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Your guide to housing

Stronger Economy: Stronger Communities. **Together we can be stronger.**

Your guide to housing

How do I find somewhere to rent?

Where could I rent?

Financial.....

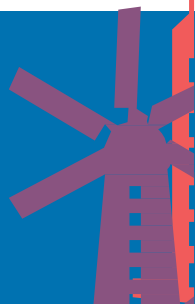
Found somewhere you like? Next steps

What bills will I need to pay?.....

Furnishing your new home

Bins, recycling & bulky items

Top tips for house maintenance



How do I find somewhere to rent?

If you're looking to rent, there are a number of local letting agencies and private landlords.

You can find these by searching on the internet, walking around the town centres, looking in convenience store shop windows advertising spare rooms or properties, looking in local newspapers or asking friends and family if their landlord has any properties to rent or if they know someone who has a property available.

There are also Facebook groups advertising properties to rent by area.

- See list of letting agencies in the area provided.
- Browse websites: national ones include:

www.rightmove.com

www.zoopla.co.uk

www.onthemarket.com

Where could I rent?

There are lots of different locations around North East Lincolnshire. You should consider how affordable a property is, if you want to be in a town or close to the countryside, if you need to be near to employment opportunities, if you need to be close to public transport, and if you have family, where children go to school, for example. If you are wanting to relocate to another area, we are unable to find you properties in other towns or cities, we can assist with general advice on expected affordability and local connection policies.

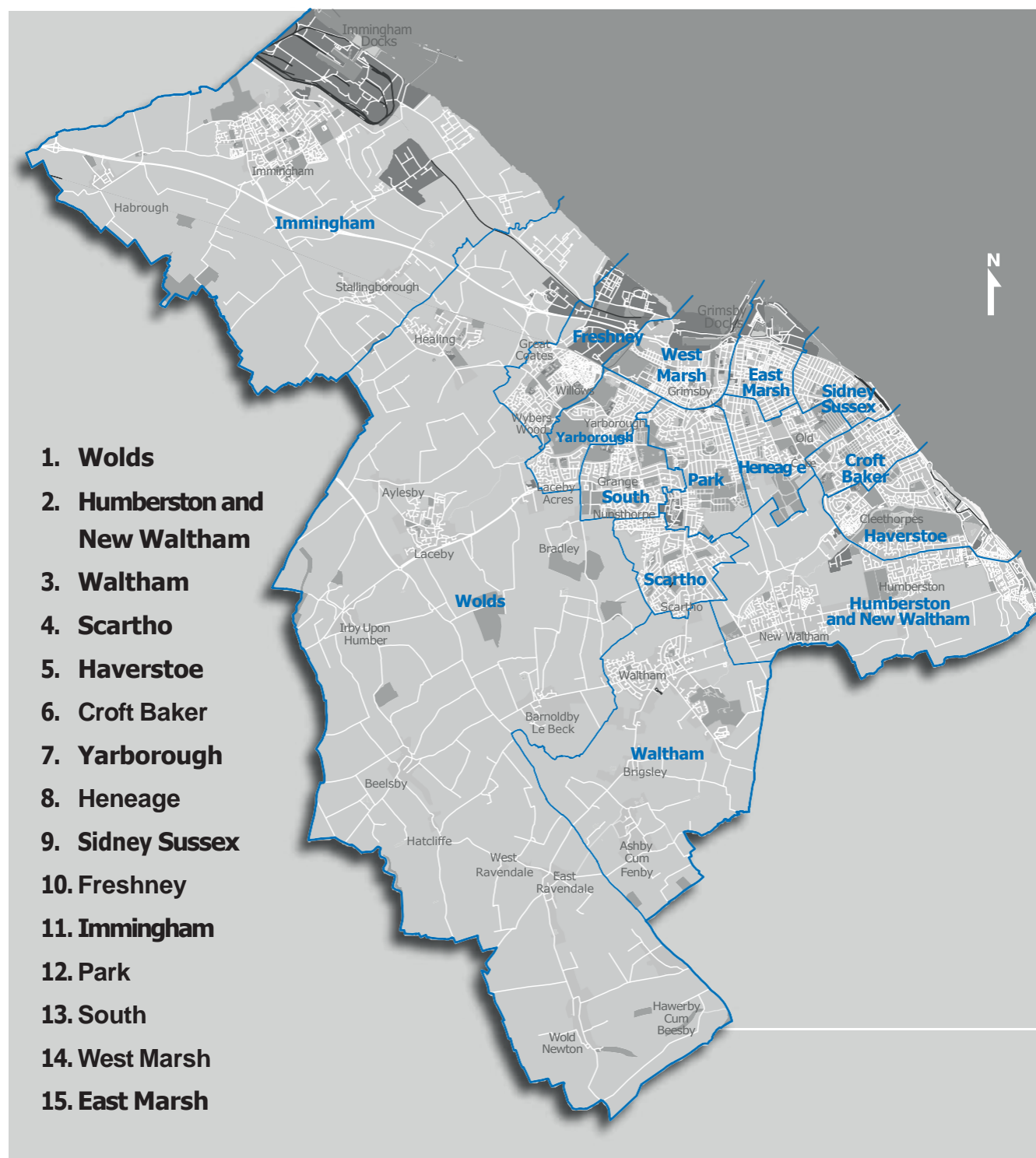
There are 14 "Wards" or areas that make up North East Lincolnshire. The Wards are listed below in terms of average rental cost for a 2-bed property from high to low. The most expensive area is Wolds, the least expensive is East Marsh.

