



Tenant Information





Welcome to
your new home

Welcome to your new home

We hope you find this information pack useful. It is designed to let you know what our services are and how you can get in contact.

The information in this pack has been approved by our Residents Panel, which is made up of council tenants and leaseholders.

The different departments of Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council's housing management services are:

Repairs

☎ 0800 111 4484
@ housingmaintenance@welhat.gov.uk

This team deals with the day-to-day repairs to your home.

Housing Income

☎ 01707 357 088
@ housingincome@welhat.gov.uk

This team deals with council property rent issues, including rent arrears.

Neighbourhood & Enforcement

☎ 01707 357 796
@ neighbourhoods@welhat.gov.uk

This team deals with issues around managing tenancies such as tenancy breaches, succession, other changes to tenancies, anti-social behaviour from council tenants.



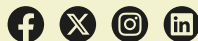
Independent Living

☎ 01707 357 000
@ independentliving@welhat.gov.uk

This team manages our sheltered housing schemes which are usually reserved for those over 60 years old or with other support needs, such as a disability. Your Independent Living Officer will be your first point of contact for any issues.

The most up-to-date information and news about our services can be found on the council website www.welhat.gov.uk

Follow Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council on social media.



Welcome to your new home

Useful WHBC contacts

Income Officer

Name:

☎ 01707 357 088
@ housingincome@welhat.gov.uk

Neighbourhood Officer

Name:

☎ 01707 357 796
@ neighbourhoods@welhat.gov.uk

WHBC Residents Panel

@ residentinvolvement@welhat.gov.uk
f /ResidentsPanelofWHBC





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- Health and safety
- Community services
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Moving

- When you move
- Moving in, including transfers, mutual exchange and rightsizing
- Keeping a pet
- Home contents insurance
- Resident parking permits and garages
- Ending your tenancy

Moving

When you move

Utilities

You are responsible for registering with utility companies. The details of your electric and gas (if applicable) supplier and meter locations will be provided when you sign your tenancy. Take gas and electric meter readings on the day your tenancy starts as you will have responsibility for any charges from this date.

Water

Contact Affinity Water to let them know you are the new tenant and tell them when you moved in.

If you have a water meter, take a reading on the day your tenancy starts and give this to Affinity Water.

The water will have been shut off while the property has been empty. You will need to turn on the stopcock / surestop device once you have moved in to resume the cold water supply.



Details of where to find the stopcock / surestop device will be included on your **Utility Information** sheet.

If you do not have this information, call the **Neighbourhood Team** on **01707 357 796** or email **neighbourhoods@welhat.gov.uk**.

Hot water / heating

If your home has gas, you will first have to register with a gas provider and then arrange with us for your meter to be uncapped for the hot water and heating to work.

To arrange an appointment for your gas meter to be uncapped, please call **Housing Maintenance** on **0800 111 4484**.

At the appointment, the gas engineer will uncap and recommission the heating systems and complete a safety check on the gas installations.

Moving

Gas safety check

For your safety, we are legally required to carry out a gas safety check every 12 months on all gas appliances in your property. We will contact you to offer an appointment.

Cooker points

There will be either a gas or electric cooker point in the kitchen. We will not supply additional gas or electric cooker points. You will need to arrange and pay to have your electric or gas cooker connected. It is against the law for anyone other than a qualified electrician or gas safe engineer to carry out these connections. A list of gas safe engineers can be found at www.gassaferegister.co.uk

Door keys and fobs

We will give you two sets of keys for your new home and if your property is in a block with a secure communal area, two entry fobs. If you require additional sets of the entry fobs, we will charge you for them. For more information contact the **Neighbourhood Team** on **01707 357 796** or email neighbourhoods@welhat.gov.uk

Gardens

If your property has its own garden, you are responsible for maintaining it. This includes any hedges or trees within your boundary.

Fencing

WHBC is only responsible for providing boundary marking fencing between properties. This is in the form of close-boarded or lap fence panels. We will not maintain or repair any fencing that a resident has installed or for boundaries we do not have responsibility for.

Pest control

It is your responsibility to deal with pests, such as rodents or insects, in your home and you will need to organise any pest control treatments. Our contractor **John O'Conner** offers a discount to Welwyn Hatfield residents. They can be contacted on **01462 421 579** or by emailing pestcontrol@johnoconner.co.uk

If pests are seen in communal areas, please contact the **Neighbourhood Team** on **01707 357 796** or neighbourhoods@welhat.gov.uk



Moving

Change of address checklist

We've put together a handy list of suggestions of who you may need to notify of your new address.

Water Company	<input type="checkbox"/>	DVLA	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gas Supplier	<input type="checkbox"/>	Doctors	<input type="checkbox"/>
Electricity Supplier	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dentist	<input type="checkbox"/>
TV Licence	<input type="checkbox"/>	Optician	<input type="checkbox"/>
Car Insurance	<input type="checkbox"/>	Schools / Colleges	<input type="checkbox"/>
Car Breakdown / Recovery	<input type="checkbox"/>	TV Subscription Services	<input type="checkbox"/>
Contents Insurance	<input type="checkbox"/>	Broadband Supplier	<input type="checkbox"/>
Life Insurance	<input type="checkbox"/>	Telephone Provider	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pet Insurance	<input type="checkbox"/>	Subscriptions	<input type="checkbox"/>
Banks and Building Societies	<input type="checkbox"/>	Online Retail Accounts (e.g. Amazon)	<input type="checkbox"/>
National Savings / Premium Bonds	<input type="checkbox"/>	Milk Delivery	<input type="checkbox"/>
Credit Card Companies	<input type="checkbox"/>	Online Supermarket Deliveries	<input type="checkbox"/>
Employer	<input type="checkbox"/>	Newsagent	<input type="checkbox"/>
Council Tax	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sports Club	<input type="checkbox"/>
Department of Work and Pensions	<input type="checkbox"/>	Library	<input type="checkbox"/>
Housing Benefit	<input type="checkbox"/>	Family and Friends	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Electoral Roll	<input type="checkbox"/>	Royal Mail (for mail redirection)	<input type="checkbox"/>

Moving

Moving in, including transfers, mutual exchange and rightsizing

If you would like to move, there are several ways to search for a new home.

Transfers

Before making an application to move to another of our properties, you will need to complete a brief pre-assessment questionnaire on the council website,

www.welhat.gov.uk/housing-garages

After completing the questionnaire, you will be presented with a personal action plan outlining your most suitable housing options. You will be asked to complete a **Housing Needs Register** application.

Transfer applications are assessed in line with the Housing Allocations policy which can be found on our website,

www.welhat.gov.uk/policies/council-housing-allocations.

Those with an identified housing need are banded accordingly and can bid for suitable housing.

Your housing application login allows you to view and bid for the properties you're eligible for on our website.

Mutual exchange

A mutual exchange is when council or housing association tenants swap their homes, with their landlord's permission. Each tenant moves into the property of the person they are exchanging with.

You can exchange with:

- another WHBC tenant
- a tenant of another council or housing association

You'll need to complete and sign the appropriate legal paperwork before you move and you will usually take over the existing tenancy agreement of the person you're exchanging with.

It is not possible to exchange to an empty property.

It is important to remember that you will be agreeing to take over your new home as it is. If the property needs decorating or repairing, you will have to carry out this work yourself.



Moving

Who can exchange

Any council or housing association tenant with a secure, assured or flexible tenancy can apply for a mutual exchange.

Your application may be turned down if you:

- are in arrears with your rent
- have caused a nuisance, committed anti-social behaviour, or you have breached your tenancy agreement in some other way
- have not allowed us to carry out a gas safety check during the last 12 months
- are being taken to court
- have been issued with a notice seeking possession of your home
- have not kept your home to the standard required
- have altered your home without our permission

The application may also be turned down if the property you would like to move to is:

- too big or too small for your needs
- has been designed or adapted for a disabled or older person, or built for a specific age group and you, or the person you're exchanging with, does not qualify for that type of housing



Finding someone to exchange with

The easiest way to find a swap with another tenant is to register with **HomeSwapper**, an online database of people who want to move home.

It's free to use and is a nationwide service, so you can move within Welwyn Hatfield or anywhere else in the country.

To register, go to **www.homeswapper.co.uk** and complete an online application form.

You'll need to supply:

- contact information
- choice of locations
- number of bedrooms you need
- details of the kind of home you would like

Once you have found a property you are interested in, you'll need to contact the tenant to arrange to view each other's homes.

You can show an interest in as many homes as you like until you find a home that suits you.

Moving

Rightsizing Transfer Scheme

If you are an existing tenant and live in a property that is too big for you, we can help you move to a smaller, more manageable home.

People downsize for all sorts of reasons. It can be an opportunity to move to a new area or to a property more suited to your needs.

A smaller home is easier to keep clean and manage. You could also pay less in rent, council tax and energy bills.

We want to make it as easy as possible for you to find a more suitable home. The help we can provide includes:

Advice

We can meet with you to discuss your housing options, including sheltered accommodation and mutual exchanges. We also offer practical help with the moving process, including guidance on how to arrange removals, changing your utility suppliers and changing addresses.

The Housing Needs Register (waiting list)

If you are not already registered for a transfer, we can help you apply and show you how to 'bid' for homes which might be of interest.

We can set up auto-bidding for applicants. This means the system



will automatically place bids according to your preferred area and house size.

Additional priority

Households who are looking to rightsize are awarded additional priority in accordance with the Housing Allocations Policy.

Financial assistance

You may be able to claim some financial assistance towards the cost of rightsizing. The amount payable is based on the size of property you are moving from and in to.

Incentives will be paid following the completion of the move by BACS payment. Any money owed to the council may be deducted from the amount offered.

