

**TORFAEN  
COUNTY  
BOROUGH**



**BWRDEISTREF  
SIROL  
TORFAEN**

# **A Tenants Guide to Private Sector Renting**



## **THE GOOD TENANT GUIDE**

### **Introduction**

Torfaen County Borough Council are working to improve the standard of accommodation in the private rented sector through interacting with Landlord's and Tenants.

If renting accommodation, the following should be observed;

- ◆ Always use a good agent who is a member of a professional body, such as the National Association of Estate Agents or NAEA
- ◆ Members of such a body have strict rules of conduct, Client Money Protection and Professional Indemnity Insurance.

Due to changes in legislation more and more restraints are being placed upon private Landlords, but Tenants must realise that they also have responsibilities and should adopt a similar if informal "code of conduct".

Here are some guidance notes for Tenants that should prove helpful.



## Type of Tenancy

### Assured Shorthold Tenancy

All tenancies are Assured Shorthold UNLESS otherwise notified in a prescribed form.

This form of Assured Tenancy guarantees that you, as a Tenant have the right to a fixed term of occupation.

If the tenancy is for a fixed term, say six months, the tenancy is just that, six months.

It is good practice on the part of the Tenant to inform the Landlord or the agent well in advance of the end of the fixed term or if you are not renewing.

When the assured tenancy contract has finished the letting becomes a contractual periodic tenancy. You will be required to give at least one clear period notice of your intention to vacate. There is still some confusion over the amount of notice that the Tenant is required to give.

Under the **Protection of Eviction Act 1977** it is clear that the Notice required is at least 4 weeks if the rent is paid weekly or 1 calendar month if the rent is paid monthly.

If you do not give notice from the contractual due date, the Landlord can enforce that the notice was incorrect and that it will be taken from the next contractual due date. For example;

The rent is due on the 10th of the month-Notice would have to be given **BEFORE THE** 10th of the month and commence from the 10th to the 9th of the following month for it to be valid. If not, you could expect the Landlord to ask for another rental payment.

### I want to leave, what do I have to do?

If you are still in your fixed term of the tenancy, you will be required to pay the rent until the end of this term. **This is a contractual obligation.**

However some Landlords may be willing for you to vacate, but still pay the rent until a new Tenant is found and signs the tenancy agreement. Then you will be released from the agreement.

If the fixed term is coming to an end, you can without penalty, return the keys to the agent on the last day of the period, giving details of your new address etc, and to arrange a check of the property, with you present if you wish.

## Joint Tenancies

A joint tenancy is where two or more Tenants sign one agreement. The rent will be a single figure also the deposit will be quoted as a single figure.

Each Tenant must be aware that when signing such a tenancy, you will be responsible for the actions of each other, including rent arrears, if paying individual amounts to make up the collective rent.

If one or more Tenant(s) vacates, the remaining Tenant(s) will be responsible for the whole rent and the condition of the property in its entirety.

Similarly, if one Tenant is in breach of the tenancy, the Landlord can serve notice on all of the Tenants.

It is therefore **VERY IMPORTANT** that you know the parties you are entering into agreement with.

Even a couple signing a joint tenancy will be treated in this manner.

As the deposit is a whole amount, the person vacating will not receive the part of the deposit back, until a 'top-up' has been made by the remaining Tenant(s).

## Damage Deposits

Damage deposits are taken for security against the Tenant damaging the property or for any unfair wear and tear made by a Tenant or towards any rent arrears. There must be a suitable clause inserted in the tenancy agreement on how the deposit will be held and the use of it should the need arise. Neither the Benefits Agency nor the Housing Benefit Department can help with this payment.

It is normal to take an amount equal to one month's rent as a deposit/bond, but each case is taken on its own merits. It can be two months. There is no upper limit, but an excessive amount of deposit requested could be termed as a premium and therefore advanced rent.

The deposit must be held in a separate account, and cannot be used for any other purpose. This sum should then be refunded at the end of the tenancy **PROVIDED** that there is no unfair wear and tear or damage to the property.

A Landlord cannot expect to make the Tenant pay for a new item of furniture that has been in the house for many years. This is called "**Betterment**" and is deemed to be unfair by the Office of Fair Trading. Allowances must be made for depreciation before the damage costs are assessed.

