

2009

Resident's Handbook



“Working with local communities”

Welcome

Welcome to your Solon home

This handbook is a guide to our services, your rights and your responsibilities and we hope you will find it useful while you are a resident with Solon. Please keep it safe as you may need to refer to it throughout your tenancy.

We would like to thank the members of the Residents' Forum for their help in producing this handbook.

If you would like any more information, we have several leaflets available from our office and copies of the association's key policies can be made available on request.

Disclaimer

The information in this handbook was correct at the time of publication and reflects current legislation and Solon's most up to date policies. If there are any changes to our services, we will let you know by writing to you or through articles in our newsletter.

This handbook includes information on the following:

- Solon's aims and how it is run
- Your rights and responsibilities as a Solon resident
- Practical advice on living in your home
- Rents and other charges
- Ways you can get involved
- Options for moving on
- Useful telephone numbers.

The **Contents** pages will help you find the relevant section when you need it. If you are moving into your home, **Section 3** is a good place to start.

Please contact us if you need this document in another language, or in large print, Braille or audio tape.

Last Updated: February 2009

If you would like any of our information translated into your language or would like an interpreter to help you discuss any issues with our staff then please let us know and we will arrange this for you.

ARABIAN

إذا أردت الحصول على أي من المعلومات مترجمة إلى لغتك الأصلية أو احتجت إلى مترجم شفهي لمساعدتك في مناقشة أي من المواضيع مع أي من موظفينا يرجى إبلاغنا وسنقوم بتوفير ذلك لك.

BENGALI

আমাদের যে কোন তথ্য আপনার নিজের ভাষায় চাইলে অথবা কোন বিষয় নিয়ে আমাদের কর্মচারীদের সাথে আলোচনায় সাহায্য করার জন্য একজন ইন্টারপ্রিটার চাইলে দয়া করে আমাদের বলুন এবং আমরা আপনার জন্য তার আয়োজন করবো।

CHINESE

如 果 你 有 任 何 資 料 翻 譯 成 你 們 的 語 言 或 想 與 我 們 的 人 員 討 論 一 些 問 題 ， 請 替 你 們 安 排 。

GUJARATI

જો તમને અમારી કોઈ પણ માહિતીનું તમારી ભાષામાં ભાષાંતર કરીને જોઈએ કે કોઈ પણ બાબતો વિશે અમારા સ્ટાફ સાથે વાતચીત કરવા માટે દુભાષિયાની મદદ જોઈએ તો મહેરબાની કરીને અમને જણાવજો જેથી અમે તમારા માટે તેની વ્યવસ્થા કરીશું.

HINDI

यदि आपको हमारी किसी जानकारी का अपनी भाषा में अनुवाद चाहिए, य आपको हमारे कर्मचारियों से किसी विषय पर बातचीत करने के लिए अनुवादक की जरूरत है, तो हमें बताइए और हम आपके लिए इसका इंतजाम करेंगे।

KOSOVAN / ALBANIAN

Nese ndonje prej informacionit do ta deshironi te perkthyer ne gjuhen tuaj apo nese do te donit nje perkthyes gojor per tju ndihmuar per te diskutuar ndonje prej ceshtjeve me stafin tone ,atehere ju lutem na e beni te ditur duke na thene keshtu qe mund te sigurojme nje gje te tille per ju.

PUNJABI

ਜੇਕਰ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਸਾਡੀ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਦਾ ਤਜਰਮਾ ਤੁਹਾਡੀ ਆਪਣੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿੱਚ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਜਾਂ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਦੋਭਾਸ਼ੀਏ ਦੀ ਜ਼ਰੂਰਤ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਜੋ ਉਹ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਵਿਸ਼ਿਆਂ/ਚੀਜ਼ਾਂ ਨਾਲ ਤੁਹਾਡੀ ਮਦਦ ਕਰ ਸਕੇ ਜਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਬਾਰੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਸਾਡੇ ਸਟਾਫ ਨਾਲ ਗੱਲਬਾਤ ਕਰਨਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ। ਅਸੀਂ ਤੁਹਾਡੇ ਵਾਸਤੇ ਇਸ ਦਾ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧ ਕਰਾਂਗੇ।

SOMALI

Hadii aad rabto qoraaladayada wargelinta ah in laguugu tarjumo afkaaga, ama aad rabto qof turjubaan ah oo kaa caawiya sidii aad arimahaaga ugala hadli lahayd shaqaalahayaga, fadlan noosoo sheeg si aanu kuugu diyaarino.

URDU

اگر آپ کو ہماری دی ہوئی کسی بھی معلومات کا اپنی زبان میں ترجمہ چاہیے ہو یا آپ کو ہمارے خطے کے ساتھ کسی مسئلے کے بارے میں صلاح مشورہ کرنے کے لئے ترجمان کی ضرورت ہو تو براہ مہربانی ہمیں ضرور بتائیں، ہم آپ کے لئے اس کا بندوبست کر دیں گے۔

VIETNAMESE

Nếu quý vị muốn bất cứ tài liệu gì dịch ra ngôn ngữ của quý vị, hay quý vị muốn thông dịch viên giúp quý vị thảo luận với nhân viên chúng tôi về bất cứ điều gì thì xin quý vị cho chúng tôi biết để chúng tôi thu xếp điều đó cho quý vị..

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Section 1

Introducing Solon



Introducing Solon

What is Solon?

Solon is a charitable housing association, established in 1974 to develop and manage good quality, affordable rented housing for people in housing need.

Solon now provides over 1100 homes. The majority are located in Bristol and South Gloucestershire.

In the early days Solon's focus was on improving older houses and bringing empty properties back into use. Since the 1990s we have been able to expand into providing new build homes and have a better mix of properties. Solon also works in partnership with a range of voluntary organizations that manage supported housing on its behalf.

As a Registered Social Landlord', Solon is monitored by the Tenant Services Authority, the independent regulator for affordable housing in England. The Homes and Communities Agency for England is the main body that funds the development of new housing and regeneration programmes.

What are Solon's Aims?

Solon aims to provide high quality affordable housing to meet a range of housing and social needs, focusing on the inner city community of Bristol and surrounding areas. The association achieves this by working in partnership with residents and other agencies and by prudent financial and property management.

A key aim is to give you an efficient and cost effective housing management and maintenance service. Solon is keen to improve the service by setting high standards and involving residents in the management of their homes.

Achieving Equal Opportunities

Solon is committed to providing housing and services on a fair and equitable basis, and to ensuring equality of opportunity in all its activities.

Solon acknowledges that in society, certain groups and individuals are on occasion unfairly and unlawfully discriminated against. The association is committed to taking positive steps to help redress the effects of unfair discrimination and disadvantage and to actively promote equality to ensure that equal opportunity becomes an integral feature of all its activities.

The association's equal opportunities policy describes in more detail how these principles are applied and is available on request or it can be downloaded from Solon's website www.solonswha.co.uk

How is Solon run?

The Board of Management is responsible for the overall management, control and direction of Solon. Members of the Board are volunteers who give their time on a voluntary basis and bring expertise and skills from a range of backgrounds. They meet regularly throughout the year and a public Annual General Meeting is held each year. The Chief Executive and Managers of each department report on progress and current issues to the Board meetings.

Which department?