If you want to know more about an area of North East Lincolnshire, you can use our website www.nelincs.gov.uk and search for "Wards".

More information about areas in terms of living environment, amenities, broadband speed, crime statistics, schools - website: www.open.xploria.co.uk



Wards in terms of cost of rentals in order of high to low



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House shares / HMO

House shares, which are often called HMOs (Houses of Multiple Occupancy) are a good way to save money and make new friends if you are a single person. If you are not in employment, this is usually the most affordable option until you start working to be able to cover the cost of bills associated with living in your own self-contained property. HMOs may also accept couples. These may include all your utility bills within your rent, but make sure to confirm with the agent or landlord if it includes any, and which ones.

All tenants will be jointly responsible for keeping the communal areas clean and tidy and respecting each other's need for privacy. It's important that you and your guests do not cause any distress or excessive noise.

You will need to consider your own lifestyle and living habits and whether living with others is right for you and the people you would like to live with.

Looking for a house share in a different place to where you live now can be challenging if you don't know which areas are good. If you wish to know, please check if your support worker, housing officer or a friend or family member is familiar with the place you are interested in as they may be able to provide advice.

You should contact letting agencies in the area and ask about house shares in your budget. It may also be worth creating a profile on www.spareroom.co.uk and looking on www.gumtree.com.

Try and arrange multiple viewings in one day and ask if it is possible to meet any of the current tenants so you can get a feel for the type of house you may live in.



FINANCIAL

What deposit do I need?

- You will need a deposit, up to 5 weeks rent in advance and usually a guarantor in place in order to be able to rent. With shared accommodation, this is sometimes less. This could be money you have saved up or borrowed from a friend or family.
- If you don't have your own income from employment, you will need a UK homeowner or a UK resident in employment to act as a guarantor, with a minimum salary requirement that equals an amount where they can cover their own housing costs as well as yours should you not pay your rent, and any damages caused to the property.
- In some cases, North East Lincolnshire Council may be able to offer financial support through the Home Options team or the Refugee Integration Service. You will need to speak to your support worker or housing officer regarding this as this does not apply to everyone.
- Some letting agencies will accept an employment reference confirming your salary in place of a guarantor. It is recommended you confirm this before making any viewings for properties to avoid disappointment. Ask if they still require a deposit if someone is acting as a guarantor.
- Your deposit covers any unpaid rent or a sudden cost such as damages at the end of your tenancy. Your landlord or agent must put your deposit in a government-backed tenancy deposit scheme within 30 days of you giving them it and you should receive an email confirmation of where it has been registered and how to create an account. This scheme will make sure you get your money back at the end of your tenancy if you meet the terms of your tenancy agreement. Website: www.gov.uk/tenancy-deposit-protection
- A letting agency will need to know your income to see what properties you can afford. You will need to calculate your total salary and/or Universal Credit including any housing element you receive or have checked that you are eligible for.
- Consider the reputation of the agency - look at reviews online or get advice from friends and family.
- Beware of requests to put down a holding deposit to view the property. This is not standard practice, and the money is non-refundable if you decide to not to proceed with the application.

What financial help can I get to rent?

If you are on Universal Credit or Pension Credit, you may be able to get help to rent your home.

The Valuation Office Agency determines Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates used to calculate housing benefit for tenants renting from private landlords. These rates are based on private market rents being paid by tenants in the area within which a person might reasonably be expected to live.

Please speak to your support worker or housing officer if you need help to apply for this.

To find out how much you might be eligible for, search for Local Housing Allowance Rates by

postcode or local authority on the **Government Website:** <https://lha-direct.voa.gov.uk>

Use the **LHA Bedroom calculator** at the bottom of that website page to calculate how many bedrooms you may be eligible for depending on the size of your family.

You can also search by the local authority - we are “North East Lincolnshire Council” - to find the rates you may be entitled to for different size properties. Please note the rate varies for each area in the UK. Work out your entitlement at <https://www.entitledto.co.uk>

The Weekly LHA rate for North East Lincolnshire Council is currently as follows: (As of April 2024).

£77.00 per week / £316.00 per month - Shared Accommodation Rate (also applies to under 35s).

£90.90 per week / £393.90 per month - 1 bedroom rate.

£110.47 per week / £478.00 per month - 2 bedroom rate.

£120.00 per week / £520.00 per month - 3 bedroom rate.

£165.70 per week / £718.00 per month - 4 bedroom rate.

Found somewhere you like? Next steps

We’ve put together some handy tips about what to look for when you find a property.

