

Tenants' Handbook

Your guide to housing services from Hounslow Homes



If you need this tenants' handbook in another language or format please contact 020 8583 2299 or minicom 020 8583 3122.

Somali

Haddii aad rabto koobbi buugga dadkak guryaha kaga jira Hounslow Homes oo ay ku qoranyihiin macluumaad ku saabsan degganaanshaha iyo adeegyo, fadlan soo wac 020 8583 2299.

Gujarati

હંસલો હોમ્સ ટેનન્ટ્સની માહિતીપુસ્તિકાની નકલ માટે, કે જેમાં તમારી ટેનન્સિસ(પટા-ભોગવટા) અને સેવાઓની માહિતીનો સમાવેશ થાય છે તે માટે કૃપા કરી સંપર્ક સાધો 020 8583 2299.

Panjabi

'ਹੋਮਲੋ ਹੋਮਜ਼ ਟੈਨੈਂਟਸ' ਦੇ ਕਿਤਾਬਚੇ, ਜਿਸ ਵਿਚ ਤੁਹਾਡੀ ਕਿਰਾਏਦਾਰੀ ਅਤੇ ਸੇਵਾਵਾਂ ਬਾਰੇ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਦਿੱਤੀ ਗਈ ਹੈ, ਦੀ ਇਕ ਕਾਪੀ ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਵਿਚ ਲੈਣ ਲਈ ਇਸ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਫ਼ੋਨ ਕਰੋ: 020 8583 2297

Albanian

Per kopjen e Hounslow Homes Tenants handbook, e cila permban informata lidhur me kontraten tuaj dhe sherbimet, ju lutemi kontaktoni 020 8583 2299.

Hindi

हाउंज़लो होमज़ टैनेंट्स की पुस्तिका आपकी किराएदारी के बारे में और सेवाओं के बारे में है। यदि आपको इसकी कॉपी चाहिए तो कृपया 020 8583 2299 पर संपर्क करें।

Urdu

هاؤنسلو ہومز کی ہیٹ پیڈ بک (هاؤنسلو ہومز کی جانب سے جاری کردہ کرایہ داروں کیلئے رہنما کتابچہ)، جس میں آپ کی کرایہ داری اور سروسز کے بارے میں بیان کیا گیا ہے، اس کی نقل حاصل کرنے کیلئے براؤزرم اس فون نمبر 020 8583 2299 پر رابطہ کریں

Arabic

للحصول نسخة من كتيب سكان هاونسلو هومز و الذي يحتوي على معلومات حول عقد الايجار والخدمات، الرجاء الاتصال على 020 8583 2299.

Farsi

برای دریافت نسخه ای از کتاب راهنمای مستاجرین، که شامل اطلاعات درباره اجاره و خدمات داده شده به شما است، لطفاً با شماره تلفن ۰۲۰ ۸۵۸۳ ۲۲۹۹ تماس بگیرید.

This handbook is based on your Tenancy Agreement with the London Borough of Hounslow. It gives you more information about the terms and conditions outlined in your Tenancy Agreement but it is not a replacement for that agreement.

This handbook explains in more detail:

- Your rights and responsibilities as a council tenant.
- The rights and responsibilities of the London Borough of Hounslow (as your landlord).
- The rights and responsibilities of Hounslow Homes, the management company providing services to your home and neighbourhood.

What does Hounslow Homes do?

Hounslow Homes Ltd is a company owned by the London Borough of Hounslow and was formed in 2002.

Hounslow Homes is responsible for the day-to-day management of council homes such as collecting rent and service charges, assisting tenants with applications for home ownership, dealing with repairs and modernising homes. It also provides housing services for tenants and leaseholders such as caretaking, grounds maintenance, specialist anti-social behaviour and hate crime teams, and aims to encourage greater resident involvement in housing matters.

What does the London Borough of Hounslow do?

Matters relating directly to your Tenancy Agreement with the Council are dealt with by the Housing Department at the Civic Centre, Hounslow. Contact details for the London Borough of Hounslow are given at the back of this handbook.

Questions and comments on this handbook or your housing services

If there is anything you are not clear about in this handbook or you need further information, please contact your Hounslow Homes area office.

You can also comment or complain about any of the services you receive, please either:

- Write to Hounslow Homes'.
- Call your area office.
- Visit your area office.
- Put a comment on our website. Contact details for Hounslow Homes area offices are detailed to the back of this handbook.

Hounslow Homes' mission

To deliver excellent housing services and encourage the development of sustainable local communities.

Our objectives

- a) To deliver excellent housing services with a commitment to continuous improvement.
- b) To deliver the Decent Homes programme and secure a longer term investment programme for council housing.
- c) Create opportunities for the development of sustainable local communities.
- d) Develop partnerships to explore long term opportunities which would take advantage of the Government's "freedoms and flexibilities".

Equalities for all

Hounslow Homes is fully committed to equality of opportunity for all people, with positive regard and fair treatment for all our communities regardless of age, colour, ethnic or national origin, race, religious belief, gender, marital status, sexuality, responsibility for dependents, disability, trade union or political activity and any other disadvantaged group.

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Chapter 1

Your tenancy

- a summary

Hounslow Homes' responsibilities

- Keeping your property in reasonable repair.
- Carrying out repairs to the structure of your home.
- External decoration.
- Lift maintenance (if you live in a multi-storey block).
- Fixtures and fittings Hounslow Homes or the London Borough of Hounslow have provided.
- Maintenance of shared areas (such as foyers).
- Maintenance of shared facilities (such as estate lighting and play equipment).
- Dealing with anti-social behaviour and (with a victim's consent) domestic violence.

Your responsibilities as a tenant

6.1 Rent

You must pay your rent and any other charges shown on your rent card regularly and on time. More information about your rent is included in chapter five.

6.2 Using the property

You must not allow any other people living in your home or visitors to your home to damage the property.

You must tell Hounslow Homes straight away if anyone else comes to live at your property.

You must not carry out any business or trade from your home/garages or shared areas or put up any permanent sign or advert.

6.3 Repairs and maintenance

You are responsible for repairs and maintenance of some aspects of your home. For more details on this, see chapter six.

6.8 Giving access to your home

Sometimes, you will need to give Hounslow Homes (or a contractor) access to your home, for example:

- Hounslow Homes needs to carry out a repair in your home.
- There is a risk of injury or damage to the property or a neighbouring property.
- There is a risk to public health.

In these cases, Hounslow Homes has the right to access the property without giving you notice, although it will try to do so.

6.9 Noise and offence

You, or any person living at or visiting your home, must not cause nuisance or annoyance to any person living in or visiting the local area.

(See chapter eleven about anti-social behaviour and racial harassment which lists terms stated in your Tenancy Agreement, 6.9-6.19).

6.20-6.23 Cleaning and taking care of your home and shared areas

You, and any person living at your property, must:

- Not leave rubbish on any staircase, landing, balcony or any entrance hall in flats or maisonettes, or allow shared areas to become blocked up.
- Make sure that rubbish is removed from your property (including gardens and garages).
- Only get rid of your rubbish in a refuse chute, bin or designated rubbish area.
- Not allow rubbish or soil to build up against fences or walls, or above the damp course level of any building.
- Cleaning shared areas by your home (except where Hounslow Homes has arranged for this to be carried out by caretakers or cleaners).

(See chapter nine for more information)

6.28 Liquid petroleum or gas products:

You must not keep or use any volatile or inflammable liquid or gas products (e.g. paraffin or Calor gas) inside your home, garage or in shared areas.

6.29 Parking vehicles

Parking spaces are on a first come first served basis, unless specified. You must not park in a way that blocks access for other residents, emergency vehicles or services or on pavements or verges. You are also not permitted to park in allocated disabled bays unless you have a Registered Disabled badge.

Tenants are not permitted to repair or maintain vehicles for commercial purposes or allow vehicles to cause a nuisance to others on any estate road, access road, courtyard, or in parking bays.

Trees

You must get written permission from Hounslow Homes before cutting down or removing any trees.

Satellite dishes

You must get written permission from Hounslow Homes before putting up a satellite dish or any other receiving / transmitting device.

6.24 Pets

Your Tenancy Agreement allows you to keep domestic pets under certain rules:

- You may keep a dog, whether or not you have a private garden, as long as you keep the dog under strict control.
- You cannot, however, keep a dog in any tower block or warden assisted sheltered housing. You can request a list of these properties.
- Pets must be kept under control.

- They must not be a nuisance to anyone else.
- You must make sure that your pets do not foul any of the shared areas. If they do, you must clean it up.

You will be expected to repay any expenses paid by Hounslow Homes if cleansing is required.

6.35 Keys

You are provided with keys for your home by Hounslow Homes. It is your responsibility to replace them if lost.

Tenancy matters

Security of tenure

Most council tenants are secure tenants under Part IV of the 1985 Housing Act. There are certain exceptions such as service tenants (e.g. caretakers), or those housed in temporary accommodation, e.g. bed and breakfast, by the council as homeless persons.

As a secure tenant of London Borough of

Hounslow you have the right of security of tenure as well as other rights explained in your Tenancy Agreement.

You are a secure tenant as long as your home is your 'only or principal' home. It is a condition of your Tenancy Agreement that you must live in the property or you may lose security of your home.

Security of tenure means that Hounslow Homes can only end your tenancy if it can prove that there is a good reason for doing so and obtain a court order for possession of the property. The grounds for possession are set out in the Schedule II of the Housing Act 1985 (as amended by the Housing Act 1996).

There is more information about how you can risk losing your home at the end of this chapter.

Joint tenancies (other agreed tenants living in your home)

All tenants of a council property have the same rights and responsibilities. For example, each joint tenant is responsible for paying all the rent, not just part of it.

Any joint tenant can apply for a rent or council tax rebate.

If one of the joint tenants dies, the tenancy automatically continues for the surviving joint tenant who becomes a successor. You need to let Hounslow Homes know if this happens. A surviving joint tenant is responsible for any and all rent outstanding.

In the case of partnership disputes, except where there is evidence of domestic violence, Hounslow Homes can take no action to transfer a joint tenancy to one of the tenants until the dispute is decided by the Courts or

the parties themselves.

A joint tenancy may be terminated by notice from either party with four week's notice to Hounslow Homes in writing ending on a Monday. In the situation where both joint tenants want to give less notice they must agree and both sign a Notice of Termination.

If you are cohabiting or do not wish to go to court, you will need a letter from your partner surrendering or giving up their rights before an application for the tenancy to be transferred can be considered. You should then consult Hounslow Homes.

The only major exception is where there is violence or threatened violence, in which case you should ask for advice at your local housing office. Hounslow Homes' and the London Borough of Hounslow's policy on domestic violence is to operate a 'victim

orientated' approach to those who are made homeless. If a victim feels unable to return home an offer of bed and breakfast accommodation will always be made. Please read the separate leaflet on domestic violence available at your local Hounslow Homes office.

If you are at present a sole tenant and would prefer a joint tenancy with your wife/husband/partner you should contact your local housing office. A Hounslow Homes Customer Information Officer can give you advice and may be able to help issue you with a new joint tenancy provided you are not already a successor tenant. Hounslow Homes will not usually offer a joint tenancy across generations. Normally joint tenancies are offered wherever practicable when two or more cohabiting adults are re-housed by Hounslow Homes.

Succession

Sole tenancy

If you are a secure sole tenant, your tenancy may pass to a family member living with you at the time of your death provided:

- You were not already a successor (the law allows only one succession to a secure tenancy).
- The family member occupied the property as her/his only or principal home at the time of your death.
- The family member (other than a spouse) must have lived with you for at least the twelve months immediately prior to your death (although not necessarily at the property you occupied at your death).

Joint tenancy

When one joint tenant dies, the survivor remains a secure tenant and automatically becomes a successor but no further

succession may occur. This is inline with housing law.

Under-occupying/specially adapted properties

A successor tenant (other than a spouse) may be required to move, within a given time limit, if the property is considered by Hounslow Homes to be too large for the successor's needs or if the property is one that has been built or adapted for special needs but the successor and members of her/his family have no special need for such accommodation.

In these cases Hounslow Homes must offer reasonable alternative accommodation. Removal expenses may be paid where alternative accommodation is accepted. For more details contact your local housing office.

