

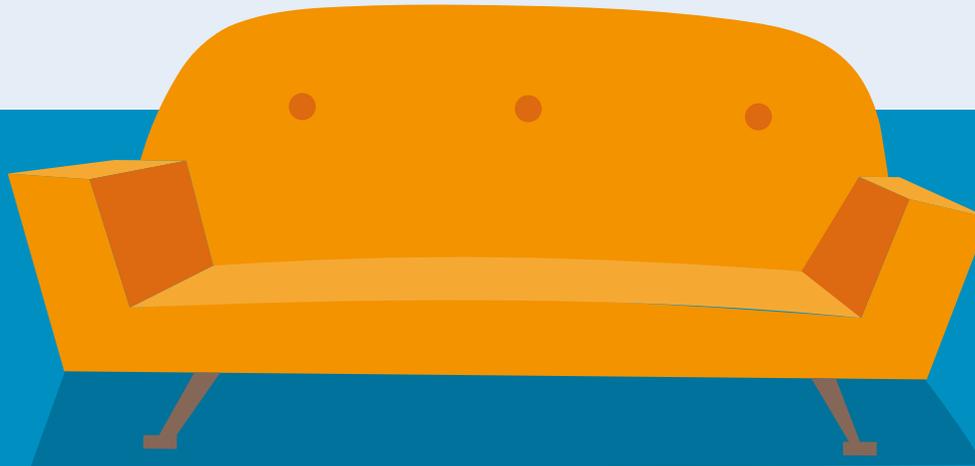
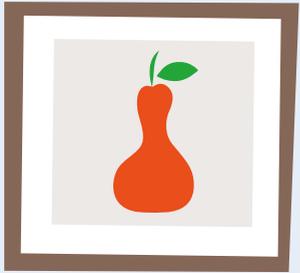
Welcome to your new home

Residents' Handbook

A go-to guide about your stay with Solo Housing



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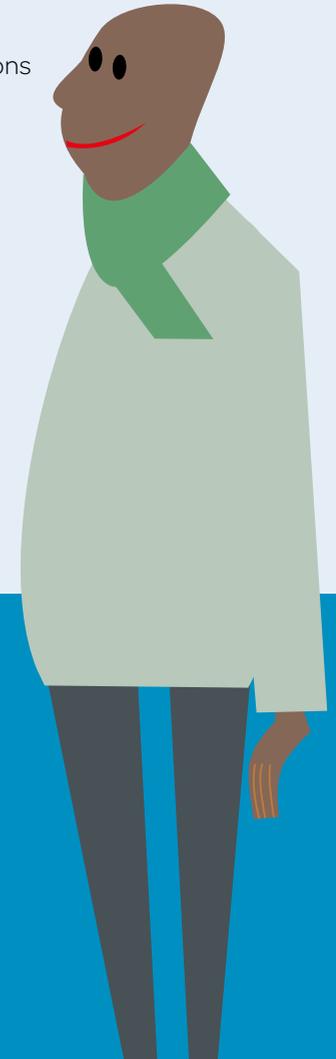
Welcome to your new home

Solo Housing would like to welcome you to your new home. We want your stay with us to be happy, safe and secure, so we have produced this useful handbook to give you all the information you need.

We hope everything in this handbook is easy to understand and will help you to find what you are looking for quickly, but if you don't understand anything or you have any questions please speak to your Support Worker.

Need more information

Our website solohousing.org has more detailed information about the topics covered in this handbook.



First steps... What happens now?

When you first arrived at Solo Housing you met with our staff to talk about where you will be living. If you are moving into a shared house, you will probably also have met the person you will be living with.

You will be allocated a Solo Housing Support Worker who is there to help you with everything you need, and this person is your first point of contact if you have any problems or questions at all about your tenancy, safety or problems with other residents.

You will need to meet with your Support Worker regularly at mutually agreed times to discuss your support plan and progress. You will work closely with them and make a plan for living more independently. If your Support Worker is absent for any reason, we will provide you with an alternative point of contact.



