

Tenants Handbook



HAPPY TO TRANSLATE



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Included in Your Pack

Customer Care Standards
Complaints Leaflet
Tenancy End Checklist
Void Property Standards
Right to Repair Information leaflet
Right to Compensation for Improvement leaflet
Allocation Information leaflet
Right to Buy
AFTAR Leaflet



Welcome

Thank you for taking the time to read your tenant's handbook. This guide gives you information about your tenancy and our services. You can also find more helpful advice in your tenancy agreement or by contacting our office.

We welcome you to your new home and hope you find the handbook helpful. We have divided your handbook into separate sections so you can easily find the relevant information. This handbook explains what you can expect from us as your landlord and what we expect from you as a tenant.

We will provide you with good-quality information during your tenancy and tell you about any changes which affect you, your tenancy and our estate and repair services.

You will find useful contact numbers in your tenancy pack and you should keep your handbook in a safe place for when you need to refer to it.

Please get in touch if you need to talk to us about any housing or maintenance matter. You can phone us on 01698 269119, email us at enquiries@lanarkshireha.com or use the contact form on our website at www.lanarkshireha.com.

If you ask, we can produce this handbook in large print or on audio tape, and we can translate it.



Welcome

About Lanarkshire Housing Association

Lanarkshire Housing Association (LHA), is a registered social landlord (RSL), set up in 1978. We provide good-quality homes within the Lanarkshire area.

LHA is registered under the following:

- Registered Society under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014: Reg. No 1941R(S)
- Registered for a Scottish Charity: Reg No (SCO42523)
- Registered with the Scottish Housing Regulator: Scottish Landlord No 202
- Registered under the Property Factors (Scotland) Act 2011: Reg No PDF000275:

LHA's Key Purpose

To provide good quality social and affordable housing and associated services.

LHA's Core Values

Accountability

Customer Satisfaction

Care for the Environment

Ethical Practice

Public Service

Teamwork

Housing management vision

"To provide a sensitive, professional, customer-focused service at an affordable rent, as well as addressing fair and equitable means of allocating tenancies."

Property maintenance vision

"To continuously improve customer services in property maintenance by ensuring repairs and improvements are carried out efficiently, effectively and economically, achieving high satisfaction levels."

We provide quality customer-focused services relating to your tenancy and our repair and estate-management services. We hope to involve you in developing our service. There is information in this handbook about how you can take part in decisions which affect you.

Our staff

Housing and Maintenance staff provide a wide range of advice on issues relating to your tenancy and your property, including rent payments and arrears, estate management, allocations and repairs.

Governing body

Our governing body (management committee) are elected at the annual general meeting and is responsible for ensuring the Association is well run. The committee is made up of local residents, including tenants and service users, with members co-opted for their specific knowledge or skills.

Membership of the association



You can become a member of the association by taking a £1 share.

This will allow you to:

- come to and vote at the annual general meeting;
- stand for election to the management committee; and
- receive a copy of our annual report and accounts.

You can get application forms from our office, or you can download them from our website at www.lanarkshireha.com.

Welcome

The Scottish Social Housing Charter

The Scottish Social Housing Charter (the charter) sets standards and outcomes that all social landlords must achieve when carrying out their housing activities. The Scottish Housing Regulator (the regulator) will use the charter to assess our performance. We are responsible for delivering the results you want to see and will publish our outcomes against targets set. The regulator will publish information each year on our performance and assess this against the performance of other RSLs. This will allow you to compare our performance, with other social landlords. Information is available from the regulators website:

www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk



Information & Advice

Customer care

We aim to provide quality services to our customers and want you to tell us if you are unhappy with our service or if we have not achieved expected standards. It is also good to know if you feel we have performed well and we ask you to share this with us too.

You will find a customer service charter leaflet, with details of our service standards, in your tenancy pack.

We carry out an independent tenant satisfaction survey every three years, to test your views on our service and make sure we respond to your needs.

Our equality commitment

Our communities are made up of people from different backgrounds with different needs, which we take into account when developing services. We aim to deliver services in a way that does not discriminate against anyone.

If you ask, we will provide interpretation and translation services and can provide information on our services in large print or on audiotape or disc.

