

**SQUARED**  
TO THE POWER OF YOU



**TENANT'S  
HANDBOOK**

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## Section 1:

# WELCOME TO SQUARED

## Introduction

Welcome to Squared! We want you and your family to feel safe and secure in your new home and community, we understand that moving into a new home can be a busy and stressful time. Our aim is to support you as you move and provide you with quality housing and services.

This handbook sets out useful information about your tenancy with us and our services; your rights and responsibilities and how you can contact us. It's important that you keep this handbook so that you can refer to it.

We hope that you will be able to find the answer to your question in the pages of this handbook. If that isn't the case, do please get in touch with us.

## About Squared

Operating as Luton Community Housing until 2019, Squared and its legacy organisations have been providing social homes to rent in Luton and Central Bedfordshire since the 1960s.

In addition to our general needs homes, we also run supported housing, temporary accommodation and older age housing for residents over 55 years old.

You can find full details about Squared in a range of services on our website - [www.squared.org.uk](http://www.squared.org.uk).



## How to contact us

Your Housing Officer will give you their contact details including direct line and email address. If you need to contact them, please do so directly.

If you need to contact the office, our phone number, email and postal address are:

 **01582 391053**

 **office@squared.org.uk**

 **Bramingham Business Centre,  
Unit B2, Enterprise Way,  
Luton  
Bedfordshire  
LU3 4BU**

Our office opening hours are Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm.

## How to report a repair

Non urgent repairs can be reported 24/7 via the Tenant Portal - [my.squared.org.uk](https://my.squared.org.uk), you will receive sign up details in the post a few days after your tenancy start date. If you do not have access to the portal you can call and report your repairs directly to us by ringing us on **01582 391 053** or emailing [repairs@squared.org.uk](mailto:repairs@squared.org.uk).

For out of hours repairs emergency repairs, please ring **01582 391 053**.

Please see [page 15](#) for more details on reporting repairs.

## Section 2:

# Your tenancy with Squared

Your tenancy agreement is a legal contract between you and us. It sets out your responsibilities as a tenant and our responsibilities as your landlord. By signing it, we are both agreeing to all the terms and conditions listed in it.

### **As the tenant, your main responsibilities are to:**

- pay your rent in full and on time
- look after your home, including telling us as soon as any repairs are needed
- don't behave in a way that causes upset or distress to others living in the area
- give us the correct amount of notice if you want to end your tenancy. Your tenancy agreement will tell you how much notice you need to give.

### **As the landlord, our main responsibilities are to:**

- carry out all repairs to agreed timescales (except repairs that are the tenant's responsibility. See more details about this on page 15)
- give you the required notice of a rent increase
- insure the structure of your home (but not your personal belongings)

### **Supporting you in your new tenancy**

In the first 12 months of your tenancy, we will meet with you at least 3 times to see how you are settling in. If you are a new tenant of Squared, you will have a starter tenancy for the first 12 months. As long as you are keeping to the terms of your tenancy agreement, at the end of the 12 months, you will become an assured tenant.

You can contact your Customer Relationship Manager at any time during your tenancy if you are experiencing difficulties.

We will warn you in advance if you are breaking the terms of the tenancy agreement and are at risk of losing your home.



Section 3:

# Your rent

You are legally required to pay us rent, in exchange for living in your home. We have to make sure that we collect the rent that is due as it is that money that allows us to maintain and improve our homes.

If you do not pay your rent, you may be evicted from your home. Please get in touch with us immediately if you are having difficulty paying your rent. We will be able to guide you to the correct organisation who can offer free and independent advice.

**“ IF YOU CLAIM HOUSING BENEFIT OR UNIVERSAL CREDIT TO HELP PAY TOWARDS YOUR RENT, YOU MUST TELL US ABOUT ANY CHANGE IN YOUR INCOME, OR IN THE INCOME OF ANYONE LIVING IN YOUR HOME, AS THIS MAY AFFECT THE RENT THAT YOU NEED TO PAY. ”**

## Our responsibilities

We will review your rent once a year. The amount we can increase your rent is controlled by the government.

