

Welcome to Independent Living booklet

# About Independent Living



Independent Living is accommodation for people aged over 60, and is suitable for those capable of living independently but who feel more secure having a 24/7 emergency alarm system in their property and the support of an Independent Living Officer.

**What support do Independent Living Officers provide?** The Independent Living Officer will help you live as independently as possible, offering advice, support and assistance as and when needed.

They maintain records of tenant's doctor, carers, relatives, emergency contacts etc. This confidential information is stored securely and is used to provide you with help in an emergency. Please help the Independent Living Officers by ensuring this information is kept up to date.

Independent Living Officers liaise with the Council's Income Recovery Team, Community Safety Team, the Tenancy and Estate Team as well as other agencies to support you in respect of a range of tenancy issues, ensure your rent is paid and that your home and estate are kept to a good standard. They also support residents to obtain adaptations, complete benefit forms, etc.

Generally Independent Living Officers are on duty from 9:00am to 5:00pm Monday to Friday and are onsite at independent living schemes Tuesday and Thursday. All residents will be visited on a weekly basis, those residents with an assessed need will receive more frequent visits which could be up to 4 times a week. If staff are undertaking emergency alarm testing or updating personal fire risk assessments at a scheme they will be in the building all week. Their hours may vary as some Independent Living Officers could be on annual leave or may be working evenings, facilitating a social activity for example.

The service is overseen by the Team Manager, Older Peoples Services. Independent Living Officers are supported on a day to day basis by the Senior Independent Living Officer, In this booklet you will also find information on the emergency alarm system, duties of an Independent Living Officer, advice on how to stay safe and secure, some frequently asked questions, and some useful contact information can be found on the back page.

### ***The emergency alarm system***

All of the Council's independent living schemes have an emergency alarm system that allows you to summon help in an emergency. When activated, an alarm call will be sent directly to the alarm monitoring centre where staff will summon the appropriate help, this could include, calling the emergency services, your GP, carer, family or giving reassurance.

Various sensors can be linked to the alarm system to support you to continue living independently, however, there will be an additional charge for these. Examples include but are not limited to: Fall detectors, flood detectors, medication reminders, chair/bed occupancy sensors, property exist

Each property also has a smoke detector and heat detector linked to the emergency alarm system for added peace of mind. The Independent Living Officer will demonstrate how the alarm system works and will be happy to answer any questions you have.

**Please note:** Calls via the emergency alarm are recorded for your benefit and for training purposes.

## *Tenant support plans*

Shortly after moving in an Independent Living Officer will make arrangements with you to complete a tenant support plan. The purpose of this document is to identify any support you may need to live independently. This could include assigning a case worker to you, who will spend time with you on a weekly basis while you recover from an illness/injury, or perhaps you need help making telephone calls, dealing with mail etc. Your support plan also helps us identify if you need welfare checks and how often these checks should be. Your views will be taken into consideration and the outcome of our support plan will be discussed with you to ensure you are happy. Your support plan will be reviewed on an annual basis or sooner if you become unwell, your support needs change or you request a review.

## *Master key and Key safes*

The majority of our independent living schemes benefit from a master key, which enables staff to gain access to a property in an emergency. In general, an Independent Living Officer will not enter your home without your written permission. However, if an emergency situation arises where you are unable to open your door, the Independent Living Officer may enter your property to deal with the incident. If this happens, they will be accompanied by another person wherever possible.

Outside each tenants property is a key safe. This allows you to store a key to your flat securely. It is up to you who you give the code to. You may decide to give the code to your family or to care staff. The alarm monitoring centre will also have the code but they will only give it to the emergency services if you need help and you are unable to get to your street door.

**Please note: For security reasons the alarm monitoring center will not give the key safe code to your family or friends.**

## *Purchasing key and Fobs*

Additional keys and fobs can be obtained on-line via our website. If you do not have access to the internet, please speak to an Independent Living Officer. Keys and fobs must be paid for in advance and will be delivered to you by a member of staff. Proof of identity will be required if someone is purchasing these on your behalf, they will need I.D for themselves plus the resident.