The support you receive from Solo Housing is designed to meet your specific needs and will cover things like:

- Meeting your immediate support issues
- Helping you with filling in forms and budgeting
- Making it easier for you to access services such as benefits, health, emotional support
- Helping you with problems that have made it difficult for you to keep your housing in the past.

- Helping you to plan for a more permanent home, when the time comes to move out of your Solo Housing accommodation. Once you are settled in to your accommodation your Support Worker will explain to you the process for registering with the local authority housing register or choice-based lettings scheme. Each local authority area will have its own criteria and waiting periods, so your Support Worker will need to explain and support you with the process of applying for more permanent accommodation.



About Solo Housing

We believe in people, and our aim is to help you to improve your life by giving you the opportunities you need to make that happen.

Solo Housing provides services for single people who find themselves homeless or in need of support to sustain accommodation.

We help all sorts of people, from those who simply need a roof over their heads, to others who need regular help to manage the problems and personal issues they currently have.

We can provide you with safe, temporary accommodation, and a Support Worker who is there for you every step of the way, helping you to become more independent and move on to a permanent home.



Useful contact information

Solo Housing

Solo Housing (East Anglia) Ltd
12a St Nicholas Street, Diss,
Norfolk IP22 4LB

Freephone: 0800 6520155
Tel: 01379 640250
Fax: 01379 640303
Email: info@solohousing.org
Visit: solohousing.org



Solo Housing Schemes

If you want to know more about one of our schemes or simply need more information, please use the contact numbers as follows:

Supported Housing

Norfolk Visiting Support Service: 01379 640250
Old Post Office Maltings Project: 01379 650906
Suffolk Visiting Support Service: 03333 057588

Lodgings Scheme 01379 640250

Emergency number

During office hours Monday to Friday 9am - 5pm
please call your Support Worker – you have their direct mobile number or call the head office main number.

Out of hours (weekdays 5pm - 9am and 24 hours Saturday, Sunday & Bank Holidays).

Out of hours calls will be redirected to the duty Support Worker. Out of hours please call:
Suffolk: 0333 305 7588 or Norfolk: 01379 650906



Equality & diversity



We will always treat you fairly, with respect and sensitivity and without discrimination.

We will supply you with an 'Equalities and Diversity Policy' with this handbook, so please take the time to read it, as it's key to the service we offer residents.

Service improvements & resident involvement

We are always trying to improve our services and we rely on you, our residents, to tell us how you think we can do things better. We use your comments and feed-back to make positive changes and improvements. We also report on our performance each year to our funders and wider stakeholders.

You can be involved in shaping our services and business plans as much as you like while you are staying with us and we welcome your participation so that we can carry on improving our services.

Please talk to your Support Worker if you have any ideas, comments or would like to get involved in developing our services.

Tell us how you think we can do things better.

Your responsibilities

Self-contained accommodation

If your Solo accommodation is self-contained you will have an Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST). This initial contract lasts for six months, and towards the end of this period you and your Support Worker will discuss what progress you are making in your plan for independent living and how much longer you may need to stay with us. We normally expect people to stay with us for up to 18 months before moving into more permanent accommodation.

Where you have an Assured Shorthold Tenancy you will also be provided with a copy of the property Gas Safety Certificate, Electrical Performance Certificate and the Government 'How to Rent' booklet.

Shared house accommodation

If your accommodation with Solo is in a shared house you will be given a licence to occupy the room you are allocated and use of the shared facilities (bathroom, kitchen etc.). Please use shared areas with consideration and respect for your fellow residents and make sure they are always left clean and tidy.

