TENANT HANDBOOK
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Welcome To Your New Home

We hope you will be very happy here.

This is your Tenant Handbook. It aims to give you information about your property, your rights and the service you can expect from Nottingham Community Housing Association.

The Association was set up in 1973. Since then, we have produced more than 6000 homes for people in housing need in the East Midlands.

We aim to provide high quality services that meet customer’s needs and demands through efficient Housing Management and Maintenance of the Association’s homes.

If you have any comments about this handbook, or about any other aspect of our Housing Service, either fill in the feedback form on the NCHA website or get in touch with your Intermediate Housing Officer.

Premier Sales & Lets
Tenancy Agreement

Your Tenancy Agreement is a legal contract between yourself and Nottingham Community Housing Association or Lets Select. It lets you live in the property that you have signed for, as long as you pay rent and follow the rules. It also sets out the legal terms and conditions of your tenancy.

You have signed an Assured Shorthold Tenancy with a fixed term of 6 or 12 months. If you wish to stay in the property longer than the fixed term, providing your tenancy has been conducted in a satisfactory manner, your tenancy will go on to a periodic agreement where your tenancy will run on a month by month basis. You will not be issued with another agreement, but will be bound by the same terms and conditions as in your original agreement. Either party can give notice at any time.

The tenancy agreement also covers items such as internal decorations, noise nuisance and damage. It is therefore vital that you keep your agreement in a safe place to enable you to refer back to it when necessary.

Please remember this is a legally binding document
NCHA uses text messages as well as letters, phone calls and visits to notify you if you have a debt on your rent account. We will text from the number 0783 663 6607 so you may wish to save this to your phone.

As an NCHA or Lets Select resident, you are required to pay your rent on the 1\textsuperscript{st} of each month by direct debit; this is a condition of your Tenancy Agreement. If you pay later in the month you may receive regular texts reminding you that there is a debt on your account, unless you pay by regular direct debit or have set up an agreement with your Housing Officer to pay off your debt (and keep to this agreement).

NCHA is running a pilot scheme to confirm repairs and maintenance appointments so you may get a text if you report a repair. Please note that you are unable to opt out of arrears and repairs texts.

NCHA may also use the texting service to send you information about events in your area or other information that may be of interest to you. If you do not wish to receive these texts then please text STOP in reply.

The new texting service allows you to contact NCHA for information in the following ways:

Text BALANCE to 0783 663 6607.
… and you’ll receive a text message with your rent account balance

\textit{(this will be based upon the balance at close of business the previous day and some transactions may take up to two working days to appear)}

Text PAY to 0783 663 6607.
… and you’ll receive a text message with details of the last payment received into your account

Text REPAIR to 0783 663 6607.
… and a member of the Maintenance team will call you back to discuss the details of your repair

\textit{(Please note that all calls will be made within our service standard of five working days)}
Your Deposit

The law states that your deposit is to be protected in a Government – authorised tenancy deposit scheme. NCHA will send your deposit to The Deposit Protection Service to safeguard for the duration of the tenancy.

Once The DPS have received your deposit from NCHA, they will notify you by email. Within the email, there will be a unique ‘Repayment ID Number’. You will need to keep this somewhere safe, as you will need it to claim your deposit back at the end of your tenancy. You can find further information on how to claim your deposit back in the Moving On section of this handbook.
Your landlord/letting agent’s responsibilities

If you are renting a property, then you probably will have been asked to pay a tenancy deposit. In April 2007 it became law that all assured shorthold tenancy deposits received by landlords and letting agents are required to be protected in a Government-authorised tenancy deposit protection scheme.

The Deposit Protection Service (The DPS) is the only custodial scheme authorised by the Government. We require that the money you paid to your landlord/letting agent is physically paid over to us to safeguard for the duration of the tenancy. The deposit will be repaid at the end of the tenancy when both parties have reached agreement on its distribution.

How does The DPS work?

You pay your deposit to your landlord/letting agent

Your landlord/letting agent is required to pay the deposit over to The DPS within 30 days of receiving it and provide us with the tenancy details and your contact details. They also have a legal requirement to provide you with certain information about the tenancy - full details can be found on our website. Supplying your mobile phone number and/or email address to your landlord/letting agent is essential.

On receipt of the deposit, we will contact you and your landlord/letting agent to confirm that your deposit is protected. You will also be issued with your unique Repayment ID number. This is five digits long and must be kept somewhere safe as you will need this to request repayment of your deposit from us at the end of your tenancy.

www.depositprotection.com
Your responsibilities: updating your details

Your landlord or letting agent will register your details with us, so make sure they have your up-to-date details, most importantly your mobile phone number and/or email address.

If you change your mobile phone number or email address during your tenancy, please make sure you contact The DPS to update us with this information. It is your responsibility to do so and will enable us to make the deposit repayment process as efficient as possible.

In addition when you move out please ensure that The DPS has your new forwarding address. It is important that you update the system with this address as your landlord/agent cannot do it for you.

You can update your contact details in one of four ways:

**ONLINE**
By logging onto your account at www.depositprotection.com

**IN WRITING**
The Deposit Protection Service
The Pavilions
Bridgwater Road
Bristol
BS99 6AA

** VIA**
an online form connected to our Virtual Customer Service Agent/FAQs at www.depositprotection.com/help

**BY TELEPHONE**
0844 4727 000

www.depositprotection.com
Landlords and Tenants: the repayment process

At the end of your tenancy, you and your landlord/letting agent need to agree who is entitled to the deposit. Once this has been decided, you can let us know.

