

FOCUS

TENANT

HIGH RISE LIVING AND FIRE SAFETY



⏻ RESET

🔄 RESHAPE

▶ RESTART

WELCOME TO TENANT FOCUS

Welcome to this special edition newsletter which highlights the fire safety precautions and other fire safety measures to protect our residents living in High Rise Blocks of Flats. Your safety and wellbeing are a key priority for Birmingham City Council Housing Services.

To help our residents we have compiled what we think are very important messages to advise and explain the ways in which you can protect your own safety and that of your neighbours should the need arise. There is very detailed advice about how to keep safe if there is a fire, the importance of making sure you know the sound of your smoke alarm, your emergency

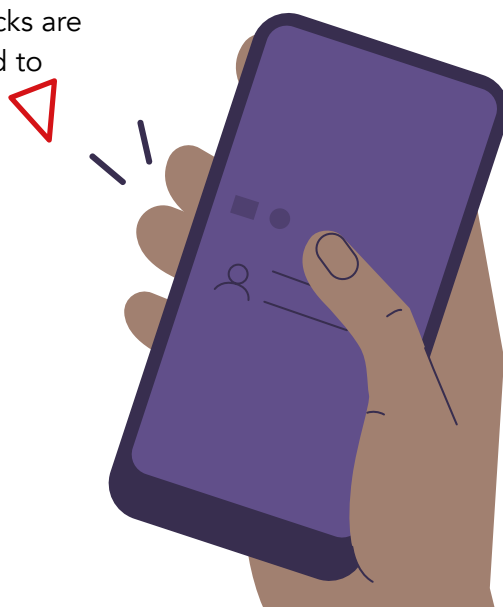
escape route and how to contact the Fire Service. There is a lot of information about how to prevent fires all year-round while living in your flat such as the safe and proper disposal of your rubbish, keeping communal areas free of clutter, and shutting fire doors.

Regular fire safety checks are strongly recommended to

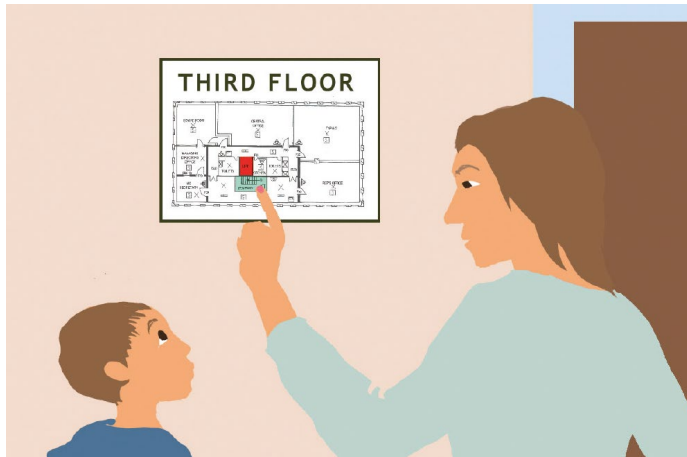
make sure fire alarms are working, electrical devices that you use in your home are safe and to clear clutter. We have also included what we think is helpful advice about how to safely enjoy fireworks and Christmas decorations, and the importance of a good spring clean!

**FOR ANY
EMERGENCIES
DIAL 999**

birmingham.gov.uk



BE PREPARED



- Plan your escape route before a fire happens.
- Play your part in preventing fires.
- Know what safety actions to take during a fire.
- Report any fire hazards immediately by phoning 999.
- Try not to panic and stay calm

MAKE SURE YOU KNOW:



- 1 What your smoke alarm sounds like.



- 2 Where your emergency escape route(s) are located – never use the lift !



- 3 How to contact the fire service.

IF YOUR FLAT IS ON FIRE – ACT FAST!



Don't ignore your smoke alarm.

If a door feels hot, there is probably a fire on the other side.

You should:

- Close the door of the room where the fire is and other doors, to prevent the spread of fire and smoke.
- **Get out, closing the front door behind you, and stay out.**

WHAT TO DO IF ANOTHER FLAT IS ON FIRE



During a fire you must not use the lifts and the stairs could be overcrowded. Rather than try to escape, it's probably safer to stay in your flat as it is designed to resist fire getting in.

If the fire is in another flat:

- **Call 999** to report the fire.
- **Close all doors** go to the living room. It's usually the safest place to be.



