



A TENANT'S GUIDE TO INDEPENDENT LIVING

Welcome to your new home. Please take the time to read this Tenants' Guide as it is full of helpful information that will help you settle into your home quickly and provide you with information on what is available.

This guide has been designed to help you get the most out of the Independent Living services that we provide and answers some of the questions most commonly asked by our tenants.

LANCASTER
CITY COUNCIL

Promoting City, Coast & Countryside



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1 WHAT IS INDEPENDENT LIVING

The Independent Living service promotes independence and quality of life for older people and other vulnerable adults.

We have 16 Independent Living schemes in the district, consisting of flats, bedsits and bungalows that are ideally suited to older people who can manage their own home but may have individual support needs.

You Can Expect Us To:

- Be courteous and treat you with respect at all times.
- Ensure all personal information disclosed to us will be treated in confidence.
- Respond to enquiries and complaints quickly.
- Discuss and agree with you the content of your support plan.
- Provide regular calls to monitor health and wellbeing.
- Visit you in accordance with your Personal Information sheet.
- Encourage and facilitate social activities at your scheme.
- Consult with you and involve you in decision making.
- Respond to intercom calls quickly and effectively.
- Assist you in liaising with health and social services agencies.
- Ensure communal areas are kept clean, safe and tidy.

Your Responsibilities Are To:

- Treat our staff with courtesy and respect. This also means that we will not tolerate violence or abuse of staff or other agencies visiting your property or the Scheme.
- Provide us with the information we request promptly.
- Let us know of any changes in circumstances as soon as possible.
- Let us know if you will be away from home.
- Comply with the terms and conditions of your tenancy agreement.
- Agree days for your weekly contacts. These will be at least twice a week by visit, telephone or intercom.
- Allow us to access your flat to carry out monthly equipment checks or alternatively agree to intercom the Independent Living officer or the Control Centre to carry out a check at your own convenience.

Lifestyle & Social Activities

Everyone is different! Independent Living offers you the choice of joining in with social activities in the communal areas of the scheme or on day trips out, and/or spending time privately in your own home.

2 THE SERVICES WE PROVIDE

The Independent Living Officer

The Independent Living service promotes independence and quality of life for older people and other vulnerable adults.

We have 16 Independent Living schemes in the district, consisting of flats, bedsits and bungalows that are ideally suited to older people who can manage their own home but may have individual support needs.

For you as an individual, the Independent Living Officer will:

- Provide daily support and contact as agreed in your support plan to ensure your continued well being*
- Update your Support Plan with you at least annually, but more frequently if required and if you have a change of circumstances.
- Contact you at least twice a week, Monday to Friday between 9.00am – 5.00pm to check on your welfare – we will agree with you whether this will be by visit, intercom, telephone or text.
- Encourage independence by helping you to remain in Independent Living for as long as possible.
- Liaise with other agencies on your behalf such as: your GP, Social Services, Community Mental Health Services and other Council services.
- Signpost you to other services when you need them.

The Independent Living Officer is also responsible for the day to day management of the schemes, including:

- Checking the community alarm (intercom) system in the scheme and your flat/bungalow to ensure that it is working correctly.
- Ensuring that the environment within the scheme is safe, following LCC health and safety policies and procedures.
- Checking that the Fire Alarm system and smoke alarms in your property is working correctly (“all under one roof” flats only)
- In bungalow schemes the Independent Living Officer is responsible for testing the fire alarm in the communal areas.
- Working closely with tenants to facilitate social activities
- Promoting opportunities for tenants to get involved with issues concerning their scheme and the wider community
- Reporting general scheme repairs

** Please note that if you are due to have contact from your Independent Living Officer but go out and do not advise them of this, they may enter your flat/bungalow to ensure that you are not at home and in difficulty. This would also be true of a visiting Independent Living Officer who is providing cover when your Independent Living Officer is on holiday.*

Independent Living Officer's Working Hours

Your Independent Living Officer works a 37-hour week, Monday to Friday. The council's normal business hours are Monday to Friday 9.00am - 5.00pm, but the council operates a flexible working scheme. Your Independent Living Officer will normally work within the normal business hours and should generally be on site every morning Monday to Friday, but their hours are flexible. When they are not on duty, the Control Centre monitors calls that come via the Tunstall Communicall alarm equipment.

Staff Cover

When your Independent Living Officer is on holiday, or off sick, cover will be provided by another member of the team and the Control Centre. You will be advised of the contact arrangements.

Likewise, your Independent Living Officer may be required to go off site to cover at another scheme on occasions to cover for staff absences elsewhere.

