

# Tenant Handbook



## Introduction

*Welcome to your Venture home*

Thank you for choosing Venture Housing Association.

This is your handbook. We don't expect you to sit down and read it all in one go but it's a handy source of bite size information about all of the services available to you as a Venture tenant.

Everything you read here has been prepared in consultation with tenants so you should find it interesting. You will find practical advice about your home, guidance on your responsibilities as a tenant, and information about other support services available to you from Venture and our partners.

We can't cover everything here, so please contact your Neighbourhood Housing Officer if there is anything else you wish to know or if something is not clear. We are happy to help.

**Your Neighbourhood Housing Officer is:**

## Contacting Venture

### Addresses

Registered Head Office  
Venture House  
212 Boaler Street  
Liverpool  
L6 6AE

Email: [info@ventureha.co.uk](mailto:info@ventureha.co.uk)  
Website: [www.vha.org.uk](http://www.vha.org.uk)

Wirral Office (*surgery*)  
The Coach House  
21 Clifton Road  
Birkenhead  
Wirral  
CH41 2SE

### Phone Lines

General calls: **0151 261 2100**  
Repairs: **0151 261 2119**  
Rents: **0800 398 4438**  
Fax: **0151 261 2219**

Office opening hours	
Liverpool (Venture House)	Monday to Friday • 9am – 5pm
Wirral (The Coach House)	Monday, Wednesday and Friday • 10am – 12pm
Emergency repairs and anti social behaviour advice	24 hours a day, 7 days a week

## About Venture

Venture Housing Association Limited was formed in 1970 to provide good quality, secure and affordable accommodation. We are a charity, registered with the Tenant Services Authority – a government body which provides finance and supervises the conduct of Registered Providers.

We are managed by a voluntary, unpaid Board. The day-to-day running of Venture is led by an executive team who are guided by Board Committees.

We operate in Liverpool and Wirral and our homes include flats, houses, bungalows and some sheltered accommodation. Our properties are mainly concentrated in the following areas:

### Liverpool

<b>L8 and L17</b>	Grove Park/Sefton Park/Canning
<b>L6</b>	Sheil Road/Molyneux Road areas
<b>L7</b>	Holt Road/Botanic Road/some properties in Everton, Kirkdale and Anfield
<b>L12</b>	Sheltered Housing Scheme in Parkside Drive
<b>L25 and L27</b>	Belle Vale, Naylorfield/Netherley
<b>L5</b>	Prince Edwin Street, Watmough Street/Bute street

### Wirral

<b>CH41</b>	Clifton Park, Tranmere, Birkenhead
<b>CH42</b>	Rock Ferry
<b>CH62</b>	New Ferry
<b>CH43</b>	Oxton

## Our commitment to you

We are committed to improving our services. As part of this commitment we will:

- champion your needs and aspirations
- provide choices that meet your needs
- challenge ourselves to continuously improve.

Our **mission** is to be the 'best' provider of housing services within the neighbourhoods in which we work, with the needs and aspirations of our customers at the heart of everything we do.

To help us achieve our mission, we will abide by five core **values** which define Venture and our approach to delivering your housing services. Our core values are:

- a determination to improve services and delight customers
- an openness and accountability in everything we do
- reliability and excellent customer service standards
- integrity and financial viability
- concern for improving the quality of products and services.

## What you can expect when you contact us

We will	When
Provide you with emergency advice and assistance on repairs and anti social behaviour	24 hours a day, 7 days a week on 0151 261 2100
Identify ourselves, be polite, approachable and helpful	Every time you contact us
Ensure you meet a member of staff who can deal with your enquiry when you visit our offices	Within 5 minutes
Answer your phone calls promptly	Every time you contact us
Acknowledge your letters and e-mails	Within two working days
Visit you at home if this is necessary	Within three days of agreeing to visit you

## You and Venture

We don't think just being your landlord is enough. We work hard to offer you much more than that and to make sure you get the most out of being a Venture tenant.

This is just a snapshot of the services available to you – more detailed information is available. Just give us a call on **0151 261 2100**.

### In this section:

- rights and responsibilities
- your tenancy rights
- your tenancy responsibilities
- rent payments
- difficulty paying your rent
- rent setting
- complaints
- getting involved
- equality, diversity and fairness
- moving to another Venture property
- ending your tenancy

## Rights and responsibilities

Everything you need to know about your rights and responsibilities as a Venture tenant can be found in your tenancy agreement. Your Neighbourhood Housing Officer will be able to help you if you don't understand any part of the agreement.