If you are trapped and can't call 999:

- **Close all doors** and go to the balcony or a window. Attract attention by shouting, waving a cloth, or in any way you can.
- **Don't jump** – wait to be rescued.

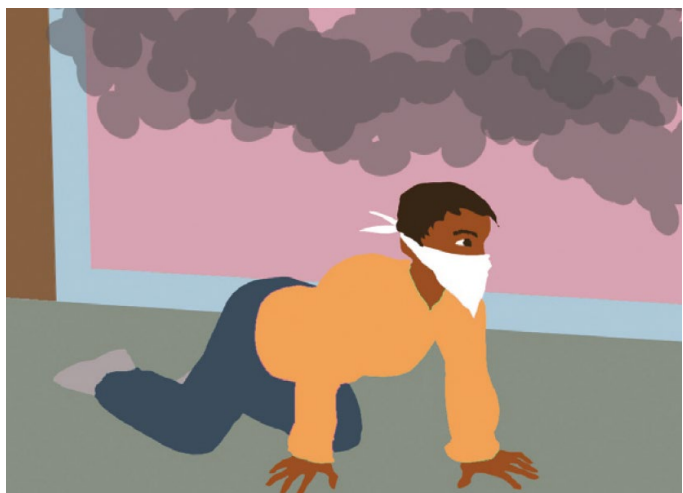
TO HELP AVOID BREATHING IN SMOKE.



Smoke is the main danger from fire, and you should avoid breathing it in by:

Sealing the room

Stuffing wet towels and sheets in gaps around the doors to seal out smoke.



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IF YOU MUST LEAVE YOUR FLAT



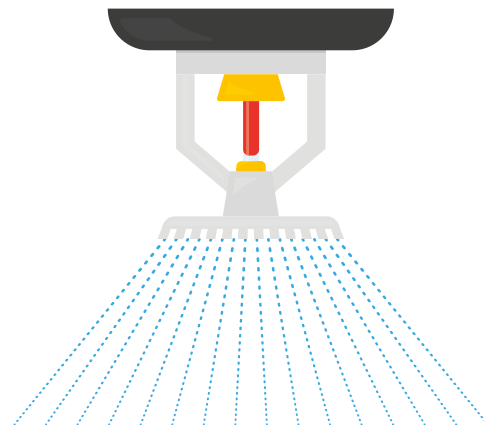
You should only leave your flat if:

- The fire is in your flat.
- Your flat is full of smoke.
- The fire service tells you to go.

If you do leave:

- Take your key if you can get it safely.
- Close the door behind you.
- Go calmly using the stairs and hold onto the rail. If you're stopped by heavy smoke, go to a smoke-free area, and wait for the fire service.
- Take a torch, if handy.
- Never use the lift

Do not use the lift



HOW TO PREVENT FIRES IN HIGH RISE BLOCKS

STOP FIRES BEFORE THEY START!

SMOKE ALARMS

You can help prevent fires in high-rise blocks by:

- Testing your smoke alarms regularly by pushing the test button. If these are not working replace the battery. If there is a fault report this to the repairs call centre.
- Vacuum the vents of your smoke detector twice a year.
- **NEVER** cover the detector.
- **NEVER** remove the battery or isolate the power supply.

SPRINKLERS

The programme to install sprinklers in all our blocks of flats is now complete and provides the highest level of safety, complimenting the robust fire safety measures already in place.

However, you must protect your sprinkler to help prevent fires:

- You must keep all sprinkler heads/cover plates free from obstruction. Ensure each sprinkler head/cover plate isn't covered by pictures, stacked boxes, or furniture. If the sprinkler head/cover plate is covered it is unlikely to effectively put out a fire
- Do not attempt to hang anything from any part of the sprinkler system.
- Do not attempt to hang, drill or screw anything to the trunking or sprinkler installation.
- Do not tamper or remove the sprinkler head, cover plate or trunking.
- Do not paint or decorate the sprinkler head, cover plate or trunking, including using filler, caulk products around the cover plate.

- Do not obstruct the sprinkler heads, to work effectively they must be visible from all parts of the room and not obstructed by any furniture or other items.
- Do not use steam wallpaper strippers, blow torches or other equipment that produces a lot of heat in rooms that have sprinklers installed.

If there is any damage to the sprinkler head or cover plate, or any are missing, please log a repair with the Contact Centre immediately on 0121 216 3330.

If there is a fire in your flat and the sprinkler has been activated follow your fire procedure and leave the premises.