Staff in the following departments carry out the day to day running of the association:

1. **Customer Services** – dealing with the allocation of housing, tenancy issues, rents and resident involvement.
2. **Asset Management** – providing the responsive repairs service, improvement works and gas servicing.
3. **Supported Housing** – Monitoring the externally managed supported housing projects, tenancy support and the direct management of Solon's homeless hostel in Bath, Rackfield House.
4. **Finance** – responsible for financial control and finance administration.
5. **Development** – Responsible for the development of new homes.
6. **Central Services** – dealing with personnel, recruitment, training and office administration.

Contacting Solon

Your Housing Officer is your key point of contact for any tenancy matter. Housing Officers have responsibility for homes in certain areas. They deal with the letting of properties, tenancy agreement issues, advice on benefits and services from other agencies, liaison with housing benefit, rent arrears, disputes, transfers and exchanges.

The maintenance team deals with repair requests – for more information see Section 3 on Getting Repairs Done.

If you require an emergency repair outside office hours you will be given a contact number to call a contractor directly. It is most important that this service is only used in genuine emergencies, such as complete power failures or where your safety is at risk!

Our office address is:

1 Newfoundland Court
St Paul Street
Bristol
BS2 8AN

Tel No: 0117 9244071
Fax No: 0117 9248816
Maintenance Line: 0117 9167777
e-mail: solon@solonswha.co.uk
Website: www.solonswha.co.uk

The office is open 9am – 5pm Monday to Friday.

Our office is wheelchair accessible and we have hearing loops installed.

Section 2

Your Tenancy Agreement



Your Tenancy Agreement

The Tenancy Agreement

All new residents of the association will be given a Starter Tenancy which reduces their security of tenure for the first year only, unless extended for a further period. An exception to this will be in cases where the incoming resident has previously held an assured tenancy with another Registered Social Landlord (RSL) and where their tenancy has been confirmed to have been conducted in a satisfactory manner. In such cases these residents will be given an Assured Non-Shorthold Tenancy for which the rights are laid down in the Housing Acts 1988 and 1996.

If your tenancy started before 15 January 1989 you will have a Secure Tenancy. The same applies if you transferred from a tenancy that started before that date or you carried out a mutual exchange with a Secure Solon resident. The main differences for a Secure tenancy are greater security of tenure under the Housing Act 1988 and the right to a Fair Rent set by the Rent Officer service (see Section 6 for more detail).

Joint Tenancies

We would normally enter into a new tenancy with one person, however, if you wish your partner, or another person, to be included you may be able to sign up as joint residents. This gives equal rights and responsibilities for the rent and other terms of the tenancy.

If one of the joint residents gives notice to end the tenancy this will end the entire tenancy. However in the case of a relationship breakdown, for example, it is possible for the outgoing resident to sign a deed of release, releasing them from the terms and conditions of the tenancy therefore handing full responsibility for the tenancy over to the remaining resident.

Before deciding to enter a joint tenancy it is advisable to ask your Housing Officer for advice on the implications.

Residents of temporary housing will have an Assured Shorthold Tenancy for which there are various differences in rights since occupation is only short-term.

What is in Your Tenancy Agreement?

The agreement is a contract spelling out the duties of Solon as landlord and your rights and responsibilities as a resident. It gives information on your rent and service charge, as well as the legal grounds on which Solon is entitled to seek repossession.

The main obligations of Solon are:

- To allow you peaceful occupation of your home
- To keep the property in good repair
- To keep the exterior and any communal areas in a good state of decoration
- To provide you with a responsive housing management service
- To make our policies and procedures accessible to you when requested.

Your main responsibilities as a resident are:

- To pay the rent and service charge as it falls due
- To use the premises as your principle home without causing nuisance or annoyance to others
- To keep your home in clean and good decorative order
- Not to allow the property to become overcrowded
- To report promptly any repairs for which Solon is responsible and give access for us to carry out the work.
- To give the association at least 4 weeks notice, in writing, when you wish to end your tenancy

Your main additional rights are:

- To make improvements or alterations with Solon's permission
- To be consulted by the association on changes to the tenancy agreement or any substantial changes to housing management or maintenance policies
- To exchange by mutual assignment with another social housing resident with consent

Your tenancy agreement

- To pass on your tenancy after your death to a qualifying family member
- To compensation for the association's failure to repair in line with certain criteria
- To complain to the Independent Housing Ombudsman if you are not satisfied after going through Solon's complaints procedure.

Further information on the above is given in the relevant sections of this Handbook.

We will also issue you with a copy of the Housing Corporation's Residents' Charter - this explains your rights in more detail.

Lodgers and Subletting

You have a right to take in lodgers or sublet part of your home as long as you get Solon's permission first. Your request will only be refused for good reason - for example, if it would result in overcrowding. You will be responsible for ensuring that your lodgers and sub-tenants do not breach any tenancy conditions and that they leave the property if you end your tenancy. We recommend that you ask for further advice on the potential rights of any lodgers or sub-tenants and how they may affect your housing benefit entitlement.

You must not sublet the whole property or hand the tenancy over to anyone else. In certain circumstances Solon may agree to a 'caretaker' agreement, where prior permission is given for someone else to live in and look after your home while you are away for a temporary period (for instance while working or studying). You will remain responsible for rent payments and the other conditions of tenancy.

Passing on Your Tenancy

On your death your partner has a 'right of succession' to take over the tenancy as long as:

- He / she has been living in your home immediately before your death, or
- It is his / her main or only home, and
- The tenancy has not previously been passed on.

Solon will also agree to allow any partner (including same sex partners) or other members of your household to take over the tenancy on your death provided that:

- He / she has lived with you throughout the 12 month period before your death
- The tenancy was not previously passed on and that he / she makes a written claim for the tenancy within a month of your death.

If there is more than one eligible person making a claim, Solon shall decide who will take over the tenancy.

Section 3

Living in Your Home



Living in Your Home

Moving in

We hope moving into your new home goes smoothly, there is a lot to remember and to be done, below is a list of some of the main things you will need to arrange when you first move in:

- Informing the gas, electricity and water companies of the date that you moved into the property and arranging for meters to be installed if none are present.
- Ensuring that any gas cooker, or fire, is fitted by a CORGI registered tradesman
- Arranging for your own TV aerial to be fitted if there is not one already there (Solon will normally only supply TV aerials for flats where a communal aerial is shared or on a newly built property).

Your Housing Officer should be able to give further advice about the heating system, where to find the water and gas stop taps and fuse box, and whether the electricity is operated by a 'key' meter or payable in advance.

We aim to check all gas installations and appliances before you move in, but if the supply has been cut off it will be necessary to arrange with you to do this as soon as you have moved in. This is most important and we ask you to co-operate with us to arrange a suitable time.

Solon will normally ensure that your new home is in a reasonable state of decoration before you move in however, on some occasions where decorations are poor we will offer new tenants vouchers for decorating materials, which can be traded in locally. This will be agreed with you when you first accept the tenancy.

Your Keys

Most Solon locks are 'best mastered' to give you additional security. This means that only Solon can order additional sets of keys. If you lose a key please let us know straightaway as it can take up to 2 weeks for a new key to be delivered once ordered. You will also be asked to pay for any additional or replacement keys when ordered or upon collection.

If you have been issued with any other key which is not within the 'best mastered' system you will be responsible for arranging duplicates. In addition to this if you lock yourself out of your home you will need to arrange for a locksmith to gain entry and you will be responsible for all associated costs.

Solon's insurance only covers the structure of the building. We strongly advise you to take out your own contents insurance to cover yourself against loss, theft or damage to your

possessions. If you require any further information on this, please see your housing officer.