We need to hear from both you and your landlord/letting agent before we will make any repayment. You must fill out a Joint Deposit Repayment form, either online or using the paper form, providing us with your unique Repayment ID number.

Helpful hint

Remember that everything can be done online. This helps to make the repayment process as quick and easy as possible. Once an online account is set up both parties can:

› Update their own contact details
› Submit a Joint Deposit Repayment form
› Consent to use the ADR service.

What happens if we can’t agree on how the deposit is repaid?

The DPS run an independent Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) service which aims to resolve any dispute quickly and without the need for court action. It is an evidence-based adjudication service, but requires the consent of both parties.

For more information visit www.depositprotection.com

www.depositprotection.com
Useful Information

If you have any questions about your actual tenancy, such as permission for home improvements, rental payments, or to end your tenancy, your first point of contact is your housing officer. In their absence, please contact your landlord.

For minor repairs and information about the building the scheme supervisor is able to assist you.

Any other repairs will need to be reported to the maintenance team.

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**Your Housing Officer:** Sharron Frost, Heather Hart or Bal Rathore  
**Tel:** 0845 650 1203  
**Contactable Hours:** Monday to Friday 9am-5pm

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**Maintenance & Repairs:** NCHA Maintenance  
**Tel:** 0800 317 861  
**Email:** MaintRepairs@ncha.org.uk  
**Contactable Hours:** Monday to Friday 9am-5pm  
**Emergency Repairs:** 0800 317 861  
(efficiency repairs only outside office hrs - non emergency callouts will be charged)

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**Your Landlord:** Nottingham Community Housing Association  
**Department:** Intermediate Housing Team  
**Address:** 12-14 Pelham Road, Sherwood Rise, Nottingham, NG5 1AP  
**Tel:** 0845 650 1203  
**Email:** ihtemail@ncha.org.uk  
**Fax:** 0115 844 2606  
**Contactable Hours:** Monday to Friday 9am-5pm
OUT OF HOURS

EMERGENCY MAINTENANCE and HOUSING CALLS

ALL OUT OF HOURS CALLS TO NCHA’S MAINTENANCE AND HOUSING DEPARTMENTS ARE HANDLED BY THE SMaRT SERVICE.

SMaRT direct number: 0345 650 5599

OOH maintenance: 0800 317861

DEFINITION OF AN EMERGENCY

A maintenance or housing issue that cannot wait until the day to day housing/maintenance teams return to duty and is detrimental to the tenant or the fabric of the building.

Emergency repairs include:

- Fire damage
- Unsecure doors and windows
- Uncontrolled flood and other major plumbing faults
- Dangerous electrical faults
- Heating failures involving elderly or vulnerable people

Tenants’ Responsibilities

- Lost keys.
- Out of hours maintenance will only board up broken windows if a crime number has been obtained from the police.
- Broken fixtures and fittings, unless caused by criminal damage – a crime number must be obtained from the police.
- Making sure that gas/electric meters are in credit.
- Know where your stop tap is in case of emergency.
- Infestations, such as ants, wasps, fleas, rats or mice. Please contact your local Environmental Health Office at the Council to report any of these issues.
Moving In

When you have accepted a tenancy with us, you should find the property in a clean and tenantable condition.

If there are any problems, please contact us straight away. Remember to inform the local authority, electricity supplier and Severn Trent Water that you are moving in, or you may be liable for someone else’s debt. Below you can find the relevant contact details.

Your lettings officer will read your meters with you and show you where they are located at the sign up. They should also be able to tell you who your electricity supplier is. In some circumstances, they might not have been given the supplier information from the previous tenant. If you do not know who your supplier is, you will need to contact Western Power Distribution who can give you the information that you need.

Water Board: Severn Trent Water
Tel: 03457 500 500
Website: www.stwater.co.uk
Contactable Hours: Monday to Friday 8am - 8pm Saturday 8am – 1pm

Electric Supplier Info Line: Western Power Distribution
Tel: 0845 724 0240
Web: www.westernpower.co.uk
Electric Emergency Line: 0800 6783 105
### Electricity Suppliers

If you have a credit meter you will receive a bill every month or quarter. If you have a prepayment meter you will need a card or key to top it up.

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<th>Prepayment Meter</th>
<th>Website</th>
<th>Contactable Hours</th>
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<td><strong>E.ON</strong></td>
<td>0345 303 3020</td>
<td>0333 202 4643</td>
<td><a href="http://www.eonenergy.com">www.eonenergy.com</a></td>
<td>Monday to Friday 8am - 8pm Saturday 8am - 6pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>British Gas</strong></td>
<td>0800 048 0202</td>
<td>0800 048 0303</td>
<td><a href="http://www.britishgas.co.uk">www.britishgas.co.uk</a></td>
<td>Monday to Friday 8am - 8pm Saturday 8am - 6pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Southern Electric</strong></td>
<td>0800 107 9639</td>
<td>0800 980 2481</td>
<td><a href="http://www.southern-electric.co.uk">www.southern-electric.co.uk</a></td>
<td>Monday to Friday 8am - 8pm Saturday 8am - 2pm</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Npower</strong></td>
<td>0800 316 8558</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.npower.com">www.npower.com</a></td>
<td>Monday to Friday 8am - 8pm Saturday 8am - 6pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EDF</strong></td>
<td>0800 056 7777</td>
<td>0800 015 1733</td>
<td><a href="http://www.edfenergy.com">www.edfenergy.com</a></td>
<td>Monday to Friday 8am – 8pm Saturday 8am - 2pm</td>
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Electricity & Water Meters

On the day you sign up for your property, the lettings officer will show you where your meters are allocated. They will then record the opening meter readings on your inventory. You will need to contact the electric and water supplier in order to set up an account, and to give them your opening readings.