REPORT FIRE HAZARDS

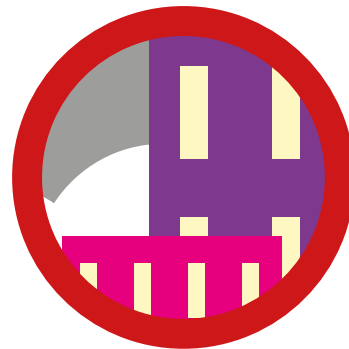
Such as:



Missing or broken fire equipment and fire doors.



Electrical problems.



Nearby flats that are empty but not secure.



Faulty exit lights.



Blocked stairs.



Rubbish.

You should take care with:

- Smoking and cooking (the main causes of fire).
- Electrical appliances - always act upon the fire safety advice given by manufacturers regarding the safe use of equipment and any modification recommendations, for example tumble dryers.
- Flammable liquids –always check the label and never pour cooking oil down sinks, toilets, or drains.

- Ensure all doors are closed at night-time.
- Unplugging/turning off electrical appliances and chargers when you are not using them, or when you go to bed, helps reduce the risk of fire.
- Unplug electric blankets before you get into bed, unless it has a thermostat control for safe all-night use

You should also:

- Keep fire doors closed to slow the spread of fire and smoke.
- Keep halls and stairs clear of rubbish – they are your escape route.
- Familiarise yourself with your escape route and staircase in your high-rise block.
- LPG cylinders must not be used in High Rise buildings. A gas explosion in a block of flats could cause death or serious injury.



SAFELY DISPOSING OF RUBBISH

Bin chutes are used in our blocks of flats for residents to dispose of household domestic waste. They are an efficient way of disposing of rubbish, but it is very important that residents use them properly because they can get blocked easily and safety features can become damaged.

To ensure the ongoing and efficient operation of the chutes:

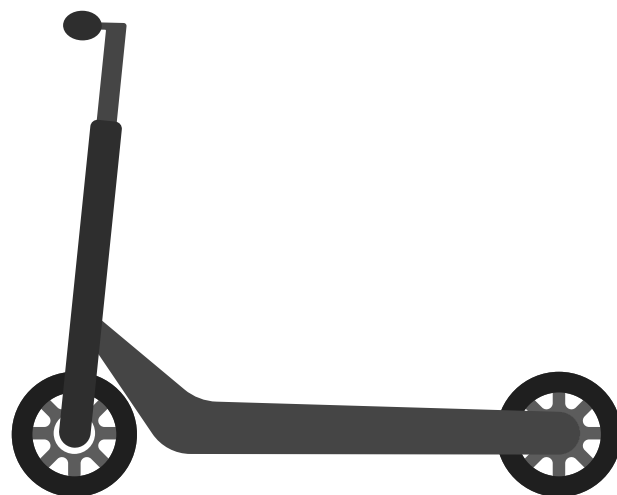
- only dispose of household waste in small quantities. Anything larger than a carrier bag can block the chutes which can cause an inconvenience to you and other residents.
- don't put large or awkward shaped items (such as pizza boxes, delivery boxes) down the chute because they will get jammed. Please flatten and tear up the item first.
- do not force items down the chute which are too large, internal fire safety seals can become dislodged or damaged.
- please put wet waste (such as tea bags, peelings, leftovers) into small bags before disposing of them in the chute
- please ensure dangerous items such as broken glass or sharp tins are wrapped up securely before throwing down the chutes.
- if you would like to collect your waste in a larger bag before visiting the chute, please leave it untied and empty the contents of the bag down the chute. You can either reuse your bag or dispose of it down the chute.
- utilise recycling facilities at your block, if available, to separate recyclable goods from the rest of your general domestic waste. This will help you to reduce the amount of waste you put into the chute and help to prevent blockages.

Residents must not attempt to dispose of bulky items in the bin chutes as they are likely to

create a blockage which puts the chute out of operation and creates a significant fire risk. If you have larger items to dispose of, please arrange a bulky waste collection by calling **0800 188 4000**. This service is free.

Finally, please do not fly-tip/ dump black bags or other waste in the communal areas or next to the rubbish chutes or bin rooms. If you fly-tip you could receive a fine or criminal record. It also significantly increases the fire risk throughout our blocks and puts residents' and their visitors at risk. Communal landings, walkways and stairs are your emergency exits and should always be kept completely clear!

