

Tenant Handbook

A GUIDE TO MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR TENANCY



Tinteán - Carlow Voluntary Housing Association Limited

Welcome to the first edition of the Tinteán Tenant Handbook. This handbook is a useful resource for all Tinteán tenants and in particular is an essential guide for new tenants of the Association.

Your handbook has been written and designed with your tenant needs in mind and will allow you make the most of your tenancy.

It contains basic information about Tinteán and provides most of the answers to questions we are most commonly asked by our tenants.

Our aim is to provide an easy to read and user-friendly guide to the housing and support services we provide for our tenants.

This handbook will inform you of the full range of services available to you as a Tinteán tenant.

It will help you get to know more about Tinteán and will provide you with important information about your tenancy.

We hope that you finds this Tenant Handbook helpful and suggest that you use it as a reference for any queries or problems that you may have during your Tinteán tenancy.

This Handbook forms no part of your Tenancy Agreement and it is intended only as a general guide to allow you obtain information on your tenancy.

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Part I

About Tinteán

Who we are

Tinteán, founded in 1993, is a voluntary housing association, which operates within County Carlow. Tinteán was established to assist in the provision of social housing in the county with an emphasis on groups and individuals not catered for in mainstream social housing provision. Tinteán aims to build and provide dwellings but more importantly, Homes and Communities.

The old Irish seanfhocail or saying, ‘níl aon tinteán mar do thinteán féin’ translates as ‘there is no fireside like your own fireside’. In other words There is no place like home! That’s where we take our name from.

Tenants are drawn from the waiting list of Carlow local Authorities.

We provide housing for people with special needs, the elderly and low income families.



Who is involved in Tinteán Housing.

Tinteán is made up of a Voluntary Board of Directors, who together with the Chief Executive Officer and the Project Administrator, manage the day to day running of the organisation.

The Project Administrator is the person with whom you will have most contact and it is to this member of staff that you should report all problems of repairs and maintenance.

How you can contact us

Our phone no is 059 9135934.

Our email address is:

admin@carlowvoluntaryhousing.com.

Our opening hours are 9am - 5pm,
Monday to Friday.



Tinteán Coille Community Centre

Our office is located in the Tinteán Coille Community Centre. The Community Centre also contains two large meeting/training rooms and a kitchen.

Bookings for the Centre are arranged through Enterprise House, O'Brien Road, Carlow and it is available for training courses, meetings and community events subject to availability.

Contact our office for further details.

Part 2

Your Tenancy

Being a Tinteán tenant

When you become a tenant of Tinteán we give you the right to occupy the property as your own home.

Every Tenant is required to sign a Tenancy Agreement when allocated a Tinteán home.

This tenancy agreement sets out the terms on which you occupy the property. In signing the agreement both you and Tinteán have obligations to each other and to the other residents on the estate or in the property.

These will be explained to you before you move in.

The tenancy agreement is our promise to each other that both tenant (you) and landlord

(Tinteán) honour their obligations.

But of equal importance are your obligations to each other as neighbours.



In signing the agreement you make commitments to your neighbours.

Respecting and fulfilling those commitments is your responsibility.

By signing this agreement you are agreeing to become a Tinteán tenant and be bound by the conditions of the agreement.

Your neighbours will have exactly the same rights and responsibilities as you. Your responsibilities apply to you, your friends and relatives, and any other person living in or visiting your home, including your children.



The tenancy agreement is a **legally binding document** If the agreement is not kept, it can result in Tinteán taking action which can lead to eviction.

It's important that you understand what you are committing to.

If you want to ask any questions about your rights and responsibilities, you should contact our Office.

As a non-profit making Housing Association, we are currently obliged by legislation to keep our properties within the rental sector, therefore you cannot purchase your own home. The property remains in the ownership of Tinteán. However as a Tinteán tenant you may be eligible for the mortgage allowance scheme, if you decide you want to buy a private property or build a house and return your property to Tinteán. Contact Carlow Local Authorities for more information on the scheme.

Part 2

Your Tenancy

The conditions of your tenancy are fully stated in your Tenancy Agreement which was explained to you when you signed it.

Please remember to keep your copy of the agreement in a safe place.

The following is a brief outline of the key conditions of your tenancy.



