

Customer Handbook

A practical guide to your home, your agreement
and getting help when you need it.



Your home



Your agreement



Getting help
when you need it

*Great homes.
Stronger
communities.*



! Need help quickly?

Keep this page somewhere easy to find.

Immediate danger

Call 999 for police, fire or ambulance. If you cannot speak on a mobile 999 call, follow the operator instructions.

Smell gas?

Leave the area, avoid switches or flames, and call the National Gas Emergency Service on 0800 111 999.

Urgent housing or repair

Use the out-of-hours repair contact for your property. If it is not an emergency, report it to your Housing Officer as soon as possible.

Worried about someone

Tell Pivotal, your support provider or another professional you trust. If someone is in immediate danger, call 999.

My important local contacts

Contact	Details / when to use it
My Housing Officer	Name: _____ Phone / email: _____
Out-of-hours repairs	Numbers: 01202 738495 / 07792 916825
My support provider (if relevant)	Organisation: _____ Phone: _____

HEAD OFFICE

For general Pivotal enquiries: 01202 306070. For the latest customer information and policies, visit pivotalhomes.co.uk/customers.

0 How to use this handbook

This is a hub: the main things you need in one place, with live policies online for the detail.

YOUR AGREEMENT COMES FIRST

This handbook is a practical guide. It does not replace your signed tenancy, licence or occupancy agreement, or your legal rights. Your signed agreement contains the terms specific to your home. If anything here appears inconsistent with your agreement, your agreement and the law take precedence. Ask us if you are unsure.

Find what you need

1 Welcome to Pivotal	who does what and how we communicate	4
2 Your agreement and moving in	the basics, keys, condition and permissions	5
3 Paying for your home	rent, service charges, benefits and arrears	6
4 Repairs and looking after your home	how to report issues, access, damp, mould and pests	7
5 Keeping safe	fire, gas, electricity, water and security	9
6 Living well with others	communal areas, visitors, pets, smoking and shared standards	11
7 Anti-social behaviour and safety concerns	ASB, hate incidents, domestic abuse and safeguarding	12
8 Your occupancy	changes, absences, permissions and when occupancy is at risk	14
9 Complaints, feedback and privacy	how to be heard and how we use information	15
10 Moving on	ending your agreement and leaving your home properly	17
11 Useful contacts and words	quick reference and glossary	18

Need another format? Ask us for large print, Easy Read, a translated version, an interpreter or another reasonable adjustment that helps you access our service.

1 Welcome to Pivotal

We want your home to be safe, well managed and somewhere you can live with dignity and as much independence as possible.

Pivotal provides homes for people with a wide range of housing and support needs. Some customers receive support directly from Pivotal; others receive care or support from a separate organisation. Your housing and your support are connected, but they are not always provided by the same team.

Who does what?

Pivotal - your landlord / housing provider

We manage your tenancy or licence, rent and service charges, housing-related issues, landlord repairs and safety duties, and complaints about our housing service.

Your support or care provider

They may help with daily living, care, appointments, wellbeing, medication or goals, depending on your individual support package. Ask them what is included.

You - the customer

Look after your home, follow your agreement, pay what you owe, report problems promptly, allow essential access and treat neighbours, staff and visitors with respect.

Other services

Emergency services, councils, health teams and safeguarding services may become involved where there is risk, crime, care need or another statutory responsibility.

What you can expect from us

- To treat you fairly, respectfully and without discrimination.
- To explain housing decisions in language you can understand.
- To keep your home and shared areas we are responsible for safe and in reasonable repair.
- To listen when you report a problem and keep appropriate records.
- To make reasonable adjustments where you need them to access our services.
- To work with your support provider and other agencies when this is necessary and lawful.

What we need from you

- Follow the terms of your signed agreement and any reasonable scheme safety rules.
- Pay rent and any service charges you are responsible for.
- Report repairs, hazards, damage and safety concerns as soon as you notice them.
- Keep your own room or home, and any areas you are responsible for, reasonably clean and safe.
- Respect other people and avoid behaviour that causes harm, harassment, nuisance or serious disturbance.