To report fly tipping please click on the following link:
Report fly-tipping | Birmingham City Council



FIRE SAFETY AND ELECTRIC SCOOTERS/E-BIKES

Birmingham City Council do not allow mobility/electric scooters, e-bikes, and similar devices to be stored or charged in communal areas of any building it manages.

Most of our high-rise blocks were designed before the use of these devices and we have a duty to manage the risks to the building and those living within it.

These include but are not limited to:

- obstruction of passageways and escape routes particularly in emergency situations.
- hazards to others who may have mobility difficulties and other impairments.
- fire loading risk, when being charged or due to poor maintenance.
- damage caused when used in buildings without adequate turning circles and for which their use was not designed.

SAFE USE, STORAGE, AND CHARGING OF E-SCOOTERS/E-BIKES

If a high-rise or low-rise block has a facility specifically designed for storing or charging these devices the user must seek the Council's express permission to use it before a scooter can be brought onto the site. Where approval is not given, the Council will work with individuals to find solutions.

Where these devices are in use, the following safety information must be followed:

- reduce the risk of overheating by:
 - never exposing them to extremes of temperature

- allowing batteries to cool down before attempting re-charge
- charge batteries on hard flat surfaces so heat can dissipate
- avoid the battery becoming damaged through careful use
- follow manufacturers' instructions whilst charging and unplug after use
- never leave unattended or charge whilst asleep and use correct chargers, buying replacements from reputable suppliers
- never block your escape routes inside properties with electric scooters or e-bikes OR charge batteries in escape routes or at exit points.



HIGH RISE LIVING: FIRE SAFETY ALL YEAR ROUND

HAVE A SPRING CLEAN!

As clearer skies and warmer temperatures return many of us look to have a Spring Clean, undertake improvements around our homes and enjoy the outdoors again!

We encourage you to include a Home Fire Safety Check on your Spring-Cleaning list:

- **Smoke Alarms** – ensure you check these on a regular basis and replace the batteries when required.
- **Laundry Equipment** - clean out your washing machine and tumble dryer filter, vents, and hoses, of any lint and debris.
- **Electrical Safety** - check your home appliances for any cracked, frayed, or overloaded extension leads.
- **Storage of chemicals and flammable liquids** – It is a good time to make sure that cleaning chemicals and any flammable products are

stored properly and whether you have any old or leaking containers! Small quantities of domestic products can be disposed of through your normal waste disposal arrangements. Check all remaining containers are stored in a cool, dry place away from other combustibles.

- **Fire Procedure** – make sure all your family members know what the Evacuation Procedure is for your home and discuss your Escape Plan!
- **Clear Clutter** - While clutter does not start fires, it becomes a fuel that makes a fire grow: one small spark and this can lead to a fatal fire.

If you have fire safety concerns in your home, West Midlands Fire Service will undertake an assessment in your property and give advice on keeping you safe. Contact West Midlands Fire Service on **0800 389 5525** and request a **'Safe and Well' visit**

FIREWORK CELEBRATIONS

The safest place to enjoy fireworks is to attend a large public display.

If you do choose to celebrate with fireworks. Please Remember:

- Never attempt to use or set off fireworks inside your home or in communal areas of High and Low-rise blocks of flats. The risk of a fire starting is very high and places all residents at risk!
- It is against your Conditions of Tenancy to light or burn bonfires in any garden, including shared gardens, or on communal land.
- Fireworks must not be set off from balconies or high- or low-rise blocks of flats - at any time.

WINTER SAFETY

Winter can be a particularly risky time for fires due to the need to keep warm. These top tips will help keep you safe:

Using portable heaters

- Keep heaters away from curtains and furniture and never use them for drying clothes.
- Always unplug electric heaters when you go out or go to bed.
- Try to secure heaters against a wall to stop them falling over.
- To keep you safe, the WMFS has produced the following information www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/guidance/product-safety/portable-heaters. There are also other ways people can keep warm whilst reducing the use of energy, these are highlighted in the Heat the Human campaign:

Portable Heaters: Halogen, Fan & Oil Filled Radiators | Electrical Safety First

Using electric blankets

- Never use hot water bottles in the same bed as an electric blanket, even if the blanket is switched off.
- Unplug blankets before you get into bed, unless they have a thermostat control for safe all-night use.
- Store electric blankets flat, rolled up or loosely folded to prevent damaging the internal wiring.
- Try not to buy second-hand blankets and check regularly for wear and tear.
- Replace your blanket when it is more than 10 years old.
- Always follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- Always look out for the British Standard Kitemark or this symbol which show a blanket is safe to use.