The following lists your main responsibilities as a Tinteán tenant:

Your rent is to be paid weekly in advance.

Failure to keep your rent up to date will result in the ending of your tenancy.

You must live in the dwelling full time.

You may not give the tenancy of the dwelling to anyone else.

You may not take lodgers or sub-let.

You must seek written permission for another adult to move into your household and if permission is given this will affect the amount of rent due.

You cannot use your dwelling, out buildings or garden for any business.

Large trucks or vans cannot be parked outside a Tinteán dwelling. Tenants whose work involves the use of these types of vehicles must park them at an alternative location.

You cannot keep any animals or pets in the Dwelling without the prior written consent of Tinteán and compliance with the terms of the consent.

You must keep your dwelling in good decorative order and attend to any repairs that are your responsibility.

Report all other repairs to Tinteán immediately you are aware of them.

You are also responsible for keeping the outside of your home including the gardens in a neat and tidy condition.

You must get written permission from Tinteán before making any alterations or additions to your home including the garden areas.

You must make use of a covered bin and not allow rubbish to collect around your dwelling. You must arrange for the disposal of your refuse regularly.

You must make sure that all members of your household or any visitors to your home behave in a reasonable way and do not cause any annoyance to any other tenant.

You must give Notice if you wish to surrender your tenancy and leave the dwelling in good condition.



Part 2

Your Tenancy

Tinteán have the right to:

Make necessary rent changes – Any such amendments will be notified to you at least four weeks before any change.

To be allowed into your home to carry out annual Inspections or repairs.

These visits will be notified to you (unless it is an emergency).

Rent



Rent makes up the bulk of our income and pays for the ongoing maintenance of your home as well as the running costs of Tinteán.

Rents can be paid by standing order, or credit transfer.

All your rent payments are recorded in your rent book and a receipt is issued for any cash payments.

We issue rent statements every quarter. These are posted to your address and any queries can be taken up with our Office in the Community Centre.

Standing Order is the most convenient options; it takes little time to set up and is a hassle free way of paying rent from then on. Cash payments are being phased out.

We take failure to pay rent very seriously and will result in loss of tenancy.

Rent Schemes

There are two rent schemes operating for Tinteán tenants:

Capital Assistance Scheme

Rent Year – 1st January to 31st December.
Tenants occupying accommodation provided under the Capital Assistance Scheme pay a fixed weekly rent.

A tenant may qualify for Rent Allowance from the Department of Social Protection.

This scheme is means tested and is administered by the local Community Welfare Officer. Once received tenants can transfer to the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) payable by Carlow County Council.

Capital Loan and Subsidy Scheme

Rent Year - 1st July to 30th June of the following year.

Rent is calculated on your gross income in the previous Tax Year.

You will be required to provide evidence of this income.

If your income decreases you may apply to have your rent assessed based on current income and again you will need to provide documented evidence of this.

The formula for calculating rent under the scheme is as follows:

Weekly gross income up to €102 = €6.35 per week.

Plus 18% of any amount over €102 per week.

Plus a weekly figure to cover the Local Property Tax applying to the house.

Less a deduction of €1.27 per week for each qualified child living in the house.

The formula for other person income:

Up to the first €102 is disregarded.

18% of any amount over €102 per week subject to a maximum of €25.39 per week.

Part 3

Moving In

The following are some practical suggestions and reminders to help in the initial period of a new tenancy.

It is your responsibility to ensure that accounts with utility companies are in your name.

Electric / Gas Supply:

Contact the relevant suppliers to register and to ensure that everything is in order for your new home.

Phone / TV:



You will need to arrange connection with a telephone/Cable TV Supplier.

Services:

You are responsible for ensuring that all services are in your name.

Insurance:

Tinteán insures the building structure of the dwelling but each tenant is responsible for insuring household contents.



We advise that you insure your possessions against accidental damage, fire and theft.

Contents insurance can be arranged through an insurance company, Credit Union or bank. We recommend you shop around for the best options.

New Address:

Notify relevant people and organisations of your new address.



An Post:

Notify An Post of your new address so that post can be forwarded.

Refuse Collection:



Organise collection of your household refuse.

Register with Medical Services:



Notify your Doctor/Medical Services of your change of address and if necessary register with new doctor.