2 Your agreement and moving in

Know what you have signed, what is specific to your home, and what to check at the start.

Your signed agreement

Pivotal uses different types of occupancy depending on the property and service. Your document may be called a tenancy agreement, licence agreement or occupancy agreement. In this handbook we call it “your agreement”.

KEEP IT SAFE

Your agreement sets out the legal terms of living in your home, including rent, notice, visitors, pets, use of the property and what can happen if the terms are seriously or repeatedly broken.

At sign-up, make sure you know

- Your weekly or monthly rent and service charge, including any amount you must pay yourself.
- How to pay and what payment reference to use.
- Who your Housing Officer is and how to report a repair.
- The out-of-hours repair process for your property.
- Your fire evacuation arrangements and the nearest safe exit.
- Any scheme-specific rules, such as visitor arrangements, smoking areas, parking or communal facilities.
- Who provides your support or care and how to contact them.

Keys, security and the condition of your home

Tell us quickly if you have not received the right keys, if a door or window does not secure properly, or if you notice damage or missing items when you move in. Photos are helpful. Do not change locks, fit additional security, copy restricted keys or make alterations without permission where your agreement requires it.

Changes to your circumstances

Tell your Housing Officer if there is a significant change that affects your occupancy, such as a change in household members, a long absence, a change in benefit circumstances, a new appointee or representative, or a need for a reasonable adjustment.

3 Paying for your home

Rent and service charges are easier to manage when you know exactly what is due and ask for help early.

Rent

Your agreement and rent schedule tell you how much rent is due and when. Pay using the method agreed at sign-up, such as a standing order or another approved method. Always use the payment reference Pivotal gives you so the payment reaches the correct account.

Service charges

A service charge is an amount you pay for services connected with your home or shared building. This can include things such as communal electricity, cleaning, fire-safety services, water, grounds maintenance or other building services, depending on your scheme.

ELIGIBLE AND NON-ELIGIBLE CHARGES

Housing Benefit or Universal Credit may cover some eligible housing costs, but not every service charge. Any non-eligible service charge shown on your rent schedule normally has to be paid by you. Ask us if you do not understand a charge.

Benefits and payments

- Give Housing Benefit or Universal Credit the information they ask for promptly.
- Tell the relevant benefit service if your circumstances change.
- Do not assume your benefit claim has started just because you have moved in - check that it has been submitted and is progressing.
- Open letters about rent or benefits and ask for help if you do not understand them.

If you are struggling to pay

Contact us as early as possible. Ignoring arrears normally makes the problem harder to solve. We can explain your account, agree reasonable next steps where possible, and work with you, your appointee or support provider to resolve benefit or payment issues.

DO NOT WAIT FOR A WARNING

If you think a payment is missing, your benefit has stopped, or the balance on your rent account looks wrong, raise it straight away.

4 Repairs and looking after your home

Report problems early. Good information helps us diagnose the issue and get the right person to the property.

How to report a repair

1. Tell your Housing Officer, or support provider if relevant, as soon as you notice the problem.
2. Explain exactly where the problem is and what is happening. Photos or short videos can help.
3. Say if there is water, electricity, gas, fire risk, loss of security or another immediate safety concern.
4. Tell us when access is available and whether you need a reasonable adjustment for the appointment.

EMERGENCY MEANS RISK

An emergency repair is about immediate danger, serious damage or a critical loss of safety or essential service. Outside office hours, call 01202 738495 / 07792 916825 when the issue cannot reasonably wait.

Access for repairs and safety checks

We will normally arrange access with you in advance and give the notice required by your agreement and the law. You need to allow reasonable access for repairs, inspections and legally required safety checks. In a genuine emergency, access may be needed without the usual notice to prevent injury or serious damage.