We will give you at least 4 weeks' notice in writing of any change to the rent that you need to pay.

You must tell us in advance if you want to have anybody else living in your home as this also may affect the rent that you will need to pay.

## Your responsibilities

You must pay your rent on time and in full each week. Please note that we can only allow you to pay rent monthly, if your account is one month in credit and you continue to pay one month in advance.





“ It is important that you claim any welfare benefits to which you are entitled to. We are able to check by using a benefits calculator [www.entitled2.co.uk](http://www.entitled2.co.uk) to ensure you are receiving what you should be and we can also help with any claims that may need to be made.”

### Service charges

Some homes have a charge for services such as maintenance of communal areas or centralised fire alarm systems. You will have been told about these charges when you signed your tenancy agreement with us. These charges are due to be paid alongside your rent and are reviewed on an annual basis

### How to pay your rent

We offer a range of ways for you to pay your rent. The easiest and safest way for you to pay rent is by Direct Debit. We can help you set this up. Our tenant portal is also very popular as it is quick, easy and safe and your payment is credited to your account instantly

We also accept payments by:

- standing order
- payment card (where you can make payments at many high street outlets and the post office)

Section 4:

# Your responsibilities, home and neighbourhood

## You must:

### Home

#### Financial



- ✓ pay your rent in full and on time. If you wish to pay fortnightly or monthly, you must do so by paying in advance
- ✓ If you claim housing benefit or universal credit tell us of any change in your financial circumstances as this may affect the rent that you have to pay
- ✓ get our permission in advance before you let anybody live at the property with you, even if only temporarily
- ✓ pay your council tax, gas, electricity, water and any other domestic bills
- ✓ take out insurance to protect your own belongings



#### Pets and animals:



- ✓ ask our permission before getting a pet (as not all homes are suitable). An application to keep a pet must be made to your Housing Officer
- ✓ keep pets under control and clear up any mess
- ✓ keep your home and garden clean to reduce the risk of pest and vermin infestation - you are responsible for any pests inside your home or garden



**Safety and security:**



- ✓ test your smoke detector and carbon monoxide detector regularly; changing the battery when needed (where the detectors are battery operated)
- ✓ allow us access for the yearly gas safety inspection and any other essential maintenance and servicing
- ✓ tell us if you're going to be away from your home for longer than 28 days
- ✓ pay for the replacement of any keys or fobs if you lose them

**Upkeep of your home:**



- ✓ tell us straight away about any repairs that are needed that are our responsibility
- ✓ get our permission before doing any home improvements
- ✓ keep your home well ventilated to reduce condensation
- ✓ allow access for annual property inspection

**Other:**



- ✓ ensure that your family, friends and visitors comply with all the terms of your tenancy agreement whilst in your home and the local neighbourhood
- ✓ report any tenancy or housing problems to us

**Gardens and outside areas**



- ✓ keep your garden clean, tidy and free from rubbish
- ✓ check with us before cutting down any trees - some are protected by special orders
- ✓ supervise children on balconies, outside and in communal areas



### **Communal areas**

- ✓ be considerate to other people when using all outside communal areas, including inside stairwells and walkways
  - ✓ ask permission before planting shrubs/flowers
- 



### **Behaviour**

- ✓ treat your neighbours, Squared staff and contractors with respect and consideration
- 

## **You must not:**



### **Your home**

- ✓ let anyone else live in your home - either with you or instead of you - without our prior permission
  - ✓ intentionally damage your home
  - ✓ run any kind of business from your home without our permission
- 



### **Your safety and security in the home**

- ✓ remove or tamper with any items installed in your own home or communal areas which are provided - and are a legal requirement to be in place – for your safety and that of your neighbours. This includes, smoke alarms, carbon monoxide alarms, window restrictors, door closers, fire extinguishers or fire blankets.
-

