



Resident handbook

Social and affordable rent



May 2021

If you would like to receive this information in large print, braille, audio format or translated into your own language, get in touch with your housing officer.

إذا كنت تريد أياً من هذه المعلومات مكتوبة بحروف أكبر، بلغة بريل للمكفوفين، مسجلة صوتياً أو بلغتك فالرجاء أن تتصل مع الموظف المسؤول عن منزلك.

আপনার যদি এই তথ্যের মধ্যকার কোন কিছু বড় হরফের ছাপায়, ব্রেইল-এ, কোন কানে শোনার ব্যবস্থায় অথবা আপনার নিজের ভাষায় দরকার হয়, তাহলে দয়া করে আপনার হাউজিং অফিসারের সাথে যোগাযোগ করবেন।

اگر مایل به داشتن هر بخش از این اطلاعات با چاپ بزرگ، خط بریل، نسخه صوتی و یا به زبان خود هستید، لطفاً با مأمور امور مسکن خود تماس بگیرید.

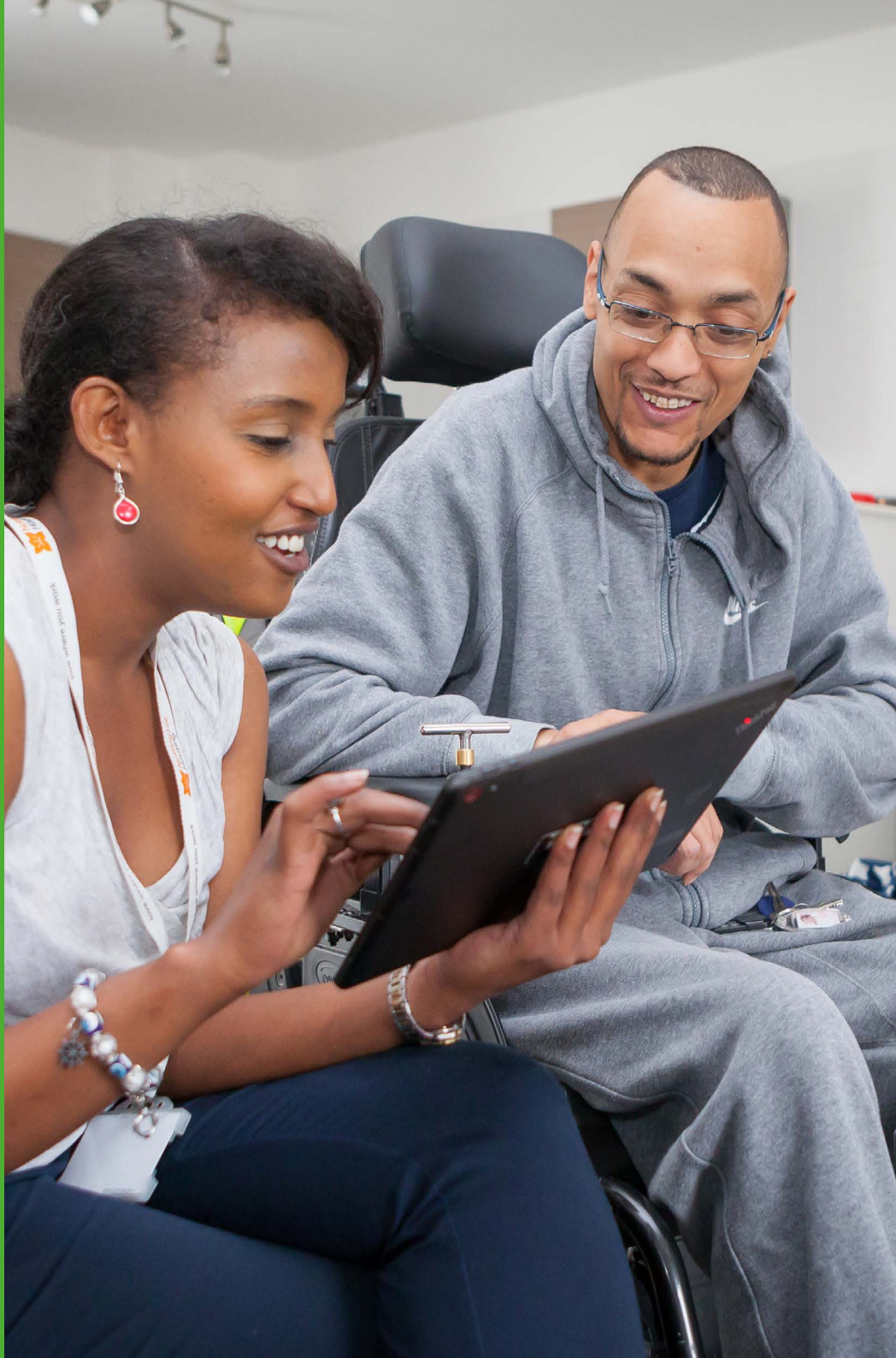
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Haddii aad u baahan tahay in warbixintan qayb ka mid ah aad ku hesho far waaweyn, farta Braille ee dadka indhaha la', nuskhadda dhegeysiga ama luqaddaada gaarka ah, fadlan la xiriiir Sarkaalkaaga Gurueynta (Housing Officer)

Bu bilgilerin herhangi birini büyük baskı, görme özürülülere mahsus kabartma Braille alfabeti, ses kaydı veya kendi lisanınıza çevrilmiş olarak istiyorsanız, lütfen Konut memurunuz ile temasa geçiniz

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Introduction

Welcome to Notting Hill Genesis

This guide provides answers to some of the questions you may have about your tenancy and how we work. It does not form part of the tenancy agreement that you and your housing officer have signed which is a separate legal document.