Damp, mould and condensation

Tell us if you see damp, mould, repeated condensation, leaks or a persistent musty smell. Do not wait for it to become severe. We will need to understand the cause and may inspect the property, check ventilation or heating, and arrange repair work where needed.

- Send photos and say when you first noticed it.
- Tell us about leaks, broken fans, heating problems or water coming through walls, windows or ceilings.
- Tell us if damp or mould is affecting your health or your ability to use a room.

Pests

Report pests such as fleas, bedbugs, cockroaches, rodents or wasps promptly. Responsibility for treatment can depend on where the problem is, how it started and what your agreement says, so report it rather than arranging major treatment yourself.

Repair timescales

We prioritise repairs according to the level of risk and urgency:

Category	Target	Examples
Emergency	Within 5 hours (no later than 24 hours)	Serious flooding/leaks, burst pipes, gas leaks, no electricity, no heating/power.
Priority	Within 24-48 hours	No cold water, no hot water in winter, structural damage, making the property secure.
Urgent	Within 7 working days	Non-dangerous electrical repairs, roof/taps, minor leaks, damp inspections, white goods.
Standard	28 working days	All other repairs and maintenance, except very minor repairs.
Routine	3-6 months	Very minor repairs which may be grouped with other work at the property.

Timescales are taken from Pivotal's repair guide. The response category may depend on the circumstances and level of risk.

4.1 Looking after your home

Small actions from everyone help prevent damage and keep the building safe.

Please do

- Use fixtures and appliances provided by Pivotal in a reasonable way.
- Keep exits, hallways and communal fire routes clear.
- Report broken doors, locks, windows, alarms, lights, heating, plumbing or electrical fittings.
- Tell us if you accidentally damage something - hiding damage can make the repair more serious.
- Dispose of rubbish in the correct bins and follow local recycling arrangements.

Please do not

- Carry out electrical, gas, plumbing or structural work yourself.
- Disable, cover or interfere with smoke alarms, heat alarms, fire doors, vents or other safety equipment.
- Make alterations, decorate where permission is required, install locks, satellite dishes, CCTV or other equipment without first checking your agreement and getting written permission where needed.
- Leave belongings in shared escape routes, stairwells or other areas where they create a fire or trip risk.

Damage and recharges

Normal wear and tear is different from avoidable damage. If damage is caused deliberately, through misuse, or by a customer or visitor, Pivotal may recover reasonable repair costs where the agreement and law allow. We should explain any recharge and how to challenge it.

Planned works and contractors

Some work is planned in advance, such as safety servicing, replacement of major components or building improvements. Contractors working for Pivotal should be able to identify themselves. If you are unsure whether someone is genuine, do not let them in until you have checked with Pivotal.

5 Keeping safe

Your building has safety systems for a reason. Know what to do before you need them.

Fire

IF THE FIRE ALARM SOUNDS

Follow the evacuation or stay-put instructions for your building. Never assume an alarm is false. If you discover a fire, raise the alarm, leave if it is safe to do so and call 999.

- Keep fire doors closed unless they are designed to stay open automatically.
- Never wedge or prop a fire door open.
- Keep corridors, stairs and exits clear.
- Do not cover or tamper with alarms, detectors, vents or fire equipment.
- Take part in fire drills or safety briefings when your scheme requires them.
- Do not leave cooking unattended.

Evacuation support

If you may have difficulty hearing an alarm, understanding what to do or leaving the building safely, tell Pivotal and your support provider. An appropriate evacuation plan or other safety arrangement can then be considered for your needs and the building.

Smoking and fire risk

Follow the smoking rules for your property. Never smoke in bed and fully extinguish smoking materials. Do not charge or store e-bikes, e-scooters or large lithium batteries in escape routes or in places where your scheme rules prohibit them.

5.1 Gas, electricity, water and security

Report anything that looks unsafe - do not try to repair it yourself.

Gas and carbon monoxide

- **If you smell gas:** leave the area, avoid switches and flames, and call 0800 111 999.
- **Carbon monoxide:** if an alarm sounds or you suspect carbon monoxide, get into fresh air and seek urgent advice. Call 999 if anyone is seriously unwell.
- Allow access for gas safety checks where gas appliances are present.