## *Your facilities*

**Laundry:** You are responsible for your own laundry. If your scheme has a laundry room you are welcome to use it for this purpose. Opening times at schemes vary, so do check the notice board for more information. Please be aware that the last wash is permitted an hour and 30 minutes before closing.

Ensure you check machines before use as the council will not be held responsible for damaged clothes as a result of anything left in the machine. If for any reason a machine is not working, please call Qualis on 0333 230 0464

**Laundry facilities are for residents use only and we ask that you only use one washing machine and one tumble dryer at a time.**

**Guest room:** There may be a guest room available to visitors. You will need to pre- book and pay for the room if you require it. Information on how to book and pay for the guest room is displayed on the scheme notice board. If more than one resident at any one time wishes to book the guest room for a relative or friend, we will give priority to any resident who is ill. There are two separate charges, a single person charge per night or where more than one person will be staying in the guest room the charge will be for the room per night

**Please note:** the guest room is for short term bookings only.

**Refuge Room:** The refuge facilities at your scheme are for day to day household waste only. For items such as furniture, fridges etc. please contact Waste Management on 01992 564000 or apply on-line for a special collection. The council offer concession rates for older people. For current charges please speak to an Independent Living Officer or check the Council's website.

**Communal lounge:** A good way to make new friends is to join in the social activities held in the lounge or hall. Our Independent Living officers will promote and encourage social activities which older people living locally are also welcome to join, or residents might like to organize their own social events.

Details of social activities can be found on the notice board. If you would like to help with social activities, please speak to an Independent Living Officer.

### *Security of your scheme*

To help prevent unwanted visitors or intruders, your independent living scheme has a door entry system.

When a visitor arrives, they can call your flat from the main entrance and talk to you. You can then open the main front door from your flat. To help keep our building secure please ensure you know who you are letting into the building.

For additional peace of mind, the Council has installed closed circuit television cameras (CCTV) at the main entrance to your scheme.

### *Smoking and vaping*

Smoking and vaping is prohibited in all communal areas, although you are allowed to smoke and vape in your flat or the communal garden if you wish.

### *Suggestion scheme*

Would you like more social activities? Do you think there are some simple ways to improve the lives of people in your scheme? If you have any ideas, please fill in a form and place in the suggestion box, alternatively, you could raise it at a "Chatterbox" Session.

### *Independent Living Resident Forum*

If you would like to be more involved in issues relating to independent living, you may wish to consider forming a Residents Group with other interested residents in your Scheme. This is a formal group with a constitution, regular meetings and official roles for members (such as Chair, Secretary, Treasurer etc). Please speak to an Independent Living Officer for further advice about

what is involved.

If there isn't a Residents Association in your Scheme, regular 'Chatterbox' sessions will be held where you can meet with your fellow residents and Officers to discuss any issues and enjoy a chat in an informal setting. Action points from these meetings are displayed on scheme notice boards.

The Independent Living Forum generally meets quarterly online, with representatives from each Scheme (either a Residents Group chair, or a volunteer selected during a Chatterbox meeting). The Forum discusses matters which affect all independent living residents and helps to shape the Council's plans and policies in these areas. Look out for meetings advertised on your noticeboard or speak to an Independent Living Officer to find out more.

### *Scooter stores*

Some of our independent living schemes benefit from scooter storage, which allows residents to store and charge their motorized scooter securely. There is a weekly charge for these stores which are for rent on a first come basis.

**Please note:** Motorised scooters must not be stored in communal areas of your scheme. If your scheme does not benefit from scooter storage you will need to store your scooter in your property. All motorised scooters must have appropriate insurance. We would advise that you speak to an Independent Living Officer if you are considering purchasing one.

### *Our Handyperson Scheme*

This scheme could help you with some of the small repairs needed around your home. The service is free, or at a low cost, depending on the work you require. Our Handyperson can help you by fixing minor faults, such as a leaking tap. They can also carry out small tasks, such as putting up curtain rails, or even assembling your flat-pack furniture. To arrange a visit from the handyperson please call Qualis or speak to an Independent Living Officer.