Alternative lighting

- Keep a battery-operated light or torch handy in the event of a power cut or failure.
- If you must use candles or matches, always take special care. Put them out completely before leaving the room or going to bed.
- Make sure candles are secured in a proper holder and away from materials that may catch fire – like curtains or soft furnishings.
- Keep a mobile phone handy so you can still make an emergency call if there is a power cut.

Christmas Decorations

Within your flat you can decorate freely - if they do not cause a nuisance to other residents.

However, in the communal/ shared areas of our high and low-rise blocks decorations are restricted. This is because in the event of a fire we need to ensure that all residents and visitors can evacuate the block, or be reached by the fire service - quickly, safely and without the risk of obstacles blocking their way. Therefore, communal landings and lobby areas must not have anything hanging up which could be flammable, a hazard or block access.

Christmas decorations can pose as a fire hazard as many are highly flammable. We are happy for residents to have a flame-retardant wreath attached to the front door of their property but additional decorations within communal areas must not be displayed e.g. tinsel, electrical decorations, Christmas trees.

Sheltered Housing Scheme designated common rooms can be decorated in line with the guidelines set by the Team. Please talk to your SHO.

**Fire door
keep shut**

WHAT ARE FIRE DOORS?

Fire doors are specifically made to reduce the spread of fire and smoke within a building. A 'fire door' is made up of the door, its frame, and all the fittings like locks, handles, closers, and hinges. As a set of components, they are designed to resist fire for a certain length of time and to help keep you safe in your home.

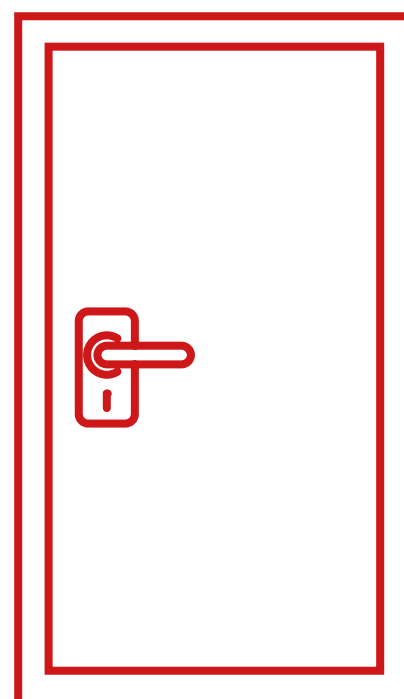
WHY ARE FIRE DOORS SO IMPORTANT?

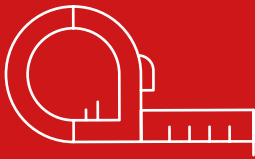
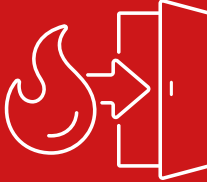
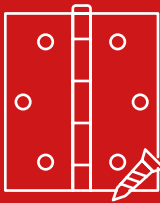
Fire doors are important as they protect you from the spread of fire and smoke. Fire doors are fitted at strategic points throughout your building to ensure that you have the best level of protection in the event of a fire. If fire doors are damaged or altered in any way, they may not be able to stop fire and smoke from spreading and could put you and your family at risk.

INSPECTING FIRE DOORS IN YOUR BUILDING?

As your property is in a "Stay Put" building it is imperative that fire doors function correctly therefore, by law, we must inspect all fire doors in common areas as well as your flat entrance door to make sure they are maintained to the required standard. We have an ongoing program of fire door inspections that continues to rely on your support to ensure we achieve this together.

In the meantime, here are some basic checks you can do yourself to see if there are any obvious issues with your fire doors.