It is highly recommended that an inventory of all fittings, effects and furniture is made before a tenancy is granted, making a note of any current damage/stains etc, in order that the Tenant is covered from wrongful damage claims.

When entering a property, you should check off all items marked in any inventory and check for signs of damage/wear or appliances that are unusable.



The most important piece of equipment in use today is the Digital Camera. With this you can take accurate photographs of the condition of the property and date stamp them. One copy should be kept until the end of the tenancy and one should be deposited with the Landlord or Agent. This will ensure that all parties have factual information to base a final check on when you leave.

### **Tenancy Deposit Scheme or TDS**

The Housing Act 2004 makes provisions for the Government to implement a central deposit holding facility, so that the Landlord or Agent will not be able to hold this money if they are not party to a TDS.

However, the Landlord or Agent can belong to a scheme enabling them to retain the deposits as normal. In the event of a dispute, they must notify the scheme of such and pass all details as required. They will then deal with the dispute accordingly.

The deposit may be held by the Agent for:

Failing to observe the terms and conditions of this agreement, such as damage or for missing items as detailed on the inventory/schedule of condition attached to this tenancy, subject to an apportionment or allowance for reasonable fair wear and tear and for the age and condition of each and any such item at the commencement of the tenancy.

The fair cost incurred in compensating the Landlord for, or for rectifying or remedying any meaningful breach, including those relating to the cleaning of the premises, its fixture and fittings.

Any unpaid accounts for utilities/standing charges or water charges or environmental services or similar services or Council Tax incurred at the property for which the Tenant is liable under this agreement.

Any rent or other money lawfully due or payable by the Tenant under this agreement of which the Tenant has been made aware and remains unpaid at the end of the tenancy.

If the Landlord suffers any loss or damage directly arising from unfair wear and tear, damage or the negligence of the Tenant they will seek redress and compensation using the normal means including court action. This does not remove the Landlord's liability under the provisions of Section 4(2) Defective Premises Act 1972.

**Protection of the deposit.** The deposit is safeguarded by the Tenancy Deposit Scheme, which is administered by:

The Dispute Services Ltd  
PO Box 541  
Amersham  
Bucks  
HP6 6ZR

Phone: 0845 226 7837    Fax: 01494 431123    Email: [deposits@tds.gb.com](mailto:deposits@tds.gb.com)

### **At the end of the tenancy**

The Landlord must tell the Tenant within 10 working days of the end of the tenancy if they propose to make any deductions from the deposit and what these deductions are for.

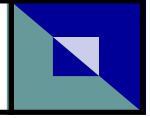
If there is no dispute the Landlord/Agent will keep or repay the Deposit, according to the agreed deductions and the conditions of the tenancy agreement. Payment of the Deposit or any balance of it will be made within 10 working days of the Landlord and the Tenant agreeing the allocation of the deposit.

If the Tenant intends to dispute any of the deductions regarded by the Landlord or the Agent as due the Tenant should try to inform the Landlord/Agent in writing, within 20 working days after the termination or earlier ending of the Tenancy and the Tenant vacating the property. The Independent Case Examiner (ICE) may regard failure to comply with the time limit as a breach of the rules of TDS and if ICE is later asked to resolve any dispute may refuse to adjudicate in the matter.

If, after 10 working days following notification of a dispute to the Agent/Landlord and reasonable attempts having been made in that time to resolve any differences of opinion, there remains an unresolved dispute between the Landlord and the Tenant over the allocation of the Deposit the dispute will (subject to A4.5 below) be submitted to the ICE for adjudication. All parties agree to co-operate with the adjudication.

In some circumstances if the amount in dispute is over £5,000 it can be taken for arbitration. The appointment of an arbitrator will incur an administration fee, to be fixed by the Board of The Dispute Service Ltd from time to time, shared equally between the Landlord and the Tenant; the liability for any subsequent costs will be dependant upon the award made by the arbitrator.

The statutory rights of the Landlord and the Tenant to take legal action through the County Court remain unaffected by clauses (1-35) above.



## Rent

If the rent is paid weekly, you must by law have a rent book.

There are two other ways rent is paid Lunar Monthly or Calendar Monthly.

For example

Annual rent of £3120 may be collected as

Weekly	$£3120/52 = £60 / \text{week}$
Lunar Monthly	$£3120/13 = £240 / \text{lunar month}$
Calendar Month	$£3120/12 = £260 / \text{calendar month}$

## Inventory

Depending on the Landlord/Agent's instructions, they may provide you with an inventory.

