



Residents Handbook

Welcome to your new home!

The Board and Staff at Bristol hope you're excited about your move and that you enjoy living here.

This welcome pack is designed to help you settle in and give you all the information you need about the property and the area.

The pack contains important information about your tenancy and describes the main services we can give you in relation to your housing.

If there is anything you do not understand or you would like more information, please contact us.

If English is not your first or preferred language or any member of your household, has specific needs due to a hearing or visual impairment, please let us know. You may if you wish to be supported by a representative or advocate in interactions about Bristol CLT.

Our main address:
Bristol CLT
c/o Brighter Places
Eden House
10 Eastgate Office Park
Eastgate Rd
Bristol
BS5 6XX

Telephone number: 07421127279
n.b. This is for part time BCLT staff so calls may not always be answered.

E mail: info@bristolclt.co.uk
Our website: www.bristolclt.co.uk

Our homes are currently managed by Brighter Places and responsive repairs by Ian Williams.

Find this handbook online at www.bristolclt.co.uk

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Bristol CLT (Community Land Trust)

Bristol CLT was established in 2011 for the benefit of the community to operate as a Community Land Trust in Bristol and the surrounding area providing and managing social homes and community land and assets.

Community-led housing

Community-led housing is where people and communities play a leading and lasting role in addressing their own housing needs.

Meaningful community engagement and consent occurs throughout the process.

A local community group or organisation owns, manages or stewards the homes in a manner of their choosing.

BCLT Strategic Objectives
Community-Led Housing Development Enable the development of sustainable homes and places
Champion the role of community led housing Promoting Bristol CLT as an exemplar in community led housing
Organisational Excellence Ensure the organisation is complaint and operating at the highest level including financial, legal and governance
Community Engagement and membership growth To build a strong, inclusive, and engaged membership base that reflects the diversity of the local community and actively participates in the democratic governance, decision-making, and stewardship of community assets.

Equal Opportunities

Bristol CLT is committed to making sure everyone can access the housing and services it provides. This commitment is equally important to the development and encouragement of customer participation.

We are committed to developing ways in which all customers may have an input into service design and provision:

Our governance

Bristol CLT is headed by a Board of Directors. Membership of the Board consists of people who are committed to providing affordable homes for people in housing need. It

is voluntary and unpaid. Board members devote a considerable amount of free time to the running of the organisation.

Once membership has been approved you have the right to stand for election to the Board of Directors and/or to vote for others who wish to stand for or be re-elected to the Board of Directors. As a member you will be invited to nominate prospective Board members and to attend the Annual General Meeting. You will also receive a copy of the Annual Report.

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

This is an important law which protects your data. It gives you rights in relation to how information about you is gathered, used, recorded and shared by organisations. It also places certain requirements on organisations that collect and process information about you.

You have a right to information about certain issues and can make a request to see the information we hold on you.

Living at Fishponds Road

Fishponds Rd was built in 2016 as the first BCLT development with support from Bristol City Council and Homes England. Many of the residents who helped finish their homes still live at Fishponds Rd and maintain the community ethos.

The properties are a mixture of shared ownership and affordable rent and are all built to high energy efficiency standards.

New residents will be expected to share the ideals of Respect, Community and Communication and demonstrate:

- respect for the physical space in the community
- respect for the experience and views of the people living there
- willingness to participate in community meetings, workdays and events

There is a car park, but parking is not allocated. There are also other shared facilities such as a communal garden, workshop and bike shelters.

Bristol CLT has an agreement with Brighter Places, a local Housing Association to manage aspects of the properties and tenancies at Fishponds Rd. As a small organisation, BCLT doesn't have the infrastructure or capacity that Brighter Places do, so they can bring expert help, advice and support to many of the processes we are required to follow.

Residents Communications

Residents can communicate with each other and Bristol CLT in a number of ways, through Loomio, email and WhatsApp. Each platform/method has a slightly different use.