You and Your Neighbours

Getting along with your neighbours will be of benefit to you and will enable you to have peace and enjoyment whilst in your home. Noise such as loud music or TVs is one of the most common causes of friction between neighbours. So please ensure that you, your family and visitors show consideration for others, especially late at night or when windows are open during the summer months. Solon will treat complaints of continued noise as a serious matter and such action will be considered anti-social behaviour and as such this behaviour may be considered as a direct breach of your tenant conditions.

You should also be aware that Bristol City Council Environmental Health Officers also have powers to take enforcement action in serious cases.

If you are on the receiving end of continued noise problems or are in dispute with neighbours, your Housing Officer can give advice. If both parties are in agreement one option may be to arrange for you and your neighbour to resolve the problem with the help of a mediation service (**more information is given at the end of section 3**)

Pets

You are welcome to keep pets as long as they are kept under control and do not disturb your neighbours. If you want to put in a cat flap it cannot be put into any door that opens into a shared entrance. You will need to reinstate the hole you have made before you move to another home.

You do need to ask permission for a dog (or another animal that might cause a nuisance). Consent will normally be given unless your home is a flat or maisonette with no separate entrance or access to a garden. This permission can be withdrawn if we receive complaints about the animal.

Rubbish

Your local Council is responsible for provision of dustbins (or bin bags if appropriate). Please make sure you put your rubbish out on the correct day.

In addition to the usual weekly rubbish collection, your Council may operate a regular recycling collection in your area. In Bristol this is known as the "black box" scheme and collects paper, bottles and jars, cans oil and old clothes or textiles. You can also help the recycling effort by using a compost bin in your garden.

Larger items of rubbish such as broken furniture or old carpets should be taken to the local tip or you can arrange for it to be collected by the Council (see useful telephone numbers at the back of the handbook).

Pests

If you have problems with mice, fleas, wasp nests or other pests in your home, we regret that we cannot deal with these for you. You should contact the Council's Environmental Health Department who can give advice or arrange for pest control officers to visit to help get rid of them.

Harassment

Solon's tenancy agreement includes a clause in which you agree not to harass or cause offence to others on the grounds of race, colour, religion, sex, sexual orientation, disability or any other reason.

You are also responsible for the behavior of your household and any visitors to your home in complying with this condition.

If you are on the receiving end of racial or other harassment, please report this to your Housing Officer **immediately**. They will investigate, give advice and contact other support agencies if appropriate. Solon will also give priority to any repairs or graffiti removal that result from acts of harassment.

Solon treats such matters seriously and will take swift action to try to prevent further incidences of harassment. If the harassment is by another Solon tenant, we will act to enforce the tenancy agreement which may result in legal action being taken against the perpetrator.

Racial Harassment Reporting Centres

Throughout Bristol there is a network of Racial Harassment Reporting Centres where any racially motivated incident can be reported. Incidences of Racial Harassment can be reported to Support against Racist Incidents (SARI) who record the incident and take action if required. Sari also offer support to those who have suffered racial harassment and will liaise with your landlord and other stakeholders on the victims behalf.

If you are suffering from racial harassment or are aware of any members of your family, friends etc. suffering, please report it so that a record can be made and action taken where appropriate.

You can use this service whether you are a tenant or not and you can remain anonymous if you wish. No action will be taken against the perpetrator(s) without your prior consent but by

reporting incidents a clear understanding of the extent of racial harassment can be established and resources targeted to prevent it.

Your cooperation is required in order to help us stamp out this unacceptable form of harassment once and for all.

Mediation

The association has an arrangement with Bristol Mediation Service to help resolve disputes between individuals or between tenants and the association. They work entirely independently from Solon and all contact is kept confidential. The service is provided free to our tenants.

If you feel that mediation would help you resolve a current problem please ask your Housing Officer about this or contact Bristol Mediation directly (see useful telephone numbers), advising them that you are a Solon tenant.

Emergencies and Precautions in Your Home

If you have an emergency in your home read the following checklists before taking any action. You may be able to resolve some simple issues by following this advice. If this is not possible you may need to contact Solon and / or another organisation. For further info also see **Section 4 – Emergencies out of hours.**

Gas leaks

- Do not switch any electrical appliances and/or lights on or off.
- Turn off the mains lever at the meter.
- Open windows and doors to get rid of the gas.
- Call Transco on 0800 111 999 or your gas suppliers emergency number.
- Contact Solon's repair line – 0117 9167777

Burst Pipes

- Turn off the water at the stop tap.
- Try to contain the leak with rags, bowls, etc, as best you can.
- Drain off water from the cold taps into saucepans and the kettle so that you have some water to use.
- Drain off water from the hot taps into buckets/bowls (but don't use it for drinking)
- Turn off the gas boiler and water/immersion heater.
- If the leak is near to electrical fittings switch them off at the mains.
- Remove any belongings likely to be affected by the leak.
- Contact Solon's repair line – 0117 9167777

Electricity

- If the electricity trips, more often than not it's because of a blown light bulb or faulty appliance.
- Switch off all lights and unplug electrical appliances.
- Reset the trip fuses on the fuseboard.
- Switch on each light to see if any don't come on because of a blown bulb. Change the bulb if necessary.
- Plug in each appliance one at a time to see if any cause the system to re-trip.
- Have the appliance checked and repaired before re-using it.
- If all appliances are individually working, make sure that you have not overloaded the circuit by having too many items on at once. Electric fires, kettles and washing machines in particular use a lot of electricity and if all used at the same time can trip a correctly installed, sensitive system.

Cold Weather precautions

- If you go away and anticipate a cold snap it is sensible to leave your heating on at a very low level.
- If you are away for a long period shut off the stop tap before you go and consider draining down the system by opening the taps.

Condensation

- Keep moisture within the property to an absolute minimum.
- Close bathroom and kitchen doors when bathing and cooking.
- Open bathroom and kitchen windows when you've finished, but keep the door closed to allow the steam/moisture to escape without cooling the whole property
- Use lids on saucepans when cooking.
- Always use your extractor fans if fitted. Call Solon's repair line if they do not work - 0117 9167777
- Do not use a tumble drier unless the vent tube goes to the outside through a window or a purpose made vent.
- Keep your boiler on at a very low level constantly, rather than switching it on full for a short time and off again allowing your home to cool down.
- Close the curtains and doors in rooms that you don't use as well as those that you do.
- Open the windows a little at night or if you can't, for a short time each morning.
- Wipe up spills and unavoidable condensation as soon as possible.
- Do not use calor gas or paraffin heaters.
- Minimise the time that you dry clothes on radiators or clothes horses inside your home and try to do it only when you can have the window in the room open and the door closed.
- Ask for advice and a copy of our condensation leaflet.

Flats and Maisonettes with Communal Areas and Gardens

In most Solon properties with communal areas you have joint responsibility with your fellow residents for keeping them clean and tidy. In some larger properties Solon employs a cleaner and a service charge is included for this in the rent. Similarly you will share responsibility with your fellow residents for the upkeep of any communal garden unless Solon provides a gardening service.

Solon will organise the redecoration of the communal areas – this is normally done at the same time as external painting.

Living in a shared building involves particular consideration for the other occupants. Please be aware of how noise can travel to those above and below you, and that slamming entrance doors can often be heard throughout the building.

Your neighbours will also appreciate your co-operation in keeping the communal bin areas clean and tidy.

Security can also be an issue in shared buildings – it is advisable not to let anyone into the communal area before confirming their identity and the purpose of their visit. If a caller says they are visiting another flat whose occupants are not in, they should be asked to return later.

