



Home from Home
Housing Association Ltd

Tenant Handbook

SHARED ACCOMMODATION

This handbook is intended to provide useful guidelines and information about our policies and practice, but due to the varied nature of some of the housing we manage, some of the sections may not be completely relevant to each resident.

Your tenancy agreement is the formal document which contains the legal position. If in doubt, please do not hesitate to contact your Housing Officer.

OFFICE ADDRESS

Head Office
Home From Home H A
230 Portway
London E15 3QY

Tel: No: 020 8472 7711

E-mail: mail@hfhhousing.org

OFFICE HOURS

The office is open:

Monday to Friday 9.00a.m. to 4.00p.m.

1. THE ASSOCIATION

Welcome to Home From Home Housing Association.

Home From Home is a black led Housing Association, providing temporary and permanent homes for the Afro-Caribbean community and other groups in Newham.

The Association was formed in 1985 when a group of local black women concerned about housing and homelessness formed a co-operative to provide for those in most housing need. In 1991 Home From Home changed its status to that of a Charitable Housing Association.

In addition to general needs Housing, Home From Home also provides supported accommodation for young mothers and babies, and a move on project for mothers with older children.

Our emphasis is on a personal approach to housing management, to maintain close contact with our tenants and to manage properties to a high standard with a view to the long term well being of both tenants and buildings.

THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The Association is governed by a Board made up of representatives from a wide cross section of the community. The Board, consisting of voluntary members, makes all policies and guides the work of the Association.

MONITORING THE WORK

Home From Home is registered with The Housing Corporation, a government body which provides a large part of the funds necessary to carry out our work. It regularly monitors our work and ensures that the money is spent wisely and that our policies are efficient and fair.

The Residents Charter issued by the Housing Corporation explains your rights and our responsibilities as your landlord. A copy is given to all applicants.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Home From Home Housing Association Limited is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity in all areas of its work, irrespective of gender, disability, marital status, age, sexual orientation, health, religion and nationality. Home From Home expects staff, Board members and tenants to adhere to the principles set out in this policy.

In addition, other organisations with whom we work, particularly referral agents, need to operate within the framework of this policy.

2. YOUR TENANCY

The Assured Short-hold tenancy you have signed is a legal contract between yourself and Home From Home. Your tenancy gives you security for a minimum period of six months. During this time your tenancy can only be ended by a Court Order for the specific reasons or “grounds” detailed in your Tenancy Agreement.

In any event the Association may only proceed to Court for Possession Order after serving a formal Notice explaining the reasons for its action.

It is the policy of the Association to attempt to resolve any difficulties concerning your tenancy before legal action is pursued. Court action will only be considered as a last resort, in which case the required notice period will be given.

GROUND'S FOR POSSESSION

The Association will normally only apply to a Court for possession of your home in the following circumstances:

- a. Rent is outstanding.
- b. Serious breach of the terms of your tenancy agreement that cannot otherwise be resolved.
- c. You or your visitors have caused damage to the property and or furniture provided as part of your tenancy.
- d. You have caused serious or persistent nuisance or harassment or used the premises for illegal or immoral purposes.
- e. Major works need to be carried out and it is not practicable to allow you to remain in the property.
- f. Abandonment of property.

The Court will give the Association possession of your home only if it thinks it is reasonable to do so.

CONSULTATION

You will be consulted on all important matters of housing management that will substantially affect you. If any changes in your tenancy agreement are proposed you have a right to be consulted.

All the tenants likely to be affected by a new proposal will be consulted either by letter or by a general meeting of tenants.

The Association undertakes to consider carefully any views received before taking a decision and tenants will be informed of the result of any consultation.

NUISANCE & NOISE

Where it is proved that a nuisance is being caused, the Association will do all it can to stop anyone persistently causing that nuisance. Our powers are limited and can only be used in certain circumstances. Home From Home cannot become involved in minor everyday problems which are part of living in a community. You do of course have the right to take your own legal action against neighbours causing nuisance and for further information you should contact the Citizen's Advice Bureau, or a Solicitor.