You will have one of four types of tenancy:

- a secure tenancy
- an assured tenancy
- an assured shorthold tenancy
- a family intervention tenancy.

Each one is a legal contract between you (the tenant) and us (your landlord). The agreement outlines your rights and responsibilities as a Venture tenant.

## Your tenancy rights

- you have the right to occupy your home without interference from Venture as long as you comply with your tenancy agreement
- you have the right to have your tenancy in joint names with someone else who has lived with you for more than 12 months (this includes a same sex partner)
- we are responsible for ensuring that your home is repaired to keep it in a habitable condition at all times
- if you die, other members of your household living with you have the right to succeed to your tenancy. Who may succeed is determined by the type of tenancy you hold. This may include:
  - your husband or wife
  - your joint tenant
  - your co-habitee (including same sex partner) who was living with you for at least 12 months beforehand
  - another member of your household
  - a live-in carer
- you have the right to obtain copies of our policies or to find out about any information we hold on you. For more information speak to your Neighbourhood Housing Officer on **0151 261 2100** or e-mail **info@venture.co.uk**

## Your tenancy responsibilities

- you must occupy the property as your only, or principal home
- you must take reasonable care to avoid damage to your home and to your neighbours' homes
- you and anyone living with you, or visiting you, should respect other people and must not harass or act in an anti social or threatening manner toward anyone else
- you must obtain written permission from Venture before you make any alterations or improvements to your home. Permission will be conditional on factors such as the standard of work and contractors being suitably qualified
- you must take all reasonable steps to make sure you and anyone living with you, or visiting you, keeps to the terms and conditions of your tenancy agreement.

Please contact your Neighbourhood Housing Officer if you need a copy of your tenancy agreement in another format (large print, audio format or Braille), or in another language.

## Rent payments

Your rent helps us pay for a number of things, including improving our properties, building new homes and providing the following housing services:

- 24 hour repairs service
- Tackling anti social behaviour
- Welfare benefit advice
- Resident involvement opportunities.

There are seven easy ways to pay your rent:



### Direct debit

Direct Debit is the simplest, most reliable and convenient way to pay your rent. You can choose whether to pay weekly, fortnightly, four weekly or monthly.

If you would like to set up a Direct Debit, call us on **0800 389 4438**.

### Housing Benefit

We accept direct housing benefit payments.

You will need to make the claim to your local council Housing Benefit service and ask for your housing benefit to be paid directly to Venture.

### Internet

Paying online is becoming increasingly more popular.

Visit **www.allpay.net**, and input the details from your rent payment card to access this service.



### Post Office

You can use your payment card free of charge at any Post Office, by handing over your card with either cash or cheque made payable to Post Office Limited.

### Telephone payments by Card

You can pay by phone using a Debit Card. Call [allpay.net](http://allpay.net) between 9am and 5.30pm on 0870 243 3434 and quote your rent reference no.

This is on your rent statement or payment card but if you don't have these to hand call us on 0800 389 4438 and we'll be happy to provide it.



### PayPoint

Any outlet displaying the Paypoint symbol will accept a payment in cash (using your payment card).

Cheques may be accepted at the discretion of the outlet concerned.

### By Post

You can pay by cheque and your cheque should be made payable to '*Venture Housing Association Limited*' and sent to:

Venture House, 212h Boaler Street,  
Liverpool, L6 6AE

## Rent payment cards

During the first week of your tenancy, a rent payment card will be sent to you. If for any reason you don't get this card, or if it is lost, please contact us straight away on **0800 389 4438** and we will arrange a replacement card.

## Rent statements

Venture will provide you with a rent statement four times a year. If you would like a statement at any other time, please call **0800 389 4438** and we'll be happy to provide one.

## Difficulty paying your rent

We understand there are many reasons why people fall behind with their rent and there are lots of ways we can help you pay. If you're worried about how you are going to pay your rent, call us free and in confidence – we're here to help. **The number is Freephone 0800 389 4438.**

Please be aware, paying your rent is not a matter of choice. If you don't pay you could lose your home.

Your local council may be able to help you to pay your rent with Housing Benefit. We will be happy to help you in making a claim for Housing Benefit, and we will confirm how much you need to pay **(if in doubt, always make a claim!)**

If you make a claim for Housing Benefit, it is your responsibility to ensure that your Housing Benefit claim form is completed and returned to the Housing Benefit department, with relevant documents provided on time.

Our rent team and welfare benefit service can help to make sure you are receiving all of the benefits you are entitled to. Call your Neighbourhood Housing Officer to make an appointment.