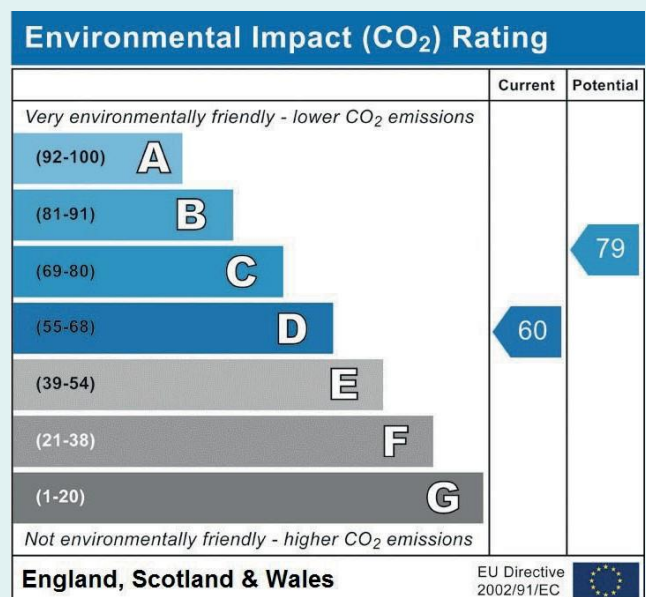
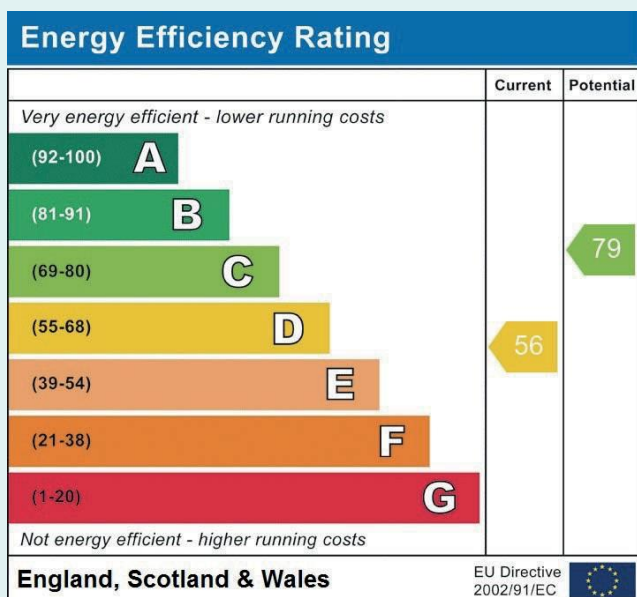
PROPERTY VIEWING TIPS

Before you get there:

Energy Performance Certificate

Check whether the property has an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) in advance - This will tell you how expensive it is likely to be to run the property. Properties are given a rating from A (most efficient) to G (least efficient). Properties are also given a score. The higher the number the lower your fuel bills are likely to be. For properties in England and Wales, the average energy rating is D.

Website: www.gov.uk/find-energy-certificate



Council Tax

Check the council tax banding in advance. You will usually have to pay Council Tax if you are 18 or over and own or rent a home. A full Council Tax bill is based on at least 2 adults living in a home. Spouses and partners who live together are jointly responsible for paying the bill.

There are reductions available.

Website: <https://www.nelincs.gov.uk/council-tax/>

At the property, Check:

- All windows are double glazed and open and close with window keys.
- All doors open and close with ease.
- Does the property have a combi boiler with radiators or electric storage heaters (common in flats).
- Is there a shower or bath installed?
- Gas Safety Check and Electrical Safety Check paperwork must be up to date (a legal requirement).
- Are there signs of damp around the windows, in the corners of the rooms or from the bottom of the walls?
- Do all the taps work and the toilet flushes?
- Check that all cupboard doors and handles are present and working.
- What furniture and appliances are included? If furniture and appliances are supplied by the landlord, they have a responsibility to repair these if things go wrong. Make a check list of what's included.
- If there is a garden, what part is your responsibility to keep clean and tidy?
- Are there any parking spaces and restrictions on use of these? i.e. a permit.
- Who are your neighbours? Ask the letting agent if they know and look for signs that might tell you, i.e. toys in the garden.
- Visit area during day and night to check you feel safe walking around.
- Are any nearby schools and shops the ones that you need?
- Do they accept pets, is an extra deposit needed for this?
- Is the property on a water meter?
- How will you pay for your utilities? Are these included with the rent or not?



Be scam aware

Beware of property scams! Never pay a deposit or rent in advance via companies like Western Union or in cash, use a bank card or a bank transfer to a UK bank account and not before you have viewed the property inside.

People will use many excuses and pressure tactics to convince you why it should be done like this, but it is usually a scam for a fake property. If you are replying to an advert on social media, check their profile. Are they located out of area or abroad? What does their profile tell you?

Be vigilant and remember, if it seems to be good to be true, it usually is! Check with someone else.



Signing your tenancy agreement and moving in

- Make sure the correct agreed rent, deposit and rent in advance is listed.
- Your names are spelt correctly and whether it is a joint tenancy with every adult's name listed or a Room Only tenancy for house shares /HMOs with only your name listed with responsibility for your room only.
- Confirm the tenancy length is correct and what happens after that time, does it become a month rolling contract or does a new tenancy have to be signed?
- Make sure you are given a copy of the tenancy agreement you have signed.
- You have received your deposit protection information.
- You have agreed a moving date and when you will collect the keys.
- If you are given an inventory, go through this list around the house and make any notes you do not agree with listed on it, take photos of damages, marks or stains and return this within 14 days to the landlord/letting agency, keeping a copy for yourself. Please take meter readings for water and electricity/gas at this point so you can register these with your providers.
- Check you have keys and/or codes for all the doors, garage, alarms etc. and that they work correctly.
- Check that you have been provided with a gas safety certificate and a separate electrical safety certificate which confirms that all gas appliances and the property's electrics have been checked to ensure they are safe to use and in good working order.