This is a very important part of the process. You must check off all the items on the inventory and make notes of any existing damages or wear.

Even if you have not been given an inventory it is a must that you take photographs and note the condition of the property as possible. A copy should be sent (registered post) to the Landlord or Agent.

DO NOT overlook this vital part of the tenancy process.

## Insurance

Under normal circumstances the Tenants contents will not be covered under the Landlord's insurance policy. Therefore you should make your own arrangements for cover. It is advisable that you cover fridge/freezer contents, as this can be costly to replace in the event of electrical power failure or other problem.

You will not be able to claim against the Landlord.

## Increasing the Rent

Depending on the provisions in the tenancy, the Landlord can increase the rent according to those provisions, but only once in any given year.

If there are no provisions contained in the tenancy, the rent can only be increased once the fixed term has expired and either grant a new fixed term tenancy at a new rent, or, by way of service of a Section 13(2) Notice proposing a new rent. You will have one month to discuss any increase and agree a different amount. If you do nothing the new amount will apply automatically.

This increase can only be made once in a given 12 month period. The Landlord cannot increase the rent again until this period has elapsed and the service of another Section 13(2) Notice. You may refer the matter to the Rent Assessment Committee (RAC) for assessment if you think that the rent is excessive and the Landlord will not compromise with you.

However, the rent set by the RAC may be higher or lower than that that proposed by the Landlord, the rent set is based on the market levels of similar properties in the area.

## Utilities

Tenants should read all meters on entry, regardless of any other person's actions. You should notify the authorities of the meter readings. You should also notify the Council for Council tax purposes and the relevant water authority.

Many utility companies do not take third party information, such as from a letting agent. Therefore if you have not read the meters on occupation and vacation, you may be in for a shock when a final demand arrives for a very large sum of money.



### Refuse Collection

When occupying a property for the first time, it is good advice to contact a neighbour or the local Council to find out the procedure for the disposal of household rubbish. This should include any recycling facilities in the area. Do not allow rubbish to mount up in the back garden, this only encourages rodents and other unwanted pests to frequent the area. Also any cost for removal of this rubbish will come down to you. Do not allow rubbish to mount up in communal areas of flats, as this is a fire risk.



### Recycling

The Council provides a number of recycling sites across the Borough so that members of the public can dispose of the recyclable waste, such as glass, paper, cans and textiles. The kerbside recycling collection service for paper, glass and cans is now offered to every home in Torfaen.



**For further information about any aspect of recycling please contact the recycling office on 01633 860086.**

### **Noise/Unsavoury Behaviour**

In certain properties, such as converted houses into flats, there is a greater risk of impact noise due to the construction of the property. Laminate flooring is now considered a problem in this type of property and should not be laid.



Loud music/parties are very well in private grounds, but in flats, semi-detached and terraced houses can cause a nuisance and annoyance to neighbours. **BE** considerate to your neighbours. If there has been cause of complaint, address the neighbours courteously and try to reach an amicable agreement on the level of acceptable noise. However, you have to live, so someone cannot argue about you walking, talking, laughing etc.

### **Repairs**

#### **My drain is blocked - will you send someone to clear it?**

The Landlord is responsible to keep all drains, gullies, down pipes etc in working order. **BUT** if you put materials down a pipe, drain or gully that will potentially block it, such as grease, fats etc or sanitary towels down the toilet, then you will be responsible to pay the bill for the clearing.

If you find that a problem has come to light and a repair is required, inform your Landlord or agent as soon as possible. In writing if necessary (keeping a copy of all correspondence). Depending on the severity of the problem, the Landlord or agent should react to the information accordingly. For example a dripping tap would be a minor problem compared to a leaking cold water tank in the attic. Under normal circumstances do not attend to the repair by yourself, as this may invalidate any insurance policy or warranty.

The Landlord has certain repairing obligations to comply with under **The Landlord & Tenant Act 1987**.

Under this Act, the Landlord must ensure that all mains services are satisfactory and maintained. There should be (where at all possible) no disruption to the supply of gas, electric, water, drainage. However, certain repairs may be necessary from time to time and therefore supplies may need to be halted to undertake such a repair. This cannot be helped.

