

Neighbourhood Centres

a guide for all users

- **Council and tenant responsibilities**
- **Frequently asked questions**

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Council and tenant responsibilities

RMBC responsibilities

The council is responsible for the building structure, condition and fixtures and fittings that have been installed by the council and will ensure that the centre facility is:

- Kept in a clean and tidy condition.
- Wind and watertight.
- Fit for purpose and use.
- DDA compliant (Disability Discrimination Act 2005)
- Kept in a good condition and all repairs are undertaken within a reasonable timescale.

As well as the general fixtures and fittings detailed in the below table, the Council will provide the following non fixed items within each centre:

- Tables
- Chairs
- Laundry machines (if applicable)
- Fire extinguishers (in lounge, hallway and kitchen)
- Fire blanket (in kitchen)
- Fire retardant curtains
- Noticeboard
- Toilet rolls
- Washing up liquid
- Kettle or water boiler

Tenants are responsible for providing any items that they require which are not detailed above.

Tenant responsibilities

Tenants are responsible for any items that have been placed in the building by them or other tenants.

The table below provides an overview of general items within centres and the associated responsibility which includes repairs, maintenance, replacement, cleaning, insurance, security, liability etc.

This list is not exhaustive

Location	Item Description	Responsibility	
		RMBC	Tenants
Kitchen	Kitchen fixtures and fittings: units, worktops, taps, sinks	Yes	
	Wall mounted hot water boilers if applicable	Yes	
	Non fixed items i.e kettles, water canisters, cookers, fridges, freezers, cups, cutlery, glasses, plates etc	Yes	
	Floor coverings and decoration etc	Yes	
Toilets	Toilet, sanitary fittings, toilet roll holder, sink, toilet brushes, flooring	Yes	
	Non fixed items i.e. pictures etc		Yes
Lounge	Floor coverings, decoration etc	Yes	
	Non fixed items i.e. pictures, tables, ornaments, games tables, bingo equipment, TV's, freeview boxes, stereos, etc		Yes
	Tables and chairs (provided by RMBC only)	Yes	
Laundry	Laundry machines i.e. washer and dryer	Yes	
	Floor coverings, decoration etc	Yes	
	Sink area if applicable	Yes	
	Personal items belonging to tenants eg washing detergents, softeners, clothes, washing baskets		Yes
Heating System	Full heating system i.e. boiler, radiators, thermostat etc	Yes	
Electrical	Lights, plug sockets, switches, wiring etc.	Yes	
All areas	Any personal items belonging to tenants or groups eg books, jigsaws, IT equipment, stationary, food, drink, kitchen equipment purchased by groups		Yes

Permission

Tenants should seek approval from the Area Housing Officer before placing any items within the building or external to the building, including alteration permissions. The Area Housing Officer will ensure that items are legal and comply with the use of the building.

Items requiring permission include

- Televisions and stereos
- All electrical items
- Chairs and sofas
- Any furniture such as tables, bookshelves
- Any soft furnishings such as rugs, curtains and cushions

Frequently asked questions

This section provides an overview of the most frequently asked questions in relation to the use of neighbourhood centres.

1. What is a neighbourhood centre?

Neighbourhood centres are communal facilities located usually within a bungalow housing complex. The centres act as a focal point for the provision of tenant activities to support independent living and reduce social isolation.

There are 45 centres across the borough. All centres have a communal room, kitchen and toilet facilities. Some centres also offer a laundry facility.

Tenants living on a scheme with access to a centre must pay a mandatory weekly communal facility charge and where there are laundry facilities, an optional additional laundry is applied, as agreed within their tenancy agreement. The charges provide income for the neighbourhood centres and laundries to support the associated running costs.

2. Laundry

Within some of the centres, there are laundry facilities consisting of a washing machine and dryer.

• Who can utilise the laundry facility?

Tenants who pay the laundry charge can use the laundry. Carers, family, and friends are not able to utilise the laundry for their own washing however they are able to wash on behalf of tenants who pay both charges.

• Can the laundry charge be removed?

The laundry charge can be removed if a tenant has their own washing facilities or arrangements and does not require use of the laundry facility. If a tenant wishes to opt out of using the laundry facility, they can do so by contacting Council Homes on 336009. An appointment will be made for the Area Housing officer to check you have your own facilities.

• Can residents opt into the laundry charge?

A resident can only opt into the laundry charge if they live on a complex/scheme where a laundry is present and pay the Communal Facility Charge (CFC). Non-residents are not able to opt into the CFC or laundry charge.

• Tenants who do not pay the laundry charge are using the laundry

If tenants are aware of people using the laundry who do not pay the charge, they can provide further details to the Area Housing Officer (for example name, address).