Moving

Eligibility

To be eligible for this scheme you must be a council tenant and meet one of the following criteria:

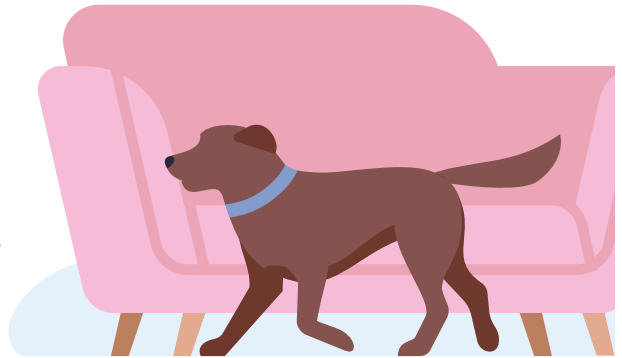
- your current home has two or more bedrooms
- you are under occupying your home by at least one bedroom
- you must not be moving into overcrowded conditions
- in most cases you should not have rent arrears and your property should be in good condition

How to apply

For more information about the **Rightsizing Transfer Scheme**, please contact the **Neighbourhood Team** by calling **01707 357 796** or emailing **neighbourhoods@welhat.gov.uk**

Further information

Further information can be found on our website **www.welhat.gov.uk**



Keeping a pet

If you want to keep a pet in your home, you must get our written permission. This needs to be done before you house any animal in your property or garden, including but not limited to: cats, dogs, livestock and reptiles.

The request should be emailed to **neighbourhoods@welhat.gov.uk** or posted to **Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council, Campus East, Welwyn Garden City AL8 6AE.**

Only when this has been received, and all conditions met to the satisfaction of the council, will written permission be granted for a pet to be kept.

We will not withhold permission if you require a guide dog or other assistance pet but you will still need to let us know they are in your home.

Moving

The following factors will be considered when deciding whether to grant permission for a pet:

- The size and type of animal – dogs listed in the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 and any animal listed in the Schedule of the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 may not be kept.
- The size and type of property.
- Proximity to outside space.
- The health and ability of the resident to provide the level of care required for the animal.
- Any other animals already in your home.
- The impact of the animal on neighbouring residents.
- The impact on the condition or safety of the home, including overcrowding and fire safety.
- Any previous problems within your household relating to pet ownership or antisocial behaviour which may give rise to concerns about your ability to look after a pet in an appropriate manner.



For permission to be granted, we also expect you to provide confirmation that the following conditions can be met:

- A contingency plan is in place whereby a family member / friend will re-house your pet should you have to temporarily leave the property or you become incapable of providing the level of care required for the pet.
- You agree to make good any damage caused to the property by your pet.
- If appropriate to the animal, the pet is micro-chipped and registered with a local veterinary surgery, PDSA or animal welfare centre.
- You are responsible for the health and welfare of your pets. Routine healthcare must include regular control of parasites (fleas and worms), vaccination and neutering where appropriate.
- You must ensure your pet is suitable and trained for their accommodation (i.e. cats must be litter trained and dogs house trained).
- The control of your pet and any animals visiting the property are your responsibility.
- They must never be allowed outside the boundary of your property on their own – this includes communal balconies, gardens, stairwells, and corridors.

Moving

- If your pet fouls in the communal gardens or outside communal space, you must clear up after it immediately and responsibly dispose of the waste.
- In our independent living accommodation, pets are not allowed in communal socialising areas e.g. communal lounges, kitchens, craft areas and exercise rooms.
- Animals should not cause harm or concern to a visiting member of WHBC staff or any of their contractors.
- If we give permission for a pet and you do not obtain this pet within six months, you are required to make a fresh request.

How long will it usually take to approve your request?

We will aim to provide an answer to your request within 10 working days. In more complicated cases it could take up to 28 days.

If you were offered a new home via our choice-based lettings system, we will provide an answer to your request within three working days, in more complicated cases this may take up to 10 days.

If you are unhappy with the way we have dealt with your request, you can follow our complaints policy.

Withdrawal of permission

Permission to keep your pet may be withdrawn by the council if:

- We receive complaints about your pet from neighbours or staff which is evidenced as nuisance, such as a dog barking excessively, and which cannot be resolved satisfactorily.
- You are found to be keeping animals for commercial breeding purposes, or you allow your property to be used for such purposes.
- You are found to be in breach of any of the conditions around the keeping of animals set out in your tenancy agreement.
- Your animal harms or presents as harmful to other residents, the general public or a member of WHBC staff or their contractors.
- You have too many pets in your home.

Please note the breach of any tenancy conditions could result in WHBC taking enforcement action, including repossession of your home.

For more information about our pet policy or to request a permission form, see our website

www.welhat.gov.uk or contact your **Neighbourhood Officer** on **01707 357 796** or neighbourhoods@welhat.gov.uk

Moving

Home contents insurance

Home contents insurance is not included as part of your tenancy agreement. No matter how careful you are, there's always the risk of your belongings being damaged, broken or stolen.

Replacing them can prove expensive, so it's a good idea to take out home contents insurance, either through the scheme we run in partnership with Thistle Tenant Risks or by using another trusted provider.

The Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council Home Contents Insurance Scheme is designed for tenants and the premiums can be paid weekly alongside your rent.

The scheme is open to all WHBC tenants, except those who have rent arrears.

What the scheme covers

The low-cost scheme provides cover for the contents of your home against fire, theft, water damage, storms and other hazards, but not accidental damage (except at an additional cost).

Cover can be provided for items such as furniture, carpets, curtains, clothes, bedding, electrical items, jewellery, pictures and ornaments, plus the contents of your freezer and stolen keys.

The scheme also covers damage to the fixtures and fittings in your home which you are responsible for under the terms of your tenancy agreement.

Other benefits include:

- weekly payments alongside your rent
- no excess (you don't pay the first part of a claim)
- no minimum security requirements
- freezer contents cover
- loss and theft of keys cover
- cover for contents in the open, in sheds and in garages as standard
- tenant responsibility and improvements cover included

The cost and paying premiums

The cost of your premiums will be based on the value of the contents you would like covered. Premiums are charged on a weekly basis and can be paid with your rent. All premiums include Insurance Premium Tax at the current rate.

Moving

Starting a policy

1. Download an application form from our website (these are also available for collection at the council offices).
2. Complete the application form giving your personal details and the sum insured required.
3. Return your completed form to us.

Your application will be sent to Thistle who will review the information you've supplied. If your application for cover is accepted, you will be sent a welcome letter which will advise you of the amount you need to pay and when the first payment has to be made.

Important information

You must ensure you answer all of the questions on the application form fully, and that your answers are true and correct to the best of your knowledge and belief.

Contact us immediately if there are any inaccuracies or omissions. Failure to do this will result in your policy being invalid or it will not operate in the event of a claim.

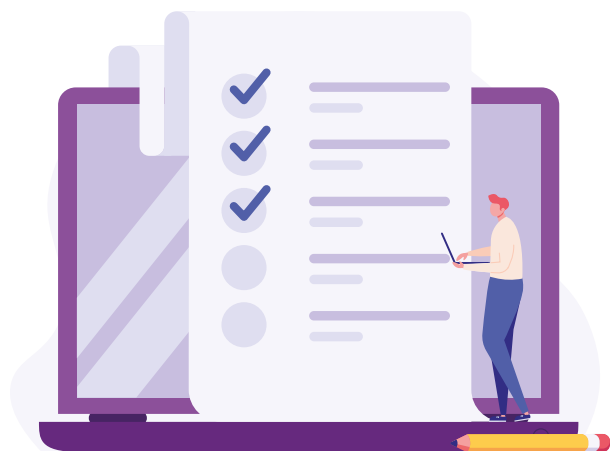
You should keep a copy of all information and correspondence you supply to us in connection with your application. A copy of your application and supporting information can be supplied on request for a period of three months after its completion.

A copy of the policy wording is available on request.

You are not covered until your application has been accepted by Thistle Tenant Risks.

You must keep your payments up to date or your cover will be invalid.

For more information, see our website www.welhat.gov.uk/tenants or contact **01707 357 000**.



Moving



Resident parking permits and garages

Parking permits

Parking permits are issued and managed by the council's Parking Services team.

If your road is in a permit zone, there will be signs in place stating, 'resident permit holders only'.

To find out if your road is within a permit zone or to apply for a permit, go to

www.welhat.gov.uk/parking-permits

Once you have created a permit account and logged in, simply click on 'apply for a permit' and go through the application process as shown in the user guide on the page.

Please note for vehicle document Parking Services will accept either the log book or insurance schedule showing the vehicle is linked to the new permit address.

For reference, the quickest document to acquire is the vehicle insurance

schedule as insurers can change address details for vehicles in advance of a home move and provide the document electronically.

Only vehicles that will be insured / registered at the permit address will be eligible for an annual parking permit.

If you are unable to get vehicle documents amended before your move, you can also apply for visitor vouchers to cover your vehicle(s) in the meantime.

If you require any further information or assistance with parking permits, please call **01707 357 000** or email **parkingservices@welhat.gov.uk**

Garages

We have garages available to rent throughout the borough. You can rent a garage for your vehicle or use it for storage.

For more information or to make an application please see our website **www.welhat.gov.uk/garages** or email **garages@welhat.gov.uk**

Moving

Ending your tenancy

To end your tenancy, you must request a tenancy termination form from us, fill it in and return it.

You can do this by contacting the **Neighbourhoods Team** on **01707 357 796** or **neighbourhoods@welhat.gov.uk**

You must give us at least 28 days written notice that you wish to end your tenancy. The end of the notice period must be a Sunday. Rent is payable until the end date of the tenancy.