No right to succeed

Where there is no right to succeed, the tenancy will be brought to an end by Hounslow Homes serving

the required notices.

Any unauthorised person(s) remaining in the property after the death of the tenant will normally be required to vacate, and failure to do so may result in Hounslow Homes seeking possession of the property through the County Court.

However, in very exceptional circumstances, Hounslow Homes may at its discretion re-house a person remaining in the property after the death of the tenant, who does not have the right to succeed. However, if this involves a large property the person may be asked to accept a smaller property.

A situation where this might occur could be where an occupier gave up her/his home to provide care and support even though s/he is not a relative.

All applications for succession of tenancies are handled by Hounslow Homes. If the tenant or a

joint tenant dies, please contact your housing office and let them know.

Changing the terms of your Tenancy Agreement

If the Council wishes to change the terms of your tenancy, it has to consult with tenants formally to tell them what changes it wishes to bring in and what the effect will be.

It has to ask for your views, consider the views put forward, and then decide whether to go ahead with the proposed change.

If the Council decides to go ahead, Hounslow Homes will send you a 'Notice of Variation' telling you what the new terms are, the effects and the date, (at least four weeks ahead), when the change will come into force.

These arrangements do not apply to changing your rent or other charges. The Council must give at least four weeks' notice in writing.

Assignment and exchange of tenancies:

You are not allowed by the terms of the Tenancy Agreement to sublet or part with possession of the whole of your home. If you sublet or part with possession of the whole of your home all at once or in stages, you risk losing your home.

You may only assign (legally pass on) your tenancy if:

1. You are exercising your right of exchange and have all signatures of the tenants involved and have the prior permission of both landlords.
2. You are assigning to your spouse/cohabitee or other close relative, including grown-up children, who have lived with you for at least the previous 12 months and would be qualified to succeed.

3. There has been a Court Order in matrimonial proceedings.

In cases 1 and 2 you must obtain Hounslow Homes' permission and in 3 you must inform Hounslow Homes.

Your right to exchange

All secure tenants have the right to exchange their properties with another secure tenant, whether of the same landlord or not (section 92 (1) of the Housing Act 1985).

As landlord, the London Borough of Hounslow has 42 days in which to consent and may only refuse consent on one of the grounds set out in Schedule III of the Housing Act 1985.

The full grounds to withholding permission to exchange properties are set out in the schedule. The most common grounds for refusing permission to exchange are as follows:

Ground 1

The tenant is already under a court order to give up possession of their property.

Ground 2

Proceedings for possession have commenced, or a Notice of Seeking Possession has been served.

Ground 3

The accommodation would be too large for the tenant.

Ground 4

The nature of the accommodation offered does not meet the needs of the tenant and his/her family.

Ground 5

The accommodation or land was held primarily for non-housing purposes or let for reasons of employment.

Ground 6

The landlord is a charity and the tenants' occupation would conflict with the purpose of the charity.

Ground 7

The property is designed for a physically disabled person and if the proposed tenant moved in there would be no disabled person living in the property.

Homeswap

If you are a tenant of Hounslow Council or have a permanent tenancy with another social landlord in another borough or a housing association, you may be able to do a "Homeswap". This is also known as a "Mutual Exchange". This means you agree to swap homes with another household. Sometimes more than two households are involved.

To register for a Homeswap you need to complete an application form. Forms are available at all Hounslow Homes area offices. More information about moving home is included in Chapter Two giving details of how you can bid for a property through the

choice based lettings scheme, Locata.

Lodgers, sub-letting or parting with possession of your home

The Housing Act 1985 does not permit subletting and / or parting with possession of the whole of your home. This is also stated in your Tenancy Agreement.

You have the right to take in lodgers without the Council or Hounslow Homes' permission, but please contact your local housing office for advice before you do. You should only take in a lodger if you have room.

If it leads to overcrowding in your home, Hounslow Homes has grounds for seeking possession of your property.

You also have the right to sublet part of your home, but only if you obtain Hounslow Homes' written permission beforehand, contact your local housing office for details.

Hounslow Homes cannot and will not refuse permission to sublet without good reason (such as overcrowding).

If Hounslow Homes refuses permission to sublet and you think this is unreasonable, you have the right to challenge this decision in court. The Council would have to prove its case, not you. The Court will look at all the circumstances in deciding whether the refusal was unreasonable. The Court will consider the possibility that subletting could lead to overcrowding and any plans the Council may have to make changes in your home which would affect the accommodation you want to sublet.

But before any case of this sort reaches court, except where statutory overcrowding would arise if the permission to sublet was granted, a senior manager will review Hounslow Homes' decision.

If you sublet part of your home without the permission of Hounslow Homes, Hounslow Homes may ask you to evict her/him. If you do not do so, Hounslow Homes may seek to end your tenancy but you and your subtenant would be given time to get advice.

You should not evict a lodger/tenant without first getting advice from the Law Centre, Citizens Advice Bureau or a solicitor.

If you are not sure in the beginning whether any arrangement you are making could be called subletting rather than just taking in a lodger, you should also consult one of the above agencies.

Please write to Hounslow Homes if a member of your family comes to live permanently at your home.

This is to help Hounslow Homes deal with any future applications or enquiries you might have such as buying the property, succession rights,

overcrowding, etc. If you take in a lodger or sublet and are claiming Housing Benefit, you must notify Hounslow Revenue Services on 020 8583 4242.

Ending the tenancy

You must give Hounslow Homes a minimum of four weeks notice in writing, ending on a Monday to end your tenancy (this is called a Notice of Termination). Please write to your local housing office. Addresses can be found at the back of this handbook.

If you have a joint tenancy, all the joint tenants must sign the letter. If it is not possible for you both to sign a Notice of Termination as one partner has left, then one signature will also be valid. If there are good reasons why you cannot tell Hounslow Homes you are leaving a month in advance, you may be able to give less notice. If both joint tenants are in agreement to give less notice, this must be in writing. This can only be

arranged with Hounslow Homes at your local housing office. In specially agreed circumstances, a minimum of seven days' notice ending on a Monday is required.

Please note as listed in your tenancy agreement

- 8.2 You must make sure that all persons leave the property when the tenancy is brought to an end.
- 8.3 You must allow Hounslow Homes access to inspect the property before you leave.
- 8.4 Hounslow Homes has the right to clear the property and sell any items you leave behind.
- 8.5 You must leave Hounslow Homes' fixtures and fittings as they were at the beginning of your tenancy and if you fail to do so you may be charged for any damage. Allowances will be made for fair wear and tear.

Keys

All keys to the property and store shed, any garage, security doors and entryphone etc. must be returned to your local housing office on the Monday morning on which your tenancy ends at the latest. If you keep the keys after that Hounslow Homes will change the lock and you will be charged the cost of this and any lost rent. It is your personal responsibility to ensure that the keys are handed back at your local Hounslow Homes office and not through a third party.

What to do if you are leaving your home for a period of time

You must tell Hounslow Homes if you are going away for more than two weeks. You should also leave a forwarding address/telephone number in case of an emergency.

If you are leaving your home for 1 to 6 months and want someone to

occupy your property in your absence, you must get written permission from Hounslow Homes in advance.

Permission will not be granted for other people to live in your home if you are leaving it for more than 6 months.

If you do not return to your home within the time you say, Hounslow Homes will assume you have given up the tenancy. Anyone living in your home without Hounslow Homes' knowledge or approval may be treated as an unauthorised occupant and Hounslow Homes will go to Court to evict them from the property.

Reasons for seeking possession of your home

Before applying to the Court, the council would have to serve notice telling you of its intention of seeking possession and the reason. The Notice of Seeking Possession must fix a date - at least four weeks

ahead - after which a court action may be started. If the action is not started within a further 12 months, the Notice is no longer valid. However, a fresh Notice can be served.

In cases involving nuisance and anti-social behaviour, the Housing Act 1985 (as amended) states that Hounslow Homes can serve a Notice of Seeking Possession on a tenant/s and start proceedings immediately.

You would have the opportunity to present your side of the case to the Court, if and when the application is heard and you may be able to obtain Legal Aid.

After the date set in the Notice, the Council can go to court to ask for a Possession Order, but the Court will only order this in certain circumstances which are laid down in the Housing Act 1985 (Part IV).

The first type of case where the Court can order

eviction is where the council has 'grounds for possession' and the Court thinks it 'reasonable' that you should be asked to leave the property.

The grounds for possession by Hounslow Homes in this case are that:

- You are in arrears with the rent or have broken a condition of your tenancy. This also includes being in arrears with your service charge or heating which is all collected under the general heading of 'rent'.
- You, or anyone living with you, have caused a nuisance or annoyance to your neighbours, now referred to as anti-social behaviour.

It is the Council's policy to evict proven perpetrators of racial harassment and other very serious anti-social behaviour. Anti-Social Behaviour Orders and criminal charges may also be sought. On behalf of the

Council, Hounslow Homes may also take action to evict persons who commit acts of domestic violence. We will find temporary accommodation for the victim if it is not possible for her/him to stay in the home and seek to evict the perpetrator.

- You, or anyone living with you, have been convicted of using your home for immoral or illegal purposes.
- You, or anyone living with you, have damaged your home or any of the common areas shared with your neighbours.
- You made false statements to get the tenancy.
- You have refused to leave a flat or house which was let to you temporarily while your permanent home was being repaired or modernised.
- You have given or received a sum of money as part of an exchange.

- You have another permanent home elsewhere.

The Court, in deciding whether an eviction is reasonable or not, is likely to take into account the size of the problem (how much, for instance, you owe in rent arrears), your personal circumstances, your past conduct as a tenant, etc.

The second type of case where the Court may order eviction is where the council has 'grounds for possession' and suitable alternative accommodation is available for you.

The grounds for possession by Hounslow Homes in this case are that:

- Your home is overcrowded under the Housing Act 1985.
- The Council wants to demolish or work on your home or land connected with it and cannot do so while you are still in occupation.

In these cases, Hounslow Homes does not have to convince the Court that it is reasonable to evict you. But Hounslow Homes does have to prove that one of these facts is true and that suitable alternative accommodation is available.

The new accommodation available must give you the same or equivalent security of tenure and it must be 'reasonably suitable' for you and your family. The Court will take into account the size and type of accommodation you live in as well as other relevant factors.

The third type of case where a court can evict is where Hounslow Homes has 'grounds for possession' and it is reasonable that you should be evicted and suitable alternative accommodation is available.

The grounds for possession by Hounslow Homes in this case are that:

- Your home is one that has been built or adapted for a person with disabilities but there is no longer a disabled person living there and Hounslow Homes needs it for other people with disabilities.
- Your home is one of a group of homes let to people who need a special facility (like a warden service in sheltered flats) and there is no longer someone who needs that service living in your home.
- You succeeded to the tenancy when the original tenant died and the home is too large for you. This ground will not be used at all if you are a widow or widower of the original tenant. The Notice of Seeking Possession must be served within six or twelve months of the tenant's death and court proceedings may be started up to a year after this date. However, the

Court will take into account your age, the length of time you have occupied your home and any financial or other assistance you have given to the original tenant. Each case will be considered individually before court action is started.

In these cases, Hounslow Homes must prove to the Court that it is reasonable to have you evicted and that suitable accommodation is available for you.

The Court has power to adjourn the case for any length of time or postpone the date on which you would have to leave. The Court can also suspend the Possession Order so that it only becomes operative if

you do not comply with the Court Order to pay off rent arrears at a certain rate; or continue to be a nuisance to your neighbours, etc.

The Court cannot exercise these sort of powers in cases where the council has proved overcrowding or that possession is needed for demolition or to carry out other works. The Court will take into account the need to rehouse the homeless and those living in overcrowded conditions when deciding whether it is reasonable to allow tenants to stay in their present accommodation.

For your information

Copies of The Housing Act 1985 and the Housing Act 1996 are available at local libraries.

Chapter 2

Applying for a property and transferring from one property to another

Becoming a tenant

Hounslow Homes will view suitable properties with you before you sign any tenancy agreement and make an appointment to see you within 6 weeks to ensure that you are satisfied with your new accommodation.