Halls and stairways are escape routes in case of fire – in the interest of everyone's safety please make sure they are kept free from obstruction. Some doors will have automatic closers, please do not remove these or prop the doors open as they are installed to prevent the spread of fire and give you a better chance of escape.

Many of the properties with communal access have the added protection of a fire alarm system triggered by a break-glass call point or smoke / heat detectors. There is usually a control panel in the downstairs hallway which should be left switched on at all times. These can be reset after a false alarm and our maintenance section can give advice on how to do this. Solon will arrange for these to be checked regularly.

The communal areas of all our flats will be inspected at least once a year. Improvements, such as a door entry system or caretaking service, may be suggested but nothing will change unless all residents affected agree. Such improvements will be subject to an additional service charge, but full details will always be given before any decision to proceed is made.

Think Green

At Solon we are committed to reducing our impact on the environment. We aim to provide our residents with support and information on current environmental issues and what each of us can do to help reduce our impact on the environment.

There are plenty of different things we can all do to help, including:

- buying energy efficient appliances
- switching off electrical appliances at the wall
- walking, cycling or using public transport
- holidaying closer to home

Energy Efficiency in the home

It's easy to remember the phrase Reduce, Reuse, Recycle but here are some realistic tips and ideas you can easily implement at home:

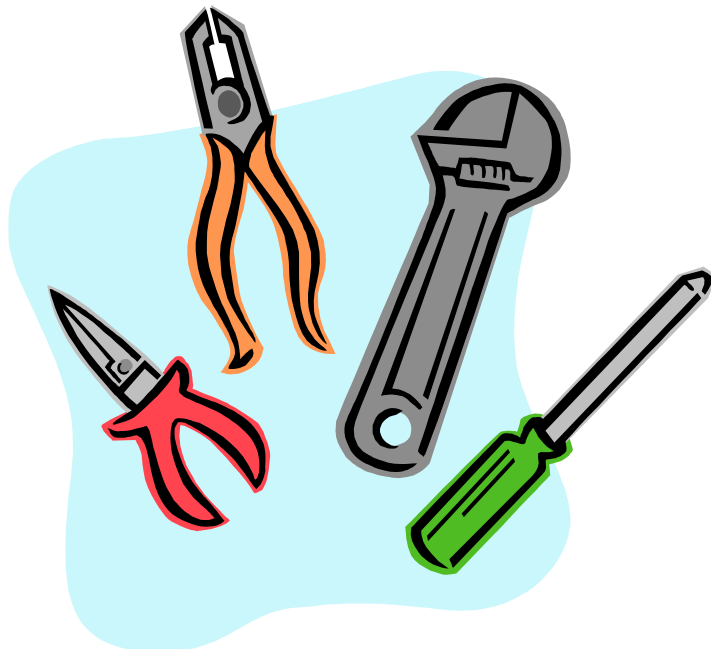
- **Reduce your waste** - by recycling. Nine out of ten UK residents now have access to a doorstep recycling collection. Contact your local council waste department to order a recycling bin. Don't forget to recycle the waste from all the bins in your house! You can also consider getting a compost bin for the garden.
- **Furniture recycling** - There are plenty of charities in Bristol and the surrounding area who want your unwanted reusable furniture items. Contact The Space Trust on 0117 9555755 who can collect for free, or The Sofa Project on 0117 9543567, or Emmaus on 0117 9540886. If your furniture cannot be reused you can take it to your local Household Recycling Centre (contact your council to find your nearest one) or your local council may be able to come and collect it. Bristol City Council will collect up to three items in one go for a small charge – you can get one free collection every six months if you are on a qualifying benefit.
- **Reduce unwanted mail** - Many organisations now offer secure online billing rather than sending a paper bill each month. Eliminate junk mail by registering for free with the [Mail Preference Service](#) to have your name, as well as those of previous residents, removed from direct mail lists.
- **Reuse where you can** – Such as reusing your plastic bags as often as you can or buying a stronger reusable shopping bag. Donate unwanted items such as clothes, books, CDs and furniture to charity shops or join a gift community such as [Freecycle](#) which you can find on line at www.freecycle.org.

- **Save Water** - Remember to turn off the tap while brushing your teeth, always fully load the dishwasher or washing machine (if you have one), use a shower timer to help use less water, wash your fruit and veg in a bowl rather than under a running tap, then you can use any left over water for watering plants. Also remember to contact the Solon maintenance department if you have any leaks or problems with your plumbing
- **Heating and Lighting** - Switch off lights and appliances when not in use, turn down your central heating thermostat by 1 degree or use it for 1 hour less, use products with a longer life, such as energy saving light bulbs, if you're cold - put on a jumper!, change your energy supplier to one which uses renewable sources and you can use draft excluder.
- **Environmental Travel** – Cycling or walking are both excellent ways to save money, help the environment and to get fit. Public transport or car sharing is also a great option. Visit www.sustrans.org.uk (cycling), www.citycarclub.co.uk or www.liftshare.com (car shares) or www.nhs.uk/Change4Life (general fitness) for more information

Visit the Energy Saving Trust website for more ideas www.energysavingtrust.org.uk or speak to your Housing Officer.

Section 4

Getting Repairs Done



Getting Repairs Done

What is Solon responsible for?

- Solon will ensure that your home is in a good state of repair when you move in.
- We are also responsible for carrying out day to day repairs to the structure of the property, such as walls, roofs, windows and for works to plumbing, heating and electrical services.
- If your home has shared/communal area Solon is responsible for its maintenance e.g. for landlord lighting fire alarms etc.
- Solon will redecorate any external painted timber on a regular cycle.
- Solon also has a prioritized programme of replacement of major items such as kitchens and bathrooms.
- We will ensure you receive reasonable notice before any works begin.

What are you responsible for?

Your tenancy is agreed on the understanding that you are responsible for the following:

- Any appliances owned by you- such as cookers and washing machines, etc.
- Fixtures that you have fitted, such as shelves, curtain rails, hooks, toilet roll holders).
- Fixtures left by a previous resident, identified when you sign up for the property, which are non-standard or are gifted to you
- Keeping in reasonable condition and undertaking internal decorations along with normal preparations for works such as minor cracks to walls, ceilings or doors.
- Broken windows **UNLESS** the cause is an attempted break-in or vandalism **and** the incident has been reported to the police (in which case you will need to provide us with the incident number and full details)
- Blocked sinks and hand basins, where the blockage is caused by inappropriate use or lack of normal cleaning.
- Replacements of sink plugs and chains, or toilet seats.
- Replacement of light bulbs, doorbell batteries or other consumable items.
- Lost keys (see Section 3)
- The repair of any damage caused by you, your household or your visitors.
- Upkeep and maintenance of your garden (unless this is done as part of a service charge).
- Normal bleeding of air from central heating radiators

Charging for repairs

Solon will charge you for any repair or replacement costs that result from:

- Misuse, carelessness or neglect by you, your household or visitors
- Your faulty appliances (for instance leaking washing machine)
- Broken windows not reported to the police
- Lost keys (replacements usually have to be ordered and paid in advance)
- Visits by contractors where you have not been in at an agreed time.

Reporting repairs

If you notice that there is a fault or problem with your home that needs repair you should report it to us as soon as possible.

The quickest way to report a repair is to phone the **Maintenance Line on 0117 916 7777**.

You will be asked to:

- Give as detailed a description of the problem as possible
- suggest times when it is most and least convenient to call to fix the problem
- Give a contact telephone number if you have one, as we will use this to agree an appointment

If for any reason you have to change any of the access arrangements, please let us or our contractors know as soon as possible.