## Communal areas



- ✓ allow anyone who you do not know into shared parking areas, entrance halls, stairways or lifts
- ✓ vandalise or leave rubbish
- ✓ store any personal possessions - these may block access in an emergency or cause a fire (in the case of flammable materials)
- ✓ put bulky items (such as furniture, electrical goods, mattresses) in the bin stores or any communal areas
- ✓ keep untaxed or unroadworthy vehicles



## Behaviour

- ✓ behave in an antisocial way in your home or neighbourhood
- ✓ allow visitors or family to behave in an antisocial way in your home or neighbourhood
- ✓ verbally or physically abuse staff or contractors

## Anti-social behaviour includes, but is not limited to:

Anti-social behaviour includes, but is not limited to:



- ✓ physical violence, making threats or other behaviour or harassment resulting in danger to somebody else
- ✓ racial harassment or other hate crime
- ✓ arson or attempted arson
- ✓ using the home for unlawful purposes
- ✓ criminal behaviour including drug dealing or the use of illegal drugs
- ✓ noise including music, shouting and swearing and dogs barking
- ✓ littering
- ✓ problems associated with groups of people
- ✓ garden misuse and vandalism and damage to homes
- ✓ misuse of communal areas and public spaces including nuisance from vehicles and car repairs
- ✓ use of drones in communal areas

Section 5:

## Contents insurance

### Home contents insurance

Although we insure the structure of your home, you are responsible for insuring your possessions against accidental damage, fire and theft. Your possessions include furniture, clothing, appliances, carpets, curtains and flooring and anything you keep in the garden or shed.

Replacing your belongings could be very expensive. When taking out insurance, list your belongings which include all your appliances and white goods and estimate how much it would cost to replace these.

We would advise you to get three quotes to ensure that the insurance cover you decide on best meets your needs.

Although we cannot recommend any particular company, the National Housing Federation works with Thistle Tenant Risks, who provide My Home Contents Insurance. Their My Home scheme is designed for tenants and residents living in social and affordable housing, offering economical and flexible schemes for tenants.

Further details are at:  
[www.thistlemyhome.co.uk](http://www.thistlemyhome.co.uk)



Section 6:

# Getting Involved

## Why get involved?

We'd like to encourage you to get involved so that you can help us shape the services you receive. We know that people lead busy lives, with some having more time than others; we regularly review the ways in which you could work with us - we hope you will find something here that appeals to you.

## How can I get involved?

Let your Housing Officer know if you would like to:



**BECOME A  
VOLUNTEER**

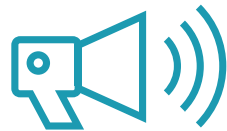


**LOOK FOR  
EMPLOYMENT**

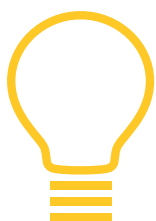


**BECOME A  
BOARD MEMBER**

**HAVE YOUR SAY  
ABOUT US**   
IMPROVING OUR SERVICES



**HAVE YOUR SAY ABOUT WHAT  
YOU THINK IS NEEDED IN  
YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY**



**WANT TO SHARE AN IDEA  
THAT YOU HAVE SEEN WORK  
SOMEWHERE ELSE**





Section 7:

# Improvements and adaptations

## Improvements

You must ask our permission before carrying out any type of improvement to your home such as replacing a kitchen or changing the electric fittings. Please request an alteration request form or you can fill this out on the tenant portal.

## You will need to tell us:



**Details of the work that you want to do**



**Who will be doing the work. We will need to see that the person doing the work is suitably qualified.**

If the work causes any damage, you will have to pay for the repairs.

Squared is not responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of the work that has been carried out.

## Adaptations

If you are disabled or have serious health issues, we may be able to adapt your home so you can live in it safely and independently.

Please contact us if you would like more information.

## Mobility issues

If you have mobility issues which could mean you have difficulty getting up and down the stairs or safely into a bath, we are able to install aids like extra handrails or grab rails, please contact us for more information.

## Section 8:

# Maintaining your home

### Reporting repairs in office hours

You can report repairs by the tenant portal, e-mail or telephone.