There are a number of ways to apply for a home for the first time and transfer from one home to another.

About Locata

The London Borough of Hounslow has joined with neighbouring boroughs

and several housing associations to form Locata. Locata is a choice based lettings scheme for existing Hounslow Homes tenants and new applicants. When you become a member of Locata you will receive a letter confirming your housing band and the size of the property you are eligible to bid for and a batch of coupons.

Locata provides you with a choice of new home.

Under the scheme you bid for a vacant property and then, depending on your priority and length of wait, and others who have put in bids, you could be offered that home.

If you are a council tenant, rent privately or are homeless, you will become a member of Locata when you apply for a home or transfer to another property. Locata members are placed in one of four bands, (A to D), according to their housing need and date order within band. Locata gives you more

choice about where you want to live and the type of home you want to live in but there is still a shortage of homes to live in. This means that some people may still have a long wait to be housed.

Are you eligible for Locata?

You are eligible if you are already a council tenant.

You may not be eligible to become a member however if:

- You are a tenant with a Notice of Seeking Possession outstanding.
- You are a new applicant with immigration restrictions.
- You are living in another West London borough, (you should register there).

If these circumstances apply to you we will write to you within 10 working days of receiving your form.

What you need to do if you want to transfer from one property to another or apply for a property for the first time

Complete an application form

These forms are available from your local Hounslow Homes housing office.

Please send or take the completed form to your local Hounslow Homes housing office if you are a Hounslow Homes tenant wishing to transfer to another property, or to the Rehousing Unit or the Homeless Persons Unit at the London Borough of Hounslow if you are a new applicant.

Private sector applicants

If you rent your home from a private landlord, or you live with your parents or other relatives (even if they rent their home from the council) you need to complete an application form. The London Borough

of Hounslow's Rehousing Unit deals with private sector forms. To obtain a copy please contact them on 020 8583 3814.

Housing Association tenants

If you rent your home from a Housing Association, Co-op or Trust, you need to complete an application form. Housing Association forms are also available from the Rehousing Unit.

When you have fully completed your form, you can take it back in person or post it to the Rehousing Unit at: The Civic Centre, Lampton Road, Hounslow, TW3 4DN.

Other options to move to a new home

Homeswap

If you are a tenant of the council or have a permanent tenancy such as an assured tenancy with another social landlord, in another borough or a housing association, you may be able to do a

"Homeswap". This is also known as a "Mutual Exchange".

This means you agree to swap homes with another household. Sometimes more than two households are involved.

To register for a Homeswap you need to complete an application form. Forms are available at all Hounslow Homes area offices. See chapter fourteen for further information.

Lawn scheme

This scheme gives you the opportunity to move away from London to areas such as the Midlands, Scotland and Wales. It is therefore important you are sure you want to move, as if you move and find you don't like it, it will be exceedingly difficult to move back to London.

If you are interested in moving please telephone your Area Housing Office and you will be sent information on the scheme.

You can also visit the Lawn website at:
www.lawn.org.uk

Trading Places

This scheme encourages tenants with spare rooms they no longer need to "trade down" into a smaller home, with a lump sum payable when you move. For more information and an application form, please contact your local housing office.

Sheltered Housing

There are a number of schemes all over the borough which provide independent housing opportunities for people aged 60+, with the added security of a Sheltered Scheme Manager on hand.

We can arrange to visit you at home to discuss sheltered housing in more detail or please feel free to visit your local housing office for more information.

Please refer to the booklet "How to apply for a property for the first time or move from one property to another" for more information on Locata and other schemes which involve moving home.

For further information about low cost home ownership (including shared ownership with a housing association), where you part buy and part rent a property, or the availability of key worker accommodation, please visit www.hounslow.gov.uk

Chapter 3

Buying your home

If you are a council tenant, you may have the right to buy your home at a discount under the Government's 'Right to Buy' scheme.

You are eligible for the scheme if you are a secure tenant and rent your home from one or more public sector landlord(s). Members of your family that live with you may be able to share the right to buy with you. At present, you can get up to £16,000 discount for properties in the London Borough of Hounslow.

For more information and to get an application pack please contact Hounslow Homes' Home Ownership Unit. Contact details are listed in chapter fourteen.

After you buy

In addition to the payment for the property, buying your home means having to pay for works and services that are currently included in your rent. You have to pay for everything needed to insure, maintain and improve your home if you buy the freehold of your house.

If you buy the lease for a flat you arrange and pay for works to the interior of your home and also pay service charges. Service charges are your contribution towards Hounslow Homes' costs in insuring and maintaining your building (and your estate if you live on one) and for services such as caretaking and grounds maintenance. This can be very costly if major works, such as roof and window renewal, are carried out.

Hounslow Homes' Home Ownership Unit calculates and collects service charges from leaseholders and from some freeholders. Their

office is open from 8.45am to 5pm, Monday to Friday and until 5.30pm on Thursday by agreement.

Please make an appointment if you want to visit the Home Ownership Office. Contact details are at the back of this handbook.

The Home Ownership Unit will:

- Answer questions about annual service charges, major works, ground rent and buildings insurance accounts.
- Provide information for prospective purchasers, through the Councils' Solicitor, if you are a leaseholder thinking about selling your property. There is a charge for this service.
- Assess any applications you make to carry out alterations to your property. There may be a charge for this service.

Chapter 4

Sheltered Housing

Sheltered housing enables older people to live independent lives. The aim is for residents to be independent but still feel secure knowing that there is a Sheltered Scheme Manager in case of emergencies. The accommodation is usually a flat with a bedroom, sitting room, kitchen and bathroom or a bed-style room with a kitchenette, toilet and shared bathroom. Sheltered Housing also offers communal facilities such as a laundry room and lounge.

Communal facilities

Most sheltered schemes have a communal lounge where you can meet other residents. The Sheltered Scheme Manager will keep you informed about social activities such as musical

evenings, discussion groups and outings, and will link you with the services provided by the council and voluntary organisations.

Laundry rooms with washing machines and tumble driers are provided so you can do your own washing. Some schemes have communal telephones but if you want your own private telephone installed in your flat, this can be arranged independently.

The Sheltered Scheme Manager is there to provide you with support without interfering in your daily life and pays a regular visit to each of the tenants six days a week. In an emergency you can call the Sheltered Scheme Manager



through an easily reached alarm system. If you are taken ill, the Sheltered Scheme Manager will call a doctor and contact your relatives or other welfare services if necessary. The Sheltered Scheme Manager's duties do not include providing personal care.

Support plans are completed when new tenants move in. The support plan helps to identify your support needs so we can supply the best service. With your consent, we will also contact other agencies on your behalf for example social services to assess your personal care needs.

Ensuring protection from abuse

Every adult has a right to:

- A life free from fear.
- To be treated with dignity.
- To have their choices respected and not to be forced to do anything



against their will.

If you are concerned that a vulnerable adult you know may be at risk from abuse, please do not ignore it. There are a number of agencies you can contact listed at the back of this handbook. If you are concerned about someone living in sheltered housing, your Sheltered Scheme Manager is there to listen to your concerns and take them forward if you so wish.

Linkline

Our community alarm system, Linkline, gives peace of mind to older people by linking their homes direct to a central call centre. The scheme

operates 24 hours a day and the Community Support Warden can talk to you and provide reassurance and help where necessary. Community Support Wardens can visit sheltered schemes in an emergency.

All sheltered flats are connected to Linkline. If a Sheltered Scheme Manager is away, all alarm systems are switched over to Linkline, so you always have someone to call on. Linkline is also available to any resident in their home if they feel they may benefit from extra security. Users tend to be older people, those with disabilities or individuals who feel threatened or vulnerable because of previous harassment or attack.

You can be temporarily connected to Linkline's call centre from your existing home whilst you are waiting for an offer to move into a sheltered scheme. Ask your local

housing office for details or contact Linkline.

What is sheltered housing and how do I apply?

You will normally qualify for sheltered housing if you are aged 60 and over, and suffer from some kind of frailty, illness or disability and need a daily visit from a Sheltered Scheme Manager.

If you feel that you need this type of home, please do not hesitate to contact your local housing office or your Social Services area office. When you apply, a member of staff will help you fill in the form and take all the necessary details. If you find it difficult to travel to the your local area office, we will visit you with an application form or a form will be posted to you.

If you have any language difficulties, we can arrange for an interpreter. Please tell the officer helping you what language you speak.

A Housing Officer, and possibly an Occupational Therapist, will visit you to assess your need for this type of home. We will then write and let you know whether or not your application has been successful.

If you are found to be unsuitable for sheltered accommodation, we will write to advise you why. However, we will arrange to visit you and review your situation in 12 months time as your circumstances might have changed. In the meantime you should let us know if you experience any additional health problems or other changes that might make it possible to look at your case earlier.

Support charges

In addition to rent and service charges, sheltered tenants may have to pay a support charge. The sheltered housing support charge pays for the daily visit from a Sheltered Scheme Manager and all

assistance with housing related support. This service is part of the Supporting People programme, and means that the support service is chargeable and Hounslow Homes will collect the charge on behalf of the council.

However sheltered tenants who are in receipt of full or partial housing benefit may be entitled to assistance with the support charge. Tenants not in receipt of Housing Benefit or partial housing benefit may get assistance under the Fairer Charging arrangements.

Your Sheltered Scheme Manager will be able to assist you with further information and help you to claim benefits.

Tenants living in Sheltered Housing from April 2003 do not have to pay the support charge. This protection means that existing tenants can move to properties within the sheltered service e.g. from a first floor to a ground floor property, without

incurring support charges. The rent card you receive will show details of your support charge.

What are my rights and responsibilities?

Your responsibilities and rights are the same as any other council tenants in most ways. However, because sheltered housing is specially designed for older people, you cannot transfer the tenancy of your home to other members of your family or friends. Neither can you buy your sheltered flat. See Right to Buy at the end of the chapter.

What will it cost?

Rent costs are equivalent to similar property in general housing, plus an additional weekly support charge.

Can my relatives visit me and stay overnight?

Your friends and relatives are welcome to visit and provide you with regular help and care. Some sheltered schemes have a

guest room which may be used for an overnight stay for which a small charge may be made. Please ask your Sheltered Scheme Manager for more details.

Can I keep a pet?

You are not allowed to keep a dog in a sheltered flat but you may be able to keep a cat. Please consult the Sheltered Scheme Manager before moving in.

If I am already a council tenant, can I apply for a sheltered flat?

Yes, certainly. However, your rent account must be clear. Your local housing office will give you any help you need with your application.

Are there alternatives to council sheltered housing?

Yes, but these are in short supply. Some Housing Associations in the area have sheltered schemes to which the council can nominate suitable older applicants. If you would

like to be nominated for a Housing Association flat, you need to apply to the Council stating your interest in sheltered housing on the application form or to the Housing Officer who visits you.

Occasionally, private developers inform the council of new sheltered schemes in the area where flats are on sale to people who want the support of a Sheltered Scheme Manager. Residents buy a flat and pay a regular service charge for the costs of the Sheltered Scheme Manager's services. If you have a home to sell and would be interested in buying a private sheltered flat, ask your local housing office if any such schemes are available.

All of our sheltered schemes reflect Hounslow's multi-cultural profile and we recognise that older people from ethnic minority groups might

need different types of support. We have one sheltered scheme that caters particularly, but not exclusively, for Asian older people in the borough. The Sheltered Scheme Manager at Heath Court, Hounslow, has been appointed specifically to understand the needs of all groups in the community and speaks both English and Asian languages.

Right to Buy

Sheltered housing is not part of the Right to Buy scheme because the homes are particularly suitable for people of pensionable age, are regularly let to older people and because special facilities are provided including a Scheme Manager and a common room. Some older persons' housing is also excluded from the Right to Buy scheme, please see chapter three' buying your home' for more information.

Chapter 5

Your rent and benefits

'Rent' is a charge paid by all council tenants.

What does my rent pay for?

- Basic rent (which helps towards providing, maintaining and managing your home and neighbourhood).
- Heating.
- Hot water charges.
- Sheds.

What is not covered by my rent?

- The cost of hiring a garage.

If a house is classed as a "house and garage", your rent may be higher to include the cost of hiring the garage. These costs are not separated out on the rent card.

