

Moving into your new home

When moving into your new home there is a number of important and urgent tasks that need to be carried out. You will need to contact the following:

- ▶ Housing Benefit Department (if claiming benefit)
- ▶ Benefits Agency (department of Social Security, if claiming benefit)
- ▶ The council tax department of the local council
- ▶ Electricity company
- ▶ Water company
- ▶ Gas company (if applicable)
- ▶ Personal insurers (for contents of your home)



Housing Benefit

This is for tenants over 16 years who are on low incomes or receive welfare benefits. It only helps with rent payments. It does not cover water rates, sewerage charges, Council Tax, home contents insurance, or rent for a separate garage.

Your responsibilities:

- ▶ **It is your responsibility to ensure that your rent is paid even if you receive housing benefit.**
You must renew your claim when you receive a reminder to do this. If you do not renew on time you may go into arrears with your rent and your Housing Benefit will not be backdated.
- ▶ You must inform your local Council's Housing Benefit Office of any changes that could affect your entitlement, such as changes in the number of people in your home, or a change in income. You must also tell them if you move to a different ASRA property. You must do this before your new tenancy starts.

Department of social security, housing benefit, unemployment benefit

If you are claiming income support, housing benefit or unemployment benefit, it is important that you notify any or all of these departments of your

change of address. Any delay in contacting them can result in loss of benefit. Relevant addresses and telephone numbers can be obtained from ASRA's head office as can claim forms for benefits.

Council tax

Council tax is not normally included in your rent; therefore all new tenants must contact their local council to register for the Council Tax. You may be entitled to Council Tax Benefit. This is for people on low incomes or receiving welfare benefits who would normally be expected to pay Council Tax.

The amount given depends on:

- ▶ Your income and any savings or investments
- ▶ Your personal circumstances
- ▶ The amount of Council Tax set by the Council after any reductions which apply to your home.

People who live alone, or households where everyone is a student, can get reductions on their Council Tax. You can claim these reductions even if you are not receiving other benefits.

The telephone number and addresses of your local council can be found in the telephone book, your local citizens Advice Bureau or Housing Advice Centre.

If you live in shared housing, contact your Housing Officer for advice.

Electricity, Gas and Water

It is important that you contact the electric company, water company and gas company (if applicable) as soon as possible after signing up your new tenancy. If the previous occupants did not terminate their accounts with the electric or gas company, you could be charged for electricity or gas that was used by the previous occupants. We therefore suggest you take meter readings as soon as you are given the keys. Ask for a termination bill to be forwarded to the previous occupant and for a new account to be set up in your name from the date that your tenancy started. Please note it may be necessary to show your offer letter or tenancy agreement to these suppliers.

Insuring your possessions

You are highly recommended to take out an insurance policy that covers the personal contents of your home against theft, fire, flood, accidental damage, etc. Your insurance should cover all your personal belongings, including clothes, decorations, furniture, electrical appliances, jewellery and so on.

Addresses and telephone numbers of insurance companies can be found in the telephone directory. We suggest that you contact more than one company to obtain a number of quotations as costs for contents insurance can vary enormously.

ASRA is not responsible for the contents of your home. If a pipe bursts, ASRA will not normally be responsible for any damage to your belongings - only for repairing the burst pipe.