## How to avoid rent arrears

- make regular payments
- check that you are claiming all of the correct benefits
- tell Venture and your local Housing Benefit Service if your circumstances change
- let us know if you can't make a rent payment
- contact us to agree an affordable payment plan to pay off your arrears
- contact a citizens advice bureau for independent advice.

## Rent setting

Your rent is carefully controlled by the Government.

In April 2002 the Government introduced a new way to work out social rents called **Rent Restructuring**. This policy is designed to bring rents up to a similar level whether you live in a council property or a housing association property. As a result of this policy, all housing associations and councils must all follow the same rules for setting rents, so that by 2012 different landlords operating in the same areas will charge similar rents for similar homes. This is known as the target rent and is based on factors such as:

- property value
- local average earnings
- property size and type
- location.

A target rent is reviewed every year on the first Monday in April. Once set we will write to you a month in advance of the increase to let you know of the propose increase.

Once the target rent is reached (April 2012), your rent will only go up by the cost of inflation (also known as the Retail Price Index or RPI).

## Council Tax

You pay this charge to your local council. Contact details are provided below

### **Liverpool City Council**

Municipal Building  
Dale Street  
Liverpool  
L69 2DQ

Tel: **0151 233 3008**

### **Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council**

Conway Centre  
Conway Building  
Birkenhead  
CH41 6JD

Tel: **0151 666 4128**

## Complaints

Venture aims to provide the best possible services to our customers. But we accept that there will be times when this may not be the case.

When this happens, we will listen and learn so we can put things right and stop the same thing happening again.

Your views are important to us as they let us know how and where we can improve. If we have made a mistake, or you are unhappy with our service, we aim to make it as easy as possible for you to tell us.

Hopefully, there will be many more occasions when we get things right and we would like to hear your positive comments and compliments too.

To make a complaint, comment or compliment:

- Call us on **0151 261 2100**
- Call in person to **your local office**
- Use our online form at: **[www.vha.org.uk](http://www.vha.org.uk)**
- Or complete the form below and return to: **Freepost RRL-L-BRLA-KSYL, Liverpool L6 6AE**

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## Tell us about your complaint

Name:

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Address:

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Tel (daytime):

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Mobile:

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E-mail:

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Details of your complaint, comment or compliment:

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Signed:

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Date:

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## Getting involved

We want our services to meet your needs and aspirations.

That's why we will ask for your views before we make changes to the way we manage, maintain or improve your home or neighbourhood. This could include things like repairs and maintenance services or rent and service charges. Please take the time to get involved and have your say.

You can do this on your own or as part of a Tenant and Resident Association.

We want you to get involved and you can get so much out of it. You can raise issues of concern to you and other people in your area. You can make a real difference to your community by helping us to improve the way we work.

There are lots of different ways in which you can get involved:

**Full Board membership**

**Member of Tenant Board/Committee**

**Mystery  
shopper**

**Tenant  
Inspectors**

**Tenant  
and Resident  
Associations**

**Tenants  
Panel**

**Editorial Panel**

**Surveys**

**Reading Panel**

**Consultation with all tenants**

You can put in as much or as little time as you like. If you are interested in getting involved, even if it's only on one issue contact your Neighbourhood Housing Officer on **0151 261 2100** and they will be happy to discuss the many options with you.

## Equality, Diversity and Fairness

Liverpool and Wirral are diverse areas made up of vibrant communities which reflect all of society. We want our customers, our board and our staff to reflect this diversity.

Our Single Equalities Scheme and our Action Plan ensure that everyone has equal access to our services. Through this scheme we aim to make our services relevant, responsive and sensitive to the needs of our current and future customers.

Venture is committed to the principles of fairness and will take every action necessary to avoid intentional and direct discrimination. We offer equal access to our services for all - regardless of age, race, sexual orientation, faith or belief, or gender.

We also recognise that action is necessary to guard against unintentional bias and indirect forms of discrimination.

Our Single Equalities Scheme and our Action Plan ensure that we deliver our commitment to fairness and equality. You can find a copy of this scheme on our website at [www.vha.org.uk](http://www.vha.org.uk). If you don't have access to the internet give us a call on **0151 261 2100** and we will be happy to provide a paper copy.

## Moving to another Venture home

Venture no longer holds a separate waiting list.

We are a partner in the choice-based lettings schemes. In Liverpool we work with Propertypool, and in Wirral we work with Wirralhomes. We advertise the majority of our empty homes through these organisations.



Applicants interested in a Venture home are asked to register with these letting schemes and encouraged to bid for properties in their area of choice.

Priority is based on your housing circumstances, the type of property you need and how long you have been registered.