All the keys to the property should be given back to us by 12 noon on the Monday after the tenancy has ended. We will continue to charge you until the keys are returned or we obtain possession.

Before you leave

You must let us have access to the property to carry out an inspection before it is left empty.

At the end of your tenancy, we ask that:

- All your belongings, as well as any floor coverings (carpet, vinyl) installed by you, have been removed from the property and garden – this includes the loft and any outbuildings.

- The property and garden are in a clean, tidy condition and clear of rubbish.
- WHBC's Council Tax and Housing Benefit teams have been notified (if applicable).
- You've arranged for any post to be redirected.
- Final meter readings have been taken and the gas, electricity, water and any other utility companies have been notified.



Moving

Removing items

If we have to clear any items from the property or garden, or if we have to carry out work to bring the property back to a reasonable and safe standard, we will charge you for the cost of this.

This may include removing unsafe garden walls, patios or filling in ponds.

If you leave items behind after your tenancy has ended, we may dispose of them. We will do this without giving you any notice and you will be charged the cost.

Fixtures and fittings

All fixtures and fittings, whether they have been installed by the council or by you, become property of the council when the property is vacant and must remain.

Rechargeable repairs

If you leave your tenancy and rechargeable work is needed to make the property ready for a new tenant, we will add the cost to your final rent account.

This will appear in a separate account called a sub-account. You will be sent an invoice showing the work needed and the cost. If you do not pay the invoice we will take legal action against you and refuse to re-house you if you apply for housing in the future.





Paying your rent

- How to pay
- Your rent notice
- Rent arrears

Paying your rent

Your rent is charged to you on a weekly basis. When the amount you need to pay weekly changes, we will send you a new Rent Notice within five working days of us being told of the change.

If your Housing Benefit entitlement changes, we will send you a new Rent Notice as soon as we have confirmation of your new award.

We will send you a rent statement every year which will summarise the charges and payments on your rent account.

How to pay

The annual rent for each property is set at the beginning of April each year, based on government rules.

There are several ways you can pay your rent:

- **Online:** Make a payment on our website (www.welhat.gov.uk).
- **Direct Debit:** This is the easiest and most efficient way to pay. You can choose for the payments to be made on either the 1st, 8th, 15th or 22nd of each month. Please contact us if you would like a form. If you pay by Direct Debit we will

calculate the amount by taking the yearly rent and dividing it into 12 equal instalments. If the amount you need to pay changes, we will write to you two weeks before the new payment amount is due. When you send us a Direct Debit mandate we will update your rent account and send this to your bank within five working days of receipt.

- **Telephone: 01707 357 755** (24hrs Payment Line).
- **Standing Order:** This is similar to Direct Debit but you need to amend the instructions to your bank whenever your monthly charge changes.
- **PayPoint card:** On request, we give a PayPoint card which can be used at any PayPoint outlet or Post Office. You can check where your nearest PayPoint outlet is by visiting www.paypoint.com.
- **Cheque:** Please make cheques payable to **Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council** and write your rent account number clearly on the back.

HOUSING BENEFIT

We do not deal with Housing Benefits claims and payments. If you have a query about Housing Benefit, please contact 01707 357 000.

Paying your rent

Your rent notice

Your rent notice may include some or all of the following charges:

- **Rent:** The rent for your home.
- **Communal heating:** Only applicable to some properties.
- **Utilities and running costs:** These are only charged for temporary accommodation.
- **Insurance:** Our discounted home contents insurance scheme.
- **Garage and/or parking:** Charges for garages which you can choose to rent and some properties that have allocated parking spaces.
- **Store shed:** Charges for store sheds in a block.
- **Support charges:** Examples include charges for the Scheme Manager Service or for Lifeline Emergency Alarms.

Rent arrears

Paying rent is a key part of your tenancy agreement and we take a firm but fair approach to those who do not pay. We recognise that tenants may suffer from money problems and can fall into arrears for lots of reasons. Your Income Officer is there to help, and you should contact us as soon as possible if you are having trouble paying your rent.

Falling behind with rent payments

If you fall behind with the rent and you are in arrears, your Income Officer can identify benefits you may be entitled to, help you fill in claim forms and make an agreement with you to pay your arrears in instalments.



Paying your rent

We will offer you support and help to deal with your arrears, but if our efforts to help you fail or if you break an agreement with us, we will consider taking legal action to evict you or denying you certain rights, for example transferring or mutually exchanging your home.

If we do evict you for having rent arrears, it is unlikely that we will offer you housing again in the future unless the outstanding arrears are cleared.

If you would like to speak to your Income Officer about rent arrears, please contact us as soon as possible.

The council works in partnership with **Citizens Advice**. For independent impartial advice, please contact the Citizens Advice on **03444 111 444** or talk to one of their advisors online at **www.citizensadvice.org.uk**.

Rent arrears recovery

If you are in arrears, we will take a number of steps to recover the money you owe.

Actions we may take include:

- Writing to you, telephoning you or visiting you at home to discuss the arrears and agree the best way to deal with them.
- Serving a 'Notice of Seeking Possession', the first stage in the legal process that could lead to you losing your home.
- Applying for possession in the County Court.
- As a last resort evicting you.

Our aim is to prevent rent arrears from developing and we work with support agencies, in particular Citizens Advice, to deliver targeted advice and assistance.





Right to Buy

- Who is eligible
- Applying for Right to Buy
- Costs of owning your home

Right to Buy

If you have been a council tenant for at least three years, you may be eligible to buy your home at a discount under the Right to Buy scheme.

The maximum discount you can receive is capped by the Government, this is usually set every April.

Who is eligible

You can apply for the Right to Buy scheme if you are a secure tenant of Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council and you:

- Live in a house, bungalow, flat or maisonette which the council owns or on which it holds an appropriate lease.
- Are buying either in your sole name or jointly with other people named on the secure tenancy. On a joint tenancy the Right to Buy belongs to all tenants so you can either buy jointly or individually where the other tenants agree to this.
- Occupy the property as your only or main home.
- Have the minimum qualifying tenancy period of three years public sector tenancy. A public sector tenant is someone whose landlord is a public body such as a council, housing association or government department. The three-year period can include your current tenancy and any previous public sector tenancy.

Reasons why you might not be able to buy the property:

- You or someone you hold the tenancy with is subject to an order of the court for possession of the property.
- You or someone who is joining in the Right to Buy with you has legal problems with debt.
- You live in sheltered accommodation or other housing suitable for elderly or disabled people.

Applying for Right to Buy

Contact the **Home Ownership Team** on **01707 357 004** for an application form.

The date we receive your application is called the relevant date. This is the date we will use to work out the value of your home and your discount entitlement.



Right to Buy

If the value of your property changes while your application is being processed, for the purposes of the Right to Buy, the value will remain the same as it was on the relevant date.

You can cancel your application at any time. WHBC will not charge you for this but your solicitor and mortgage provider may charge you for any services they have provided.

Calculating the sale price

The price you will pay for your home is based on:

- The market valuation of your property which we will arrange to be carried out free of charge.
- How long you have been a tenant in your current home and any previous public sector tenancies you have claimed that can be confirmed.
- The cost to the council of buying or building your property – if any work was done in the last 30 years the cost of this may reduce your discount.
- Previous Right to Buy purchases – you are only entitled to one Right to Buy discount in total so previous discounts given will be subtracted from any discount you may currently be entitled to receive.

If there is a delay

If you delay the Right to Buy application process the council can serve a formal notice where:

- You have not responded to the formal offer letter within the 12-week notice period.
- You have not taken steps to complete the purchase within a reasonable time (the reasonable time period cannot be less than three months after the formal offer letter is sent to you).

If you do not meet the timescales set out in the formal notice, we can end your Right to Buy application.

If WHBC delays your Right to Buy application, you can:

- Send an Initial Notice of Delay which requires us to resolve the delay within a given time – this cannot be less than a calendar month.
- Send an Operative Notice of Delay – you can only do this if after the Initial Notice of Delay we have not rectified the delay within the response period allowed or served a counter-notice.

You may be entitled to a reduced purchase price if a valid Operative Notice of Delay is received by the council.

Right to Buy

You can ask us to provide you with the delay forms or you can download them at www.gov.uk/right-to-buy-buying-your-council-home

The notice is only effective once we have received it so you may wish to send it by recorded delivery or hand deliver it to us and get a receipt.

You can only use these notices while a delay is occurring. Once the delay has ended you cannot serve delay notices.

Costs of owning your home

There will be initial costs for taking up your Right to Buy. These may include:

- stamp duty which is calculated on the actual purchase price of the home, so market value minus Right to Buy discount
- legal fees – a fee will be payable if you use a solicitor or other legal representative to help you
- land registry fees
- mortgage fees

As a homeowner you will also have regular ongoing costs. These can include payments for:

- a mortgage or loan on your property.
- building insurance
- contents insurance



- life insurance
- mortgage payment protection insurance
- council tax
- water, gas, electricity, broadband and other services
- repairing and maintaining your property
- service charge

(This list is not exhaustive)

Remember:

- **you will not be eligible for housing benefit if you become a homeowner**
- **the value of your home can go down as well as up**
- **if you do not keep up with your mortgage payments, your lender may take possession of your home**

For more information about the scheme go to www.ownyourhome.gov.uk or call a Right to Buy Agent on **0300 123 0913**.

The **Home Ownership Team** can be contacted on **01707 357 004** or homeownershipaccounts@welhat.gov.uk.



Repairs and maintenance

- Repairs to your home
- Planned maintenance

Repairs and maintenance

Reporting a repair

Please report all emergency repairs by telephone on **0800 111 4484**.

All other repairs can be reported by contacting us via email at **housingmaintenance@welhat.gov.uk**.

