

# RESIDENTS' HANDBOOK



# WELCOME TO PHA HOMES:

**Set up in 1974, PHA Homes is a traditional housing association that is committed to meeting the housing needs of local people.**

PHA Homes operates in Hampshire. We provide affordable rented homes, low-cost shared ownership, temporary homeless, leaseholder properties for the over 55s and new homes for local people. We also manage properties on behalf of other providers. We are committed to providing great homes and supporting communities.

In all of its operations, PHA Homes aims to maintain high levels of customer satisfaction and meaningful resident engagement, enhance the housing stock to meet present and future customer needs, develop quality affordable

homes for those in need and be a strong, viable and outward-looking organisation that has an excellent local reputation.

## OUR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:

1. To maintain flexibility and embrace opportunities as they arise
2. To understand and respond to residents' changing needs and aspirations
3. To ensure our assets meet the needs of both current and future residents
4. To develop good quality homes which address local need
5. To work proactively in partnerships to deliver more homes and better services to our residents
6. To maintain robust financial management to enable future growth

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““PHA HOMES STRIVES TO PROVIDE GOOD QUALITY AFFORDABLE HOMES AND EXCELLENT SERVICES”

# TENANT'S RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

Everything you need to know about your rights and responsibilities as a PHA Homes tenant can be found in your Tenancy Agreement. The housing team will be able to help if you don't understand any part of the agreement. Unless you move in to your property by way of a mutual exchange or are in temporary accommodation (Assured Shorthold Tenancy) you will be granted a 'Starter' tenancy. A starter tenancy gives you 12 months to understand what it is to be a good tenant, then providing there are no breaches of your tenancy agreement you will be granted one of the following tenancies;

1. Assured Tenancy
2. Assured Shorthold Tenancy
3. Affordable Rent Assured Tenancy
4. Assured Shorthold Affordable Rent (Fixed Term) Tenancy

## YOUR TENANCY RIGHTS:

You have the right to occupy your home without interference from PHA Homes as long as you comply with the terms of your tenancy agreement.

You have a right to have your tenancy in joint names with someone else who lives with you (this includes a same sex partner). We are responsible for ensuring that your house is repaired and to keep it in a habitable condition at all times.

If you die, other members of your household living with you may have the right to succeed to your tenancy. Your tenancy may be inherited by:

- your husband or wife
- your joint tenant
- your co-habitee (including same sex partner)
- another member of your household
- a live-in carer

The relative must have lived with you for 12 months and the property must have been their main or only home at the time of your death. There is only one right of succession.

You have a right to information from the Association about the terms of your tenancy and about the Association's repairing obligations, its policies and procedures on tenant consultation, housing allocation and transfers and its performance as a landlord.

Depending on which agreement you have, your legal rights will differ slightly.

## YOUR TENANCY RESPONSIBILITIES:

- You must occupy the house as your only or principal home
- You must take reasonable care to avoid damage to the house and to your neighbours' houses
- You and anyone living with you should respect other people and must not harass or act in an antisocial or threatening manner towards anyone else
- You must get written permission from PHA

Depending on which agreement you have, your legal rights will differ slightly.

- Homes for any alterations or improvements you wish to make to your home. Permission will be conditional on factors such as the standard of work
- You must take all reasonable steps to make sure you and anyone living with you or visiting you, keeps to the terms and conditions of your Tenancy Agreement.

## ENDING YOUR TENANCY:

If you want to end your tenancy, you must give us at least four weeks' notice in writing, the tenancy must end on a Sunday. This gives us time to find a new tenant for the property.

- You must leave the property clean, empty and in a reasonable condition
- You must repair or replace any broken fixtures and fittings you are responsible for before you leave the property
- If we have to carry out repairs which you are responsible for, need to clean the property, or have to arrange for items to be removed, we may charge you
- You must return all keys before or on the date stated in the letter of termination from us (late return of keys will result in rent being charged on a weekly basis until the keys are returned)

### **In addition to this, we strongly advise you to;**

- Leave us details of your forwarding address
- Advise all services that you are moving and make sure you read meters on the final day

There are certain circumstances that PHA Homes may want to end your tenancy. Generally, it is if you have breached the terms of the tenancy agreement.