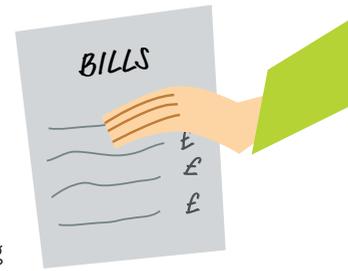
After the initial six months you may need more time for your plan to come together. Don't worry if the six months has passed and you feel you aren't ready to leave, we will work with you to decide how much longer you may need to stay with us.



However, there may be some situations when we do ask you to leave. These include:

- Failure to pay your rent
- If you do not meet regularly with your Support Worker to work on your plan for independent living
- If you or your visitors cause nuisance and annoyance to neighbours
- If you harass neighbours and/or your housemate (if in shared accommodation)
- Involvement in criminal activity which is causing a risk either to yourself, other residents or neighbours

If we think you should leave your accommodation we will provide you with the necessary legal notices and you will have the opportunity to ask for a review or an appeal.



Do you need help with your bills?

See page 12

Visitors to your accommodation

You may want to maintain contact with friends or family while you are living in our accommodation and we will support you to do so. Where you have visitors to your accommodation you are responsible for their behaviour. We ask that your visitors respect those living in the accommodation, they must not cause nuisance to other residents or to people in the surrounding area.

You will need to talk to your Support Worker first if you are planning to have anyone to stay overnight, but please be aware that in some of our accommodation this will not be allowed.

Access visits for children & dependants

You must talk to your Support Worker about any proposed visits to your accommodation by children or young people under the age of 18, to check whether they can visit you in the accommodation provided by Solo Housing.

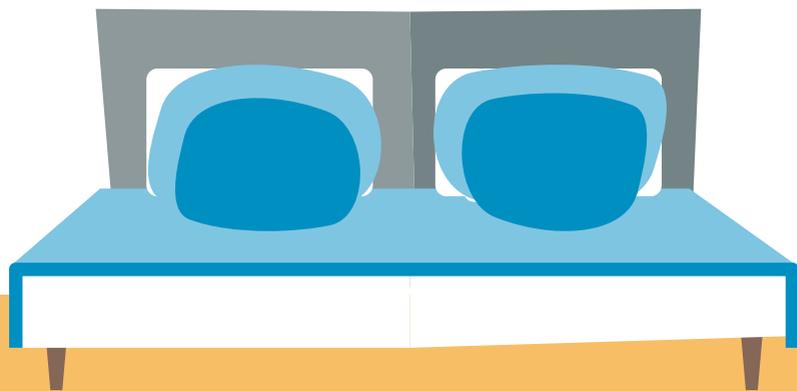
Bills – gas, electricity, water & council tax

If you rent a one bedroomed flat from us, you need to pay utilities and council tax yourself – you may be able to get assistance in paying council tax via the local authority council tax support scheme. Your Support Worker will help you to contact the utility companies and your local authority to set this up.

Your electricity will probably be on a pre-payment meter and your Support Worker will explain how this works, along with all the electrical appliances in your home.

If you share a property with another resident, Solo Housing will pay the utilities and council tax and they are included in your rent as part of the service charge. Charges for communal areas are classed as 'Eligible' services and should be included in any Housing Benefit claim. Solo Housing can help you with your Housing Benefit claim.

Your Support Worker can advise and help you with budgeting and paying your bills and setting up any standing order or direct payments to us.



Ineligible services for housing benefit are the costs of heating and lighting your room and the cost of water used by you.

These will not be paid by housing benefit, so you need to pay these costs to Solo yourself. This is called 'top up' and it will be between £5 and £16 each week. This charge, along with a break-down of your rent and service charge, will be shown on your Assured Shorthold Tenancy or licence agreement.

Obtaining a TV Licence

Solo Housing does not provide a TV Licence, so if you own a TV you need to organise this yourself.

Insurance

Please note that Solo Housing does not insure your personal contents, so we strongly advise you to organise your own household contents insurance.