If the person renting a garage buys a property they will no longer be a

tenant, and will lose their tenants garage allowance (currently £1 per week) and may also have to pay VAT.

When to pay your rent

Rent is due on a Monday and should be paid in advance either weekly, fortnightly or monthly to suit you.

If you are going to be away from your home you must make sure that your rent is still paid. You can do this by setting up a direct debit or a standing order with your bank.

You must pay your rent, and any other charges shown on your rent card, regularly and on time.

Help and information

Hounslow Homes' rent team looks after your rent payments. They will receive your payments, send your payment cards and answer any queries on your rent account or rent statements. The information given on your rent account will not be given to anybody unless they quote the reference

for payment number. You should contact your local housing office if you have a rent query; a customer information officer will be able to help you.

How to pay

You can pay by:

1. Direct debit (if you set-up a direct debit for a minimum of 12 months, we will give you a one-off incentive payment of £35)

A direct debit means that the Council will take money from your Giro bank account, bank or building society account each month until you tell us to stop or you cancel the payment. It also means that if your rent increases, you do not have to change the arrangements of your direct debit.

(NOTE: You are given two weeks' notice before any changes are made and can cancel at any time.)

HOW

You can set-up a direct

debit through the Post Office Giro System (if you have a National Giro bank account) or through your bank or building society.

You can get a direct debit form by ringing Hounslow Homes Rent Accounts.

2. Standing order (if you set-up a standing order for a minimum of 12 months, we will give you a one-off incentive payment of £25).

A standing order means that the payments will be made automatically each month, by the post office or the bank, until you tell them to stop. You can get a standing order form, by ringing Hounslow Homes Rent Accounts.

HOW

You can set-up a standing order through the Post Office Giro System (if you have a National Giro Bank Account), or through your bank or building society.

If you want to cancel your standing order you must

inform Rent Accounts at the same time as you cancel at the bank or building society.

3. Pay online through our website

HOW

1. Visit our website:
www.hounslowhomes.org.uk
2. Click on 'online payments' and 'internet payment facility'. This takes you through to a secure computer link.

3. Under 'reference':

If you choose 'rents swipe card', you do not need to enter the first 6 digits on your rent card which are always 633574. Type in the next 12 digits leaving out the last number. (Click on the I icon if you need more help.)

If you choose 'rents 14 digits', you need to enter the full 14 digits from your rent card or statement of account.

(NOTE: Please do not insert dashes or gaps when you enter your rent card

number as this will make it difficult to process.)

4. Select the type of bill you want to pay from the drop down window.
5. Then, type in the amount you wish to pay.

Enter the amount in pounds and pence (e.g. enter 10.00 for £10). Do not enter a £ symbol. If you have made a mistake click on 'clear'. Click on 'add' if correct.

6. Go to "Card details" and select your card type from the drop down window.

- i) Enter the card number from the front of your card without any spaces.
- ii) Enter the issue number for switch cards only, leave blank for other cards.
- iii) Enter the issue date if your card has one. Leave blank if there is not an issue number on your card.
- iv) Enter the expiry date shown on the front of the card and select month and year from the drop down window

7. Enter the payer details.
8. Click on 'accept' if you want to carry on with this payment. You will be given a number which is proof of receipt. You need to use this number if you want to contact us about your payment.

4. Pay by cash or cheque, at:

The Cash Office, The Civic Centre, Lampton Road, Hounslow TW3 4DN.

Opening times:

Monday to Friday
8.45am to 4pm

Cheques should be made payable to the London Borough of Hounslow.

You can also pay direct at your local housing office (cheques only).

5. Pay at the post office

You can pay at the post office using a payment card given by the council with your rent card. The payment card shows your name and reference numbers of your property

and account. The post office accepts cheques and makes no charge. Cheques should be made payable to Post Office Ltd.

6. By phone

Telephone Hounslow Council's 24 hour automated telephone payments system on 020 8583 5959.

What should you do if you cannot pay your rent?

Ask us for help as soon as possible

Arrangements for clearing a debt are flexible and can suit your own needs.

If you miss payments you will be contacted by a member of our rents team.

Get in touch with the person who has written the letter as s/he can advise you about available benefits and discuss ways to clear any debt. Hounslow Homes should also be told as soon as possible if your partner leaves when the tenancy is in joint names as you will

be held responsible for any rent arrears. In some cases, Hounslow Homes may be able to arrange for you to change to a single tenancy.

If you have other debts apart from rent arrears, you can talk to a Customer Information Officer. S/he can refer you to Hounslow Money Advice Service (the number is given at the back of this handbook). Leaflets about how to manage your rent are available at local area offices.

What happens if you don't pay your rent?

Hounslow Homes may go to Court for a Possession Order, which could lead to you being evicted from your home.

Changes in your rent

The council will give tenants at least 4 weeks' notice of any increase to rent or heating costs. If any part of your rent costs change, you will be sent a new rent card.

As stated in your Tenancy Agreement:

You must pay your rent to your landlord, the London Borough of Hounslow via Hounslow Homes on a Monday for the week, fortnight or month in advance. The amount to be paid will be shown on your rent card which will be given to you at the start of the tenancy.

You must also pay any other charges every Monday which are shown on your card, for example, heating charges.

Hounslow Council have the right to change the rent and other charges. The council will give you notice of any changes in rent before they are made. You will be sent a new rent card after any changes to rent.

Where appropriate Hounslow Homes will use payments received for current rent and other charges to pay debts you owe to Hounslow Council incurred under a former tenancy.

When we set or change your rent we may take into account any amounts of rent or other charges you failed to pay for another property where you were a tenant. If we need to take

this into account, it may lead to you paying a higher rent. You will be able to appeal such a decision and say why this should not happen.

Chapter 6

Reporting repairs

This chapter talks about repairs and maintenance work to your home. It will tell you about the repairs and maintenance work that Hounslow Homes will carry out free of charge and explain the repairs which are not our responsibility and should be arranged and paid for by you. This chapter also explains how to report a repair to us. For further information on our repairs service, see our booklet 'Reporting Your Repairs', by visiting www.hounslowhomes.org.uk or your local area housing office.

How to report a repair

1) Call Hounslow Homes' Call Centre on:

0800 085 6575

Opening hours:

8am to 8pm Monday to Friday and
9am to 12pm on Saturdays.
or

2) Visit your local housing office

Addresses are listed in the Useful Contacts section at the back of this handbook.

Emergency repairs

- 1) Use any of the methods above.
- 2) Outside office hours, call our emergency repairs number 020 8583 2222.

(In emergencies it is sometimes only possible to do a temporary repair that leaves your home safe. If this happens, a permanent repair will be carried out later.)

What happens when you call us?

We use a 'queuing' system which means you will sometimes have to join a queue of callers. We staff the service to meet high demand times but you might wish to avoid mornings and especially Mondays if your call is not urgent. Please hold on and be patient as we will try and answer your call as soon as possible.

If you put down the phone you will be at the end of the queue when you phone back. For the purposes of accuracy and training, Hounslow Homes' call centre has a policy of recording all telephone calls.

Information you need to report a repair

- Your name, address and daytime telephone number.
- As much information about the repair as possible. The detail you

give us will help us identify exactly what needs doing and get the job done quicker.

'Reporting Your Repairs' booklet includes diagrams and questions to help you identify the nature of the repair. These are available at your local housing office.

Arranging an appointment

- When you report a repair you will be given a job number which you can use if making further enquiries. We will then carry out the repair as quickly as possible.
- You will be given (unless the repair is an emergency) two appointment dates. The first appointment will be for us to check what materials we need to make the repair, the second appointment will be for our operative to carry out the repair.
- A member of our repairs

staff will call at your home. Remember to check their identity and if in any doubt do not let them in.

- If you are out when we call, a 'call card' will be left and the job will be cancelled. You will need to ring the call centre for them to raise another repair order and make another appointment.
- In the case of emergency orders please remember you must stay in. If you are out when we call,

the order will be cancelled. You will need to ring the call centre again for them to raise another repair order and book another appointment. An emergency repair is completed within 24 hours, unless we are unable to enter the property.

- If a technical inspection is required, we will offer an appointment date for a Technical Officer to visit.

Delays

Your repair may be delayed if:

- You give the wrong information about the problem
- Your repair needs a new part which is not in stock and must be ordered or specially made.
- The repair is already included in another works programme
- You do not keep your appointment

What are Hounslow Homes' responsibilities?

i) Repairs

The repairs that Hounslow Homes is responsible for are outlined in the "Right to Repair Regulations 1994". These are listed in Reporting Your Repairs booklet.

As a general guide, Hounslow Homes is

responsible for major repairs such as repairing the structure and outside of buildings and the fixtures and fittings we have provided in your home.

We also deal with major problems affecting your electricity, heating, gas and water supply.

*** Generally, repairs to fences and gates are your responsibility.** However, there are some instances when Hounslow Homes will carry out repairs. We will make sure that fences and boundaries are in a reasonable condition before you move into your property.

We will repair fences or gates if it is likely that by not doing so, there could be a safety or security risk to you or other residents. Examples include:

- If the fence that needs the repair links to a main road, railway, watercourse or other similar hazard and you have children under 5 years old living in the property.

We will repair gates under similar circumstances, for example, if a broken gate poses a potential security risk. In all other cases the fencing and gates are your responsibility. For general advice on your situation please contact your local housing office.

Specific examples of the areas, fixtures and fittings we carry out repairs or maintenance work to include (A-Z):

Basins/baths
 Brick built store sheds we have provided
 Chimneys (not sweeping)
 Council garages
 External decorating (we aim to do this every 6 years, if funds are available)
 Doors
 Drains
 Electrics
 Fences and gates*
 Floors and ceilings
 Flushing cisterns
 Gutters and rainwater pipes
 Heating
 Paths (only if in a dangerous condition)
 Plumbing (drains, loss of water, burst pipes)
 Refuse chutes
 Roofs and walls
 Sinks
 Steps
 Toilets
 Walls
 Windows

ii) Maintenance

Hounslow Homes will also keep in good working order:

Boilers
 Communal rotary dryers
 Communal stairs
 Communal TV aerials
 Driers provided by us
 Extractor fans that we have installed
 Fires, heaters and radiators provided by the Council
 Gas and water pipes
 Lifts
 Sockets & light fittings
 Water heaters
 Waste pipes
 Wiring

What are your responsibilities?

Hounslow Homes will not take responsibility for the repair or replacement of any fixtures or fittings, if:

- The repair or replacement is needed through the fault of the tenant, their family or visitors.

- The fixture or fitting has not been fitted by the London Borough of Hounslow or Hounslow Homes.

Examples of the repairs you are responsible for:

- Supplying and fixing plugs or chains to sinks, basins and toilets.
- Supplying and fixing toilet seats.
- Replacing fixtures and fittings not provided by us.
- Replacing light bulbs, light tubes and starters and plugs connected to appliances.
- Replacing glass in internal walls, doors or cupboards.
- Improvements, alterations and works carried out, or equipment provided voluntarily, by you or by previous tenants.
- Repairing fences.
- Internal decorations (except in specific circumstances).
- Individual rotary driers.
- Cookers, refrigerators, washing lines and washing machines (including installation of washing machines).
- If you lose your key you will have to pay the full cost of gaining access, fitting new locks and making good as required.

A note about decoration

You are responsible for decorating the inside of your home. If there is nobody at home who can help you and you are an older person or registered physically disabled we may decorate two of your rooms, or the hall and staircase, every six years (this is dependent on the money we have available).

Hounslow Homes is responsible for external decoration, however, if you would like to make improvements, you must get written permission from us.

Costs

Repairs that are the responsibility of tenants should be paid by the tenant themselves. If Hounslow Homes is asked to carry out this type of repair, we will recharge the cost to you. If you choose not to carry out a repair which affects other people in your area, for example, a broken fence which can be seen by other neighbours, Hounslow Homes will arrange for the repair to be carried out and will recharge you the cost of the repair. It is possible to pay for recharged repairs by instalments. Or, you might be able to claim back the cost of getting a repair from your own insurance company. Check your policy to see if this is possible. If you receive Housing Benefit, Hounslow Homes will arrange to carry out and pay for the repair and you will be able to pay back the cost in instalments. The amount will be agreed with the Rent Accounts section.

