

Living in your home

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Tell us how you want this information

Please tell us if you would like this handbook in a different way, for example, in your first language, Braille or large print, or on audio tape or computer disc. Call **0117 924 4071** or email us at **solon@solonswha.co.uk**

POLISH

Jeżeli język angielski nie jest Twoim językiem ojczystym i wymagasz tłumaczenia, możemy to zapewnić.

PORTUGUESE

Se o Inglês não é a sua língua materna e precisa de uma tradução, nós podemos obtê-la.

PUNJABI

ਜੇਕਰ ਇੰਗਲਿਸ਼ ਤੁਹਾਡੀ ਪਹਿਲੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਅਤੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਦੁਭਾਸ਼ੀਏ ਦੀ ਜ਼ਰੂਰਤ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਤੁਹਾਡੇ ਲਈ ਅਸੀਂ ਇਸਦਾ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧ ਕਰ ਸਕਦੇ ਹਾਂ।

SOMALI

Haddii Ingiriisku aanu ahayn afkaaga kowaad oo aad u baahan tahay turjumaad, annagaa kuu samayn karra.

URDU

اگر انگریزی آپ کی پہلی زبان نہیں ہے اور آپ کو ترجمہ کی ضرورت ہے تو ہم آپ کے لئے فراہم کر سکتے ہیں۔

VIETNAMESE

Nếu quý vị không thạo Anh văn và cần bản dịch, chúng tôi sẽ giúp quý vị một bản.

ALBANIAN

Nëse anglishtja nuk është gjuha juaj amtare dhe keni nevojë për një përkthim, ne mund t'ua sigurojmë atë.

BENGALI

ইংরেজী আপনার মাতৃভাষা না হলে এবং আপনার কোন অনুবাদের প্রয়োজন হলে আমরা তা প্রদান করতে সক্ষম।

CHINESE

如果英文不是您的第一語言，而您需要翻譯的話，我們可以為您安排。

GUJARATI

જો તમારી પહેલી ભાષા અંગ્રેજી ન હોય અને તમને ભાષાંતરની જરૂર હોય તો અમે તમને તે આપી શકીએ છીએ.

HINDI

यदि अँग्रेज़ी आप की पहली भाषा नहीं है और आप को अनुवाद की आवश्यकता है तो यह हम आपकी प्रदान कर सकते हैं

KURDISH

Heke îngilîzî zimanê we ye yekem nîne û pêwîstiya we bi wergêr heyê, em dikarin yekî ji we re bibînin

1 You and your neighbours

Solon believes that everyone has a right to enjoy their home and their surroundings in their own way – as long as this does not affect the lives of other people who live nearby.

We all have our own ideas about what is acceptable behaviour. Solon believes that a neighbour should try to be tolerant and understand that other people choose different lifestyles.

We expect all our tenants to abide by their tenancy agreement. This includes clauses about tenant behaviour. We also support any resident who is experiencing anti-social behaviour or harassment, and we can act on their behalf.



→ Anti-social behaviour and harassment

What is anti-social behaviour?

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 defines anti-social behaviour as “acting in a manner that caused or was likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to one or more persons not of the same household”.

This may include:

- excessive noise
- rowdy or threatening behaviour
- intimidation and harassment
- violence against people or property
- criminal damage
- vandalism or graffiti
- drug dealing
- hate behaviours targeted at people who are perceived as different because of their race, colour, sexuality or disability
- dog fouling.

What is not anti-social behaviour?

Some behaviour may be annoying to you but we may not regard it as anti-social and would not take action. We will, however, always acknowledge a complaint. If we cannot act, we will explain why. For example, we would not usually take action about:

- noise from children playing
- personal differences
- family disputes
- overgrown gardens
- noises of normal living, such as flushing toilets and closing doors.