Information & Advice

Complaints

If something goes wrong or you are unhappy with our service, please tell us, as we value complaints and welcome the chance to put things right, through our complaints process. You can get a copy of our leaflet A Customers guide to our Complaints Handling procedure from our office or you can download one from our website at www.lanarkshireha.com



Our complaints handling procedure allows us to deal with them promptly. This is a two-stage process which aims to sort out complaints at stage one - frontline resolution or stage two - investigation.

If you are still not satisfied with our decision after using the complaints process, you can ask the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) to look at your complaint. Information is available in our Complaints Leaflet, or on the SPSO's website: www.spsso.org.uk or by phoning 0800 377 7330

About Your Tenancy

Your tenancy agreement

At the start of your tenancy you signed a tenancy agreement, which forms a legally binding contract between you and us. This confirms your responsibilities as a tenant and our responsibilities as your landlord.

Your tenancy is called a Scottish Secure Tenancy which is set by law. As a tenant, you must keep to your responsibilities as shown in your tenancy agreement.

Your responsibilities

When you move into your home you must:

- live in your home from the start of your tenancy and cannot give your home to anyone else;
- tell us if you are going away for any length of time, and give us contact details in case we need to contact you in an emergency;
- pay your rent when due (this is explained further in Section 4 of this handbook);
- keep your home in a clean condition;
- report repairs to us as soon as you know a repair is needed;
- always respect your neighbours and make sure you do not cause a nuisance or disturbance;
- ask for our permission if you want to carry out any alterations to your home (you can get an application form from our office);
- ask for our approval if you want to keep a pet (we will give permission as long as the pet does not cause any nuisance to your neighbours);
- keep your garden in a tidy condition;
- take your turn of cleaning the close, landing and shared areas, including front and rear windows of the close, if you live in a block of flats; and
- make sure you have insurance cover for your household items. (You are responsible for insuring your belongings against loss, theft and damage. Most insurance companies provide monthly payment plans.)

About Your Tenancy

Joint tenancies

If two or more people sign the tenancy agreement, they are joint tenants and are jointly and individually responsible for keeping to the tenancy agreement.

Ending your tenancy

If you want to end your tenancy, you must give four weeks written notice and fill in a 'termination of tenancy' form. When we receive this, maintenance staff will visit your home and tell you about any repairs or work needed before you leave. You must allow access for this visit before you leave the property. You may be charged for any reinstatement work not completed at the end of the tenancy.

You must leave your home and garden in a clean and tidy condition. If it is not, you may be charged for cleaning or clearing it.

You must return all keys to our office, if not, we may charge you for changing the locks.

Remember to take meter readings and let your utility suppliers (gas, electricity) know the final readings. Also let everyone know that you are moving.

Abandoning your home

If we think you have abandoned your home, we will issue a notice and may force entry into the property to make it secure. You must tell us, in writing, within four weeks if you intend to occupy the house. If you do not, we may end your tenancy.

Settling-in visits

We carry out a home visit to new tenants within six months of the tenancy starting. This allows us to discuss any matter of concern including repairs, rent or estate issues.





Paying Your Rent

Paying Your Rent

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You can pay your rent in a number of ways.

Direct debit

This is a payment we take direct from your bank account. You can choose to pay every week, every two weeks, every four weeks or every month and on your chosen date.

Rent payment card

We will issue a rent payment card if you ask. You can use this to pay your rent at our office, at the Post Office or any PayPoint outlet. You can also use this card to pay online at www.allpay.net or www.lanarkshireha.com using the Allpay payment link or by phone on **08445578321**. Just have your rent payment card and debit or credit card handy.



Mobile phone app

You can pay rent using this secure mobile application available for your smartphone. It works with any Apple, Windows or Google package.

Standing order

You can get standing order forms from our office.

Office payment

We accept cash, credit and debit cards or a cheque.

Pay by cheque

You can post a cheque to our office.

Rent charges

Your tenancy agreement confirms the rent we will charge at the start of your tenancy and tells you that we will review your rent each year. Rent is due monthly in advance (for the month to come) on or before the second day of each month.

Paying Your Rent

Rent review

We consult you about any change to your rent by writing to you in December or January each year seeking your feedback on the proposed rent. We take account of your views and responses prior to the rents being decided in April every year. We take account of your views and responses prior to the rent review being decided before April every year.