Staff Training

Independent Living Officers are required to attend Lancaster City Council's corporate training events including First Aid and Food hygiene within their normal working hours.

We also encourage staff to gain a wider understanding of the Independent Living service by attending professional training courses.

The Emergency Call Centre

Outside the Independent Living Officer's normal 'office' hours, all Independent Living properties are linked to the Progress Lifeline Control Centre via the Tunstall Communicall (intercom) system. The Control Centre is staffed 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year. Calls are automatically diverted to the call centre when the Independent Living Officer is off duty.

Progress Lifeline provide telecare service across the whole of Lancashire and have been contracted by Lancaster City Council to provide this service for our tenants. They work closely with your Independent Living Officer to provide a service when they are off duty or at any time of the day when you have an emergency issue.

The information that you provide on your Personal Information sheet regarding any medical conditions and details of your GP and emergency contacts will be shared with the Control Centre so that the operator can summon the correct help for you in an emergency.

Support Plans

A Support Plan is completed when you are offered a property within an Independent Living scheme and they are then reviewed annually once you move in. A Support Plan is made up with three aspects:

1. Independent Living Assessment
2. Person Centred Fire Risk Assessment (**PCFRA**)
3. Personal Information Form

The Support Plan will highlight areas such as:

- Whether you require any assistance with everyday activities such as washing and dressing, cooking, cleaning, shopping etc
- Referrals to other agencies to assist with the above issues.
- The level and type of contact you would like with your Independent Living Officer
- Whether you require help and advice regarding benefit entitlements
- Referrals to Occupational Therapist for aids and adaptations to your home

The Support Plan is a confidential document stored on your personal file, which is kept securely in a locked filing cabinet by your Independent Living Officer. As mentioned earlier in the guide, the information is also shared with the Control Centre to ensure that we can summon the correct help for you in an emergency when your Independent Living Officer is absent from the scheme.

You can also receive a copy of your Support Plan if you would like one.

Keys

Living in Independent Living, your privacy and independence will be respected. Your Independent Living Officer will hold a key to your property, either in the form of a master key or a copy of the door key given to him/her by you.

The Independent Living Officer will only enter your home using the key:

- In response to an emergency call made by you through pulling an alarm cord/pressing the button on your pendant
- If they do not get a response from you when they visit or intercom call you on your agreed days as per your support plan.
- You, and/or other tenants are in danger.

If this happens, the Independent Living Officer will use the key to enter your property after first trying to contact you. If you are not there, they will leave a note to say that they have come into your property and why. When leaving the property, the Independent Living Officer will leave the property secure.

If you require an extra key, please speak to your Independent Living Officer, who can advise where to purchase one from.

Money

Under no circumstances is your Independent Living Officer allowed to handle or manage your money – this includes cash, bank cards, saving books or online banking.

Gifts, Wills & Bequests

Occasionally tenants may wish to give a small gift to a member of staff as a sign of their gratitude. Small personal gifts such as a bottle of wine or a box of chocolates can be accepted but staff cannot accept gifts that exceed a value of £5.00. They cannot accept money or vouchers regardless of the amount.

We would strongly discourage proposals by tenants (or their family or friends) to leave money or other forms of bequests in their Will to a staff member. We would also respectfully discourage tenants from naming any staff member as an executor of a Will.

Your Independent Living Officer will be able to explain these limitations to you in more depth should you need any further information on gifts.

Data Protection

Under the Data Protection Act, Lancaster City Council must, upon your written request, make available a copy of any personal information that relates specifically to you. Certain information may be withheld if it was supplied by a third party in confidence, or if it relates to any legal action being taken against you.

If you wish to see this information, please write to us. To protect the information that we hold, you will have to produce proof of identity. There may also be a small administrative charge for this service. If the information supplied to you is incorrect, you are entitled to have it amended or deleted as appropriate.

Privacy & Confidentiality

Lancaster City Council will also ensure that all personal information it receives and holds about its customers, potential customers or others, who may be affected, will be treated with complete confidentiality. There are some circumstances when relevant information may be passed on, for example to assist in the prevention and detection of crime, if required to do so by law.

Health & Safety

Health and Safety is a key consideration in Independent Living. The council recognises the need and accepts responsibility for providing, so far as is reasonably practical, a safe and healthy environment for tenants, its staff and any others affected by its service provision.

The council has a Health and Safety Policy to support this and undertakes regular inspections and assessments to maintain a safe and healthy environment within its Independent Living schemes.