• What are the opening hours of the laundry?

The laundry facilities are available for use at the council's discretion; however, the general opening times are between 8am and 7pm Monday to Friday and 10am to 6pm on Saturday and Sunday.

This is to limit the noise levels and the associated impact on the tenant living above the centre or the adjacent property. If this becomes a problem, the Area Housing Officer may amend the times and a notice will be placed with the laundry advertising the new time restrictions.

• Are there any restrictions in relation to use of the laundry?

There are no restrictions in relation to the number of times a resident can use the laundry. However, tenants will need to ensure that other tenants are able to use it. If laundry use becomes a problem in a particular centre, the Area Housing Officer will implement a rota system to resolve the issue.

• We have been unable to utilise the laundry machines due to repair issues therefore can we have a refund on the laundry charge?

If tenants have been unable to use machines for over a week, then the council can consider refunding the appropriate laundry charge.

- **Are there any restrictions in relation to items which can be placed in the machines?**
Laundry users are asked to not place heavily soiled laundry, rugs, blankets, duvets, pillows, or other large items in the machines. If items are placed in machines and cause issues, the Area Housing Officer will write to all laundry users to remind them of the conditions of use.
- **Tenants are smoking in the laundry or centre**
Smoking cigarettes in any centre and laundry is against the law. The Council also does not allow the smoking of e-cigarettes in any council building. The Council will take action against any tenant who does not comply with this regulation. Any reports of issues of smoking will be dealt with by the Area Housing Officer.

3. Repairs and Maintenance

- **Where can repairs be reported?**

Laundry repair issues should be reported to Facilities Management on 01709 822838 or daytodayrepairs@rotherham.gov.uk.

Any other repairs can be reported to 01709 336009 or repairs@rotherham.gov.uk

- **Is there a Building Officer who is responsible for Health and Safety issues?**
There is a Building Officer who is responsible for ensuring that the centres comply with health and safety regulations i.e. servicing, legionella risk assessment, building checks etc. Building checks are carried out every 6 weeks. Alarm checks are carried out weekly.
- **Repair exclusions**
The council will not repair, maintain or replace any items placed in the building by tenants for example televisions, kettles, Christmas lights, CD and DVD players, freeview boxes, non wall mounted boilers, fridge, freezer, cooker etc. However, the council will arrange for them to be PAT tested.
- **Improvements**
Tenants may undertake an improvement within the centre subject to the written consent of the Area Housing Officer and in some cases the Technical Support Co-ordinator.

4. Centre usage and access

- **Who is able to use the centre?**
Tenants who live on the scheme and pay the communal facility charge can utilise the centre (referred to as Tenant throughout this section).

Non-residents are able to use the centre subject to permission by the council (the Area Housing Officer) and agreeing to pay the appropriate charges for usage.

Children under the age of 16 are able to attend activities at the centre subject to permission by the council (the Area Housing Officer) however must be accompanied by a CFC paying tenant at all times. Any issues involving children attending activities should be reported to the Area Housing Officer and permission may be withdrawn.

- **How can the centre be booked?**

- The centre can be booked by telephoning Housing Services on 01709 336009 or emailing NhoodCentreBookingEnqs@rotherham.gov.uk. A booking form will be sent to the enquirer for completion and return. Alternatively, you can book online at www.rotherham.gov.uk/housing and click the Neighbourhood centre Booking Form.

- **What activities can the centre be booked for?**

Centres can be booked for a social gatherings, games sessions, party, funeral etc however anyone using the centre is not able to restrict use by other tenants during the activity. Tenants are asked to be respectful of all users and the activities being carried out and to not disturb others.

Bookings for children's parties are generally not accepted; however where centres have TARA activities that may include children's activities this can be considered.

- **There are various activities/usage undertaken within the centres. Which should be prioritised?**

Tenant's activities and usage will take priority over any other usage as they pay a mandatory communal facility charge for the facilities.

- **What are the charges for using the centre?**

There are various types of usage as follows:

- Non-residents attendance at a tenant activity- £0.53 per activity
- Activity organised by a non-resident which solely involve or benefit tenants residing on the scheme who pay the communal facility charge- £0
- Commercial businesses and non-residents activities- £10.60 per hour
- Community and voluntary organisations - £7.10 per hour

- **Who is responsible for monitoring non-residents usage and collecting the income?**

Non-residents who book the centre are charged for their usage which is collected via the relevant payment method.

The council is unable to attend all tenants' activities to monitor non-resident attendance therefore we rely on the honesty of the non-resident and reports from tenants to enable them to be charged for usage.