Rent statement

We issue a rent statement each year with your rent review notice. If you want another rent statement, please ask us for one.

Service charges

Service charges are separate from your rent and cover services provided in your estate. These may include ground maintenance, close lighting and estate caretaker services, with close cleaning provided to some developments. Not all of these services are eligible for Housing Benefit.

Help paying your rent – Housing Benefit

If you are on a low income, or receive benefits, you may be able to get Housing Benefit. If you think you are entitled to Housing Benefit, we can help you fill in an application form. You can get forms at our office or local authority housing offices in North and South Lanarkshire.

Welfare reform. Under-occupancy charge

Changes to the Welfare Benefits System means that if you receive Housing Benefit and have one bedroom more than you need, the local authority will reduce your Housing Benefit by 14%. If you have two spare bedrooms it will be reduced by 25%. This means that you have to pay the shortfall direct to us.

You can get information and guidance on Housing Benefit and welfare reform from our office or we will tell you where to get help from other local services available. Information is also available from the Government website on www.Gov.uk. or by contacting your local Jobcentre Plus office.

Universal Credit

Universal Credit is a single means-tested (based on your income and savings) welfare payment will replace Job Seekers Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance, Income Support and Tax Credits. This monthly payment will be paid direct into the claimant's bank account by electronic transfer and will include a housing element which may have previously been sent direct to your landlord as Housing Benefit. When your benefit changes to Universal Credit, you will have to make rent payments direct to us every month.

Problems paying your rent

If you are finding it difficult to pay your rent, you must contact us as soon as possible, to allow us to try and help you and make a suitable repayment arrangement. We will help you to check if you are getting the benefits you are entitled to. Help is also available on budgeting and on the best way to bring your rent up to date.



If you ignore our letters, phone calls or visits, we will take court action against you, which could lead to you being evicted from your home. In this situation we will issue a notice of proceedings advising that we plan to take legal action against you. We legally have to issue a copy of this notice to anyone living with you who is over 16 years of age.

It is important that you get independent advice if we take you to court as this action may lead to eviction.

Council tax

Council tax is separate from your rent and is paid to the local authority. You may qualify for a Council Tax reduction. Your local authority can give you more information.

Paying Your Rent

Money Advice Service

North and South Lanarkshire Councils' provide advice about money and debts.

North Lanarkshire Council hold an outreach service in our office twice a week. You should phone 01698 274690 for an appointment.

For South Lanarkshire tenants, contact your local Q & A office for an appointment.

Advice for Tenants and Residents Project (AFTAR) project

We are currently taking part in a joint project with other local RSLs and Motherwell Citizens Advice Bureau called the AFTAR project. This is a service for housing associations which offers extra support with rent and council tax arrears, housing benefit problems and also includes assistance with income maximisation.

We have extended this service to provide help with the various elements of welfare reform. Two new staff have been appointed in the roles of energy advisor and digital inclusion coach and they provide additional assistance with utility issues and IT problems including training requirements. If you want to see an advisor, please contact our office and we will arrange an appointment for you.

Credit unions

Why not find out if there is a credit union near you that you can join. A credit union is a non-profit organisation and if you are a member, you may be able to save or borrow money at a reasonable rate.



Confidentiality & Your Rights

Data protection

We are governed by data protection law as we process personal information as part of our work. We may sometimes reveal the information we hold (in certain circumstances) to other organisations. For example, we may release information to contractors (so they can come and do work on a property), to the police (to help in their investigations), to the local authority (to help them provide Housing Benefit and deal with council tax) or to the Scottish Housing Regulator (for the purposes of inspection and regulation). You can get more details from the Information Commissioner's website www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk

Access to information

Data protection law allows you to inspect the personal information we hold on you in our housing files. You will have to pay a charge of £10 for this. We will provide a copy of the information we hold within 40 days of you asking.

Power of attorney

If anyone has power of attorney on your behalf, we need a copy of this to allow us to discuss any tenancy matters with them.

Confidentiality

All information we hold on file about you is confidential. We cannot discuss your tenancy with anyone else unless you have given us permission beforehand. If you want to give permission for someone else to discuss tenancy matters on your behalf, you must tell us in writing.