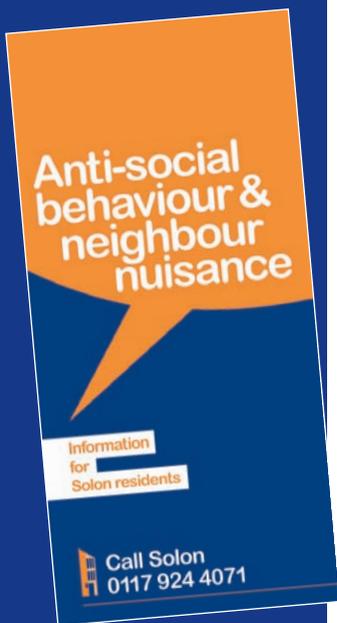
→ What to do if you have a problem

If you feel able, try to speak to your neighbour calmly and politely and tell them that they are causing you some difficulties. Your neighbour might not realise that their behaviour is affecting you. It may be possible to sort everything out in a friendly way. Do not speak to your neighbour if you feel you are in danger.

If speaking to your neighbour is not helpful or you do not feel you can, contact your Solon Housing Officer. They will tell you what you can do and who you can call. We have a leaflet about this, which you can have for more information. We will support you as much as possible and treat what you tell us in confidence.

The **Useful contacts** section of this handbook has local phone numbers you can call in case you need to report anti-social behaviour.

For any serious incident such as assault, threatening behaviour or racial or sexual harassment, contact the police immediately and then tell Solon.



→ What Solon will do

Your Housing Officer will investigate your complaint and contact the person(s) involved. If the problem continues, we may ask you to keep a record of what happens and we will agree a plan of action with you. For very serious incidents, Solon will take legal action – but only if you agree.

We can also give you practical support. For example, we might provide additional security for your home. We may also want to involve other agencies such as SARI (Support Against Racist Incidents) – see page 9. We will always ask you first before we take any action.

→ Action to stop harassment

The Solon tenancy agreement has a clause against harassment. When you sign the tenancy agreement, you agree not to harass or cause offence to others on the grounds of ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, age or any other reason.

The agreement applies to you and to all members of your household and any visitors who come to your home.

If you experience any kind of harassment, tell your Housing Officer immediately. They will investigate, give advice and may contact other support agencies, if you agree.

We treat matters of harassment very seriously and will act quickly. If the harassment is by another Solon tenant, we will enforce the tenancy agreement. This may result in legal action.

We also treat as priority any repairs or graffiti removal that are the result of harassment.

→ How to report racial or religious harassment

If you are the victim of racial or religious harassment, tell Solon as soon as possible. We can offer you support and advice.

You can report behaviour against yourself, your friends or your family, and you do not have to give your name. No action will be taken without your agreement.

Solon recommends that all acts of racial or religious harassment are also reported to the organisation **SARI** – Support Against Racist Incidents. SARI can offer support and can help discuss matters with us and with others.



Report racist behaviour

Support Against Racist Incidents (SARI)

PO Box 2454

Bristol BS2 2WX

Tel: 0117 942 0060

Email: sari@sariweb.org.uk

Web: www.sariweb.org.uk

→ Help to resolve a dispute

Where there is a dispute between individuals, neighbours or between a tenant and Solon, we can arrange mediation. This is provided by an independent agency (not by Solon) and they will try to resolve the problem. All contact is kept confidential and the service is provided free to tenants.

If you think that mediation might help you resolve a problem you have, tell your Housing Officer.



Solon Service Standard

We work with residents to agree our standards for resident support against anti-social behaviour. Details are given in the **Anti-Social Behaviour, Domestic Abuse & Harassment Service Standard**, which you can get from the Solon office and on our website. It explains the service we provide and what we expect of you when dealing with anti-social behaviour.

For more information call **0117 924 4071**

2 Communal areas and gardens

→ Who looks after communal areas?

If you live in a Solon property with communal areas, usually you will be jointly responsible with the other residents for keeping these areas clean and tidy.

Your neighbours will also appreciate it if you keep the bin areas clean and tidy.

Solon provides a gardening service for communal gardens. This includes mowing lawns and pruning bushes. Some residents agree to take over the garden maintenance themselves. If there is agreement with all residents and the garden is maintained, this can be taken out of the service charge.