Loomio

Loomio is an online forum which the residents and BCLT use for open conversations about anything that's required. All residents can look at this and make decisions together and BCLT can view and respond to the messages in the forum which we have access to. This is useful for when we want to open a conversation up to everyone at Fishponds Rd and request input or keep track of projects over time.

There is also a resident only part of Loomio which BCLT cannot view or access. The whole Loomio platform is managed by the residents.

Email

Some communications will use email, this is for when residents wish to raise things either privately or where it only affects their household and wouldn't be appropriate on Loomio.

WhatsApp

Residents have also self-organised a WhatsApp group for quicker notifications and make sure important info has been circulated to people who may have missed a Loomio message.

Residents meetings

BCLT aim to host a resident meeting twice a year to update residents on anything related to the organisation or their homes as well as a chance for residents to come together to ask questions and raise concerns to address.

Your Tenancy Agreement

A legal contract, your Tenancy Agreement is a very important document. It sets out the terms and conditions of your tenancy and the rights and responsibilities of Bristol CLT to you.

By signing a Tenancy Agreement, you agree to what is contained within it. If you are a joint tenant, there is an equal responsibility to keep to the terms and conditions in your Agreement.

For example, if you move out of the property you will still be responsible for rent payments if your name is still on the Tenancy Agreement.

Many of your rights and responsibilities are put in place through Statute (that means they are set down in law). Other rights and responsibilities are written down in your Tenancy Agreement and these are called contractual terms. In other words, these terms and conditions exist because you have signed your Agreement.

The following notes give you a summary of the main parts of your Tenancy Agreement.

Security of tenancy

You have a legal right to stay in your home. You cannot be forced to leave your home unless a Court has agreed to this. We will only take action like this where there has been a serious breach of the Tenancy Agreement.

If you leave your home without letting us know (abandon your tenancy) we will follow a set procedure to get the tenancy back.

When you are allocated a property, you must use it as your main home and you must make sure that the property is looked after. This includes any common areas that can be shared with others.

Rent

Your Tenancy Agreement shows the rent you need to pay when you sign for your tenancy. Rents and service charges are reviewed annually.

We will give you at least 28 days written notice of any changes to your rent charges.

Joint tenancies

You can apply to have a joint tenancy with someone who lives, or intends to live, in your home with you. You must ask for permission, but we will not refuse any request, unless there is good reason for doing so.

Succession

Certain people living in the home of a tenant who has died may have rights to take over the tenancy. It is important that you keep us up to date about who is living in your home as this will affect their ability to succeed to your tenancy.

To be eligible, Bristol CLT must have been informed of the occupant living in your property 12 months prior to application is made for a Succession and the person applying must be over the age of 16.

You do not necessarily have to be a member of the tenant's immediate family to qualify and succeed to the tenancy.

Subletting and Lodgers

You cannot sublet the whole property or hand the tenancy on to anyone else. This is tenancy fraud and is illegal. Therefore lodging is not allowed as this would constitute overcrowding.

Paying Rent

Rent

BCLT Rent Policy makes sure that rents are low enough for most tenants working 35 hours per week to afford while still covering our costs.

We review the rent levels on 1 April each year. You will be given 28 days' notice of any change. Service charges **for** things like communal area cleaning are also reviewed every year. We will make sure the services provided are best value for money.

How to pay your rent

All rent, service charge and sinking fund payments are processed by Brighter Places

Direct debit

brighterplaces.co.uk/direct-debit

This is a flexible, safe, simple, direct way to make rent and service charge payments from your account. It takes a few minutes to set up. You can use the form on the Brighter Places website, call on 0117 942 4600 or ask for a form to be sent in the post.

MyPlace

brighterplaces.co.uk/myplace

MyPlace is your Brighter Places online account that offers 24 hours access to pay your rent and lets you see your balance at any time. It is quick and easy to register for your MyPlace account – you need your seven-digit tenancy number.