### **The following are some reasons that PHA Homes may wish to end your tenancy:**

- Failing to pay rent or persistently late in paying.
- Causing nuisance or annoyance to your neighbours, visitors or people lawfully visiting your home.
- Committing an arrestable offence at or near your home or in domestic violence situations.
- Damaging the property/fittings supplied by the Association or the surrounding common areas.
- Deliberately giving false information when applying for your tenancy.
- Breaching any of the terms in the agreement
- If we need to redevelop or undertake major works to your home. In this case we will find you alternative accommodation.

## RIGHT TO EXCHANGE PROPERTY:

You have the right to exchange your tenancy with another tenant of a housing association or local authority, provided the Landlords agree. All parties MUST receive written consent to exchange from their landlord BEFORE they exchange. Failure to obtain the approval of the appropriate landlords before moving could mean the loss of a tenancy to both properties – the one you have left and the one you have moved to!

**For more information, please contact the housing team on 01730 263589 or visit [www.homeswapper.co.uk](http://www.homeswapper.co.uk)**

# YOUR RENT:

## HOW TO PAY YOUR RENT:

Your rent is charged on a weekly basis every Monday and in accordance with your tenancy agreement, is payable 4 weeks in advance. You can pay your rent:

- In person at our office at 32 Dragon, Petersfield and pay by cash or cheque (please make cheques payable to PHA Homes)
- By Standing Order or Direct Debit (please pick up a form from our office)
- By Electronic Banking
- By post (please do not send cash in the post)
- By Allpay via payment card, online at [www.allpay.net](http://www.allpay.net) or via the Allpay App
- By Worldpay – contact the office to make payment by debit card

Paying your rent must be your first financial priority.

When you accept your tenancy, you sign a legal agreement to abide by the terms and conditions laid out in your Tenancy Agreement, including ensuring that your rent is paid on time and that your rent account does not fall into arrears.

If you fail to keep to any of these conditions, you will be in breach of your tenancy agreement and PHA Homes may take further legal action which could result in you losing your home.

The housing team is able to provide you with debt advice and support you with your finances.

You could also seek further advice from:

- The Citizens Advice Bureau who can be contacted on 03444 411306 or
- The National Debtline on 0808 5016308 or visit [www.nationaldebtline.co.uk](http://www.nationaldebtline.co.uk)

We understand there are many reasons why people fall behind with their rent but there are also lots of ways we can help you pay.

If you're worried about how you're going to pay your rent, please contact the housing team on 01730 263589.

# REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE:

As your landlord, we have a legal duty to carry out certain repairs to your property and maintain your home to a safe and suitable standard. We are responsible for maintaining different parts of your home both inside and out.

## EXTERNAL PARTS OF THE BUILDING:

We will repair and maintain the external fabric of the building. This includes roofs, external walls, gutters and down pipes.

## INTERNAL COMMON AREAS:

We will maintain the common entrances, halls, stairways, passageways and other communal areas to make sure they are in a good condition. This includes walls, ceilings, stairs, paintwork, window safety catches and communal TV aerials.

## INTERNAL FITTINGS:

We will maintain the fittings/installations that we have provided. This includes kitchen and bathroom fittings, water and gas pipes, heating systems, electrical wiring (including hard wired smoke alarms), windows and doors.

## COMMUNAL REPAIRS:

We will repair and maintain areas around the property and related communal areas including paths, boundary walls and fences, drains, bin stores, drying areas, play areas, parking areas and hard and soft landscaping.

## HOW TO REPORT A REPAIR:

You should report any repair needed during office hours of 09.00hrs to 17.00 hrs Monday to Thursday and 09.00hrs to 16.00hrs on Friday on 01730 263589. If you experience an emergency fault outside of office hours, please contact the office and the out of hours service providers number is in the answer machine message. The out of hours number is also on our website [www.phahomes.co.uk](http://www.phahomes.co.uk).