Solo's responsibilities

As a resident you have responsibilities, which we have covered in this handbook. But Solo Housing also has responsibilities, as follows:

- To ensure that the structure, exterior and interior of your home is a decent standard.
- To keep in good repair and proper working order your heating system, water heating and sanitation and the supply of water, gas and electricity.
- In shared housing we will keep the common areas in reasonable repair e.g. the entrance, hallway, stairs, landing, lounge, kitchen and bathroom.
- Solo also has a responsibility to provide you with the support service as mentioned earlier in the handbook.



- We must consult with you about what you see as the key areas for improvement
- We must report to you annually on the organisation's performance via our annual report

key areas for improvement

report to you annually

Support Worker meetings

It is a condition of occupying supported accommodation with Solo Housing that you agree a support plan and meet regularly with your Support Worker so that together you can overcome any issues you had when you arrived with us. Working with your Support Worker will also help you develop the necessary skills you'll need for independent living.



When you are assessed by the local authority for move-on you will need to show you have these skills and they will be vital when you move into a permanent home.



Finance

Your accommodation charge is split into two elements – the rent and the service charge. Some charges may increase once a year, and we'll give you one month's written notice in advance.

Your accommodation charge covers the costs of running your home and it varies depending on the type of accommodation you live in. If you are living in self-contained accommodation, the electricity, gas and council tax are paid by you direct to the supplier. If you are in shared accommodation some of these charges are included in your rent and may be included in your housing benefit payment and you will pay Solo a 'top up' fee. See page 11 for more details.

If you are unemployed and claiming Housing Benefit, most of the cost of your accommodation and services will be paid directly to Solo Housing. There are some 'ineligible' charges which Housing Benefit does not cover, such as heating and lighting your room. See page 11 for more details.

When you move in you should complete an application for Housing Benefit, but if your circumstances change, or you need help, please speak to your Support Worker immediately.

Even where most of the weekly charges are covered by Housing Benefit, which should be paid directly to Solo Housing, as the resident you are responsible for making sure payments are made and your accommodation is at risk if payments are not made.

We will always encourage you to work. If you are earning you may not be entitled to full housing benefit, but we may be able to provide a rent subsidy to help you to afford your accommodation until you are ready to move out. Please talk to your Support Worker if you are in work or about to start work.

Please be aware:

You are responsible for paying your accommodation charge, even if you are claiming Housing Benefit.

If you don't pay you could be evicted. If you start work, stop claiming Housing Benefit, or miss signing on, you must let us know immediately, because if your Housing Benefit stops your rent to us will not be paid. Please make sure you keep your Support Worker up to date with any changes in your circumstances.



If you are responsible for paying any element of your accommodation charge to Solo Housing, please pay this promptly, as late payment will take your account in-to arrears. You can pay by cash, cheque, or through a standing order with your bank.

Make sure you always get a receipt from a staff member if you pay cash towards your rent.

You can ask for a rent statement at any time to show how much you have paid and this will give your current position, any arrears or credit.



Arrears

If there are amounts outstanding on your rent account, you will receive a letter from our head office advising you of the amount and asking for a repayment plan.

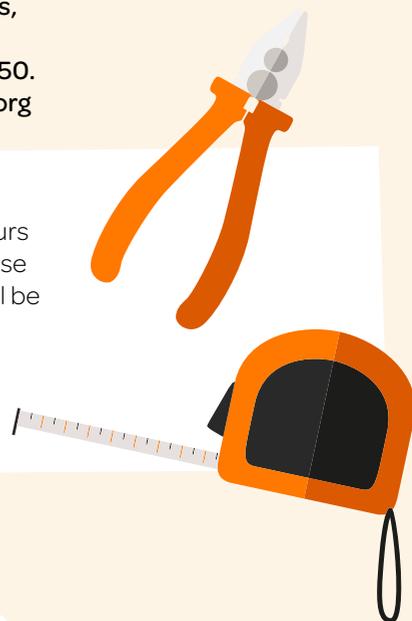
Please speak to your Support Worker – they will help you to manage your debt and if necessary, set up a reasonable repayment plan based on your outgoings.