- Convenient – make payments whenever you want and use it to message us too
- Secure – it's your own account with a private login
- Control – you can see and update your personal details and send us requests

Allpay

allpay.net

Call 0330 041 6497

Allpay is a flexible way to pay rent used by many tenants. You use the payment reference number on your rent card and pay online or by phone 24 hours a day 7 days a week. You can also pay at the post office, at a shop with a PayPoint sign or even get an app on your smartphone.

Get help paying your rent - Universal Credit & Housing Benefit

You may be able to get help paying your rent if you are on a low income. This was formerly known as Housing Benefit, but this is now being phased out and replaced by Universal Credit. If you have not made an application for assistance with your rent before, then you need to make an online application for Universal Credit.

If you receive Housing Benefit it is up to you to let both the Council and BCLT know of any changes in your circumstances which may affect how much Housing Benefit you get, for example if you start working.

Rent arrears

If you are unable to pay all or some of your rent when it is due, you should let Brighter Places know immediately. We are keen to help you avoid getting into rent arrears. We will help you as much as possible to make sure you stay in your home if you are having money problems.

Confidential help and advice is always available so please contact us as soon as possible. We can set up payment plans to help you pay off any rent arrears. However, where you do not keep to any arrangement made and your arrears continue to rise, we may take further action against you. This may lead to court action, and you may lose your home.

Looking after your home

Repairs

Bristol CLT is responsible for ensuring your property is in a good state of repair. As the tenant you need to make sure you report repairs in good time and that you and anyone else living in the property looks after the property. Currently our responsive repairs service is provided by Brighter Places in partnership with Ian Williams.

Emergency repairs

An emergency includes a gas leak, no water, total power failure, fire, sudden serious damage, burst internal pipes or a broken lock on the only access door to your home

Can you smell gas?

- If you can smell gas, immediately contact Transco, the National Gas Emergency Service, anytime on 0800 111 999

No electricity

- Check to see if your neighbours have lost their supply. If they have not, the problem could be with your own trip switches in your consumer unit (fuse box).
- Check your trip switches are all in the 'on' position. If your trip switch has switched off, turn off all your appliances and try to reset the trip switch to the on position. The supply may then come back on. Connect or switch on the appliances one at a time – this may indicate which appliance is causing the problem.
- If the trip switch has not switched off and you can find no other reason, call Western Power on 0800 365 900

Water leak

- Turn the water off at the stopcock – this is often under the kitchen sink or behind a small metal lid in the front garden. Then call us on 0117 942 4600
- In an emergency call Wessex Water on 0800 214 651

If you are not sure who to contact in an emergency Brighter Places

- 0117 942 4600

Other emergencies

Call 0117 942 4600 We respond within 24 hours

- unsafe electrical socket or other electrical fitting
- no heating and/or hot water (1 October to 1 April)
- immersion heater not working (if this is your only hot water)
- main door locks broken (only if there is no other access to your home)
- severe roof leak
- blocked toilet or drain with sewage overflowing
- minor water leak that is out of control and will probably cause damage e.g. if it runs onto electrics
- blocked toilet or drain with sewage overflowing
- burst water pipe that is out of control

If we respond to an emergency call-out and the situation in your home is not an emergency, we may recharge for our time.

Non-emergency repairs

Repairs are assessed on a case-by-case basis, looking at the severity of the repair as well as any vulnerabilities or individual circumstances that could make the impact of the repair worse.

We aim to provide an appointment and attend a non-emergency repair within three months.

<https://www.brighterplacs.co.uk/report-a-repair/>

Alterations/improvements

You may want to make alterations or improvements to your home. If this is the case, you must ask for permission before you make any changes. In certain circumstances, you might be entitled to compensation for any alterations you have carried out when you end your tenancy.

Painting

Residents can paint their home upon moving in, we will supply white paint only, if required.

If white/off-white paint is not used, the resident must paint it back to white/off white at the end of their tenancy.

Gardens/common areas

Where it is your responsibility, you must make sure gardens and common areas are kept clean and tidy and used properly. You must make sure that you, and members of your household, use these areas responsibly.