## **Duties of an Independent Living Officer**

- 1 Independent Living Officers are accountable to the Team Manager, Older Peoples Services for the support, cleanliness and good management of independent living schemes. They support tenants to live independently in a number of ways including but not limited to: giving advice, making referrals, and signposting to other agencies where appropriate.
- 2 The Independent Living Officer will ensure all tenants are visited on a regular basis and a call register maintained.
- 3 They will complete a Tenant Support Plan for each resident and provide support in accordance with the Support Plan.
- 4 They maintain close liaison with the Estate and Tenancy Team in respect of tenancy matters including rents and tenancy sustainment.
- 5 Independent Living Officers do all that is possible to foster among tenants the spirit of a neighbourly and mutually supportive community.

- 6 Independent Living Officers are alert to the degree of ill-health and dependence of residents and take appropriate action, whether through direct or indirect supervision, to ensure that all is well with a particular person.
7. They give emergency help and general assistance of a neighbourly kind in case of accident or illness, until the tenant gets help from a professional or from relatives.
8. In situations other than emergencies, Independent Living Officers will make sure that any assistance required by a tenant is sought as soon as possible.
9. Independent Living Officers maintain records of the doctors and relatives of each tenant, and the emergency telephone numbers of Health and Community Care Services. They will also ensure the alarm monitoring centre have up to date information in order to assist you in an emergency.
10. They will test the alarm equipment in your home on a regular basis.
11. Independent Living officers will promote, encourage and facilitate communal activities within the scheme.
12. They will not provide meals for tenants, and they will never be involved in the provision of a nursing service, or the administration of medication.
13. They will test the fire alarm system at your scheme on a regular basis and arrange practice evacuations of the building, entering this information in a fire log-book.
14. They will make sure that firefighting equipment is regularly checked and maintained, that all exits remain clear, that all fire doors (non-magnetic) are kept closed and that all reasonable precautions are taken to prevent outbreaks of fire.
15. Independent Living Officers will advise tenants on proper use of the emergency alarm system, communal kitchen equipment and laundry equipment.
16. They will regularly inspect and test all communal equipment (such as lighting, communication systems, communal laundry equipment, and lifts), promptly reporting any defects or breakdown and making sure appropriate action is taken.
17. They check that all communal areas are kept clean, tidy and clear of obstructions, and assist with monitoring the performance of council cleaning staff.
18. Independent Living Officers will report any Health and Safety issues.
19. They will record bookings for the Guest Rooms (if appropriate) and ensure payment has been made for use of the facility.
20. Independent Living Officers carry out other such duties as may be required from time to time by the Council or Team Manager, Older Peoples Services.

## **Repairs**

It is not the duty of Independent Living Officers to deal with repairs unless it has been identified in your support plan that you need help with this. If you require a repair within your own property, you should phone Qualis on 0333 230 0464, this is a 24/7 number.

If you think a repair is needed in a communal area please inform an Independent Living Officer.

## *Improving the safety and security of your home?*

We all have a role to play in reducing crime within our schemes. By taking these simple steps, you can help to reduce the risk of crime and make your home safer.

### *Security in your home*

- Where possible do not keep large amounts of money in your home.
- Do not keep your cheque book and debit card together.
- Mark your valuables with your postcode, followed by your house number and the initials of your name.
- Do not hang a spare key inside your letter box. Use the key safe provided.
- keys should be removed from window locks.
- keys should not be left in doors.

### *Door entry system*

- Make sure you know the person you let into the building.
- Never leave or wedge any entrance door open.
- Do not hold the door open for anyone you do not know.
- If a caller buzzes you, but wants to visit your neighbour, please tell the caller to buzz the neighbour direct. **Do not let them in.**

### *Securing windows and doors*

- Close all windows if you leave your property, even if you are just going shopping.
- Always lock your own front door, even if you are just going to the laundry room.
- When leaving the communal lounge make sure the windows and doors are closed, including fire exits.
- Never leave doors wedged open.
- Even though you have door entry at your scheme, please ensure you lock your front door.