Part 3

Moving In

There are some very obvious costs involved in moving dwelling such as:-

Heating – oil, gas, fuel

Bord Gais/ESB sometimes require a deposit before setting up an account if you are a new customer.

Redirection of post

Prioritise what is essential and shop around and compare costs.



Transport Removal costs.

Buying furniture, carpets, floor covering, curtains and electrical goods.

Refuse/bin collection charges.

But there are also hidden costs such as:-

Household Insurance for contents

Connection charges for phone and TV



Part 4

Repairs and Maintenance

If you encounter a problem in the dwelling you must in the first instance determine if the work required is the tenant's or the Association's responsibility. Please refer to your tenancy agreement.

All repairs and maintenance requests should be reported to the Project Administrator only. The Board will make all final decisions in regard to the carrying out of work on our properties.

Any work which is the responsibility of the Association will be carried out in order of priority and according to the level of urgency. The carrying out of all work is subject to the availability of the necessary funding.

Contact details:

Administrator	059 9135934
Mon - Thurs	9am - 5pm
Fri	9am - 4pm

Emergency Repairs

You should use the Emergency service
*If there is major damage to your home and
If that damage creates a risk to safety of your
household and building*

If the Tinteán office is closed

It is not to be used for minor repairs.

Please contact either of the following, as appropriate:

Carlow Town Area	Tom Dormer 086 3112347
Tullow Area	John Maher 087 8115743; 059 9151629

Communal spaces and gardens contribute greatly to making an estate an attractive and pleasant place to live - it is up to tenants to ensure that they look after these areas. Litter and refuse must be cleared from the gardens and communal spaces regularly and children should be encouraged to be "litter aware".

Tinteán are responsible for the repair of:

The structure and exterior of properties including drains, gutters and external pipes, fence or boundary wall provided at the time of building. Where a gas boiler is provided Tinteán will arrange for a yearly inspection by a qualified Gas Installer.

Tinteán make every effort to provide good dwellings but it is the responsibility of the tenants to look after the dwellings and turn them into homes where each person enjoys living.



The Tenant is responsible for:-

- Replacing lost or broken keys.*
- Re-fixing loose handles to doors and windows and oiling door and window hinges and locks.*
- Replacing any damaged letter box covers.*
- Repairing any damaged internal plasterwork.*
- Blocked sinks or drains or toilets.*
- Broken or damaged shower hoses.*
- Broken or damaged toilet seats and handles.*
- Decorating the inside of the dwelling.*
- Replacing smoke alarm and carbon monoxide alarm batteries.*
- Replacement of broken glass.*
- Damage caused by negligence.*
- Taking reasonable steps to prevent pipes freezing in winter.*
- Ensure you know the location of your internal stop tap for turning off the water supply (usually under the kitchen sink).*
- Preventing drains becoming blocked.*
- Ensure vents are not blocked in all rooms to avoid condensation and mould.*
- Use only suitably qualified professionals to install appliances.*

Part 4

Repairs and Maintenance

Making changes and alterations

From time to time you may want to make changes and alterations to suit your own tastes and make the property your home. This is natural, and we encourage it.

But we must make sure that the alterations are safe and will not detract from the property and the estate. That's why you must formally request permission for any changes before any work begins. You must put your request in writing. Carlow Voluntary Housing Association Ltd will allow most reasonable alterations to properties. Each request will be looked at individually but in general the following guidelines apply:

No structural changes may be made, e.g. knocking through or removing walls.

No changes/alterations will be allowed to fencing walls around the front gardens.

No fencing or walls will be allowed at the front of residents' homes if these were designed as open plan.

You are not permitted to paint the outside of your home.

External structures, (such as sheds or extensions), will only be permitted by Carlow Voluntary Housing Association Ltd if you have appropriate planning permission, have consulted your neighbours and satisfy any other statutory regulations. You must seek our approval in the first instance.

There are also a number of other conditions: Carlow Voluntary Housing Association Ltd insists that qualified tradesmen are used in any work carried out to property e.g. qualified gas fitters and electricians. We will look for test certificates when the work is completed.

The tradesmen you employ must have adequate insurance cover.

If you are not sure how to go about organising repairs or alterations please ask the Project Administrator for guidance.

