



Welcome to your new home

A guide for
new tenants



HILLINGDON
LONDON

www.hillingdon.gov.uk/housing



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Welcome to your new home

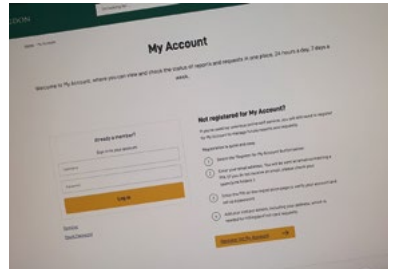
We want you to be happy and settled.

We appreciate that, as a tenant, the responsibilities that come with renting a home for the first time can be a bit daunting.

This guide offers you some important and useful information to help you through the first few weeks.

MyAccount

If you haven't already, register for a MyAccount where you can request services and check your rent account all in one place, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Registration is quick and easy at  www.hillingdon.gov.uk/myaccount.



By signing up you will be able to:

- check your rent account balance and make online payments
- report fly-tipping or anti-social behaviour
- request recycling bags
- order a Hillingdon *First* card and much more...

Tenancy management


If you are transferring from another council property, you must ensure the keys are handed back promptly and a vacation form completed, otherwise you will be charged rent until the former tenancy is ended.

When you move, you will be allocated a dedicated Tenancy Management Officer who will visit you shortly after you move in. These officers deal with tenancy-related issues such as changes to the tenancy (like adding a tenant), requests to improve your home and tenancy checks/reviews. They also handle breaches of tenancy, subletting, fraud and reports of anti-social/ nuisance behaviour.



If you want to make or track a request with them, you can do this on your MyAccount.

For more information about your tenancy, visit

 www.hillingdon.gov.uk and search 'tenancy management'.

Property inspections

From time to time, we will need to do a tenancy check to see who is living in the property and ensure it is in a reasonable condition. If you do not allow access, we can seek a legal injunction and you may incur court costs.

If the property is found to be in an unreasonable condition you will be advised and given the opportunity to bring the property up to a reasonable standard. If you fail to do this, action may be taken against you under the terms of your tenancy agreement.



This is also an opportunity to see if the property still meets your needs, as you may want to downsize or need an adaptation to help you to continue living in your home.

Setting up your gas and electricity accounts

When you move into your new home, you must arrange to have electricity and gas accounts put into your name.

For safety, the gas and electricity have been disconnected.

This means you will not have light, heat or hot water until you have followed the steps below.

1. Locate your gas/electricity meter and take the meter readings. You will need to report these to your utility provider when you set up your accounts.
2. Find out who your utility provider is. To do this, visit:
 -  www.ukpowernetworks.co.uk to find your electricity supplier
 -  www.findmysupplier.energy to find your gas supplier

	Gas	Electricity
Meter reading		
Utility provider		
Contact details		

3. If you have pre-payment gas/electric meters in the property, you will need to find out who the utility provider is. Different utility providers have different processes, so they will explain how you can top up the meter. You may need to email your tenancy agreement to the provider to prove you are the new tenant.

You are likely to need to go to a Paypoint to collect a temporary card/key. If there is a debt on the meter, make sure you register yourself on the meter before you put a credit on it, or you may end up having a deduction for the debt. Your utility provider will send out a key or a card in the post once they have set up your account.



4. The next step is to contact our gas engineers (Monday to Thursday, 8am to 5pm and Friday 8am to 4.30pm) to let us know that the meters are now in credit. We will then arrange a visit within two working days to reconnect the services and carry out safety tests. We will let you know when the workers will be calling.

Note this work cannot be carried out at weekends or out of hours.

Only council workers and utility companies are authorised to reconnect and test the gas and electricity supplies. Tenants must not interfere with the meters or supplies, and must not allow other unauthorised persons to do so.

Gas safety

By law, we must have all gas appliances serviced annually by a Gas Safe registered engineer and hold a valid annual Gas Safety certificate.

In order to do this, we need access to your property. If we are unable to get access we will serve a notice which will allow us to force entry.