If nuisance, noise or disturbance persists and a number of neighbours are affected, on receipt of written representations, the Association may decide that it can intervene. This may take the form of a referral to the local Environmental Health Department, or some form of mediation between the parties.

We may consider legal action ourselves where the situation is very severe and there are witnesses prepared to give evidence in court, or we may refer the case to the London Borough of Newham's Investigation Scheme.

HARASSMENT

Deliberate harassment of a neighbour, on any grounds (including race, colour, religion, sex, or sexual orientation, disability, ill health or age), will not be tolerated by the Association. We will give immediate advice, support and assistance to victims in such cases. If you believe you are being harassed, inform your Project Officer at once. The sort of action that the Association may take includes visiting both parties involved or taking legal action. The London Borough of Newham is informed of all cases, and confirmed perpetrators may be excluded from applying for permanent properties. The same rules apply in the case of service users harassing HFH staff member

3. RENT AND SERVICE CHARGES

RENT AND SERVICE CHARGES

Rents and service charges are fixed by the Association and based on the cost of providing you with a home. Rents are increased annually and, you will be given one month's notice in writing of any increases.

SERVICE CHARGES

If you live in one of our shared properties, your rent will include a personal service charge which covers the heating, lighting, cooking and laundry facilities. This charge will not be paid by housing benefit.

METHODS OF PAYMENT

There are a number of ways you can pay your rent and service charges. Your tenancy agreement states that all payments should be made in advance regardless of the method of payment.

1. Standing Order

If you have a bank account and a regular income, it may be more convenient to use this method. Please ask for a form from the office.

2. Post Office

a payment can be made at any Post Office free of charge, either by cheque or cash, using a payment card which will be supplied.

3. Housing Benefit Direct

If you are in receipt of Housing Benefit, you must ask that payment is made direct to Home From Home. Please note that the claim is still your responsibility. You must ensure that your rent is in payment and that renewal forms are completed and returned on time. **Please note that if housing benefit do not pay due to delays in completing renewals or you fail to provide them with the information they request you will become responsible for paying the full rent.**

You should contact your Project Officer who will be able to advise you and assist in completing a claim form. You will need to provide details of your income and your rent to submit with your application.

There may be other benefits available to which you may be entitled to, to find out more please speak to your Project Officer or local Benefits Agency.

RENT ARREARS

If you are having difficulties paying your rent or service charges you must get in touch with your Project Officer immediately.

You will begin to receive reminder letters if you owe two weeks rent or more, do not ignore these. The Project Officer will try to reach an agreement with you to repay your arrears over a specified period.

If we do not receive a satisfactory response to reminders, a Notice of Seeking Possession will be served where arrears of rent are between 6 and 8 weeks, this is the first stage of legal action. Home From Home will then approach the Court for a Possession Order if no agreement about repayment has been reached. If this course of action is taken it could result in you losing your home.

If you are finding it difficult to keep to your agreement you should contact your Project Officer immediately.

4. DURING YOUR STAY

If you have any queries concerning the Association, your tenancy or your home, please contact your Project Officer in the first instance.

She is responsible for the day-to-day management of your property. Although based at the Associations offices she spends much of the time on home visits. If the Project Officer cannot deal with your query directly, you will be referred to the appropriate person. If she is out of the office, another member of the staff team will do their best to deal with your query.

Our main aim during your stay will be to equip you with the skills required to live independently once you leave the Project.

HOW WE GIVE SERVICE USERS / TENANTS INFORMATION

The pattern laid down below is how we will normally give you information but this is not exclusive and depends on the Service User / Tenant requirements and needs

One to One

Your Project Officer will meet with you on a one-to-one basis to talk about issues that may be of concern to you. These meetings will be based on the support plan drawn up at the start of your tenancy.

Education and Training

Information relating to courses and training opportunities will be provided based on your areas of interest and need.