Please do not commence any works until we have given you permission in writing.

No alterations should be made during the defects period, i.e. in the first year of a new property.

Carlow Voluntary Housing Association Ltd will not repair or maintain any changes or additions you have made.

For example, if you install an electrical shower without permission, you will be responsible for any repairs to that shower afterwards.

Carlow Voluntary Housing Association Ltd. will not compensate you for any alterations or improvements you have made if you leave.

If you decide to leave the property and wish to remove any alterations or improvements made during your tenancy you must reinstate the original item(s) and they must be in reasonable condition, e.g., kitchen units, doors.

We may also ask you to reinstate the original features before you move out if your alterations are of lesser quality or do not comply with our design standards.



Internal Decoration

You can decorate the inside of your home. If you are moving into a new property, please do not hang wallpaper in the first year as Carlow Voluntary Housing Association Ltd needs to monitor any settlement cracks or stains that may appear. After the first year it is not a problem.

If you want to paint the walls in the first year of a new property, remember that repairs on minor cracks in the plaster work may be needed during this time. Carlow Voluntary Housing Association Ltd. is not responsible for matching any new paint colours you may have used, so if you are re-decorating, remember to keep some of the paint.

Part 5

Safety in Your Home

You can reduce the risk of your home being broken into by taking the following advice: **Preventing Carbon Monoxide Fumes**

- Make sure that doors and windows are locked when you go out.
- Leave a light on if you go out at night.
- Ensure broken windows are fixed as soon as possible.
- Don't leave your keys under the doormat or anywhere burglars are likely to find them.
- Change your locks if your keys are lost or stolen and advise the Project Administrator
- Put a security mark on your electrical goods with a UV-pen or get them security-etched.
- Ask a trusted neighbour to keep an eye on the property if you're going away, e.g. they could park a car in your driveway or turn on lights at night.
- Secure garden sheds and side gates with locks.
- Let the Project Administrator know if you are going away for longer than 2 weeks and arrange a contact in case of an emergency.



Carbon monoxide poisoning can arise in a number of different ways. You cannot see or smell it, but it can kill. Early symptoms include tiredness, headaches, nausea and pains in the chest. There is a risk of carbon monoxide poisoning:

- If your gas or oil appliance is not working properly
- Your boiler or fires have not been serviced regularly
- There is not enough ventilation
- Your chimney has not been swept regularly

Carlow Voluntary Housing Association Ltd. carries out a gas safety check on all appliances installed by us once a year.

You must allow us into your home to do this check.

If you have your own gas appliances, you must use a registered gas installer to fit them and must get them serviced regularly.

Also follow this advice:

Keep rooms well ventilated.

Never block or close vents.

Sweep chimneys at least once a year if they are used for wood or coal fires.



You can get more advice on home security by calling your local Garda Crime Prevention Officer or have a look at the Garda Síochána website (www.garda.ie).

Part 5

Safety in Your Home



Electrical Safety

Electrical installations can be dangerous, so please follow this advice:

- Unplug any appliances that are not in use
- Use the correct fuses in plugs
- Don't touch bare wires - turn off the electricity at the consumer unit, (fuse box)
- Don't touch any electrical appliance if it is wet or if your hands are wet - turn off the electricity at the fuse box and don't use the appliance again until it is dry
- Don't overload sockets
- Don't carry out any electrical alterations or improvements without our permission
- Don't put nails or fittings in a wall near a socket, switch or light fitting or around the edge of the wall as this is usually where electrical wires are put behind plaster

Gas Safety

Carlow Voluntary Housing Association Ltd. will service gas central heating boilers regularly and any other gas appliances supplied by us. Tenants have to allow access for the contractor.

Burst Pipes / Water Leaks

Know where your stop valves are located
If you have a leak, immediately switch off the water supply to the property at the stop valve (internally usually under the kitchen sink)
Drain the system by running taps.
Turn off heating.
Look for the leak and try to stop it initially by wrapping towels around it.
Contact Tinteán immediately.

Fire Safety

Here is some advice on how to prevent fires and how to protect yourself and your family in case of a fire.

If you smell gas, immediately follow these steps:

Turn off the mains.

Open windows and doors.

Extinguish flames.