Repairs to your home

Emergency repairs

We will attend emergency repairs within 24 hours to make the situation safe and secure. Any additional work needed following an emergency call-out will be raised and prioritised in the usual way.

If your heating system has failed and we are unable to carry out a repair on the first visit, we will provide temporary heaters during the winter months.

Diagnosing your repair

When you report a repair, we will ask you some questions to find out exactly what the problem is.

What we need to know

We need to know what the problem is, the location of the repair and the severity of the problem.

We will need a contact telephone number and details of any special requirements, such as allowing you time to reach your door or avoiding school runs.

If an appointment to access your home is required, we will need to know when someone over the age of 16 will be there.



Repairs and maintenance

Acknowledging your repair

Repairs that are reported by email will usually be acknowledged by the Housing Maintenance Team the next working day. The Housing Maintenance Team will contact you by telephone once the job has been raised to arrange an appointment.

We try to provide an appointment date immediately for repairs that are reported by telephone (if required). In some situations, the details of your repair will be passed to a third-party contractor who will contact you directly to arrange an appointment that suits you.



Timescales for repairs

Timescales for repairs depend on how urgent they are. We will tell you the priority of your repair when you report it.

- **Emergency repairs: 24 hours.**
- **Urgent repairs: Five working days.**
- **Routine repairs: 20 working days.**
- **Major work: 45 working days.**

An emergency is a situation that is actually or potentially dangerous, or a serious risk to health. It is likely to include repairs where immediate action will prevent serious damage to the property.

Examples of urgent repairs include blocked drains, sinks.

Examples of routine repairs include:

- general joinery repairs, for example easing/adjusting doors and windows
- repairs of doors/frames/leaks to garages managed by the council
- minor repairs to footpaths, boundary walls, fences and gates
- repair of entry doors and/or windows
- minor brickwork and plastering repairs
- kitchen and Bathroom floor tiles that require repair/replacing

Repairs and maintenance

Examples of major work include:

- larger repairs to car parks, pathways and boundary walls/fencing
- replacement of internal doors/windows
- replacement kitchen units
- larger plastering repairs
- larger fencing repairs
- routine clearing, adjustment/repair of gutters and rainwater goods

In some instances non-emergency repairs may take longer than expected. There are various reasons for this, for example where we need to instruct specialist contractors or where we need to consult with leaseholders. If this is the case, we will let you know.

Tenant repairs

Responsibility for looking after your home is shared with us. You are responsible for some repairs which include:

- lost, stolen or broken keys/door entry fobs (this includes gaining entry)
- TV aerials (except for communal blocks and sheltered properties)
- decoration and floor coverings

- light bulbs
- washing line posts and rotary driers (except those in communal areas)

A full list of repairs that we are responsible for carrying out and those that you are responsible for as a tenant can be obtained by contacting our **Housing Maintenance Team** on **0800 111 4484**.

Neglect

If we need to carry out work because of neglect or intentional damage, we will charge you unless there are special circumstances. Charges are made to ensure that tenants who cause damage to council properties are held accountable. This includes damage caused by tenants, a member of your household, visitors to the property or pets.



Repairs and maintenance

Paying for rechargeable repairs

After a rechargeable repair has been carried out, our Housing Income Team will add the cost of the repair to your rent account, in a separate sub-account, and will send you an invoice.

If your rent account is in credit, we will ask if we can take the payment from the credit on your rent account. If you do not respond after 28 days we will use the credit to pay all or part of the cost. We will not send you an invoice.

If you pay your rent by direct debit, we will give you 28 days' notice in writing that we plan to add the cost to your monthly direct debit. If you do not contact us we will spread the cost over your remaining direct debit payments for the rest of that financial year. We will tell you what your new monthly payments will be.

We will take legal action to recover the cost of rechargeable repairs if they are not paid.

Limiting damage to your home

If damage is being caused to your personal property while you are waiting for a repair to be made, you must take whatever action you can to limit the extent of the damage. For example, this could mean moving furniture or other items affected.

Before you move in

We have an agreed standard that our empty properties must meet before they are let.

This standard ensures all the necessary work and checks have been carried out before a tenant moves in so that the property is clean, safe and fit to live in. You can request a copy of the Empty Properties Lettable Standard from your Neighbourhood Officer.

Access

You must allow us access to complete repairs in your home. Failure to do so is a breach of your tenancy agreement and can result in legal action being taken against your tenancy.

Planned maintenance

Our planned maintenance programmes aim to maintain all council properties in the borough so that they meet the Decent Homes Standard and other statutory requirements. The programmes also aim to modernise and improve properties where needed.

Repairs and maintenance

Replacement programmes

Our range of planned replacement programmes identify components that require renewing. These are assessed against a standard life expectancy.

- **Boiler:** 15 years life expectancy.
- **Kitchen suite:** 20 years life expectancy.
- **Bathroom suite:** 30 years life expectancy.
- **Electrics (rewires):** 30 years life expectancy (although we aim to test your system every five years).
- **Windows and doors:** 30 years life expectancy.

Improvement programmes

We carry out regular stock condition surveys on all our properties to ensure the information we hold about their condition is up to date and we can identify any immediate improvements needed. These surveys help us plan our future improvement programmes.

Our range of planned improvement programmes include:

- boiler and heating upgrades
- insulation
- aids and adaptations
- roofing
- lifts

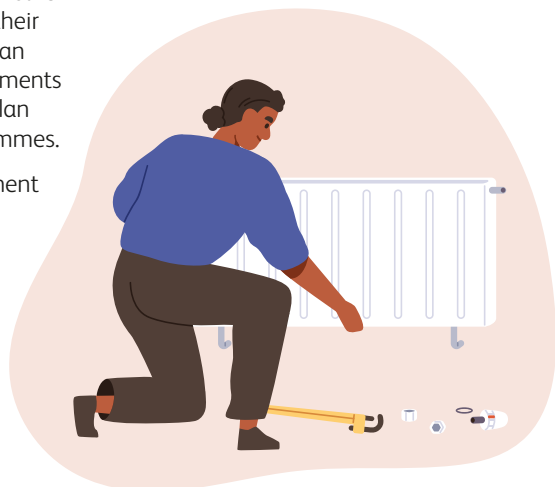
- door entry systems
- windows and doors
- electrical rewires

This is not an exhaustive list of our replacement and improvement programmes.

Letting you know

If your home is included in any of our planned maintenance programmes you will be contacted before any work is started. We carry out a consultation process with you before beginning any planned major work on your estate.

Once the work has been completed, we will ask you to complete a satisfaction survey so you can tell us how we did.





Home improvements and alterations

- When and how to apply
- Application form and guidance

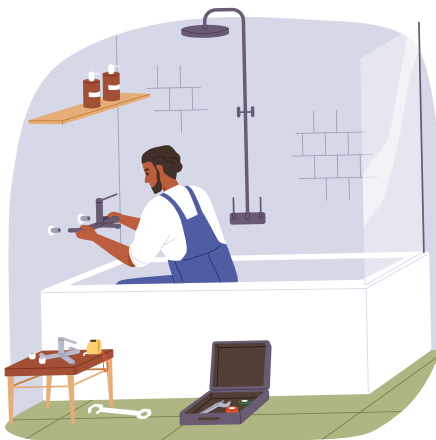
Home improvements and alterations

When and how to apply

You may want to make alterations and improvements to your home and we are usually happy for you to do so if they meet our requirements and you get our permission first.

This permission is in addition to any **Planning Approval, Building Regulation Approval** or **Estate Management Scheme Consent** that may be required.

You must apply for these yourself and we will only be able to consider your alterations request once you have all the relevant approvals. **Party Wall Notice** may also be required for some types of work.



What is an improvement or alteration?

An alteration is classed as:

- Replacing a fixture or fitting with one of a similar standard.
- Removing an existing fixture or fitting.
- Removing or replacing any of the existing fabric of the building, its grounds or boundaries.

An improvement is classed as:

- Replacing a fixture or fitting with one that, in our opinion, is of a higher standard.
- Installing a new feature within the property where there wasn't one before – a new shower or a garden shed, for example.
- Extending the property in some way, such as adding a conservatory or porch.

Any improvements or alterations which fall outside of our usual repairs and planned improvement programmes will need to be paid for and maintained by you. We will not contribute towards the cost.

Home improvements and alterations

Applying for permission

Complete the **Tenant Alteration Form** in this handbook and return it to us or call **0800 111 4484** to request a form. Or you can also email **housingmaintenance@welhat.gov.uk** with details of:

- your contact information
- the type of alteration you are making
- the work involved
- any supporting documentation (including plans)
- any gas or electrical works and include your contractor's registration details

We may ask for further details, plans and sketches if necessary.

After you make an application

We will acknowledge receipt of your request within three working days.

Our Property Services and Neighbourhoods teams will review your request within 10 working days and contact you if we need more information or want to visit your home. In these cases a revised timescale for considering your application will be agreed with you.

You will be notified of our decision within 15 working days unless a revised timescale has been agreed.

Consent to carry out an alteration is valid for three months. If you wish to carry out the alteration after this time, you will need to make a new application.

Refusal of alterations requests

If we refuse your request, the reasons will be detailed in our decision letter. You can revise your proposal at any time and apply again.

If you are in rent arrears or there are ongoing court proceedings in relation to your tenancy, your request may be placed on hold until the matter is resolved.

We will not grant permission if the proposed works:

- Breach planning or building regulation approval.
- Are considered harmful to the structure and / or long-term maintenance of the property.
- May have a damaging effect on health and safety including fire risks.
- Are thought to be potentially detrimental to the future letting / use of the property.
- Negatively affect neighbouring properties / residents and are not in keeping with their surrounding environment.