If you want to know more about moving to another Venture home, please contact your Neighbourhood Housing Officer on **0151 261 2100** who will be happy to discuss the application process with you.

## Ending your tenancy

We hope you will be very happy with Venture but should the time come when you wish to move from your home you must provide us with four week's notice of your intention to move.

We are keen to learn about your experiences with us and will ask you to fill in a short questionnaire to tell us how you rate our services and why you have decided to move. We will use this information to improve our services,.

## Your home

Feeling good about your own home is a big deal for everyone. Above all, we want you to feel safe, comfortable and proud. In this section of your handbook, you'll find advice on things to do to help you feel comfortable in your home. If you don't feel comfortable, call to tell us why on **0151 261 2100**.

### In this section:

- home safety
- making your home efficient
- gas safety checks
- bogus callers
- asbestos

## Home safety

As a tenant you must always take reasonable precautions to prevent risks to yourself and others. These risks include fire and explosions arising from the use or storage of any flammable or dangerous substances in and around your home.

### For example:

- heaters fuelled by liquid petroleum gas (LPG) are not permitted
- bicycles and motorcycles must never be stored in stairwells
- rubbish should always be disposed of properly, using individual wheelie bins where provided and never left on landings
- unattended rubbish can be a health hazard and may attract rats, or could be a fire hazard if set alight by vandals.

We strongly recommend that you take out home contents insurance.

Venture is part of a citywide home contents insurance scheme and you can pay home contents insurance weekly.

Some of the benefits are:

- over 60's premiums as low as £1.80 per week for £6,000 contents cover
- premiums from £2.70 per week for £9,000 contents cover for all others
- pay with a Paypoint swipecard
- cover tailored to meet your needs
- i.e. includes cover for Tenants Improvements and Tenants Liability
- no excess payment for claims
- no minimum security areas (insurer does not insist on special locks being fitted)
- optional Accidental Damage Extension for contents up to £500 for any one claim.
- If you would like to receive an application pack or need more information about this scheme call us on **0151 261 2100**.

## Making your home efficient

We can provide you with help to improve the energy efficiency of your home. Our partner agencies will offer impartial energy advice and assistance that will help you:

- cut down your energy use and keep you warm
- help you get better deals on your fuel bills
- help you with debt arrangements to energy providers.

To find out more about this service call us on **0151 261 2100**.

## Gas safety checks

Everyone in your home should know what natural gas smells like.

If you smell natural gas in your home:

- make sure all gas appliances and the burners on your stove
- are completely turned off
- put out any cigarettes
- open all doors and windows
- don't use matches or naked flames
- turn the gas off at the meter
- don't use electrical switches or appliances including door entry systems
- call Transco free on **0800 111 999** or
- call Venture on **0151 261 2119**.

Remember, by law you must allow us access to your home so we can carry out our annual gas safety check. The check protects you, your family and your neighbours.

## Bogus callers

Bogus callers can cause serious emotional and financial distress.

To avoid this, please follow some simple rules:

- always check for proof of identification and check it carefully – it must have a photograph of the caller on it. Never be persuaded or bullied to let someone inside your home or worry about seeming rude. If in doubt keep them out!
- if your keys are lost or stolen contact Venture to arrange a lock change
- never give keys to work men or women, unless already agreed in advance. It is easy to make copies of keys.

If you receive a visit from a bogus caller or have any doubts about someone at your door, please call us on **0151 261 2100**.

## Asbestos

Asbestos is a material made up of strong fibres which are resistant to both heat and chemicals. These qualities made asbestos a popular material in the building trade and led to its use in a wide range of building products, including fireproofing.

Asbestos is most likely to be found in homes built between the 1950's and the early 1980's. Properties built since the mid 1980's are very unlikely to have asbestos within the fabric of the building, but they may contain some traces in other areas. Properties built after 1990 are extremely unlikely to contain asbestos anywhere in the building.

Asbestos has now been banned.

As long as it is not disturbed or broken, asbestos is not a danger.

Asbestos fibres can only be seen under a microscope. It is very unlikely that the levels of asbestos fibres found in buildings will be harmful, but if you think you have damaged asbestos materials in your home, you should contact Venture immediately on **0151 261 2100**.

### **Where you might find asbestos products:**

- floor tiles
- wall boards
- artex (textured) ceiling finishes
- some plaster finishes
- sprayed coatings/lagging to pipe work and hot water cylinders
- water tanks
- lining boards on the back of boilers
- inside electrical distribution boards
- gutters and rainwater pipes.

### **Other items from around the home which may contain asbestos:**

- ironing board heating pads
- lining panels on the back of gas fires.