**Meter Location**
Your electricity meter will be allocated as close to your front door as possible, on the wall at waist level.

![Electricity Meter](image)

**Reading Your Meter**
There are five readings on your electric meter. You will need to press the blue display button to view each reading.

The water meter will usually display seven dials. The first five will be in black, and the last three will be in red. You will only need to record the numbers on the black dials.
Contents Insurance

Home insurance is split into two basic types of policy.

First off is buildings insurance, which protects the structure of the home and any permanent fixtures inside. Contents insurance is designed to protect your belongings. As a general rule, your contents are the things that could be taken with you if you decided to move home.

Think to yourself: “If I had to replace everything in my home after a fire, how much would it cost me?”

Chances are that figure is in the tens of thousands. This is where contents insurance comes in handy. This kind of policy protects your stuff against theft or damage from fire and flooding. This would include:

- Your beds, sofas and other furniture
- DVDs, CDs, video games, books and vinyl (if you’re into that sort of thing)
- Pots, pans, cutlery and crockery
- TVs, Blu-ray players, laptops and digital media
- Toys, ornaments and antiques
- Clothes and jewellery

Most insurers operate under one of these two types of policy:
The first is indemnity - a policy that takes into account wear and tear on items that you claim for. So if your six-year-old rug ruined by leaking water, any pay-out you’d get for the rug might be reduced because of its age. The other kind is new for old, which pays out the full amount for a shiny new replacement. Because the pay-outs tend to be higher, new for old policies could have higher premiums than indemnity policies.

It is not compulsory to insure your contents, but we highly recommend that you do. The following insurance providers are recommended by us:-
Service standard: Maintenance Service

Maintenance Service Standards – how to tell us what you think about our services and how we’ll respond if things go wrong

We are committed to providing our tenants, residents and service users with an excellent maintenance service.

These service standards tell you what you can expect if we carry out repairs or improvements to your home.

What you are responsible for

- Reporting repairs promptly and being honest about the nature of the repair. If we believe that you have misrepresented the nature of the repair to gain a quicker response you may be charged for the call out.
- Providing our staff and contractors with safe and reasonable access to your home.
- Providing access for gas and electricity checks to ensure your own and your neighbour’s safety.
- Not smoking while our staff or contractors are working in your home.
- Ensuring that there is a responsible adult present when our contractors attend. By responsible adult, we mean someone aged 18 or over.
- Ensuring there is credit on your electricity and gas meters when we attend for gas or safety checks.
- Keeping appointments made or informing us at the earliest opportunity if appointments can’t be kept.
- Paying us £10 if an appointment cannot be kept by you, unless we have been notified of any change.
- If you are not at home for an emergency out of hours call out you will be charged for the full cost of the call out; this could be as much as £150.
- Keeping the property and internal decoration in good, well-maintained order.
- Obtaining written permission to carry out any improvements to your home which may affect the structure or fixtures and fittings maintained by us.
- Leaving the property and the inside decoration in a clean and tidy condition when you end your tenancy, or we’ll charge you for the cost of repairs or the clearance of rubbish.

You are also responsible for:

- Blocked sinks, baths and hand basins.
- Infestations, e.g. ants, wasps, rats or mice.
- Replacing light bulbs.
- Maintaining internal door handles.
- Maintaining cupboard catches and hinges.
- Replacing tap washers.
- Replacing plugs and chains on sinks, baths and hand basins.
- Repairing minor plaster cracks and similar repairs.
- Lock changes (caused by tenant negligence).
- Repairing any damage caused by yourself, your family or visitors, even if it is an accident.

What we will do

- Provide an efficient repairs and maintenance service.
- Work with the Technical Services Customer Advisory Panel (CAP) to improve the service.
- Provide a fair and equal service to all residents.
- Use Link magazine and our website to regularly report to you on our performance.
Service standard: Maintenance Service

- Offer repairs through our free-phone number: 0800 317 861, or 0115 844 2931, by e-mail at maintrepairs@ncha.org.uk and through our website with the option to use ‘Live Chat’.
- Offer an emergency repairs service outside working hours using the same telephone numbers.
- For all emergency, urgent and routine repairs, we will offer a morning (between 8am and noon) or afternoon (between 12:30 and 4pm) appointment and we will send you a reminder by text message.
- Carry out gas and electric checks on time.
- Carry out regular resident satisfaction surveys.
- Make sure our Quality Control Officer inspects any work we carry out once it is finished.

**How soon repairs are carried out**

**Emergency repairs**
Emergency repairs are carried out when people's health and safety are at serious risk, or when major damage may be caused to the property.

We aim to attend to emergency repairs within 24 hours of them being reported to us.

Examples of emergency repairs are:
- A gas leak.
- A burst pipe.
- A total loss of electricity (not caused by one of your appliances tripping the power supply).
- A blocked drain.
- A blocked toilet (if there is only one toilet in your home and you have tried to clear the blockage).
- Flooding to your home.
- Security issues with external doors or windows.
- Heating or hot water appliances breaking down between 1st November and 31st March (temporary heating will be offered if the repair cannot be completed immediately).
- Damage to the structure of the property.
- Damage caused by fire.

If you have any doubts about whether your repair is an emergency or not, call us on 0800 317 861 or 0115 844 2931.