Repairs to Your Home

Repairs to your home

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Repairs to your home

Your Scottish Secure Tenancy explains our responsibilities as your landlord. During your tenancy you can report a repair by phoning 01698 269119, by sending us a letter to 191 Brandon Street, Motherwell, ML1 1RS, by emailing enquiries@lanarkshireha.com or online through the contact form on our website at www.lanarkshireha.com

Your repair responsibilities

You must keep your home in a good and clean condition. You are responsible for taking care of your home including all decoration inside the home. You are responsible for any damage caused and we will charge you for any repairs due to neglect or carelessness by you or visitors to your home.

You must tell us about any repairs needed to your home. Please report faults promptly and provide access for our contractors.

Our repair responsibilities

As your landlord we have a legal duty to carry out certain repairs. We will maintain the structure and outside areas of the property including drains, gutters, roofs, windows, doors, paintwork and footpaths. We will keep in good repair any installations we provide to supply water, gas, electricity sanitation and space and water heating. We will also consult you about any changes to our maintenance policy which significantly affects you.

Repair priorities & Response times

Repairs are put into three categories:



Repair	Time to be carried out
Emergency repair	2 hours
Urgent repair	5 days
Routine repair	8 days

Repairs to your home

Emergency repairs

We class emergency repairs as those where the problem could cause danger to health or residents' safety or serious damage to the property.

Urgent repairs

We class a repair as urgent where the problem significantly affects your comfort or convenience, emergency repairs as those where the problem could cause danger to health or residents' safety or serious damage to the property.

Routine repairs

Routine repairs are less urgent and cover minor problems within the property and can wait a short time before being dealt with.

Access for repairs

We may need to inspect the problem before we instruct work and will tell you if this is necessary and will ask you the most suitable time for us or a contractor to call. We will do all we can to arrange for the repair to be done at a time to suit your needs.

Out-of-hours emergency repairs

We provide an out-of-hours emergency repair service (with a 24-hour call centre) to make sure we deal with all emergency repairs promptly. Our phone number (01698 269119) is redirected to call centre outwith office hours.

Gas servicing

We must carry out a gas safety service every year to keep to the law and make sure your home is safe. Our contractor will visit every 10 months and give you a gas safety certificate after the service is complete. You must keep this in a safe place.

We will tell you when the service visit is to be carried out and you must allow our contractor access on that date. If you do not allow the contractor into your home, we will issue a 24-hour notice, which may progress to court action to allow us to carry out this essential service.

Energy efficiency

We will display an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) in a property when new tenants move in, to advise them about the energy efficiency of the property. We aim to make sure you have a warm and affordable home, which is free from faults, is safe, well-maintained and energy efficient.

You may be able to save money on your utility bills by using some energy-saving tips to reduce the amount of fuel you use and benefit from lower bills. You may also be able to switch to a cheaper energy tariff or supplier. You can get information from the Energy Saving Trust on www.energysavingtrust.org.uk.

Shared TV aerial system

Most properties have a shared TV aerial system, which allows access to digital terrestrial channels. If you have any problems with the system, please check if your neighbour has a similar problem. If they do, contact our office to report the fault.

Void (empty) property standards

We set standards for letting empty properties to make you aware of the standards you can expect when you move into your home. We enclose an information leaflet with your tenancy pack to tell you about the standards. If you notice any repairs needed, please contact our office.

Right to repair regulations

We have to make sure certain minor repairs are carried out within a given timescale. If the repair is not carried out within this timeframe, you can arrange the repair yourself. This is called the 'Right to Repair' scheme. We have included a Right to Repair information leaflet within your tenancy pack. We also include details within our quarterly newsletter.

Alterations to your property

You must ask for our written permission if you want to alter your home in any way. You can get an application form from our office.

Repairs to your home

Right to compensation for improvements

If you have made alterations or improvements to your home, with our written permission, you may be entitled to compensation at the end of your tenancy. We have enclosed an information leaflet in your tenancy pack.

Planned maintenance

We have an agreed planned maintenance programme, which sets out the timescale for replacing fixtures and fittings in your home, including kitchen, bathrooms and central heating.

Cyclical maintenance

We also carry out regular service and maintenance work, including cleaning gutters and painting work.