Repairs

To report a repair during working hours, contact your Support Worker or call our head office in Diss on 01379 640250. You can also email info@solohousing.org

If the repair is urgent and it is out of hours (weekdays 5pm - 9am and 24 hours Saturday, Sunday & Bank Holidays) please call the out of hours number, the call will be redirected to the duty Support Worker.

Suffolk: 0333 305 7588
Norfolk: 01379 650906



When you report a repair, you will need to give your name, address and telephone number, a description of the problem and where it is in your home. It would also be helpful to let us know when you will be able to let a contractor in to do the repair.



When will the repair be completed?

We give priority to repairs depending on the urgency. Here is guide to how long each type of repair is likely to be completed or made safe:

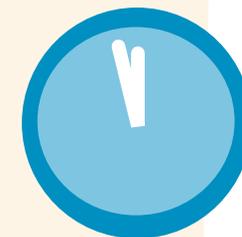


Immediate Priority – less than 5 hours

- Faulty thermostats, gas leaks/supply failure. Gas leaks should be reported to the National Gas Emergency Service on 0800 111 999 before contacting Solo Housing
- Burst water supply/loss of supply. Call Anglian Water Emergencies on 08457 145 145 if the leak is outside your property, before the water goes to your meter
- Unsafe power, lighting, electrical fitting (where there is immediate danger)
- Blocked flue to open fire or boiler
- Potentially life-threatening situations

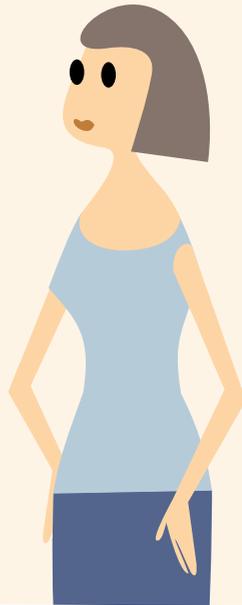
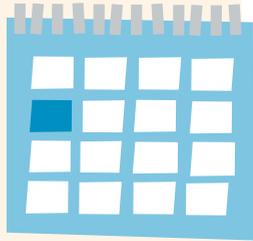
Emergency – up to 24 hours

- Loss of electricity (unless you're out of credit)
- Blocked toilet, drain or leaking drain
- Leak from water or heating pipe, tank or cistern
- Leaking roof (made safe)
- Fire door closures
- Broken light switch, socket or exposed wiring
- Boarding up for security
- Broken door lock



Urgent – less than 5 working days

- Replacing glass
- Blocked gutters or drains that may cause flooding
- Repairing entry phone
- Repairing hot water system
- Repairing space heating (between 1 November to 31 May)
- Repairing cooker, washing machine and fridge
- Trip hazard
- Loose or detached bannister or handrail
- Rotten timber flooring or stair tread
- Outside lighting failure



Routine – less than 42 working days

- Cracked window
- Wind damaged fence
- Leaking taps
- Curtain poles

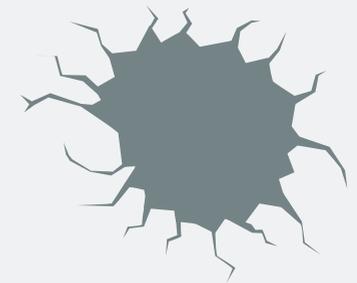


Which repairs are your responsibility?

- Replacing light bulbs
- Maintaining any appliances and fittings that Solo Housing has not provided
- Replacing batteries in your doorbell
- Clearing rubbish and putting bins out for collection
- Cleaning the front of your property
- Keeping your room clean
- Keeping shared areas clean
- Cleaning household appliances such as fridges and cookers
- Defrosting freezers
- Wiping down condensation and mould
- Removing items you have disposed of in the boundaries of the property e.g. furniture or rubbish the council will not remove.