Our housing officers provide a local service and that might include things that are not included in this guide. Speak to your housing officer for more information.

From time to time we might update sections of this guide. You can always access the latest version, together with a list of what has changed on our website at www.nhg.org.uk/publications/guides-and-handbooks

If you don't have access to the internet then contact your housing officer to make sure you have the latest version.



Online, anytime

My Account is the best way to manage your home and tenancy. You can make rent payments, request repairs, provide feedback or contact your housing officer whenever it's most convenient for you.

Register now at:

www.nhg.org.uk/residents/my-account

Equality, diversity and inclusion

We respect and promote equality, diversity and inclusion for all our residents. Our resident involvement networks provide us with insight into how we can improve the delivery of our services to ensure we meet the diverse needs of our customers.

We also use data analysis to monitor who is accessing our services to ensure all residents have fair access. As part of this we might ask some extra questions about you. This includes a few questions about protected characteristics such as race, disability and sexual orientation. This information will be treated confidentially. It will only be seen by our support team, and it will never be used against you. On the contrary, it's to help us make sure we're as inclusive as possible. If you ever change your mind, and want something taken off your record, you can ask us at any time.

We want to understand the communities we serve. We ask questions to collect overall statistical information – not to pinpoint individuals. It helps us understand who is and isn't accessing our services, and how satisfied different groups of people are.

Your information is safe. There are strict laws to make sure your information is stored safely and responsibly. Your answers are confidential and we'll always tell you how they're going to be used before we ask.

Help us improve our services. By learning more about the people we serve, we can tailor our services to meet your needs. In the past we've used this information to ensure we provide a wide range of helpful support and advice services.

Your housing officer

Our housing service is designed to be personal, easy and convenient for you to use.

Your housing officer is the main point of contact and the first

person to go to when you need something. You can trust your housing officer to help you get the best out of our service.

Your housing officer will:

- Offer to visit you in your home, get to know you and explain clearly what we can offer
- Make sure you understand your responsibilities under your agreement with us
- Help you to sort out any issues in your home or with your tenancy – particularly things to do with your rent, repairs, your tenancy or any problems you are having in your home
- Give you information about other local, voluntary or statutory services which might be useful to you

Contacting your housing officer



The easiest way to contact your housing officer is through **My Account**.

www.nhg.org.uk/residents/my-account

To find out who your housing officer is and how to phone them, search for them using your postcode at www.nhg.org.uk/resident-contacts.

You can also contact your housing office over the phone, by email or post. If your housing officer is unable to take your call because they are busy or you are reporting an emergency out of office hours, you will automatically be redirected to our customer service centre, where a customer service adviser will be able to assist.



Your tenancy

About your tenancy

The tenancy agreement you have signed is a contract between you and us. It contains a range of rights and responsibilities, many of which we describe in other parts of this guide. You should read the terms of your tenancy carefully to ensure you understand your responsibilities as a tenant, and our responsibilities as your landlord.

If you are new to Notting Hill Genesis (NHG) you will have been given a 12-month probationary tenancy before you are granted a permanent assured tenancy. This is a bit like a 'trial run'. As long as you pay your rent and do not break the terms of the tenancy agreement, you will be given an assured tenancy, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

If you are a secure, or assured tenant you have security of tenure. This means that we cannot force you to leave your home without an order for possession from the courts.

The courts will not grant an order unless we have sent you a legal notice, and specific reasons apply. The most common reason we will ask the courts for a possession order is if you have seriously and persistently broken your tenancy conditions (for example, by not paying rent or by causing extreme nuisance to your neighbours).

We will always try to sort out problems without having to take legal action. However, we will take legal action if you do not cooperate or you break agreements. We will also take legal action to repossess your home if you are no longer living in it or illegally subletting to someone else. This means that we have to obtain an order for possession from the courts.

Leaving your home and giving up your tenancy

If you are leaving your home, you should give your housing officer four weeks' notice in writing. However, if you are transferring to another of our homes, you will give up the tenancy of your old home when you sign the tenancy agreement for your new one.

You should leave your old home in a good state of decoration and repair and remove all furniture and belongings. This means:

- Repair any minor faults that are your responsibility (for example, fill in holes in the walls where you have removed shelves or pictures)
- The decorations should be of a standard that the next tenant can move in and live in the home without needing to decorate
- Empty the home of all your belongings and rubbish
- The home should be clean, especially kitchen units, windows, baths and sinks

We will inspect your home before you leave and may recharge you for carrying out any work that is your responsibility.



Rent and other charges

Your tenancy agreement will tell you how much your rent is at the start of your tenancy. This figure will change as we review your rent yearly.

You must pay your rent each week or month in advance dependent on the terms of your tenancy agreement. If you have a weekly tenancy you can pay every fortnight or every month if you want, but you must make sure your rent account balance is always one week in credit.

It is your responsibility to make sure that your rent is paid regularly and on time. Joint tenants are jointly and equally responsible for paying all the rent.



You can make payments and check your balance through **My Account**.

www.nhg.org.uk/residents/my-account

At least once a year, we will send you a statement of what you have paid. You should check these against your own record of payments and raise any questions with your housing officer.