**Urgent Repairs**
These are repairs that may affect how you use your home or its facilities. We aim to attend to urgent repairs within six working days of them being reported to us.

Examples of urgent repairs are:
- Heating or hot water appliances breaking down between 1st April and 31st October.
- Minor leaks with plumbing and ball valves.
- Faulty door entry systems.
- A faulty shared TV aerial.
- Damaged stairs and handrails.
- Floor damage which puts people's health and safety at risk.
- Severe roof leak.
- Partial loss of electricity (not caused by one of your appliances tripping the power supply).

**Routine repairs**
These are repairs which do not need to be carried out as an urgent priority. We aim to attend to routine repairs within 30 working days of them being reported to us.

Examples of routine repairs are:
- Minor repairs to internal walls, doors, skirting boards and so on.
- Routine repairs to gutters, roofs and outside walls.
- Minor kitchen and bathroom repairs.
- Minor floor repairs.
- Minor repairs to fences, paths and garden gates.
- Minor work to exterior brickwork / rendering.

**Programmed/Batched work**
These are repairs which are not urgent and can be carried out in between other appointments. We aim to attend to programmed works within 180 working days.

We will let you know when an appointment has been arranged to carry out these works.

Examples of programmed/batched work are:
- Replacing windows.
- Replacing kitchens and bathrooms.
- Painting the outside of your property.
- Major roof repairs or replacements.
- Replacing central heating systems.
- Gas servicing.*

* For your own safety it is a legal requirement that we test gas appliances at least annually. Should you fail to provide access for this we will pursue the matter through the courts and you may be liable for costs.
**Repairs by Appointment**

These are repairs which are carried out at a time agreed with you. This can be either a morning appointment (between 8am and 12 noon) or an afternoon appointment (between 12:30pm and 4pm). When arranging an appointment for gas servicing we can also offer early evening and Saturday availability, however appointments at these times are limited.

We will tell you as soon as possible if we will not be able to keep to an appointment.

We will pay you £10 if we fail to keep an appointment, unless we have told you of any change.

**Aids and Adaptations**

Once an application for aids or adaptations has been assessed as reasonable it is added to the waiting list.

Where funding is available immediately, the application will be processed and undertaken as soon as possible. When demand for aids or adaptations is high applications will be prioritised in the following category order:

1. Families with a disabled child who require an adaptation to continue to care for them in the property.
2. Tenants/prospective tenants who have been diagnosed with a terminal condition.
3. Tenants/prospective tenants who are unable to leave hospital/care without an adaptation.
4. Tenants/prospective tenants who cannot continue to occupy their accommodation without an adaptation being undertaken.
5. All other adaptations (other than minor adaptations or aids) where the tenant/prospective tenant can continue to live in the property whilst waiting for the adaptation to be undertaken.
6. Adaptations undertaken for cultural or religious reasons. These adaptations will not be undertaken until all current minor or large adaptations have been budgeted for or undertaken within the budget allocated for the financial year.

Within each category adaptations will be carried out in the order in which the applications were received.

Minor adaptations and aids costing less than £500 will be excluded from the prioritisation criteria and undertaken as soon as possible.

**More information**

If you do not think that we are meeting the standards set out above please let us know.

If you have any questions please contact NCHA.

**Maintenance Contact details**

Telephone:
0800 317 861 (free-phone) / 0115 844 2931

Email: maintrepairs@ncha.org.uk

Web: www.ncha.org.uk

NCHA Maintenance Department
Unit C, Camberley Court
Bulwell
Nottingham
NG6 8GE

Please note: the Maintenance Department is not a public office and tenants will only be admitted by prior agreement

**Translation**

By request we will do what is reasonable to provide copies of the wording of any document in another language or format.

Please telephone 0800 013 8555 / 0115 844 3150 or email nottingham@ncha.org.uk
Asbestos – Information Sheet

Asbestos in your Home
This leaflet is about Asbestos, and explains what it is, its effects on health, where it may be in the home and what NCHA are doing to deal with it. Any home that was built before the year 2000 may contain some form of asbestos but as long as it is not damaged, flaking or producing dust, it is unlikely to cause you problems. It is important to be aware that your home may contain asbestos, so you can avoid doing anything that could put you or your family at risk. If you have any concerns about Asbestos in your property, please contact NCHA’s Maintenance Department.

What is Asbestos?
Asbestos is a strong, fibrous rock that is formed by liquids passing through rocks over thousands of years. It was commonly used in building materials between the 1950s and 1980s. Asbestos was often used to fireproof buildings but was also used as a general building material. Almost all buildings built or changed during this period are likely to contain some form of asbestos. Products that contain asbestos can often look the same as those that do not.

White or Brown Asbestos in its raw state looks very similar
Blue Asbestos in its raw state

What is the likelihood of exposure to asbestos in the home?
There are very low levels of asbestos in the air all the time, exposure to this low level of asbestos fibres is unlikely to harm peoples’ health. It is very unlikely that the levels of asbestos that may be found in your home will be harmful, but if you believe you have asbestos in your home, you should contact NCHA so we can survey and monitor the asbestos to reduce the risk even further.

Are you at risk?
Asbestos can only pose a risk to your health if the asbestos fibres become airborne. You will not be at risk if products containing asbestos are undisturbed or undamaged. In good condition asbestos is not a health hazard and the health and if it is undamaged it should be left alone and monitored. If items do become damaged or deteriorate, then you and others around you may be at risk and you should contact NCHA. DIY activities such as drilling, sanding and sawing may disturb and possible damage products containing asbestos. Before doing any DIY work you should first seek permission from NCHA who will be able to advise on the risk of asbestos in your home.
Where might I find asbestos in my home?
Not all homes contain Asbestos. Below is a list of places where asbestos can be found in properties, although these are not the only place it may be found.