In some larger properties, Solon employs a cleaner for communal areas. This is paid for by a service charge that is included in the rent.

Communal areas are inspected at least once a year. Residents can suggest improvements such as a door entry system or a caretaking service. Any changes need to be agreed by all residents who share the communal areas. Improvements will usually add an extra cost to the service charge and Solon will always give full details of the cost before any decision or action is taken.

Solon organises the regular redecoration of communal areas. This is normally done in the winter months.

→ Keeping it peaceful, safe and secure

Communal areas work well when all residents show consideration and respect to others in the building. Solon also asks residents to keep their homes as safe and secure as possible by treating communal areas with care.

Come in and leave quietly when using the main door

Please be aware that noise can travel to homes above and below you and that an entrance door that slams shut can often be heard throughout the building.

Keep strangers out

Security is very important. Do not let anyone into the communal area if you do not know who they are or why they are there. If a caller says they are visiting a home where the residents are not in, ask them to come back later.

Keep the hallway clear

Halls and stairways are escape routes in case of fire. For safety, make sure that they are kept clear. Some doors have automatic closers. These are installed to prevent the spread of fire and to give you a better chance of escape. Do not remove these closers and do not prop the doors open.

Keep the alarm switched on

Many Solon properties with communal areas have extra protection from a fire alarm system. There is usually a control panel for this in the downstairs hallway. The alarm should be switched on at all times. If an alarm goes off by mistake, it can be reset. Solon will tell you how to do this.

Solon arranges for all alarms to be checked regularly.

→ Gardens

We are responsible for:

- repairing fences, walls, gates and pathways
- existing overgrown trees if they are likely to cause damage to the property.

You are responsible for:

- keeping your garden tidy and not overgrown after you move in
- maintaining any greenhouses, sheds or lean-to buildings
- maintaining any trees and shrubs in your garden.

Solon residents are usually responsible for the upkeep of their gardens. Even shared gardens can be maintained by residents if everyone agrees.



Need support right now?

Tell Solon, speak to your Housing Officer or call us on 0117 916 7769.

3 Support for tenants

The Solon Tenancy Support service offers practical and emotional support to help people become more independent. The service is for anyone who is taking on a new tenancy or for Solon residents who are finding it difficult to manage in their current tenancy.

The Tenancy Support service is free and confidential. All Solon residents can ask for support.

→ How do I find out more?

Speak to your Housing Officer or contact the Tenancy Support Officer on 0117 916 7769. The Tenancy Support Officer will then make an appointment to meet you and discuss your needs. If we feel that the best help would come from another agency, we will try to find you that support.

If you are a Solon tenant who lives outside the Bristol area, tell us and we will help you to link up with a support service in your area.

→ How does the Solon Tenancy Support service work?

1 We will discuss what you need

The Tenancy Support Officer will discuss your needs with you and make an assessment. If we think that another service or agency can offer you the best support, we will try to find you the right service.

2 We make a plan with you

If you qualify for support, we will agree a plan with you that gives you access to the help you need. The support plan will have clear and achievable goals.

3 We offer regular support

We will offer you regular appointments for a set period to support you. The aim is to help you to get the skills and confidence you need to live independently and manage your tenancy well.

4 We check that the plan is right for you

We will review your support regularly to make sure that you are happy with the service and that it is suited to your needs.

→ The different types of support

Help to manage money or debt

- **Benefit advice**
We can give you advice and make sure that you are getting all the benefits you are entitled to.
- **Debt advice**
We can contact debt collectors for you and put you in touch with debt advice agencies.
- **Help with budgeting and paying bills**
We can help you to prioritise spending and show you how you can manage your money better.
- **Advice on grants and funding**
If you are on a low income and need to buy furniture or household goods, we can help you to get funding to help with the cost.