What bills will I need to pay?

Council Tax (not optional)

You will usually have to pay Council Tax if you are 18 or over and own or rent a home.

A full Council Tax bill is based on at least 2 adults living in a home. Spouses and partners who live together are jointly responsible for paying the bill. If you are a single adult living in a household you are eligible to a 25% discount, which you will need to apply for and will not be automatically applied to your bill. If you are on a low income e.g. Universal Credit you are eligible for Council Tax benefit, which you will also need to apply for.

For full details of council tax rates and when a discount or full exemption applies:

<https://www.nelincs.gov.uk/council-tax/>

What you are paying for:

- Corporate & democratic services (incl. housing benefit).
- Looking after the environment.
- Helping to grow the local economy.
- Public health and leisure facilities.
- Children and Family services.
- Adult services.
- Contribution to reserves.
- Police and Crime Commissioner for Humberside.
- Humberside Fire Authority.
- Parish Precepts.
- Other budgets.

Water (not optional)

Our local supplier is Anglian Water and you will want to check if your property is on a water meter or not.

You could save money if you are on a water meter, and you have a small household. You may need to check with your landlord/agency if you are allowed to switch to a water meter. You cannot change back once it has been installed.

Even though most properties in North East Lincolnshire are with Anglian Water, you can get water saving equipment for free online to reduce your bills from our neighbouring provider:

Yorkshire Water <https://www.yorkshirewater.com/your-water/save-water/>

There are also things you can do in the home to help save water.

- Don't leave the tap running whilst you brush your teeth, switch it on and off when you need it.

- When washing the dishes, fill the sink up with the amount of water you need instead of running the tap for the duration of the activity.
- Wait to do a full load of laundry instead of lots of small loads.
- Only boil the amount of water you need in the kettle to save water and energy.
- Avoid long showers.

When you move into your home you will need to inform Anglian Water <https://www.anglianwater.co.uk/account-and-bill/moving-home/tell-us-you-are-moving/moving-home-form/>

You will be able to pay your bill online, by direct debit or when you receive your bill.

They can provide support if you are struggling to pay your bills. Please contact Anglian Water directly if you need help. They also provide various tariffs for individuals and families on low incomes. Enquire with them for an assessment.

Gas and Electricity (not optional)

Properties may be supplied with gas and electricity, or just electricity. The price of both gas and electricity has risen significantly in the last two years due to global circumstances.

It's possible that there will be more rises in the coming years.

You are responsible for paying for your gas and electricity, but this may be in different ways. Your landlord may collect this as part of your rental agreement. However, the most common ways of paying your bills are:

1. Prepayment Meters.
2. Monthly Direct Debit.
3. Quarterly when you receive your bill.

Prepayment meters:

If you have a prepayment meter, you will want to check if this is a smart meter or an old-style key meter.

If it is the old-style key meter, you will need an electric key and a gas card to top up your meters in person in a shop displaying the Payzone or Paypoint logo.

You can find your nearest shops here:

<https://www.payzone.co.uk/>

<https://www.paypoint.com/>





If you are on a smart meter, you can top up online 24/7 and through the companies app on your account.

Your landlord will be able to advise you where your meter is and may provide you with the key/card. However, you may need to request a new one from your supplier and go through an activation process using a code provided by the supplier and sourcing a shop which has blank keys/cards for your supplier. Some are easier to source than others and you may need to ask for one to be posted to your home.

Make sure you ask for clear instructions on what to do and write these down, so you don't have to keep calling the supplier back.

There are friendly credit and emergency credit options, which are different for each supplier. Some offer a credit loan and friendly credit hours through an online account. Other suppliers offer up to £10 emergency credit, activated on the meter (subject to the provider).

Direct Debit

If you pay by direct debit, this will be the same amount each month and will put your account in credit during the summer months to help pay for the expected increase over the winter months. This is a good way to help you know your budget each month. If your supplier thinks you are not paying enough to cover your bills, they will increase this amount and should notify you by email.

Standing charges

In all cases, there are daily standing charges for gas, water and electricity which are included in your bills and are payable even if you do not use any energy or water all day. This charge is to pay for the maintenance and hiring of the meter equipment.

If you are on a pre-payment meter, you will go into debt if you do not top up your meter and this will come off your next top up.

You can monitor your usage with a smart meter and through your online accounts, as well as keep track on your payments and direct debit amounts.

How to read your meter

If you are on anything other than a smart meter, your meter will need to be read at various times through the year. It's possible that you may have someone from the utility company come to read the meter, or you may be asked to provide readings. It's important that you don't ignore these requests as it helps to keep your account up to date and will alert you if your payments need to change.