The Landlord is obliged to keep in working order all appliances (supplied by him/her) for water heating and space heating in working order. Sanitary ware (including drains, water course gutters) must be in good repair. However, the Landlord is not responsible for the actions of a Tenant, such as putting grease or oil down pipes or other obstructions. The cost of clearing drains caused by these sort of obstructions would be down to the Tenant to pay. If you cannot get repairs carried out, please contact the Public Health Team on 01633 648489/648494 and an officer will visit to carry out an assessment under the Housing, Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS).

### Am I allowed to decorate?

Tenants often believe that they could personalise their accommodation by decorating it themselves and in so doing would please the Landlord. **PLEASE DO NOT DECORATE WITHOUT AUTHORISATION.** The Landlord may not wish to have the current colour scheme changed.



You are responsible for the upkeep of the decoration during the term and must not let it deteriorate due to smoking, condensation mould or other damage. Bluetack may damage walls and any necessary redecoration costs will be deducted from the dilapidation deposit.

### Health & Safety

In certain types of accommodation, such as Houses in Multiple Occupation or HMO, there is a requirement for the Landlord to provide fire-fighting equipment for your safety. These are **NOT** toys and should be regarded as your lifeline.



**DO NOT** set off fire extinguishers for fun. If you do have cause to use an extinguisher or blanket **INFORM** the Landlord or agent as soon as possible. This is for two good reasons, 1, the equipment will need refilling or replacing, and 2, the insurance company may need to be informed. Smoke alarms, these are only as good as the batteries you put in them. You will be responsible for the replacement of the batteries. **Don't get caught out - Press the button.** Test them at least once a week.

Self-closing mechanisms on fire doors. We all know they are a pain; you're carrying a tray and it slams in your face! These are designed for your safety and well being - **DO NOT** tamper with the springs, or remove them altogether. They are costly items to replace and reset and this cost will come back on to you. They are there for good reason - they will prevent the spread of fire enabling you to vacate the property more safely.

If the property has an automatic fire detection system, make sure that there are no faults in the panel and that no one has broken the sounders or call points.

**ALWAYS CHECK THE MEANS OF ESCAPE** - this will normally be through the centre of the property and out through the front or back doors.

## Housing, Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS)

The Housing Act 2004 came into effect on the 6th April 2006 and introduced with it a new way of assessing dwellings called the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS), which replaces the old 'fitness standard' under the Housing Act 1985.

The HHSRS aims to provide a method which enables risks from hazards to health and safety dwellings to be removed or minimized. The principle behind the system is that a dwelling, any associated outbuildings and outdoor amenity space should provide a safe and healthy environment for the occupants and any visitors to the dwelling. The dwelling should be free from hazards or when they are unavoidable, they should be made as safe as is reasonable practicable. The HHSRS applies to both single dwellings and Houses in Multiple Occupation.

The HHSRS assess 29 categories of housing hazards including those which were not covered or were inadequately covered by the old housing 'fitness standard'.

### Physiological

1. Damp & Mould Growth
2. Excess Cold
3. Excess Heat
4. Asbestos (& MMF)
5. Biocides
6. Carbon Monoxides etc
7. Lead
8. Radiation
9. Uncombusted Fuel Gas
10. Volatile Organic Compounds

### Psychological

11. Crowding & Space
12. Entry by Intruder
13. Lighting
14. Noise

### Infection

15. Domestic Hygiene etc
16. Food Safety
17. Personal Hygiene etc
18. Water Supply

### Safety

19. Falls in bath etc
20. Falls on level etc
21. Falls on stairs or steps
22. Falls between levels
23. Electrical Hazards
24. Fire
25. Hot surfaces
26. Collision/Entrapment
27. Explosions
28. Position and Operability of Amenities
29. Structural Collapse

The property is inspected and any defects and deficiencies which may pose a hazard are noted. A score for each hazard is then calculated. The score depends on the severity of the hazard and its potential to cause injury to a person who is most vulnerable to that hazard. For example, stairs constitute a greater risk to the elderly, so when assessing the hazard relating to stairs, the elderly are considered to the vulnerable group. Likewise the elderly and very young are at greater risk from cold so they are the vulnerable group for the hazard excess cold. The greater the likelihood of harm occurring or the more severe the outcome, then the higher the score for the hazard will be.

