

Tenants' rights

These are your rights under Acts of Parliament and Government Regulations.
This symbol shows that introductory and demoted tenants do not have these rights.

Handing on your tenancy

When a tenant dies, the tenancy will automatically pass to a joint tenant. If there is no joint tenant, a partner (married or unmarried) may be able to take over the tenancy. This is called a succession. Under the law a tenancy is only handed on once.

You may be able to hand on your tenancy before you die but only under certain circumstances. See **Household changes** on page 21.

Sub-letting and taking in lodgers

You can take in lodgers provided you do not overcrowd your home. A lodger is someone who shares your home as part of your household.

You can sub-let part of your home (not the whole) provided you first get our written permission. Sub-letting allows someone to have private use of a part of your home.

You should inform us of the name, age and sex of any intended lodger or sub-tenant and the part of your home they will live in.

Information and consultation

We must provide you with information about your Tenancy Agreement and about certain policies and procedures. We must also inform you about how well we are carrying out our work following standards set down by the Government.

We must consult you about any changes to your Tenancy Agreement, any modernisation or improvement planned for your home, or any changes to our housing management policies, such as repair response timescales or tenant responsibilities.

Exchanging tenancies

You can exchange (swap) homes with another Hackney tenant, or a tenant of a housing association or another council. You must get written agreement from us and any other landlord involved before you move. We will give permission except where there is a specific reason such as your rent has not been paid. See **Other ways to move** on page 67.

Carrying out improvements

You can carry out improvements to your home provided you have our written permission before you start work.

When you leave you may get compensation for certain improvements you have carried out. See **Improvements to your home** on page 45.

Buying your home

You can buy your home from us provided you have been a tenant for at least five years.

Certain types of homes cannot normally be bought, for example housing built for people with disabilities.

You cannot apply to buy your home while you are a demoted tenant and the demoted period does not count towards any discount you might receive.

Security of tenure

No tenant can be made to leave his or her home unless ordered to do so by a court. The court will make sure that there are good reasons for ordering a 'possession'.

Getting repairs done

You are entitled to have certain urgent repairs carried out within set times under the Right to Repair regulations. These are repairs which, if not completed on time, could seriously affect your health or safety in your home. You will be told if a repair you have reported is classified as a 'qualifying' repair. In certain circumstances you may get compensation if we fail to meet the regulation requirements.

Access to and control of personal information

We must treat all personal information about tenants and leaseholders as confidential. However, by law, we must share certain essential information with other public bodies.

You can see personal information relating to you held by us on file or on computer, provided you give us reasonable notice. We have the right to make an administrative charge for this.

If you are unhappy about any information or expression of opinion recorded in your files, you can ask for it to be corrected or removed.

Rent and other charges

It is important that you pay your rent and any service charges on time. This money pays for the services you receive. You must pay the rent for the current week by Wednesday.

Rent

Your weekly rent covers the cost of providing you with your home and the services you receive, including repairs and maintenance.

We set your rent following guidance from the Government, which limits how much your rent can increase.

The Government has brought in changes to make rent levels fairer. They want all tenants of social landlords to pay similar rents for similar properties in the same local area.

The changes will happen gradually over 10 years. We started in October 2002, so by 2012 all rents in your area charged by social landlords will be similar for the same size or type of home.

Other charges you may pay

The total amount you pay each week may include the following.

- For certain flats, a service charge for the upkeep of shared areas. This includes the cost of providing a concierge service, caretaking, cleaning and grounds maintenance, shared lighting, and servicing lifts and door-entry systems.
- For the warden service and for Careline, the 24-hour emergency alarm system. This may be covered by a Supporting People grant. (For tenants in sheltered housing this may be part of the service charge.)
- A garage you are renting.

Service charges vary depending on the services you receive and how much they cost to provide. These charges will be shown separately on your rent details slip. All tenants and leaseholders in your block will pay service charges.

What are service charges?

These are usually paid by people living in properties with shared facilities or services. The charges are not part of the rent, although they will be paid with the rent. The amount you must pay will be shown on your rent details slip each year. The amount you must pay is based on what these services will cost for the year.

If we need to put charges up or lower them, we will show them to you beforehand and explain why. You can write to us within four weeks with your comments.

If you ask to see more detailed accounts relating to service charges, we may make a small charge for the cost of copying.

Can I appeal against an increase in rent or service charges?

If you want to appeal against your rent increase or the level of your service charge, you should contact your local housing team. A member of staff will then give you advice on what to do next.

Will my rent go up?

We set rents in line with government guidelines. We review them once a year. If your rent goes up, we will let you know at least one week before you must pay it. Any rent increase will come into force on the first Monday in October. The Government checks each year that the rents you are charged are fair in relation to where you live. See **Rent** on page 27.

Reporting a repair

You can report any repair problem to our Housing Contact Centre 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Please give us as much information as possible about your repair.

What we need to know

- Which item needs repairing or replacing?
- What is the problem eg: is it loose, leaking, broken?
- What is causing the problem?
- Where is it: which room inside or whereabouts outside?
- Can you describe the item: what type, size, shape or colour is it?
- What is it made of: wood, metal or plastic?
- How big is the problem: what area or length is affected?
- Is it causing any other problems or damage?

When you call

Let us know your name, address, telephone number and the details of what needs repairing.

We will discuss the problem with you and will tell you:

- whether an order for work will be placed immediately, or whether a surveyor needs to visit to assess what needs to be done
- if it is an order, the response category it falls into
- the job number, which you can check against the repair operative's order when they call.

Arranging a time

We will discuss what time of day you can be at home to let a repair operative in to carry out work.

For all urgent and normal category repairs we will agree a specific morning (8am-1pm) or afternoon (12pm-4.30pm) when a repair operative will call. If you are not in when we have agreed an appointment the job will be cancelled. You will have to report the repair to us again.

The work is carried out

When the work has been completed, the repair operative will ask you to sign that he or she has attended to the repair.

Who do I contact about repairs?

The best way is to telephone the Housing Contact Centre. You can also visit your Neighbourhood Office and use the freephone in reception. When you report a repair please give us as much information as possible.

What if it is an emergency?

If you have an emergency outside office hours you should call the Housing Contact Centre or the 'out of hours emergencies' number. See the **Contact sheet** at the back of this book. There are staff on emergency duty all the time. Be sure that it is a genuine emergency because if you call us out on an emergency without good cause, or you are not at home when we respond to an emergency, you may be charged for the repair operative's time. If we need to get into your home to carry out an emergency repair and we cannot contact you or you unreasonably refuse to let us in, we will break in.



Who will carry out the repair?

There are different contractors for different areas of Hackney. There are some general contractors and some specialist contractors. All repair operatives must carry identification. Always check their identification and phone the Housing Contact Centre if you are in any doubt.

Operatives must also follow a strict code of conduct while they work in your home. See **Repair standards** on page 57.