If you have difficulties paying your rent

It is a condition of your tenancy that your rent is paid regularly and in advance. Your home is at risk if you do not pay your rent. However, we appreciate that you may have difficulties paying your rent from time to time, and we will do everything we can to help you.

You will receive an automatic notification by text when we have not received a payment.

If you have rent arrears (missed payments) and cannot pay these straight away, you may be able to make an arrangement to pay them over a period of time.

Please contact your housing officer who will be able to offer advice and help you with any benefits claims.

Service charges

We sometimes provide services to tenants that incur an extra charge, like:

- Cleaning shared areas
- Entry phones
- Lifts

Your tenancy agreement will list the services that are covered by your service charge.

If you receive Housing Benefit or Universal Credit this may not cover all the charges, so you may have to pay some charges yourself.

Paying your rent



Direct Debit is a great, no-hassle way to pay your rent.

Once you set up a Direct Debit with your bank, we will automatically take your payment each month. You can set the payment up for a day of the week or a date in the month that suits you.

Your housing officer can help you set up your Direct Debit payment, or you set up an account via the My Notting Hill portal on our website. Most bank accounts will allow you to have a Direct Debit payment.

Your Direct Debit will be protected by the Direct Debit Guarantee, but if you don't have enough funds in your account on the day you choose to pay then your bank may charge you a fee.

Housing Benefit and Universal Credit

If you are on a low income or if you receive other welfare benefits, you may be entitled to help with paying your rent.

Your housing officer will be able advise on whether you are entitled to Housing Benefit or Universal Credit, as well as how to go about starting your claim. Managing your claim is your responsibility and it can be complicated. If you are not sure about any aspect of your claim, ask your housing officer who will be able to offer advice and support.

Whether you are waiting for claim to be assessed or are already it receipt of Housing Benefit or Universal Credit, it is still your legal responsibility to make sure your rent is paid in full. This means that if the rent is not paid (whether or not it is your fault) you still owe us the missing rent. Also, if Housing Benefit does not cover all of your rent, you are responsible for paying the difference. Please check that payments are being made and take action if there is a problem.

Please contact your housing officer who will be able to offer advice and help you with any benefits claims.

You must tell either the Housing Benefit Department or the DWP about any changes in your circumstances, including:

- Changes in household income, including the income of other adults living with you
- Changes in the household, such as people joining or leaving
- Rent increases
- If you are going away for more than a few weeks
- If anyone in your household leaves or enters full-time education.

If you fail to report changes to your household income, you may receive too much benefit (which you will have to pay back). This could be treated as deliberate fraud.

Losing your home is not the only risk you face if you fall behind with your rent:

- Court orders can affect your credit rating, and you may not be able to borrow money
- You will have to pay the cost of any court hearing
- We will not usually transfer you, or allow you to mutually exchange until you have paid the arrears
- If you lose your home your local council may not rehouse you because you have made yourself 'intentionally homeless'
- Banks, building societies or other lending agencies can ask us for references on your payments, and a poor reference may mean you cannot get a mortgage or other loan

Both the Local Authority Housing Benefit Department and DWP can request details and evidence from you at any time. Make sure you reply in the timescale they set or you may not receive the money to which you are entitled. If it's possible, obtain a receipt for any evidence or documents you submit.



Safety in your home

Emergencies

It is important that you identify where your water stopcock, gas stopcock and mains electricity switch are when you move into your home so that you do not have to waste time searching for them in an emergency. If you cannot find the stopcocks or mains switch and cannot find someone to help you, contact your housing officer for advice.



Fire: Make sure you are familiar with the fire action notice for your building.

If there is a fire or smoke in your home, get everyone out and leave the building as calmly as possible, closing the door behind you and not using the lift. Once you're outside, call 999.

If the fire is not in your home but in another part of the building you should follow the advice in the fire action notice



Electricity: If you have an electrical fault that you think might be dangerous, switch off the electricity at the mains. The switch is either next to the fuse box or next to the meter. Then call us for help. If your electricity supply fails completely, call your electricity supplier.

In the event of a power cut, call 105, a free line which will put you through to your local electricity network provider who can give help and advice



Gas: If you smell gas, turn off the gas supply at the mains next to the gas meter and open all windows. Then call National Grid on 0800 111 999 immediately.

This service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

You should also:

- Not smoke or strike matches
- Not turn electrical switches on or off
- Put out any naked flames (for example, on a gas cooker)
- Keep people away from the affected area

If the problem relates to one of our gas appliances or our pipework, contact your housing officer immediately. If the problem happens outside normal office hours, phone our emergency repairs service on 0203 815 0000.



Water leaks: If you have a leak or a burst pipe, turn off the water supply straight away. You can do this by turning off the main stopcock which is normally either inside your home or, if you live in a flat, behind a small trap door in the shared hallway. Then call us for help.



Frozen pipes: In severe winter weather, water can freeze in your pipes and cause damage by expanding until the pipe can no longer stretch to contain it.

If your pipes freeze, take the following steps to defrost them slowly and carefully:

- First, always turn off the water supply to your home
- Use an electric hairdryer at its lowest setting to help defrost the pipe – do not warm pipes too quickly
- Do not use a blow lamp, heat gun or any other naked flame
- Thaw along the pipe from the end nearest the tap
- Do not leave taps on – water may not flush away down the plughole if the pipes below are frozen
- If a pipe bursts after it has frozen, turn off the water supply to your home immediately and contact us straight away. In an emergency, these actions may help to reduce any damage.