The scores are divided into 10 hazard bands, A to J, Band A is the most serious and Band J the least serious. A hazard which falls into Bands A to C is termed as a 'category 1' hazard which the Council has a statutory duty to take enforcement action to deal with these hazards. A hazard in bands D to F is a 'Category 2' hazard which the Council has the power to take enforcement action to deal with if it is deemed appropriate.

The decision on which type of action can be taken is based on several factors, the severity of the hazard score, whether the Council has a duty or just a power to act and a judgement about the best means of dealing with the hazard.

## Animals/Pet



Due to the damage that some animals cause in properties, not only physical, but noise, Landlords or Agents may not allow these animals, such as cats and dogs. If agreement is made to allow you to keep an animal, you may have to pay a higher bond to cover any damage, and you may have to have the property

cleansed by a professional company at the end of the tenancy for parasites such as fleas or ticks.

Always ask your Landlord or agent first before allowing any animal into the property. If possible get any agreement in writing.

## CONDENSATION OR DAMP?

Many Tenants report to letting agents that the property is damp as mould growth has appeared.

### What is condensation?

Condensation in a building usually occurs when warm air comes into contact with a cold surface. The air is cooled below its saturation point causing its excess water vapour to change into liquid water. The condensed water usually appears as water droplets or water film on non-absorbent surfaces such as windows or tiles. This form of condensation is described as surface condensation.

### Conditions for condensation

Condensation in dwelling houses is mainly a winter problem particularly where warm moist air is generated in living areas and then penetrated to colder parts of the building. Water vapour is produced in relatively large quantities from a large number of activities. Condensation will also occur under suspended timber floors where the temperature of humid air in the floor space is lowered by cold air moving in through ventilators and water is then condensed on the underside of the timber floor, this will often induce timber decay of the wooden floor.

## The causes of condensation

In dwelling houses condensation is related to modern living standards, economic pressure and changing building design. The main cause of condensation is naturally the generation of moist warm air by domestic activities. Moist air can come from cooking, bathing, washing and drying clothes as well as paraffin heaters and flueless gas heaters - up to 17 litres of water can be produced daily in some homes! In certain areas such as bathrooms and kitchens moist, warm air can spread to cooler parts of the house to condense on cold surfaces. The effect of moisture generation is further aggravated by the way houses are ventilated it is theoretically possible to avoid condensation by adequate ventilation. Up to about the later 1960's there was natural ventilation in many homes because of the lack of double-glazing, poorly fitting windows and doors, open fireplaces. Present attitudes have eliminated natural ventilation by the use of double-glazing, draught excluders, fitted carpets (preventing air movement up through suspended wooden floor boards) and the removal of open fireplaces with the introduction of central heating systems. To put it simply buildings have been effectively sealed and provided ideal conditions for condensation to occur.

Properties which are unoccupied and/or unheated throughout the greater part of the day allow the fabric of the building to cool down. Moisture producing activities such as cooking, washing, etc are then concentrated into a relatively short period, i.e. in the evening when you return home. This sudden increase in warm air can produce condensation as the air comes into contact with the relatively cold structure which is still warming up.

## Mould Growth



Condensation mould photo for illustration purposes only Mould growth will appear on any damp surfaces such as plaster, wall-paper and timber and is associated with condensation problems in many buildings. It is unacceptable because of appearance (unsightly growths of various colours greens, yellows, pinks, black, grey or white)

There are many factors for such growth. It is agreed that "black mould" will settle on damp areas. However, the main cause of such mould can be one of the following reasons:

- ◆ Drying Clothes - particularly on radiators, can increase condensation unless you open a window to compensate and allow the air to flow
- ◆ Tumble Drier - If this is not vented out of the property, moist air will circulate and settle on cold surfaces producing condensation. Unless this is wiped off, mould can form.
- ◆ Doors - Keep bathroom doors shut when bathing or showering. Kitchen doors shut when cooking.
- ◆ Windows - Keep windows open when bathing or showering or when cooking.
- ◆ Portable gas fires - Under no circumstances should these be used in rented accommodation - for this purpose they produce more than a pint of water vapour per pint of liquid gas consumed. They are also very dangerous - Carbon Monoxide
- ◆ Extractor fans - These should be used when appropriate
- ◆ Cupboards etc - If these are placed too close to walls, air cannot circulate and therefore, mould growth will form on walls. Always allow a suitable gap.