Satisfaction with repairs

When a repair is completed to your home, we will ask you to tell us if you were satisfied with the work. We will send you a survey postcard, which we ask you to return to us, to help us assess the quality of the work.



Quality control

We expect our contractors to complete repairs to a high standard and aim to get repairs right first time. To assess the standard of work, we inspect a percentage of repairs once they are complete.

Rechargeable repairs

Your responsibilities for repairs are shown in your tenancy agreement. If the property is damaged, we may carry out the repair and charge you for this. You can arrange to meet the cost of this repair before the work is ordered or arrange to pay afterwards by contacting our office.



Getting Involved

We hope that you will get involved in our work as much as possible. We will give you the chance to play a part in setting our housing plans and services in the future.

We aim to give you up-to-date information in a format that is accessible and easy to understand. We issue regular newsletters to keep you informed and invite you to focus groups and our yearly tenant conference. You can take part at a level that suits your needs.

Tenant and resident groups

Starting up or getting involved in a tenant and resident group is an effective way to get involved in your area. Many groups have been set up by tenants who come together to try to improve their local community. Contact us if you want more information on residents' groups in your area. We are keen to offer groups as much support and encouragement as possible and Housing Services staff will help you set up and attend group meetings if you ask.

Consultation

We hope you find our communication with you to be good quality and informative. We will issue regular surveys, letters and newsletters to advise you about our plans and ask for your views on services and work in your area.

We will consult you each year about changes to your rent and ask you to provide feedback on our proposals. We also ask that you tell us how we can improve our service or consultation process.

Registered tenant organisations

Housing law gives you the opportunity to set up a registered tenant group with a recognised role in our decision-making process. Tenant groups need to apply to become registered and must meet certain conditions to qualify as a Registered Tenant Organisation (RTO). RTOs are independent organisations set up to represent tenants' housing and related interests.

We will help any group set up and provide guidance on the registration process if you ask



Applying for Rehousing

Applying for rehousing

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Common Housing Register

We are part of the North Lanarkshire Common Housing Register (CHR) and you can get an application form from our office, any NLC first-stop shop or RSL office within North Lanarkshire. To apply for rehousing in South Lanarkshire, you can get a home finder application form from South Lanarkshire Council offices or from their website.

www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk

Housing options

We want to make sure you have good-quality information and advice on your housing options to allow you to make informed choices. Our housing staff will be happy to help you with a housing application or you may want to get independent advice from other agencies. We can give you contact details for the most appropriate agency.

A number of options may be open to you if you need rehousing:

- We, the local authority or other RSLs can rehouse you: (you will need to fill in an application form to be assessed):
- If you want to move outwith your current local authority area, you can apply to the local authority or RSLs within your chosen areas:

Our allocation policy

Our allocation policy sets out how we allocate housing to make sure everyone has fair and open access to our housing list and assessment process.

We will assess your housing needs and treat you fairly in the allocation process. We allocate houses in a way that gives priority to those in greatest

Applying for rehousing

housing need, makes best use of available stock, creates as much choice as possible and helps to sustain communities. We use a points system in our selection process based on housing need. We give priority to those with the highest number of points.

Mutual exchange

If you want to exchange your home with another tenant - this is known as a mutual exchange and you may do this if you meet certain conditions. You can get an application form from our office and you may exchange with a local authority tenant. RSL tenant or tenant of a qualifying landlord.



Receiving support to stay in your home

If your home no longer suits your needs, you may want to move or have your home adapted to make it more suitable to your circumstances.

If you want to stay in your home, you can consider the following.

Disabled adaptations

If you are experiencing problems in your home and need help to meet your changing needs, you may benefit from some adaptations to your home. We aim to support you as your needs change and work with the local authority who will assess any modifications you need in your home to allow you to be independent and retain your privacy and dignity.

You should discuss any applications for adaptations directly with your local authority social work department.

Assistive technology

A range of specialist equipment is available if you need help or to alert people when you need help. Your local authority social work department will advise you what is available.

If you want to exchange homes, you must make sure:

- > your rent is up to date;
- > the property is the right size for you and the other person;
- > you have looked after the property and the condition is satisfactory;
and
- > you have not broken any conditions of your tenancy.