Fire safety

The issue of fire safety is a major concern to all of us. You can make your environment safer and limit the risk of fire by taking some basic precautions:

- Be very careful if you are using a Calor Gas heater. Do not leave it on when you go out
- Be careful when getting rid of cigarette ends. Make sure they are properly put out
- Keep an eye on pans on the cooker and take care when cooking with hot oil
- Put out any candles, incense and oil burners when you leave the room
- When charging phones, tablets, e-cigarettes and so on, always use the charger that came with your device as counterfeit chargers can be deadly
- Turn off electric sockets when you are not using them.
- Never use a BBQ indoors or on balconies

Make sure your home has smoke or heat detectors and carbon monoxide detectors.

If you don't have a heat and smoke detector please report this and we will arrange installation.

You should test your smoke alarm once a week using the test button and replace the battery if the low battery warning sounds with an intermittent bleep.

For the safety of residents in shared properties, please make sure that you do not leave any goods or belongings (particularly items that could set fire) in the shared areas. The shared



staircase and hall are usually the main escape routes so you must not leave anything that could cause an obstruction to someone trying to get out if there is a fire. We will take action against you if you leave any items blocking the escape routes through shared areas.

If you have any queries about fire safety you can speak to your housing officer or email safeplaces@nhg.org.uk

You can find out more about safety in your home at www.nhg.org.uk/residents/repairs-and-maintenance/safety-in-your-home

Gas safety

Once a year, by law, we have to carry out an inspection of all the gas appliances we've installed in your home. These inspections are vital for your safety. They make sure that appliances are safe to use and are working correctly and efficiently.

We will try to organise this at a time which is good for you, but you must give us access to your home to complete the checks. If you don't, we may need to apply to court to enter your home.

You can find out more about gas safety checks at www.nhg.org.uk/news/news/resident-news/gas-safety-checks



Repairs to your home

As your landlord, we are responsible for carrying out certain repairs but we also expect you to look after your home and do your best to keep it in good condition.

Most simple repairs can be carried out within 20 working days, but more complex repairs need planning and are based on an annual schedule and you will be contacted before any work is due to be carried out.

How do I request a repair



The quickest way to report a repair is to raise a request through **My Account**.

www.nhg.org.uk/residents/my-account

Alternatively, you can contact your housing officer to arrange a repair appointment. If your housing officer is busy or you are reporting an emergency repair outside of office hours, you will be redirected to our customer service centre where a customer service advisor will be able to assist.

Repairs we are responsible for

As your landlord, we are responsible for repairs to:

- The structure of your home including the roof, outside walls, doors, windows and windowsills.
- Gutters, down pipes and drains.
- Garden walls, fences, and steps used to access and exit the property (except where they are the neighbouring property's)

responsibility).

- Existing central heating, water heaters and fires (where provided by us).
- Electrical repairs (not including electrical appliances)
- Repairs to the gas installations such as boiler and pipework (not including appliances)
- Inside walls, floors and ceilings.
- Doors, door frames, door hinges, letter boxes and skirting boards, window catches, sash cords and window frames.
- Chimney stacks and flues.
- Banisters.
- Kitchen units, wall tiling, air vents and extractor fans.
- Showers (where provided by us), sinks, toilets and baths.
- Pest control in communal areas.
- Bathroom flooring and wall tiles.
- Persistent issues with drainage/removal of waste water

Repairs you are responsible for:

- Internal decorations (except where we are painting to cover an area affected by a leak etc...)
- Repairs to small cracks in plaster or woodwork
- Repairs to furniture, appliances, or floor coverings (e.g. carpets, lino, tiles, wooden floors)
- Replacing light bulbs, fluorescent tubes, starters or fuses
- Fitting or repairing smoke and carbon monoxide alarms or replacing batteries (except where these are hard-wired)
- Replacing toilet seats, shower heads, hoses and plugs for sinks and baths

- Installing additional locks or replacing keys and changing locks if you are locked out. In an emergency or where your home is not secure we may carry out these works and recharge the costs to you
- Replacing or maintaining security features such as spyholes and door chains
- Garden or basement clearance and cleaning (except where covered by a service charge)
- Repairs to any items that have been damaged by you or your guests except where these pose a risk to health and safety. We may charge you for these repairs
- Repairs to any appliances, fixtures and fittings you've installed yourself (e.g. gas cooker, carpets, furniture etc.), unless these have been specifically approved by NHG in advance as home improvements. Any repairs to gas installations such as cookers or gas fires should be carried out by a certified GasSafe engineer
- Garden sheds
- Shower curtains
- Internal door handles

Sink/toilet blockages in the first instance (you should attempt to unblock these with drain unblocker/plunger where appropriate) Your tenancy agreement gives more information about your rights and responsibilities around repairs. If you are not sure who is responsible for a repair in your home, please contact your housing officer.

Emergency repairs

When you report an emergency repair we aim to get someone to you within four hours and make the problem safe within 24 hours. Sometimes we might need to come back to complete carry out further work after it is made safe.

What sort of repairs are an 'emergency'?

Emergency repairs are ones which pose an immediate risk to life or property, that is, to your health and safety and/or the health and safety of your family, neighbours or others in or around your home, or to the property itself (including communal areas).

Examples of emergency repairs include:

- Complete electrical failure or electrical failure in a kitchen/bathroom
- Serious leaks that will cause significant property damage if left unfixed
- Serious damage to an external door which means that your home is not secure.