## Electrics and Fire

Common sources of fire in homes can include:

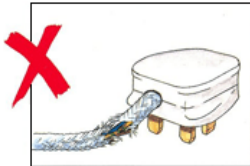
Drying clothes over or too close to fires



Not attending to cooking appliances



Damaged cables or flexes



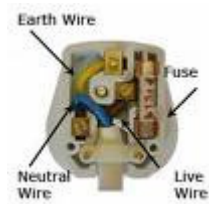
Overloading Sockets



**REMEMBER—ALWAYS USE CORRECT FUSES IN PLUGS FOR THE APPLIANCE**



**REMEMBER THE COLOUR CODING FOR PLUGS**



## Water



Make sure that you know where the stopcock is located. Make sure that all drain plugs are removed when the property is unoccupied. If away for long periods, please turn off the water supply at the stop cock. Please inform your Landlord of any long stay away from the property (i.e. 3 weeks or more) in order that suitable arrangements can be made in winter for the frost protection etc.

## Gas

If the property has gas appliances supplied by the Landlord, these will require an annual Landlord's safety certificate to check for soundness.

It is a criminal offence for a Landlord not to have the appliances serviced and records kept of any maintenance. **Gas safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 and amendments.**

### **If you don't, you are putting your lives in danger**

As a Tenant you have also the responsibility for allowing access for engineers to carry out safety checks on the appliances.

There should be plenty of notice given to Tenants of a visit.

Don't forget that contractors have wasted journeys the same as you, so if an appointment is made KEEP IT. If you can't, phone the engineer or the agent in good time.

## Gas Safety

Carbon Monoxide is a tasteless, odourless, poisonous gas which is produced when gas is not burning properly.

Carbon Monoxide is absorbed into the body affecting the oxygen supply and causes drowsiness, sickness, headaches, pains in the chest and stomach and, in extreme cases, death. People are most vulnerable when they are asleep and have left on faulty gas appliances. British Gas estimates that the death rate is approximately 40 people each year.

There has recently been a lot of publicity highlighting deaths of private Tenants from Carbon Monoxide poisoning, Tenants of houses in multiple occupation are particularly at risk. It is good practice to install a Carbon Monoxide monitor.

Danger signs to look out for:

- ◆ Stains, soot or discolouring around a gas fire or at the top of a water heater may mean to fire or chimney is blocked;
- ◆ A yellow orange flame on a gas fire or water heater;
- ◆ A strange smell when the gas appliance is on;
- ◆ Any of the medical symptoms listed above

**IF YOU ARE AT ALL CONCERNED ABOUT THE SAFETY OF A GAS APPLIANCE OR SMELL GAS YOU MUST TAKE ACTION IMMEDIATELY**

- ◆ Please extinguish any cigarette or any naked flame
- ◆ Turn off gas supply at meter
- ◆ Open windows for ventilation
- ◆ DO NOT turn any electrical appliance on or off
- ◆ Leave the property
- ◆ Contact the Landlord or managing Agent immediately. If they refuse to take action, contact the Local Authority.
- ◆ Telephone Transco to report the escape of gas and listen to their instructions Tel: 0800 111 999

The Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations place a legal duty on Landlords to service and carry out checks to gas appliances annually.

The checks must be done by a CORGI registered installer.

The Landlord must keep a record of when each gas appliance was checked, any faults found and remedial action taken and must show that record to a Tenant if asked to do so.

Contravention of the regulations are a criminal offence and the Health & Safety Executive have the responsibility for prosecuting offenders.

If your Landlord or managing agent refuses to carry out safety checks you should contact the Health & Safety Executive. Their address is:-

Government Buildings  
Ty Glas Avenue  
Llanishen  
CARDIFF CF14 5SH  
Tel: (029) 2026 3000



## Washing Machines



It is always advisable to turn off the taps when the appliance is not in use. It is recommended that liquid detergent be used in the machine in preference to powders, if the washing machine is provided with the let. If you do use powders, it is advisable to clean the dispenser trays and any filters after use or at least once a month. You may be charged if a repair is made due to clogging of any filter or foreign material found clogging the machine, as use of such machines require regular cleaning as part of normal hours.

## Security

Ensure that all doors and windows are closed and locked at night and when the property is left unattended. Please use any security devices at the property.