Personal support and training

- **Links to training, education, voluntary work and employment**
We can help you to find a course and put you in touch with organisations that help people to get out more. We can also support you if you want to get back to work.
- **Practical household support**
We can support you to complete practical tasks in your home or help you to find organisations that provide assistance if you cannot manage.
- **Links to community and social activities**
We can help you to find out about local groups and events.
- **Advice on homelessness**
We can put you in touch with services you might need and tell you what your rights are. We can also help you to be assessed.

Support for you and your family

- **Help to be safe from domestic violence and abuse**

If you are the victim of abuse, we can help you to access the right support and advice to help you to feel safe. Our service is confidential.

- **Advice on education, and links to children's services**

We can put you in touch with specialist support services for help with parenting or issues around families and children. We can provide help and advice on education.

- **Housing and tenancy advice**

We can help you to understand your tenancy agreement and discuss housing issues. We can help you to talk to your Housing Officer if you are experiencing any problems.

- **Help to resettle in a new community**

We can help you to settle into your new home and give you help to sort out your gas and electricity.

Help to meet your health needs

- **Help to manage your physical needs**

We can make sure you are receiving care for your individual needs and offer advice on any adaptations to your home that may be useful to you.

- **Access to mental health services**

We can make sure you are receiving the care and the services you need.

- **Support for drug and alcohol recovery**

We can help you to link up with services for your needs.

4 Pets – our rules

You are welcome to keep pets but before you get a pet you must ask for permission from Solon.

We will normally give permission for pets unless your home is a flat or maisonette that has no separate entrance or access to a garden.

All pets must be kept under control and they must not disturb your neighbours. If we receive complaints about an animal, we can withdraw the permission for the pet.

If you want to put in a cat flap, you will first need to have written permission from Solon. You will need to remove the cat flap and make good or replace the door before you move to another home.

A cat flap cannot be put into any door that opens to a shared entrance or communal area.



5 Pests – who can help

If you have problems with rats, mice, fleas, wasp nests or other pests in your home, contact your local council and ask for the Environmental Health department. The numbers are given in the **Useful contacts** section of this handbook.

Residents are responsible for dealing with pests. You need to have specialists to deal with any problems. Our repair contractors are not equipped to do this.

Your local council gives free advice on pest treatment and how to protect your home against pests. See the **Useful contacts** section of this handbook.

Bristol City Council will treat a rat infestation free, but there is a charge for getting rid of any other kind of pest.



Pest control rates for Bristol

If you receive Income Support, you are entitled to a lower rate (usually 50% reduction) for pest treatment charges. You will need to show proof before any treatment is carried out. Treatment is FREE if you receive Pension Credit Guarantee. You will need to show proof before any treatment is carried out.

6 Rubbish and recycling

→ Regular collections

Your local council provides dustbins (or sometimes bin bags) and collects the rubbish each week or each fortnight.

Please make sure that you put your rubbish out in time on the correct day. The council will give you a leaflet about this. If you are not sure of the day, contact your council.

Your council may also operate a regular recycling collection. For example, in Bristol the council supplies black boxes for rubbish that can be recycled. These are collected each week. You can put paper, bottles and jars, cans, old clothes, shoes, aluminium foil and aerosol cans in your black box. Oil can be left at the side of the box. You can also help by using a compost bin in your garden.

If you need a replacement rubbish bin or recycling box or if you want to report a missed collection, call the council customer service centre.

Contact numbers for rubbish and recycling services for each local council are given in the **Useful contacts** section of this handbook.



→ Getting rid of furniture and other big items

Larger items of rubbish such as broken furniture or old carpets should be driven to the local tip or you can arrange for it to be collected by the council. To find out where your nearest tip is, contact your local council.

The local council will often collect bulky items at a charge. See the **Useful contacts** section of this handbook for contact details.

If you receive benefits, you may be able to get a free collection. You need to ask your council about this.

Charities and other organisations will also collect unwanted furniture.

Solon encourages all residents to recycle. Call your local council to find out what they will collect.



£50 for keys when you leave

When leaving your property, please make sure you hand in all gas and electricity keys along with the door keys. We will inspect the property to make sure that it is clean and clear. If we are satisfied, we will send you a cheque for £50.