Access

There may be times when it is essential for us to access your home to carry out inspections or repairs. We will give you notice of this, but it is a condition of your tenancy that you give us access and we can take legal action to enforce this, if necessary.

Major improvements

NHG sometimes carries out planned upgrade programmes to improve kitchens, bathrooms, electrics and central heating boilers. The decision to include your kitchen, bathroom, electrics or boiler in a planned programme is based on the condition that it is in, whether it is safe and whether it can be repaired. We will always get in touch to let you know if your home is part of a planned upgrade programme in advance of work starting.

Painting the outside of your home:

To keep your building in a good state of repair, we have a maintenance programme. This means that every few years we repaint the outside of the windows and front doors, and the shared areas.

We also carry out repairs to the outside of the property and inspect and repair roofs if necessary.

We will tell you beforehand if your property is due to be repainted. For some work, such as painting windows, we may need to come into your home so we would appreciate your co-operation.

We often need to put up scaffolding to the building to finish the works safely. Please take extra security precautions while the scaffolding is in place.

When carrying out any improvements to your home we will ensure that you are notified and involved in the process from the start to the end of the work.

If you have any queries regarding the programme of works please contact your housing officer.

Contractors' code of practice

All the contractors we employ have to meet certain standards of work and behaviour. They should carry out work with as little noise, nuisance or inconvenience as possible and pay particular attention to keeping your home clean and safe. If there is any delay in finishing the work, the contractor will keep you fully informed.

If you have a complaint about a contractor, please contact your housing officer.

Compensation for service failure

You may be able to claim compensation if:

- We fail more than once to deal with a repair within the timeframe outlined in our repairs policy
- We fail to keep an arranged appointment without giving you notice or a good reason

Damages for disrepair

We do our best to make sure that all our repair work is done quickly and adequately. However, from time to time things do go wrong. Damp-proofing in a basement flat may fail or a contractor may knock a nail through a hidden water pipe. If you believe you have suffered personal harm or damage to your belongings as a result of our failure to repair in time, or during repair work, please let us know straight away.

We will investigate all claims sympathetically and apologise and pay compensation if we are responsible. If we pay compensation as a result of a failure by one of the contractors we employ, we will ask you to support and help us in claiming the cost back from the contractors.

Condensation

Condensation is caused by warm, moist air hitting a cold surface. It is most noticeable in bathrooms and kitchens, but it can also affect other rooms. With proper ventilation, insulation and heating, condensation can be avoided or reduced.

You can reduce condensation in your property by doing the following:

- Open your windows. This will help water in the air to escape your home
- Leave your “trickle vents” open. On most modern windows there will be a vent on your window frame which you can open. These will let water out without losing the heat from your property.
- Don't dry clothes on the radiator – use a drying rack

- Close the door and open the windows when you cook, shower or bathe
- Leave a gap between furniture (such as wardrobes) and the walls to allow air to circulate.
- Make sure your kitchen and bathroom fans are working. Hold a piece of paper over the fan when it's on. If it stays there when you take your hand away it is functioning. If you think it is broken – talk to your housing officer.

Sometimes condensation can cause a black stain on walls and paintwork. You can wash this off using a suitable cleaner or diluted bleach solution (you may need to do this more than once). However, if the stain doesn't go away please contact your housing officer.

Using heating and electricity effectively

Heating and hot water account for two thirds of your fuel bills. You can save money by taking a few sensible steps and changing the way you use appliances:

- Turn down your central heating by one degree
- Turn off your heating when it is not needed at night or if you go out. In very cold weather, keep some heating on low to prevent frozen pipes
- Adjust your heating and hot-water controls to lower settings in the spring
- Look for draughts and block them e.g. fit a flap over your letter box, and put draught strips around doorframes and window frames
- Be aware that electric fires and fan heaters are expensive to run
- Adjust your routine – how often do you need hot water? Can you lower the temperature of your hot water? Which radiators do you need on? Do you really need the heating

on first thing in the morning if you are going out to work?
Do you need the heating on when you go to bed, or could you turn it off an hour or so beforehand?

- Turn off lights and other appliances if you do not need them

Security

We provide at least a night latch for the door of your home. You may want to fit more locks on doors and windows for extra security.

If you lose your door keys or get locked out of your home, you must arrange for someone to change the lock. If you have any difficulties, we may be able to arrange for a locksmith to do the work for you, but we will charge you the full cost.

If you share a front door with others, it is against fire regulations to fit certain types of locks. You must always consult us before changing a lock or fitting a new lock on a shared front door.

To stay safe in your home, you must check the identity of all callers before you let them in. Our staff carry identity cards with photographs that they should show you, as should representatives from other organisations such as gas and electricity companies and the local council. We also tell our contractors to carry identity cards that they should show you. If you are suspicious of any person who calls at your home, do not let them in and call the police or the organisation that they claim to represent.

If you want advice on what else you can do to protect your home, contact the crime prevention officer at your local police station. Your housing officer may also be able to advise you about other help that may be available.

Getting rid of rubbish

Please be considerate towards your neighbours and make sure you put rubbish in sealed bags inside the dustbins. Please do not

leave rubbish in the shared areas.

You are responsible for getting rid of bulk rubbish. If you need bulk rubbish to be removed, contact the Local Authority.

If you notice bulk rubbish dumped by a non-resident in your block or on our estate, please contact us to report it.

