animal waste in order to maintain a pleasant environment within your garden.

If gardening services are not provided, EHSL would expect tenants to maintain their garden, keeping it tidy, free of litter and not overgrown.

We encourage our residents to take an interest in their gardens and welcome any improvements, but please check with EHSL before cutting down any plants or performing other significant alterations in your garden. Alterations made without permission may leave tenants liable for the cost of returning the garden to its original condition.

Disposal of Waste

EHSL encourages the practice of recycling at every possible opportunity. Please consult your local council's website for details on how to dispose of your waste responsibly.

Waste should only ever be left in appropriate bins and must never be allowed to build up outside doors, in gardens, on paths or anywhere else on the property.

Bulky waste collections can be arranged with your council for the disposal of large and unusual items such as old furniture or appliances but please be aware that there may be costs associated with these collections.

Paying Rent

Rent and Other Charges

As a tenant of EHSL you are required to make payment for the 4-weekly rent amount stated on your tenancy agreement. You may be able to claim Housing Benefit to do this.



The main other charge payable by tenants who do not have utility accounts will be the service charge for electricity, gas, water and sewerage. The service charge (rent contribution) for utilities will need to be paid via ongoing service charge payments every four weeks. We can help you set up a standing order to do this.

If there are no service charges in place within your property and EHSL manages your bills, recharge invoices for these will be sent via post and will need to be paid within 30 days of the invoice date.

Housing Benefit

EHSL can help you apply for housing benefit to pay for part, or all of your rent. The amount of Housing Benefit you are eligible to receive can vary, depending upon your income, savings and other circumstances.

Housing benefit payments will cover rent and other property related charges but will not cover heating, hot water, energy or support costs. This means that there may be some elements that you will have to pay for yourself. We may refer to these as service charges, or rent contributions.

How to Pay

- From your bank account – make payments or set up a standing order using your online banking services to the bank details below.

- At your bank via cash or cheque.

- Direct Debit. Please visit EHSL’s website and click on ‘Tenants’

- Post - send a cheque made payable to EHSL to our office address:

EHSL, Videcom House, Newtown Road, Henley-on-Thames, RG9 1HG

Payment Information

When making payments to EHSL please use the following details and please remember to use your name as the reference for your payment.

Account Name:	EHSL
Sort Code:	40-38-04
Account Number:	74823729
Payment Reference:	Your Name

You are liable to pay your rent in full through housing benefit or other means. It is your responsibility to maintain payments and satisfy any requests made by the housing benefit department of your local authority. Failure to cooperate with any such requests may adversely affect your Housing Benefit award and may jeopardise your ability to adhere to your tenancy agreement if you do not otherwise pay your rent.

Failure to pay your rent and service charges when they are due will constitute a breach of your tenancy agreement and may result in the termination of your tenancy, loss of your home and recovery action

General Information

Writing to You

EHSL may occasionally send letters to you in the post. Please make sure you read these letters to make sure you don't miss out on important information. In addition to this, you may receive letters addressed to EHSL. Please forward these to us in the post or hand them to a member of EHSL staff.

Visiting Your Home

EHSL reserve the right to enter the communal areas of any property without giving notice to tenants. We are required to give reasonable notice before entering any area/property/bedroom that is not used for communal use.

EHSL Employees will always carry their identification cards with them, please ask to see ID if you are uncertain of who is calling at your door.

We will aim to give at least 24 hours' notice prior to visiting your home and will try to give longer notice where possible.

House Rules

EHSL expect tenants to maintain good relationships with housemates, taking their share of household management. Tenants in shared properties should be able to communicate and apply methods of managing household matters such as cleaning and the replacement of toilet paper, lightbulbs and other sundries.

Other tenants and support staff may have rules in place to help in the management of daily life. Please make sure you abide by any rules that are in place when you move into your home.

Troubleshooting

Tenants and support staff may be asked to troubleshoot with certain issues, devices and appliances that may otherwise result in a repair request. This can help in solving problems promptly and without the need for an engineer to attend. This includes using domestic products to unblock drains, changing standard light bulbs, checking fuse boxes to see if a trip switch has activated and other checks that any tenant would be reasonably expected to undertake.

Need More Help?

Our staff at EHS� are experienced in helping our tenants get the most out of their homes. We can help with the following and more:

- Liaising with local authorities regarding Housing Benefit claims and assisting tenants to make a claim
- Advising tenants regarding housing and welfare benefit claims.
- Consulting with occupational therapists regarding adaptations to the accommodation.
- Signposting to local accommodation related services.
- Attendance and input at tenancy related meetings.
- Liaison with court appointed deputies, appointees and those with lasting power of attorney over tenant's affairs and other matters relating to accommodation.
- Managing antisocial behaviour, and offering mediation between tenants.
- The provision of documents in an 'easy-read' format.

Breaching the Agreement

Anti-social Behaviour

You are responsible for your behaviour while at home and when out in the local area. You are also responsible for the behaviour of your visitors, this includes family members and friends so you must ensure that you and your visitors do not cause a nuisance to others.