Television and streaming services (optional)

In the UK, any household that has a device (TV, computer, laptop, phone, tablet, games console or digital box) that can receive live broadcast pictures or streams on any channel must have a TV Licence. You only need one TV Licence per household, even if you use more than one of the devices listed above. **Website:** www.tvlicensing.co.uk

A TV Licence costs £169.50 per year (correct as of April 2024). You can pay this in one go, but most people choose to spread the cost by Direct Debit (£28.25 for the first 6 months, then £14.12 a month thereafter).

What is live TV and when do I need a licence for it?

Live TV means any programme you watch or record as it's being shown on TV or live on any online TV service. It's not just live events like sport, news and music. It covers all programmes on any channel, including soaps, series, documentaries and even movies.

If you're watching live TV, you need to be covered by a TV Licence:

- If you're watching on TV or on an online TV service.

- For all channels, not just the BBC
- If you record a programme and watch it later
- If you watch a programme on a delay
- To watch or record repeats
- To watch or record programmes on +1, +2 and +24 channels
- To watch live programmes on Red Button services
- Even if you already pay for cable, satellite or other TV services

Do I need a TV Licence to watch online, including on YouTube?

You don't need a TV Licence to watch videos or clips on demand on YouTube. But you do need a TV Licence if you watch TV programmes live on YouTube. An example of this would be watching Sky News live. But it isn't just live news or sport which needs a licence - it's any programme which is part of a TV channel, broadcast or transmitted for everyone to watch at the same time.

I only watch non-UK channels, do I need a licence?

Yes, you need a TV Licence to watch any TV channels live (broadcast or online), even if these are from outside the UK. This applies no matter what device you're using.

Can I get a discount?

- If you're aged 74 and over and you, or your partner living at the same address receive Pension Credit, you could get a free licence.
- If you live in a care home or sheltered accommodation you may be able to pay a discounted fee of £7.50.
- If you're blind (severely sight impaired) you can apply to pay half of the licence fee (£79.50)
- If you only watch on a black and white TV, the licence costs £53.50.

Broadband (Internet) & TV Packages (optional)

You will likely need to set up internet in your home and often these are sold as a combination package with TV.

Here are some tips

- Check if they offer a "refer a friend" offers, for example, some may have offer deals for new customer and the existing customer referring you. (Subject to availability)
- Deals often last for 6, 12 or 18 months and then the price increases.



- Keep track of when your new customer offer is due to expire and contact the company to see if they can offer you a new deal.
- Prices vary from £25-£80+ a month and sometimes include a setup fee.
- Check to see if you get a deal through your mobile phone provider e.g. O2 customers get supercharged internet with Virgin Media for free.
- You can also buy a Freeview box which gives you free digital TV for around 50 channels.
- Use comparison websites to find the best deal. (Examples below).

<https://www.uswitch.com/broadband>

<https://www.moneysavingexpert.com/compare-broadband-deals>

<https://www.comparethemarket.com/ps/broadband>

Furnishing your home

Your home may come with some furniture and appliances or may have nothing. It's important that you work on the basics first - somewhere to cook, eat, sleep and sit down. Then you can add more times over time by buying different items each month with money you have saved up.

To access lower cost furniture, look at alternative suppliers, charity shops or use Facebook marketplace and selling pages such as:

- **Cleethorpes Swaps & Sales**
- **Grimsby Swaps & Sales**
- **Free Stuff in Grimsby and Cleethorpes**
- **Free Stuff in Grimsby / Cleethorpes**
- **Stuff For Free Give It Away Free Grimsby & Cleethorpes**
- **Free To Good Home In GRIMSBY, CLEETHORPES & IMMINGHAM**

You can post adverts in there asking for items you need. Please note that most sellers will not deliver, so you will need to make arrangements to collect any large items yourself using a van service.

In some circumstances, North East Lincolnshire's Refugee Service may help with furnishing your home. Most things provided will be good quality secondhand items. Please speak to your support worker or housing officer for more details. By not having to pay for these items, you will have a better budget to buy any further items yourself such as curtains, pans, plates, cutlery, bedding, TV.



RIGHT THING RIGHT BIN

Blue Bin

Flatten your boxes. Make sure card and paper is clean and dry.

Paper and card is recycled in the UK.



Yes Please



Cardboard boxes, tubes and packaging

(remove all polystyrene, bubble wrap and other packaging)



Letters, note paper and envelopes

(with or without windows)



Newspapers and magazines

(no plastic bags)



Junk mail

(menus, leaflets etc)



Shredded paper

(not in a plastic bag)



Greeting cards and wrapping paper

(no foil or glitter)

No Thanks



Pizza or takeaway boxes



Tetra-pak cartons

(eg. juice cartons)



Books



Wire from notepads

If you are using recycling boxes, paper and card go in your **blue box**

Grey Bin

Check items are clean. Squash cans and plastics.
Plastics, metals and glass are recycled in the UK.



Yes Please



Plastic bottles



**Pots, food tubs
and trays**
(no black plastic)



Tins and cans



**Empty household
aerosols**



**Biscuit and
sweet tins**



**Glass bottles
and jars**

No Thanks



**Polystyrene,
plastic bags
and bin liners**



**Drinks cartons,
foil and foil trays**



**Containers for
paints, oils or
solvents**



**Sheets of glass,
broken glass,
mirrors or pyrex**

If you are using recycling boxes, glass goes in your green box, plastic bottles, food tubs, trays and pots, and metal tins and cans go in your orange box

RIGHT THING RIGHT BIN

Green Bin

Household waste is used to generate electricity at the Energy from Waste Plant. Hardly any goes to landfill. Bag waste before putting it in your bin.