- Exterior of buildings: Sheet roofing (often found in garages), some roof tiles, fascia boards, soffits, exterior cladding, guttering and drain pipes
- Boilers: Some interior workings of old boilers, boiler flues, old electric night storage radiators.
- Interior surfaces: Textured wall and ceiling coatings (for example Artex), Duct panels, infill panels (above doors), airing cupboard doors, panels behind radiators or heaters, vinyl based floor tiles, suspended ceiling panels, fire proofing to under stairs.
- Other areas: some bath panels, fireplace panels, panel to underside of kitchen sink, some water tanks, old pipe lagging, garage and shed roofs.

Asbestos textured coating (Artex)
Asbestos cement garage roof
Asbestos insulating board
Asbestos toilet cistern
Asbestos floor tiles

What does Nottingham Community Housing Association do to minimise risks?
We keep a list of properties where asbestos has been found or is believed to exist. This list is updated each time we survey your home or remove some asbestos. Where we think asbestos is present, we arrange for tests to be carried out. If asbestos is found and it is in a good condition, we leave it in place, which is safe. If the asbestos is in a bad condition it is removed or made safe. This may mean that once a year a NCHA employee may need access to your property to monitor it.

What can you do?
Your tenancy agreement requires you to get our permission before you carry out improvements, alterations or make additions to your property; this is to help control and monitor asbestos that may be present in your home. If you damage what you suspect to be asbestos, leave everything in place (Tools, groundsheets etc.), close the door leading to the room and contact us immediately. We will arrange to have a sample taken and tested to establish if it contains asbestos and take the appropriate action.

If you require any further information then please contact Maintenance on 0800 317861
Keeping your home free from damp and mould

Much of this advice was originally available as a Department of the Environment leaflet
Keeping your home free from damp and mould

Is your home damp?

Damp can cause mould on walls and furniture and make window frames rot.

Some damp is caused by condensation. This leaflet explains how condensation forms and how you can get rid of it. If you can eliminate condensation then you can be free of the mould and damp it causes.

First steps against condensation

You will need to take proper steps to deal with the condensation, but meanwhile there are some simple things you should do right away.

Wipe down the windows and sills every morning. Wring out the cloth rather than drying it on a radiator.

Condensation channels can be bought at DIY shops. They are fitted to windows to prevent window frames from rotting, stop the growth of mould and avoid damp forming under sills.

Anti-condensation paint can help.
First steps against mould

First treat the mould already in your home. Then deal with the basic problem of condensation and mould should not reappear.

To kill and remove mould, wipe down walls and window frames with diluted bleach or a fungicidal wash. Dry-clean mildewed clothes, and shampoo carpets. Do not try to brush mould away but use a vacuum cleaner.

After treatment, redecorate using a good quality fungicidal paint to help prevent mould. The effect of fungicidal or anti-condensation paints is destroyed if they are covered with ordinary paints or wallpaper.

The only lasting cure for severe mould is to get rid of dampness.

Is it condensation?

Condensation is not the only cause of damp. It can also come from:

- Leaking pipes, wastes or overflows
- Rain seeping through the roof where a tile or slate is missing, spilling from a blocked gutter or leaking through a cracked pipe.
- Rising damp because of a defective damp-course or because there is no damp-course.

These three building defects usually leave a ‘tidemark’.

If your home is newly built it may be damp because the water used in constructing it is still drying out.
If your home is damp for any of these reasons it may take weeks of heating and ventilating to dry it out. Hiring a dehumidifier will help.

If you do not think the damp comes from any of these causes, it’s probably condensation.

**What is condensation?**

There is always some moisture in the air, even if you cannot see it. If the air gets cold it cannot hold all the moisture and some appears as tiny droplets of water. This is condensation. You notice it when you see your breath on a cold day, or when the mirror mists over when you have a bath.

Condensation occurs in cold weather, whether it is raining or dry. It does not leave a ‘tidemark’. It appears on cold surfaces and in places where there is little movement of air. Look for it in corners, on or near windows, in or behind wardrobes and cupboards. It often forms on north-facing walls.

**These four steps will help you reduce the condensation in your home**

1. **Produce less moisture**

Some ordinary daily activities produce a lot of moisture very quickly.

**Cooking:**
To reduce the amount of moisture in the kitchen, cover pans and do not leave kettles boiling.
Paraffin and portable gas heaters:
These heaters put a lot of moisture into the air - one gallon of gas or paraffin produces a gallon of water. If you have a lot of condensation, do not use them at all.

Washing clothes:
Put washing outdoors to dry if you can. Or put it in the bathroom with the door closed and the window open or fan on. If you have a tumble dryer ventilate it to the outside (unless it is the self-condensing type). DIY kits are available for this.

2. Ventilate to remove the moisture

You can ventilate your home without making draughts.

Some ventilation is needed to get rid of the moisture which is produced all the time, mostly just by people’s breath. Keep a small window ajar or a trickle ventilator open when someone is in the room.

You need much more ventilation in the kitchen and bathroom during cooking, washing up, bathing and drying clothes. This means opening the windows wider. Better still, use a humidistat-controlled electric fan. These are cheap to run - only 6p a week for two hours every day.