You may be charged for a repair in the following circumstances:

- When a repair has been done as a result of damage caused by you
- When Solo Housing carries out work that is your responsibility e.g. you have not cleared rubbish from the front of your property
- When criminal damage has been done to your property you will need to report it and obtain a crime number, otherwise you will be charged for it.



Contractor Appointments

Please make sure you keep the agreed appointment to let the contractor into your home. If the contractor arrives on time and you're not there to let them in, you will be charged for this service.



Safety first fire precautions

When you move into your property the Support Worker will complete a Fire Risk Assessment with you. The assessment will then be carried out with you annually.

The smoke and heat detectors in your property are mains powered with a battery back-up (the Support Worker is responsible for checking the battery is still working when they visit the property). In properties that have gas cookers or gas central heating there is also a mains-operated carbon monoxide detector.

Please do not try and disable these. There are buttons on the bottom face which you can press to silence the alarms if they go off accidentally. The alarms are radio linked which means that if one goes off, they all go off.

For your own safety please ensure you are always familiar with all escape routes from your property and keep them clear of obstructions. To help prevent possible causes of fire, please don't keep flammable materials in your accommodation.

If you discover a fire, however small:

- Leave your property
- Call the Fire Brigade immediately.
Don't assume that someone else has done this; it's better that the same fire is reported several times than not at all.
- Do not re-enter the building until a Fire Brigade Officer has told you it's safe to do so.



Safety first Health & Safety

Solo Housing aims to protect its employees, and others, from risks to health and safety as part of their work activities, as far as is reasonably possible.

We achieve this by adopting a safety management strategy that includes using safe working systems and appropriate procedures to cater for all significant risks.

This policy is supported by issuing safety rules and general procedures, each subject to review and revision by management, and in conjunction with the Health and Safety Advisory Committee as necessary. The systems for implementing this policy will be given to all employees.

The responsibility for achieving and adhering to acceptable safety standards is the responsibility of both the employer and employees, sub-contractors and suppliers of materials to be used at work.

Employers are required by law to publish this safety policy. It is the duty of all employees to not only read this document carefully, but to take an active interest in achieving safety at work. The successful implementation of this policy depends on the wholehearted co-operation of all levels of employee and management.

This statement of policy will be reviewed and revised as appropriate, to take account of changes in circumstances or in legal requirements.



Drug misuse

We do not tolerate the misuse of drugs on the premises and we may take action to prevent their use. The main points of our drugs policy are as follows:

- It is an offence to allow occupied or managed premises to be used for the supply of any controlled drug, or the smoking of cannabis or opium. This means that if we know, or suspect, that any drug misuse is being carried out we must legally act immediately to stop it.
- If a resident has experienced a drug misuse problem in the past, they will be expected to seek external assistance and support to minimise risk or reduce drug use as part of their support plan
- All visitors to your premises must be made aware of the substances that are not permitted. If they are caught using or supplying controlled drugs they may be banned from the premises.
- There does not need to be any exchange of money for supply of controlled drugs to have taken place. Sharing, swapping or giving also constitutes supplying of drugs.



Your feedback

Solo Housing values feedback from all its residents, so if you have any thoughts, ideas or suggestions about how we can do things better please speak to your Support Worker.

When the time comes for you to leave your Solo Housing accommodation, we will ask you to complete a questionnaire which looks in more detail about your time with us, your experiences – good and bad. This will also help us to make more positive changes and improvements.





providing a pathway home...

We are here to help you get the most from your stay with us

We'll help you find your feet, feel more confident, and get on the road to finding a more permanent home.

If there is anything we can do please talk to your Support Worker, they will be happy to help you as much as possible.

Solo Housing (East Anglia) Ltd

12a St Nicholas Street, Diss, Norfolk IP22 4LB

Freephone: 0800 6520155

Tel: 01379 640250

Fax: 01379 640303

Email: info@solohousing.org

solohousing.org



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