If you notice bulk rubbish on public land (e.g. on the street), report it to your Local Authority or report it via www.fixmystreet.com

Household pests

Unless you believe there is an infestation, you will usually be responsible for dealing with household pests such as ants, wasps or mice within your property. Contact the Environmental Health Department at your local council for advice. Go to www.gov.uk/report-pest-problem for more information.

If you cannot deal with the issue, suspect that you have an infestation, you have a problem with cockroaches, pharaoh ants or rats or if you have a pest problem in a communal area then contact your housing officer.

Home improvements

If you want to carry out any improvements or alterations to your home, you must get our permission in writing before you start any work. Contact your housing officer, who will advise you of the information we need to assess your application. You may also need other approval, such as planning permission from the council.

TV aerials and satellite dishes

If it isn't prohibited by your estate regulations, you might be able to fit things such as TV aerials and satellite dishes but you may still need to get planning permission from your local council.

These improvements will remain your responsibility to maintain

and you must get our permission in writing first. If you are unsure, speak to your housing officer.

Other improvements

If you want to carry out any other kind of improvement (for example, fitting your own central heating, gas fire or shower units), these become our property. You cannot remove them if you move. If you have replaced existing fixtures, you must return these to us.

We are not able to refund the cost of carrying out the improvement, but in most cases we will take over responsibility for maintenance when we have inspected and approved the work. We will not increase your rent as a result of any improvements you make to your home. At the end of your tenancy you may be entitled to compensation for some improvements that you have carried out with our permission.

Fitting wooden or laminate flooring

If you are thinking about replacing your carpet with wooden or laminate flooring, you must get permission from your housing officer. If you live in a flat, it is likely that your neighbours will hear more noise if you lay wooden or laminate flooring. Please consider this before making any changes. It could cause nuisance to your neighbours and may end up in a dispute. If you install this kind of flooring without permission, you may be asked to remove it and replace the original flooring at your own expense.

Decorations

You are responsible for decorating inside your home to a reasonable standard. If you are elderly or have a disability and there is no one who can do the decorating for you, we will try and arrange help from a voluntary organisation.

Adaptations to your home

If you are elderly, have a disability or a long-term medical condition you may find carrying out day-to-day tasks difficult, such as using your kitchen, bathroom or the stairs. If so, speak to your housing officer about adaptations to your home.

Simple adaptations (such as installing a grab rail in the shower) can be arranged by housing officers but for larger changes you will need to contact your Local Authority Occupational Therapy Department to request an Occupational Therapy (OT) Assessment. They will provide advice about whether you are eligible for an assessment.

If an occupational therapist approves any adaptations, they will contact the Major Adaptations Department at Notting Hill Genesis and they will arrange for any work to be carried out.

Pets

You must get our permission in writing before you can keep a pet. We will normally give permission as long as your home is suitable and your pet does not cause nuisance or damage. We will withdraw our permission if your pet causes nuisance or damage. If this happens, it will be against your tenancy to continue to keep your pet. You will either need to find it another home or risk losing your own.

Running a business from home

If you want to run a business from home, you must get our permission in writing. You may also need council planning permission. We will refuse any business use that may annoy your neighbours.

Home contents insurance

We strongly advise you to take out a home contents insurance policy. This is to insure your personal belongings, furniture,

carpets and decorations against damage or loss due to water, fire or burglary.

Our own insurance policy does not cover your belongings if they are lost or damaged, unless we have been negligent. Taking out your own insurance will also provide you with cover if you are held responsible for damage caused to your home or a neighbour's home or belongings (for example, if you let your bath overflow or if you accidentally hammer a nail through a central-heating pipe).

NHG has set up a specific insurance scheme which is open to all NHG residents. To find out more, contact your housing officer.



Your household

Changes to your household

You should let us know if there is any permanent change in your family – for example, if you start living with a partner or have a baby. This information helps us to avoid overcrowding in our properties and helps us plan for transfers. It also allows us to confirm how long someone has been living there – which is important in the case of a succession or the granting of a joint tenancy. If you claim Housing Benefit, you must also tell your local Housing Benefit Department about any changes to the size of your family or changes to your household income.

Joint tenancies

If we accept couples for housing we will normally give them a joint tenancy irrespective of their marital status. If you are a single tenant and want your partner to move in with you, you are entitled to apply for a joint tenancy. If you want to apply for a joint tenancy, we must be satisfied that your request is as a result of your genuine desire to live in your home as partners. As a result, we will need evidence that you have lived together in your home for a year.

Subletting and lodgers

You may wish to rent out a room to someone as this can help bring in some extra money. Most of the time this will be done by taking in a lodger. Usually this will involve someone having their own room and living as part of your household e.g. taking part in things like meals.

You may wish to sublet a part of your property. This gives the person living with you legal rights and a separated part of the property. If you are thinking of renting out a room, you should discuss this with your housing officer.

Remember: If you move out without telling us, sublet the whole of your property or transfer your tenancy illegally, you will have broken the conditions of tenancy. We will take immediate action through the court to repossess your home and evict any people living there.

It is strictly forbidden to sublet the whole of your home. If you are going away for three months or more (for example, to visit family abroad) and you would like someone to stay in your home while you are away, please discuss this with your housing officer. They will explain how you might be able to do this.

You cannot transfer your tenancy to someone else unless we give you permission (for example, to exchange your home with another resident) or unless a court orders the transfer of the tenancy as part of a divorce or relationship breakdown settlement.