In most cases, provided that we have enough information to work out what's required, our staff will then issue a repairs order straight to a contractor.

You will receive a copy of the order as confirmation of what has been instructed and so that you can give us feedback on our and our Contractor's performance.

More complicated problems may require our Surveyor to inspect the problem first. In these cases an appointment will again be made with you. We will keep you informed if we need to obtain quotes or bring in a specialist firm to rectify the problem.

For very simple repairs or issues which are not Solon's responsibility to rectify, our staff will always try to offer advice to help you sort out simple problems yourself.

How long will your repair take?

Solon will assess the urgency of your repair request when you contact us, so please be prepared to give us as much detail as you can about the problem and the cause. We will class the response as one of the following priorities and response times. You will be told what priority the repair falls into:

EMERGENCY: within 24 hours

For problems that have an immediate health, safety or security risk, or result in no water or electricity (see next section). You will be expected to wait in for a period of 2 hours following a report of an emergency problem so that we can agree access with you.

URGENT: within 5 days

For problems which do not cause an immediate Health and safety risk but which may do so or may result in further damage to the property if left unattended for longer than one week. Our contractor will attempt to contact you within 24hrs of you reporting an urgent problem to agree an appointment to carry out works. This will generally be by telephone and you should try to make sure that you have your contact telephone with you during this period.

NORMAL: within 20 days

The majority of repairs will fall into this category and are works of a general nature that we will look to plan and undertake in the most efficient way possible. Examples are repairs to windows, doors, or kitchen units.

We will always attempt complete your repair within the above timescales, however where there are delays due to circumstances beyond our control, for instance - access problems, difficulty in obtaining parts, problems that require specialist works, or simply bad weather preventing work, we will keep you informed so that you know when to expect the works to be undertaken.

Solon will insist that all of its contractors develop systems for agreeing appointments to carrying out works to your home, rather than call on you without notice.

To facilitate this and keep you informed of changes we will rely mainly on telephone contact with you. **It is vital therefore that you provide us with contact details when you make a repair request and keep us informed if you change you telephone number.**

Solon also carries out planned repairs over a longer timescale. These are repairs that are unlikely to affect the day-to-day use of your home - examples are repairs to fences, gates or outside walls.

Emergencies – Out of Hours

If you suffer an emergency problem outside of normal office hours, you should ring Solon's number and the answering machine will give you the number of our emergency contractor. They will attend to the repair only if it is clearly an emergency and your safety or health is threatened. In appropriate cases they may suggest action you can take to alleviate the immediate problem and arrange the repair for the following day.

The emergency contractor will only be able to carry out a temporary repair if parts are not available out of hours or they need to obtain Solon's agreement before doing further work. In these instances the works will be arranged as soon as appropriate after the immediate danger has been overcome.

The charges for out of hours visits are much higher, so please ensure that you only call when it is a genuine emergency.

Examples of an emergency might include:

- Gas leaks (**report these immediately to Transco on: 0800 111 999**)
- Serious water leaks that you cannot contain with a rag, bowl, etc until the next day.
- Your property is insecure following vandalism, break-in, etc (please note that you will be required to contact the police also in these instances)
- Loss of services due to a fire.
- Safety hazards such as gale damage.

See '**Emergencies and Precautions**' in *Section 3* for further advice on action to take in emergencies.

Gas Servicing

Solon services and checks the safety of gas fires, boilers and heaters every year. We or our Contractor will write giving you advance notice of the time and date. You will be required to confirm if the allotted date and timescale is not convenient to you so that another appointment can be agreed. On completion of the servicing work you will receive a copy of the certificate confirming that the appliance is safe.

If further work is required, this will be treated as a priority and completed as soon as possible.

It is most important that you co-operate with us in arranging access to do this safety check - we have a legal duty to inspect our gas appliances once a year and it is in your interest to ensure you and your household are completely safe.

Customer Care

Whilst we will always try and keep inconvenience to a minimum, repair work often involves some degree of noise and disruption. However our contractors and operatives are required to meet certain standards when working in your home. These include:

- Keeping to agreed access arrangements and notifying you if these need to change for any reason.
- Ensuring their work does not affect the health and safety of your household.
- Being polite and courteous and respecting your rights and your reasonable requests with regard to their presence in your home.
- Not Smoking within your home.
- Not playing radios inside your home unless with your agreement.
- Protecting your carpets and furniture.
- Agreeing with you in advance if carpets or furniture need to be removed.
- Clearing up any mess before they leave.
- Ensuring that your home is left secure.
- Making good any damage to decorations to a reasonable standard.
- Keeping you informed of and agreeing follow on actions when there needs to be a break in the works, e.g. to allow plaster to dry out, etc.

Your Feedback on Repairs

Solon is aware that for most residents the quality of the repairs service is the key test of how we perform as a landlord. For this reason we welcome your feedback by completing and returning the copy order or any other feedback form left with you.

We use your responses to help to improve the service and identify any problem areas.

We may contact you and our surveyor may visit to inspect when you are unhappy with the quality of the repair. Where necessary we will instruct the contractor or operative to return. Each year we also review the contractors we use, taking into account your feedback on their performance and any complaints received.

What if we get it wrong?

You have a right to compensation under the Housing Corporation's **'Right to Repair'** guidelines if we fail **twice in succession** to carry out an emergency or urgent repair within our target response times (emergency - 24 hours; urgent - 5 days). The compensation is set at £10 plus £2 a day that the repair remains outstanding up to a total maximum of £60.

There are certain conditions that apply - for instance reasonable access must have been given and only repairs worth less than £250 are eligible. Fuller details on the **'Right to Repair'** scheme are available on request.

You may also claim under Solon's **'Compensation Policy and Procedure'** for damage to possessions, loss of amenity or other costs due to negligence or disrepair. See *Section 7* for further details on this and **'How to Make a Complaint'**.

Section 5

Improvements



Improvements

Your Alterations and Improvements

You have a right to carry out alterations or improvements to your home, provided that you receive Solon's permission first. We will always look to approve your request unless there is good reason why we can't, in which case we will tell you those reasons. We may want to specify how the work is done or make certain conditions if there are safety or maintenance implications. Our surveyor will inspect on completion of the work to check that it has been carried out to an adequate standard. We may refuse or ask you to change your proposal for such reasons as:

- Failure to comply with planning or building regulations
- Weakening the structure of the building
- Out of keeping with the rest of the property
- Unsuitable for future occupants
- Health or safety risks
- Likely to result in opposition from neighbours or other occupants.

You may also have the right to compensation for your own legitimately undertaken improvements. This is paid when your tenancy ends. The amount of compensation will depend on the original cost of the work and how long ago the improvement was completed. Only certain types of improvement qualify and you will be asked to obtain estimates for the work once Solon has given permission. For further details ask **for our information sheet on the 'Right to Compensation for Improvements'**.

Major Repairs and Improvements

Each year Solon has a programme of major repairs and improvements for older properties in need of substantial work. Priorities for these are based on stock condition surveys, which identify the properties most in need of major works. Often the scale of the work means that it can take several months or can only be done while the property is vacant.

Each year we will include, in our newsletter, a general description of the work we propose to do. If you are to be affected directly we will write to you personally setting out the nature of the work and likely implications.

Nearer to the proposed start time we will visit you to discuss how the works will affect you and discuss whether it will be necessary to move you to another property while the work is done. If this is necessary we will make all the arrangements and pay all reasonable costs incurred.

Solon and its Contractor's will take every opportunity to involve you in making choices during major works proposals at your home.