Paying your rent

Your rent pays for the repairs, estate management and other landlord services that you receive. If you do not pay your rent, it means that the level of service given to tenants cannot be maintained. You must ensure your rent account does not go into arrears as this can affect you if you need to move.


Your rent is due on a weekly basis, as stated in your tenancy agreement. Once your rent account is set up, you can view your rent statement online by logging into your MyAccount. Rent is reviewed annually in April and you will be informed of any changes.


To make a payment, you will need your rent payment reference number (which you can find on your rent statement) and bank details/card.

The easiest way to pay your rent is by setting up a direct debit or making a payment online by going on your MyAccount once your rent account has been set up.

To find out more about ways to pay your rent, visit

 www.hillingdon.gov.uk/otherpayment.

If you would like more information about any of these ways to pay or need a new or replacement payment card, contact the Housing Charges team by email  housingcharges@hillington.gov.uk or call

 01895 277252.

Don't delay in getting your rent payments set up.

Please allow up to 48 hours for any payment that you have made to show on your rent account.


Universal Credit claimants

If you receive Universal Credit, it is important that you report your rent on your journal and make your rent payment as soon as you receive your Universal Credit housing payment.




If you are unable to make your rent payment yourself, you can ask Universal Credit to make the payment directly to the council.

If you fall into arrears of more than eight weeks, we can ask Universal Credit to pay us directly. This is called an Alternative Payment Arrangement (APA). We can also ask for payments towards your rent arrears. These are called third party deductions.

Please note, a separate claim for council tax reduction must be made as it is not included in Universal Credit. For details of how to apply, visit  www.hillingdon.gov.uk/ctrapply.

Housing benefit

If you are of pension age or living in temporary accommodation and in receipt of Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) benefits or on a low income, you can make a claim for housing benefit. For more information on housing benefit and how to claim, visit  www.hillingdon.gov.uk/housing-benefit-apply.

If you already receive housing benefit or Universal Credit housing costs payments, you will need to complete a change of circumstances form rather than making a new claim when you move home.

Water charges are not covered and will NOT be paid by Housing Benefit or Universal Credit. You need to set up a Direct Debit or standing order to make sure these are paid.

Having difficulty paying your rent?

If you are having difficulty paying your rent, the Welfare Reform and Tenancy Support team can provide advice and support. We can check to make sure you are receiving benefits you may be entitled to, managing debt and help you to apply for grants that may be able to help with rent shortfalls. Contact us by email [@ housingsupportworkerteam@hillington.gov.uk](mailto:housingsupportworkerteam@hillington.gov.uk).



What happens if you do not pay your rent?


It is important to contact your Arrears Recovery Officer as soon as you have a problem with making a payment. If we do not understand your situation and you do not contact us, we may have no option but to proceed with court action.

Wherever possible, we want to avoid court action and agree a rent arrears payment plan. If we must take legal action to recover rent arrears, a County Court Judgement could be made against you. This may affect your ability to get credit in the future, including credit cards, loans, mobile phone contracts or mortgages. You will also have to pay court costs on top of the rent arrears that you owe.


Council tax


Council tax helps to cover the costs of local services such as education, social services, highways, environmental health and waste collection.





You are responsible for paying council tax for your property. You will need to tell us your new address and who is living in your home. You can do this via  www.hillingdon.gov.uk/counciltax.

If you earn a low income, are out of work, claim benefits, or live alone, you may be able to get a discount or help with paying your council tax.

You can apply for council tax reduction (CTR) at  www.hillingdon.gov.uk/ctrapply.


If you already receive CTR and are changing address within the borough, you will need to report a change on the benefits section of the council's website  www.hillingdon.gov.uk/benefits.



If you would like to discuss your council tax account, please email  counciltax@hillington.gov.uk or call  0300 123 1384 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm).

Setting up home

You are responsible for decorating your home. Your new home does not come with furniture, so you will need to source your own furnishings and appliances. If you receive DWP benefits, you may be able to get an interest-free loan for essential furniture.