Respect for others

All tenants must make sure they, and anyone living with them, or any visitors, do not act in a way that causes a nuisance to anyone living in the area. We will take action where this happens and in extreme cases this can include ending your tenancy.

Ending the tenancy

You must always provide BCLT with at least 28 days' notice of your intention to end your tenancy. Tenancies end on a Sunday, so it will be the first Sunday after 28 days' notice, the exact day will be confirmed to you.

Before leaving, your rent must be paid, and a check of the property must be arranged with us.

You may also be asked to let a new tenant look around your home before you leave

Repairs and maintenance

Bristol CLT is legally responsible for ensuring your home is kept in a good state of repair, however we currently outsource our repairs and maintenance services to Ian Williams via Brighter Places.

Bristol CLT is responsible for:

Repairs to the structure and exterior of the property including the roof, walls, doors, windows and chimneys.

Repairs to internal walls, floors, ceilings, doors, door frames, internal staircases and landings.

Repairs to gutters, pipes and drains.

Repairs to baths, showers, toilets, sinks, basins and kitchen units. Repairs to electrical wiring and central heating systems.

Repairs to our fixtures and fittings, including communal TV aerials and door entry systems. Repairing damage caused by acts of vandalism/criminal activity provided this has been reported to the Police within 24 hours of happening.

Tenants are responsible for:

Repairing any damage that has been done to the property by you, your household or visitors to your home.

Advising us as soon as a repair is required. Keeping their home in a good clean condition.

Replacing or repairing any damage that has been caused through carelessness or neglect. Clearing blocked pipes if the blockage is caused by misuse (for example by putting nappies or wet wipes down the toilet).

Replacing lost or broken keys.

Charges for repairs

BCLT has the right to check your property at a reasonable time with 24 hours' notice.

You will be charged for repairs that have been caused by neglect, carelessness or deliberate damage by you, your household or visitors to your home.

You may also be charged if we have to make an insurance claim for something that was due to you, or someone living or visiting you, not taking care of things or causing damage.

You may also be charged if we arrange for workers to repair your home, and you fail to keep to the agreed appointments without good reason.

Planned Maintenance

As part of our commitment to maintaining our properties in a good condition we are developing a planned maintenance programme. This includes external decoration and

installing central heating systems, etc. When carrying out such work, tenants are responsible for removing their floor coverings, moving furniture and redecorating.

Service charges

There is an additional charge for services which are shared between tenants for example electricity costs for lighting the communal areas and communal waste collection. The costs will vary across the year however we only change the charge once a year. Where we don't have your actual bills at the time of applying the charge (for example for a new building) we will estimate the costs.

Admin charge all services are charges at cost, to help with the administration of these services, an admin cost of 15% is charged by Bristol CLT.

Note: If you have items to be dumped, please remove them yourself or arrange uplift through the local Council, let us know or label your item to say an uplift has been arranged.

Sinking Fund

BCLT manages the sinking fund for the site and properties. A sinking fund is a pot of money that builds up so that when long term repairs are required, e.g. Fencing or roofs, we have money put aside to cover the cost. Residents contribute to the fund through a weekly or monthly payment and Bristol CLT contribute an additional amount. Sinking fund for Tenants is currently taken out of the total rent cost.

Contents insurance

Bristol CLT insurance policy only covers the building. Tenants are responsible for insuring their own household contents and we strongly advise you get contents insurance.

Utilities & Bills

Within your home you are responsible for your water and gas bills as well as council tax.

Electricity

There is one electricity supply into the site, which is charged to BCLT, then that supply is split to supply the individual homes. BCLT recharges residents for electricity use at cost – we do not make any money out of this or take an admin fee.

The reason for this set up is that Bristol CLT pays a single standing charge for the electricity, which is split between the homes, so much lower than everyone paying an individual standing charge. We also get business rates which, when the site was developed were cheaper than domestic rates. Electricity at business rates have increased since then, but are still a similar amount to domestic rates, so with the savings on a shared standing charge, this is still a cost-effective way to manage electricity.