Yes Please



Bagged household waste



Plastic bags and cling film



Crisp packets and sweet wrappers



Polystyrene and bubble wrap



Plastic plant pots



Nappies, wipes, tissues and face masks



Takeaway containers



Drinks cartons

No Thanks



Batteries



Electrical items



Hazardous waste



Building materials

Please take these items to the tip or an instore recycling point.

Brown Bin

Garden waste is used to make compost.
We offer a paid-for garden waste service.
More than 26,000 households use it.
Details: www.nelincs.gov.uk/gardenwaste



Yes Please



Grass cuttings



Hedge trimmings



Flowers and plants



Fallen fruit



Leaves



Twigs and sticks

No Thanks



Soil



Food waste



Rubble and building waste



Large branches or pieces of wood

Put food waste in your green bin (or food waste bin if you are part of the pilot). Please take the other items to the tip.

RIGHT THING RIGHT BIN

TIP IT

You can take most types of household waste and recycling to the Community Recycling Centres (CRC or tip) **for free**.

Grimsby and Immingham tips are open daily from 8am to 6pm and 8am to 4pm on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve. Closed Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day.

Grimsby tip can be busy at peak times, try Immingham instead.

Grimsby Community Recycling Centre, Estuary Way, Pyewipe Industrial Estate, Grimsby, DN31 2UD

Immingham Community Recycling Centre, Queens Road, Immingham, DN40 1QN

If you are using a commercial vehicle, trailer or large vehicle (including people carriers, 4x4s and estate cars), complete the online declaration form before your visit.

www.nelincs.gov.uk/tip

BulkyWaste

We offer a cost-effective bulky waste service for large items and electrical goods. It's easy to book a slot online at www.nelincs.gov.uk/BulkyWaste



Putting your bins out

Write your house number on your bin.

Bins out by **7am** please with the lids shut.

Take in your bins after we've been.



Take your extra rubbish to the tip. We don't take side waste.



Duty of Care

You have a Duty of Care to make sure your rubbish is disposed of responsibly and legally. If you have too much rubbish for your green wheelie bin it could mean you aren't recycling as much as you can. Use this guide to see what else you can recycle. You can be fined if you leave extra rubbish with your wheelie bin or recycling boxes. If you rent your home from a private landlord, your landlord must provide you with bins or recycling boxes.

Top tips for house maintenance

Reporting repairs, complaints and decorating

Your landlord/letting agent is responsible for carrying out repairs to your property and any items they supply.

It is very important you **do not attempt to carry out electrical or gas repairs** to your home. If you do, it could cost you money to get the work corrected by a professional and could impact the landlord's home insurance.

Your landlord has a duty of care to ensure you have access to heating, hot water, bathing facilities and access to a working toilet. If they do not carry out repairs in an acceptable timeframe or provide you with appropriate alternative arrangements, you are in your right to report this to North East Lincolnshire Council to take action.

Website: www.nelincs.gov.uk/report-it

We advise that you first attempt to resolve any issues between you and your landlord before making an official complaint to avoid further tensions between you and your letting agent.

You should check it is OK to decorate with your landlord/letting agent and they may give permission only if you return the property to its original décor when you move out. Landlords will often not agree to red or black paint as it is hard to paint over.

You must not make any major structural changes to the property or remove fixed furnishings.

If you have any issues with your neighbours, if you know their landlord/letting agency then you can contact them first.

If you require further assistance you can speak to the Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Team at NELC.

Website: <https://www.nelincs.gov.uk/keeping-our-area-clean-and-safe/>

If you would like additional security measures for your home, please ask your support officer for a referral to the Safer Communities team. You may be provided with items such as door and window alarms.



No hot water or heating?

First, check to see if there is credit on the electricity/gas meter then try these steps.

1. Check the number gauge on the boiler; is it close to 0? This means the pressure is low and you need to top it up. Your boiler will have a small black lever that turns left and right, this is to open and close the valve. Open it to increase the pressure and watch the number gauge go up to the green area, then close the valve again. You must remember to close the valve, or it will keep adding pressure causing damage.



2. Check the radiators, are they turned on?

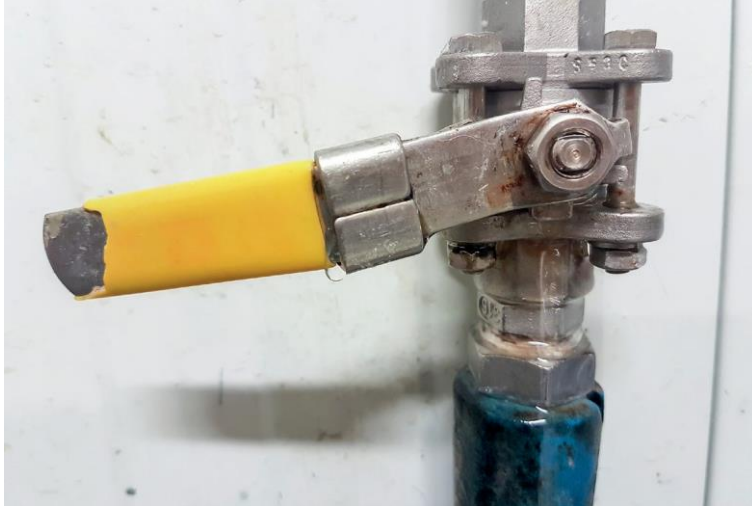
Are they hot at the top, but not at the bottom? This means there is likely to be a build-up of sludge. You will need to let your landlord know they need clearing out. Sometimes the radiators just need some air releasing. You can buy a radiator valve cheaply and release some air out. Make sure to have a bucket to catch any release of water.