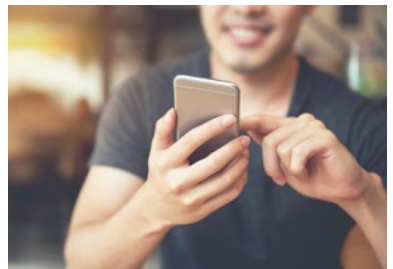


If you are on Universal Credit, and have not already applied, you can ask them for a budgeting advance to help with settling into your property. If you have had an advance in the past, but have since paid this back, you can ask for another one. You can apply for an advance via the homepage of your online Universal Credit account or by calling  0800 328 5644. If you are successful, they will deduct an agreed amount from your ongoing entitlement to pay this back.


If you claim income support, income-based job seeker's allowance, income-related employment and support allowance or pension credit, you may be eligible to apply for a budgeting loan. You can apply online at  www.gov.uk/budgeting-help-benefits or call  0800 169 0140 to request a paper form. You will need to return your completed form by post.

Alternative options include:

- Claiming furniture for free using reuse websites such as Freecycle, Freegle, Olio, Geev, Trash Nothing and the freebies section on Gumtree. Don't forget you will need to arrange to collect items.
- Purchasing second-hand furniture online using sites such as Facebook Marketplace, eBay and Gumtree.
- Trying local second-hand furniture shops like the Trinity Furniture Shops in Uxbridge and Hayes or All Furniture in Hayes.





- Charity grants may be available, but it may take time to get a decision. Ask your Welfare Reform and Tenancy Support Officer for information.
- Family Fund for families that have children with disabilities. To find out more visit  www.familyfund.org.uk.


Please read your tenancy agreement carefully as it gives useful information about your rights and responsibilities as a tenant.

Keep your tenancy agreement in a safe place as you may need it – for instance if you are applying for DWP benefits, setting up utilities or opening a bank account.

Repairs

The council expects you to be responsible for notifying us of any repairs that need to be made to your home internally or externally.

We are responsible for doing some of your repairs and you are responsible for others. Repairs should be reported online as this will start the process of booking your repair.

For more information on repairs and maintenance, and which repairs you are responsible for, see the following page and visit  www.hillingdon.gov.uk/non-emergencyrepairs.

To request a repair:

- Complete an online form  www.hillingdon.gov.uk/requestrepair. You will need to provide your rent payment reference number.
- If you need an **emergency repair** at any time of the day or night, please call us straight away on  01895 556600.

Emergency repairs

What do emergency repairs include?

- Severe roof leaks
- Insecure windows, front doors and back doors
- Leaks that cannot be contained
- A blocked toilet and you only have one toilet
- Blocked or leaking drains or soil stack
- Complete loss of electrical power or lights
- No heating in cold weather where there is no other form of heating available

Non-emergency repairs

You are responsible for dealing with repairs caused by misuse, neglect and accidents, even if it's something we are normally responsible for. We can do these repairs if you pay us, but we will normally expect advance payment unless there is a health and safety risk.



What is the council responsible for?

- Repairing the structure and the outside of your home.
- Making sure that fixtures and fittings for water, sanitation, electricity, gas and heating are safe and in working order.
- Maintaining shared facilities such as communal paths, doors and fences, passenger lifts and communal TV aerial systems.

What are you, the tenant, responsible for?

- Looking after your home.
- If you live in a flat, keeping the landing area immediately outside your entrance door clean and tidy.
- Carrying out minor repairs and all internal decoration.
- Maintaining your own fixtures, fittings and appliances, including any improvement work that we have permitted you to do.
- Ensuring that you, your family, visitors and pets do not damage your home, communal areas or gardens – helping to keep the area a pleasant place.
- Reporting all repairs promptly to us and letting us carry them out.

Condensation, damp and mould

Condensation is the most common cause of damp in many houses, in particular in bedrooms, bathrooms and kitchens. It occurs when warm moist air comes into contact with cold surfaces causing water to be deposited on the surface.



