

# Returning your home to us after a bereavement

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## Returning your home to us

We realise that this is a difficult time and we will work with you to ensure that the end of the tenancy is dealt with sensitively.

We have prepared this simple guide to let you know what you, as the executor or next of kin, need to do to avoid unnecessary charges against the estate, and how to resolve any money owed on the late tenant's rent account.

When someone dies you should let us know as soon as possible. You can either write to us or phone our neighbourhood services team. This will allow us to give you any advice you may need about the tenancy.

### Who can Selwood Housing legally deal with?

We can only discuss matters relating to the tenancy with either the next of kin or executor of the estate. The person or people who are legally entitled to deal with the deceased's estate may be asked to provide a copy of the will or a grant of representation from the Probate Registry.

Visit [www.hmcourts-service.gov.uk](http://www.hmcourts-service.gov.uk) or call the Probate and Inheritance Tax Helpline on **0300 123 1072**.

If a solicitor is handling the estate, please let us have their contact details as soon as possible.

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## Ending the tenancy

The first stage of this process is to send a letter giving 4 weeks' written notice to legally end the tenancy. You, as the executor or next of kin, must do this. We will then confirm the date that the tenancy will end. The keys must be returned to our office by midday on the Monday at the end of the 4 week notice period.

During the 4 weeks' notice period a copy of the death certificate must be sent to us. The executor or next of kin must also arrange an appointment for one of our neighbourhood surveyors to carry out an inspection of the property. They will advise you of any work to be done to bring the home up to the expected standard.

You may choose to carry out this work yourself to prevent charges to the estate. Be aware that damage may be identified once the property is empty, which may have been covered by furniture and other personal belongings.

### Rent Charges

Rent will be charged to the account until the Monday the keys are returned to us.



Make sure the property is left in a good, clean and tidy condition and without damage.

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## Condition of the home

This is a simple guide to let you know what you need to do. By following these steps you can avoid unnecessary charges or problems. We want to make returning the property to us as easy as possible.

### Keys

All keys must be returned to our office by midday on the Monday at the end of the 4 week notice period. Each external door must have at least two keys. A charge will be made to change the locks if keys are not returned.

### Internal doors and floor coverings

All internal doors must be present in each room and in good order. The average charge to replace missing or damaged internal and standard doors is about £180 per door. Floor coverings such as carpets and laminate flooring must be removed unless our neighbourhood surveyor has given permission to leave them in place during the property inspection.

### Kitchen and bathroom

Kitchen units and worktops must be left clean and free of damage. The average charge for a replacement unit is about £150. All appliances must be removed. If there is a gas cooker, a qualified gas engineer must disconnect it.

Bathroom fixtures and fittings, such as a toilet seat, must be present. The average charge for a replacement toilet seat is about £28.



### Personal items and rubbish

The property, including loft space and all cupboards, must be empty. The average charge for a three-bed house clearance is between £700-£1100.

### Cleanliness and decoration

The home should be cleaned throughout. Rooms should be left in good decorative order. We will charge you for rooms with ripped wallpaper, graffiti, stained carpets or items which are considered to be beyond reasonable wear and tear. Room decoration should be neutral, if it is not we may have to redecorate and charge the estate.



### Garden and garage

If the late tenant rented one of our garages, the neighbourhood services team will also need 4 weeks' written notice to end the garage tenancy.

The garden must be left in a tidy condition with trimmed grass, shrubs and hedges. It also must be clear of any rubbish and personal items.

### Improvements

Improvements made by the tenant such as kitchens, feature fires, doors and garden items like sheds, green-houses, ponds and patios must be removed unless our neighbourhood surveyor gives permission to leave them in place. A charge will be made to the estate if we have to arrange removal of unauthorised items. Items such as light fittings and switches must be returned to the standard fittings.