### Reporting an emergency repair out of office hours

We carry out emergency repairs outside of office hours where the situation is so serious that there would be a risk of harm or damage to people or property if we waited until the next working day.

If you have an emergency repair outside of office hours you can report this to our emergency repairs team on **01582 391 053**.

Out of office hours, we will only carry out repairs to make you and your family safe overnight – for example, serious water leaks, gas or electrical problems or to secure your home. We may carry out a temporary repair and then return later to complete the repair.

### Repairs we can charge you for

We will charge you for any damage you, your family or visitors cause to your home.

### Repairs you are responsible for

There are some minor repairs or jobs that are your responsibility, for example changing light bulbs or replacing toilet seats. Examples of other repairs that tenants often ask us to carry out but are your responsibility are:



REPLACING LOCKS AND KEYS IF YOU LOSE YOUR KEYS



MINOR REPAIRS TO HINGES, HANDLES AND CATCHES



MINOR CRACKS TO PLASTER

**A full list is available in your repairs handbook**

## Section 9:

# How quickly will we complete your repair?

### Emergency repairs – within 24 hours

These are repairs which threaten your health, safety or security or could cause significant damage to your home, including flooding, total loss of electrics or water, damage where your home is not secure, complete boiler failure. (We may have to return at a later date to complete a full repair.)

### Urgent repairs – within 7 calendar days

These are repairs that cause inconvenience, including minor leaks and blockages, faulty electrical fittings and leaking roofs.

### Routine repairs – within 28 calendar days

These are non-urgent repairs which do not pose a risk to health or safety, including repairs to outside walls, repairing and replacing individual kitchen units, floor tiles, guttering and downpipes, fencing,

### Vulnerable tenants

We may deal more urgently with some repairs for vulnerable residents. Please ask us for more information.

### Maintenance

We have a planned maintenance programme of maintenance for bigger items to ensure that your home remains safe and in good condition over a number of decades. Examples of items covered by the planned maintenance programme are external painting, re-wiring and replacement

of kitchen and bathrooms.

We will let you know when your home is to be included in the planned programme.

All our staff and contractors carry identification. Always ask for ID from anyone visiting your home to complete a repair or inspection.

**Section 10:**

# Ending your tenancy

## No longer want or need your home?

If you decide that you no longer want or need to live in your home, you must:



give us the required notice in writing, as stated in your tenancy agreement



allow us to inspect your home before your tenancy ends



leave your home and garden clean and tidy. We will charge you for any damage that you have caused or any belongings or rubbish that you leave behind.



make sure that your rent and any other monies that you owe us are paid up to date by the time your tenancy ends



return the keys to us by 11.00 on the Monday following the end of your tenancy, or you will be charged another week's rent



remove all your belongings and rubbish from your home, including the attic, garden and any outbuildings.

## Ending a joint tenancy

If you are a joint tenant, the tenancy can be ended by just one of the joint tenants. If you both want the tenancy to end, please follow the steps above.

If only one of you wishes to end the tenancy, please contact your Housing Officer to talk about this.

## Section 11:

# Compliments, comments, complaints

## Comments and compliments

We value any comments and compliments on our service as these also help us to understand what you like, as well as what could be improved.

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## Complaints

We try to always give excellent service, but we know that sometimes things go wrong. It's important that we know if you are not happy with a service or if you believe that you have been treated unfairly.

We have a complaints procedure so that you can tell us when we have not delivered services as we have promised to do. Our staff are trained to listen and resolve any concerns or queries you may have.

You can see our full complaints procedure via the Tenant Portal or on our website. If you would like a printed copy, any member of Squared staff will be able to send it to you.

## What Happens When You Make a Complaint?

### Stage 1:

Our experience shows that the best people to put matters right are the staff who are your first point of contact for day-to-day services. If they are not able to resolve your complaint, you may ask for it to be dealt with at Stage 2.

### Stage 2:

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of Stage 1, you can ask for the complaint to be referred to the Strategic Team.

Customers have the right at any stage in the complaints process to access the Housing Ombudsman service for support and advice ([www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk), tel 0300 111 3000).