Benefits and Welfare Advice

Information about claims or other issues can also be provided; these needs are assessed as part of an ongoing evaluation completed by Your Project Officer.

Newsletter

The Project newsletter is circulated every 2 months to inform you about current events and information relating to your tenancy. The newsletter is also a place for any comments, tips or other information you may have to share.

House/Group Meetings/Support Sessions

During your stay you will be required to attend house meetings where you will meet with other residents and staff to discuss other issues about the facilities and services that are provided as well as general welfare/childcare matters. Special events may be organised from time to time in response to requests.

5. THE ACCOMMODATION

The aim of the Association is to provide good quality temporary accommodation, whilst equipping you with the skills necessary for you to be able to live in your own permanent home.

COMMUNAL AREAS

Each property has communal areas whether it's halls and stairways or living areas. Home From Home arranges for the cleaning of these areas, and this is included in your service charge. You are asked to not cause obstructions which may restrict access or cause damage or injury to persons or property in shared areas. Causing an obstruction may also be in contravention of fire regulations.

Noise in communal areas can be a real problem, particularly in accommodation for mothers and their babies. It is therefore important to make every effort to keep noise to a minimum. You are advised to keep television sets, record players and radios away from walls, and turn the volume down, particularly late at night or early in the morning. Try to resolve problems between yourselves without involving Home From Home where ever possible.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

A summary of your responsibilities

- **Keeping to the terms of your Tenancy Agreement**
- **Paying the rent and service charges on time - (see your Tenancy Agreement)**
- Not causing a nuisance to others
- **Keeping the House Rules**
- Not causing unacceptable noise
- Not keeping pets. (see your Tenancy Agreement)
- Keeping your property in good and clean condition
- Making sure you or your visitors don't damage the property or the fixture and fittings
- Keeping communal area clean and clear
- **Reporting repairs and giving access to contractors. (see back page for useful addresses)**
- Not letting other people live in the property
- **Keeping to the Health, Safety and Fire rules.**
- **Insuring your belongings**
- **Buying your own TV licence**
- Keeping your keys safe
- **Attending House/Group/Support meetings. (see your Support Agreement)**

6. REPAIRS

Home from Home is responsible for making sure that your home is safe and in a good state of repair. It is your responsibility to report any defects to the Association so that we can take the necessary action.

ACCESS

It is your responsibility to give staff or contractors access to the property to carry out repairs, inspections or services i.e. Annual Gas Service.

HOT WATER AND HEATING

If your hot water and heating fails, you should contact the Gas Board on 0845 9500 400

Home From Home has service contract with them. You will need to have your details (Name, address and your post code) ready for them when you call.

EMERGENCY ACCESS

If repairs are urgent, the Association has a statutory right to enter your home after giving 24 hours notice, if all other arrangements fail.

GAS LEAKS

If you smell gas in your property:

- Turn off all appliances and turn off the supply at the meter.
- Put out all naked flames, fires, and cigarettes.
- Do not touch any electrical switches or equipment (sparks from electrical equipment could cause a gas explosion).
- Open all windows.
- Report the leak using the local Gas Board's emergency service or the Association's Emergency Service.

Please note: All gas installations are serviced and certified safe annually and you will receive a copy of the Landlords Gas Safety Certificate from our CORGI Registered Contractor for your records.

ELECTRICITY

If you have a total power failure or dangerous electrical faults, phone the local electricity board and report it to the Association as an emergency.

FIRE

If you have a fire in your home:

- Telephone the Fire Brigade on 999.
- Get everyone out of the property and do not go back inside.
- Close all doors.
- Inform Home From Home Housing Association at the earliest opportunity.

FIRE PRECAUTIONS

- Never leave chip-pans or similar unattended.

- Do not store flammable materials, e.g. petrol, paraffin or liquid gas in your home.
- Make sure all doors are closed when you go to bed or leave your home.