If the property has a keypad alarm, if you change the combination, please inform the Landlord or agent, to avoid any unnecessary problems with authorities.

## Keys



Please use common sense regarding keys, take all labels associated with the keys off the bunch. If keys are lost or stolen, you will be responsible for the replacement of locks and additional keys. On vacation of the property, do not leave the keys in the property or with any other person. Please return them to your Landlord. Costs may be incurred if keys are not returned.

## Gardens



During the growing season, lawns will need to be cut every 7 days, this will ease the problem of overgrown and unsightly gardens. Under the terms of your tenancy you are responsible for the cutting of lawns and keeping the garden tidy. Do not cut down trees or take up shrubs. It is expected that the garden will remain in a suitable condition throughout the tenancy and on vacation.

## Parking



Do not obstruct other parking spaces, garages or drives; acquaint yourself with the designated parking areas. If there is a resident parking permit required for the parking area, these are normally obtained direct from the local authority.

## Cleaning



At the end of the tenancy the property should be cleaned to a good standard. Everybody's perception of a good standard is different.

Therefore, please make sure that all sanitary ware are clean and disinfected. The kitchen appliances are cleaned professionally. The carpets are vacuumed. If heavily soiled during the tenancy, then the carpets should be professionally cleaned.



## Pests

Time to time you may come across insects or other pests in homes.



### Silverfish & the Firebrat

The silverfish and the firebrat are very common household pests.

How to spot them

They are long, slim, scaly, segmented, wingless insects, with a pair of long fine antennae at the front and three tail-like appendages at the rear. Silverfish may grow to about 12mm in length but the firebrat tends to be larger (14mm) with much longer antennae. The silverfish, as its name implies, is silvery and glistening in appearance whilst the firebrat is grayish with dark, irregular markings. They also leave "slug" like trails over carpets, leaving people to believe they have a slug or snail infestation.

## Control

When only a few silverfish are seen it is not necessary to take any action other than checking for damp.

If large numbers of these insects trouble you they are easily controlled with normal insecticidal spray or dust which can be bought from most hardware stores. Look for the products that are specifically designed to deal with crawling insects.

## Ants

These are of no public health significance but can be a nuisance. Control measures are generally only required where ants are entering buildings. Access points should be sealed using mortar, cement or mastic as appropriate together with the application of a residual insecticide.

There are two species of ant commonly found in the UK:

The Garden (Black) Ant  
The Pharaoh's Ant



The Garden Ant has a black segmented body, the workers are 5mm in length and the queen is 15mm long and brown in colour. Their nests are found in soil, lawns and close to buildings.



The Pharaoh's Ant which is of tropical origin is a smaller species; the workers are only 2mm long, the queen 5mm long and brown and yellow in colour.

### How can they be controlled?

There are several measures you can take to control Garden Ants:

Identify and destroy the nest using boiling water or a proprietary insecticidal dust or spray around the nest and opening in buildings.

Ensure that sugary foods are kept in sealed containers and all food spillages are cleared up.

An infestation of Pharaoh's Ants must be professionally treated.

### Fleas

The most common fleas found in British houses are the cat flea and the dog flea. The human flea is now extremely rare.

### How to spot them



Fleas are brown, around 2mm long, 1mm high and so thin that they look almost flat. The adult feeds from birds or mammal while the larvae feed on small particles of organic matter.

Fleas pass through three stages (egg, larvae and pupa) before becoming an adult. Their eggs are smooth, oval, grayish white and very smooth (1/4mm). They can only just be seen with the naked eye. The fleas' armour makes them almost impossible to squash and they are capable of jumping a vertical height of 30cm. This represents 200 times its own body length.

### Habits

Both adults and larvae live in cracks and crevices, usually on the floor in the host's bedding. Each species of flea is more or less dependant on their own species of host, but remove the host and some fleas can live for months on human blood. However they cannot breed and so will die eventually. If a house has been empty for months fleas can lie dormant until a host appears for them to feed from.

### Control

With cat or dog fleas it is necessary to have the animal treated (your vet will be able to help) and have its bedding thoroughly washed and treated with insecticide. All floors, cracks, crevices, fabrics and bedding should be treated with insecticide and bed linen should be washed. We advise that you vacuum all floors and floor coverings and spray all new vacuum cleaner bags with insecticide to kill any fleas that are collected.