Tenants do not have to pay for repairs that are the responsibility of Hounslow Homes or for repairs which are the result of burglary or another crime (for example, a broken window). Please make sure you get a crime reference number from the police otherwise you may be recharged the full cost of repairs.

What is an emergency repair?

We urge tenants to contact us (or another relevant company) as soon as possible if something happens in their home which seriously affects their safety or security.

Examples include:

- Gas leaks - These should be reported to Transco on 0800 111 999.
- Burst pipes and other water supply failures which cannot be contained and are causing damage to the property.

- Blocked drains causing flooding inside or outside your home/causing the toilet to overflow when flushed or when no other toilet is available in the property.
- Fire or storm damage which leaves a home unsafe and unprotected against the weather.
- Missing or dangerous drain covers.
- A power failure. It is vitally important before you call Hounslow Homes that you carry out basic internal checks such as wall switches and fuse boxes, as you will be charged for a call-out. We also ask tenants to check if neighbours are experiencing the same problem before calling.
- If you have a heating problem during cold weather and there is someone living in your home who is over retirement age, is less than three years old or who is chronically sick or disabled.
- Complete power failure affecting lighting in internal shared areas (for example, entrance halls, landings and staircases).
- If you have lost your keys.
- The roofing of your home either failed or been damaged causing internal damage.

What to do if things go wrong

i) Complaints

If you are not happy with our service you can contact:

STEP 1

Our Complaints Officer on 020 8583 3737.

STEP 2

If you are unhappy with this response, contact our Customer Services Officer:

Tel: 020 8583 3726 or 3727

Write:

Customer Services Officer,
St Catherine's House, 2
Hanworth Road, Feltham
TW13 5AB.

The Complaints Officer will pass your stage one complaint to the relevant service manager and provide you with a reference number if you need to contact them again. They can also give you information on action you can take if you do not get a satisfactory response within ten days.

There is more information on how to complain in chapter twelve.

ii) Compensation

The Right to Repair Regulations 1994 state that tenants are to be paid compensation if a repair is not carried out within a certain number of working days. You will be advised of an estimated completion time when you call to report your repair and when more extensive repairs are required, after a home visit.

Hounslow Homes and contractors aim to complete repairs as quickly as possible.

If the repair is not carried out within a satisfactory time, tenants are advised to ask a second contractor to carry out the work. If the second contractor fails to carry out the work within the target time, you may have the right to compensation.

You will need to inform Hounslow Homes if you wish to claim and the repair must be less than £250 to qualify.

In some cases Hounslow Homes can allow rent reductions.

How much and for how long will depend on whether:

- You lost some facilities (such as hot water) in your home for a long period, and/or
- Part of your home could not be lived in because the repair had not been done.

In both cases, Hounslow Homes has to be satisfied that you suffered

substantial inconvenience, loss or discomfort.

Conditions

- A working day does not start until the morning after the repair was reported unless reported before 10.00 am. The number of working days excludes weekends and bank holidays.
- Compensation is paid only if the value of the work is less than £250 and if you have allowed reasonable access for the work to be carried out. (NOTE: We may take away any money owed to us against any

compensation payable under these regulations.)

- It is up to you to make a claim for compensation and you must make the claim in writing please.

Further information

If you are unsure about whether a repair is your responsibility or Hounslow Homes, please contact our call centre on freephone 0800 085 6575. More information about repairs is included in the 'Reporting your repairs' leaflet, available at your local housing office or by visiting www.hounslowhomes.org.uk

Chapter 7

Improvements to your home

Arranging improvements yourself

You may carry out improvements to your home but in most cases you will need to contact your area housing office to get written permission from us.

If the improvement qualifies, you may be entitled to compensation which will be a percentage of the cost of the work. You will need to discuss this further with us.

Getting permission from Hounslow Homes

The types of alterations you need permission for includes:

- Making additions to your home, such as a room extension, a porch, patio doors or conservatory.
- Altering the structure of the building - for example, removing a wall or chimney breast.

- Putting in new fixtures and fittings such as kitchen units or central heating.
- Making changes to gas or electricity supplies or the plumbing system.
- Putting in double glazing.
- Painting the outside of the property.
- Putting up television, radio (including CB) aerials and satellite dishes.

1. Satellite dishes may only be erected with our permission
2. Where permission is granted, it is your responsibility to ensure that the dish is fitted securely and safely and is positioned where it does not constitute a nuisance to another resident or impede access.
3. During works to the property, it is your responsibility to remove the dish to allow works to proceed and to replace it when works are complete.

4. Redundant dishes or those that are deemed to be unsafe will be removed at your cost.
5. It is not our responsibility if works to the property or to other properties in the area interfere with the reception of your system.

Note: The policy on satellite dishes and aerials will change as new technology becomes available - please check with your local housing office.

- Putting up sheds and garages.
- Replacing internal doors.
- Installing heavy storage heaters.
- Putting in a new washing machine.

If in doubt, call your area housing office.

Hounslow Homes has some rules on carrying out improvements. Please check with us before you start.

If we refuse to give you permission to make a home improvement, you can discuss the matter further

with your local housing officer.

Getting permission from other organisations

1. For some improvements, such as building a garage, you will need planning permission, and/or to conform to building regulations. To get this, please write to:

Head of Development Control, London Borough of Hounslow, Civic Centre.

If you are in any doubt about whether you need planning permission, please contact this department. There is a charge for their advice.

2. You may also need permission from your electricity company for additional sockets outlets/cooker panel.

Other improvements

Car parking

If you live in a house with its own front garden, you may apply for a hardstanding and pavement crossover to make your front garden suitable for

parking a car. If Hounslow Homes agrees with your request, you will have to meet Development and Control regulations and you pay the full cost of the works.

After you have made improvements

If you want to take any fittings with you, you must replace the originals or provide a substitute which is up to Hounslow Homes' standards. If you do not do this, Hounslow Homes will charge you for the cost of new fittings.

Hounslow Homes' Investment Programme

Hounslow Homes carries out major works to improve and maintain your home and neighbourhood. We have planned a four-year programme for this work (known as the Investment Programme) and each year we consult with tenants and leaseholders on our planned priorities for the following year. To find out more about how you can be involved in planning major improvements, see chapter ten.

Our Improvement Programme includes the following:

Creating decent homes

The Government has set a standard known as the Decent Homes standard, which all our homes are required to meet by 2010.

In order to be decent, a home must

- Reach a basic standard of fitness.
- Be in a reasonable state of repair.
- Have modern and appropriate facilities (e.g. kitchen and bathroom) and
- Have a reasonable level of energy efficiency.

This is our first priority and we hope to bring all of our homes up to Decent Homes standard by 2006 and then maintain that level of decency in future years.

There is a video available about the Decent Homes programme. If you would like a copy please contact your local housing office.

Other maintenance work

We have also planned other general improvements such as lift refurbishments, finding and removing asbestos, replacing cold water storage tanks and upgrading security systems.

Adaptations

We also carry out adaptations to homes to help elderly and disabled residents live independent lives. For further information please contact your local social services office, the numbers are listed in chapter fourteen.

Creating Decent Estates

The Decent Estates Programme aims to improve facilities as well as the appearance of estates. The improvements will focus on environmental issues on estates and will also tackle the appearance of areas such as stairways, lobbies, refuse disposal, and other shared spaces.

More information about programmed work can be

obtained by calling your local housing office.

If your home is included in a major works scheme

You will be contacted and consulted in the normal way before any specific works are carried out to your property.

You should not normally be visited by anyone other than the Tenant Liaison Officer (Hounslow Homes) or the Resident Liaison Officer (the contractor). All Hounslow Homes employees and contractors' personnel carry ID cards with their names and photographs.

Should anyone visit you at home, you should ask their name and ask to see their ID card. If you are in any doubt, ask the caller to wait outside while you call us to verify their identity.

DO NOT LET ANYONE INTO YOUR HOME UNLESS YOU ARE SURE OF THEIR IDENTITY

Chapter 8

Safety and security in your home

The importance of contents insurance

Your Tenancy Agreement states that you are responsible for the contents of your home.

This means that if there is a fire, flood, storm damage, accident, theft, etc, you will be responsible for replacing any items which are damaged such as carpets, furniture, clothing and curtains. Hounslow Homes is only responsible for the cost of repairs to the building. In order to be protected, it is advisable to take out your own contents insurance.

Hounslow Homes has an insurance scheme and for a small weekly premium payable with your rent, the policy will protect against fire, theft, vandalism and

water damage. Included with this policy is insurance to cover loss of keys and freezer contents. This scheme can only be joined if there are no rent arrears relating to your property. Application forms are available from Housing Offices and from the Civic Centre. For details of the scheme, contact Hounslow Homes. Other reputable insurance companies will also operate home insurance schemes.

Some common problems and how to avoid or deal with them

Frost

Serious damage can be done to pipes, sinks and basins by the expansion of water, if it freezes in the winter.

To avoid this in cold weather you should:

- Keep your home as warm as you can.
- Ensure that all pipes and tanks in your home are lagged; this is your

responsibility, and not Hounslow Homes. The exception to this is communal blocks. There is no compensation for any damage caused if a flood occurs as a result of freezing.

Burst pipes

If you have a burst pipe:

- Turn off the water immediately at the stopcock (which is usually under the kitchen sink). If in doubt contact Hounslow Homes' repairs service on 0800 085 6575. If you live in a communal block please contact Hounslow Homes for advice.
- Turn on all the taps to drain the water as quickly as possible from the system to stop flooding.
- If the water has been leaking turn off the main electrical supply.
- Turn off all hot water boilers.

Contact Hounslow Homes Call Centre, or our emergency service (after 6pm) - see chapter fourteen for telephone numbers.

Water overflow

Overflow pipes are fitted to the toilet and cold water tank.

If you have a leaking overflow it may be due to grit lodged behind the ballcock valve. You may be able to move it by:

- Flushing the toilet.
- Pressing the ball gently below the surface of the water, allowing it to rise slowly (repeat several times).
- If there is still a leak, report it to the Call Centre.

Drainage

Hounslow Homes will usually attempt to deal with blockages inside a property as well as gully drains, but in some cases where the blockage is too deep, specialist equipment will be needed.

The Drainage Team at the Council are responsible for maintaining drains which are located near to properties, all other drains (usually in roads) are maintained by Thames Water. If you are unsure who is responsible for a drain, contact the council team who will be able to confirm if the drain is their responsibility. Drains that are the responsibility of Thames Water should be reported to them direct. Thames Water will give a job reference number once the problem is reported.

Contact details for Thames Water and Hounslow Councils' Drainage Team are given at the back of this handbook.

Damp

Is it damp . . . or could it be condensation?

Condensation is moisture in your home which could appear on places like windows and may be caused by steam from cooking, baths or from drying clothes.

When does condensation happen?

Condensation usually occurs during cold weather, mainly on cold surfaces and in places where there is little movement of air.

How can you reduce condensation?

Wipe condensation off windows, doors and window sills every morning. (Wring out the cloth rather than drying it on a radiator.)

Cooking: Cover pans when cooking and do not leave kettles boiling.

Washing clothes: Put washing outdoors to dry if you can or put it in a room with the door closed and the window open or fan on.

If you have a tumble drier make sure you vent it to the outside (unless it is a self-condensing type).

Paraffin and portable gas heaters: These heaters put a lot of moisture into the air. If you have a damp problem these heaters should not be used.

Air your home!

- Keep a small window open or a ventilator open when someone is in the room and for short periods (10 to 15 minutes) each day. (On cold or wet days, keeping windows or vents open for long periods, when rooms are not used may only make the room colder and the air damper, which may increase condensation.)
- When using your kitchen or bathroom close doors to help stop moisture reaching other rooms.
- Avoid putting too many things in cupboards and wardrobes as this stops air circulating.
- Try to leave space between furniture and the wall so that air can circulate and position furniture beside internal walls rather than outside walls.
- Keep the heating on low: This is very important in flats and

bungalows where bedrooms are not above a warm living room.

How can I treat the effects of condensation?

Condensation can lead to mould growth on walls and clothing.