3. **Has the boiler ignited?** This is usually indicated with a red light on the boiler instead of green or amber. Try resetting the boiler on the switch; hold it for a few seconds on switch before letting go.

4. **Is the hot water working,** but not the heating or the other way round? This could be the diverter valve. You will need to contact the service centre to arrange for an engineer to attend.



5. Are there any leaks coming from the radiators or the boiler? You will need to call your landlord to repair any leaks, but make sure the radiators are switched off as soon as you spot a leak to prevent water damage to the flooring or walls. If there is a risk of flooding due to a big leak, from anywhere in the home, you will need to switch off the water at the stopcock. This is usually underneath the sink, looks like a tap or a valve and may have a blue tap or lever.



6. Smell gas coming from somewhere in the home? Look for a yellow lever on the boiler to switch off the gas supply and call Northern Gas Works straight away on **0800 111 999**.
Do not use the gas supply, have naked flames with lighters, cigarettes or any other smoking paraphernalia or use the gas hob. Have you switched it off before?
Does it need turning back on?



7. Do not attempt to carry out any repairs to your boiler, or allow anyone else to other than what is on this list – it is illegal for anyone to work on gas appliances without the correct training and registering with Gas Safe.



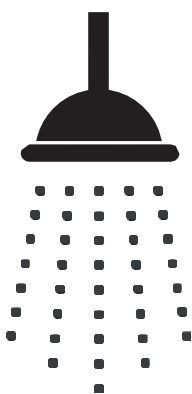
Condensation

Homes in the UK are generally not insulated or ventilated like you may be used to in your own country. Generally, condensation isn't something to worry about, it's normal for it to appear on cold windows overnight in a bedroom or while the heating is on. It's caused when the air indoors can't hold any more moisture. However, if you find it's happening constantly or on cold walls it could potentially create mould. There are key areas in homes where this can happen, mainly the kitchen and the bathroom. Here's what you can do to avoid condensation:

Be aware that if you can turn a ventilator on you must do so when:



Cooking



Showering/bathing



Drying clothes inside



Condensation usually occurs during cold weather, and it does not leave a 'tidemark'. It appears on cold surfaces and in places where there is little movement of air. Look for it in corners, on or near windows and in or behind wardrobes, cupboards and piles of belongings. It often forms on north-facing walls and will appear as black mould.

You can reduce condensation in your home by following these simple steps.

Produce less moisture

- Cover pans with their lids and do not leave gas kettles boiling.
- Avoid using paraffin and portable flueless bottled gas heaters.
- Dry washing outdoors on a clothesline, or put it in the bathroom with the door closed and the window open or an extractor fan on.
- Avoid drying clothes on radiators; use a clothes airer and have the heating on or open a window to allow the water to leave the inside of the home instead of staying inside and going on to the walls.
- Vent tumbles dryers on the outside, unless it is the self-condensing type. DIY kits are available for this.

Ventilate to remove moisture

- Opening your bedroom window for 15 minutes every morning to allow the water in the air out.
- Keep a small window ajar or a trickle ventilator open when someone is in the room.
- Ventilate kitchens and bathrooms when in use by opening the windows wider or switch on the extractor fan if there are no windows.
- Close the kitchen and bathroom doors when these rooms are in use, even if your kitchen or bathroom has an extractor fan. A door closer will help prevent moisture reaching other rooms, especially bedrooms which are often colder and more likely to get condensation.
- Ventilate cupboards and wardrobes. Avoid putting too many things in them as this stops the air circulating.
- Leave space between the back of the wardrobe and the wall and don't fill it up too much. Where possible, position wardrobes and furniture against internal walls.
- Don't leave toys, clothes, boxes stacked up against walls as this prevents the moisture from circulating around the room.
- Put the heating on regularly to warm up the home during colder months and don't forget to still warm up the rooms you don't use often.



Other causes of condensation

- Check the windows for leaks around the sealant, if there are gaps and missing sealant then the outside weather is getting inside the room.
- Check the bath or shower seal and grout in the walls for lots of gaps and holes, if there are gaps then the water from bathing is getting trapped.
- Check the guttering around the top of the building or house, if it is blocked with lots of leaves, dirt, birds' nest then it will cause the rain to overflow and run down the side of the walls. If there is a break in the down pipes, then the water may be pouring out on to the walls. You can tell this by looking at where the affected area is in your home and looking at the area on the outside wall.
- Check the pointing (the cement in between the bricks) on the outside of the building, if there are lots of gaps and holes, then the outside weather is getting inside the home.
- Check the front and back doors, if there are gaps in the woodwork of the frame then the outside weather is getting inside the home.