The decision of the Ombudsman is final.



Section 12:

# Your safety

## Gas

If you smell gas, call the free phone gas emergency number on **0800 111 999**.

### In the event of an emergency:

**Do not  
smoke  
or light  
matches**

**Do not turn  
electrical  
switches on  
or off**

**Open doors  
and  
windows**

**Turn off  
the meter at  
the control  
handle  
unless the  
meter is in  
the cellar**

**Call the  
National  
Gas  
Emergency  
number  
(0800 111  
999)**

For yours and your family's safety we will inspect and service your gas boiler and appliances once a year. It is very important that you allow us access when we get in touch about this. Failure to comply could result in us applying to the courts for an injunction to enter your property, this can be a very costly exercise and you will be responsible for all legal fees that are paid.

## Fire

We have fitted fire detection alarms in your home for your safety. It is your responsibility to test the alarms weekly and to replace the batteries when needed. It is also your responsibility to keep all exits within your home clear. As soon as you notice a fault with a smoke detector you must advise us immediately.

We will ensure fire risk assessments are carried out for all communal

areas. You must not store any personal belongings – for example washing or children's toys - in communal areas. These may be a fire hazard and also may block an escape route in an emergency.

When fire breaks out, it can spread quickly. You need to act quickly. Preparation can save valuable seconds. A rehearsed fire escape drill can make all the difference. Make sure you know where your fire exits are and plan an escape route.

### In the event of a fire breaking out:

Sound the alarm

Phone the fire brigade from outside (Dial 999 or 112)

Close all doors behind you as you leave

**GET OUT AND STAY OUT!**

If your clothes catch fire, “Stop, Drop and Roll”

### If you are prevented from leaving by smoke, heat or fire:

Seal off the spaces in the door openings with sheets or clothing or a sheet to stop smoke from entering.

Always keep down on the floor where the air is cleaner and cooler.

Go to the window, open it and call for help.

The window may be the quickest and safest way for the fire brigade to rescue you.

## Carbon monoxide

Carbon monoxide is a colourless, odourless, poisonous gas which can kill you. Early symptoms include nausea, tiredness and headaches. Carbon monoxide poisoning may arise due to a faulty heating system, a gas boiler not being serviced or not enough ventilation.

To avoid carbon monoxide poisoning:

- Allow us access to carry out the annual gas safety check
- Do not block air vents, flues or chimneys
- Keep rooms well ventilated
- If you have a carbon monoxide alarm installed you can test this like you would a smoke alarm and inform us if there is a fault with it

## Electricity

We will test your home’s electricity supply and wiring every 5 years. You should make sure that your own electrical equipment is safe and in good working order.

## Winter safety in your home

If you are going away over winter, please keep your heating on low, at least at 10 degrees celsius, to prevent pipes from freezing and bursting. Alternatively, you could turn off the water at the stopcock, open all taps (including showers) and flush all toilets before you leave.

Section 13:

# Useful contacts

## Emergencies

Ambulance / Police / Fire Brigade **999 / 112**

### Gas safety

To report a gas or carbon monoxide emergency, or if a pipeline is struck (even if no gas leak has occurred) call **0800 111 999** - 24 hours a day

### Squared – out of office hours repairs emergency line

To report an emergency repair when our office is closed – **01582 391 053**

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## Housing advice



**0808 278 7847**

Citizens Advice Bureau



**01582 481000**

Luton Law Centre

.....

## Health and wellbeing



**111**

Medical advice or treatment when it is not an emergency



**01582 708999**

Mental health services  
East London  
Foundation Trust



**01582 343230**

Penrose Synergy  
or

[luton@penrose.org.uk](mailto:luton@penrose.org.uk)



Freephone  
**0808 2000 247**

National Abuse Helpline



**01582 416783**

Luton all  
Women's Centre



**01582 548888**

Family  
Information Service



Follow us



Instagram



**Registered Office:**

Bramingham Business Centre, Unit B2, Enterprise Way, Luton, Bedfordshire, LU3 4BU

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