BURST PIPES

- Turn off water supply at the stopcock.
- Call the emergency service.
- Inform your neighbours if there is any danger to them of flooding.

EMERGENCY OUTSIDE WORKING HOURS

In the event of a gas leak or electrical emergency, contact the emergency number of the local Transco or Electricity Board. (see Useful Addresses for details), and let us know as soon as possible afterwards. Contact local plumbers only in the event of a serious water leak or burst pipe.

7. MOVING ON

Permanent accommodation – Choice Based Lettings

Permanent accommodation in Newham is now dealt with through a system called Choice Based Lettings.

Properties are advertised on the internet at www.ellcchoicehomes.org.uk.

If you see a property you like then you can apply for that property, provided that you fulfil the criteria outlined in the brochure.

The system is based on the amount of time that you have been on the waiting list. It is therefore important that you renew your registration and continue to bid.

It remains your responsibility to manage your housing application. If your circumstances change, it is up to you to inform the Housing Options Centre, e.g. if you have another child or change address.

8. COMPLAINTS

We hope that you will be satisfied with your housing service but we realise that there may be occasions when you wish to make a complaint. If you do not feel your complaint has been treated fairly by your Project officer you can make a formal complaint to Home From Home by following the stages listed below:

1. The Supported Housing Manager who will give you a written response within 2 weeks.
2. The Association's Director who will give a written reply within two weeks.
3. The Management Committee who will look at the matter again and write back to you within four weeks.
4. Housing Ombudsman Service
81 Aldwych
London
WC2B 4HN
0207 421 3800

The Ombudsman will not investigate cases unless the Association's complaints procedure has been completed first.

Copies of the Independent Housing Ombudsman leaflet are available from the office on request.

You may wish to seek advice from the local Citizens Advice Bureau or a Solicitor.

**TELEPHONE NUMBERS
AND ADDRESSES**

REPAIRS:
DURING OFFICE HOURS
9.00AM.-5.30AM

Home From Home Housing Association
230 Portway, E15 3QY
020 8472 7711

NO HEATING/HOTWATER:
24 HOURS SERVICE CONTRACT

British Gas **0845 9500 400**

You have to give them your Name Post
code and your telephone number

GAS LEAKS/FAILURE (Transco)

0800 111 999

EMERGENCIES/ OUT OF HOURS:

07958 112 3 41

USEFUL ADDRESSES

H O U S I N G

Housing Options Centre

Local Service Centres

3, Prugel Street Plaistow London E13 1EP Tel: 020 8430 2000	Stratford: 112-118 The Grove, E15 1NS Forest Gate, 4-20 Woodgrange Road, E7 0Q 020 8 472 1430
B E N E F I T S	
Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit Inland Revenue Preston PR1 0SB 0845 300 3900	Child Benefit Centre Washington Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE88 1BR Tel: 0541 555 501
A D V I C E	
Newham Action Against Domestic Violence St Marks Community Centre Tollgate Road, Beckton London E6 4YA Tel: 020 7473 3047	Stratford Advice Arcade 107 - 109 The Grove Stratford London E15 1HP Tel: 020 8221 1995
H E A L T H	
Lord Lister Health Centre 121 Woodgrange Road Forest Gate London E7 0EP Tel: 020 8250 7200	Family Planning Shrewsbury Road Forest gate London E7 8QP Tel: 020 8586 5147
ELBOW CENTRE Forest Gate Methodist Church Woodgrange Road London E7 0QH Tel: 0208 534 7545 Fax: 0208 534 9018 www.elbow.org.uk	Alternatives Crisis Pregnancy Centre 66 Prince Regent lane Plaistow London E13 8QQ Tel: 020 7 476 8215
T R A I N I N G	
East London University Strafford campus University House, Romford Rd London E16 2RD Telephone all UEL Campuses on 020 8223 3000	Newham Women's Training (Newtec) & Education Centre 22 Deanery Road Stratford London E15 4LP Tel: 020 8519 5843