Do not switch on electrical equipment or switches.

Contact the gas company immediately

- 1850 20 50 50.



Test each smoke alarm every week by pressing and holding the test button until the alarm sounds

Replace the backup battery every year or when the alarm starts to beep

If a smoke alarm is damaged or doesn't sound when tested, please tell the Project Administrator immediately.

Keep children away from the cooker unit when cooking

Never leave pans unattended and keep the handles turned in over the work surface to avoid adults or children knocking or pulling them off the cooker

Keep cables from kettles, toasters etc. away from the cooker and don't let them hang off worktops
If you deep fry food, use a proper electric deep fat fryer instead of a chip pan. Chip pans are highly dangerous.

If a pan catches fire, turn off the cooker, use the fire blanket provided or soak a tea towel under the tap and wring it out.

Part 5

Safety in Your Home

Do not remove the fire blanket/tea towel or move the pan for at least 1 hour until it has cooled down. Never throw water onto a pan fire!!

Both cigarettes or candles be dangerous and can start fires very quickly if you are not careful.

Never smoke in bed.

Don't smoke when you are tired or when you have had alcohol.

Make sure you put out cigarettes fully when you are finished.

Never leave lit candles unattended or near anything that could catch fire, especially curtains. Always put candles out when you leave the property and when going to bed.

Always use a proper holder for candles and never



put them on plastic surfaces like televisions.

It's a good routine to check the home every night before going to bed.

Check you have put out all cigarettes.

Check all candles are out.

Unplug all electrical appliances, especially televisions, dryers and washing machines.

Check the cooker is off.

Put the guard up to the fire.

Close the door to each room. This will help stop smoke and flames spreading if there is a fire.

It's also a good idea to plan ahead, so that your family members are prepared for an emergency.

Make sure all your family know what to do if there is a fire.

Plan your escape route and keep all exit routes clear, keep door and window keys handy.

Make sure you know where to meet outside of the dwelling and account for everyone that was in the dwelling.



If there is smoke, keep low where the air is cleaner. Get everyone out as quickly as possible, don't waste time investigating the fire or stopping to collect valuables.

Call the fire brigade 999 or 112 - try to stay calm and give them your address and other details they need.

Don't go back into the dwelling or apartment for anything, wait for the fire brigade

If clothes catch fire:

Don't run.

Lie down and roll around.

Smother the flames with a heavy material, like a coat, blanket or a fire blanket if there is one near.



Part 6

Your Neighbourhood

Your Estate

The upkeep of communal areas and the overall tidiness of the estate says a lot about how people feel about living there.

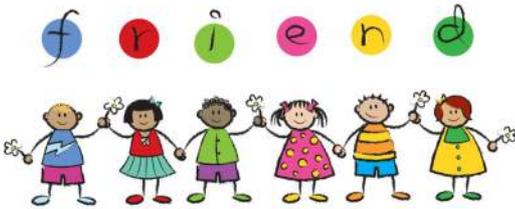
It's you and your neighbours who determine how your neighbourhood develops. Whether or not you become actively involved in a residents group, you still contribute to the development of your area in a number of ways:

How you keep your home or garden.

How you get on with your neighbours.

How you resolve difficulties with your neighbours.

Whether you support local activities such as clean-ups, residents meetings etc.



You and your neighbours

Getting on with your neighbours is your responsibility and common sense plays a large part in making this happen such as the following:

Residents respect each other's right to live peacefully.

Residents do not engage in behaviour that offends or upsets others.

Residents look after their homes and gardens.

Residents drive and park their cars in a way that doesn't endanger or interfere with others.

Residents take responsibility for their pets.

Residents keep an eye on each other's property.

Residents are responsible for the behaviour of their visitors.

Residents are mindful of noise, especially at night and early in the morning.

These are reasonable expectations of what people can hope for from each other.

What should I do when difficulties arise?

There will be occasions when difficulties arise between neighbours. Before approaching your neighbour, stop and ask yourself:



Are you being reasonable?

Do you have all the facts?

Are you willing to listen to what they have to say?

Explain to your neighbour how their behaviour is affecting you.

Try to resolve the problem yourselves and don't get other neighbours involved if they are unaffected.