### *Beware of bogus callers*

- Think before you open the door.
  - Use your spy hole if you have one fitted.
  - Always ask for proof of identity, and check it.
  - Tell the caller to wait outside if no appointment has been made to see you.
  - Check the caller's identity with their employer.
  - Do not let anyone in if you are suspicious of them.
  - If in doubt call the police or activate your emergency alarm system.
  - Try to remember anything special or unusual about the caller.
- Please be assured, crime in our Independent Living schemes is not a big problem, but many of us have a fear of crime. We produced these safety tips with the Police. Following them will make life harder for the criminals and help you to feel more secure in your home.

# Fire safety

## Fire alarm

Shortly after you move into an independent living scheme an Independent Living Officer will complete a personal fire risk assessment with you. The purpose of this is to identify any potential fire concerns and to give you advice on how to reduce the risk of fire within your home, this could include a referral for a home safety visit by the fire service.

Upon the fire alarm sounding you must evacuate the building and make your way to the assembly point. If you are unable to evacuate you will be given advice and a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) will be completed. The PEEP will be stored securely in the Gerda box near the main entrance of your scheme which in the event of a fire, the fire service have access to and will know which properties to check.

Independent Living Officers test the fire bells and carry out fire drills on a regular basis. It is important that you familiarise yourself with fire exits and the fire assembly point.

The evacuation procedure is clearly displayed on the notice board. In the event of a fire, you should leave by the nearest fire exit and make your way to the fire assembly point. Do not stop to collect belongings on the way, for safety reasons the lift will stop working so evacuation of the building is via the stairs only.

**Please note:** the Council does not operate a stay-put policy. In the event of a fire you must evacuate the building. If you are able to do so you may need to consider alternative accommodation.

## Fire Safety Advice

We all have a role to play in reducing fires within our schemes. By taking simple steps, you can help reduce the risk of fire and make your home safer. Whenever you leave your property, go on holiday, or before you go to bed, always ensure that:

- All internal doors are closed to stop fire and smoke from spreading.
- You have unplugged all electric items that are not designed to be left on.
- You have not left anything on charge or on standby
- You have checked that your cooker is turned off.
- You have checked that heaters have been turned off, including electric blankets.
- We advise against burning candles, incense sticks, tea lights or oil burners. But if you do use them, avoid placing them near materials that could catch fire. Do not leave them unattended and ensure that they are completely out before disposing of them.
- If you smoke, do not leave cigarettes burning in the ashtray and do not leave the ashtray on the arm of the sofa.
- Ensure that cigarettes are completely out and are disposed of carefully.



- Try and keep your cooker clean and be careful when using woks or chip pans. Never leave them unattended, even if the doorbell rings.
- Always check the packaging of ready meals as some may use foil containers which are not suitable for heating in a microwave.
- Ensure extension leads and adaptors are not damaged or overloaded.
- Keep window keys where you can find them easily in an emergency.
- Help to keep the building's corridors and escape routes clear of any obstructions or trip hazards that could hinder your escape.
- If the fire alarm sounds, the fire doors in the corridors will close to prevent the spread of fire. Do not place anything near the doors that may prevent them closing.
- Plan your escape route. Know where your fire exits are. Plan an alternative means of escape in case the route you would normally use is blocked.
- If you have poor mobility and would not be able to evacuate in an emergency without help, make sure you tell an Independent Living Officer so that a PEEP can be completed. You should also consider moving to more suitable accommodation i.e, a ground floor property.

Please note: the communal corridors do not form part of your home so please ensure they kept clear and free of personal belongings.

For more information on fire safety please refer to the fire safety booklet displayed on your notice board.

## Safeguarding

We aim to protect all vulnerable adults from incidents of abuse. Safeguarding is defined as 'protecting an adult's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect' (Care and Support Statutory Guidance, Ch. 14)<sup>8</sup>.