Aids and Adaptations

Solon has a limited budget for fitting mobility aids (such as handrails) or adapting properties to meet the needs of those with disabilities - for instance by installing a ramp or altering a door opening.

Please contact your Housing Officer if you need this sort of help. In some circumstances it may be necessary to involve an Occupational Therapist who can set out in detail what is required to help overcome your particular problems.

Additional Security Work

Solon also has an annual budget for carrying out certain security work. Examples are:

- Additional or stronger door locks
- Window locks to the ground floor
- Improved fences or gates.
- Entry phones to communal entrances (subject to consultation with all tenants affected and a service charge).
- For more details on how to apply, please contact your Housing Officer.

Energy Efficiency

Solon considers the energy efficiency of its properties when carrying out major repairs or improvements - for instance by considering additional loft insulation and putting in double-glazing. However because of the costs involved these works have to be prioritized and undertaken over a period of time.

Certain Residents in receipt of qualifying benefits are however able to apply for a grant under the Government's **Home Energy Efficiency Scheme** for basic measures such as draught-proofing and increased insulation. In addition your energy supplier may be able to provide low energy light bulbs free of charge. Solon encourages you to take up any options to benefit from assistance and will always look to support improvements by giving permission to undertake works. **If you would like more information on whether you might be eligible, please contact us the maintenance department, or freephone 0800 512012.**

Section 6

Rents and Charges



Rents and Charges

How we set your rent

In 2002/2003 the Government introduced a new way of working out rents, which must be followed by registered social landlords. This will mean, for example, that two people living in identical properties in the same area will pay a similar rent. At the moment, this is not always the case.

The aim of the change is to take away some of the unfairness of the previous system. It is doing this by using a formula that sets a target rent for each property that we must reach by 2012.

As a result, Solon will calculate your rent based on a formula made up of the following elements:

- property values within the ward
- average weekly manual wages in the area
- the number of bedrooms you have

The new formula means that:

- 70% of your rent will be based on local earnings
- 30% of your rent will be based on property values
- a bedroom factor will ensure that larger properties cost more

To avoid making extreme changes to the rent in any one year, the formula is being implemented over a ten year period ending in 2012.

The Government has set 'caps and limits' to make sure tenants are protected from sudden increases. In August 2008, we sent out Rent Increase Notices. The Notices indicated what you are currently paying and what your new rent will be from October 2008. If you receive Housing Benefit you need to notify them of the increase so that they can adjust your benefit accordingly.

All tenants will be given a least one month's notice of any rent increase

Rent Increases

Rents for assured tenants go up every year in October. For secure tenancies the Rent Officer is asked to increase the rent every two years in line with the latest rent values. The Rent Officer may set a different rent to that which we have asked for. Where the registered rent is higher, we would cap increase to Solon applied rent in order to comply with guidance from our regulator (the Tenant Services Authority).

Service Charges

If you live in a flat or maisonette your rent may include a service charge for such items as communal lighting, cleaning, gardening, replacement of communal carpets and servicing / replacement of fire alarm or door entry systems.

Changes in the service charge will normally be made at the same time as the rent increase. If you receive housing benefit for your rent, the service charges should also be fully eligible.

If the residents of a block wish to have a new facility, such as a door entry system or caretaking service you will have to pay a service charge. Any such changes will only occur after consultation and with your full agreement.

You have a right to challenge your service charge at a Leasehold Valuation Tribunal if you feel it is unreasonable.

Council Tax and Water Rates

The resident is responsible for paying their own Council Tax, further information on how to pay can be obtained from the Council Tax department – NB if you are entitled to Housing Benefit it is extremely likely that you will also be entitled to Council Tax rebate, please see your housing officer if you wish to discuss this matter further..

Similarly you will also be responsible for paying your own water and sewerage charges, please liaise directly with the water company who will be able to give you details on various available payment options.

Paying My Rent

It is extremely important that you keep your rent and service charge payments up-to-date, as this money enables Solon to carry out repairs, maintain and manage homes, carry out future improvements and develop new housing stock.

It should be noted that:

- Rents are set at the start of your tenancy and are reviewed annually.
- Rent payments should be made in advance and not in arrears.

Ways to pay your rent

In order to make paying your rent as easy as possible, we accept the following methods of payment:

- **Standing Order.** This is the easiest way to make regular reoccurring payments. Contact your Housing Officer or visit our website to download a form.
- **Allpay Payment Card.** By using your Allpay Payment Card in conjunction with either cash or a debit card, you can make payments online, over the phone, at the post office, or where you see the paypoint symbol.
- **Cheques.** Made payable to 'Solon South West Housing Association Ltd' and can be either brought in to our offices or sent to us in the post.
- **Cash.** Although we accept cash over the counter at our offices, we would encourage residents to pay by one of the above methods.

You can find out where your nearest payment outlet is by logging onto www.allpay.net and filling out the "Payment Outlet Search".

If you would like any further details on any of the payment methods listed here, then please contact your housing officer.

Solon charges the rent for your property over 49 weeks in the year. This means that you will have 3 "rent free" weeks during the year – 2 at Christmas and 1 at Easter, these weeks vary each year and will be clearly marked on your rent card.

Rent Statements

Solon South West Housing Association will provide you with a rent statement on a quarterly basis, or upon request.

The rent statement will show all charges made against you, as well as all payments received from either yourself or Housing Benefit.

You should ensure that you look closely at your statement, and should contact your housing officer if you are at all concerned or disagree with any of the information contained within the statement.

If you have difficulties paying your rent

If you are experiencing any difficulties in paying your rent, you should immediately contact your housing officer. Your housing officer will be able to assist you by checking that you are in receipt of all the benefits that you may be entitled to.

If you fall behind in rent and do not contact us, legal action can be taken. Such action could result in the **loss of your home** and/or a **County Court Judgment** being issued against you. It is therefore in your best interest not to ignore your debt and to allow your Housing Office to offer assistance.

Section 7

Having Your Say



Having Your Say

Consultation and feedback

Solon will keep you informed on matters relevant to your tenancy and is keen to obtain your feedback on its performance as a landlord. These are various ways in which we aim to do this:

- By sending you regular Newsletters
- By arranging scheme based meetings
- By asking you to complete questionnaires on specific aspects of our service
- By arranging for an independent firm to carry out a Resident Survey
- By sending you an annual performance report
- By consulting you in writing on any significant changes to our housing management arrangements
- By encouraging and consulting any residents' associations.

Resident Involvement

Our aim

We want our residents to be involved in important decisions made about their homes and to influence the services we provide. We will support residents to increase their confidence, knowledge, skills and desire to influence our services.

Why get involved?

You can have more say in the service that Solon Housing Association provides and how it's delivered. Resident Involvement is a two way process and we want to create a meaningful relationship with our residents. You can also really help others in your community by representing their views at meetings.

Everyone's Welcome

We are looking for a cross section of residents to get involved: young and old, people with families and single people, those working and those who are not in work, people with a disability and people from Black or Ethnic Minority Groups.

Training

Active residents can attend free training sessions. Residents can focus on areas of interest to improve their skills and knowledge.

Expenses

We help with reasonable travel costs to meetings, childcare costs and provide hot food for all forum meetings.

How to get involved – Our ‘Menu of Involvement’.

We understand that our residents get involved for many different reasons, have different levels of interest and have other commitments. We need to be flexible and so offer a ‘menu of involvement’. The menu gives residents many different ways to get involved from filling in a survey in their own home to becoming a member of our board.