Whenever possible, you should try to solve any problems yourself. We can advise you on how to do this. Often, the best way of solving a problem between neighbours is for both parties to talk to each other and try to see each other's point of view.

If your neighbour continues to be unreasonable while you are talking, walk away and report the problem to EHSL.

EHSL's anti-social behaviour policy is available to read on our website along with many other useful pieces of information - www.ehsl-uk.com

If you, another person or someone's property is in danger please report this to the police using the usual methods (999/101).

Subletting and Visitors

Subletting, or allowing other people to live in your home is not allowed under any EHSL Tenancies and will constitute a breach of the tenancy agreement.

Visitors are generally welcome but this may be subject to the agreement of your support provider and other tenants. Please check with your support staff, keep noise at an acceptable level and always avoid causing disturbance to other tenants and neighbours.

Working from Home

Tenants must have EHSL's written permission to run a business from their homes. Permission should be sought from your local council's planning department and this may have an effect upon your housing benefit awards.

By running a business from your home without the written permission of EHSL you will be placing yourself in breach of your tenancy agreement.

Damage and Recharges

Tenants must report any damage, either intentional or accidental to EHSL immediately. This can be reported via the repairs phone number. You should explain what happened and provide as many details as you can, sending photographs wherever possible.

Tenants will be required to pay for any damage caused by the tenant or their visitors either intentionally, accidentally, or through neglect.

Tenants will be sent an invoice for the full costs of repairing any damage caused. This is known as a recharge.

Tenants are expected to take all reasonable precautions to minimise the potential occurrence of accidental and intentional damage.

Contents Insurance

Tenants are responsible for insuring the contents of their home against loss or damage. We strongly recommend that you arrange insurance to cover the cost of replacing all your possessions, should you suffer any loss. EHSL are unable to assist in setting up contents insurance upon the behalf of our tenants.

EHSL will not be able to help you to replace lost or damaged items unless their loss or damage was caused by our negligence.

Ending Your Tenancy

Giving Notice

Should you wish to end your tenancy you must give EHSL at least one month's notice in writing. Your support worker may be able to assist although you must sign the notice yourself for it to be valid.

Time to move on

When leaving your home, the property will need to be left in a similar condition to how it was when you moved in. This will involve making good any damage and returning furniture to its original position.

All keys will need to be returned, including any copies that you have had made. Your home will need to be cleaned to a suitable standard including all surfaces and appliances and you will be required to pay in full any outstanding balances that are due to EHSL for rent, service charges and recharges. EHSL may take legal action to recover any outstanding funds.

Any remaining furniture and other personal effects will be disposed of in accordance with the relevant law. The tenant will be recharged to cover any costs incurred from its disposal or storage. You could be held liable for the costs of professional cleaning, in the event that EHSL deem that further cleaning is required once you have returned possession of the property.

Final Inspection

To ensure the property has been left in an acceptable and to establish that it is ready for the next tenant to occupy, EHSL will need to inspect the condition of your home at the end of your tenancy. EHSL will make contact with you to arrange for this to take place once you have submitted your notice.

Should there be any damage to the property that does not constitute normal wear and tear, you may be liable for the costs incurred in having the damage repaired.

Feedback

Complaints, Compliments and Feedback

Feedback from our tenants, their families and support staff is always appreciated, whether good or bad. We will always try to resolve any issues in the way we deliver our services, and all complaints will be treated seriously. Likewise, if we have done something well, or a particular staff member has gone above and beyond to help you, we will always be pleased to hear about it.

Please send compliments and complaints to:

EHSL, Videcom House, Newtown Road, Henley-on-Thames, RG9 1HG.

Alternatively, you can call 0161 919 3126 and ask to leave feedback, or send us an email at feedback@ehsl-uk.com.

Getting Involved

We will work with our tenants to continually develop and improve the service that you receive from us.

If you would like to get involved with EHSL and the work we do, please get in contact with us and we will be able to provide you with further advice in how to do so.

Data Protection

EHSL takes your personal information seriously and will only process it for legitimate reasons.

Contacting EHSL

For general enquiries and to report routine maintenance issues please call EHSL's 24/7 hotline:

 **0161 919 3126**

Maintenance issues reported to this number will be followed up during office hours which are 09:00-17:00 excluding bank holidays and weekends.

To report an **emergency** maintenance issue at any time of the day, please call EHSL's emergency hotline.

 **0345 319 4542***

*You must tell the operator that you are calling about an EHSL property. Please note that misuse of the emergency facility will result in charges being made back to the tenant.

Routine repairs can also be reported via email to: repairs@ehsl-uk.com.

For queries that are not dealt with in this handbook, please contact us using the details below.

Phone: 0161 919 3126

Email: info@ehsl-uk.com

Web: www.ehsl-uk.com

Post: EHSL, Videcom House, Newtown Road, Henley-on-Thames, RG9 1HG