To remove and prevent mould:

- Wipe down walls and window frames with a fungicidal wash which carries a Health and Safety Executive approval.
- Dry-clean clothes which have mould and shampoo carpets. (Don't brush or vacuum carpets as this can cause breathing problems).
- After treatment, redecorate using a good quality fungicidal paint to help prevent mould. (This paint is not effective if you cover it with ordinary paints or wallpaper.)

Other types of damp

If you are not sure of the cause, please contact the Call Centre and they will get a technical officer to visit you.

If it is condensation, the technical officer will give you advice on how to treat it.

If the cause is a building problem, Hounslow Homes will carry out treatments to remove it.

Your safety

To reduce the risk of your home being burgled:

- Check the identity of callers to your home.
- Never leave notes outside for callers/ friends.
- Cancel milk, newspapers or anything that gets delivered when you go away.
- Do not leave keys under a mat.
- Have a mortice lock, safety chain and spyhole fitted to outside doors and use them!

- Where there are entryphone systems, don't let people in when you are going out and ensure that the front door is kept locked.
- If you are aged 60+ you may be able to have additional security devices fitted free. Ask at your local housing office for more information.

Dealing with fire

To reduce the risk of fire in the home:

- Make sure all fires are guarded.
- Don't hang clothes around fires or cookers.
- Close all doors at night.
- Never leave pans on the cooker.
- Put up a smoke alarm.

Advice on smoke alarms

Putting up a smoke alarm

Homes that have had or will have complete re-wires as part of our Decent Homes programme will have smoke detectors fitted.

If you need to buy a smoke alarm, there are many types you can buy and put up yourself. Check the instructions as some may need to be put up by a professional. The Fire Safety Office can give you more information. They can be contacted on 020 7587 4413.

Looking after your smoke alarm

Make sure all your alarms are fitted according to the instructions from the manufacturer or Fire Brigade instructions:

General advice:

- Test the alarm each week.
- Clean the alarm regularly.
- Change the battery every year and always use a high quality battery.
- Change the alarm if it has come to the end of its lifespan.

Remember

Take care to reduce false alarms by using extractor fans and opening windows as necessary.

What to do if a fire happens

- Close the door of the room where the fire started.
- Get everyone out.
- Call the Fire Brigade (telephone 999).

Gas safety and supply

Safety checks

Before you even move into your home, Hounslow Homes will raise an order with the gas company for a safety check. You, the tenant are then responsible for making an appointment for the safety check to be carried out.

The telephone number to book appointments is 020 8583 4354.

Gas supply

We will make sure that a gas supply is available. The gas supply will be

connected when the safety check has been carried out. The company will need at least 48 hours notice to make this connection.

Gas charges

You are responsible for all gas charges.

Gas Safety advice

Make sure you find out where your stopcock is for turning off the supply in an emergency.

If you smell gas:

- Turn off the supply.
- Contact Transco immediately FREEPHONE 0800 111999.
- Put out cigarettes.
- Don't use matches or a naked flame.
- Don't use electrical switches.
- Open doors and windows to get rid of gas.
- Check if the pilot light has been blown out or if a gas tap has been left on.

- Telephone Hounslow Homes Call Centre or the emergency number (after 6pm). See the last chapter in this handbook "Useful information" for telephone numbers.

What to do if there is no gas

If there is no gas, check to see if your key meter is in credit.

When the gas comes on, make sure all pilot lights are lit. This also applies to gas meters using rechargeable cards.

If the pilot light has gone out, most appliances will have instructions printed on them as to how you can try to relight it. If you are unable to do so, report your repair to Hounslow Homes stating the type of appliance and, if possible, the model name.

Advice on dealing with electrical problems

Check the main switch for the electricity supply. (This can be found with the

meter and fuse-box). Switch off the supply if you leave your home for some time.

Check that a fuse has not blown. If there is still a problem with an electrical appliance, and you have checked the fuse, contact the supplier to make sure that there is nothing wrong with it.

If your home has circuit breakers (instead of fuses) check that this has not switched off. This can happen if you use too many electrical appliances at one time. If it has switched off, reduce the number of appliances you are using and reset the switch. If the switch cuts off again contact the Hounslow Homes Call Centre.

General safety advice

- Check the conditions of flexes and plugs regularly.
- Make sure that electric fires are kept away from water.

Poisoning

Poisoning is the second major cause of death in the home. So remember:

- Keep medicines in a locked cabinet and bleaches and weed-killers out of children's reach.
- Don't store household or garden chemicals in containers which would confuse people (e.g. soft drink bottles).
- Return used medicines to the chemist or flush them down the toilet.

Carbon monoxide poisoning

To avoid this danger:

- Get your chimney swept at least once a year, no matter what fuel you burn.
- If you burn solid fuel, keep boilers, room heaters and flue pipes clear and, at least once a month, remove the 'throat plate' at the top of the fire box and brush it free of ash and soot.

- Clean solid fuel boilers and cookers according to the manufacturer's instruction. Always keep the flue clear.

Falls

- Remember to put guards or safety-catches on windows above the ground floor, and use stair gates if you have young children. If we put in a new window, they will be fitted with a safety catch which can be opened for escape in a fire.
- Make sure your home is well lit and carpets are secured and in good condition (particularly on stairs and in hallways).

Flooding

Some floods are caused by blocked sinks and toilets. To try and avoid this, do not wash anything down the sinks or flush anything away that may get stuck.

If flooding of your property is caused by another tenant your claim needs to be referred to that tenant's insurance company and this is why it so important that all tenants' take out their own home contents insurance policy.

Hounslow Homes will repair damage to a property which has been flooded but will not pay for damage to internal decoration, or loss or damage to possessions.

Under the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998, it is our statutory duty as landlord to ensure the Health and Safety of our tenants by checking and servicing all landlord owned gas appliances and instalations on an annual basis. This is included within a maintenance contract presently held by Planned Maintenance Engineering (Areas East and Central) and Quality Heating Services (Area West). Properties are visited on an annual basis and the contractor will leave a copy of his worksheet (a CP12 certificate) showing what appliances/systems have been tested and the work done. This document is dated and signed by both the operative carrying out the inspection and the tenant.

The date of the inspection is inserted into a shared database and monitored by Hounslow Homes.

The contractor will send letters to tenants giving appointments generally in one block/area at a time within one year of the last inspection then service and check as many dwellings as possible.

This inspection is for your safety and ensures that your gas appliances are working safely and that the appliances will continue to provide trouble free service throughout the year. Not only is this safety check a legal requirement it is also a wise safety precaution.

It is of vital importance that you allow entry to our contractor to perform this safety check.

Failure to provide access could leave Hounslow Homes with no choice but to seek to remedy the situation through the courts under the terms of your Tenancy Agreement, which may well involve costs of up to £500 being charged to yourselves.

Chapter 9

Services to your neighbourhood

We aim to ensure that neighbourhoods are clean and safe places to live. We employ caretakers to clean internal and external shared areas in our neighbourhoods.

Caretaking involves:

- Cleaning the lifts.
- Removing rubbish.
- Checking building areas.
- Cleaning bin areas.
- Cleaning the main entrance.
- Sweeping and mopping the staircase (where water is easily available).
- Reporting repairs in communal areas.
- Removing broken glass and repairing broken windows, where possible.
- Replacing broken light

bulbs in shared areas, where possible.

- Reporting graffiti and removing where possible.
- Cleaning bin areas.
- Sweeping main staircases.
- Mopping stairs (where water is easily available).

We also have a rapid response team to answer calls across the borough including clearing up incidents of fly tipping on estates, jet washing areas where required and cleaning empty properties, making them ready for occupation.

As well as the above, Hounslow Homes' caretakers will:

- Ensure that shared areas in and around the estate are clean.
- Help in an emergency.
- Deal with abandoned bulk rubbish.
- Reports illegal and abandoned vehicles.

Remember

Caretakers are there to help you but please do not disturb them when they are off-duty unless it is an emergency.

Further information

Please contact your local area housing office for further information on caretaking services for your area.

What you can do to keep your neighbourhood clean

1. Getting rid of your rubbish in high rise blocks

You must only use the chutes or paladin bins provided. These chutes can get blocked by very large items, so please do not try and force large items of rubbish or furniture down them.

Chutes must not be used after dark, or during any other hours marked on the chute.

In low rise blocks

Refuse chutes are provided in some blocks, others have paladin bins. If you have to

carry rubbish down to the ground level, take care to place the rubbish in the rubbish container and avoid spilling any in shared areas.

Some maisonettes have sacks or individual dustbins; others are provided with communal paladin bins or refuse chutes.

2. Dealing with large rubbish items

You are responsible for clearing furniture and large items of household rubbish.

You can get rid of rubbish at the rubbish tips in:

- Spaceway, Pier Road, North Feltham Trading Estate, Feltham
- Charlton Lane, Shepperton
- Townmead Road, Richmond
- Greenford Road, Greenford

Everyone has to pay for garden and building waste. There is a small charge for household waste unless you are elderly or disabled, then it is free.

3. Gardens

If you have a home with a garden you are responsible for keeping fences and gardens in good condition and tidy. This includes:

- Ensuring the grass is cut regularly.
- Preventing weeds and bushes from overgrowing.
- Ensuring trees do not grow too large or too near the building where it might cause structural problems.
- Keeping your garden clear of rubbish. This includes both garden and household waste.
- Ensuring items such as broken down vehicles, old fridges and other similar bulky items are not kept in gardens.

Helping you keep your garden clean

Hounslow Homes and The London Borough of Hounslow provides the following services to assist you in keeping your gardens clear of rubbish.

- Green Garden waste collection service.
- Removal of old vehicles, fridges, other large bulky items.

Useful numbers are at the back of the handbook.

If you fail to keep your garden clear of rubbish and it becomes necessary for Hounslow Homes to make arrangements to clear it, you will be recharged for this work.

Please remember you must get written permission from Hounslow Homes to park trailers or caravans in your garden or driveway.

If you are elderly or disabled, and are unable to look after your garden, we may be able to help you. Hounslow Homes operates

a Garden Maintenance Scheme. Please contact your local area housing office to see if it is possible to add your name to the waiting list for this service.

Other useful services for tenants

Garages and store sheds

Hounslow Homes has garages and store sheds to let. If you want to rent one, contact your local housing office. When you are let a garage, you will be asked to sign a separate garage agreement. As with all agreements, read it carefully before signing it.

Communal paths and other areas

Hounslow Homes has external contractors who look after shared lawns and weeding of planted areas. Please contact your local housing office with any queries and complaints about maintenance of these areas.

Street cleaning

The Consumer and Environmental Services Department sweeps streets and roads and collects rubbish. Caretakers look after estate paths.

Disposal of vehicles

If you wish to dispose of a vehicle, you should write to the Planning and Transport Department (see the last section 'Useful Contacts') including registration documents and giving the location of the vehicle. The vehicle will then be removed and disposed of, free of charge.

You can also report abandoned vehicles in the street to the Planning and Transport Department or the Estate Manager (if they are on a housing estate). These will be removed where possible.

Pest control

Even the cleanest homes may suffer from pests from time to time.

Types of pests:

- Rats
- Mice
- Fleas
- Bedbugs
- Cockroaches
- Pharaoh ants
- Wasps
- Pigeons
- Squirrels (in loft spaces)
- Crickets
- Red mitre
- Silver fish

Hounslow Homes is responsible for keeping all shared areas on estates clear of pests. It is a tenant's responsibility to arrange for the clearance of pests within their own property, including their garden. By ensuring your property is kept clean you can control problems with most pests including mice, fleas, bedbugs and cockroaches.

If you have a pest problem which poses a health and safety risk for the whole

block of flats, Hounslow Homes will arrange for the pests to be removed. We will investigate the cause of the pest problem and will charge any tenants who have caused the problem by not keeping their home clean.

The control of mice, fleas and bedbugs is chargeable. However, this service is free to tenants on certain benefits. The Pest control Service will inform you if you are eligible.

Pigeons are removed by external contractors. A price will be given when you apply for the service. Hounslow Homes will only arrange for their removal from shared areas.

Contacts

If you have a pest you should contact the London Borough of Hounslow's Pest Control Service on 020 8583 5082.