Applying to change your tenancy

If you want to change your tenancy from a joint tenancy to a single tenancy, or add someone to your tenancy, you need to apply to us for a change of tenancy. You can get an application form from our office.

Succession

If you die, the tenancy may pass to another person who has been living with you in your home, as long as they meet certain conditions. You can find information on this in your tenancy agreement, with further guidance available from our office.

Subletting, lodgers and assignation

You must get our permission if you want to sublet, take in a lodger or transfer the tenancy to someone else. You can get more information and application forms from our office.

Nomination arrangement with local authorities

We have a nomination arrangement in place with North Lanarkshire Council, which invites them to put forward people on their waiting list for 50% of our properties available for allocation.

For allocations in the South Lanarkshire area, we invite 100% nominations from the local authority.



Your Estate

Managing the estate

We have a number of estate services in place to make sure your neighbourhood is a well-maintained, attractive and safe place to live.



Estate caretaker service

We provide an estate caretaker service with weekly or fortnightly visits to your estate. The caretaker checks the area, picks up litter and gives us feedback on any problems. The caretaker may carry out some minor repairs including changing light bulbs in shared areas. The cost of this service is included in your service charge. We pay 25% of the service cost with the rest divided between all properties.

Car parking

We provide car parking for licensed and roadworthy vehicles. This will either be designated for your use or will be on a first come, first served basis. Some car parking will only be available for people who hold blue badges. Housing staff will tell you about this when you sign your tenancy.

Your Estate

Home security

You may avoid break-ins by taking a few simple precautions.

- Keep windows and doors locked when you are out:
- Keep valuables out of sight:
- Make sure door-entry systems are used effectively, keep close doors secure and do not allow access to strangers:
- Join a neighbourhood watch scheme:
- When on holiday, ask a neighbour or friend to check for post and move it away from your door:

Fire safety

The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service carry out free fire safety visits. You can arrange one by calling 08000731999 or text 'Fire' to 80800 from your mobile.

If you live in a close, we have a duty to make sure the building is free from any fire risk. We have assessors who check the premises including the structure and fire-safety facilities. You must not block any shared areas with prams, bicycles or any item which may cause an obstruction

Ground maintenance

We provide a ground maintenance service for shared areas within your estate and this includes cutting grass, maintaining shrub beds, pruning trees and weeding shared garden areas. If you live in a flat, we provide ground maintenance to the shared gardens.

Gardens

If you live in a house, you are responsible for maintaining your own front, side and back garden by making sure your grass is cut and your garden kept tidy. Housing staff carry out regular checks to assess garden conditions and this helps us with our garden competition awards too.

Cleaning closes and stairs

If you live in a block of flats, you must take your turn to clean the shared stairs, close and bin areas. You will do this on a rota with your neighbours. We will give you close cleaning rota cards if you ask. Housing staff carry out regular checks to monitor this and it also helps with our 'Best kept close' competition.

Bin areas

If we provide a shared bin area, you must take your turn of cleaning the bin store. We will give you a rota and you must make sure you keep to this rota.

Special collection service

If you need to get rid of large household items, you can phone your local authority for a special collection.

- North Lanarkshire Council provide three free collections each year – phone **01698 403110** to arrange a collection:
- South Lanarkshire Council, special collection: – phone **0303 123 1020**

Respect for others

You, those living with you, and your visitors, must not cause a nuisance or annoyance or act in an antisocial way towards your neighbours, other residents, visitors, our employees, agents and contractors.

Neighbour disputes

From time to time neighbour disputes can happen. This is often caused when members of the household or visitors behave in a way which causes nuisance to others. You must respect your neighbours and allow them to enjoy the right to live in a peaceful and safe environment.

Vandalism

You must report any vandalism on your estate to the police. If the incident is likely to result in an insurance claim, please make sure you receive an incident number from the police. Contact Police Scotland by phoning 101, or 999 in an emergency.

Useful contact numbers

Useful contact numbers, email addresses and websites are included in your tenancy pack.



Included in Your Pack

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Customer Care Standards

Complaints Leaflet

Tenancy end checklist

Void property standards

Right to Repair information leaflet

Right to Compensation for Improvement Leaflet

Allocation Information Leaflet

AFTAR Leaflet



LANARKSHIRE
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