Non-resident money is usually collected and monitored by a nominated person on most schemes or the TARA or group lead.

Money can be paid in via estore on the Council website www.rotherham.gov.uk/housing then click pay housing rent, or by phoning Housing Services on 01709 336009

To pay by cheque, the following payment code will be required – **621200/52510/BC...../0**
Please contact NhoodCentreBookingEnqs@rotherham.gov.uk for the relevant BC code (centre specific code)

- **Where is the non-residents money paid into?**

It is paid into the relevant individual centre cost code and used to support that centres expenditure.

- **How are tenants and non-residents able to access the centre?**

Tenants have been issued with fobs to enable them to access the facilities.

Ward Members, Area Housing Officers, Housing Enablers, Housing Repairs and Maintenance Operatives and other staff are aware of the key safe code which provides access to the buildings.

Regular community group/TARA hirers can arrange to sign a condition of use form and can be offered a key fob to enable them to access the building. This would be arranged by the Area Housing Officer.

Non-residents who attend tenant activities will be able to access via an existing tenant who also attends the activities.

- **Are there restrictions in relation to use?**

Activities should be sensitive towards residents living on the scheme and in adjacent properties. For example, activities such as live music and karaoke etc are not permitted unless this is within agreement with the Area Housing Officer.

There are no time restrictions regarding centre usage, however the expectation is that tenants will not use the centre at an unreasonable hour, for example late into the evening/night or early in a morning. If a tenant lives above the centre or in a property attached to the centre, we would expect that activities in the centre do not significantly impact on them.

Each centre has a permitted number of occupants allowed in the centre at one time. This information is displayed in each centre. The number of people attending an event must not exceed the permitted occupancy.

- **Anti-Social Behaviour**

The council does not tolerate acts of anti-social behaviour at any of its properties including neighbourhood centres and other community accessible buildings. Where the council investigates allegations of anti-social behaviour and there are grounds to take action, a number of options are available to the council depending upon circumstances. Formal actions that are available to the council range from warnings through to Injunctions and prosecution and include powers to evict individuals from their tenancies.

The council reserves the right to temporarily remove access to centres of any individual who is subject to investigation of anti-social behaviour. The council also reserves the right to permanently remove access to centres of any individual who is subject to formal sanctions relating to anti-social behaviour. Where individuals are served with a civil or criminal notice, the council reserves its right to consider temporary or permanent removal of access rights to centres.

The council will appoint an officer to be the point of contact for the centre who will not be involved in the day-to-day housing management function of the area.

- **Tenants are smoking in the laundry or centre**

Smoking cigarettes or e-cigarettes in any centre and laundry is against the law. The council will take action against any tenant who does not comply with this regulation. Any reports of smoking should be reported to the Area Housing Officer.

- **Can the hirer of a centre serve food?**

If a centre is hired out to a group or user that intends to prepare and serve food (hot or cold) on a regular basis, then the group or user will need to be registered with the council's Food, Health and Safety team. This can be arranged by the Area Housing Officer or Neighbourhood Co-ordinator.

- **Housing repairs and maintenance operatives use of centres**

Mears and Engie have access to four respite facilities within the borough as follows:

- Oates Close, Henley
- St Marys View, Munsbrough
- Tickhill Road, Maltby
- Vale Road, Thrybergh

They are charged a fee per annum for this usage which provides them with access for lunch facilities from 12pm to 2pm Monday to Friday.

Both contract partners have agreed to leave the centres in a clean and tidy condition, return furniture to its original position and to not use tenant's equipment or items.

They are able to utilise all centres within the borough for toilet facilities.

- **Can a tenant's carer, relative attend activities?**

If the carer or relative is attending the activity to assist the tenant, then they will not be charged for usage however they will pay appropriate charges if they are attending the activity for their own benefit.

- **Can RMBC staff use the centres?**

Council staff can utilise the centres in relation to meetings and office touch down facilities, subject to availability.

Officers are not permitted to use the centre lounge and kitchen whilst tenant's activities are being undertaken, with the exception of Housing staff who may require access to any room of the centre at any time. Officers should not use tenant's items such as kettles, cutlery, cups etc.

The council are responsible for testing the fire alarm and managing the centres to compensate for this payment.

- **Licence Requirements**

Some activities may require a licence, for example, bingo, music, live entertainment etc. The applicant booking the centre is responsible for obtaining the necessary approvals and providing the council with evidence prior to confirming the room booking. Any evidence provided must be sent to the relevant Area Housing Officer for approval. The Housing Administration team will then confirm the booking with the applicant.

- **Access Fobs**

Tenants who pay the CFC should be provided with a fob on tenancy sign up.