Electricity

- Do not use damaged plugs, sockets, cables or appliances.
- Do not overload sockets or use unsafe multi-plug adaptors.
- Report burning smells, scorch marks, sparking, repeated tripping or damaged fittings immediately.
- Do not carry out your own fixed electrical repairs.

Water

- Report leaks promptly, especially if water is near electrics or is affecting another room or property.
- Tell us if hot water is unusually hot, water has an unusual colour or smell, or a shower/tap is not being used for a long period and you are concerned about water hygiene.

Security, keys and CCTV

Do not let unknown people follow you into secure buildings. Report faulty door-entry systems or external locks. Some Pivotal schemes use CCTV for safety and security. Signs should explain where CCTV operates, and its use is governed by Pivotal's data protection and CCTV arrangements.

6 Living well with others

Most Pivotal homes are part of a shared building, scheme or neighbourhood. Everyone has a part to play.

Being a good neighbour

- Keep noise at a reasonable level, especially late at night and early in the morning.
- Use communal areas respectfully and leave them ready for other people to use.
- Do not leave rubbish, bikes, mobility equipment, furniture or personal belongings where they block access or fire routes.
- Treat staff, contractors, neighbours and visitors with respect. Disagreement is allowed; threats, harassment and abuse are not.

Visitors

You are responsible for the behaviour of people you invite to the property. Your agreement or scheme rules may limit visitors, overnight stays or access to certain areas. Do not allow visitors to threaten or harass others, damage property, bring weapons, supply illegal drugs, create serious nuisance or put other residents at risk.

Pets

Check your agreement before keeping or bringing a pet to the property. Where permission is required, ask in writing first. Any pet that is allowed must be kept under reasonable control and must not cause persistent noise, fouling, damage or risk to other people.

Smoking, vaping, alcohol and drugs

Follow the specific rules for your property about smoking and vaping. Alcohol use becomes a housing issue when it leads to danger, serious nuisance, damage or behaviour that affects other people. Possession, production or supply of illegal drugs, or allowing the property to be used for criminal activity, can put your occupancy at serious risk.

7 Anti-social behaviour and safety concerns

We want to act on behaviour that genuinely harms people or the community, while recognising that ordinary living can sometimes cause friction.

What can count as anti-social behaviour?

- Threats, violence, intimidation or harassment.
- Persistent or unreasonable noise and disturbance.
- Drug dealing or other criminal activity connected with the property or scheme.
- Hate incidents or abuse linked to disability, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment or another protected characteristic.
- Serious nuisance from visitors, animals, vehicles, rubbish or damage.

What is not usually ASB on its own?

- Normal household noise, such as doors closing, ordinary conversations or occasional daytime activity.
- A one-off disagreement where there is no threat, harassment or continuing nuisance.
- Reasonable differences in lifestyle, routines or use of a home.

Reporting ASB

Tell your Housing Officer, or your support provider if relevant, what happened, when and where, who was involved and how it affected you. Keep messages, photos, incident numbers or other evidence if it is safe to do so. Do not put yourself at risk to gather evidence.

IF THERE IS IMMEDIATE DANGER OR A CRIME IN PROGRESS

Call 999. For non-emergency police matters, call 101 or report online. Tell Pivotal as well where the incident affects your home, scheme or occupancy.

Depending on the circumstances, Pivotal may work with support providers, police, councils or other agencies and may use tenancy warnings, behaviour expectations, visitor restrictions or legal action where appropriate and lawful.

7.1 Domestic abuse and safeguarding

Safety comes before tenancy management.

Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse can include physical violence, threats, coercive control, stalking, sexual abuse, financial abuse or controlling access to money, medication, communication or other people. It can happen between current or former partners or family members.