Close the kitchen and bathroom doors when these rooms are in use. This stops the moisture reaching other rooms, especially bedrooms, which are often colder and more likely to get condensation. Draughtproofing kitchen and bathroom doors, and fitting automatic door closers, can help.
Ventilate cupboards and wardrobes. Avoid putting too many things in them, as that stops the air circulating. Cut a ventilation slot in the back of each shelf or use slatted shelves. Cut ‘breather’ holes in doors and in the back of wardrobes. Leave space between the back of the wardrobe and the wall. Put floor-mounted furniture on blocks to allow air underneath. Avoid putting wardrobes and furniture against cold walls.

3. Insulate and draughtproof

Insulation in the loft and draughtproofing windows and doors will keep your home warm and you will have lower fuel bills as well. When walls are warmer, condensation is less likely.

**When draughtproofing:**

- Do not block permanent ventilators
- Do not block chimneys completely. Leave a hole about two bricks in size
- Do not draughtproof rooms where there is condensation or mould.
- Do not draughtproof a room where there is a heater or cooker that burns fuel, such as a gas fire.
- Do not draughtproof windows in the bathroom or kitchen.

You can leave the top edge of some windows without draughtproofing to allow a little ventilation. If you are getting supplementary benefit you may be able to get some money for draughtproofing.

If you live in a house, insulating your loft is the most effective way of cutting heating costs. You may be able to get a grant from your local authority, even if you are a tenant.
Draughtproof the loft hatch as well.

Cavity wall insulation can help but you should talk to the local building inspector. The work should be done only by approved contractors.

Secondary glazing of windows reduces heat losses and draughts but you must check that there is some ventilation.

4 Heat your home a little more

In cold weather, the best way to keep rooms warm enough to avoid condensation is to keep low background heating all day, even when there is no one at home. This is very important in bedrooms, especially in flats and bungalows and other dwellings where the bedrooms are not above a warm living room. So if possible install a very small heater with a thermostat in each bedroom (do not use a paraffin or bottled gas heater). The thermostat will help control heating and costs.

Dehumidifiers will help dry out damp after construction. They can also help reduce condensation in warm rooms with a lot of moisture. But they are of little use in cold damp rooms.
Points to remember

**Produce less moisture:**
- cover pans
- dry clothes outdoors
- ventilate your tumble dryer
- ventilate for paraffin or bottled gas heaters or avoid using them

**Ventilate to remove moisture:**
- ventilate when someone is in
- ventilate kitchen and bathroom more when in use and shut the door
- ventilate cupboards, wardrobes and blocked chimneys

**Insulate and draughtproof:**
- insulate the loft
- draughtproof windows and external doors
- consider cavity insulation
- consider secondary glazing

**Heat your home a little more:**
- keep low background heat on all day
- find out about benefits, rebates and help with fuel bills

If you have any questions please contact the Maintenance Department on 0800 317861
www.ncha.org.uk

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Fire Safety

All communal areas should be kept clear at all times. Please do not store any items in communal areas as this can block exits and affect the fire risk along with the health and safety of tenants. This includes items such as door mats, bicycles, motorbikes. If you are considering leaving an item in the hallway please discuss it your housing officer. NCHA take your safety very seriously and at least once a year their officers inspect your building to ensure that it is meeting all the fire safety requirements.

Smoke Detectors
Your property is fitted with an electrical or battery smoke alarm. It is recommended that you or a member of your family test the alarm once a week to be sure that the unit is working and become familiar with the sound of the alarm.

When you press the test button, it simulates the effect of smoke during a real fire, thus there is no need to test the alarm with smoke.

**TO TEST ALARM:**
- Press the Test button until the alarm sounds.
- The alarm will stop shortly after the button is released.
- If the alarm fails to sound, please contact the Maintenance Department.

When battery alarm power is low and replacement is necessary, the alarm will bleep about once per minute for at least 30 days. Be sure to change the battery in this case. It is very important to check the operation of your smoke alarm and, if you require assistance in testing your smoke alarm, please contact the Maintenance Department.

Responsibilities of Residents
As a resident in a house in an apartment block you have a responsibility towards your landlord/Estate Manager, other residents and yourself to ensure that the fire precautions installed by your landlord/Estate Manager are kept in good condition and not interfered with or abused. The following is a list you should be aware of:

**Fire Doors**
All fire doors on communal areas and on the entrance to your property should be fitted with an automatic door closing device. The purpose of this device is to ensure that the door remains shut when not being used. This is to prevent the spread of fire.

Fire doors should **never** be wedged, propped or otherwise kept open as this will allow a fire to spread unchecked throughout a property, increasing the risk of death and destruction from fire.
Your entrance/escape door should be fitted with a lock that does not require a key to escape if this is not the case please ring the maintenance helpline on Free phone: 0800317861 to arrange for a service engineer to visit and ensure your safety is upheld in the event of a fire in your home.

**Fire Detection Equipment**

Fire safety equipment, including emergency lighting which has been provided to alert residents to the presence of a fire should *never* be tampered with, switched off or otherwise disconnected. This is the primary means of protecting your life in the event of a fire and aiding in your safe escape.

If a fire starts, this system will alert you to the presence of a fire and, together with the structural protection incorporated into the property, should enable you to escape the fire without injury. If an alarm sounds all alarms should be considered to be genuine. If the alarm system in your house is repeatedly giving false alarms, you should contact the Maintenance helpline on Free phone: 0800317861 advising them of the possibility of a fault in the alarm system.