## Examples of Emergency Repair work are:

- Severe roof leaks
- Total loss of electrical power
- Unsafe electrical work
- Burst pipes
- Blocked foul drains
- Dangerous structures
- Flooding
- Loss of heating and hot water involving health risk, affecting for example:
  - elderly persons
  - people with special needs
  - families with small babies

If a contractor is called out to deal with a repair as an emergency when an emergency repair is not justified, then you will be charged for costs involved.

### REPAIR TARGET TIMES:

Emergency – 24 hours

Urgent – 7 days

Routine – 21 days

## RECHARGEABLE WORK:

Where a tenant is responsible for the cost of repairing a problem which is their responsibility, the cost of the call out charge, repair costs plus a £15.00 administration fee will be recharged to the tenant. Examples of when tenants will be held responsible are:

- Blocked drains
- Blocked toilets
- Replacement bath & basin plugs
- Broken glazing, unless caused by vandalism and a crime reference number is obtained from the police
- Gaining access if locked out
- User error of controls such as heating controllers, time switches, immersion switches etc.

Other areas that occur infrequently, and are not in the above list, may be deemed rechargeable in circumstances that apply at the time. Where a contractor has not been allowed access on two agreed appointments to carry out requested repairs, the tenant will be recharged for the cost of those visits.

## ANNUAL GAS SERVICING:

We take our responsibilities very seriously when it comes to the safety of you and your family. As a landlord, we have a legal obligation to ensure our gas appliances (PHA Homes installed gas fire or central heating) and flues are maintained in a safe manner. We service our gas appliances every year to keep them in good working order and safe for your use. Unsafe systems are dangerous and can have potentially fatal consequences. We will contact you in advance, advising you of the date that we will come to carry out your gas service. If

you won't be at home that day – or can't arrange for someone else to be there – please call us as soon as possible. Please remember, by law you must allow us access to your home so we can carry out the gas safety check.

**In the event of a suspected Gas Leak you should call National Grid on 0800 111 999.**

**If you need further information on gas safety, please contact the maintenance team on 01730 263589.**

## CYCLICAL MAINTENANCE WORK:

Cyclical works are those which are carried out on a regular programme and would, principally, be external redecoration. Repainting, re-staining, window maintenance, etc. are carried out at 3, 4 or 5 year cycles.

## PLANNED MAINTENANCE WORK:

PHA Homes regularly assesses the condition of its properties, particularly in kitchens and bathrooms, so that a planned programme of renovation may be operated. Where renovation is deemed necessary it will be incorporated into a budgeted programme. If you have rent arrears, breach the terms and conditions of your tenancy agreement or have allowed your property to fall into disrepair, you will not be entitled to have any planned maintenance carried out in your home, until your rent account has remained clear for a period of 6 months, you adhere to the terms and conditions of your tenancy agreement for 6 months or until you have brought your home back into a reasonable condition.

# BEING A GOOD NEIGHBOUR:

## ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR (ASB):

**PHA Homes believes everyone has the right to live peacefully and safely in their homes, unaffected by the unacceptable behaviour of others.**

Reports of nuisance and ASB will be taken seriously and investigated thoroughly and the appropriate action taken.

### We will tackle anti-social behaviour by:

- Prevention - Initiatives will be used to try and stop the problem from arising in the first place and from continuing and escalating, should a problem develop.
- Intervention - We will aim to intervene and offer support and advice if preventative measures have been unsuccessful. This option gives residents another chance, before enforcement measures are considered.
- Enforcement - Will be used when necessary and when other options have been unsuccessful.

## REPORTING ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR:

It is important to remember that what might be a nuisance to one person may not be to another. There are many types of neighbour problems which often require differing approaches. If you have a problem with a neighbour, your first action should be to approach them and try to come to an amicable agreement. They may not realise that their actions are causing you a problem. If you can resolve the matter in a friendly way without involving PHA Homes, you should do so.