Asbestos may also be found in other products. This list is only a guide to the most common types.

If the asbestos is sealed (encapsulated) safely and is in good condition then it will not be a problem unless the sealant gets damaged. This is because asbestos is only dangerous when fibres are released into the air.

**Remember:** cutting asbestos with electrical tools or breaking asbestos products with a hammer is extremely dangerous. Don't do it! Always contact Venture for permission to alter your home. We will then be able to advise you whether there is any asbestos in your home.

## What are we doing about asbestos?

We have an asbestos register and we have an accredited asbestos contractor who is carrying out surveys in properties which may contain some asbestos.

Once a survey has been carried out we will know whether there are any materials that contain asbestos in your home. If there is any asbestos in a dangerous condition we will arrange for them to be encapsulated or removed as soon as possible. However, material which are not in a dangerous condition will not always be removed. This is because it would be more dangerous to disturb it than to leave it alone.

We aim to carry out any required work on asbestos when properties are empty, or at the same time as other major works are being carried out.

## Your repairs

Being a Venture tenant gives you special rights when it comes to getting things fixed. This is called your Right to Repair. Here you'll find all you need to know about that, and much more. If you think we've missed anything give us a call on **0151 261 2119**.

### In this section:

- our repairs and maintenance service
- how to report a repair
- what happens next
- what repairs are Venture responsible for
- different types of repairs
- what are you responsible for
- our staff
- your right to repair
- what happens when I report a repair
- staff conduct
- minimising hazards
- what happens if the work is not done in time
- how long does the contractor have to complete the repair
- what if you miss an appointment
- repairs covered by the scheme
- making an appointment outside the timescale
- paying for the repair
- how to claim compensation
- carrying out your own improvements
- the handyperson service
- annual gas safety checks
- Gas Safe Register

## Our repairs and maintenance service

As your landlord, we have a legal duty to carry out certain repairs to your property and maintain your home to a safe and suitable standard. We provide a range of ways for you to report a repair and we encourage you to give us your views so we can keep improving the service we provide.

As part of our service we will:

- Provide you with a high quality, flexible and accessible repair service
- Make sure it's easy for you to report a repair
- Offer an appointment time that's convenient for you
- Aim to carry out all repairs within agreed response times
- Aim to get it 'right first time'
- Offer good value for money
- Provide a 24 hour emergency repair service
- Monitor your satisfaction with completed repairs
- Give you clear information on the main aspects of the repairs and maintenance service

## How to report a repair

Call us 24 hours a day, seven days a week on **0151 261 2119**

E-mail us at **[info@ventureha.co.uk](mailto:info@ventureha.co.uk)**

Online at **[www.vha.org.uk](http://www.vha.org.uk)**

Report a repair in person at **Venture House, 212h Boaler Street, L6**  
or at **21 Clifton Road, Birkenhead, CH41**

## What happens next?

- we will contact you to confirm the appointment before we visit you
- workers from our team or from our contractors will arrive at your home carrying appropriate identity cards to confirm who they are
- always be sure to check workers identity cards before allowing them into your home
- if you are home your repair will be carried out
- if you aren't home we will leave a calling card to let you know we were there – or we'll let you know by phone call or text message.

Once your repair has been completed:

Please use the feedback card or call us to tell us what you think about the quality of service you received. Your feedback will then be used to help make sure that we continually improve the repairs service.

## What repairs are Venture responsible for?

As your landlord we are legally required to carry out certain repairs and to maintain your home to a safe standard. We are responsible for maintaining different parts of your home, both inside and out. Before a tenancy begins, we inspect the house and carry out work to ensure that the property is safe and secure, wind and watertight and ready to live in. After you move in, we will carry out work to keep the property in reasonable repair.

### Outside

We will repair and maintain the outside of your home. This includes roofs, outside walls, gutters, down pipes and close doors.

### Internal communal areas

We will maintain common entrances, halls, stairways, lifts and passageways and other communal areas to make sure they are in good condition. This includes walls, ceilings, stairs, paintwork, window safety catches and communal TV aerials.

### Fittings inside your home

We will maintain the fittings/installations we have provided except where these are given to you as a gift (e.g. sheds). This includes kitchen and bathroom fittings, water and gas pipes, heating systems, electrical wiring (including hard wired smoke alarms), windows and doors.

### Environmental repairs

We will repair and maintain areas around the property and related communal areas including paths, boundary walls and fences, drains, bin stores, drying areas, play areas, parking areas and hard and soft landscaping.

We have a five year cyclical maintenance programme of works which covers day to day maintenance.