Excess moisture

Moisture gets into the air in our homes through everyday activities like cooking, washing, showering and drying clothes. Through these activities alone, one person can contribute four pints of water to their home's environment in just one day.

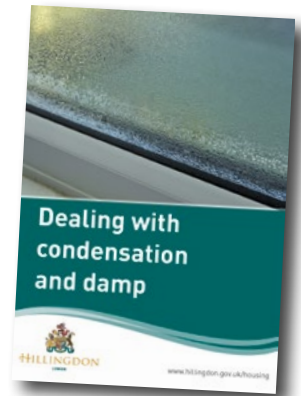
Tips on preventing condensation, damp and mould

- Make sure rooms are ventilated to allow moisture to escape. Do not cover or obstruct air vents and air bricks.
- When cooking, cover saucepans and open windows or use an extractor fan. Keep your kitchen door closed when cooking so steam can't spread around the property.
- Dry laundry outside if possible. If clothes must be dried indoors, keep the room ventilated. If you have a tumble dryer, make sure its vent is funnelled outside.
- Keep a small window in your home slightly open to allow ventilation. If your windows have trickle vents, leave them open.
- Keep the bathroom door shut when bathing to stop moisture getting to other, colder rooms.
- Check that extractor fans in your bathroom and kitchen are working correctly.
- Ventilate cupboards and wardrobes and don't pack them too full to allow air to circulate.
- Leave space between large furniture (especially beds and sofas) and the wall to allow air to circulate.



- Heat your home a little more. In cold weather, the best way to keep rooms warm enough to stop condensation is to keep heating on a low setting all day.

Please read the *Dealing with condensation and damp* leaflet provided for more information about damp and mould.



Home contents insurance

It is important that you have contents insurance in case of loss due to fire, theft or damage. Otherwise, your furniture, carpets, electrical appliances and personal belongings may not be replaced by the council as the contents are your responsibility.

You can purchase pay as you go home contents insurance policy through the council which can be added to your rent account. For further information, visit www.hillingdon.gov.uk/social-housing-insurance, email housingcharges@hillingdon.gov.uk or call 01895 556666.

Alternatively, you can source contents insurance independently. It is a good idea to shop around using comparison sites such as [gocompare.com](https://www.gocompare.com), [moneysupermarket.com](https://www.moneysupermarket.com) and [comparethemarket.com](https://www.comparethemarket.com).

Comments, compliments and complaints

We are always improving our housing service for tenants, so appreciate your views.

We'd like to know when you're pleased with our service and welcome your feedback via www.hillingdon.gov.uk/feedback or customerengagement@hillingdon.gov.uk.




If things go wrong, please let us know so we can put them right and learn from what has happened.

If you have a complaint, in the first instance speak to the relevant department to see if they can resolve the issue. If you are still unhappy you can make a complaint at www.hillingdon.gov.uk/complaints.

Useful contacts and information


Hillingdon Council website

 www.hillingdon.gov.uk

MyAccount

 www.hillingdon.gov.uk/myaccount


Universal Credit

 www.gov.uk/universal-credit

Find your electricity supplier

 www.ukpowernetworks.co.uk

Find your gas supplier

 www.findmysupplier.energy


Housing benefit

 www.hillingdon.gov.uk/housing-benefit-apply

Council tax

 www.hillingdon.gov.uk/counciltax

Repairs

 www.hillingdon.gov.uk/requestrepair

If you contact the council, make a note of the name of the officer you have spoken to.

Getting set up

	Date and details
Connected gas	
Connected electricity	
Set up rent payments	
Set up home insurance	

Keep this information safe and secure.

	Details
Landlord	London Borough of Hillingdon
MyAccount	
Arrears Recovery/Rent Officer	
Welfare Reform Officer	
Tenancy Management Officer	
Rent Payment Reference	
Water Charge	
Housing benefit reference number	
Council tax reference number	
Universal Credit claim number	
Gas meter location	
Electricity meter location	
Stopcock location	
Boiler make	
Home contents insurance number	
Waste and recycling collection day	
Doctor's surgery details	
School contact details	