Treating condensation

If you do have an issue with mould:

Only remove mould yourself if it's caused by condensation and covers an area less than 1 metre squared (1x1 metre or 3x3 feet) in total.

- Fill a bucket with water and some mild detergent, such as washing-up liquid or a soap used for hand-washing clothes.
- Use a rag dipped in the soapy water to carefully wipe the mould off the wall. Be careful not to brush it, as this can release mould spores.
- When you've finished, use a dry rag to remove the moisture from the wall afterwards, put the rags in a plastic bag and throw them away.
- All the surfaces in the room should be thoroughly cleaned by either wet wiping or vacuuming to remove any spores. You can purchase special anti-mould liquids in most local shops.



Blocked drains

Most blockages are caused by our own habits, and you can prevent them from happening too often by avoiding these common mistakes.



DO NOT

- Flush make up/cleansing wipes down the toilet
- Flush sanitary products down the toilet
- Allow hair to build up in the shower/sink plug holes
- Flush clumps of hair down the toilet from your brush/plug holes
- Wash away excess food down the kitchen sink
- Flush cigarette butts down the toilet



DO

- Clean away hair from the shower/sink drains and put it in the bin
- Clear food from your plates and kitchen sides into the bin
- Try to clear blockages using a plunger before calling for a plumber
- Clear leaves and debris from outside drains to prevent overflows

Pest Control

If you do suspect you have a pest infestation, let your landlord know as soon as possible so they can begin to resolve it for you. The local authority does not have a pest control service.

Which pests do you need to look out for

Some of the pests that people in the UK commonly have trouble with include:

• Mice	• Fleas
• Rats	• Spiders
• Foxes	• Cockroaches
• Bees	• Ants
• Wasps	• Bedbugs

These pests will cause different problems and vary in terms of the threat to safety they pose depending on potential allergies or phobias. While foxes will probably just go through your bins, and be too scared to come near you even if you go outside, a wasp nest could deliver some nasty stings if you disturb it.

It's important that you do everything possible to prevent a pest infestation, both inside and outside the house.

Inside

Food waste should be a key concern inside your home. Crumbs and general food debris around the kitchen or living room should be cleared up, and any leftovers should be stored in an airtight container, so ants are not attracted to them. In terms of bins and food waste, the bin should be closed or otherwise always sealed. When it is full, remove the bin liner and take it to the food waste bin outside.

Cleaning should be something you do to maintain a hygienic home, but if things aren't particularly clean, pests will breed easily. Make sure that kitchen counters, tables and floors are cleaned regularly to prevent crumbs and food building up. If there is clutter on bedroom floors and in living room, this should be cleared as regularly as possible because they provide hiding places and homes for pests. You should also ensure you vacuum regularly, not just to clean the floors and other surfaces, but also to catch pests and their eggs.

Here are some other things you can do to prevent pests taking over your home:

- Report any cracks or holes in the walls that could provide access for insects or rodents to the inside of your home.
- Fix any leaks that might result in standing water.
- Check any pets that spend time outside for fleas on a regular basis.
- Report if you suspect that you do have a mouse in the walls or you're finding a lot of wasps entering the house.

Outside

Given that pests will enter your home from the outside, it's important not to neglect areas like your garden and shrubbery when taking steps to prevent an infestation.

- If you're outside, use citronella candles to help keep mosquitoes and wasps away from your garden.
- Wood piles and scraps can be a haven for beetles and termites, which you need to keep away from your home. Don't use wood mulch or chips in your garden if possible and keep any woodpiles at least twenty feet from your home.
- Keep any tree branches or bushes well-trimmed to keep them away from the house, as they could provide routes inside for pests.
- Use a bird feeder tray to catch fallen food, as this can attract rodents.

Testing your smoke alarm

Smoke alarms require little maintenance, but that maintenance could be life-saving. Although there are several makes and models that you might have, you can test their effectiveness in one of two ways.

Method 1:

Most smoke alarms will have a test button. Carefully stand on a stepladder, reach up and push it using a long handle if necessary. The alarm should go off.

Method 2. Light a couple of matches and then blow out the flame so that the smoke drifts up towards the smoke alarm. If the detector is working, the alarm will go off.

What to do: Change the battery. If this still doesn't work, or the battery can't be changed, the alarm needs replacing.

How often should I test a smoke alarm?

Some people recommend testing it once a month; some recommend testing it when the clocks change. It's up to you - test your alarms as often as you feel comfortable doing so.

General smoke alarm maintenance

- Clean dust away wherever necessary.
- Never remove the battery to use in something else because you may forget to replace it.
- Replace the battery on an annual basis even if it is still working.
- Replace the alarm every ten years or so.



Maintaining your Home

Utilities	
The water stopcock is located:	
The water meter is located:	
The electricity meter is located:	
The fuse box is located:	
The smoke alarm is located:	
The TV aerial socket is located:	
The phone line socket is located:	
The thermostat is located:	
The energy is provided by:	

Bins	
The green rubbish bin is collected on:	
The black recycling bin is collected on:	
The blue recycling bin is collected on:	

Make your notes...

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