**Escape Routes**

You should ensure that items of furniture, bicycles, or other personal property, etc., are not stored in the common hallways as this will obstruct people escaping from a fire. The **communal area is not part of your property** any items stored here will be removed and a charge will be issued. It is essential that you and your family know the fire procedure for your building, this should be displayed in your communal area and will advise you of the procedure to follow if a fire does break out.

**Implications**

The implications of residents failing to co-operate with landlords/Estate Managers in maintaining fire safety are considerable:

- You may cause a fire to spread throughout a property, resulting in excessive damage to the property and possibly injury or the death of another resident or yourself.
- You may be prosecuted under The Management of Houses in Multiple Occupation Regulations 2006 for failure to co-operate with the landlord/Estate Manager in carrying out his duties. **Fines of up to £5,000** can be made in these circumstances.
- Any insurance you may have for your personal property may be invalidated by your insurers if they identify that your actions have resulted in increased damage.

Please contact your local Estate Officer if you have any concerns or queries relating to this matter.
User Manuals

**Electric Storage Heaters**

Electric storage heaters are commonly called night storage heaters. They work by having heat retaining clay bricks inside the storage heater, which are charged over night to store heat and release the heat during the day.

**How Storage Heaters Work**

Electricity to the units is restricted to off peak hours. When the unit is charging, electricity heats the elements, which in turn heat the bricks. Although surrounded in a layer of insulation as the bricks get hotter the casing of the heater becomes hotter. Essentially it is the heat from the casing that heats the room.

The heater will charge mainly at night so it will be at its hottest, first thing in the morning. As the day progresses the bricks become cooler and hence the heat output decreases.

**How Storage Heaters Manual Controls Work**

Storage heaters are very straight forward to adjust. Essentially every heater has 2 controls, an Input control and an Output control.

The main control is the Input control. It determines the level of heat stored over night and hence the heat of the casing. The setting of the Input control will have the greatest influence on the level of comfort and also on the running costs. Like the control on a cooker, the higher the setting the more heat stored and hence the more heat released. Maximum setting will certainly be needed in winter but it can be reduced in autumn and spring for more economical operation.
The Output or 'boost control' plays a smaller but none the less important role. When the Output control is opened air directly enters the brick core and is released from the grille at the top of the heater. You should leave this control set to in between the minimum and maximum options.

This Output control causes the most confusion in terms of customer understanding. In reality it only controls about 10% or 15% of the total amount of stored heat and only releasing this as the brick themselves become cooler. However some customers think turning the Output to minimum should result in no heat being released whatsoever but of course 85% to 90% of the heat is provided from the hot casing and is controlled by the Input control.

Economy 7 with HeatWise

Your electric meter may have five different readings, which are charged at different rates by your electricity supplier. Your five readings are broken down as follows:-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Day Rate</td>
<td>Economy 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Night Rate</td>
<td>Economy 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afternoon Rate</td>
<td>HeatWise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evening Rate</td>
<td>HeatWise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Night Rate</td>
<td>HeatWise</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Alternatively you may only have two readings charged at the Economy 7 rates.

Economy 7

All the electricity you use, excluding your heating and hot water, will go through the Economy 7 meter and be charged at the standard Economy 7 rates. You will need to check with your electricity supplier, at what times the different rates are charged. Night usage will be dependant on the timings of your meter, but generally speaking you will get 7hrs off peak electricity for all electrical consumption, after this time frame you will then be charged peak rates. It is totally independent of the heat storage and water heating usage going through the HeatWise circuits.
**HeatWise**

Your meter has specific switching times, and during these times your heating and hot water will be charged at the HeatWise rates. When active your heating and hot water will begin to operate, charging any storage heating you have ready for use. In effect, continually topping up your heaters throughout the day (even if they haven't been used). You will need to ensure that the switch on the wall next to each heater and the water tank are on, so that the storage/water heaters are charging during these times.

The storage/water heating usage will have built up during the 10 hours of each day when Heatwise is active. It is set up so that you have hot water and heating on demand no matter the time of day. Your electricity supplier will advise you on the exact switching times, but will be roughly similar to the following:

- 3 continuous hours in the afternoon between 1pm and 4.30pm.
- 2 continuous hours in the evening between 5.30pm and 10pm.
- 5 continuous hours at night between 12am and 7am.

To work, the Heatwise part of the meter is wired directly into the heating/hot water circuits. This allows the meter to switch the heating/hot water on and off at the off peak times. Additionally, there's a boost button on the meter to let you top up the heating/hot water if needed. This is more expensive though so we wouldn't recommend relying on it. The meter has two red neon indicators directly above and below the display screen which indicate when electricity is being used. There'll be at least a 1 hour gap between each of the switching periods. You might hear a click from the meter at the start and end of each off peak period.

**Door Entry System**

- The visitor enters your number on the main entrance panel and presses the ‘ring’ button.
- The telephone handset in your apartment will ring.
- Pick up the telephone and ask who is there.
- If you wish to admit a visitor press the ‘open door’ button once.
- Please tell your visitors to ensure the main entrance door closes behind them.

It is up to you to control who enters the building. Only let people in if you are sure of their identity. If you do not want to talk to them or let them in simply replace the handset.
**Electric Shower**

The electric shower is switched on by the 45 amp ceiling pull switch in the bathroom. The control knob on the shower controls the flow rate of the water. The faster the flow, the cooler the water; the slower the flow, the hotter the water.

After use **ALWAYS SWITCH OFF THE SHOWER PULL SWITCH.**

**Bathroom Fan Heater**

The bathroom fan heater is manually operated by the pull cord on the unit. Local isolation is provided by an un-switched fuse spur.