	GAPS	SEALS	HINGES	CLOSING PROPERLY
				
WHAT TO CHECK	The gaps around the top and sides of the door should be less than 4mm when the door is closed. The gap under the door can be slightly larger (up to 8mm), but it does depend on the door. Ideally, you should not see light under the door.	Look for signs of missing or damaged intumescent seals and check they are intact. These look like a piece of white plastic material which is fitted around door or frame.	Hinges should be firmly fixed (three or more of them), with no missing or broken screws. Remember, fire doors should never be altered in any way as it may affect their ability to stop the spread of fire and smoke.	All fire doors should be fitted with a working fire door closer, so it automatically closes the door fully into its frame. Check the door closes firmly onto the latch without sticking on the floor or the frame.
WHY	To confirm the gaps are not so big that smoke and fire could travel through the cracks.	Be sure the seals will expand if they're in contact with heat, and will stop the fire and smoke moving through the cracks.	Be sure the door has been properly maintained, and in the intensity of a fire will perform properly.	A fire door only works when it's closed. A fire door is completely useless if it's wedged open or can't close fully.
HOW	You can use a £1 coin to give a feel for scale, this is about 3mm thick.	Look at the edges of the door and frame.	Open the door and look at the hinges.	Open the door about halfway, let go and see what happens when you allow it to close by itself.

It is not permitted to fit anything requiring penetration through or into the door or frame including the fitting of ring style doorbells or any other device. Where items are fitted to the door these will be removed and the costs for repair and recertification of the fire door will be passed back to the tenant.

If you spot any problems or have concerns with the fire doors in your building, please tell us as soon as possible by reporting it to housingrepairsonline@birmingham.gov.uk or by calling **0121 2163330**.

Additional information on how to check a fire door is available on your notice board inside your building.



RESPECTING YOUR NEIGHBOURS

We ask that all tenants and their families are considerate towards their neighbours and help to create caring and happy communities.

ROADS AROUND YOUR BLOCK

The building in which you live has been designed with safety in mind. Outside the building, roads and other areas are designed so that emergency vehicles can get as near as possible. NEVER block these.

FIRE DOORS

The walls, doors and floors are specially designed to resist fire and stop the spread of smoke. To do this, fire doors need to be kept closed when they are not in use.

Do not prop open the communal doors/Fire doors. This is a breach of your tenancy agreement and is a dangerous fire hazard.

COMMUNAL AREAS, LANDINGS, AND LOBBIES

All communal areas, landings and lobbies MUST be free of combustible items and obstructions such as artificial flowers, furniture, rubbish bins, books, pushchairs, bicycles etc.

BLOCK SECURITY

Don't allow anyone into the block/communal areas who do not live there or who you don't know.

Report rough sleeping to your local housing team straight away or contact StreetLink on **0300 500 0914**. StreetLink will then connect that person to local support services that can help to end their homelessness.

Lost your fob or key?

Tenants are responsible for replacing lost or broken key fobs and can do this by completing a Tenancy Estate Management Form: www.birmingham.gov.uk/xfp/form/578. There will be a charge for a new fob.

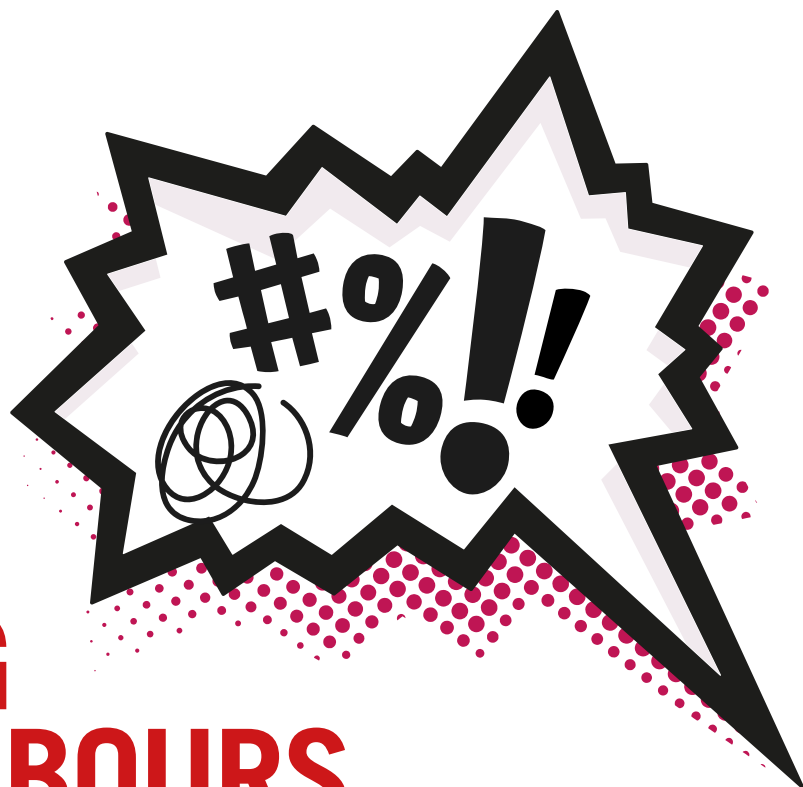
SAFE AND SECURE

There are 102 Serviced Charged Tower Blocks across Birmingham that are covered by our Security Service. These blocks are ones that were formally in receipt of a Concierge Service.