Home improvements and alterations

Alterations the council will not give permission for:

- open fires
- wood burners
- gas fires
- installation of down lights into ceilings
- structural works involving load bearing walls
- extensions and brick-based conservatories
- permissions which change the number of bedrooms in a property
- removal of stair banisters

This list is not exhaustive.

If you live above someone you must have written permission from us to install laminate or hardwood flooring. We will need to approve the type of underlay you intend to use. If noise issues occur after installation, we will require you to replace your flooring with a more suitable product at your own expense.

Tenants who do not apply for permission

If you have not applied for permission before carrying out alteration works you will be required to do so retrospectively. This will involve a £25 administration charge. You may also be required to:



- reinstate the property to its original condition
- carry out further works to bring it up to a required standard
- pay a recharge for the council to carry out repair work

Before you start work

Consent from us is different to planning permission or building regulations approval. You will need to check if these permissions are required as well. You must also comply with the regulations of your electricity, gas and water suppliers.

Check the asbestos log for your home to ensure that no materials potentially containing asbestos will be disturbed by your proposed alterations. **If you do not have the asbestos log, please contact Housing Maintenance.**

Home improvements and alterations

For some types of alterations, permission is only given in principle until we have inspected the completed work and signed it off. Once this has been done, full permission will be granted.

We will not support you with the cost of doing the work. You will be responsible for the repairs and maintenance of any alterations unless we accept this responsibility under the terms of the **Tenancy Agreement**.

Carrying out the work

You are responsible for the works so need to ensure that competent people carrying it out. For certain works (e.g. gas and electrics) you will need to use suitably registered tradespeople.

It will be your responsibility to put right any damage caused.

For larger and more complex alterations, we may require on-site inspections while the work is underway.

Alterations with health and safety issues

If we become aware of an alteration where there is a major health and safety issue, we will arrange all necessary works to make safe.

The cost of this and any associated expenses will be recharged back to you.

Poor workmanship

If the work is not of a reasonable standard and we have to make good the property after you leave, you will be recharged.

What happens if you move?

You may be entitled to compensation when you move if you have made improvements to your home with the council's prior permission. However, not all alterations and improvements qualify for this.

Permanent fixtures like baths and toilets become our property and must be left.

Dropped kerbs

These are the responsibility of **Hertfordshire County Council**. More information is on their website www.hertfordshire.gov.uk or you can contact **Hertfordshire Highways** by emailing cschighways@hertfordshire.gov.uk.

Home improvements and alterations

Application form for alterations and improvements to council properties

Property address, including postcode:

Tenant / Leaseholder name:

Contact number:

Email address:

Please provide as much information as you can below of the alterations you wish to make (or have made) and attach any scale drawings, specifications or quotations.

Tick box if you are requesting retrospective permission.

Home improvements and alterations

Application form for alterations and improvements to council properties

Have you checked with the council's Planning Department if the alterations or improvements require Planning or Building Regulations approval?

Yes

No

Not applicable

If yes, have you submitted an application for Planning or Building Regulations approval or Party Wall Notice?

Yes

No

It is your responsibility to carry out these checks and get appropriate permission. We cannot consider your application until this has been done. There will be additional restrictions / conditions for homes located in the Estate Management Area and Conservation Area of Welwyn Garden City. (Please attach any permissions that have already been given)

Name and address of all contractors carrying out the work (or those used if seeking retrospective permission):

Home improvements and alterations

Application form for alterations and improvements to council properties

Does the alteration involve any gas or electrical work?

Yes

No

If yes, please provide below the Gas Safe / N.I.C.E.I.C registration number of the engineer(s) before permission to proceed can be given (or approved in the case of retrospective permission).

Gas Safe Registration Number(s):

Electrical / N.I.C.E.I.C Registration Number(s):

If you are planning to carry out any external works, such as replacing fencing, erecting sheds, have you consulted with neighbours and included their written permission in this application? (or did you seek this for retrospective permission?)

Yes

No

Not applicable

Additional information on alterations requested for permission.

Home improvements and alterations

Application form for alterations and improvements to council properties

Additional information on alterations requested for permission (continued).

Customer's signature:

Date:

The information collected on this form is necessary to administer your application for improvements and will not be used for any other purposes. Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council is committed to protecting your privacy when you use our services. Please see the privacy notice on our website www.welhat.gov.uk/policies/privacy-notice

Please return this form and any paperwork to:

**Housing Maintenance
Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council,
The Campus,
Welwyn Garden City,
AL8 6AE**

or email housingmaintenance@welhat.gov.uk





Health and safety

- Compliance and safety checks
- Mould, damp and condensation

Health and safety

Compliance and safety checks

We take our health and safety responsibilities to tenants very seriously and planned programmes are in place to ensure that our properties are safe to live in.

You are also responsible for the safety of your home and must allow us to complete safety checks. Failure to do so is a breach of your tenancy agreement and can result in legal action being taken against your tenancy.

If you would like to review any of the documentation relating to the health and safety of your home, please contact the **Housing Maintenance Team**.

Gas

Where there is a gas supply, we have a legal duty to carry out an annual gas safety check in every tenant's home. We will write to you every year offering an appointment for this essential check.

All of the engineers we use for this are Gas Safe Registered.

Never use a gas appliance that you think may be faulty. If you suspect there is a problem, call the **Housing Maintenance Team** on **0800 111 4484** immediately.

To report a suspected gas leak, call the **National Gas Emergency Service** on **0800 111 999**.

If you own a gas cooker, it is your responsibility to have it safely installed in your home by a Gas Safe Registered engineer.

Smoke and carbon monoxide alarm

We must ensure at least one smoke alarm is equipped on each storey of your home where there is a room used as living accommodation.

We must ensure a carbon monoxide alarm is equipped in any room used as living accommodation which contains a fixed combustion appliance (excluding gas cookers).

We must ensure smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms are repaired or replaced once informed and found that they are faulty.

We will test your smoke and carbon monoxide alarm yearly at the same time as your gas safety check. We will repair or replace any that have issues. We also have a replacement programme, which is based on the manufacturer's guidance.

You should test your smoke and carbon monoxide alarms weekly by pressing the test button. If this does not work or if you suspect there is a problem, call the **Housing Maintenance Team** on **0800 111 4484** immediately.

Health and safety

Asbestos

You will have received an **asbestos survey** for your home when you moved in. Please refer to it before carrying out any DIY that involves drilling, cutting or attaching fixings to a wall or partition. If you do not have this information, contact our **Housing Maintenance Team** for a copy.

If your property was built before 2000 we will complete an asbestos survey prior to starting any intrusive works. Please allow access for this so that any works are carried out as quickly as possible.

If you suspect any asbestos has been damaged call the **Housing Maintenance Team** on **0800 111 4484** immediately.

We carry out regular inspections of all our communal blocks that contain asbestos.

Electric

We have a legal duty to carry out an electrical safety test in every tenant's home on a regular basis. This will be completed on a five-yearly programme.

You must allow the engineers into your home to carry out essential safety checks and repairs. Failure to do so is a breach of your tenancy



agreement and can result in legal action being taken against your tenancy.

If the test fails, depending on the results, we will either complete the required repairs or rewire the property.

- do not use any electrical item that appears damaged or has damage to the cable
- do not overload any socket
- do not use multiple extension leads together
- do not cover any plugged-in item as this could cause it to overheat

Health and safety

- try to minimise extension lead usage
- do not do any unauthorised work on the electrics in your home
- Any authorised work must be carried out by a qualified electrician and evidence such as certificates must be sent to the **Housing Maintenance Team**

If you suspect any electrical equipment has been damaged call the **Housing Maintenance Team** on **0800 111 4484** immediately.



Water safety

We will conduct water hygiene risk assessments anywhere required (all communal blocks) on a regular basis.

We will do periodic testing and tank inspections of any communal water tank.

We will flush any infrequently used water outlets, such as taps or toilets, in communal / shared areas.

If you are leaving your property for more than a week turn the main stopcock off and drain the tank by running the taps. This will stop potential leaks while you are away. When you return, turn the stopcock back on and flush the system by turning on all the taps.

Ensure you use all your outlets (taps/toilets/bath and shower) at least once a week.

If you are concerned about water hygiene, call the **Housing Maintenance Team** on **0800 111 4484** immediately.

Lift safety

We complete planned preventive maintenance on all our communal lifts monthly. Any issues identified will be repaired as soon as possible. If the lift is taken out of action, we will notify you.

Health and safety

We complete six-monthly LOLER inspections for all lifts in communal settings and carry out any recommended works.

We complete six-monthly inspections/services on all our domestic lifts.

Please do not overload the lift with bulky items.

Do not use the lift in the event of a fire.

If the lift stops when you are in it press the call button which will contact the lift company who will assist you.

If you suspect a lift has a fault call the **Housing Maintenance Team** on **0800 111 4484** immediately.

Fire safety

We complete regular fire risk assessments based on the risk of the block. All actions are recorded and completed.

We inspect the blocks to ensure escape routes are kept clear and the signage in communal areas is up to date.

Where required, we regularly service fire alarm systems, firefighting equipment, automatic opening vents and emergency lighting.

We inspect fire doors on a regular basis.

- please keep exit routes in your home or in communal blocks clear
- make sure fire doors are kept closed
- do not leave combustible materials in an area where they could catch fire
- do not smoke in any communal area
- make sure bins and rubbish are secure

If you have any concerns about fire safety please contact the **Housing Maintenance Team** on **0800 111 4484** immediately or consider a **free home fire safety visit** from Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service.



Health and safety

Mould, damp and condensation

Condensation and mould

Condensation is the most common cause of damp and forms when warm, moist air comes into contact with a cold surface like a window.