For example, The Housing Service arranges for:

- the regular testing and servicing of its gas appliances within your home
- the periodic inspection of the electrical system in your home,
- the maintenance of the water supply
- the maintenance of the structure and fabric of your home and of the common parts of schemes
- the inspection and maintenance of fire control systems with the scheme including the servicing of smoke detectors provided within your home.
- the inspection of the communal parts of schemes to identify and take action on any hazards found.

3 YOUR INDEPENDENT LIVING SCHEME

Communal Areas

Internal communal areas of the scheme are cleaned by a team of cleaners who work for Council Housing. The cleaning is monitored by the supervisor for this team.

Tenants are requested to show consideration to their fellow tenants by using these facilities in a manner that is beneficial to all.

Communal Lounge(s)

Where the scheme includes a common room or lounge, Independent Living Officers will encourage social activities. Tenants are not, of course, obliged to attend any function, the choice is entirely their own. Tenants are free to organise their own activities in the lounge – please liaise with the Independent Living Officer to check that the room is available.

You may find that there is a social committee in your scheme, which organises social activities and outings.

Laundry Facilities

Some schemes include a laundry and all tenants have use of the washing and drying machines for their own washing. The Independent Living Officer will show tenants how to use the machines. Everyone is expected to leave the machines clean after using.

Carers or relatives may use the machines only to do tenants' washing. Priority will be given to carers working to strict time limits. For further information, speak to your Independent Living Officer.

Guest Room

Some schemes have a guest room where, by arrangement with the Independent Living Officer, tenants may have a relative or friend to visit them for a short period. Priority will be given where the application for the use of the room arises from a tenant's illness. A small charge is made for this facility, which is payable to the council.

Please speak to your Independent Living Officer for more information on guest rooms.

Intercom System

All Independent Living properties are fitted with communication equipment so you can contact the Independent Living Officer or Control Centre in an emergency. If the Independent Living Officer is not on duty, the call will be answered by the Control Centre. The system is activated by you pressing your pendant or pulling a pull cord in your home.

It is important that where you have pull cords in your home, they are not tied up or cut off as this would mean that you would not be able to reach the cord if you fell.

We would also strongly advise you to wear your pendant. This means that if you fall you can press the button to activate an emergency call.

The pull cord or pendant can also be used for you to inform the Independent Living Officer/Control Centre that you will not be in for the daily call or if you are going on holiday.

Insurance

Lancaster City Council is responsible for insuring the building, but this does not cover the contents of your home. You are responsible for taking out a contents insurance policy. We would strongly advise you to do this in case of fire, theft or water damage and can provide further information on a low cost option.

Pets

You may keep a small caged bird, or fish in an aquarium, but you must have written permission for anything else. Cats and dogs are not allowed in Independent Living schemes with communal corridors and/or common rooms but we will allow permission if you have your own front door leading outside in most situations.

If you have a pet of any kind, you must arrange for it to be looked after if you become ill; your Independent Living Officer or Housing Officer will ask you to provide us with the contact details for someone who will be able to assist in an emergency. We may also ask you to complete a Pet Owner Contract form.

For further information you can also speak to your Independent Living Officer.

Smoking Policy

Smoking is not allowed in any of the communal areas of the scheme. You are allowed to smoke in your own flat/bungalow, but we respectfully ask that you do not smoke when staff or other professionals are visiting.

We also ask that no one smokes in a communal garden area near the main building, this is so smoke does not go into tenants' flats or communal areas of the building.

Car Parking

There are limited car parking spaces available at some of the schemes. There are no reserved spaces.

Near the entrance to some of the schemes an area may be marked for use by the emergency services. This needs to be kept clear at all times for the use of ambulances or fire engines.

Aids & Adaptations

If you would find it easier to manage if you had some alterations or special equipment in your home, you may be referred to an Occupational Therapist. The Occupational Therapy department is part of Adult Social Care. Adaptations to properties will not be carried out to your property without a recommendation from an Occupational Therapist.

Additional Information

Further information is available via communication screens in schemes that have a communal lounge/area.

Alternatively, we can provide information leaflets on:

- Who's Who in Council Housing (for your scheme)
- Energy Advice
- Guest Room booklet
- Fire Procedures (CAT2 schemes)
- Legionnaire Advice (CAT2 schemes)
- Mobility Scooters (CAT2 schemes)
- TV Licensing

Please speak to your Independent Living Officer.



Office hours are 9.00 am to 5.00 pm Monday to Friday (10.00 am to 5.00 pm Wednesdays).

When the office is closed, in an emergency you can make contact via the emergency equipment in your property.

Calls may be recorded to help improve our standard of service and accuracy of information.

CONTACT US AT COUNCIL HOUSING



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