Billing takes place twice a year and is for the period ending 6 months prior. This is because Bristol CLT needs to take meter readings and get billed for that period to then be able to charge residents the actual costs used so instant billing is not possible although we calculate payments based on use and advise on monthly payments which,

You are required to set up a standing order for a monthly payment which we will advise. When we do the next round of billing, if usage has been higher or lower, we will request you to change your standing order.

Contact us if you require our bank details for electricity payments.

Outside of your home, communal electricity and water use is added to your service charge.

Solar panels

The Solar panels on roofs of new builds generate income for BCLT which is predominantly is used to re-pay the loan which was taken to purchase the panels.

Safety and security in the home

Fire

When you leave the kitchen, make sure that the heat has been turned off.

Do not hang clothes over or around naked flames, heaters or cookers.

At night, close all the doors in your home. If a fire starts in your home, closing doors can give you and your family more time to get out of your home.

Your home will be fitted with a heat / smoke detector. We will check this every year. You should make sure it is working by testing it regularly. If you do not have a smoke detector, or you think it is faulty please contact us immediately

In the event of a fire

Get everyone out of the property.

Call the fire and rescue service (999). Close all doors and windows if possible

Burst pipes

Frozen pipes can burst and cause serious damage to your home. To lessen the chances of this happening you should consider the following:

Check that your stop tap is working properly. It is normally located under the kitchen sink or in the bathroom or a hallway cupboard.

If you are not sure where it is, please contact us as soon as possible. Do not leave it until you have an emergency.

Make sure that everyone in your household knows where the stop tap is and how to turn it off.

If you are going away during a cold weather period leave the heating switched on.

Alternatively, switch your heating off and turn off the stop tap and drain off the hot and cold-water systems

In the event of a burst pipe

Turn off the water at the stop tap.

Open all the taps to sinks and baths in order to drain the system and flush your toilet.

Make sure the water heater is switched off.

Switch off electricity at the mains if the water leak is close to your appliances, connections or wires.

Warn neighbours who may suffer damage as a result of burst pipes in your home.

Security

When you go out, close all your windows and lock all doors.

Do not leave your door key under a doormat, stone or on a piece of string behind the letterbox. If someone is trying to break into your home they will know to look in these places.

If someone who you do not know calls, you should ask them to provide identification which will prove that they are who they say they are. Do not be afraid to ask to see proof of identity.

Remember to cancel your newspaper delivery if you go away.

Fishponds Rd codes

There are various buildings at Fishponds Rd which are locked for resident use only, these include the plant room (electricity mains), bike store x 2 and a workshop/store – All codes can be requested from BCLT or ask a neighbour.

Community

All tenants should respect the right of their neighbours to enjoy a peaceful and quiet life. Unfortunately, there may be times when disputes between neighbours happen. Even small problems can grow into major issues.

If problems arise it is best if you try to speak to your neighbour about how their behaviour is affecting you and try to resolve the matter between you. It may be necessary to talk to your neighbour again if the problems continue.

If the problem does not stop, or you do not feel that you can approach your neighbour, you should contact ourselves. If it is an ongoing problem then you should keep a diary, noting dates and times of incidents and how the issue has affected you.

If other neighbours are also being affected, then it is helpful if they contact us as well.

All complaints will be dealt with sensitively and wherever possible in confidence.

However, if the case is so serious that it leads to Court action, those involved may be asked to give evidence.

By far the largest cause of neighbour disputes is noise. Most noise issues can be avoided by you being aware of the possible effects of noise on neighbours.

Mediation

We will always try to resolve all issues informally in the first instance. However, in situations where there is ongoing conflict between two or more neighbours it can be very difficult to resolve the problem.

With the agreement of those involved we may consider independent mediation to try to resolve the problem.