7 Moving on

If you choose to leave your home, you can simply end the tenancy. You can also look at options for moving to other social housing or to a shared ownership property.

If you choose to end the tenancy, you must give us 4 weeks' notice in writing. Once we have received your notice, your Housing Officer will contact you and arrange to

inspect your home before you leave. They will also confirm the arrangements for you to return all your keys and they will tell you if there is any work you need to do before you leave.

Once you have moved, if we need to clear any rubbish or belongings you have left behind or repair any damage, we will charge you for this.

→ How to end your tenancy

- Give Solon 4 weeks' notice in writing.
- Make sure that your rent is paid up to the end of your tenancy.
- Return all keys to Solon, including any electricity or gas meter keys. You must do this by the last day of your tenancy and give us a forwarding address.
- Clear the property and leave it clean and in a reasonable state of decoration.
- If you receive housing benefit, tell the council that you are planning to move.
- Tell your electricity, gas and water supply companies.
- Take final meter readings for your services on the day you leave.
- If you use a landline or internet, tell the service supply company.
- Arrange at the Post Office for your mail to be redirected.

→ Other social housing

How can I apply to move to another housing association or council home?

You can apply to be re-housed under the HomeChoice system, which is managed by your council. They will assess you and give you a 'banding' to show what level or priority you have compared to other people who have applied. Priority is given for a number of reasons, for example:

- overcrowding or accommodation too large
- medical need
- harassment or domestic violence
- homelessness
- present accommodation is unsuitable.

Tell your Housing Officer if you wish to move. They can give you more information on how banding and priorities are decided.

What if I have rent arrears?

Residents who have rent arrears get lower priority for re-housing. This is called 'banding relegation'. This depends on the area where you live and where you wish to move to. Contact your Housing Officer or your local council for more information.

→ Property exchange

As well as the HomeChoice system (see page 24), you can apply to exchange homes with another resident. This could be a Solon tenant or a tenant of another social landlord (a housing association or local authority).

You have a legal 'right to exchange' if you get the permission of Solon and the other landlord. This cannot be refused without a good reason.

Reasons for refusal would include anti-social behaviour, current rent arrears or if the accommodation was considered unsuitable because of its size or the type of home.

HomeSwapper

If you want to exchange your home, register on the HomeSwapper website (www.homeswapper.co.uk). This allows you to look at other social housing in your local area, in other areas and nationwide. Contact your Housing Officer if you would like to know more about HomeSwapper. You can also access this service on a computer at the Solon office. There are other websites where you can advertise your home, but HomeSwapper is free for Solon residents.

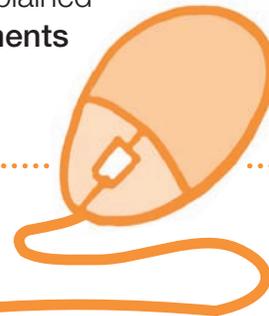
Tenancy rights when you exchange

If you exchange your home, you inherit the tenancy of the resident you exchange with and you must take it in the condition you see. This means that if you have a Secure Tenancy and you exchange with an Assured Tenant, you will lose some tenancy rights. Information about different types of tenancy is provided in the **Welcome** section of this handbook. Responsibility for repairs is explained in the **Repairs and improvements** section of this handbook.

Want to know more about home swap?

Find out on our website:

www.solonswha.co.uk



→ Shared ownership

Shared ownership is the name given to schemes that allow an individual to buy a percentage of a property and to pay rent to a landlord on the remaining percentage.

For example, a purchaser may buy 40% of a property (with a mortgage) and pay rent on the remaining 60%. They have the option to increase the share that they own later on, as their household income allows.

Shared ownership is designed to make home ownership much more affordable to those who might otherwise not be able to buy their own home.

If you would like to know more about shared ownership, contact your Housing Officer. You can also find information via your local HomeBuy service on the HomeBuy website: **www.homebuy.co.uk**