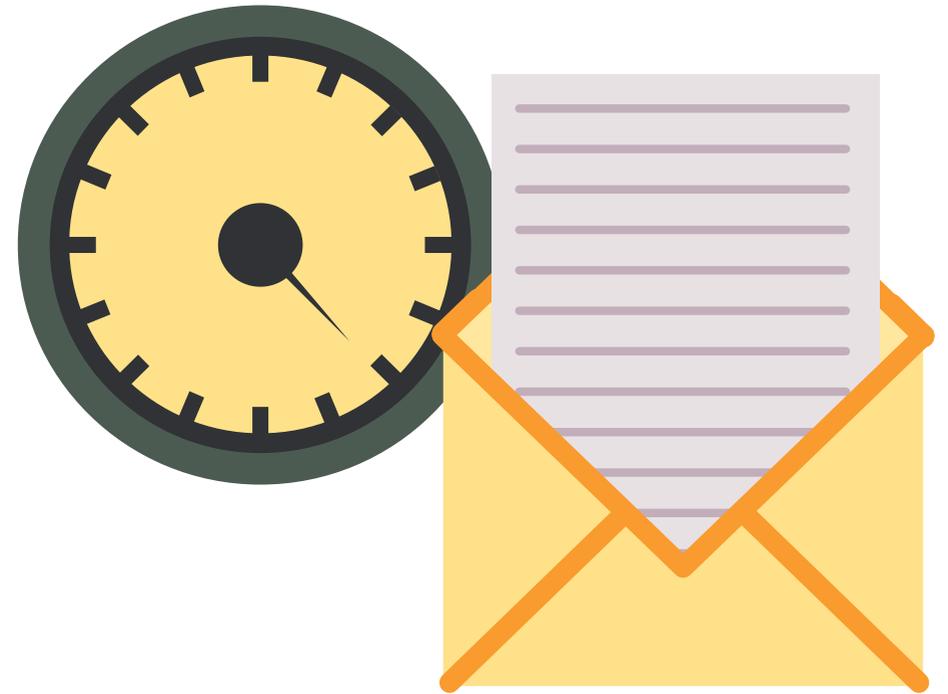


### Selwood Lifeline

If the property is connected to a Selwood Lifeline, please leave the pendant and other equipment in the property. If this equipment is not left a charge of about £65 will be made for the pendant and around £225 for the base unit.

### Preparations for ending the tenancy

Let the right people know – contact the utility companies, give final meter readings and a contact address for final bills. If appropriate please advise the housing benefit department and any other benefit agencies of the death. The local council tax department will also need to be advised.



## Financial Matters

### When will the rent stop?

If you return the property to us by midday on the agreed termination date, all charges will stop immediately. If you return the property later than midday on the Monday or on any later day, charges will be made up to the following Monday.

We will send a closing account balance to the person who is dealing with the late tenant's affairs as soon as possible after the tenancy has ended.

### Rent statements and final balances

#### Can I find out how the rent was paid?

Yes. A statement enclosed with the final account will show how the rent had been paid during the tenancy. It may have been one of the following:

#### Direct Debits

If the tenant was paying by direct debit, it is likely the bank will cancel payments, once they have been notified.

#### Standing Orders

Like direct debits, the bank may stop payments. Depending on the termination date, a partial payment may be due or a partial credit may need to be refunded.

### Housing Benefit

These payments come from the local council. Due to government regulations, payments stop the Monday after the person passes away. This means even if the tenant did not have to pay rent whilst living in their home, housing benefit will not cover the termination notice period. The estate will have to pay the rent during this time.

On occasions, the local council may have continued making housing benefit payments. This will create an overpayment and we are legally required to pay this money back to your council. If this happens we will let you know and will add it to the closing balance.



## How does the account get settled?

### If the estate is owed money

Depending on the termination date, a partial payment may be due or a partial credit may need to be refunded to the estate.

### If Selwood Housing is owed money

We have a legal claim to money or assets left by the deceased tenant and will expect the outstanding balance to be paid from the estate. Payments to clear the balance can be made in the following way:

- By cheque payable to Selwood Housing, Bryer Ash Business Park, Bradford Road, Trowbridge, Wiltshire BA14 8RT  
Please write the address of the tenancy and rent reference number on the back of the cheque
- By phone on **01225 715 715** to make a debit or credit card payment
- By cash at our Bryer Ash office.

## What happens if there is no money in the estate?

Paying rent owed by the deceased's estate is a high priority and the rent must be paid before utility bills, catalogues, store cards, credit cards etc. If the estate does not have the money to pay outstanding rent, please contact us to discuss alternative arrangements.

### If there is no money left in the estate, you will need to provide the following documents:

- A letter from the next of kin or executor confirming that the tenant left no money along with some proof, for example, a copy of a bank statement
- A copy of the death certificate
- A copy of the will. If there is no will, we will require written confirmation from the next of kin or executor.



If you need this information in large print, on audio tape, CD or in another language please contact customer services on 01225 715 715.

Me kërkesë, ky dokument gjendet edhe në gjuhën shqipe.

هذه الوثيقة متاحة باللغة العربية عند الطلب.

该文件可以翻译成 - 繁体或中文 (繁体字) 版本 -

Ce document est disponible en français sur simple demande.

अनुग्राह पर यह दस्तावेज़ हिन्दी में भी उपलब्ध है

Dokument ten jest na życzenie udostępniany w języku polskim.

Este documento encontra-se disponível em Português, a pedido.

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Tell us what you think about this leaflet by going to this website:

[www.surveymonkey.com/s/CLKZDN](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/CLKZDN)



**Selwood Housing Society Limited**

Registered charity number 1141124

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