If you tell us you are experiencing domestic abuse, we will take the concern seriously and consider what housing action or multi-agency support may help. If you are in immediate danger, call 999.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding means protecting a child or an adult with care and support needs from abuse, neglect or exploitation. Concerns can include physical or sexual abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, financial abuse, exploitation, modern slavery, discriminatory abuse or organisational abuse.

TELL SOMEONE

You can tell Pivotal, your support provider, a social worker, health professional, the police or your local authority safeguarding team. If you are worried about another resident, you do not need to investigate it yourself - share the concern.

Exploitation and “cuckooing”

Tell us or your support provider if someone is taking over your home, pressuring you to let people in, using your room to store or sell drugs, taking your money or benefits, or making you frightened to say no. These can be signs of exploitation and may need safeguarding and police support.

Medication and personal care

Housing staff are not automatically responsible for medication or personal care. If your support or care package includes help with medication, meals, personal care or appointments, your support provider should explain who is responsible and what to do if support is missed.

8 Your occupancy

Your agreement tells you what is allowed. Ask before making a change that could affect your tenancy or licence.

Tell us before you

- Have someone move in, take in a lodger or allow repeated overnight stays where this needs permission.
- Keep a pet where permission is required.
- Alter the property, change locks, install equipment or run a business from the property where the agreement restricts this.
- Leave the property for a long period or stop using it as your main home.
- Transfer, sublet or give your room or home to someone else.

If you are going away

Tell your Housing Officer or support team if you will be away for a significant period, especially where your agreement requires this or where absence could affect benefits, support arrangements or the security of your home. Do not give your keys to someone else unless this is permitted and safe.

If there is a problem with your occupancy

If we believe the terms of your agreement have been broken, we should explain the concern and what needs to change. Where appropriate, we may use warnings or other enforcement steps. Serious behaviour, persistent breaches, non-payment or criminal use of the property can put your occupancy at risk.

ASK EARLY

If you receive a warning, notice or letter you do not understand, speak to your Housing Officer, support provider or an independent advice service. Do not ignore it.

Your right to be treated fairly

Housing decisions should be based on the facts, your agreement, relevant policy and the law. Tell us if you need information in a different format, help communicating, an advocate or another reasonable adjustment.

9 Complaints, feedback and privacy

You should be able to tell us when something has gone wrong, and to understand what happens next.

Making a complaint

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about our service, action or lack of action where you want a response. You do not have to use the word “complaint”. You can complain yourself or ask a representative to help you.

- Tell any Pivotal employee or Service Manager.
- Email complaintsandcompliments@pivotalhomes.co.uk.
- Use the complaints information on the Pivotal website.

Our two-stage process

Stage 1

We should acknowledge the complaint within 5 working days and provide a full response within 10 working days of acknowledgement. If more time is genuinely needed, we should explain why and give you a revised date.

Stage 2

If you remain unhappy, you can ask for the complaint to be considered at Stage 2. We should acknowledge the escalation within 5 working days and provide our final response within 20 working days of acknowledgement.

The Housing Ombudsman can provide information about complaint handling and can consider eligible complaints after the landlord's internal process. Current details are at housing-ombudsman.org.uk or 0300 111 3000.

Compliments, comments and ideas

We also want to know what works well and what could be better. Feedback can be given through your Housing Officer, customer engagement activities, house or scheme meetings where these take place, or the Pivotal website.

Privacy and CCTV

We collect and use personal information so we can provide housing, manage rent and repairs, keep people safe and work with relevant partners. We should only use and share information where there is a lawful reason. You can ask for a copy of the current privacy notice and information about your data rights.

9.1 Communication, equality and getting involved

Good information only works if you can access and understand it.

Reasonable adjustments and accessible information

Tell us if there is a better way for us to communicate with you. Depending on your needs, this may include large print, Easy Read, a translated document, an interpreter, extra time, a nominated representative, communication by email rather than phone, or another reasonable adjustment.

Equality and respect

Pivotal aims to provide services fairly and without unlawful discrimination. We expect the same basic standard of respect between customers, staff, contractors, support providers and visitors. Harassment, hate incidents, threats and discriminatory abuse should be reported.