Chapter 10

Getting involved in your neighbourhood

With your input, Hounslow Homes wants to ensure that we deliver services that tenants expect and have policies that tenants support.

As a Hounslow Homes tenant you have the right to have a say in how your home is managed. This chapter gives you information about the way you can get involved.

You can influence changes to policy and how services are delivered by:

1. Joining a Residents' Association in the area where you live
2. Bringing your opinions to the notice of Hounslow Homes staff

3. As a representative for your estate, you can get involved in a number of forums and committees.

Tenant Participation Compact

We have developed a Tenant Participation Compact. The Compact is an agreement between the council (London Borough of Hounslow), the Hounslow Federation of Tenants' and Residents' Associations (HFTRA) and Hounslow Homes. The Compact sets out how Hounslow Homes and the Council will involve and consult tenants to ensure that participation in local decisions improves homes and neighbourhoods. A leaflet called "Getting Involved" gives more information about the Tenant Participation Compact. A full copy of the compact is available by visiting www.hounslowhomes.org.uk or by contacting your local housing office or resident group.

Consulting with you

Under the 1985 Housing Act you have a right to be consulted and receive information on a number of matters affecting your home and the services you receive. This includes:

- Standards of service.
- Changes to your conditions of tenancy.
- Repairs or improvements to your home.
- Environmental improvements, security works and caretaking arrangements.
- All matters affecting your community.

This will be done by:

- Face-to-face meetings.
- Sending a letter to invite you to a consultation and/or inform you about new policies or changes to services.
- Carrying out surveys and research to find out what you think.
- Publishing a resident newsletter.

- Working in partnerships with residents' groups across the borough and in your neighbourhood.

You and your Residents' Association

Hounslow Homes believes in working closely with its tenants and encourages Resident Associations to play an active part in all decisions made. Your Tenants' Association can represent your interests to the board members of Hounslow Homes on a range of housing issues such as repairs, the upkeep of estates and environmental improvements.

Residents' Associations can also help you get to know your neighbours by organising socials, outings, special clubs for older residents, play schemes for children, etc. Above all you can let Hounslow Homes know what you think through your Association.

But, your Residents' Association needs your support!

So, give it the support it needs by attending meetings, taking part in activities and making your views known.

Current Tenants' and Residents' Associations are finding that not many households from Asian, African Caribbean and other communities join the Associations or take part in the running of their affairs. It is essential everyone participates as we all live in the same neighbourhoods and should be able to decide together on how living conditions can be improved.

Hounslow Homes wants to actively encourage groups of Asian, African Caribbean and other ethnic minority communities to participate in the activities of their Tenants' and Residents' Group.

If your estate does not have a Residents' Group you can

start a new one up yourself. Your Tenant Participation Officer can advise you on how to go about it. Contact your local housing office to find out more or visit: www.hounslowhomes.org.uk

Getting residents' views on kitchen and bathroom programmes and other works.

The following steps show how you can be involved in planning major improvements to where you live. (Information about improvements to your property and your estate can be found in chapter seven.)

Stage one

There will be a first public meeting for all tenants and HFTRA where Hounslow Homes staff will put the proposal to tenants and listen to their initial reactions.

Stage two

A house-to-house survey will take place so tenants can comment in writing on the plans and offer their ideas.

Stage three

A second meeting will be arranged once we have everyone's comments and more information back from the architects. Drawings, models and plans should be available and tenants will be offered choices in designs.

Stage four

Tenants' choices will be reported back to the Area Housing Management Forum.

Stage five

A third public meeting will then take place with the contractors to talk about working practices, safety, where the site huts will be, etc.

Stage six

There will then be monthly meetings of tenants'

representatives, the site manager and Hounslow Homes staff to help the project run smoothly. Whenever possible, open days will be arranged to show completed flats to tenants.

Stage seven

At the end of the contract all tenants will receive a letter explaining the six months' defects liability period and told when a follow-up visit will happen to check on the work which has been carried out.

Stage eight

Finally, a satisfaction/complaints survey sheet will be sent to all tenants over a year later to find out what you think of the major improvements. Your views will help us when we carry out similar projects for other tenants.

Ways to get involved in your local area

1. Housing Management Forums

There are three Housing Management Forums for each of the three Housing Management Areas (Central, East, West). The Forums monitor how well Hounslow Homes is doing in its housing management and repairs services and discuss environmental improvements on estates.

Membership of the Forum includes tenant and leaseholder representatives, Hounslow Homes Board Members and Councillors.

2. Hounslow Federation of Tenants' and Residents' Associations (HFTRA)

HFTRA is an independent, non-political organisation. It is made-up of representatives from the many residents' associations in Hounslow. HFTRA also welcomes individuals where there is no resident group in the area.

HFTRA has an Executive Committee made up of 15 members. These members are elected by all the other resident groups at HFTRA's Annual General Meeting.

HFTRA works with Hounslow Homes on a wide range of matters affecting tenants and it can also put forward ideas for improvement through the various committees and forums.

For further information, you can contact HFTRA by writing to:

Chair/Vice- Chair
Hounslow Federation of
Tenants' and Residents'
Associations
Training & Resource Centre,
Benson Close, Hounslow
TW3 3QX

Telephone: 020 8569 5823

Your Ward Councillors and you

Councillors are elected representatives for your ward. They sit on council committees and are actively involved in making

decisions. Also, if you have a problem or an issue, they can take it to the appropriate committee.

To contact your Councillors you can either write to them, c/o Members' Suite, The Civic Centre or you can ask at your local area office for their names.

For further information

Further information about tenant consultation and

involvement can also be found in:

- Getting Involved and having your say - A Tenant Participation Compact
- Residents' Groups leaflet
- Resident information pack (available at your local housing office.)

By visiting

www.hounslowhomes.org.uk

Chapter 11

Anti-social behaviour (ASB) and racial harassment

What is ASB?

Anti-social behaviour is unwelcome and/or illegal acts carried out by individuals and/or groups that causes distress and disturbance to any resident or community.

Examples of anti-social behaviour include:

- Stalking or unwanted attention.
- Intimidation and /or harassment by others on the grounds of race, sexuality / homophobic hate crime, disability, religion, gender or age.
- Aggressive and threatening behaviour / language.

- Actual violence against people and property.
- Hate behaviour that targets members of identified groups because of their perceived differences.
- Using council property to sell drugs or for other unlawful purposes.
- Verbal abuse.
- Damage to property.
- Inconsiderate disposal of household rubbish.
- Fly-tipping.
- Inconsiderate parking of vehicles and abandoned vehicles.
- Noise nuisance.
- Overgrown gardens.
- Nuisance caused by pets.

These are all breaches of your tenancy agreement.

What is racial harassment?

Racial harassment can include abuse and intimidation on the grounds of colour, race, religion, ethnic or national

origin. A racist incident is one which is seen to be racist by the victim or any other person.

What does the Tenancy Agreement state?

Anti-social behaviour and racial harassment is a breach of the tenancy agreement. Details can be found on page eighty five.

Serious levels of harassment could lead to you being evicted from your home.

What happens to a person that is evicted?

Anyone evicted on grounds of causing harassment will normally be treated as intentionally homeless and, therefore, will not be rehoused under the Housing Act 1996 Part VII.

What can you do?

Sort it:

If the issue is a minor problem of anti-social behaviour such as a noise nuisance, you should try and sort this out by talking to your neighbour.

OR

Contact the Hounslow Mediation Service. Trained staff can help you and your neighbour sort through your issues.

Report it:

If the issue is more serious (involving violence or threat of violence or constant harassment) contact your area housing office and if appropriate, the Police.

Racial harassment is ALWAYS considered as a serious matter and is dealt with as a priority by Hounslow Homes.

How to report anti-social behaviour or race crime to Hounslow Homes

You can report anti-social behaviour and race crime to our specialist teams who can be contacted by calling your local housing office. All three areas are listed in Chapter fourteen 'useful contacts' along with other useful telephone numbers

to help you deal with anti-social behaviour and racial harassment.

Complaints relating to racial harassment should be made to the Police who may take necessary action to apprehend the perpetrator and protect the victim.

Other ways to report anti-social behaviour or race crime

Record it:

Keep a written record of all incidents, noting down the names of the people involved. If you don't know their names, write down their appearance.

What will Hounslow Homes do if I report an ASB incident?

The action we will take will depend on the type of issues that you are reporting.

Where we do have power to act we will agree an action plan with you including targets and timescales for responding to you.

Can I take action myself?

Hounslow Homes will consider legal action against those responsible, however, there would need to be good evidence that is why we need you to contact us with knowledge of any incidents.

Alternatively, you can take legal action yourself by asking the local County Court for an injunction if you can prove your health, comfort and convenience have been upset and have witnesses who will give evidence in the Court. For this you should see a private solicitor, or get advice from the Law Centre or the Citizens Advice Bureau, see the section 'useful contacts' for addresses and telephone numbers.

More information and support

For further information and advice, please contact your area housing office.

For advice and victim support you can also contact the agencies listed in chapter fourteen.

The appearance of your neighbourhood plays an important part in affecting others attitudes towards it which is why we need your help to stamp out vandalism, graffiti and thefts of fixtures and fittings.

Hounslow Homes and the Police can bring proceedings for criminal damage against people who cause vandalism. Successful prosecutions have already been achieved with the help of tenants.

If you have caused vandalism

If you, or people living in your home, are responsible for vandalism you put your tenancy at risk. If the vandalism is proved in Court, you could be evicted on the grounds of causing intentional damage by being in breach of your tenancy.

How to report vandalism

You should contact your local housing office. Your report will be passed onto the local anti-social behaviour team who will investigate and take any necessary action.

If you have a Tenants' Association for your neighbourhood, it may be able to help with the problem. Some Associations have Neighbourhood Watch schemes and are in close liaison with the Police. Contact the Hounslow Federation of Tenants' and Residents' Association (HFTRA) on 020 8569 5823 for further information.

Noise nuisance

What types of noise nuisance can be dealt with?

Occasional noise nuisance is best dealt with between you and the person causing the nuisance.

For incidents of regular noise nuisance please contact your local housing office who will pass your report onto the anti-social behaviour team.

Types of noise nuisance we cannot deal with

Regrettably neither Hounslow Homes nor the London Borough of Hounslow have powers to prevent noise from aircraft.

However both are concerned with aircraft noise problems and use their influence to protect the residents of the borough as much as possible.

Our policy is to promote quieter aircraft and in order to keep the situation under constant observation, we do a number of things:

- The Council is represented on various airport committees so that we can represent the views of the area.

- In addition, the Council is actively monitoring aircraft noise by two permanent monitoring stations. This is so that independent information about aircraft noise is available. These records are then used to monitor overall aircraft noise and the data is used for future planning purposes.

What to do about aircraft noise

If you are disturbed seriously by aircraft noise, ring the Civil Aviation Authority on 020 7379 7311.

Vortex damage (damage caused to your home by passing aircraft) should be reported to Hounslow Homes Call Centre and they will arrange for an urgent inspection.

Alternatively, you can ring British Airport Authority yourself on 020 8745 7930 (answerphone service) or the British Airport Authority's loss adjusters direct on 07860 323816.

Anti-social behaviour and racial harassment.

Your Tenancy Agreement states that:

- 6.9 You will be held responsible if any person living at, or visiting, the property breaks any of the conditions of the agreement. Furthermore, you must not allow or encourage any person living at the property or visiting it to break any of the conditions of your Tenancy Agreement.
- 6.10 You and any person living at or visiting the property must not cause a nuisance or annoy a person living in, visiting or taking part in a lawful activity in the local area.
- 6.11 You and any person living at or visiting the property must not use or threaten to use the property or allow it to be used for illegal purposes.
- 6.12 You and any person living at or visiting the property must not commit an arrestable offence in or at the locality of the property.
- 6.13 You and any person living at or visiting the property must not abuse, harass, or intimidate anyone in the area including neighbours.
- 6.14 You and any person living at or visiting the property must not threaten or use violence against any person who has a legal right to be at the property or in the locality.
- 6.15 You and any person living at or visiting the property must not threaten or use violence against any other person in the property, so that they are forced to leave because of violence or fear of violence.