### *What do we mean by abuse?*

Abuse is when someone does something to another person which puts them at risk of harm or damages their quality of life. Abuse can be a criminal act when it is an offence against another person. It can happen once or repeatedly.

It may be deliberate or caused by ignorance. Some adults may be more at risk than others, for example older people or someone with a disability.

## Who abuses?

Anyone can be an abuser, but it is often someone known to the person. Abuse can take many forms and may include:

- Physical abuse such as being hit or injured on purpose.
- Domestic violence of one partner within an intimate or family relationship.
- Emotional abuse including harassment, intimidation, threats or humiliation.
- Involvement in a sexual activity which is unwanted or not understood.
- Financial or material abuse such as the theft or misuse of money, or pressure in connection with an inheritance.
- Neglect, such as not providing food, clothing, attention or care.
- 'Institutional' neglect such as the failure to provide access to suitable health or social care.
- Discriminatory abuse such as racist or sexist remarks or comments on a person's impairment, disability, age or illness and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment.
- Modern slavery - this refers to the institution of slavery that continues to exist in the present day.
- Organisational abuse such as poor or inadequate care or support.

## *What to do if you are being abused or neglected, or you think someone else is being abused?*

Independent Living Officers are able to file a report or get advice on your behalf, if you don't want to speak to an Independent Living Officer and prefer to speak to a Tenancy & Estate Officer you can call 01992 564000

In an emergency you should use your alarm system to contact the monitoring centre. They will listen to what you say, treat you with respect and take action as necessary. Your Independent Living Officer will be alerted that your alarm was activated out of office hours.

## Some questions answered

### Will I need a full TV licence?

All tenants are required to purchase their own TV Licence when they move into one of our properties. Please keep your TV volume at a reasonable level to avoid annoyance, especially late at night.

### Will I be able to keep pets?

You are not allowed to keep a pet animal or look after one for family/friends if you are living in an independent living scheme and have no direct access to a garden. You may be allowed to keep a caged bird or a similar pet, with the Council's written permission. Write or email your Estate and Tenancy Officer, contact details are on the back page of this booklet.

### How is my rent made up?

In addition to the rent for your property, you will pay a service charge for communal facilities and services, such as cleaning, and a support charge for your emergency alarm system and the service you receive from the Independent Living Officers

### How will I pay my rent?

You can pay online by clicking **pay it** on the Council's website and entering your rent account details. You may also set up a standing order or direct debit or pay via the Council's automated telephone payment line (01992 564600) You will be given a personal plastic swipe card to use if paying your rent at any Post Office™ or PayPoint outlet, or at one of the Council's kiosks.

If you wish to set up a Direct Debit please contact our Income Recovery Team for further information. 01992 564545

### Will I have to pay council tax?

Yes, you will have to pay council tax.

### Will I be able to get help with my rent and Council Tax?

If you are on a low income you may be entitled to housing benefit and council tax benefit. If you think this applies to you see advice from the Council's Benefit Officers on 01992 564429.

### Will I have to pay for electricity I use in my flat? Yes.

### Do I have to pay water rates?

Yes. You will receive a bill from the water company if you have your own water meter. If your scheme has a communal water meter system we will make an additional charge for your share, to be paid with your rent.

### With the exception of guest rooms, can friends and family use the communal facilities?

The communal facilities are for residents use but family and friends are welcome to accompany you in the lounge. Please note: Communal lounges/hall cannot be hired by residents for private functions.

### Will I need to insure my property? Yes

The building itself is insured by the Council, but you are strongly advised to take out cover for your own household contents and personal items.

### Who will carry out repairs that I need?

Qualis carry out or arrange repairs to most fixtures and fitting in your flat. To report a repair Tel: 0333 230 0464. This number applies to emergency repairs outside our normal working hours. Please note: Repairs to your household contents and personal items are your own responsibility.