Relationship breakdown

Housing problems can arise when relationships break down. Personal differences or the threat of violence may make it impossible for partners to continue to share a home. If you find yourself in this situation, you should take legal advice and talk to your housing officer.

In cases of domestic violence, the local council may be able to provide temporary rehousing. We will only be able to provide separate housing in very limited circumstances. We

will not rehouse a husband, wife or partner who is not a tenant (although married and unmarried partners may be able to apply for a legal transfer of the tenancy under the Matrimonial Causes Act, the Family Law Act or the Children Act).

The limited circumstances where we may consider tenants for separate rehousing are:

- There is a clear threat of domestic violence
- A tenant is vulnerable (for example, due to physical illness,

mental illness, disability or age)

- Separate housing would make scarce family accommodation available

If you prevent members of your household from continuing to live in your home through the use or threats of violence, we may take action to evict you.

Succession

If a tenant dies it may be possible for their tenancy to pass to another member of their family or partner living with them. This is called the right to succession and is detailed in your tenancy agreement.



Your neighbourhood

Estate agreements

If you live on an estate, there may be local rules that form part of an estate agreement. These rules (for example, concerning parking or behaviour in shared areas) are in place for the general interest of all residents. You will be breaking the terms of your tenancy if you break these rules.

Car parking

Car-parking spaces in shared areas on estates are for the benefit of all residents. Unless we say otherwise (usually in your tenancy agreement) you do not have rights to an individual car-parking space.

Shared areas

It is one of the conditions of your tenancy that you and the other people living in your house or block keep the shared areas clean (unless you have a cleaner that you pay for by a service charge added to your rent) and free from obstruction. You and your neighbours will need to decide how to do this. You may want to take it in turns or decide that each of you will be responsible for a particular area. The shared areas are made up of:

- The entrance hall
- Stairways and landings
- Sometimes the dustbin area and the front garden or yard

Remember that the shared areas are often the only escape route in case of fire so do not leave anything that could cause an obstruction.

Neighbour disputes

Our tenancy conditions are intended to make sure that you, your family and your guests are considerate to those people living around you.

Most homes we provide are very close together and some have shared areas. This means that a certain amount of noise and differences in lifestyle should be expected.

Sometimes these differences may lead to a disagreement between neighbours. In most cases you should try and sort out these problems yourself. Raising the issue with your neighbour and explaining the effect it is having on you is usually the best way forward. Your neighbour may not be aware they are disturbing you and you could reach a compromise together.

If you're not able to solve the problem on your own, or don't feel able to speak to your neighbour, then you should discuss the issue with your housing officer. They may be able to refer you to a mediation service or provide other advice on resolving the problem.

Anti-social behaviour

We want our residents to live in a safe, secure and comfortable environment. Tenants are responsible for their own behaviour as well as that of their family members and visitors.

Anti-social behaviour can involve:

- Littering or fly tipping
- Playing loud music late at night
- Drug dealing
- Out of control dogs
- Abandoned vehicles
- Vandalism or criminal damage.

We would not generally consider household noise such as

children playing to be anti-social behaviour.

If you report anti-social behaviour to us, we will:

- Take this seriously and investigate your problem
- Offer support and communicate with you in your own language if needed
- Put you in touch with any local support groups
- Carry out any necessary repairs
- Provide extra security or try to move you if it is not safe for you to stay in your home
- Take action to resolve the problem

Legal action will always be a last resort, but for the most serious kinds of anti-social behaviour, this can lead to someone losing their home.

Harassment and hate crime

We believe that everyone has the right to live in peace.

Harassment and hate crime may be motivated by race, gender, sexuality, age, disability or religion. Abuse, harassment and violence against customers will not be tolerated.

If you experience harassment, you can:

- Report it to your housing officer
- Report it to the police
- Report it via a third party support organisation

We will take action to resolve the harassment or hate crime.

This is a serious form of anti-social behaviour and can lead to someone losing their home.

If you see or hear harassment, hate crime or anti social behaviour please report it to your housing officer even if you are not directly involved.



Data protection

The Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 gives you the right to see personal records on matters affecting your privacy which are held manually or on our electronic filing systems, which include our computer records. There are a few exemptions applied in order to protect the rights and freedom of other individuals. For example, you will not be able to see information given to us by other people (like doctors or social workers) except with their permission. If you would like access to your information, please, contact your housing officer alternatively contact the data protection team via email dataprotection@nhg.org.uk.

All information we hold about our residents are confidential. Notting Hill Genesis will not share your information without your consent (please see our privacy notice www.nhg.org.uk/privacy-policy). However there are a few exemptions under the Act which allows sharing of data under strict guidance. For example we may share information with authorities and agencies (such as the police or local authorities) for the purposes of:

- Crime, law and public protection
- Health, social work, education and child abuse
- Journalism, research and archiving
- Legal professional privilege
- Functions designed to protect the public

We will provide limited information to Housing Benefit offices and the Department for Work and Pensions to help you if you are claiming benefits. We will also provide limited information to gas and electricity providers where you will be informed that information is being passed on. We will give your details to other

members of staff only when it is necessary to provide a service to you. We treat your information with utmost care and ensure the necessary security measures are in place to protect your information and ensure confidentiality.

Data security

We have put in place appropriate security measures to prevent your personal information from being accidentally lost, used or accessed in an unauthorised way, altered or disclosed.

In addition, we limit access to your personal information to those employees and third parties who have a business need to process it. Third parties will only process your personal information on our instructions and they are subject to a duty of confidentiality.