Here are some of the **ways our residents already get involved:**

Armchair Involvement

One to One Comments – We welcome individual thoughts and comments. Contact Solon’s receptionist or resident involvement and let us know your views.

Commitment – a few minutes

Surveys, Questionnaires and Suggestions – We do need and value feedback from residents so periodically we seek residents’ views through surveys questionnaires and our Suggestion Box

Commitment – a few minutes

Resident Consultation - Contact List – Take part in resident consultations on anything from rent increases to improvements and major repairs. You can be contacted via letter, email, telephone and can view all current consultations through our website.

Commitment – as much or as little as you want

As Part of a Group

Residents’ Forum - This is a quarterly informal meeting of residents and staff to discuss Solons’ services, policies and improvements. Everyone is welcome.

Commitment – 2 hrs 4 times a year

Maintenance Forum – This group of residents concentrates with staff and our contractors on the repairs and maintenance services and delivering improvements.

Commitment – 2 hrs 3 times a year

Focus Groups – From time to time we ask small groups of residents who have shown an interest to work with us on different issues to develop the service.

Commitment – 2 hrs from time to time.

Newsletter Panel – We have a quarterly free residents’ newsletter. Residents are involved in the design and content of the newsletter through an editorial panel and to steer the newsletter in the right direction.

Commitment –4 meetings a year.

Board Member – We try to have a minimum of three resident board members nominated by the Residents’ Forum on the Board of Management. This is to make sure that there is a resident perspective at the highest level. Training and support is provided.

Commitment – from 11 meetings a year.

If you would like details on any of the above please tick the box, fill in your details and return to:

Solon South West Housing Association Ltd,
1 Newfoundland Court,
St Paul Street, Bristol,
BS2 8AN

or contact our Resident Involvement and Communications Officer on 0117 9167768

Name:.....

Address:.....
.....
.....

Telephone number:.....

E-mail:.....

Tenancy Support Service

The Tenancy Support Service is funded by Supporting People. The service offers practical and emotional support to people who are struggling with taking on a new tenancy or who are finding it difficult to manage in their current tenancy. The aim of the service is for you to improve your quality of life and become more independent.

The Tenancy Support Service is FREE and confidential.

What support does the Tenancy Support Service provide?

- **Benefit advice** – you can get a financial assessment and benefit check to make sure you are getting all you are entitled to.
- **Debt advice** – the Support Officer can contact debt collectors for you and link you up to other debt advice agencies.
- **Budgeting and bill paying advice** – we can help you to prioritise your spending and how you can manage your money.
- **Grants** – if you are on a low income and need any furniture or household goods because you are moving in to a new home, or if your old items have broken, we can help you to access funding to go towards paying for them.
- **Links to Training, Education, Voluntary Work and Employment** – we can help link you up to courses and other agencies who can help you to get out more or back to work.
- **Help to cope with Physical and / or Mental Health issues** – we can help you to link up with additional support and to make sure you are getting the care and services you need.
- **Advice on Drug or Alcohol problems**– The Tenancy Support Officer can link you up with relevant services to help with your recovery.
- **Domestic Violence Support** – if you are the victim of abuse, we can help you to access the correct support and advice to help you to feel safe.
- **Practical Household Management**
- **Housing and Tenancy Advice**
- **Homelessness Advice** – we can provide links to relevant services and ensure that you are aware of your rights. We can also help you to make sure you are assessed
- **Links with the community and social activities**
- **Resettlement support** – the Tenancy Support Officer can help you to settle into your new home and with connections to utilities such as gas or electricity.
- **Help if you are generally finding it difficult to cope with life**

Can I get support?

If you are a Solon tenant and live in the Bristol City Council area and need support with any of the above, then you can ask for an assessment for Tenancy Support. If you are a Solon tenant who lives outside of the Bristol area then we will help link you up with a support service in your area.

How do I get support?

You can apply for support by speaking to your housing officer, or by contacting the Tenancy Support Officer direct on 0117 9167769. The Tenancy Support Officer will then arrange an appointment to meet with you to discuss your individual needs. If we feel that your needs would be best met by another agency, we will endeavor to find you the appropriate support.

What will the Tenancy Support Officer do?

If you qualify for support, we will complete an **assessment** of your support needs and develop a **support plan** with clear and achievable aims and goals. We will offer **regular appointments** to work towards your aims and goals, for up to two years, to help you to get the skills and confidence you need to live independently and manage your tenancy well. We will **review** your support regularly to ensure that you are happy with the service and we will tailor the support package to meet your personal, religious and cultural needs.

How to Make a Complaint

Solon aims to provide a high quality service but we realize that you may sometimes want to complain about something we have done or not done. If you feel that you have cause for complaint, you can do this through the complaints procedure as outlined in our leaflet '**How to make a complaint**'.

Most complaints can be resolved quickly by contacting the relevant member of staff. However if you are still dissatisfied, you can contact the Customer Services Director. Your complaint will be recorded and investigated with a view to resolving it. There are 3 stages to our complaints procedure ending with the right of Appeal to Solon's Complaints Panel if you are still unsatisfied.

Solon monitors all formal complaints and reports them to the Board. We aim to use any lessons we learn to improve our services.

Confidentiality and Access to Information

Solon has a policy of not giving out confidential information on residents' without their permission. This principle is only over-ridden if we have a legal obligation or if it is clearly in the interest of the public or the resident concerned.

You have a right of access under the Data Protection Act to certain computer and other information held by Solon.

You also have the right of access to view your tenancy file except for any information that has been given to us in confidence by a third party. We ask that you make an appointment in advance if you wish to see your file.

The Independent Housing Ombudsman

The role of the Independent Housing Ombudsman is to investigate complaints from residents of registered social landlords. At the end of an investigation, a recommendation will be made. The ombudsman can also offer mediation or arbitration to help resolve a dispute. The Ombudsman will not normally consider a complaint until it has been through each stage of complaints procedure. Leaflets and application forms for the scheme are available from Solon's office.

Compensation

Solon will consider making offers of compensation if due to our actions or failure to act:

- Your possessions or decorations have been damaged
- You have incurred additional costs

- You have suffered temporary loss of an amenity (such as heating, electricity or use of a room)
- Particular inconvenience or distress has been caused to you
- You have not received a service for which you have paid a service charge.

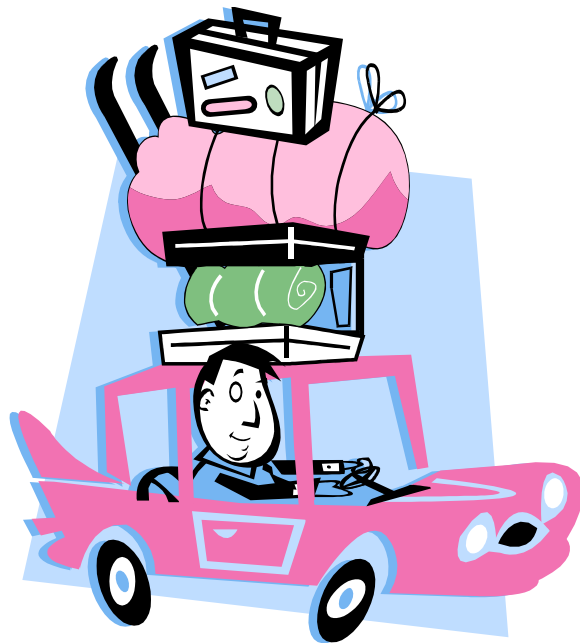
Further information is given in the information sheet for residents ‘Compensation Policy and Procedure’, and claims should be made in writing to the Customer Services Director.