**Bathroom Extractor Fan**

The bathroom fan operates automatically on a built in humidistat which is affected by the humidity in the bathroom. The fan can also be operated by a pull cord built into the fan, which has a run on timer up to 6 minutes duration. Therefore, if the fan is running without the switch being operated, it is on automatic mode. There is a local isolation point which is an un-switched fuse spur.

**Kitchen Extractor Fan**

The kitchen fan operates automatically on built in humidistat which is affected by the humidity in the kitchen. The fan can also be operated by an override switch adjacent the light switch at the door. Therefore, if the fan is running when the override switch is OFF, it means the humidistat is in automatic mode.
Listening to You

NCHA want to provide you with the Housing Service you want, not the one they think you want.

That's why they take all complaints very seriously and why they think it's so important to consult you about the service they provide.

Only by listening to what you say, then responding, can they hope to provide you with a service that you will be fully satisfied with.

**Initial Complaints**

If you have a complaint about the quality of the Association’s services or about its policies you should first raise it with your housing officer. Following this, if a satisfactory conclusion isn’t met you can contact one of the following:-

Gillian Thompson – Intermediate Housing Manager  
Anna Campbell - Sales & Lettings Manager  
David Simmons - Head of Intermediate Housing

They will endeavour to resolve the issue for you. They will also be able to explain to you in more depth, the complaints procedure in the unlikely event that a satisfactory conclusion isn’t met.

This Complaints Policy is separate from the Association’s compensation policy which applies under certain circumstances, and details of which can be obtained separately.

You can find a copy of the NCHA complaints policy on their website [www.ncha.org.uk](http://www.ncha.org.uk), in the contact us section.
Moving On

If you decide to move out of your property, we will require 1 months notice in writing of your intention to leave your home, and you will be responsible for the rent up to the date you surrender the keys to the property. You can post your notice or email it to us. Our contact details can be found on the front cover of this handbook.

Once notice is received we will arrange for a Lettings Officer to attend the property for the Pre-Termination Inspection. This inspection is to evaluate what works the landlord may need to carry out once you leave. It is also an opportunity for the Lettings Officer to advise you on what you may need to do in order to ensure you receive a full deposit refund. We ask that the property is in a presentable condition at the PTI visit so that we can take photographs of the property, in order to begin advertising it.

You must leave the property in good condition, clear out all personal belongings, and clean it to a professional standard. Anything that is left behind after the keys are handed back will be disposed of. Please do not depose of any electrical items or large items of furniture in the bin stores as a charge will be made to have them removed. Please contact the council for assistance. Further information can be found in the Refuse Store section of this handbook.

The Lettings Officer will check that the property and all white goods have been cleaned. The Fridge Freezer will need to be switched off 24hours before you clean it, in order to let it fully defrost. Once you have cleaned it, please turn it off from the main switch on the wall, and leave the doors open. The washing machine door must be cleaned inside and out, ensuring all dust and soap residue has been cleaned. The soap draw also needs to be removed and cleaned properly. The oven is to be cleaned properly, where all food, burn marks, and cleaning fluid residue has been removed.

A final Checkout Inspection will be carried out on the last day of your tenancy. You must hand in all keys to the Lettings Officer on the day you leave the property. If you are unable to attend the final inspection, keys must be posted to our head office via Recorded Delivery, and then the inspection will be carried out by a member of staff. If we have to clear the property of personal belongings, repair any damage, or change a lock because the keys have not been returned, a charge will be made.

Please note: We do not forward mail, so remember to contact Royal Mail 14 days before you move to arrange re-direction.
How do I reclaim my Tenancy Deposit?
When your tenancy began your security deposit was registered with the Deposit Protection Service (DPS). In order to reclaim your tenancy deposit, you will need to know the two identification numbers which would have been issued to you by the DPS at the start of the tenancy:

- Deposit ID - This unique ID number is required to access the details of your deposit. Please contact us if you do not have this.

- Repayment ID - Both parties are issued with a unique Repayment ID for security reasons, meaning no funds can be returned to either party without the consent of the other party.

If you no longer have your Repayment ID, you can use either of the following methods to obtain a new ID number:

- Online – Go to www.depositprotection.com/login.aspx and click the “Forgotten your repayment ID?” button located near the bottom of the Tenants Login section. After answering a series of security questions about the tenancy, a new repayment ID will be sent to the lead tenant.

- Text - Simply text REPAY followed by your 8 digit Deposit ID and the deposit amount to 07537 404 808. If the DPS cannot send your new repayment ID to your mobile, they will endeavour to send it to the email address which is registered on the deposit. Here is an example of what your text message should look like: REPAY 12345678 500.00

When will my deposit be returned to me?
Normally a member of staff will initiate the deposit repayment request once your final checkout inspection is complete, though you can start the repayment request yourself after giving notice if you wish.

Subject to the balance of your rent account and the condition property upon the termination of your tenancy, an agreement will be made between the tenant(s) and a member of staff over how much of the deposit will be returned to the tenant(s). Once a decision has been made and both parties have accepted the deposit repayment request, the funds will be sent to your nominated bank account within 5 working days.

If a decision cannot be reached, either party has the right to dispute the deposit repayment request. When this happens, both parties get an additional opportunity to make a new repayment proposal. If a decision still cannot be reached, the deposit can be sent to the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Service. Both parties will have to give consent to send the case to ADR, which is an evidence-based adjudication service.

You can find out further information about how the Deposit Protection Service works by visiting their website www.depositprotection.com, or phoning them on 0330 303 0030.