Data protection complaints

Should you wish to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office, full details of how to make a complaint to the ICO or judicial remedy as well as further information on your rights under GDPR are available at www.ico.org.uk/for-the-public

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office Wycliffe House

Water Lane Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AF

Telephone: 0303 123 1113 (local rate) or 01625 545 745 (national rate)

Fax: 01625 524 510

Email: enquiries@ico.org.uk

Resident involvement

There are many formal and informal ways in which we welcome your involvement in our work. These include:

- Local Scrutiny Panels that scrutinise and challenge how we deliver services in your local area. These panels are made up of residents who examine services and work with us to improve.

- Service panels that monitor and challenge how we deliver specific services, as well as helping to improve the way services are provided to different residents.
- Local residents' and tenant associations that provide a starting point for residents who want to get involved in decision-making processes in their local area
- Service reviews where you can work with us in looking at the whole range of services we provide and to agree changes to the way we deliver these
- Consultations about proposals involving changes in housing management practices and policy

We welcome suggestions from you for improvements in our services, including suggestions for greater resident involvement in managing our activities. To get involved, talk to your housing officer or send an email to involvement@nhg.org.uk.

Complaints

We aim to give you an excellent service and we want to know when you are unhappy with our service..

How do I make a complaint?



The quickest way to make a complaint is using **My Account**.

www.nhg.org.uk/residents/my-account

You can also tell us about your complaint on the telephone, in writing, by email or at a visit.

Often an issue can be easily and quickly solved as a 'quick fix'. If not, it will be treated as a formal complaint and your housing officer will contact you to clarify the issue and agree how and

when it will be resolved. If your complaint is about your housing officer it will be dealt by their line manager.

They aim to contact you to acknowledge your complaint within two working days, followed by a formal written response to your complaint within 10 working days.

If you remain unhappy following our initial response you can ask for your complaint to be reviewed by a manager who wasn't involved in the original decision. The manager will also ask you if you would like an independent resident to also review your complaint. They aim to review your complaint within 20 working days and will keep in contact with you during this time.

If at any time during your complaint we need more time to fully resolve the issue we will agree this with you.

If you are not satisfied with the final outcome you can then refer your complaint to the Independent Housing Ombudsman Service; you can also contact them at any stage of your complaint for advice or support.

You can contact the Housing Ombudsman Service at:

Housing Ombudsman Service
PO Box 152
Liverpool
L33 7WQ
0300 111 3000
www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Please note they will only usually look at a resident complaint once it has been all the way through our complaint process.

Your housing officer can give you a copy of our complaints policy, or you can find it on our website

www.nhg.org.uk/contact-us/make-a-complaint

You can also find a [complaint leaflet with further information](#) on NHG's complaint process on our website.

Buying your home

There are two schemes through which you may be able to buy your home at a discount:

- **The Right to Acquire scheme.** This scheme may be open to you if you have been a tenant for five or more years, have a good tenancy history and your property also meets the eligibility criteria. These depend on when Notting Hill Genesis acquired your home and how this was funded.
- **The Preserved Right to Buy scheme.** This scheme is only open to customers who were once Local Authority tenants and became a Notting Hill tenant through a regeneration scheme or stock transfer.

For more information on the above schemes and to find out whether your home is eligible, please go to our website www.nhg.org.uk/residents/staircasing-buying-and-selling or contact your housing officer.

Go to www.righttobuy.communities.gov.uk to find out what you need to consider, qualifying criteria and what your next steps should be.



Moving home

If you want to move home, you can find out about all of your options in the “moving home” booklet. Speak to your housing officer or go to www.nhg.org.uk/residents/moving-home/

If you are considering moving home, it’s best to consider all of your different options. Below are the two most common ways to move home.

Please note: if you have breached your tenancy, including anti-social behaviour or rent arrears, you might not be able to move through these means. You should discuss your personal circumstances with your housing officer.

Applying for a transfer

NHG in partnership with Locata operates its own register for residents who want to move to another NHG home. Thousands of residents are on the register and only a limited number of properties are available each year.

When you apply for a transfer you will be given a banding depending on your housing need and you will be able to view properties that you are eligible for at www.locata.org.uk. To register, contact your housing officer who can send you more information.

Bands range from A (highest priority) to D. Your banding will depend on a number of things, including whether you are overcrowded or if you have a medical condition. Your housing officer will make sure that your personal circumstances are taken into account. Depending on the property size you need and the areas you’ll consider moving to, if you are in band C or D it could take years before a transfer will be available.

House Exchange offers choice-based lettings but with properties nationwide. Register for free at www.houseexchange.org.uk

In some Local Authorities alternatives to Locata might be more suitable, your housing officer will be able to indicate your best option.

Exchanging properties with another resident

One of the quickest ways to move is to find someone who wants to swap their property with yours. This is called a 'mutual exchange'. It's a particularly good option if you want or need to move to a smaller or larger property.

If you want to apply then the best place to start is online by looking at either HomeSwapper which lists thousands of properties across London that are available for exchange, or if you are looking further afield then Homefinder list properties across the UK.

You can look at properties by price, area and number of bedrooms. You can register for free at www.homeswapper.co.uk or www.homefinderuk.org

Also, speak to your housing officer who can advise you if there are any potential properties in the area you would like to move to.

Incentives for moving to a smaller home

We are committed to making best use of our homes, and will offer incentives to those who have spare bedroom(s) to encourage them to move to a smaller home. To find out what is available and if you would qualify, speak to your housing officer.