Payments can also be made under the ‘**Right to Repair**’ (for delays in day to day repairs) and under the ‘**Right to Compensation for Improvements**’.

(More information on these is given in Section 4)

Section 8

Moving On



Moving On

What to do when you leave

When you wish to end your Solon tenancy, you will need to do the following:

- Give us 4 weeks notice in writing
- Ensure that your rent is paid up to the end of your tenancy.
- Return ALL keys, including any meter keys, to Solon by the last day of your tenancy and ensure that we have a forwarding address.
- Leave the property in a condition fit to let to a new resident. If work is needed to bring the property up to a reasonable condition we will charge you for this work.
- Clear the property, leaving it clean and in reasonable decorative order.
- Inform the council of your intention to vacate, if you are receiving Housing Benefit.
- Inform all service providers of your intention to vacate the property
- Take gas and electric meter readings.
- Inform your telephone company.
- Arrange for redirection of your mail.

Your housing officer will contact you to inspect your home before you leave and confirm the arrangements for returning the keys. They will also advise you of any work you need to do before you leave.

Transfers

All applications for re-housing are now assessed using the Home choice banding system, this will vary depending on the authority in which your property is located.

Banding (priority) will be given within the home choice schemes for a variety of reasons, such as:

- Overcrowding or accommodation too large
- Medical need
- Harassment or domestic violence
- Homelessness
- Unsuitability of the present accommodation

Please let your housing officer know if you wish to apply for a transfer. They can give you more information on how banding priorities are decided.

Residents with rent arrears will be 'Relegated' a band – this means that your priority to be rehoused will be reduced. Relegation will not normally be removed unless a clear agreement is made with the landlord for payment of any outstanding debt and the arrears are reduced to under £300 –exception will be made only at the discretion of the landlord.

If you want to move out of the area, you can register to go on the “Homeswap” scheme this will enable you to register and look at alternative social housing Nationwide. If you would like to know more about the “Homeswap” scheme please contact your housing officer.

Exchanges

An alternative to a transfer is for you to exchange with another resident of Solon or another social landlord (housing association or council). You have a legal **‘right to exchange’** with the permission of Solon and the other landlord – this cannot be refused without good reason. Reasons for refusal would include current rent arrears or unsuitable size or type of accommodation.

Please note that on an exchange you will inherit the tenancy of the resident you exchange with – this means that if you are a secure tenant and you exchange with an assured tenant you will lose some tenancy rights.

‘Shared Ownership’ Schemes

This is one of a group of Government backed scheme which allows an individual to purchase a percentage of a property and to pay rent to the landlord on the remaining percentage. This therefore makes homeownership much more affordable to those who may have otherwise been excluded from the option to own.

Social housing providers enable the purchaser to purchase a percentage of the property say 40% with the ability to purchase further amounts in future as the household income allows.

If you would like to know more about these schemes please contact your housing officer.

Section 9

Useful Telephone Numbers



Useful Telephone Numbers

Solon South West

(Maintenance line)

Tel: 0117 9244071
Fax: 0117 9248816
Tel: 0117 9167777

Electricity (emergencies) *Western Power*
Gas (emergencies)
Water (Wessex Water)

Tel. 0800 365 900
Tel. 0800 111 999
Tel. 0845 6002600

Benefit information

Department of Work and Pensions
(Income Support, Jobseekers Allowance,
Employment and Support Allowance,
Incapacity Benefit)

Tel. 0800 0556688 (new claim)

General Enquiry about your claim (Jobcentre Plus)

Tel. 0845 6088597

Disability Living Allowance,
Attendance Allowance or Carer's Allowance:

Tel. 0800 882200 (new claim)
Tel. 08457 123456 (enquiries)

Social Fund
(Crisis Loan, Budgeting Loan,
Community Care Grant)

Tel. 0845 6088616

Flowers Hill Medical Centre

Tel: 0117 9718311

HM Revenue and Customs

Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit
Child Benefit

Tel. 0845 300 3900
Tel. 0845 302 1444

Bristol City Council Housing and Council Tax Benefit service

Council Tax Benefit service
Council tax enquiries

Tel: 0117 9222300
Tel. 0117 9250981

Environmental Health (Bristol)

Pest / Noise Control
Recycling, rubbish and waste

Tel. 0117 922 2500
Tel. 0117 922 2100

Furniture Collection

The Space Trust (free collections)	Tel. 0117 955 5755
Sofa Project	Tel. 0117 954 3567
Emmaus	Tel. 0117 954 0886
Bristol City Council	Tel. 0117 922 2100

Energy and Travel

Energy Saving Trust	Tel. 0800 512 012
City Car Club Bristol	Tel. 0845 330 1234
Sustrans	Tel. 0117 926 8893
First Group Buses	Tel. 0845 602 0156
First Great Western Trains	Tel. 0845 700 0125

Mediation Service (Bristol)	Tel. 0117 904 3321
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Rent Officer Service	Tel. 0117 934 0650
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Independent Housing Ombudsman	Tel. 020 7421 3800
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Or	Tel. 0845 7125 973
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Tenant Participation Advisory Service	Tel. 0161 868 3500
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Social Services

For adults - Bristol Care Direct	Tel. 0117 903 6684
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For children and young people:	
Ridingleaze House, Lawrence Weston (North)	Tel: 0117 353 2200
Symes House, Hartcliffe (south)	Tel: 0117 353 2200
Welsman, St Paul's (East/Central)	Tel: 0117 903 6500
Disabled Children Team (covers all Bristol)	Tel: 0117 903 8250
Emergency Duty Team (outside office hours)	Tel: 01454 615165

Advice Centres

Bristol Debt Advice Centre (St. Philips)	Tel. 0117 954 3990
Citizen's Advice Bureau (Broad Street)	Tel. 0870 121 2134
SHELTER Housing Aid Centre	Tel. 0117 924 1500
General Enquiry line	Tel. 0808 800 4444
St Pauls Advice Centre	Tel. 0117 955 2981
East Bristol Advice Centre (Redifield)	Tel. 0117 378 9200
South Bristol Advice Centre (Bishopworth)	Tel. 0117 903 8415
North Bristol Advice Centre (Lockleaze)	Tel. 0117 951 5751
Avon and Bristol Law Centre (Stokes Croft)	Tel. 0117 924 8662

For more services, please look at the Local Organisations Database on the Bristol City Council Website: www.bristol.gov.uk. If you cannot find what you are looking for, please contact your Housing Officer or the Tenancy Support Officer on 0117 924 4071.

Support Agencies and Helplines

Age Concern	Tel. 0117 922 5353
Disability Information & Advice Service	Tel. 0117 983 2828
Support against Racial Harassment (SARI)	Tel. 0117 942 0060
Bristol Racial Equality Scheme - Equalities and Community Cohesion Team	Tel. 0117 922 2329
Bristol Crisis Service for Women	Tel. 0117 925 1119
Next Link	Tel. 0117 925 0680
Women's Aid	Tel. 0808 2000 247
Addiction Recovery Agency	Tel. 0117 930 0282
Alcohol Misuse Service	Tel. 0117 929 3028
Bristol Drugs Project	Tel. 0117 987 1500
Alcoholics Anonymous	Tel. 0117 926 5520
Narcotics Anonymous	Tel. 0117 924 0084
Bristol Mindline	Tel. 0808 808 0330
The Samaritans	Tel. 08457 909090

For more Helplines and local support groups, please look at the Resources section on the Bristol Mind website www.bristolmind.org.uk or contact our Tenancy Support Officer on 0117 924 4071.