Left untreated, condensation can lead to mould growth on walls, ceilings and even furniture. It can also affect woodwork and plaster.

Condensation mainly occurs during the colder months, from September to April. It doesn't matter if the weather is wet or dry.

The amount of condensation in a home depends on:

- how much water vapour is produced
- how cold the property is
- how much ventilation there is in the house

Where does moisture in the home come from?

Our everyday activities add extra moisture to the air inside our homes.



Health and safety

Two people at home for 16 hours  3 Pints (1.7 litres)	Drying clothes indoors  9 Pints (5.1 litres)
A bath or shower  2 Pints (1.1 litres)	Cooking and boiling a kettle  6 Pints (3.4 litres)
Washing dishes  2 Pints (1.1 litres)	Using a paraffin or bottled-gas heater  3 Pints (1.7 litres)

As a landlord, we have a responsibility to fix the causes of damp and mould where it is a repair or defect, but we do ask our tenants to work with us in preventing the build-up of damp and mould by ventilating and heating homes.

Tips to reduce condensation

Reduce moisture

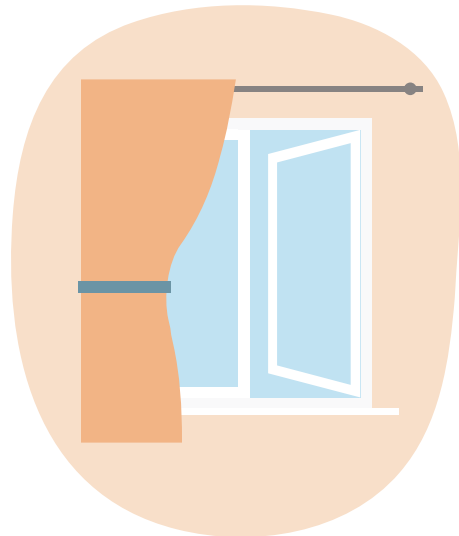
- cook with pan lids on
- use an extractor fan in kitchens and bathrooms, keeping the doors closed during and after use
- dry clothes outside where possible or on a clothes airer in the bathroom with the door closed and

a window slightly open to provide ventilation. Don't hang clothes on radiators to dry

- if you use a tumble dryer, make sure it is vented properly or use a condenser dryer
- put cold water in first when you run a bath
- wipe surfaces to remove excess condensation

Improve ventilation

- open windows regularly and use trickle vents, where fitted.
- don't completely block chimneys and flues – fit with an air vent.
- move furniture away from walls so air can circulate.
- keep cupboards and wardrobes clutter free.



Health and safety



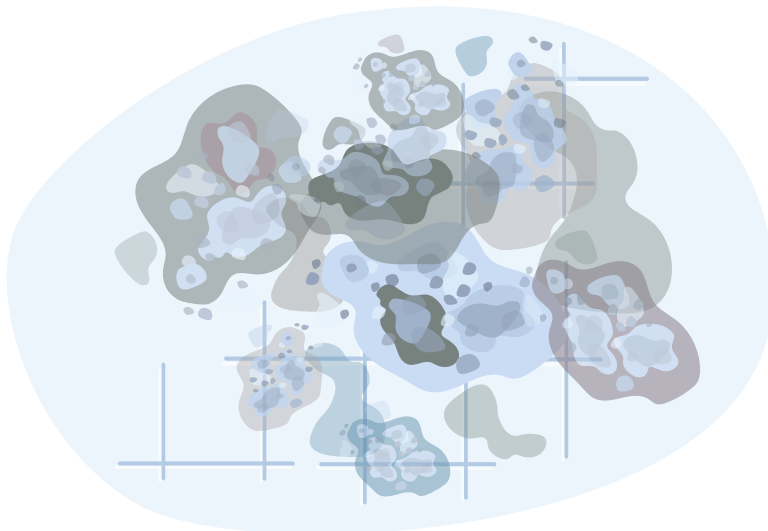
Heat your home

- Try to keep your home properly heated to a temperature of at least 18°C. It helps to provide a low heat all day.
- Avoid heaters that use bottled gas or paraffin as they produce lots of moisture and they are not allowed under your tenancy agreement.

Dealing with mould

- Don't disturb mould by vacuuming or brushing it.
- Wipe down affected areas with a fungicidal wash, following the instructions. Use a product that has a Health & Safety Executive (HSE) approval number.
- Use a fungicidal paint or wallpaper paste after treatment. Don't use ordinary paint on the affected area.
- Dry-clean any clothes that have mould/mildew on them.
- Shampoo any carpets that have mould on them.

If there are large areas of mould in a room, contact us to arrange a fungicidal wash. We will then need to establish the cause of the mould to prevent it returning.



Health and safety

Other types of damp

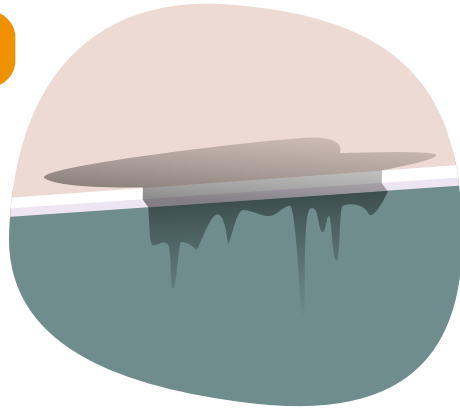
(Black mould will rarely be seen in these situations.)

Rising damp

- Caused by water rising from the ground into the home. The water gets through a broken damp proof course or the brickwork if a property was built without one.
- Only affects cellars and ground floor rooms.

Penetrating damp

- Only found on external walls or, in the case of a roof leak, on ceilings.
- Appears because of a defect outside the home such as missing pointing to the brickwork, cracked rendering, broken/missing roof tiles or a build-up of soil/plants against a wall.



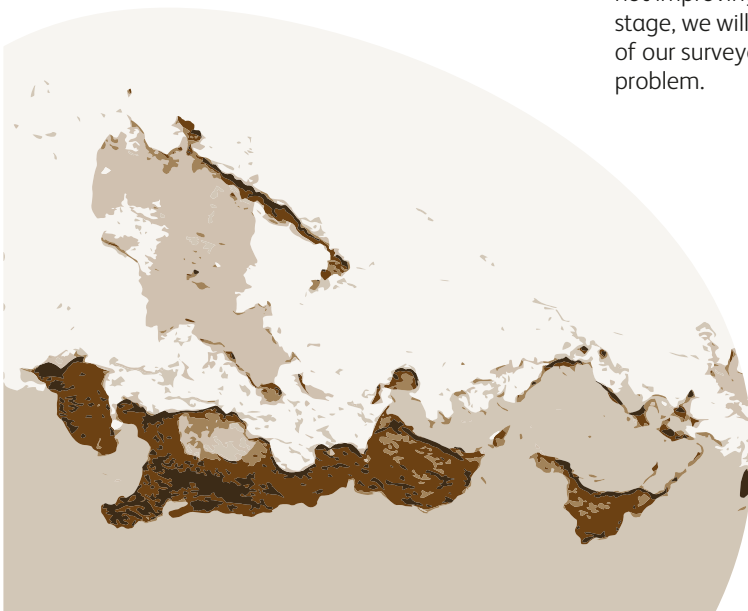
Defective plumbing

- Caused by leaks from water and/or waste pipes.
- Affected area looks and feels damp.

It's important we know if your home has condensation, damp or mould so contact our **Housing Maintenance Team** on **0800 111 4484**.

If possible, send a photo to housingmaintenance@welhat.gov.uk.

If we are not able to easily diagnose the cause, the damp and mould is not improving, or it is at an advanced stage, we will arrange a visit from one of our surveyors to assess the problem.





Community services

- Maintaining neighbourhoods
- Dealing with anti-social behaviour
- Tenancy support
- Resident involvement

Community services

Maintaining neighbourhoods

We are committed to making your neighbourhood a clean, safe and attractive environment for you to live in.

We welcome your assistance with this and actively support residents who want to take a more active role in their community in tenant groups or as a Neighbourhood Champion. Please contact the **Resident Involvement Team** for more information on getting involved by calling **01707 357 796** or emailing **residentinvolvement@welhat.gov.uk**

We visit our estates regularly to check for littering and fly-tipping, dog mess, graffiti, vandalism, abandoned vehicles and illegal parking.

During our visits we also check the grounds surrounding the blocks of flats that we manage to ensure these areas are being maintained in accordance with the standards we set and report any issues that may need attention or are a health and safety issue.

A thorough inspection of all our blocks of flats is carried out at least every six months.

Communal areas

Everyone is responsible for keeping communal areas clear of personal items and rubbish.

Communal areas are spaces everyone has access to and can include:

- entrance halls
- corridors
- under stairwells
- shared grounds
- drying areas



Community services

WHBC does not allow items to be left/stored in communal areas. This is to:

- ensure routes of access and exit in the event of an emergency are clear and safe
- minimise the risk of trip hazards generally and in the event of a fire
- reduce the risk of a fire starting or spreading within communal areas

This means we will not allow any personal items belonging to residents, or their visitors, to be left/stored in communal areas. We will remove them immediately if they are deemed high risk, or after a notice period if they are not removed by the owner upon request.

Storing items in a communal area is a breach of your tenancy and you may be charged for the removal.

Repairs in communal areas should be reported to **Housing Maintenance** by calling **0800 111 4484** or emailing **housingmaintenance@welhat.gov.uk**.

Anti-social behaviour

Anti-social behaviour (ASB) is persistent and unreasonable behaviour that could cause alarm or distress to one or more people in another household.



We take all reports of anti-social behaviour seriously and will work with you to resolve problems and prevent them happening again.