If this is not an option or was not successful, then you must contact the housing team immediately who will advise you of the next step. However, threatening or aggressive behaviour and/or criminal behaviour must be immediately reported to the Police.



## GARDENS:

Being a good neighbour is also ensuring that, if applicable, your garden is kept clean and tidy and free of rubbish. Communal gardens are the responsibility of both residents and PHA Homes. We will ensure that the garden is properly maintained, however the residents must ensure that it is kept free of dog and cat faeces and rubbish.

For those who have individual gardens, both front and back, you are fully responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of the area. The housing team who will inspect all gardens periodically. If you fail to keep your garden at an acceptable standard, we are entitled to decide exactly what has to be done to bring your garden up to standard. We will talk to you before a decision is made. If you do not co-operate with us, then we may consider this as a breach of the terms of your tenancy agreement and take legal action to end your tenancy.

## PARKING & ABANDONED CARS:

Parking may be limited and there may be insufficient parking for you and/or visitors. Parking can cause disputes between neighbours.

**Unless you have your own allocated parking space or driveway, you will have to accept that you might not be able to park outside your property.**

Please show consideration to your neighbours when parking your car and remember that inconsiderate parking could block access for emergency vehicles.

Please note that spaces are for parking taxed and insured vehicles only and not for carrying out repairs. If we have to remove any unauthorised vehicle belonging to you, you will have to pay the cost of the removal. You are not permitted to store caravans or trailers on driveways or in car parking areas.

# COMPLAINTS:

## HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT:

PHA Homes prides itself on providing an excellent service to our residents. However, we recognise that there are occasions when things unfortunately do go wrong and that you might feel the need to make a complaint. For this reason, we operate a 3 stage complaints procedure. PHA Homes takes a positive view to all complaints and uses your views to help us determine where the service can be improved.

**For more details about our complaints procedure, please contact the Head of Services.**

## RECORDING & MONITORING:

All complaints received are recorded on our housing management IT system. A complaint will be updated, and progress monitored regularly by the Head of Services. Regular reports are made to the Board, who also monitor the Association's response to your complaints.

# TENANT INVOLVEMENT:

## WHAT IS TENANT INVOLVEMENT?

Resident involvement is about giving residents choices and encouraging them to have a say in how their homes are managed. PHA Homes actively encourages residents to get involved and help determine and shape the services we provide.

No previous experience of housing is required, we just want your knowledge and your views about what we do and how we do it. You will be fully supported by the staff who are committed to providing an excellent service to all our residents.

PHA Homes will reimburse your 'out of pocket' expenses that you may incur as a result of your involvement, such as car mileage and car parking..

**Examples of previous Tenant Involvement include:**

- Developing a website, primarily for our residents
- Reviewing the Rent Arrears Management Policy
- Resident's Scrutiny Panel
- Reviewing the Repairs Service

PHA Homes' residents are represented on the Board of Management by a resident Board member.

**If you would like to know more about getting involved, please contact the Head of Services.**

# WHAT IS SAFEGUARDING?

PHA is committed to recognising its duty of care to protect residents and people visiting PHA properties and is committed to taking appropriate action to safeguard and protect vulnerable adults and children from abuse. Safeguarding means protecting people's health, wellbeing and human rights, and enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect.

The Department of Health "No Secrets" guidance defines abuse as: 'a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons'. Acts of abuse may consist of

a single act or repeated acts and can occur in any relationship and may result in significant harm to, or exploitation of, the person subjected to it.

## Examples of abuse can include:

- Physical abuse or harm
- Sexual abuse
- Psychological abuse
- Financial or material abuse
- Neglect
- Discriminatory abuse
- Institutional abuse

If you have concerns about yourself or someone else, you can approach the housing team in the first instance to discuss this in confidence.



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**WWW.PHAHOMES.CO.UK**