If the problem persists and interferes with your peace and quiet then contact the Tinteán office and they will suggest a course of action which may involve a third party such as a mediation service.

Tinteán does not normally become involved in neighbour disputes but we can recommend mediation services if you are experiencing difficulties with your neighbours.

A very small number of incidents may be considered anti-social behaviour and these cases will be dealt with by the Gardaí and ourselves.

Part 6

Your Neighbourhood

Noise

Adjacent houses cannot be completely soundproofed and so noise can be heard easily enough in neighbouring properties. We expect neighbours to be tolerant and to show each other respect. Keep the noise you make at a reasonable level, particularly the sound of TV, radio and music systems.

Talk to your neighbour if you are troubled by noise.



Anti-social behaviour

ASB can have a devastating effect on the quality of life of our residents and neighbours.

Tinteán will not tolerate ASB and is committed to preventing and addressing ASB in our tenancies.

We will investigate and endeavour to resolve all



complaints of ASB made to us. In order to take effective action against people who cause ASB we need to receive reliable accounts from residents affected

What constitutes anti-social behaviour?

The type of conduct that can constitute ASB includes:

Intimidation, threats

Racial harassment or other hate behaviour / bullying.

Actual violence against people.

Sale or supply of drugs.

Targeted vandalism, vandalism used to harass or intimidate.

What to do if you witness or experience ASB?

You should report it to the Gardaí immediately and to Tinteán.

When reporting an incident you must give details:

Date and time

What happened

Names and addresses of those involved

When the incident was reported to Gardaí

When and if the Gardaí responded

Name of Gardaí who attended the incident if possible.



Complaint Forms are available from the Tinteán office.

All such complaints are logged by Tinteán.

It is essential that all incidents are recorded and formally reported.

When complaints are substantiated a written warning will usually be issued to the person who was involved in ASB.

Tinteán will liaise with Gardaí and other relevant bodies to ensure the situation is dealt with effectively.

If necessary Tinteán will take legal action against the perpetrator and repossess the dwelling.

Part 7

Moving Out

Moving Out

If you wish to end your tenancy you must notify the Project Administrator **in writing at least four weeks** before you plan to vacate the premises.

If you do not provide at least four weeks notice to Tinteán, we reserve the right to request four weeks rent payment from you.

Tinteán will arrange to inspect the dwelling to ensure it is in the same condition it was in when you commenced your tenancy.

Any repairs which are your responsibility must be carried out by the tenant or the cost of these repairs will be invoiced to you.

You will be asked to sign a Surrender Form which confirms that you are giving up any rights or entitlements to continue to occupy the dwelling.

You will be required to surrender the keys to the property.

The readings for the electric and gas meters will be agreed with you and you will be responsible to pay for these up to the time you vacate the dwelling.



Part 8 Useful Contacts

Service	Number	Website / Email
Ambulance/Fire Brigade/Garda	999 or 112	
Bord Gais	Emergency 1850 20 50 50 Customer Service 1850 632 632	www.bordgais.ie
Airtricity	Customer Service 1850 81 22 20	www.airtricity.com
ESB	Emergency 1850 372 999 Customer Service 1850 372 372	www.esb.ie
Dept of Social Protection	059 9170170 Carlow 059 9152500 Tullow	www.welfare.ie
Citizens Information Service	180 777 121	www.citizensinformation.ie
Tinteán	059 9135934 087 6379414	admin@carlowvoluntaryhousing.com
Tom Dormer Repairs	086 3112347	
John Maher Repairs	0878115743	
Carlow Local Authorities	059 9170300	www.carlow.ie
Garda Confidential	1800 666 111	www.garda.ie
Garda	059 9136627 Carlow 059 9151222 Tullow	
Crime Stoppers	1800 250 025	www.garda.ie
St Vincent de Paul	059 9140322	info@svp.ie
MABS	059 9140977	carlow@mabs.ie

Part 9

Notes

Tenants Name	
Tenants Address	
Tenants Contact Numbers	
MPRN	
Electricity Account Number	
Gas Account Number	
Telephone / Broadband Account Number	
TV Supplier Account Number	
Doctor's Name	
In case of emergency contact number	



Supporting
your
community

Proud to support.

Best wishes to Tinteán from AIB Bank Carlow.