We use a victim-centred approach and consider the impact of ASB, not just the seriousness of it.

If you are a tenant, you are responsible for your behaviour and the behaviour of:

- anyone who lives with you, including your partner, spouse and children
- anyone who visits or stays with you
- any pets belonging to you

Community services

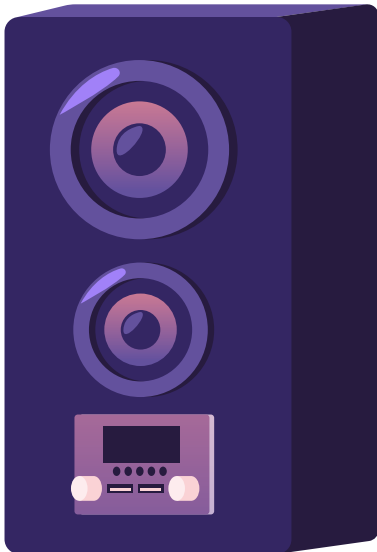
Examples of ASB

We will establish whether a report is ASB based on the behaviour, the impact and context of each case. Behaviours that we consider to be ASB can include:

Personal ASB: behaviour targeted towards a particular individual e.g. violence, threats of violence, hate crime, abuse etc.

Community ASB: behaviour that affects a number of people in the community e.g. noise, animal nuisance, drug or substance misuse, damage to property.

Environmental ASB: behaviour such as littering, fly-tipping, dog fouling etc.



Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse is an incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, threatening, degrading or violent behaviour, including sexual violence, by a partner, ex-partner, family member or carer.

If you are experiencing domestic abuse, we can help you to access the support you need, and to resolve any housing-related concerns.

Taking Action

We have a range of responses available to tackle ASB and will take whatever action is proportionate to the issue. Some of the things we take into consideration when deciding what action to take include:

- seriousness
- persistency
- harm caused to the victim or community
- vulnerability
- whether the perpetrator is co-operating
- whether previous action has been taken and how effective it was

Some problems can be solved through agreement or mediation. Where we do intervene, verbal or written warnings may be given.

More serious cases may require legal action and we will consider all options available to us.

Community services

In the most serious cases and when there is no alternative, if the perpetrator is a council tenant, we may seek to evict them from their home.

Supporting victims

Suffering from ASB is an unpleasant experience. We work closely with the police and other partners to give victims of ASB practical and personal support. This may include:

- offering a variety of channels through which to report ASB
- managing expectations fairly and early in the case
- ensuring the complainant has a point of contact
- agreeing a realistic action plan
- conducting regular case reviews

Reporting anti-social behaviour

There are several ways you or your representative can report anti-social behaviour:

Phone **999** for serious incidents or if a crime is about to happen.

Email: asb@welhat.gov.uk

Telephone: **01707 357 000**



Community services

The service is for residents who need support and help because they may be at risk of losing their tenancy, or their quality of life is affected.

Our trained Tenancy Support Team will work with you to help you regain your independence and fully manage your tenancy. We can offer help on a wide range of issues for up to two years, though in most cases support is provided for a shorter period.

We work with you to agree an action plan, setting out what support is needed and how it will be provided. All clients receive the support on a voluntary basis and are expected to engage in all aspects of the agreed action plan.

We can support you to:

- set up your home
- keep a tenancy or licence if you're at risk of losing it
- manage money and benefit claims
- get help with jobs and training
- access local community and support organisations to develop a social life
- get advice on debts and payment of utility bills
- find emotional support and advice

- manage your personal safety and security, including behaviour management

If you need support to manage your tenancy, please contact your **Neighbourhood Officer** on **01707 357 796** or email **neighbourhoods@welhat.gov.uk**.

Resident involvement

We offer a variety of ways for you to get involved with the council to help shape our housing services and make your neighbourhood an even better place to live.

Residents Panel

This is the highest level of involvement for tenants and leaseholders. They work in partnership with the council, acting as a 'critical friend', monitoring our performance and holding us to account.

Virtual Panel

A group of residents who give feedback on key policies and strategies when required, usually via email.

Community services

Neighbourhood Champions

Our Neighbourhood Champions are community spirited residents who want to make a difference to where they live. They work alongside us to help make their neighbourhoods cleaner, greener and safer.

Tenant Satisfaction Measures Survey

As your landlord, we want to know where we're doing well and where we can do better. The Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) have been introduced by the Regulator of Social Housing to show how providers of social housing in England are performing.

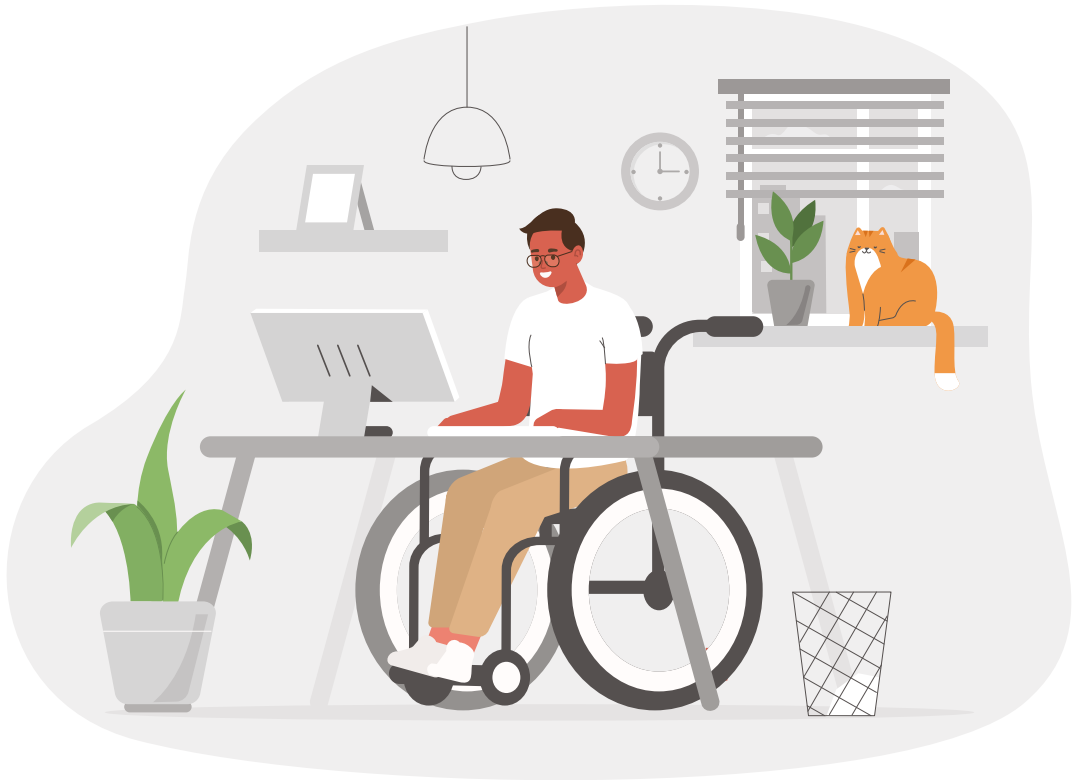
We are required to carry out a TSM survey every year, so if you receive a request to take part, please help us by giving your views.

Get involved

Other ways to get involved are also available. You can choose your level of involvement.

If you would like to find out more about the opportunities we offer, see our website www.welhat.gov.uk or contact the **Resident Involvement Team** on **01707 357 796** or email residentinvolvement@welhat.gov.uk.





Independent living

- Aids and adaptations
- Assisted gardening scheme
- Sheltered accommodation

Independent living

Aids and adaptations

If you, or a member of your family, are disabled or have mobility problems, we can help with equipment and adaptations to your home to make it more suited to your needs.

All requests for aids and adaptations for over 18s must be made to us by **Adult Care Services** at Hertfordshire County Council.

To arrange an assessment from them, please call **0300 123 4042**.

For requests for under 18s, contact Herts Community NHS Trust's **Children and Young People's Integrated Therapy Service** on **01923 470 680** or **hct.cyptherapies1@nhs.net**.

If a referral is made to us for an aid or adaptation to be installed in your home, we will write to tell you what work has been suggested and approximately when we will be able to carry it out.

One of our surveyors will then need to visit your home to check if the work is possible.

Examples of an aid or adaptation include:

- ramps
- stair lifts
- wet rooms

Our aids and adaptations policy can be found on our website **www.welhat.gov.uk/policies**.

Grab rails

We can provide grab rails and extra banister rails free of charge to tenants that require them. Contact the **Housing Maintenance Team** on **0800 111 4484** or **housingmaintenance@welhat.gov.uk**.



Independent living

Assisted gardening scheme

If you are an older or vulnerable tenant unable to maintain your garden we may be able help you with this.

To find out more about the scheme and eligibility for it, phone **01707 357 796** or email **neighbourhoods@welhat.gov.uk**.