This service provides Mobile Patrol Officers who look after the security of the block, carry out block checks and deal with incidents. Part of the service also includes a Central Control Room whose operators are on duty 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

If you need to report an incident or suspicious behaviour properties have an intercom system where they can call the control room directly and all tower blocks have the central control number **0121 303 7300** on the door entry panel.

Residents are also advised to contact West Midlands Police if they witness or are subject to any criminal activity.



RESPECTING YOUR NEIGHBOURS

ASB: STOP IT!

Always call 999 if you or someone else is in immediate danger, or if a crime is in progress.

Antisocial behaviour is a broad term and includes behaviour which has caused or is likely to cause you harassment, alarm, or distress.

Antisocial behaviour may include:

- noise nuisance
- neighbour disputes
- verbal abuse
- threatening behaviour
- harassment and intimidation

There is a list of antisocial behaviour on page 18 of your council tenancy conditions.

ASB REPORT IT!

If you, your family, or visitors behave antisocially we will take action to stop you.

Do Not Throw things off balconies or out of windows.

Do not cause a nuisance in lifts and communal areas

Do not feed wild pigeons or squirrels outside the property or on balconies.

Don't let anyone you don't know into the block or shared areas

To report antisocial behaviour please use the link below:

REPORT ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

You can also report antisocial behaviour by calling **0121 464 4700** and selecting option 5.



BECOME A BLOCK INSPECTOR!

Your Local Housing Team is looking for tenant volunteers from each block to become a Block Inspector.

The role of a Block Inspector is to listen to and voice the opinion of other residents living in high-rise blocks to ensure everyone lives in a clean and safe environment.

Block Inspectors will accompany council officers around the block where they live every month. Together they will identify issues with cleaning, communal repairs, ground maintenance, graffiti, fly tipping, grass-cutting and any other problems that are of concern to them or other tenants living in the block and the surrounding area. These issues will then be reported back and dealt with by the appropriate service area with the Block Inspector kept informed of progress.

Block Inspectors can play an important role in helping us to make a positive difference to where they live and help tenants improve their homes and appearance of their estates, making their communities a place they can be proud of. If you are interested in becoming a Block Inspector, please email **residentinvolvement@birmingham.gov.uk**