- 6.16 You and any person living at or visiting the property must not create unreasonable noise or disturbance to neighbours or to others in the locality (whether through social activities, television, radio, stereo, pets or any other means.)
- 6.17 You and any person living at or visiting the property must not threaten or use violence against any Council, Hounslow Homes employees or contractors.
- 6.18 You and any person living at or visiting the property must not keep any firearm, shotgun, or air rifle in the property without appropriate Firearms or Shotgun certification required by legislation, including the Firearms Act 1968 and the amendments thereto and in any event not without the consent of Hounslow Homes. You must not keep any firearm, shotgun or air rifle not requiring certification without the consent of Hounslow Homes.
- 6.19 You and any person living at or visiting the property must not discharge a firearm, shotgun, rifle, air pistol or air rifle in or in the locality of the property.

The tenants perpetrating or allowing such actions are in breach of their Tenancy Agreement, and Hounslow Homes may seek Court proceedings with a view to evicting a tenant and family.

It is against the conditions of your Tenancy Agreement to cause a nuisance or to annoy neighbours or other local residents.

Chapter 12

Customer care matters

At Hounslow Homes we are committed to providing high quality services to our tenants. We know that sometimes we will get this wrong and when this is the case we want you to tell us about it so we can put things right. Please refer to "Taking Care of our Customers" booklet, available at your local housing office. This details Hounslow Homes' 'Tenants' Charter', setting out the standards and services we aim to achieve. This is also available by visiting www.hounslowhomes.org.uk.

If you are unhappy with the services we, or our partners or contractors, have delivered to you and the staff responsible have not been able to resolve the matter to your satisfaction, then please follow our complaints

process. Should your complaint relate to unfair treatment on account of your race, gender, religion, disability or sexuality then a Hounslow Homes Customer Services Officer will liaise with our in-house Equalities team to assist in the investigation.

Stage 1

By calling

Tell a Hounslow Homes Complaints Officer about the problem. You can contact them by telephone 020 8583 3737.

By letter

Hounslow Homes
Complaints Team
Ashmead Road
Feltham
Middlesex
TW14 9NN

By emailing

Email: complaints.team@hounslowhomes.org.uk

Complaints forms are available from reception areas or by visiting www.hounslowhomes.org.uk.

We will confirm receipt of your complaint and tell you when you can expect a reply. A reply will normally be sent to you within 2 weeks of the date you made your complaint.

Stage 2

If you are unhappy with the reply you receive you will be invited to contact a Complaints Officer who will carry out an independent investigation on your behalf. In cases of discrimination, advice will be obtained from our Equalities department to ensure all statutory obligations are met.

You can contact our Customer Services Office

By calling

Telephone: 020 8583 3726
or 020 8583 3727

By letter

Customer Services Office
Hounslow Homes
St Catherine's House
2 Hanworth Road
Feltham
Middlesex TW13 5AB

or by email as before.

You will be told when the stage 2 investigation starts and when you can expect a reply. A reply will normally be sent to you within 2 weeks of the start of the investigation.

Stage 3

If you are still dissatisfied with the reply you receive you can ask your case to be referred to a Complaints Panel which is made up of Hounslow Homes board members and Hounslow Council representatives. The complaints panel usually meets every 6 weeks.

We monitor all services within Hounslow Homes to make sure that we treat all our customers equally. If we do not already have equalities information about your household we will ask you to complete a questionnaire as part of the complaints process.

Stage 4

If after stage 3 you are still dissatisfied you may take your complaint further.

The Local Government Ombudsman

This service is independent and is available to tenants who feel that they have been treated unfairly. The Ombudsman will only investigate complaints which have already been through Hounslow Homes or the London Borough of Hounslow's own complaints procedure.

The Ombudsman cannot question a policy decision Hounslow Homes makes or provide advice about the services we provide.

The Ombudsman can be contacted at:

The Local Government
Ombudsman
Millbank Tower
Millbank
London SW1P 4QP
Tel: 020 7217 4620
Fax: 020 7217 4621

If you want to make a complaint to the Ombudsman we would recommend that you look at the leaflet 'How to complain to the Local Government Ombudsman' first. You can get a copy of the leaflet by contacting the Ombudsman directly. You can also get a copy of this leaflet from your local Citizens Advice Bureau.

All complaints (and praise) are recorded and regularly monitored. We use this customer feedback to help us review and improve our services and the performance of our staff and contractors. Your views are important to us.

Chapter 13

Managing information about you and your property

We need personal information about you so that we can provide services for you. This is how we look after that information.

When we ask you for personal information, we promise:

- To make sure you know why we need it.
- To only ask for what we need, and not to collect too much or irrelevant information.
- To protect it and make sure nobody has access to it who shouldn't.
- To let you know if we share it with other organisations, to achieve better public services.

- To make sure we don't keep it longer than necessary.
- Not to make your personal information available for commercial use without your permission.

In return, we ask you to:

- Give us accurate information.
- Tell us as soon as possible if there are any changes, such as your household details.

This helps us to keep your information reliable and up to date.

You can get more details by calling your local area housing office about

- How to find out what information we hold about you and how to ask us to correct any mistakes.
- Agreements we have with other organisations for sharing information.
- Circumstances where we can pass on your

personal information without telling you, for example, to:

1. Prevent and detect crime or to produce anonymised statistics.
2. Instruct staff on how to collect, use and delete your personal information.
3. Check the information we hold is accurate and up to date and
4. To make a complaint.

The Freedom of Information Act (FOI) 2000 gives you a right to access information about Hounslow Homes. You can request information in any written format through your local housing office. Hounslow Homes will aim to process your request within 20 days from the date your application is received.

For more information on how to access the data we hold on you, please see the Hounslow Homes data protection booklet "Accessing information about you" or write to:

**DATA PROTECTION MANAGER, ST CATHERINE'S HOUSE,
2 HANWORTH ROAD, FELTHAM. TW13 5AB**

When we ask you for information, we will keep to the law, including the Data Protection Act 1998. For independent advice about data protection, privacy and data-sharing issues, you can contact the Information Commissioner at: Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF.

Phone: 01625 545745 Fax: 01625 524510

E-mail: mail@dataprotection.gov.uk

Website: www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk

Chapter 14

Useful contacts

Hounslow Homes

www.hounslowhomes.org.uk

Area housing offices

Central Area

Hounslow/Heston/Cranford/Isleworth area

Civic Centre, Lampton Road,

Hounslow TW3 4DN

020 8583 4382

East Area

Brentford/Chiswick area

Chiswick Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace,

Chiswick W4 4JE

or

Brentford Housing Office,
58-59 Brentford High Street,
London Road, Brentford

020 8583 4220

West Area

Feltham/Hanworth/Bedfont area

St Catherine's House, 2 Hanworth Road,

Feltham TW13 5AB

020 8583 4383

Repairs Call Centre

0800 085 6575

Complaints Team

020 8583 3737

Customer Services Officers

020 8583 3726

020 8583 3727

Equalities Team

020 8583 3762

Home Ownership Unit

21 High Street, Feltham TW13 4AG

Central Area

020 8583 3417

East Area

020 8583 4295

West Area

020 8583 3418

Insurance Scheme

020 8583 3792

Linkline	020 8583 4400
Rent Accounts	020 8583 3805
Right to Buy	020 8583 3916
Tenant Participation Officers	
Central area: Hounslow, Heston, Cranford, Isleworth	07957 207831
East area: Brentford and Chiswick	07949 699407
West area: Feltham, Hanworth, Bedfont	07956 118137
London Borough of Hounslow	
www.hounslow.gov.uk	
Adult abuse, Metropolitan Police	020 8247 5932
Adult protection co-ordinator	020 8583 4515
Child Protection, Social Services	020 8583 3456
Council Member Services	020 8583 2250
Council Out of Hours	020 8583 2222
Environmental Services / Drainage Team	020 8583 5555
Empty Property Hotline	020 8583 3863
Housing Advice	020 8583 3844
Housing Options	020 8583 4402
Housing and Council Tax Benefit	020 8583 4242
Graffiti Line	020 8583 2620
Hounslow Mediation Service	020 8568 5522
Landlord/Tenant Advice	020 8583 2045/6
Libraries	020 8583 4545
Parking permits	020 8583 4863
Pest Control	020 8583 5082
Noise nuisance team	020 8583 5555
during office hours	or 020 8583 2222
on Friday and Saturday between 10pm and 4am.	

Racial Equality Council	020 8583 2525
	or 020 8583 4665
Refuse Collection	020 8583 5000
Green Garden waste collection	020 8583 5060
Removal of vehicles	020 8583 5071 or 5072
Registrars	020 8583 2090
Schools Admissions	
Primary	020 8583 2653
Secondary	020 8583 2649
Social Services & Health Partnerships	
Chiswick	020 8583 3400
Heston	020 8583 3125
Hounslow	020 8583 3300
Feltham	020 8583 3200
Street Lighting	020 8583 5555
Trading Standards	020 8583 5555
Traffic	020 8583 4861
Travellers Hotline	020 8583 3868
Welfare Benefits and Money Advice	020 8583 5016
Tue 2pm-5pm; Thu 4pm-7pm; Fri 10am-1pm	

Other Useful Organisations

Age Concern

Bedfont, Feltham & Hanworth	020 8751 5829
Hounslow	020 8570 7788

Afghan Society of Residents in UK, West

Acton Community Centre, Churchill Gardens

Languages: Dari, Pushtu, Urdu

Mon-Fri 9am - 4pm 020 8993 8168

All Afghan Association 020 8840 8777

Bangladesh Welfare Association (BWA) 020 8577 2694

Benefits Agency, 10 Montague Road, Hounslow	020 8607 1600
British Gas	0845 609 1122
Careers Office	020 8577 5478
Carers UK (Hounslow Branch)	020 8560 1501
Citizens Advice Bureau, Old Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace, Chiswick	020 8994 4846
Disability Network Hounslow	020 8758 2048
Fax	020 8758 2014
Minicom	020 8578 2065
Feltham People's Centre, High Street, Feltham, TW13 4AH	020 8707 0077
Gas and Heating Servicing	
Planned Maintenance Engineering (East and Central Areas)	020 7924 1844
Quality Heating Services (West area)	0845 6586255
Hammersmith and Fulham Irish Centre Blacks Road, Hammersmith	020 8563 8232
Hounslow Federation of Tenants' and Residents' Associations (HFTRA) Training & Resource Centre, Benson Close, Hounslow	020 8569 5823
West Middlesex Hospital Trust	020 8321 6260
Hounslow's Asian Advice Service 12 School Road, Hounslow	020 8577 3226
Hounslow Law Centre 51 Lampton Road, Hounslow	020 8570 9505
Iraqi Community Association, Palingswick House, 241 King Street, London Language: Arabic Mon/Tue/Wed/Fri 9.10am - 5pm.	
Tube: Hammersmith, Ravenscourt Park	020 8741 5491

Kurdish Information Centre Caxton House, 129 St John's Way, London. Languages: Kurdish, Arabic, Farsi Mon-Fri 9.30am - 5pm	020 7272 9499
London Electricity	0800 096 9000
London Lesbian and Gay Switch Board (24 hours)	020 7837 7324
London's Women's Aid (24 hours)	020 7392 2092
National Aids Help Line (24 hours)	0800 567 123
Office of the Deputy Prime Minister ODPM Free Literature, PO Box No 236 Wetherby LS23 7NB (For free publications)	0870 1226 236
Fax	0870 1226 237
Website: www.odpm.gov.uk email: odpm@twoten.press.net	
ODPM Leasehold Reform Team HMD Division, 2nd floor, Eland House Bressenden Place, London SW1E 5DU	020 7944 3462
Pakistan Welfare Association	020 8569 6661
Quality Heating Services - West Area	0845 6586255
Race Equality Council 2nd Floor, Treaty Centre, High Street, Hounslow	020 8583 2525 020 8583 4665
Release (Drug advice) (24 hours)	020 7729 9904
Southern Electric	0845 744 4555
SeeBoard	0800 056 8888
Thames Water	0845 9200 800
Three Valleys Water	0845 782 3333
Transco	0800 111 999
Women's Link	020 7248 1200



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