- **Lost Fobs**

If a fob has been lost by a tenant, the council can order a replacement fob at a cost £10 each per fob, to be recharged to the tenant. Please contact Housing Services on 336009 or email councilhomes@rotherham.gov.uk.

- **Damaged Fobs**

If a fob has been damaged by a tenant then the council can order a replacement at a cost of £10 each per fob, to be recharged to the tenant. If it is not working due to a mechanical error, a replacement at nil cost can be ordered. Please contact Housing Services on 336009 or email councilhomes@rotherham.gov.uk.

- **Elections Use**

A number of centres are utilised for elections which will take priority over other use. A poster will be placed in the centre informing tenants that the centre is unavailable for use during this period.

- **People are using the centre and not paying the communal facility charge**

Any reports of people using the centre who do not pay the communal facility charge and have not booked the centre will be dealt with by the Area Housing Officer.

- **Complaints in relation to centre usage**

Any complaints received in relation to centre usage, bookings or activities will be dealt with by the Area Housing Officer.

5. Guest Bedrooms

- **What is a guest bedroom?**

The council operates one guest bedroom facility at Shaftesbury House. The room is available for use by family and friends of tenants who pay the communal facility charge to enable family to stay on a temporary basis where they do not live locally. For more information, please contact Housing Services on 336009 or email councilhomes@rotherham.gov.uk.

6. Cleaning

- **Is there a cleaning contract in place?**

A cleaning contract is in place with Facilities Service who are responsible for ensuring that centres are clean and toilet rolls, paper towels and washing up and sanitiser liquids and wipes are replenished. Exterior windows are cleaned on a bimonthly basis and the interior windows on a quarterly basis.

7. Other

- **Can we keep a pet, for example a budgie or goldfish etc in the centre? Can we take pets in when we attend activities?**

Pets are not allowed within the neighbourhood centres other than guide dogs. This is due to cleaning issues, allergies, neglect and phobia issues.

- **There are people who do not pay the CFC and are using the facilities**

Tenants can report people using the centre who do not pay the charge, however, must provide details to the Area Housing Officer (for example name, address) to enable further investigation.

- **Will first aid kits be provided within the centres or can we replenish existing kits?**

The council does not supply first aid kits as it is not a legal requirement

- **Can we offer a secure facility within the centre for tenants' equipment?**

If there are issues in relation to security for example items going missing, then the Area Housing Officer will be able to investigate options for providing a lockable facility. If tenants or user groups leave items or equipment in centres, this is at their own risk; the council will not be held responsible if tenants' items are stolen or damaged. There is no coverage under council insurance policies for privately owned possessions or equipment. It is advised if tenants or user groups wish to leave any equipment within centres, they make their own insurance arrangements.

- **There are issues with the tenant in the flat above the centre.**

Any issues relating to tenants in flats above centres should be reported to the Area Housing Officer who will investigate all issues reported.

- **Who is responsible for gritting around the centre and housing complex during adverse weather?**

The centres and complexes are on a winter weather gritting works programme which is carried out by the estate caretakers on a reactive basis during periods of adverse weather.

- **Who manages the CCTV at a centre?**

Several centres have CCTV systems in place. The Area Housing Officer is responsible for the management of any CCTV systems including requests to view recorded images. CCTV systems must be kept in a room that can be accessed by council staff only.

- **How can accidents and near misses that occur at a centre be reported?**

In the event of an accident or near miss, please report the occurrence to the Housing Services on 336009 or email councilhomes@rotherham.gov.uk.

- **Is smoking permitted in centres?**

Smoking cigarettes and e-cigarettes is not permitted in any centre or laundry area. The council will take action against any tenant who does not comply with this regulation. Any reports of smoking will be dealt with by the Area Housing Officer.

- **Can alcohol be consumed in the centres?**

The sale of alcohol is not permitted in neighbourhood centres in accordance with licensing laws. Consumption of alcohol in centres is allowed by persons over the age of 18 years. If reports of nuisance or anti-social behaviour relating to alcohol consumption are received, the council reserves the right to withdraw permission (on a case-by-case basis)

- **Activities in neighbourhood centres and the law**

Neighbourhood centres must not be used to carry out any criminal or illegal activities. 'Illegal' is defined as any activity that the law prohibits and makes a criminal offence. If reports of any illegal activities taking place in or around centres are received, appropriate actions will be taken by the Area Housing Officer.

- **What if there are issues with residents or non-residents who attend organised activities or groups?**

All centre users are expected to treat each other with dignity and respect.

Groups are encouraged to deal with any issues in relation to the running of the group themselves; however, they can always contact, Rotherfed, the Neighbourhood Co-ordinator or Area Housing Officer for advice.