We also carry out planned cyclical works – such as gas servicing and lift maintenance – on an annual basis.

## Different types of repairs

There are three different types of repairs – each category is described here.

### 1 Emergency repairs

An emergency repair is classed as one where there is a threat to health and safety or where we need to take quick action to prevent damage to your home or a neighbouring property.

### 2 Urgent repairs

An urgent repair is classed as one where speedy action is required to ensure a continuation of a key service

### 3 Routine repairs

These are day to day repairs which are our responsibility, but which don't fall into either of the categories above.

Examples of repairs in each category:

1 Emergency (within 24 hrs)	2 Urgent (within 3 days)	3 Routine (within 21 days)
Blocked drains, toilet	Leak to sink or bath	Replace kitchen unit
Gas leak	Defective immersion heater	Fencing
No heating	Overflow running	Ease doors or windows
No flush to toilet	Blocked sink	Plastering
Burst pipes	No hot water	Pointing
No electrics		

## Keeping you informed

We confirm all repairs in writing with details of your reported repair including:

- what work is ordered
- contact details for the contractor who will carry out the work
- a confirmed appointment time (where you made one)
- a completion target time
- a satisfaction form – we use this feedback to improve our repair service.

## Emergency Repairs Outside of Office Hours

We provide an out of hours service for emergency repairs when the office is closed.  
Call us on **0151 261 2100**.

Please be aware that if you call us out and the job is not an emergency you may be charged for cost of the call out and any repair completed.

If you have to call the Fire Service, or your gas or electricity supplier for any reason please let us know.

## What are you responsible for?

### You must:

- report any damage or repairs needed to your home or to related communal areas
- allow us access to your property so we can carry out repairs, inspections, maintenance and annual gas safety checks
- take care of your home and related communal areas
- pay for repairs where someone in your household, or a visitor, has caused damage to the property.

### You are responsible for replacing:

- plugs and chains on sinks and baths
- toilet seats
- light bulbs, including fluorescent lighting
- filters for cooker hoods
- lost or broken keys
- batteries in smoke detectors
- floor coverings in kitchens and bathrooms.

## Our staff

All Venture staff carrying out repairs and maintenance work will identify themselves by wearing an identification badge with their photograph on it. They will be wearing Venture uniforms and will visit you in a Venture vehicle.

Our contractors will wear identification badges and will have a works order from Venture.

If you are unsure about anyone requesting access to your home, please contact us on **0151 261 2100** before allowing them into your property.

## Your right to repair

The Housing Act 1985 (Section 96) gives you, as a tenant, the right to have small urgent repairs carried out by your landlord within a given timescale. The Right to Repair scheme covers some repairs up to the value of £250. If we don't carry out the repair within the time limit you may be entitled to compensation.

The timescales shown below are the maximum period in working days from the day after you report a qualifying repair (excluding bank holidays and weekends).

Defect	Maximum Response Time (working days)
Total loss of electrical power	1
Partial loss of electrical power	3
Unsafe power (including lighting socket or electrical fittings)	1
Total loss of water or gas supply	1
Partial loss of gas supply	3
Blocked flue to open fire or boiler	1
Total or partial loss of space or water heating between 30 April and 1 November	3
Blocked or leaking foul drain or soil stack	1
Toilet not flushing (if no other working toilet)	1
Blocked sink, bath or basin	1
Tap which cannot be turned	3
Internal Leaking from water or heating pipe, tank or cistern	3
Leaking roof	1
Insecure external window, door or lock on ground floor	1
Loose or detached banister or handrail	3
Rotten timber flooring or stair tread (making safe)	1
Door Entry phone not working	3
Mechanical extractor fan in internal kitchen or bathroom not working	3

If the repair is not started within this timescale you can ask an alternative contractor from our list to carry out the repair.

The alternative contractor has the same amount of time to carry out the repair as we do. If no other contractor is available we will carry out the repair.

Our customer service officers will be able to provide you with the names and contact details of alternative contractors. Your chosen contractor must be on our list.

When you report a repair our customer service advisors will:

- tell you if the repair is covered by the Right to Repair scheme
- explain your rights under the Right to Repair scheme
- tell you the date by which the repair should be completed.

## Staff conduct

Our staff will always conduct themselves in a professional, quiet and orderly manner and try to minimise disruption to your routine at home.

## Minimising hazards

Our staff will ensure access to your property is maintained at all times and will take all necessary precautions to minimise hazards caused by the repairs and maintenance works inside and outside your home.

Entrances, exits, fire escapes and footpaths will also be kept clear for access.