Anti-social behaviour

BCLT views any form of harassment (racial, sexual or otherwise) as a very serious matter and may consider court action against any tenant responsible for such behaviour.

If you suffer harassment, you should contact ourselves or Citizens Advice or Bristol City Council. You should also report the matter to the Police.

We aim to ensure all tenants can live in a peaceful environment. Actions of anti-social behaviour such as drug dealing, criminal activities, unprovoked assault and harassment will be treated seriously and could result in those tenants involved losing their home.

You should always report any criminal activities to the Police or if you do not want to give your name call Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.

If you are suffering from any form of domestic abuse, please make sure that you seek help and advice.

Women can call the National Domestic Violence Helpline on **0808 2000 247**

Men can call the Respect Men's Advice Line on **0808 801 0327**

Refuse and bulk items

Please ensure that all bin stores are kept tidy and that all refuse is taken out in time for it to be collected.

There are two bin stores at Fishponds Rd - one by the car park and one by the front entrance.

The residents who use the bins by the front entrance operate a rota for putting the bins out, the rota can be found on Loomio. If you are unable to do your date/s please arrange a swap with another resident.

If you have large domestic items to be removed (e.g. fridge, cooker, bed) you should Bristol city council or take the item to the local recycling centre

If you do not get rid of your refuse properly or dump large or bulky items, then we will charge you for any costs we have for cleaning or uplifting these items.

Keeping pets

Permission is required to keep a dog or cat, and a request should be made in writing to BCLT.

Tenants must make sure that pets do not cause a nuisance to neighbours.

You must clean up any dog mess or a Council Warden could issue you with a fixed penalty notice and you could be asked to find another home for your pet.

Parking

There is a small car park to the rear of Fishponds rd. Parking is unallocated and for residents and guests only. If there are concerns about vehicles being left, please let BCLT know.

Please make sure your vehicle is taxed and fully road legal, SORN (Statutory Off-Road Notifications) do NOT apply to Association car parks or property. Everyone pays a share of removing these items and costs can mount up.

Visitors

As a unique development in terms of design, history and CLH as a relatively new way of developing homes, there may occasionally be visitors or tours on site. These will always be accompanied by a member of BCLT staff or a board member and will aim to be unintrusive and respectful that it's your home. We will try to give notice of any visitors and tours.

Allocation of properties

Bristol CLT has a policy and an obligation by law to allocate properties in an open and transparent way based on housing need. To do this we use Home Choice Bristol, which allows us to compare the housing needs of a large number of applicants based on their housing need. Applicants must also be a member of Bristol CLT to qualify for our housing.

Customer participation

We are committed to making sure that the services we provide reflect the views of our customers as well as giving you a greater say in the decisions which affect your homes and the areas where you live.

As a tenant you have a legal right to certain information about our policies and services. However, as a community led housing organisation, we wish to go much further than this and we are developing a Resident, Tenant and Community Engagement Policy that gives a clear statement as to how tenants can become involved. The Policy also covers matters such as: - The role of tenants on Bristol CLT governing body (the Board).

How we will seek tenants' views on a regular basis through the use of surveys.

Compliments and complaints

Bristol CLT is committed to providing high quality customer services. We value complaints and use information from them to help us improve our services. If something goes wrong or you are dissatisfied with our services, please tell us. if you were happy with a service you have received, whether it is from ourselves or a contractor we would love to hear from you.

Compliments and complaints are monitored by the organisation and are reported to the Board.

If you have any comments about the organisation, its services or staff, that are not complaints or compliments, then please let us know! It is helpful for us to get an indication of what tenants and other customers think

Equality and diversity

We will apply this policy consistently and fairly and will not discriminate against anyone based on any protected characteristics, including those set out in the Equality Act 2010.

Complaints

Any resident or other stakeholder who is dissatisfied with how we have managed their properties is able to submit a complaint using our Complaints process.

Once our Complaints policy is complete and if they remain dissatisfied, then they can contact the Housing Ombudsman.