

Access Policy



Our Neighbourhood Service

Warrington Housing Association

INTRODUCTION

As a responsible provider of social housing Warrington Housing Association has a responsibility to maintain the condition of the properties we own and manage, as well as ensuring the welfare of occupants.

This policy sets out Warrington Housing Association's approach to accessing properties to allow us to discharge our landlord obligations, as well as the likely steps we will take if access is not granted voluntarily.

OUR APPROACH

Warrington Housing Association will work within our legal obligations when attempting to access occupied properties, this will be done in line with tenancy and lease agreements conditions.

This would normally mean 24 hours written notice before access is required, unless otherwise agreed with the occupier.

Warrington Housing Association will only seek access to a property we own or manage in the scope of a genuine housing or asset management issue, or where it is believed a danger to health or safety of individuals, animals or property is present. This may include to prevent damage to neighbouring properties.

Planned Access to Properties

In non-emergency situations, Warrington Housing Association will attempt to gain access via multiple attempts at contact with the occupier. We will tailor our approach to ensure any vulnerabilities we are aware of are mitigated where possible. Particularly in respect of communication barriers, where we will work with external support and advocacy agencies.

To meet our aims, there will be a number of situations where we may need to access properties, for example:

- Gas safety inspections
- Electrical testing
- General inspections of the condition of the home
- To carry out essential repairs which are the landlord's responsibility

The examples outlined above are not an exhaustive list and there may be other legitimate reasons we need to enter a property.

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In these planned instances the process timescales may vary between actions, however we will include multiple attempts to contact via different means such as telephone, email, text message and letter. This could include:

- Writing to the occupier ahead of access requirement detailing why we require access and proposing a date and time we will attempt access. This will include how a customer can contact us to rearrange the proposed appointment.
- Contacting customers via telephone to arrange a convenient appointment.
- Making a home visit to book an appointment.
- For annual gas inspection and electrical tests, we will make two appointments and leave a card with contact details after each attempted visit. Due to the importance of customers safety, for annual gas inspection and electrical tests, we will begin the process of arranging access, three months before the required work is due.

Emergency Access

In some situations, a planned approach to access is not available to us and we may be required to gain immediate access where we believe there is a reasonable risk to the health and safety of individuals or properties.

We will only attempt immediate access in circumstances, which include but is not limited to the following:

- Flood
- Gas escape
- Suspected medical emergency.

In these circumstances Warrington Housing Association will seek permission to proceed with access from the Head of Customer Services or Director of Operations if the timeframes permit. The safety of people and property is our priority at this time.

Where Warrington Housing Association is required to gain access in this way we will ensure the following:

- Ensure we follow up in our attempts to contact the occupier to make them aware of our actions.
- Ensure the property is left safe and secure (this may include carrying out a lock change)
- Take photographic evidence of the property condition.

Where such situations are found to be the responsibility of the occupants, we reserve the right to recharge the occupants for all incurred costs to resolve.

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Enforcement

In the majority of cases the above measures will result in access being secured. However, there are instances where Warrington Housing Association may need to rely on tenancy or lease enforcement action to secure access. This may include:

- Applying for court injunctions to enforce our 'right of access'.
- Service 'notices seeking possession' for breach of tenancy, which may include applying to the courts to bring the tenancy to an end.

We understand on occasions missed appointments cannot be helped, however Warrington Housing Association reserve the right to charge customers for missed appointments if we have tried to access their home for an agreed planned appointment and they are not in or refuse access.

Independent Living Properties

In certain situations, Warrington Housing Association may hold keys for a number of Independent Living Properties, in agreement with the tenants.

Warrington Housing Association may use these keys to access the property where we believe the occupant is in danger and contact cannot be made via normal means. This would only be once other attempts to contact the occupier have been made.

Key Safe Access

There may be instances where occupants have installed external key-safe facilities, where a key is kept in a secure external location with a personalised access code.

If the occupant desires, they may share this code with Warrington Housing Association so that we may gain access in an emergency situation.

Where this arrangement exists, Warrington Housing Association will not share the access code with any third party without the express permission of the occupant.

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LEGISLATION AND REGULATION

The following legislation applies to this policy:

- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
- Gas Safety Regulations 2018
- The Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Sector (England) Regulations 2020

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