## Carrying out your own improvements

You must get written permission from Venture before you carry out any improvements or alterations to your home.

## The handyman service

If you want to make small improvements to your home (e.g. put up shelves, fit your own internal doors, add extra locks etc.) Venture's handyman service can help. For a competitive charge our trained workers will help you with those DIY jobs you just can't manage. For more information call us on 0151 261 2100

## Annual gas safety checks

We take our responsibilities very seriously when it comes to the safety of you and your family. As a landlord, we have a legal obligation to ensure your gas appliances (Venture installed gas fires, central heating etc) and flues are maintained safely.

We service our gas appliances every year to keep them in good working order and safe for your use. Unsafe systems are dangerous and can be fatal. We will write to you in advance, advising you of the date we will come to carry out your gas service.

If you won't be home that day – or can't arrange for someone else to be there – please call us on **0151 261 2100** and we will re-arrange your appointment.

Remember, by law you must allow us access to your home so we can carry out a gas safety check. The check protects you, your family and your neighbours. If you need further information on gas safety, contact your Neighbourhood Housing Officer on **051 261 2100**.

## Gas Safe Register

On 1st April 2009, the Gas Safe Register replaced CORGI gas registration as the official gas safety body. Our engineers and contractors will all carry identification cards with the new Gas Safe logo, their photograph and a licence number. You should always check the identification of every gas engineer that comes to do work at your home. The main details are:

- the licence number
- the start date
- expiry date and
- the security hologram.

If you're in any doubt, just call **0800 408 5500** to confirm the engineer is Gas Safe Registered.

## Your community

We want you to feel safe and secure in your home and neighbourhood. We want you to have the quality of life you aspire to and we aim to build strong communities where people get on together and where you are proud to live. If you are interested in finding out more about anything in this section call us on **0151 261 2100**.

### In this section:

- sheltered accommodation
- support for people with disabilities
- anti social behaviour
- racial harassment and hate crimes
- domestic abuse
- homelessness
- refugees and asylum seekers

## Sheltered accommodation

Venture’s sheltered schemes, Bishopscourt and Brookscourt, are purpose built blocks of flats with communal facilities for people over the age of 55.

Both have a residential scheme manager (warden) living on site, 9am-5pm, Monday to Friday, and are linked by an emergency personal help alarm system to a central control at all other times.

Your scheme manager	
Will	Won't
Check and look after the emergency personal alarm system	Administer drugs or medicines
Visit you to update records	Nurse you if you are ill
Visit you to check on your wellbeing	Help you in using the toilet
Respond to emergency calls	Prepare meals for you
Liaise with outside agencies and families	Shop for you
Help you to complete forms	
Reset equipment	
Test and reset fire alarms	
Report repairs	

In your home you will notice a 'pull cord' in every room. These provide 24 hour help, 365 days a year. When your scheme manager is on duty and one of these cords is pulled, then he/she will respond and come to your assistance. When your scheme manager is off duty, the call is directed to Eldercare’s Control Centre in Rossendale and an operator will deal with the call.

Other services you can expect in sheltered accommodation are:

- grass cutting and regular care of shrubs and trees
- window cleaning (outside only)
- cleaning in communal areas e.g. lounge and laundry
- decoration in communal areas and outside the building every five years
- repair or replacement of furniture and equipment in communal areas (as required)
- communal lighting, fire alarm and lift maintenance.

## Support for People with Disabilities

If you or a member of your family is having problems due to a disability we may be able to help with adaptations to help you remain in your home for longer.

Small adaptations such as grab rails, banister rails and lever taps can usually be completed within 28 days, without the need for expert advice.

Bigger adaptations such as a level access shower or stair lift may need an expert assessment from your GP or occupational therapist (OT). These will usually take longer (between 120 and 320 days).

If it's not possible or not appropriate to adapt your home, we will help you to find more suitable accommodation either through an internal transfer, or from another landlord through the choice based lettings schemes in Liverpool and Wirral

For advice on adaptations to your home contact the repair helpline on **0151 261 2199**.

## Anti social behaviour

We will not tolerate anti social behaviour.

You must take reasonable steps to stop anyone living in or visiting your home causing nuisance. This includes keeping your children under control and not making a lot of noise. You must not abuse or threaten other people.

- if you would like to report anti social behaviour call us 24 hours a day, seven days a week on **0151 261 2100**
- if you need more information on anti social behaviour, please contact your Neighbourhood Housing Officer on **0151 261 2100**

## Racial harassment and hate crimes

Venture will not tolerate racial harassment or hate crimes.