Advocacy and representatives

You can ask a trusted person, advocate, appointee, attorney or other representative to support you with housing matters where appropriate. We may need your consent or evidence of their authority before sharing personal information or allowing them to make certain decisions for you.

Have your say

Customer feedback should shape services. Pivotal may ask for views through surveys, customer engagement, meetings or consultations. Taking part is usually optional, but it is a useful way to influence how housing services work.

POLICIES ARE LIVE DOCUMENTS

The handbook gives the practical summary. For the latest full policies - including repairs, complaints, privacy, domestic abuse and safeguarding - use the Customer section of the Pivotal website.

10 Moving on

A planned move reduces rent problems, lost belongings and avoidable recharges.

Giving notice

Check your signed agreement for the amount of notice you must give and how it needs to be given. Do not assume the same notice period applies to every Pivotal customer. Speak to your Housing Officer before you move out so the end date is clear in writing.

Before you leave

1. Agree the tenancy or licence end date with Pivotal.
2. Make sure your rent and service charge account is up to date or agree how any balance will be dealt with.
3. Remove all personal belongings and rubbish unless something different has been agreed.
4. Leave your room or home reasonably clean and do not leave avoidable damage.
5. Return all keys, fobs and access devices in the way Pivotal asks.
6. Give utility suppliers, benefits services and other organisations your new details where needed.
7. Tell Pivotal where final correspondence can be sent if this is safe and appropriate.

If you need help to move

Ask early. Your Housing Officer and support provider can explain what they can and cannot help with. If you are moving to another supported setting, make sure the new landlord or support provider has the information they need and that benefits are updated for the new address.

DO NOT ABANDON THE PROPERTY

Leaving without ending your agreement properly can create rent debt, benefit problems and uncertainty about whether the property is still your home. Contact us even if your move is sudden.

11 Useful contacts and words

Keep the local contact page at the front completed and use this page for national services and key terms.

Contact	Details / when to use it
Emergency services	999 - immediate danger, serious crime, fire or medical emergency.
Police non-emergency	101 or your local police website.
NHS	111 for urgent medical advice when it is not a 999 emergency.
National Gas Emergency	0800 111 999 if you smell gas or suspect a gas escape.
Pivotal Head Office	01202 306070 for general enquiries.
Pivotal complaints	complaintsandcompliments@pivotalhomes.co.uk
Housing Ombudsman	0300 111 3000 and housing-ombudsman.org.uk for complaint guidance and eligible cases.
Samaritans	116 123, free, 24 hours a day if you need someone to talk to.

Quick glossary

Agreement: Your signed tenancy, licence or occupancy agreement. It contains the legal terms of living in your home.

ASB: Anti-social behaviour - unreasonable behaviour that causes or is likely to cause harassment, alarm, distress, nuisance or serious disturbance.

Housing Officer: The Pivotal colleague responsible for housing management matters connected with your home or scheme.

Service charge: A charge for specified services connected with the property or shared areas.

Non-eligible service charge: A service charge that Housing Benefit or Universal Credit does not normally cover, meaning you may need to pay it yourself.

Safeguarding: Action to protect a child or an adult with care and support needs from abuse, neglect or exploitation.

Support provider: The organisation providing your commissioned care, support or key-working service where this is separate from Pivotal.

Reasonable adjustment: A change to the way a service is delivered so a disabled person is not placed at a substantial disadvantage.

The latest information lives online

This handbook gives you the practical summary. Policies, updates and customer information can change, so please use the live Customer Hub for the most up to date information.



Customer Hub

Find information, services and support online.



pivotalhomes.co.uk/customers



Complaints & Compliments

Tell us what we're doing well or where we can do better.



pivotalhomes.co.uk/customers/complaints-and-compliments



Pivotal Head Office
01202 306070

When futures are at stake...
we are Pivotal

Great homes.
Stronger
communities.



A place
to belong