What help is available:

Grass cutting

- your grass will be cut once a month between March and October
- when the grass is cut in March, the contractor will deliver a card with planned cutting dates for the rest of the year
- front and back gardens will be cut with a mower
- obstacles will be trimmed around
- footpaths will be blown clear of any cuttings
- grass cuttings are not collected

If your grass is not cut on the dates given or access was not available:

- a card will be left to say that an attempt had been made to cut the grass
- they will return the following Friday

- if a card has not been left but you are sure your grass has been missed contact us on **01707 357 000** within five working days

Hedge cutting

- hedges will be cut twice per year (in June/July and September/October)
- hedges in both the front and back gardens will be cut
- the cut is on both sides and top
- if it is a party hedge we will just cut your side and the top
- if the hedge borders a council-owned open space, both sides will be cut
- growth will be removed to the point of the previous cut
- if the hedge requires more cutting you will be expected to take responsibility for organising this



Independent living

Sheltered accommodation

Sheltered housing

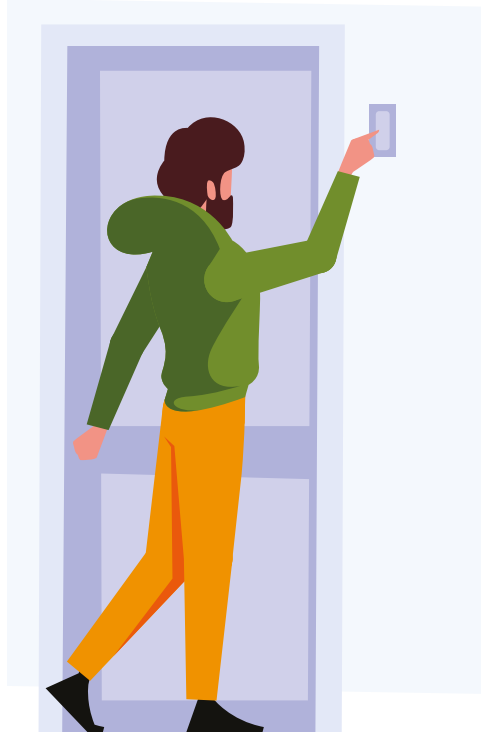
This type of housing is self-contained accommodation and enables residents to live independently while having access to an Independent Living Officer, a Mobile Warden and a 24-7 control centre. Our schemes are usually reserved for people over 60 or those with other support needs such as a disability.

Independent Living Officers and Mobile Wardens

The Independent Living Officer's role is to enable residents to live independently and to help them access any extra support they need.

Independent Living Officers do not provide care directly themselves, nor can they help with 'day-to-day' activities like shopping or housework. However, they have excellent contacts with health and support organisations and are well placed to arrange help for residents.

The Independent Living Officers also act as a vital link between residents and their Neighbourhood Officer.



A team of Mobile Wardens provide cover for all sheltered scheme residents when the Independent Living Officers are off duty, as well as Community Alarm clients living in the borough. Mobile Wardens are available 24 hours a day, every day of the year for emergencies via the emergency alarm system.

Independent living

Scheme options

Sheltered housing schemes

These have an Independent Living Officer working on site during office hours. Many of these schemes have been built specifically for older people and have facilities such as laundries, guest rooms and communal halls.

Neighbourhood schemes

These have an Independent Living Officer working from within a group of flats/bungalows while also providing a service to homes outside the central group. Some of these schemes also have communal facilities.

All homes within our schemes are connected to our emergency alarm system, which operates 24 hours a day, every day of the year.

How to access sheltered housing

To access sheltered housing, you need to apply to the **Housing Needs Register** (waiting list). Once you have registered for housing you will be able to view and bid for available properties within our schemes. Please see our website www.welhat.gov.uk or call **01707 357 000** for more information.

Extra charges

These services are paid for by the council, with a contribution from people living in our sheltered housing schemes. This contribution is in the form of a service charge.

All new residents (including council tenants who are moving from general needs housing) are charged for the services on offer from the **Independent Living Service**.

You are exempt from the service charge if:

- You were already living in supported accommodation in April 2003.
- You transferred to a new home in a sheltered scheme and your first sheltered tenancy started before 7 April 2003.

If you are in receipt of any amount of housing benefit or have limited income, you may be entitled to support with the service charge. Please contact the **Benefits Team** on benefits@welhat.gov.uk or by calling **01707 357 000**.



How we use your information

- Why we collect and use information
- Keeping your information safe
- Protecting our staff and contractors

How we use your information

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council collects and processes data to provide services to our tenants. The data we collect is for a specific, explicit and legitimate purpose and we will not use information collected for one purpose for another without permission. However, we can process data without consent where the processing is required under a legal obligation to which we are a party or there is any other lawful basis to obtain and process your data.

All the personal information on our tenants is securely held and our staff and partners process data in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation, and in a manner that ensures appropriate security of the personal data we handle. Our privacy notice www.welhat.gov.uk/privacy-notice explains how we use information about you.

Why we collect and use information

The main reason we collect and use information about you and your household members is so that we can deliver services to you. The types of services we must provide to you are set out in your tenancy agreement or lease.

These services include:

- processing your housing application
- carrying out repairs and maintenance
- collecting rent or service charge payments
- providing help to you in matters relating to your tenancy or lease
- preventing and dealing with anti-social behaviour
- taking action where there is a breach of your tenancy conditions
- providing different types of support when you need it

How we use your information

The type of information collected

We collect and use a range of information about our customers. This includes details such as your name, address, contact details, date of birth, gender and other personal information. We may also collect information about your household members. Most of the information we collect will be provided by you. However, we may also collect information from other agencies, for example if you have been involved in criminal activity and where this could be a breach of your tenancy agreement.

Keeping your information safe

We keep the information we hold about you securely and we do not keep it for longer than we have to. All our employees have received training to ensure they understand the importance of this.

Who gets to see personal data?

Generally, only staff within the housing, council tax and benefit services have access to the information we hold about you, but there are circumstances where we share this information with others, including our repairs contractors.



How we use your information

We may also share information with other landlords, for example if you are applying for housing elsewhere, or to prevent fraud. In some cases, we share information about you with the police and social services.

We would not disclose data for purposes other than those set out earlier and we will never pass on your information to outside organisations for marketing purposes.

We will only disclose data to other organisations when it is necessary to do so, and we will ensure that the information about you is kept secure. We have agreements in place with other agencies so that we can be sure they will also keep your information secure.

In most cases we only share information with others after you have given your consent. However, in some cases (for example in the prevention of crime) we may share information without your consent. We are allowed to do this by law.

Applications to move

We may apply for references from your previous landlords, contact other agencies and collect other types of relevant information about you so that we can assess your application.

Protecting our staff and contractors

The health and safety of our staff, contractors and partners is important and to protect them we record any incidents of violence, threatened violence or aggression by our customers. This information is stored on our computer system and may be shared with staff and contractors without your consent to ensure their safety. For more information, please ask for our policy on 'Unreasonably persistent and abusive behaviour' or find it on our website at www.welhat.gov.uk/policies.

We will also share information with other organisations providing you with support. For example, if you tell us you need your service delivered in a certain way because of a disability, we will share this with our repairs contractors.





Contact information

- How to contact us
- Comments, compliments and complaints
- Useful numbers

Contact information

How to contact us

Our Control Centre is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to deal with emergencies.

The team responds to Lifeline Alarm emergency calls and also deals with emergency repair calls outside of office hours.

Please only use this service in the event of a genuine emergency.

☎ 0800 111 4484

Neighbourhoods

@neighbourhoods@welhat.gov.uk

☎ 01707 357 796

Housing Income

@housingincome@welhat.gov.uk

☎ 01707 357 088

Repairs

@housingmaintenance@welhat.gov.uk

☎ 0800 111 4484

Housing Allocations

@housingallocationsteam@welhat.gov.uk

☎ 01707 357 090

Anti-Social Behaviour

@asb@welhat.gov.uk

☎ 01707 357 000 (option 3)

Council Office

📍 The Campus, Welwyn Garden City, AL8 6AE

@contact-whc@welhat.gov.uk

☎ 01707 357 000

Our opening hours are:

Monday to Thursday from 8.45am to 5.15pm and Friday from 8.45am to 4.45pm.



Contact information

Comments, compliments and complaints

We aim to provide the highest quality, customer focused services. We welcome your comments and compliments about our services and use these to try to improve further.

We also recognise that we do not always get things right, so please tell us if you are not satisfied with our services so that we can work with you to reach a fair conclusion.

Details of our procedure for managing and responding to complaints can be found on our website

www.welhat.gov.uk/contact/complaints

There are different ways to make a complaint:

🌐 www.welhat.gov.uk/contact

@ contact-whc@welhat.gov.uk

☎ 01707 357 000

✉ Council Offices, The Campus,
Welwyn Garden City, AL8 6AE

Housing Ombudsman

We hope we can resolve any issues but if you have followed our complaints process and are still not happy, you can ask the Housing Ombudsman to look into it.

🌐 www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/residents/

@ info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

☎ 0300 111 3000

✉ Housing Ombudsman Service,
PO Box 1484, Unit D, Preston,
PR2 0ET

Please get in contact with us when you:

- want to let us know what you think of our services
- have ideas on how we can improve our services
- want to comment on our policies
- would like to tell us you are happy with a particular service or member of staff

When we receive a compliment or comment we will record it and pass it to the relevant member of staff and/or manager. We will also write within 10 working days to thank you for contacting us and tell you if we decide to make a change as a result of your comments.

Contact information

Useful numbers

Emergency Services
☎ 999

Gas leaks –
National Grid
☎ 0800 111 999

Loss of electrical supply –
UK Power Networks
☎ 0800 783 8838

Water leaks –
Affinity Water
☎ 0800 376 5325

Blocked mains sewers –
Thames Water
☎ 0800 316 9800

Floods –
Floodline
☎ 0345 988 1188

Citizens Advice
☎ 03444 111 444

NHS Direct
☎ 111

Hertfordshire Police
(non-emergency)
☎ 101

Crimestoppers
☎ 0800 555 111

Victim Support
☎ 0808 168 9111

Post Office
☎ 0345 722 3344

Pay Point
☎ 0330 400 0000

Tax Credits –
general enquiries
☎ 0345 300 3900

Department for Work and Pensions
☎ 0800 055 6688

Child Maintenance Service
☎ 0800 171 2345

Universal Credit Helpline
☎ 0800 328 5644

John O'Conner Pest Control
☎ 01462 421579

