

It is in the interests of both the Council and our tenants to ensure that rent is paid promptly and when debts occur that we consider individual needs and offer appropriate support. The Council is committed to promoting sustainable tenancies by working with partners to provide a co-ordinated approach aimed at minimising rent arrears through an effective service that ensures difficulties are resolved, wherever possible, without Court proceedings. The rent collected enables the council to maintain and improve our homes and provide effective landlord services.

To do this we will:

- Deal with enquiries in a sensitive and confidential manner.
- Contact tenants who fall into arrears with advice and information in person by telephone, in their own home or in Council Offices.
- Offer practical, affordable repayment plans for rent arrears for arrears based on household income.
- Work in partnership to support tenants to maximise their income, prevent rent arrears and sustain tenancies.
- Where appropriate refer you to a debt service or signpost you to independent legal advice.
- Provide statements detailing the payments you have made and the balance on your account.
- Provide advice and assistance in completing Housing Benefit and Universal Credit applications.
- Liaise closely with the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) to ensure that Universal Credit applications are processed effectively including applications for housing costs, alternative payment arrangements and third-party deductions.
- Update our social media platforms, website and send regular newsletters with timely information regarding future changes.
- Aim to resolve rent arrears using the lowest level of enforcement, exploring all available remedies and using eviction as a last resort.
- Write to tenants annually with information of what the rent and service charges will be for the coming year with at least 28 days notice of any changes.
- Charge you for any costs incurred if we have to enter into legal proceedings to recover any arrears owed and/or seek possession of your home.
- Take legal action against any tenant who consistently fails to pay their rent or any other housing debts.

OUR SERVICE STANDARD

Rents

- If you are a former tenant, we may refer outstanding rent and other housing debts to a Debt Collection Agency to recover any identified debt on our behalf.
- Be committed to protecting your personal information in line with the Data Protection and Privacy Rights guidance (published on our website).
- Report how we perform in various ways including on our website and newsletters.
- Listen to feedback and incorporate customers suggestions into our service and aim to get things right first time.
- Accept a representative or advocate raising an issue on your behalf, providing you have given consent.
- Tell you how to make a complaint if you are not satisfied with the service that you have received from us.
- Always be courteous, helpful and ensure you are treated fairly and with respect.
- Contact tenants at every stage of the rent arrears procedure advising them of the account of rent outstanding and of any pending action.

We ask you to:

- Prioritise your rent payments and respond to any contact from us about any housing debt.
- Respect the rights of Council Staff to carry out their duties free from harassment or abuse.
- Keep to any agreed repayment plans to reduce current or former tenancy arrears.
- Contact the Rent Team immediately for help and advice if you are falling behind with your rent payments or are having difficulty keeping to any payment arrangements.
- Complete Universal Credit applications on the date your tenancy begins, when your rent changes and at any change in your circumstances, if applicable.
- Complete Housing Benefit applications as soon as possible, if applicable.

We want to make it as easy as possible for you to pay your rent so we offer a variety of ways to do so:

You can go online using the TDC website, we also have a 24-hour Automated Telephone Line, you can complete a Bank Transfer or set up a Standing Order/Direct Debit or use a Rent Payment Card at any post office or shop displaying the Pay Point sign using cash or a debit card.

If you would like to get in contact with the Rents Team you can do so using the following:

Telephone: 01255 686468

Email: rentsteam@tendringdc.gov.uk