A hate crime is any behaviour which the victim or any other person thinks was caused by hatred of age, faith, disability, race, religion, sexual orientation. Venture extends this to include people victimised because they are transgender.

If you would like to report racial harassment or a hate crime, or would like advice on this subject, contact your Neighbourhood Housing Officer on **0151 261 2100** in complete confidence.

If you would prefer to speak to somebody independent Venture supports Stop Hate UK who offer advice and support to victims of, or witnesses to racial harassment or any other hate crime. Stop Hate UK is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week on **0800 138 1625**.

**With your permission** Stop Hate UK will refer your report to Merseyside Police, and any other service which can help you to deal with the problem.

Alternatively you may wish to report racial harassment and other hate crimes directly to Merseyside Police on **0151 709 6010** or in emergencies **999**.

## Domestic abuse

Venture operates a **Zero Tolerance** policy to domestic abuse in our properties.

Domestic violence or domestic abuse can describe a wide range of physical, sexual, emotional and financial abuse of people who are, or have been, intimate partners – whether or not they have been married or living together.

We are committed to protecting the lives of adults and children suffering from domestic abuse or violence and to bringing the perpetrators to justice.

- We work in partnership with a range of agencies including Project Chrysalis and Centre 56 to provide sanctuary and support to those living with or fleeing from domestic abuse or violence.
- We can help with emergency accommodation or permanent re-housing to get away from your abuser. But we'll also improve security in your home if you prefer to stay where you are.
- If your abuser is keeping you short of money we can offer a free, confidential welfare rights advice service so you can understand what income you may be entitled to if you decide to flee.

While it's usually women who are subject to domestic abuse or violence, it can happen to anybody regardless of age, ability, sexuality, ethnicity, culture, faith, economic or social background.

If you want to talk to Venture in confidence about this we have trained officers available 9am – 5pm, Monday to Friday who will be happy to listen and offer support where you need this. Out of hours we provide a specialist anti social behaviour advice line where you can get advice or help. Call us on **0151 261 2100**.

If you would prefer to talk to somebody independent the **National Domestic Violence Helpline** offer expert help 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Call them on **0800 2000 247**.

## Homelessness

If you are worried about becoming homeless, contact your Neighbourhood Housing Officer on **0151 261 2100** for confidential help and advice. We aim to prevent homelessness and we can advise you on your options if you are faced with this situation.

If you feel you are at risk of becoming homeless you can also seek advice from:

- your local council                      **in Liverpool – 0151 233 3800**  
**in Wirral – 0151 666 5515** or
- Shelter on **0808 800 4444** or visit **www.shelter.org.uk**

If you are fleeing domestic abuse or violence contact us confidentially on **0151 261 2100** and speak to Lorraine Clarke or Margaret Dickinson.

## Refugees and asylum seekers

Venture provides permanent accommodation for people with refugee status.

- an asylum seeker is a person who has lodged a claim for asylum with the Home Office, and is awaiting a decision on that claim
- a refugee is someone who has been granted leave to remain in the UK by the Home Office after consideration of an asylum application.

Asylum seekers who are destitute without any means of support should call the **UK Border Agency** for more information on **0845 602 1739**.

People granted leave to remain in the UK are entitled to social security benefits and social housing. Call the UK Border Agency on 0845 602 1739 for more information.

## Thank You for Choosing Venture

Feel free to get in touch whenever you like with any questions about your home or the services we provide. Much of the information you need is in this handbook, but if you can't find what you're looking for, please call our number:

**0151 261 2100**

## Useful phone numbers and websites

### Liverpool City Council

0151 233 3000

### Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council

0151 606 2000

### Jobcentre Plus

0845 6060 234

### TV Licensing

0870 8501 202

### Free TV Licences (for people over 75)

0845 603 6999

### Gas emergencies

0800 111 999

### United Utilities (Water)

Unmetered: 0845 746 1100

Metered: 0845 746 2222

### Help the Aged

0808 800 6565

### Disability and Carers Service

0800 88 22 00

### Merseyside Police

General: 0151 709 6010

Emergencies: 999

### Crimestoppers

0800 555 111

### Samaritans

08457 90 90 90

### Shelter

0808 800 4444

### Victim Support

0845 30 30 900

### Working Tax Credits

0845 300 3900

### NHS 24

08454 24 24 24

### Royal Liverpool Hospital

0151 706 2000

### Broadgreen Hospital

0151 282 6000

### Arrow Park Hospital

0151 678 5111

### Clatterbridge Hospital

0151 334 4000

### National Domestic Violence Helpline

0800 2000 247

### Stop Hate UK

0800 138 1625

### National Debtline

0808 808 4000