### Is the Council responsible for decorating my flat?

No, although the Council will decorate one room for you every five years under a special scheme for Independent Living tenants.

Contact the Council's Housing Assets Section on 01992 564175 or email [housingassets@eppingforestdc.gov.uk](mailto:housingassets@eppingforestdc.gov.uk) for details.

### Who is responsible for window cleaning?

You are responsible for cleaning the inside of your windows. If your property is part of an Independent living scheme in one single block, the external windows will be cleaned quarterly. This is arranged by the council. If you live in a bungalow or block of flats, residents organize their own external window cleaning.

### Will I have to do my own shopping and cooking?

You will be responsible for your own shopping and cooking. Please see the contact information page at the back of this booklet for charities and organizations that offer help if you have difficulty carrying out with these tasks.

### Are there cooking facilities in the guest room?

No, only tea and coffee making facilities.

### Will I have to do my own cleaning?

Yes, you are responsible for cleaning your flat. The Council is responsible for cleaning all communal areas.

### Can I keep my own GP?

Yes, but you will need to check that the GP is still able to keep you on his or her list. Your new address may be too far for home visits. If this is the case you will need to register with a new GP. Remember to advise the Independent Living Officers of any change.

### Will I be able to park my car?

There are limited car parking spaces for residents and visitors which include one or two disabled bays. All of which are available on a first come first served basis.

### Can I take my gas cooker?

Please note that your independent living scheme does not have a domestic gas supply in the flats. You will, therefore, need an electric cooker.

### Will I be able to access my place of worship?

Our Independent Living Officers have good knowledge of the facilities within the district and will be able to advise you. Information can also be found on the notice board.

### How do I report a health and safety issue at my scheme?

If you have any concerns or notice anything that may be a hazard to yourself or other residents, please inform an Independent Living Officer.

**How can I find out more about the Council's housing services?** You can speak to an Independent Living Officer or look on our website.

## Compliments and Complaints

We aim to provide you with the best service possible, so it is very important for us to know how well we are doing.

If there is a problem, we need you to tell us so that we can investigate and put things right. We can then learn from our mistakes and improve our service to you.

If you need independent advice on the Council's complaints procedure, your local Citizens Advice Bureau will be able to help you. Contact details are given below.

We would also like you to tell us when you are pleased with what we have done. Your compliments can highlight good practices which we could introduce to other service areas. Staff also like to know they are doing a good job.

# Useful Contact Information

## ***Independent Living Team***

Tel: 01992 564225

Email: [independentliving@eppingforestdc.gov.uk](mailto:independentliving@eppingforestdc.gov.uk)

## ***Epping Forest District Council***

Tel: 01992 564000

Website: [www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk](http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk)

## ***Tenancy and Estate Team***

Tel: 01992 564780

Email: [tenancyandestates@eppingforestdc.gov.uk](mailto:tenancyandestates@eppingforestdc.gov.uk)

## ***Income Recovery Team***

Tel: 01992 564030

Email: [incomerecovery@eppingforestdc.gov.uk](mailto:incomerecovery@eppingforestdc.gov.uk)

## ***Qualis – Repairs Service***

0333 230 0464 (24/7 Telephone number)

## ***Hospitals (Tel)***

St Margaret's: 01992 561666

Princess Alexandra: 01279 444455

Whipps Cross: 020 8539 5522

***NHS Direct: 111***

## ***Epping Forest Citizens Advice Bureau***

Tel: 0808 278 7855

Website: <https://citizensadvicefd.org.uk>

## ***Essex Adult Social Care: Care Needs, Meals on Wheels & Food Bank Info***

Tel: 0345 6037630

Email: [socialcaredirect@essex.gov.uk](mailto:socialcaredirect@essex.gov.uk)

## ***The Pension Service***

State pension first claims: Tel: 0800 7317898 If already getting state pension: Tel: 0345 606 0265

## ***Voluntary Action Epping Forest***

Tel: (General Line) 01992 910701

Email: [admin@vaef.org.uk](mailto:admin@vaef.org.uk)