### Insecticides

There are many products that deal with fleas; the best ones give several months of protection by preventing larvae from developing properly. You can buy these products from most chemists, hardware shops and veterinary surgeries. If you have problems getting rid of fleas, your local business directory will list professional pest controllers.

### Common Garden Woodlice



The species of woodlice which occasionally enter houses are entirely casual visitors searching usually for some protection from the onset of cold weather and perhaps being encouraged by the build up of vegetation and other favorable niches outside the house. They are capable of small amounts of chewing damage to plant leaves but basically are of no public health significance as they do not cause disease. Control of woodlice may be achieved by simple cleaning, the sealing of potential entry points and removal of rubbish and vegetation from the house. An application of residual crawling insect powder around entry points will prevent further problems.

### Rats



In medieval times the black ship rat brought fleas carrying bubonic plague to England. But 200 years on we now have the brown sewer rat. They do not carry the plague but can spread Leptospirosis, Salmonella food poisoning, Typhus, Trichinosis, and Tapeworms.

#### How to spot them

Rats leave little dark brown droppings, about 20mm long. Like the mouse they gnaw on wire, wood and soft metals such as lead and aluminium which are no barrier to an active rat.

#### Control

If you see any signs of rats in your house or garden, please contact the Council as soon as possible. Please clear any food spills thoroughly. Take care that all waste foods are disposed of into your refuse bin and not left lying around in bags or sacks. If you are composting, do not use meat or cooked products. Bird food is a tasty treat to vermin, so use a rat-proof bird table.

### Mice



The house mouse is slim, grows to a maximum of 25g and has a pear-shaped body. They can climb very well and can squeeze through holes just 6mm across, so most houses are easy targets.

#### How to spot them

Mice leave little black droppings, smaller than an apple pip. They also gnaw on wire, wood and furniture and will take small chunks out of any food that is left lying around.

**Useful Telephone Numbers**

Torfaen County Borough Council                      01495 762200

**Departments**

Pest Control/Animal Warden/

Noise Pollution/Smoke Pollution/

Odour Pollution    01633 648489/01633 648494

Trading Standards                                        01633 648384

Food, Health & Safety                                    01633 648468

Western Power    0800 082 0400

Gas    0800 111 999

Water    0800 052 0130

Sewerage Problems                                      0800 085 5937

**Emergency**

Police/Fire/Ambulance/Coastguard                999 or 112

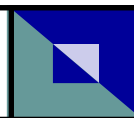
British Telecom     0800 800 150

**Hospitals**

Royal Gwent    01633 234234

Panteg Community Hospital                         01495 768768

Neville Hall Hospital                                 01873 732732



## WHERE TO GO FOR ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE

Torfaen County Borough Council  
Civic Centre  
Pontypool  
Torfaen NP4 6YB  
Telephone: 01495 762200

Torfaen County Borough Council  
County Hall  
Croesyceiliog  
Cwmbran  
Torfaen NP44 2WN  
Telephone: 01633 648009

There are four Customer Care Centres where you can obtain advice on housing benefit and homelessness issues. You can also contact the Homelessness Team on 01495 766662.

1. Civic Centre, Pontypool, Torfaen
2. 1-2 General Rees Square, Cwmbran, Torfaen
3. Church Avenue, Trevethin, Pontypool, Torfaen
4. 7-12 Lion Court, Lion Street, Blaenavon, Torfaen

For general advice on private rented housing contact the Public Health Team, 01633 648489 or 01633 648494.

Citizens Advice Bureau

21 Caradoc Road, Cwmbran, 01633 482464

George Street, Pontypool, 01495 757421

Shelter Cymru

PO Box 5002

Cardiff CF5 3YZ

Tel: 029 2055 6120

Local Shelter Cymru Surgeries:

Monday	12.00pm - 2.45pm	Pontypool Customer Care Centre
Tuesday	12.00pm - 2.45pm	Cwmbran Customer Care Centre
Thursday	9.30am - 12.30pm	Cwmbran Customer Care Centre
Thursday	1.30pm - 4.30pm	Pontypool Customer Care Centre



County Hall  
Croesyceiliog, CWMBRAN  
Torfaen NP44 2WN

Phone: 01633 648489  
Fax: 01633 648062  
E-mail: [adminteam.planning&pp@torfaen.gov.uk](mailto:adminteam.planning&pp@torfaen.gov.uk)