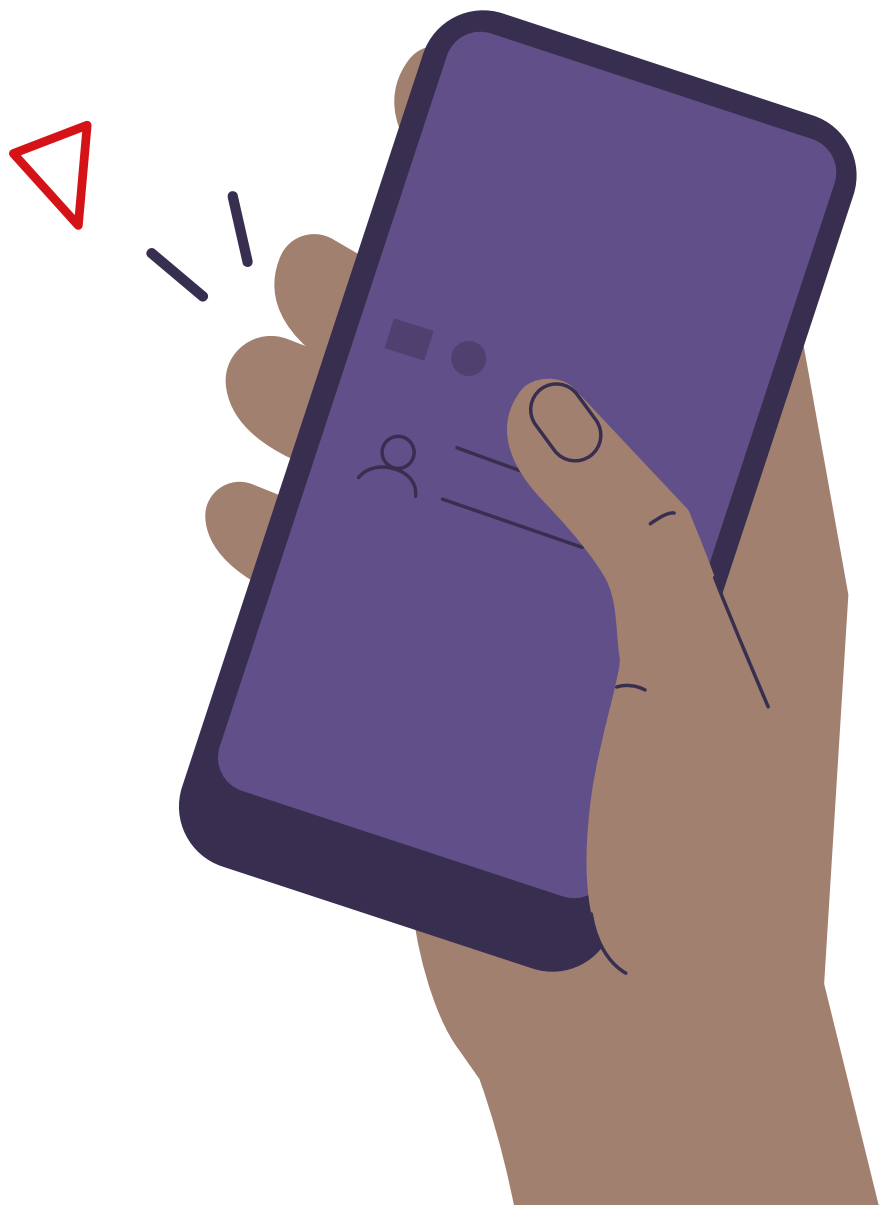
FEEDBACK

We would really appreciate your feedback on this newsletter by going to **Tenant Focus newsletters | Birmingham City Council** and completing the Microsoft Survey Form. Your views will be very useful to us when we are producing future newsletters.

Tell us how you'd like to get involved

There are lots of ways you can get involved in tenant engagement activities, please take a look at our website

Tenant engagement | Birmingham City Council and complete the 'get involved' form to let us know what you're interested in doing. Alternatively if you want any more information, please email the team at **ResidentInvolvement@birmingham.gov.uk**





Birmingham City Council Housing Customer Services

Call **0121 464 4700**
Monday to Thursday:
8.45am – 5.15pm
Friday: 8.45am – 4.15pm

To download a full copy of the Tenants Handbook visit: **[birmingham.gov.uk/tenantshandbook](https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/tenantshandbook)**

To Report a Repair

Please click on the link below to report a repair

Order a repair to your council home - Book a repair | Repairs to council properties | Birmingham City Council ([birmingham.gov.uk](https://www.birmingham.gov.uk)) or phone 0121 464 4700 option 1

For non-routine repairs call Birmingham Housing Repairs Line for council tenants on **0121 216 3330**

Damp or mould Problems

It is important you let us know about damp or mould problems in your home. If it is not reported, we do not know about it, so we cannot help. If you are a council tenant, you can report a damp or mould problem by ordering a repair to your council home using the form below.

Order a repair to your council home. You can also call **0121 216 3330**.

For further information on how to prevent damp, mould and condensation please click on the link below

What is condensation, damp, and mould | Damp, condensation, and mould | Birmingham City Council

It is really important that we have accurate and up to date information about our tenants so we can provide the best possible service and support. Therefore could you please ensure that all personal information – this includes name, address, email address, gender and ethnicity along with the information about the people living in your property is correct. Importantly if there has been a change in your personal circumstances for example a medical condition or if you have recently been diagnosed with a disability it is crucial these details are given to us so any potential barriers to service that we need to be aware of can be identified and addressed. Please get in touch with the contact centre on **0121 216 3330** or email **BCChousing@birmingham.gov.uk** to update your details as soon as possible.

Please note, the information you provide will be held and processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018/GDPR 2018 and the Councils privacy policy, which can be found on our website at **www.birmingham.gov.uk/privacy**. This explains what information we collect, when we collect it and how we use it. During the course of our activities we will process personal data (which may be held on paper, electronically, or otherwise) about you and we recognise the need to treat it in an appropriate and lawful manner. The purpose of this notice is to make you aware of how we manage your information, as a tenant, resident, service user or recipient.